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Occupy!

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The Seventh Generation

Occupy Urban Planning!

by Tom Angotti and Marie Kennedy

On September 17, 2011, a group of protesters occupied a public plaza near Wall Street in New York City. They stayed for two months and kicked off the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, which has involved over 1,500 occupations in towns and cities throughout the United States in its first six months.

Polls consistently show that the majority of people in this country are upset with Wall Street and support the occupiers, so this movement is unique because it was born already securing majority approval—something so many other movements have to struggle many years to achieve. Following and building on the massive occupation of Wisconsin's statehouse by union supporters over a year ago, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) has helped to radically shift the terrain for political discussions in this country. The electoral circus organized in preparation for the November 2012 presidential contest looks more and more like a noisy diversion primed by the unlimited contributions of wealthy corporations and individuals, highlighted by the Republican/Tea Party tussle to select a candidate to face President Barack Obama.

Most OWS activists have rejected calls from the established political class to get "a program" so that a

deal can be cut—a deal that aims to get people to "be pragmatic" and settle for the minimal reforms the establishment is prepared to concede. OWS has a powerful radical and progressive undercurrent that won't follow the protocols of a broken political system run by corporations and the wealthy, and a process that offers them participation without democracy. While the fire was lit with the active involvement of anarchists and revolutionaries, this is a movement that clearly cuts across classical political lines and is beginning to establish a new way of thinking about the economy and society. While populated by many young people, it brings together all generations; while mostly white, it is starting to breach racial barriers in a way that earlier movements never did.

It is a mistake to view the OWS movement as only the six-month-old baby born in the U.S.A. OWS is one part of a global response to the conditions created by a global capitalist crisis. This includes uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and other Middle Eastern nations, the *Indignados* in Spain and Mexico, the striking students in Chile, the massive protests in Greece and other places too numerous to mention here. Add to this the powerful ongoing movements against evictions and displacement throughout the world, movements that have been raising similar demands and using similar tactics as OWS for many generations.

Occupation is the thread running through the strategies of global movements that advocate the right to the city and the rights to housing, health care, education and all human rights. It is an essential element in the strategies that aim to demonstrate in practice that another and better world is possible. It can help meet the immediate needs of people who have lost their homes

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The Seventh Generation

Occupy Racism

By Chester Hartman

Occupy Wall Street's ardent focus on inequality is an enormous achievement. Missing, however, is the racial dimension of the phenomenon.

The wealth and income gap between whites and the nation's black/brown population is staggering and growing. It creates markedly differing abilities to weather adversity—job loss, illness, etc. It is also reproduced via intergenerational transfer of wealth, enabling children of different races to have wholly different futures. And our political system and democratic ethos is undermined and corrupted via the hefty use of candidate contributions by the rich.

The well-recognized achievement gap in our nation's schools—attributed to local (city vs. suburbs) school financing disparities, curriculum and teacher quality differences by race, plus equipment and physical plant disparities—all ensure massive gaps in job preparation and overall learning skills. Our housing system—zoning, financing, development/design, management—ensures housing segregation and quality differences by race. Housing location and conditions clearly affect health, access to schools, personal safety, access to employment and access to important commercial and community facilities. Our criminal justice system—the laws themselves, how they are enforced, how courts treat defendants—ensures the imprisonment of millions of black males, young and old, giving us the highest incarceration rate in the world (save perhaps China),

described by some as slavery redux. The racism at play in these systems, and more—cogently characterized as "institutional racism"—operates differently and more subtly than classic one-on-one discrimination and violence.

Change is needed, which will only come via greater awareness and understanding of the system, as well as creative organizing. Many organizations are beginning to see the larger picture, stressing the interconnections between systems and the need for fundamental change. One example: to deal with the shockingly high rate of student turnover in schools located in many low-income and minority areas (ranging from 50 to 70 percent a school year, which leads to high drop-out rates, poor student performance and teacher dissatisfaction), we need to understand that housing instability is the leading cause of school instability. We planners know how to create and strengthen neighborhood and housing stability, how to make sure forced mobility caused by public programs—HOPE VI, code enforcement, eminent domain, etc.—is timed to occur, if it cannot be avoided, in between school years and not in the midst of a school year, which produces the most damaging impacts. Bringing housing reform and school reform groups together around a common analysis and remedial program is the kind of collaborative work needed in many areas: housing and health, employment access and housing development, homelessness and the criminal justice system, to name just a few.

The many Occupying demonstrations across the country could advance a giant step by expanding their focus on inequality to embrace ending our country's historic pattern of racial hierarchy and white privilege.   P²

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and jobs, but it is much more than a short-term remedy. Occupation of land has been used successfully by the Landless Worker's Movement of Brazil, the shack dwellers of South Africa and the sidewalk sleepers in Mumbai, to mention only a few recent examples. It has often been a direct response to state-sponsored urban redevelopment programs ("slum clearance") and private real estate developers who evict tenants so they can create new luxury enclaves. In the U.S. during the Great Depression, people thrown out of their homes founded new settlements (known as Hoovervilles) and organized groups to reclaim homes and farms after banks and landlords evicted the tenants. In the massive housing abandonment of the 1970s, squatters and homesteaders took over vacant buildings and when landlords, banks and insurance companies walked away from entire neighborhoods, local people organized to take control of them. For that matter, today's occupiers also draw on the legacies of the lunch counter sit-in movement of 1960-61 that desegregated restaurants across the South and the earlier sit-down strikers of the 1930s who occupied their factories, along with international counterparts ranging from Italian auto workers in 1919-20 to present-day workplace occupation movements from Argentina to Korea. In sum, occupation is part of a deep historical process of achieving democratic control over land and basic human rights.

So where do progressive urban planners and community activists fit in this movement?

Sadly, the urban planning profession remains by and large silent on the major issues of the day. Even worse, it fails to recognize its contribution to the problems. The professional mainstream was a vocal supporter of government housing policies that promoted homeownership as the solution to the housing problem, ignoring the deep racial and economic inequities in the housing market and society. Planners touted the benefits of "growth" (smart growth) and "economic development." These free-market myths covered over the catastrophic secondary mortgage market, subprime crisis and over-leveraged housing that led to the devastation of neighborhoods and displacement of many working people. Many planners, and the related professions of architects, designers and engineers, limited their focus to the areas of their expertise—the built environment and local places—but ignored the big issues of economic equality, social justice and the tyranny of global capitalism.

Occupy Wall Street was born at the very heart of the city planned in the image of global capital. The city's professional planners can take credit for having helped to design the Wall Streets of the world as sacred enclaves for the wealthy, with virtual and actual walls preventing ordinary people from witnessing the financial transactions that so seriously usurped their own economic livelihoods. Particularly in New York City, official planners have followed the mythical notion of "highest and best use" to facilitate the creation of huge high-rise enclaves around the centers of financial capital. These exclusive districts are made possible by the extravagant surplus profits from Wall Street and, thanks to zoning and local fiscal policy, very little of that surplus ends up providing homes for those that need them the most.

Most planners today accept as a given the neoliberal principle that no public funds should be spent on public parks. Planners helped create Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan, a "privately owned public space" made possible through zoning incentives. Ironically, through an oversight on their part, they failed to require that this particular park had to close at dark, thus opening up the way for the two-month OWS occupation. The OWS protesters have not only threatened to violate the sanctity of private property and capitalism, but they are also challenging the distorted notion of "public space" that planners have promoted through "public-private partnerships." Clearly, in this scheme of things, it's the 1 percent, the private partner, who is the controlling partner.

Progressives in planning and the design professions who want to

The Tactic of Occupation and the Movement of the 99 Percent

By Jonathan Matthew Smucker

If we are to launch from a *moment* to a *movement*, we will have to do two things. We will have to broaden the "us." And we will have to win in the arena of values, and not allow ourselves to be narrowly defined by our tactics.

On September 17, 2011, a few hundred New Yorkers set up an encampment at the doorstep of Wall Street. Since then, Occupy Wall Street has become a national and even international symbol—with similarly styled occupations popping up in cities and towns across America and around the world. A growing popular movement has fundamentally altered the national narrative about our economy, our democracy and our future.

Americans are talking about the consolidation of wealth and power in our society, and the stranglehold that the top one percent has on our political system. More and more Americans are seeing the crises of our economy and our democracy as systemic problems that require collective action to remedy. More and more Americans are identifying as part of the 99 percent and saying, "Enough!" This moment may be nothing short of America rediscovering the strength we hold when we come together as citizens to take action to address crises that impact us all.

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This is a revised version of an article that was originally published at *BeyondtheChoir.org* on November 10, 2011—four days before the police raid and eviction of the Occupy Wall Street encampment at Liberty Square (aka Zuccotti Park).

Occupation as Tactic

It behooves us to look back and examine why this particular tactic of physical occupation struck such a nerve with so many Americans and became a powerful catalyzing symbol.

We need to consider what the physical occupation has meant to the dedicated people occupying on the ground. Within Liberty Square there was a thriving civic space, with ongoing dialogues and debates, a public library, a kitchen, live music, general assemblies, more meetings than you can imagine, and all sorts of activities. In this sense, *occupation* has been more than just a tactic. Many participants have been attempting to consciously prefigure the kind of society they want to live in.

But occupation is also a tactic. A tactic is basically an action taken with the intention of achieving a particular goal, or at least moving toward that goal. In long-term struggle, a tactic is better understood as one move among many in an epic game of chess (with the caveat that the powerful and the challengers are in no sense evenly matched). A successful tactic is one that positions us to eventually achieve gains that we are presently not positioned to win. As Brazilian educator Paulo Freire asked, "What can we do today so that tomorrow we can do what we are unable to do today?"

By this definition, the tactic of physical occupation in the case of Occupy Wall Street was enormously successful, almost overnight. At least for a moment, we subverted the hegemonic conservative narrative about our economy and our democracy with a different moral narrative about social justice and real democratic participation. We are significantly better positioned than before to make bold demands, as we can now credibly

claim that our values are popular—even that they are common sense—and connected to a social base.

Occupy Wall Street as "Floating Signifier"

The primary reason the tactic of occupation resonated so far and wide is because it served as a symbol about standing up to powerful elites on their own doorstep. To most people, the "occupy" in "Occupy Wall Street" essentially stands in for the "F" word! Millions of Americans were waiting for *someone or something* to stand up to Wall Street, the big banks, the mega-corporations and the political elite. Then one day, a relatively small crew of audacious and persistent New Yorkers became that *someone or something*—became the catalyzing symbol of defiance we'd been waiting for.

Occupy Wall Street has served as something of a *floating signifier* — amorphous enough for many different kinds of people to connect with and to see their values within the symbol. Such ambiguous symbols are characteristic of new populist alignments. Many objects can serve as the catalyzing symbol, including actions (like the occupation of Tahrir Square or the Wisconsin State Capitol last spring), individual politicians (quintessentially Juan Perón

Occupy LA. *Photo by Marie Kennedy*

in Argentina) or even constructed brands (such as the Tea Party). This phenomenon can be seen in all kinds of broad political alignments, across the ideological spectrum. In all cases, though, a degree of ambiguity is necessary if the symbol is to catalyze a broad alignment. If the symbol's meaning becomes too *particular*—too associated with any one current or group within the alignment—it risks losing its powerfully broad appeal.

It's important to note that although the signifier is *floating*, it is not *empty* of content. It has to be meaningful enough to resonate. Moreover, different symbols tend to pull things in different directions. Candidate Barack Obama as floating signifier, for example, pulled a lot of grassroots energy into what has turned out to be an establishment-reinforcing direction. Occupy Wall Street as floating signifier, on the other hand, seems so far to be pulling a lot of establishment forces in the direction of the fired-up, social justice-oriented grassroots.

When a challenger social movement hits upon such a catalyzing symbol, it's like striking gold. One might even argue that broad social movements are constituted in the act of finding their *floating signifier*. Hitherto disparate groups suddenly congeal into a powerful aligned force. Momentum is on their side and things that seemed impossible only yesterday become visible on the horizon.

It becomes imperative, then, for the forces defending the status quo to tarnish the challenger movement and its symbols—to destroy their popular appeal. This tarnishing strategy is accomplished by *nailing down the floating signifier*—by fixing it to particular meanings, associating it with particular "kinds of people" and narrower frameworks so that it can no longer function as a popular symbol. This is the phase we find ourselves in right now.

Expanding the "Us"

In this epic battle over values and ideas, our opponents have quickly mounted a sophisticated public relations offensive to nail down the floating signifier and negatively brand the emerging movement. They are caricaturing, stereotyping and "otherizing" the most visible actors—the occupiers—in order to inoculate more Americans from identifying with "the 99 percent," and thus, with the movement.

"Character assassination" is a strategy that tarnishes a person's reputation so that no one will listen to anything he or she has to say. It can be used against groups and movements, too. When New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg attempted to "clean Zuccotti Park" (on October 14, 2011), he was making the first move in an ongoing character assassination campaign that has not ceased. Bloomberg and others have thrown everything in the book at us.

In the face of a character assassination campaign, our task and challenge is to *expand the "us."* Our opponents want to portray the movement as *a particular kind of person doing a particular thing* (e.g., "dirty hippies"). Thus, it's critical that we continue to bring *more kinds of people,* visibly engaged in more kinds of things, into the movement. The 99 percent movement has to be more than a protest, more than an occupation, more than any given tactic and more than any "type" of person. We must not allow ourselves to be typecast.

The good news is that there's already a lot in motion to buck our opponents' strategy. Since September 17, the "us" has expanded exponentially. The movement has become far broader than those who have been able to participate in physical occupation. The 99 percent movement is Elora and Monte in rural West Virginia who sent hand knit hats to occupiers at Liberty Square. It's 69-year-old retired Iowa public school teacher Judy Lonning who comes out for Saturday marches in Des Moines. It's Nellie Bailey, who helped to organize the Occupy Harlem Mobilization. It's Selena Coppa and Joe Carter, who marched in formation to the New York Stock Exchange with forty fellow 'Veterans of the 99 percent.' The 99 percent movement is everyone who sends supplies, everyone who talks to their friends and families about the underlying issues, everyone who takes some form of action to get involved in this civic process.

We are moving in the right direction, but we must keep expanding the "us."

Tactic, Message, Movement

Several weeks into Occupy Wall Street (and occupations in other cities), we saw more and more news stories focusing on the physical logistics of occupation,

including the problems and challenges. News outlets presented the tactic of occupation as if the tactic were the message and the movement itself. And our opponents made some headway in negatively branding occupation and occupiers.

To navigate this challenge, it is important that we recognize a few things about our relationship to the *tactic* of physical occupation:

- It accomplished more than any of us imagined.

- It is incredibly resource intensive to maintain.

- It may not serve us forever.

- We will have to come up with other popular expressions of the values of this movement.

We have to distinguish conceptually between our *tactics*, our *message*, and our *movement*. Of these three, our *tactics* should be the thing we are *least* attached to. In oppositional struggle, it is critical to maintain the initiative; to keep one's opponents in a reactive state. This is not accomplished by growing overly attached to any particular tactic—no matter how well it worked the first time—and thereby doing exactly what our opponents expect us to do.

Admittedly, it's a lot easier to conceptualize the need to be innovative and keep our opponents on their toes than to actually come up with the right thing at the right moment. Moreover, it's wrongheaded to get caught up in the elusive search for the perfect silver bullet tactic. Movements are, more than anything else, about people. To build a movement is to listen to people, to read the moment well and to navigate a course that over time inspires whole swaths of society to identify with the aims of the movement, to buy in and to take collective action.

"Occupy Wall Street" is the tactic that propelled a movement for social justice and real democracy onto center stage. It has served as the initial catalyzing symbol. Hopefully ten or twenty years from now, when we look back at all we've accomplished together, we'll credit Occupy Wall Street as a critical *moment* that helped to spark and then build a lasting *movement*. However, if we fail to find other successful tactics—and other popular expressions of this movement's values—we will be pronounced dead as soon as the tactic fades.

Fortunately, Occupy Wall Street—and the *tactic* of occupation—is neither the primary *message* nor the *movement* itself. And, fortunately, we don't have to invent the message for the movement from scratch.

"We are the 99 percent" has become a core message of this burgeoning movement. It emerged in tandem with the deployment of the captivating tactic of occupation. The framework of *the 99 percent* accomplishes a number of important feats:

- *The 99 percent* frames the consolidation of wealth and political power in our society—the central grievance of this movement and a central crisis of our times.

- *The 99 percent* frames a class struggle in a way that puts the one percent on the defensive (whereas the common accusation of "class warfare" has somehow tended to put a lot of people in the middle on the defensive).

- *The 99 percent* casts an extraordinarily broad net for who is invited to join the movement. Most everyone is encouraged to see their hopes and dreams tied to a much bigger public. Thus it frames a nearly limitless growth trajectory for the movement.

- *The 99 percent* even leaves room for the one percent to redeem itself. There are many striking cases of "one percenters" speaking out as defectors who are as vocal as anyone that the system is broken and needs to serve the 100 percent.

The 99 percent meme is a real winner. It points the way toward a necessary expansion. It encourages us to not just act on behalf of, but alongside, the 99 percent; to look beyond the forces already in motion, to activate potential energy, to articulate a moral political narrative and to claim and contest our culture.

No framework will automatically deliver without a lot of hard work and smart decisions. Thankfully, there's a whole new generation of leadership stepping up to do just that. Together we can turn this moment into a movement that's here for the long haul.   P²

What Can We Do in Public?

Lessons from Zuccotti Park

By Manissa McCleave Maharawal

Before Zuccotti Park was Occupy Wall Street, before it became the site of the largest protest movement the United States has seen in years, it was just a small, mostly concrete park in the Financial District. If the weather was nice, people from the surrounding buildings would eat lunch there, but mostly the park was used as a shortcut from Broadway to Trinity Avenue, a diagonal path in a city of grids. This all changed on September 17, 2011, when a group of people declaring itself "Occupying Wall Street" unrolled tarps and sleeping bags and began to live collectively in the park. In that moment, this "public" space became a real, as well as symbolic, space of dissent and protest, one that pushed the boundaries of what *activities* and *practices* were possible in public.

The first time I went to see Occupy Wall Street I couldn't even find Zuccotti Park. I biked over the Brooklyn Bridge and somehow ended up at the Ground Zero con-

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Occupy photo: Gabriel Fumero

struction site, a place that always leaves me with a deep sense of sadness not only because it is where many people died, but also because it now seems like a testament to imperialism, war, torture and oppression. One of the ways that these oppressions have been manifested here in New York City is through the increased militarization of our public spaces through measures such as increased policing, surveillance and new public safety regulations. This increased policing has also been used to silence dissent as the police use tactics from counterterrorism training against protesters.

All in all this has meant a normalization of the ways we are silenced when we express dissent. Maybe this was what was most impressive about Occupy Wall Street and the broader Occupy movement it engendered: that people came together in streets and public parks not to protest any one thing in particular but to express their frustration and dissent, along with their hopes, dreams and wishes. They came together to do this in public day after day, and in doing so, a set of street politics was created, re-created and enacted every day on the ground, in the park. In this way, at the beginning, Occupy

Wall Street was more of a space than a movement, a space of radical imagination and radical possibility.

But what was also key to this movement and to its successes was the fact that people were living in the park, "occupying" it, and that through the *activity of occupying* people had to reproduce their everyday lives in public. This meant that the fundamentals of daily life happened in the park: people slept there and ate all their meals there, read books from an on-site library, did art, made music, worshipped, practiced yoga and received medical care. Through this *public practice of collective living,* Occupy challenged the range of activities and practices we are allowed to do in public and in doing so challenged the political possibilities of public space.

Occupy's uses of public space present themselves as a challenge to relations of private property and in doing so create a new set of politics of public space. Through this challenge, the lines between private and public space are always and necessarily redrawn. Occupy then forces us to rethink some of our fundamental categories, categories such as private property, public space and representative democracy.

When we think *with* this logic of Occupy, that is, with a logic of direct democracy and occupation, we are forced to think about public space differently. This rethinking is also a reimagining of space: it asks about the conditions under which people can assemble and what it means to be political in space.

One of the lessons we learned from Occupy is that by reimagining the use of public space, living publicly and collectively and determining our uses of this space collectively (through direct democratic self-governance), we produced something that the state found fundamentally very threatening. Why else would Occupy Wall Street have been brutally evicted in a midnight raid for the crime of illegal camping? What we learned is that to challenge the agreed-upon uses of public space is to also challenge the legitimacy of the state that mandates these uses. Challenging the legitimacy of our undemocratic and repressive state was, of course, precisely one of Occupy's explicit aims.

These radical politics at the heart of Occupy Wall Street may also be thought of as an invitation, or a challenge, to urban planners and advocates of public space to rethink their own practices and roles in the production of these spaces. What would it mean for planners to take seriously the radical political ideals of Occupy? This challenge is manifold. First, there needs to be a realization that a protest like Occupy cannot be planned into existence, and that the way Occupy utilized public space was fundamentally

and inherently opposed to centralized state planning. This was part of Occupy's critique of the state and of the status of public space in New York City: not only are there not enough spaces for people to assemble in public, but the uses of these spaces are determined and mandated by those other than the users. This is the second challenge that Occupy poses to our conceptions of public space and planning: the power relations between those who plan public spaces and those who use them must be radically

dismantled. What would a directly democratic planning process look like? What would a consensually planned space be? Can we imagine an urban planning process that directly challenges state power? How can planners use their positions of structural privilege to empower a more collective, horizontal and consensual determination of spaces for social and political life?

These, I believe, are the important questions that Occupy raises through its "spatial politics." Most of the occupations around the country, and world, have now been evicted and the reasons for these evictions have much to do with this radical imagining of what public and

collectively produced space could be. In New York City, the occupation in Zuccotti Park was evicted for violating public camping provisions. We were told that this was an issue of public safety, a claim that raises questions: safety for whom, and from what? Was Occupy evicted because it was a safety concern or because through its existence, through its form and structure, it fundamentally challenged relations of power and private property on which a capitalist system relies?

As people in the Occupy movement think about the possibility of "re-occupation," they make lists of public parks and privately owned public spaces. They think about what tactics it would take to defend the occupation of these spaces from the cops, who, wearing riot gear, will inevitably come to evict the occupiers. These discussions dovetail with discussions of what sort of "mutual aid" can be provided at a re-occupation, what sort of food services, health services and other services can and should be available at a re-occupation. These discussions sometimes feel surreal. On the one hand, people talk about how to provide and care for each other, and on the other hand, they talk about the violent response that this caring, this collective living, will garner from the state. The questions that these conversations should open up for planners and those interested in public space are fundamental ones: what is public space for and what do we imagine its role to be in creating a radically democratic and participatory society?   P2

Occupy Nowhere

OWS after the Eviction

By Samuel Stein

Samuel Stein is a tenant organizer in New York City and a graduate of Hunter College's Urban Planning program.

In the last issue of *Progressive Planning,* I reflected on the symbolic language of Occupy Wall Street's various reclamations of space:

> Each site of struggle suggests a different narrative about our movement. "Occupation," initially a tactic in the broader strategy of claiming a space to question the logic of capital, has now taken on a life of its own and become a de facto strategy. This movement is becoming as much about reclaiming public space as anything else. Occupy Wall Street's implicit demand is a return to public control and ownership over land, no matter its formal ownership structure or tenureship.

I wrote these words in October of 2011, as Occupy Wall Street was gaining momentum and expanding beyond

its home base in Liberty Plaza/Zuccotti Park. I did not know that just one month later we would be evicted, pushed out in a police raid described as "militaristic" by both NYPD critics and supporters. After a few early winter battles to reclaim new homes for our movement, largely focused around Trinity Church's massive real estate holdings in Manhattan, Occupy Wall Street conceded that it was homeless. We held "soft occupations" of various sites, taking them over subtly and for limited times. The use of 60 Wall Street was one such de facto occupation, where OWS strategists used the building's privately owned public lobby as a full-time meeting space. Other similar occupations occurred in the halls of public and private universities, where students congregated and then simply did not leave. And in the style of such local militant organizations as Picture the Homeless, we occupied vacant homes, taking over at least one foreclosed property (and probably more), and set them up as proper homes for those who needed them. Lacking a permanent space, Occupy Wall Street was nowhere in particular, and therefore everywhere.

This dilemma—the simultaneous disappearance and ubiquity of the "occupation"—forced Occupy Wall Street to become more like other popular movements of recent decades. It came to be about everything at once. It moved from place to place and campaign to campaign, sometimes strategically and sometimes opportunistically. Like the "anti-globalization" movement before it, decentralization and universality were both defining strengths and weaknesses.

The end of the big public occupation was, in a sense, a liberation from space that allowed the movement to clean house, giving us the time to finalize our long debated Community Agreement, coordinate between bases with an "Occupy road trip," publish our thoughts and artistic expressions and debate the way we want to publicly return in May.

At the same time, it robbed Occupy Wall Street of some of its vitality and urgency. Occupy Wall Street was no longer as inviting as it once was; meetings and events were dispersed throughout the city, and coordinated primarily on the internet. There were fewer public actions, and the confrontational culture that thrived in the fall was forced into hibernation by both the ele-

ments and the dispersal of OWS's planning capacity. Like many other political and social movements, Occupy existed primarily in the ether: in meetings, in publications and in sporadic outbursts of protest.

OWS, Homesteaders and Renters

During the Liberty Plaza/Zuccotti Park days, the situation of Occupy Wall Street came to approximate that of American homeowners. We created a home; we cleaned and cared for it, and were proud of the space we had built; we fought off those who questioned our claim to the land; and as much as we felt ownership over it, we knew it was really owned by banks and financiers. In setting up a home, defending it and ultimately losing it to the bank and the state, we mirrored the national dialogue around housing, foreclosure and the financial crisis.

In our displacement and wanderings, however, we came to look like more typical New Yorkers: renters. People who move, and are all too often displaced from site to site; people whose tight budgets are consumed by rent payments; people without equity in the places they live.

Our politics have yet to catch up with this shift. Occupy Wall Street's housing actions continue to be focused largely on homeownership, eviction prevention and single-family home occupations. We have reclaimed vacant properties, marking bank foreclosed properties as "occupied territory." We have shut down foreclosure auctions with the peoples' mic and spontaneous gospel singing. This makes sense: the financial crisis that spawned Occupy Wall Street grew out of a mortgage crisis, and its most visible target was low-income homeowners.

Despite the relatively low proportion of homeowners in New York, the city was still hit hard by a wave of foreclosures that correlated closely with race. African-American, Caribbean and Latino neighborhoods face the greatest carnage. That said, New York is a city of renters, with about two-thirds of residents living in homes they do not own. Renters in New York City have a median income one-and-a-half times less than homeowners, and one-third of renters pay at least half

or of their household income in rent. For good reason, the city has a longstanding tradition of militant tenant organizing, rent strikes and progressive rent regulations.

Standing Up Against Predatory Equity

Now that Occupy Wall Street has come to resemble renters more than homeowners, it is perhaps time for the movement to more seriously consider the ways we can stand with tenants facing the hardships of this brutal economic crisis: evictions, harassment, hazardous building conditions, landlord fraud and rent theft.
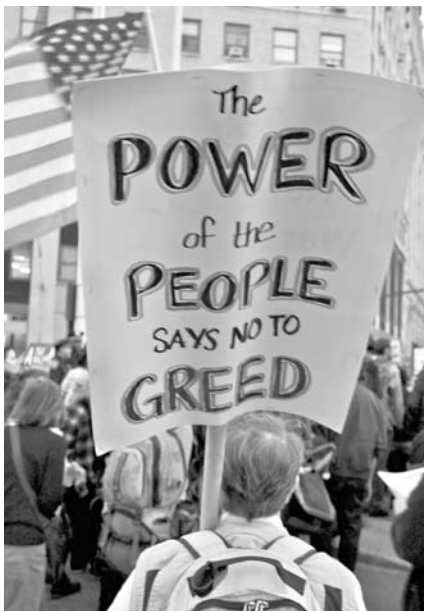
Many of the tenants facing the worst harassment and displacement pressures are residents of buildings bought by "predatory equity" firms at the peak of the housing bubble. Companies like Tahl Propp Equities, Apollo Real Estate Advisors/Vantage Properties and Stellar Management took out enormous loans from private equity firms to buy properties with regulated rents. The only way they could possibly repay

their investors was to destabilize the apartments; the fastest way to destabilize the apartments was to rapidly turn over the apartments from one tenant to another; and the easiest way to ensure high turnover was constant harassment of tenants. In this way, thousands of New York City tenants became victims of lender malfeasance and the dark side of real estate speculation.

Coalitions of predatory equity tenants, however, fought back against their new landlords and organized movements that approximate Occupy Wall Street's attempts to divest from big banks. Tahl Propp tenants in Harlem organized a "Don't Rent Here" campaign, posting signs around their buildings to discourage apartment seekers from renting homes vacated by harassed tenants. Urban American tenants around the city have been taking their landlords to court, fighting back against landlord harassment and negligence. The issue of predatory equity and the tenant-led movement against it are a natural fit for Occupy Wall Street, speaking directly to the problems associated with a finance- and real estate–oriented economy, and the obscene maldistribution of wealth in this city and country.

Occupy Wall Street can add energy, creativity and enthusiasm to the tenant movement, amplifying its voice and spreading its message. But we can also help shoulder the burden of risk for more aggressive actions. In the fall, OWS helped labor organizations move beyond the theater of sanctioned, permitted marches and rallies, staging the kinds of co-organized direct actions that were

long missing from the repertoire of New York City unions. Similarly, we can enable the tenant movement to step outside of the legal constraints of rent regulation and support more militant actions, such as coordinated rent strikes, landlord lock-outs and multi-family building occupations. On May 1st, the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) of New York City will release its preliminary recommendations for rent increases throughout the city. For decades, this has become an annual ritual of predictable confrontation, where tenants and landlords shout theatrically while the RGB hands down predictably high rent increases. By scheduling the RGB vote for May Day, however, the board is handing Occupy Wall Street a perfect opportunity to change the discourse around rent, tenancy and property ownership.

The New York Police Department's November 15th eviction at Zuccotti Park/Liberty Plaza changed the form of the occupation. Physically occupying Wall Street in any sort of visible, permanent way became untenable for the winter. While we must no doubt re-occupy Wall Street on May Day or sooner, we would be remiss to pass up the opportunities presented by our current itinerary. One of Occupy Wall Street's greatest strengths has been the creativity by which we communicate our politics. Last fall, we did this by building a home in a privately owned public plaza and claiming it as a public space for radical organizing. We can do this again by embracing our status as "renters" and scaling up the movement to include more New Yorkers and more of New York City.   P²

Keeping Space in its Place, in the Occupy Movements

By Peter Marcuse

THE Occupy movements (plural, for they are very diverse) have at least three aspects: 1) *occupy;* 2) *Wall Street;* and 3) *public space.* And not all movements cover all three aspects.

Occupy.

What does that mean? Look at the huge list of discussions at the recent Left Forum in New York City that were focused on "Occupy":

Occupy Feminism

Occupy Anarchism

Occupy Consciousness

Occupy Nigeria

Occupy the World Social Forum

Occupy Economics

Occupy Philadelphia

Occupy Gender

Occupying in Latin America

Occupying Philanthropy

Occupy Everything

Occupy Columbia

Occupy Nuclear Power

Occupy the World

Peter Marcuse is professor emeritus at the Columbia University School of Architecture and Urban Planning in New York. To read more, see the Peter Marcuse blog, *pmarcuse.wordpress.com*, #5: "The purpose of the occupation movement and the danger of fetishizing space," and #4: "What space to occupy in New York: a two-site solution?"
Photo: Thomas Good / NLN

Occupy the Non-Capitalist Economy

Occupy to Decommodify

Occupy Main Street

Occupy the White House

I can think of only one phrase that could be uniformly substituted for the word "occupy" in each of these phrases: *actively transform.* It combines the call to *do something,* which is increasingly strongly felt among the young, but also more generally as conditions seem to go from bad to worse, with the idea of *transformation,* not to simply change in little ways, at the edges, or ameliorate conditions, but to change radically, at the roots.

Wall Street.

Here the meaning is much more specific, and uses "Wall Street" symbolically to challenge the locus of economic and political power in the United States and globally. It gives content to the "transform" in "actively transform." In the limited case of New York City, it is congruent with the idea of physically occupying the space that is Wall Street in Lower Manhattan, and the location of the initial movement in Zuccotti Park lends credence to that interpretation. But there is only one instance in which anyone attempted to bring the two together. The day after the eviction from Zuccotti Park, a group of occupiers physically attempted to close down the New York Stock Exchange on Wall Street and was prevented from doing so by the police.

Public Space.

In New York City, occupying public space comes together with transforming economic power. That is not

so in any of the other uses of the term "occupy," but it is an important component of the Occupy movement in a different way. When space is occupied by the movement, it gives it a *physical presence,* a locational identity, a place that can be identified with the movement that visitors can come to, and where adherents can meet. It also has a second function: it is an opportunity to try out different forms of self-governance, the management of a space and, particularly if the physical occupation is overnight and continuous, of living together.

The basic work of organizing the economic challenge and its activities needs to take place somewhere. Being near the site of power has some advantages and disadvantages. It makes addressing power at its home easier because it is closer; but it makes it more likely that the effort will be disrupted for precisely that reason, as the occupants of Zuccotti Park have found, in ways that distract from their fundamental purpose. (I have suggested alternate ways of dealing with the locational problem in my blog, found at *pmarcuse.wordpress.com*.)

For this aspect of occupation, the *model of governance* aspect, the location of the space is not particularly important. There is a long history of efforts at developing model communities in the United States and internationally, from Shaker villages to utopian communities to the alternative communes of the 1960s and 1970s, and their locations have tended to be more rural than urban, more separate from the hurly-burly of the system than at its center. The debate around these communities

has tended to suggest that they have a greater impact on the lives of those participating than on the structures of the society around them, and that is hardly an impact to be denigrated.

In no case, however, is the spatial aspect of Occupy its central theme. Even for the purposes of modeling democratic participation, self-governance cannot be explored in isolation. The question of how to deal with governance decisions about security, for instance, is inevitably tied in with what the police do and do not do; how to deal with homeless participants has to do with housing policy outside the occupied space; health concerns can only be dealt with in limited fashion; education will take place much more outside than inside.

Too Much Focus on the Spatial Aspect?

There is a danger in giving too much attention to the spatial aspect of Occupy, or focusing on it as primarily an issue in the appropriate use of public space, important as that issue may be. Having public space available for the exercise of democratic rights to protest is indeed important, but as a means, not an end—a means to the real goals of Occupy, transformation, and the consequent necessity of organizing as the way to address positions of power in government and the economy. But meaningful public space, while desirable per se, is a means to greater goals; its importance is not confined to its expansion for other public purposes.

The call for freer political use of public space can indeed raise fun-

damental questions about what needs to be transformed. Who makes the decisions as to the use of public space? How transparently are such decisions made? Whose interests do they serve? The call is not only for permitting homeless persons to sleep on park benches but for the ending of homelessness and a Right to Housing for All. Probing even further, we can ask, why just public space? Why not ask the same questions about private space? Space, land most clearly, is a natural resource whose value is created by the collective social action of multiple individuals, in which government necessarily and appropriately plays a major role. Brazil now requires by law that the use of land be to the public benefit, devoted to socially positive purposes. The Weimar constitution in Germany many years earlier had contained a similar clause. If more or different space is required for the adequate exercise of democratic political rights, is there not an obligation of government to provide it, whether it is for the use of public or private space? Whether the space claimed for democratic use is public or private or public-private is a red herring in the larger picture.

What kind of society is ultimately necessary if all spaces—not only spaces, but all of society's resources—are to be devoted to their highest and best social uses, not just to the most profitable ones? This might even open the question of the pros and consequences of a socialist organization of society. Maybe that is the ultimate question to which the practices of the Occupy movement logically lead. Progressive planners should not flinch from raising it. P²

Occupiers and the Homeless

A Challenge for the Politics of Occupation

By Rebecca Schein

THE OCCUPY WALL STREET encampments have been explained and celebrated by many participants as both a practical resource for politics—a space to meet, deliberate and make decisions —and a stage for "pre-figurative" politics, where occupiers visibly and publicly enact the kind of society they would like to build. The decision to share food, books and blankets, and to welcome everybody into the park, is seen as central to the movement's vision of inclusivity and equality as the consensus process and the general assembly.

But a number of thorny questions arise about the relationship between the politics of the occupation and the projection of life in a new and different society. This is nowhere more visible than in the relationship between the voluntary occupiers of public space—people who have homes elsewhere, but have chosen to tent in the park for politi-

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cal reasons—and those involuntary park occupants who have no choice but to live their lives entirely in public—the "homeless." Homeless people quickly became a significant presence in OWS-inspired park encampments in major cities across North America. Perhaps inadvertently, the voluntary inhabitants of the encampments have brought into the foreground a largely unacknowledged social function of cities' remaining public space: for people without homes, public space represents the most important bulwark against the spatial obliteration of their "right to have rights," a shrinking venue for the enjoyment of an individual's most basic right "to be" without molestation by property owners or the state.

The realities of homelessness weave together many of the political and economic grievances that have converged around Occupy Wall Street: the primacy of property rights over human needs; the increasing privatization of public goods and services; the bankruptcy of democratic political citizenship in the absence of basic material security. Many of those dedicated to the park occupations make a direct link between their political vision and the communal, ad hoc provision of basic human neces-

sities in the park—whether food, shelter and washrooms, or books, music and space for recreation and political discussion. For those who emphasize the pre-figurative dimension of the park encampments, communal provision of goods and services demonstrates both a politics of inclusivity and equality, and the illegitimate and unnecessary character of capitalism and the state.

The Politics of Logistics: Meeting Needs in the Park

But what happens when the encampments are unable to meet the diverse material needs of all of its inhabitants? Soon after the OWS encampments were established, participants and onlookers in many cities began to express concerns that they were getting bogged down in the logistics of occupation, preparing and distributing food and mediating disputes within the park. The relationship between social service provision, political strategizing and pre-figurative community-building became increasingly murky, as occupiers variously resisted and succumbed to a language dividing the "real" political occupiers from those drawn to the park by the promise of a meal or a safe place to sleep. And

as substantial energies of the occupation were consumed by the demands of food, shelter and protection from the police, some began to wonder whether the encampments were successfully supporting or fulfilling any clear political objectives.

In the aftermath of the park evictions last fall, conversations among activists turned to the question of re-occupation come spring. Should OWS return to the parks? Identify other strategic sites? Target privatized, semi-privatized, pseudo public or fully state-owned and -managed public space? Six months later, what can we say about the relationship between the practice of occupation and the tactical or strategic objectives of OWS? Where are the points of intersection and divergence between symbolic politics, practical capacity-building and pre-figurative community? Are the practical demands and micro-politics of occupation a distraction from the arduous work of crafting a shared political analysis and vision, or can engagement with the micro-politics of occupation push us to develop the skills, relationships and analysis we might need to advance such a politics?

The implicit logic of the park occupations was the seizure of public space to meet specific unmet social and political needs. But while it may be necessary to use a park as a space for political discussion, or to provide people with a meal or a place to sleep, few would argue that parks are best used to host tent cities, or that people are best housed in park encampments. Likewise, few would recognize a vision of social and economic justice that begins and ends

with the right not to be harassed or evicted by police when sleeping in the park, whether you are there to express your politics or because you have nowhere else to go. The reason for occupying the park is much more focused: to bring into public view the reality that these critical social needs are going unmet, and that OWS is committed to meeting them. These are implicit "demands" of the Occupy movement.

Hard Questions for OWS

Some OWS participants have rightly acknowledged their limited capacity to provide services—including food, clothing, mental health services and treatment for addictions and other chronic illnesses, not to mention safe, stable, long-term housing—adequate to the needs of the homeless people who have become part of OWS encampments. A critical assessment of the capacity of OWS to provide *ad hoc* for such needs in the park should not lead us to conclude either that occupations are a dead end for politics, or that practical engagement with the needs of homeless people will distract or divert energy from more politically productive aspects of occupation. Rather, the practical dilemmas and limitations of the encampments have brought to the fore many of the questions that are central to the advancement of a coherent movement politics.

If we can agree that OWS expresses at its core an objection to the collusion of capital and the state at the expense of meaningful democracy, what role do movement participants imagine for the state in the

provision of public goods, if any? If the reclamation of public space is both a symbolic and a practical strike against the intensifying enclosure and privatization of public goods of all kinds, how might we make tactical use of diverse kinds of public space in order to defend and preserve their public character and function? What would truly democratic provision and management of such public goods look like? Can a commitment to pre-figurative politics include an engagement with existing public goods and services, as well as professional knowledge and skills, as a way of articulating our vision of the kind of world we want to live in?

Unless we engage seriously with these questions, OWS runs the risk of splintering into predictable political factions and/or imploding into a miniaturist subculture, unable to scale up to a level where the real challenges and dilemmas of democracy assert themselves. Tactically, public space occupations represent a real opportunity to engage in a highly visible symbolic politics and to advance our political analysis in a practical terrain where we are less likely to run aground on familiar ideological fault lines. Park occupations are an opportunity to bring our valued public services into the public eye, to visibly assert our objection to the erosion and privatization of public goods that should be preserved and held in common for everyone.

Rather than *ad hoc* book collections in our public parks, then, why not work with public librarians to maintain a mobile state-funded public library in the park? If OWS sees the

public provision of books as an essential feature of its politics, perhaps we can find ways to visibly, publicly demonstrate the irreplaceability of both the common stock of books themselves and the public librarians who enable their collective use. For most occupations, it has been substantially easier to establish and maintain an ad hoc library, often complete with wireless internet access, than to assemble the kinds of complex skills and resources that would enable effective, compassionate, dignified provision of social services to people who are homeless or underhoused. Such resources, to the extent that they have ever existed at all at the state level in North America, have already been substantially degraded and eroded by neoliberalism, and there is no obvious equivalent to the bookmobile when it comes to redressing the multiple exclusions that converge to make homelessness possible.

If OWS is to take seriously the idea that "occupation" both expresses and enables opposition to the injustice of enclosures of all kinds, it must be willing to grapple seriously with the demands of complex social life—meeting people's need for books, food, anti-racism training or a place to sleep.   P²

Seventh Generation: *Occupy Urban Planning!*
by Tom Angotti and Marie Kennedy

see the commons reclaimed and protected are excited that OWS has brought this issue to the fore. But OWS raises fundamental questions that go beyond the narrow issues of physical design and regulation: who has the right to public space and a right to the city? This is where we begin to lose the attention of too many architects and planners. This is where we have to recognize the historic exclusions from public space based on race, class, gender and sexual orientation. Not far from Wall Street, black and Latino neighborhoods are terrorized by police officers who last year stopped and frisked over 600,000 mostly young males, arresting only 7 percent, but clearly undermining basic human rights to the commons. Particularly since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, police surveillance and control of public spaces has grown to proportions George Orwell foresaw in his futuristic tale, *1984*. OWS can and must be an integral part of the historic struggles to end racial apartheids in the city. It can also help highlight the many ways that women, queer people and the disabled have been systematically excluded from public spaces by design, policing and maintenance policies. OWS itself is threatened daily by an increasingly militarized police state, and this is the basis for strategic partnerships all over the city and world.

As urban planners make progress in reclaiming the commons, we can easily reproduce these historic divides. We tend to applaud the creation of more public plazas and help plan and design them. But what if the reclaimed space becomes instead an exclusive domain for the few? What if the public plaza becomes a patio for corporate retail outlets, a free amenity for consumers or, in some cases, a site of obligatory consumption (cafes and restaurants)? What if the space is designed and managed in a way that reinforces the traditional racial and class divides? This is happening because neoliberal public-private partnerships are creating new public places only in those parts of the city that have corporate businesses that can afford to maintain the not-so-public places as amenities. Unless we can clearly say to government that it's not good enough to just create public places, but that they must be accessible, open and democratic spaces, we become part of the problem. We give in to planning's chronic occupational hazard—physical determinism—and fetishize the space instead of caring about people. In this sense, OWS is much more than a struggle for physical space.

Finally, unless we embrace the global significance of occupation and become a part of it, we in the U.S. run the risk of reinforcing the global inequalities made possible by this nation's economic and military might—even though we might end up with a little more space for ourselves.   P²

Occupy Oakland and State Repression

The Struggle for Public Space

By Mike King

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT in the U.S. has used the occupation of public space as a primary tactic, taking disaffection with politics and anger at social inequality and setting up a literal camp of opposition on the front lawn of centers of power. These camps, and the broader movement in the U.S., borrow from movements in Egypt, Greece, Spain, Mexico, Argentina and elsewhere, occupying space in a way that transcends simple protest. Whether in Tahrir Square or Oscar Grant Plaza (in Oakland), the occupation of public space—in the form of camps, speak-outs, general assemblies or the feeding of the hungry—visually and spatially represents a more egalitarian and democratic vision-in-practice, within the existing order. These spaces do more than express grievances; they attempt to offer an alternative to the present state of things. They seek to use public space to occupy the imagination of the city, showing that we can build community, make decisions directly about things that affect our lives and create new structures that meet the needs of the city—structures that we control. It is not surprising that these spaces have been attacked in federally coordinated national raids, or that police have used unconstitutional measures to destroy the movement—or at least evict it from public property.

Mike King is a doctoral student in sociology at the University of California Santa Cruz. His dissertation explores the mechanisms of social control that seek to divide, discredit and destroy the Occupy Movement, from the police and elected officials, to the media and NGOs. His work draws heavily from field experience as an organizer in Occupy Oakland, and seeks to identify the primary techniques of repression and counterinsurgency that the movement will need to navigate as it pursues substantive social change.

The response of local government, local and regional police, Homeland Security, the FBI and the mainstream media, along with the manipulation of non-state actors like certain trade unions and non-profits, is a systematic effort to discredit, disrupt and destroy the Occupy movement, here in Oakland and nationally. This dialectical interplay between protest and repression, between insurgency and counterinsurgency, is one in which the control of public space is central to both sides. As in a chess match, both sides pursue their own strategies in a context where miscalculation creates opportunities for the opponent. When the police raided the first of two encampments, firing tear gas and rubber bullets for hours (critically wounding veteran Scott Olsen in the process), 2,000 people swarmed downtown, re-took the plaza and called for a general strike that shut down the Port of Oakland and much of the city on November 2, 2011, as almost 50,000 came out to march.

Police miscalculations in the course of trying to maintain control of public space led them to temporarily lose control of the city and the Port, building mass support for the movement in the process. An attempt to occupy a vacant convention center on January 28, 2012 in order to restore the services of the camp (kitchen, children's village, medic center, library and more) and provide an indoor space for general assemblies failed, leaving over 300 people in jail, many viciously beaten by police. This miscalculation on the part of Occupy Oakland not only caused it to fail to meet its objective, it has strengthened the voice of a variety people trying to discredit and co-opt the movement, from the mayor, who unsuccessfully called on the national Occupy movement to condemn Oakland, to City Council members, who have called us terrorists, to the media, who has reignited a debate around "violence" in the move-

ment, to non-profits, who are being held up by the city as the legitimate means for pursuing social justice.

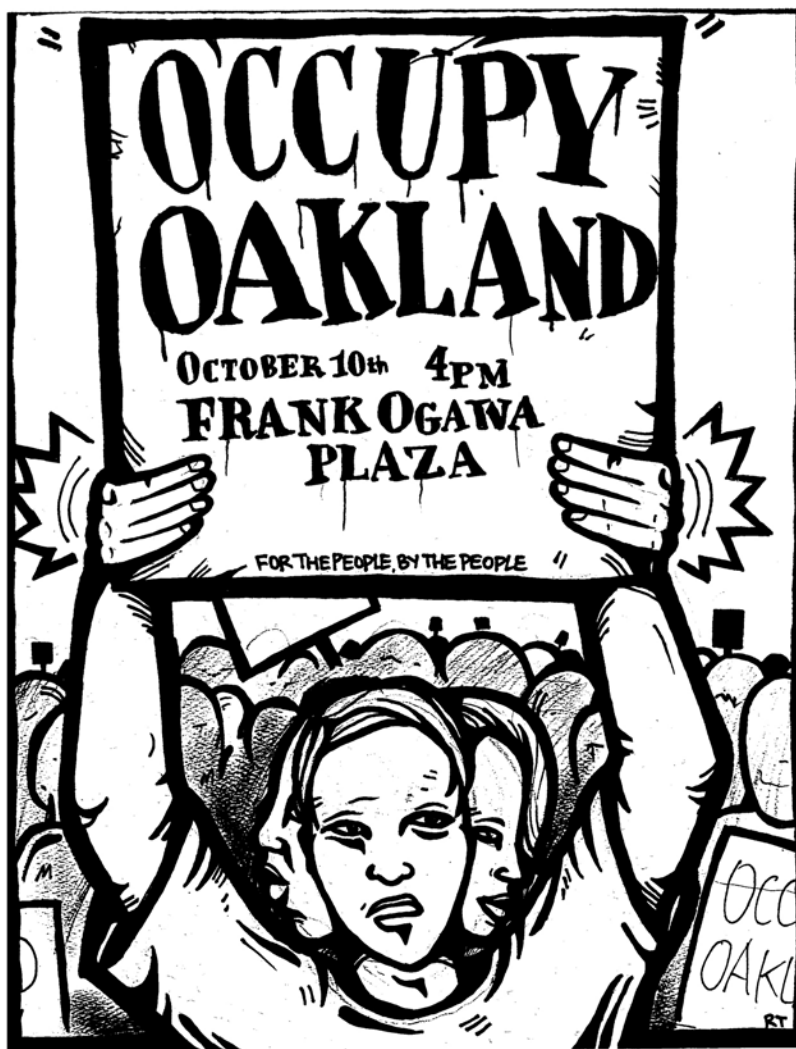## Legitimacy, Public Space and (Counter)Insurgency

The strategies used both to pursue social change and maintain the existing social order often center on control of public spaces and are wrapped up in a complex interplay that extends far beyond riot police and protesters. This spatial contestation itself is enmeshed in struggles for popular legitimacy through which the movement seeks to engender mass public participation. The destruction of the camps and the targeted, largely invisible, raids on those occupiers who congregate or provide food service in Oscar Grant Plaza, along with the subsequent restraining orders on those occupiers, is an effort to attack the movement by pushing it out of public space. The strength of the movement in Oakland has been not only its radical militance, but its ability to attract more moderate protesters to engage in activities like shutting down the Port of Oakland twice. Oscar Grant Plaza has been the place where all of these different groups came and intermingled. One goal of counterinsurgency has been to destroy that physical common ground in the plaza and to drive wedges between groups over tactics, race and politics, making the reestablishment of that common ground an impossibility.

In this strategic push and pull between the movement and the state, the dialectical evolution of insurgency/counterinsurgency

interoccupy.org.

presents opportunities to capitalize on the other side's failures, but also necessitates a progression of strategy on both sides. The police have shifted their strategy significantly in the last five months, learning that their use of repression needs to be portrayed and understood as legitimate so as to not be counterproductive. As previously mentioned, the first eviction of the encampment on October 25 and the overwhelming use of force against protesters prompted 2,000 people to retake the plaza and call for a general strike the

next week, shutting down the Port of Oakland—emboldening the movement. The police learned that their over-aggressiveness was a potential liability. The second raid, part of an eighteen-city coordinated effort led by Homeland Security and the FBI, was preceded by a public relations campaign lasting several weeks during which the police refrained from significant use of violence.

The police have developed more tailored and nuanced tactics and a broader and more patient strategy to

"Stay-away" orders share a logic with the city's much contested gang injunctions. They are both part of a strategy to control public space by making the public existence and free association of people deemed "undesirable" impossible in specific locations, legalizing the profiling of broader populations in the process.

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control public space than those they had in October. The violence and mass arrests visited upon the movement on January 28, as 1,000 people tried to occupy a vacant convention center to make it socially useful, was embedded in a carefully crafted strategy which included media efforts to discredit and pathologize the movement and Mayor Quan's efforts to divide the movement locally over race, and nationally over tactics. When brute force is needed to control public space, or in this case an attempt to make shuttered spaces into public ones, it is now situated within a carefully crafted counter-insurgency program that seeks to legitimate that use of force in order to mitigate bolstering the legitimacy of the movement in the process.

The policing end of this strategy has become more targeted and less publicly visible, directed at individuals who are identified as playing a key role in maintaining a permanent presence in the park after the second raid in mid-November. A handful of raids from late December to early January on members of the vigil and kitchen committees have been followed by weeks of "stay-away" orders being levied as a condition of release from jail against those arbitrarily arrested by police in the plaza or on "Fuck the Police" marches, which were started in response to the raids. These indefinite "stay-away" orders first prohibited occupiers from being within 300 yards of Oscar Grant Plaza. When we started having general assemblies in a different park nearby so that people with "stay-aways" could continue to attend, the D.A.

responded by seeking "stay-aways" from both parks. According to people from the anti-repression committee, which has organized jail support efforts in Oakland, the people who were targeted were not just targeted because they were a reminder of the movement's existence in a public space, but because they were meeting the needs of the poor in that space. Despite legal challenges to the constitutionality of these "stay-away" orders on First Amendment grounds, they are now sought, with the support of the mayor, for anyone from Occupy Oakland who is arraigned.

The Broader Context of Containment

These "stay-away" orders share a logic with the city's much contested gang injunctions. They are both part of a strategy to control public space by making the public existence and free association of people deemed "undesirable" impossible in specific locations, legalizing the profiling of broader populations in the process. Both policing techniques are based on a logic of preemption, making it illegal for "troublemakers" to associate with others in public or congregate in specific public locations. Used originally against people often loosely deemed by police to be gang members, a very similar technique was adapted for the Occupy movement, used first against people associated with continuing to congregate in the park, then used against anyone associated with the movement who had been arrested. Drawing from the policing tools of surveillance, profiling,

harassment and force, and coupled with legal tools of coercion and conditionality, these "stay-aways" are being used to control space by limiting the rights of free speech, association and assembly among targeted protesters, while serving as a threat to the rest of the movement.

The state's concern is not just about people occupying space, but the social and political significance of that occupation embedded in activities such as feeding hungry people and keeping visible the memory of the camp. The public threat of self-determination, represented by mutual aid in public places outside of the sanctions of the state, produces reactions from the city and police that on one level seem absurd, but on another level speak to the state's need to control and manage poor populations such that if their needs are met, they are met in conventional ways, and if they are not met, the poor suffer in isolation, invisible to the general population. From the FBI's conclusion that the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children program was its most "insidious" program, to attacks on contemporary programs like Food Not Bombs in various cities, the state sees the public provision of survival programs by radical groups as a dual threat. These programs meet people's needs in a way that shows that we can take care of ourselves while also delegitimizing the state at the same time. The attack on the Occupy Oakland kitchen shares some similarities. The city's press release on January 28, before the attempted occupation of a large, vacant space for

public use, laid plain the logic just discussed. The press release noted the city's (dubious) history of addressing inequality, (falsely) baited the Occupy movement as "outsiders" and pleaded with concerned residents to donate time and money to various non-profits and stay away from Occupy Oakland. The budgets of these non-profits will likely swell as those in power seek to mitigate the social crisis brought on by speculatory neoliberalism and the radical movement that has arisen in response. The city seems poised to use the non-profits and the media to weather the storm and legitimate police violence against a movement intent on publicly meeting peoples' needs in a manner that both challenges the existing order and makes publicly evident the illegitimacy of the city and the need for fundamental systemic change.

adbusters

The Evolution of the Struggle for Space and Power

This dialectic of insurgency and counterinsurgency has aided in the evolution of the tactics and strategy of Occupy Oakland. After persistent raids on the kitchen and restraining orders on some of its staff, Occupy Oakland has had a series of cookouts in working-class communities of color in East and West Oakland, with programs that included speak-

ers from Occupy Oakland and speak-outs from the community, which have had hundreds of people in attendance each week." The city's preoccupation with the plaza has spurred the movement to address the already obvious need of making stronger connections with Oaklanders in other parts of the city, while building towards massive protests on May 1. The city's use of repression to control public space and contain the movement has pressured the movement to branch out throughout the city in an attempt to grow and transform itself.

Homeland Security, the Oakland police, the mayor and other forces have seen the consequences of radical movements controlling public space—from Argentina to Mexico to Egypt. The Occupy movement has seen those consequences as well and is seeking to transform public space, gain public legitimacy and create a just world. Who will win in this conflict remains to be seen, but the battle for public space will continue to sit in the middle of this struggle, playing a significant role in its outcome.   P²

Riding the Rails in Boston

Occupy Takes on Proposed Fare Increases and Service Cuts on Boston's T

By Chris Sturr

My fellow T-riders! If I could have your attention for two minutes: I promise to keep it short. I am here working with Occupy the T. That's Occupy the T—an offshoot of Occupy Boston that is working to defend public transportation in our city. As many of you have no doubt heard already, the MBTA and the State Legislature are currently planning to make major cuts to your public transportation system, while at the same time raising your fares, making you pay more for less.... We at Occupy the T see their plan as an unjustified and unnecessary backdoor tax increase on the 99%.

It's a tax on workers trying to get to work, a tax on students who need to go to school, a tax on seniors and disabled persons who need to get to doctors appointments or to get groceries.... Tell the politicians to GET the money from the people who HAVE the money. Get the money from the people that TOOK the money. Corporations and rich people profit off of our labor at work every day; now they want us to pay more just to get to work in the first place?! Enough is enough! We at Occupy the T say: No Cuts, No Hikes, No Layoffs! Get the money from the 1 percent!

Chris Sturr is co-editor of *Dollars & Sense,* the Boston-based bi-monthly magazine of popular economics (www.dollarsandsense.org).

Jay Jubilee, whose activist *nom de guerre* alludes to the ancient tradition of debt cancellation, came up with this script, which Occupy Boston activists have been using in our work to fight proposed fare increases and service cuts by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The MBTA, known by Bostonians as "the T," runs Boston area buses, subways, commuter rail and commuter ferries.

It's part of an activist tactic we call "riding the rails." Here's how it works. Three of us get on the last car of a train at the beginning of a line. As soon as the doors close, one of us, usually Jay, makes an announcement, drawing on the script, loud enough for everyone on the car to hear. The others hand out flyers announcing an upcoming public hearing or rally, and copies of the *Boston Occupier*, the movement's print newspaper, which has been running front-page stories about the T service cuts. When we get to the next station, we exit the first car and run to the next one, where we make the announcement again and hand out more flyers and papers. We keep doing this until we finish the whole train—usually at the end of the line—and then we do it back in the other direction.

The reaction has been astounding and inspiring. Most people take the newspapers and flyers, many enthusiastically. When a car is crowded—we try to "ride the rails" around rush hour—people pass flyers and newspapers along to other passengers. On several occasions, people have burst into applause at the end of the announcement (especially when Jay Jubilee delivers it). We get lots of smiles, thumbs up and vocal expressions of thanks; some people are eager find out how to get involved, others are willing to be added to our email list. Sometimes we get

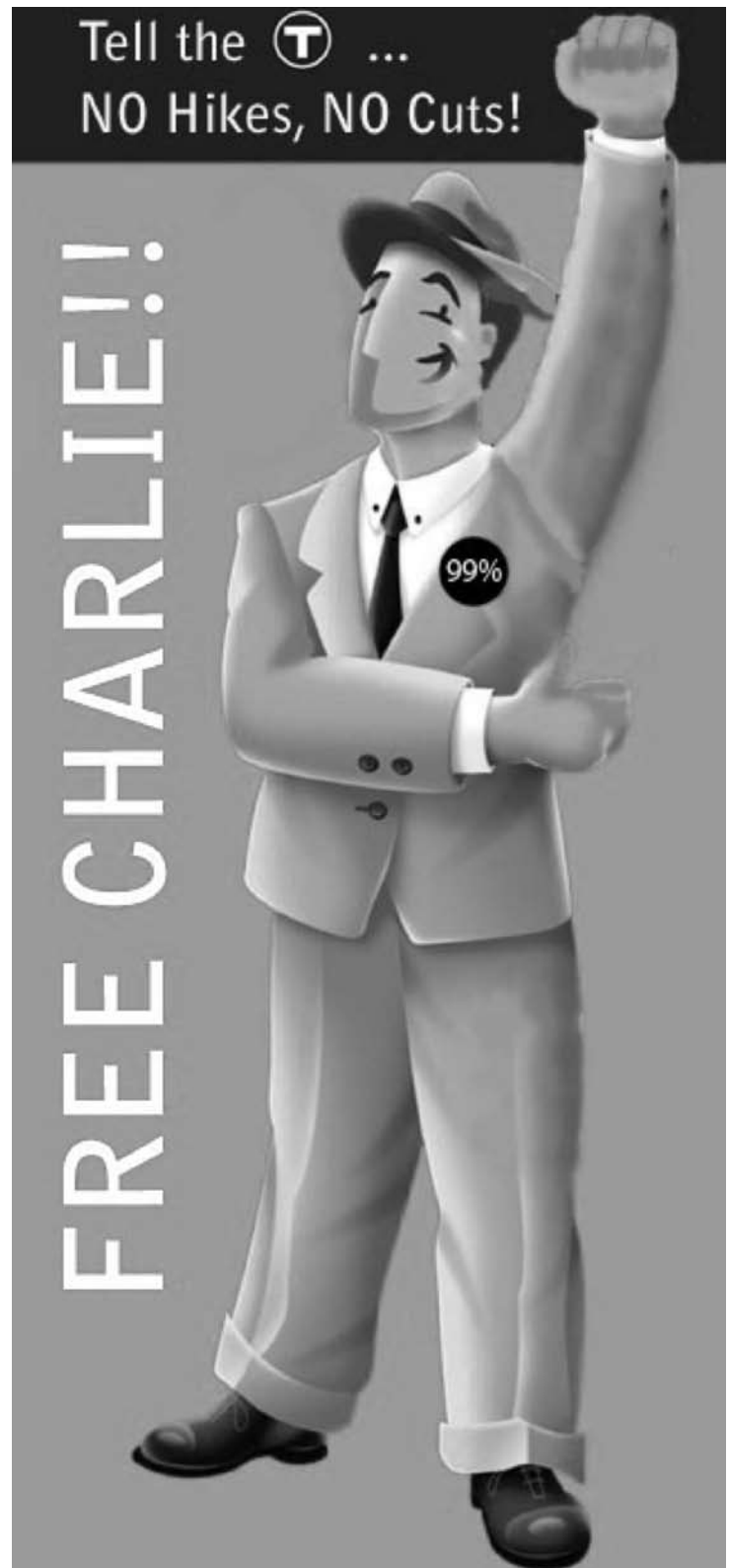into conversations with people about the struggle to resist the fare increases and service cuts to the T.

This and other tactics have already gotten the MBTA to back down from its two original draconian scenarios, but it has proposed a new one that would increase fares by 23 percent and still make service cuts. So, we're continuing to organize—and ride the rails—to publicize a huge rally at the statehouse for a National Day of Action on Transportation on April 4 and to keep the pressure on until July 1, when the Transportation Department's new fiscal year begins and the changes would be implemented. It's hard to know in advance how effective the campaign will be, but this kind of activism is emblematic of how Occupy has claimed physical space as a way of opening up the political and intellectual space we need to revive the Left.

Occupy as Self-Clarification

When Occupy came on the scene last fall, starting in Zuccotti Park but quickly spreading to public spaces in cities and towns across the United States and beyond, skeptics asked: What are their demands? What do these people want? What is their message?

At one level, the "demand for demands" and the "demand for a message" was ridiculous on its face. As Dahlia Lithwick of *Slate* put it, "It takes a walloping amount of willful cluelessness to look at a mass of people holding up *signs* and claim that they have no message. Occupy Wall Street is not a movement without a message. It's a movement that has wisely shunned the one-note, pre-chewed, simple-minded messaging required for cable television as it now exists."

There were lots of signs, and lots of messages, and lots of issues that participants rallied around—starting with inequality and the outsized influence of the financial sector and the super rich "1 percent" on the economy and the political system, but also including a whole range of traditional Left causes, from militarism to racism to climate change. At the same time, though, there has been resistance all along to the idea that the movement and its primary decision-making mechanism, the general assemblies, must coalesce around explicit demands.

Tell the Ⓣ ...
NO Hikes, NO Cuts!

FREE CHARLIE!!!

One of the best explanations of this resistance came from David Graeber, an anarchist anthropologist who was one of the early organizers of OWS and is considered one of the intellectual leaders of the movement. In an interview for a *Washington Post* blog in early October, Graeber said: "If you make demands, you're saying, in a way, that you're asking the people in power and the existing institutions to do something different. And one reason people have been hesitant to do that is they see these institutions as the problem." Just as the people who wondered why the movement focused on Wall Street rather than Washington just didn't get it—the point is that Washington has been captured by Wall Street!—the people demanding demands didn't get it: we don't want different decisions; we want to change how decisions are made, and by whom.

Photo: weeklydig

But there is another explanation for resistance to the demand for demands: the movement needs time—and space—to think. In his 1843 letter to Arnold Ruge, Karl Marx defined "critical philosophy" as "the self-clarification of the wishes and struggles of the age." The Left has been in retreat over the past thirty plus years in the face of a neoliberal onslaught that has only accelerated since the most recent financial crisis. The Occupy movement is, among other things, a collective "time-out" for the Left to take stock, regroup and clarify for ourselves the "struggles and wishes of the age"—how the whole range of issues Occupy has raised are related to each other, how they are related to the central themes of inequality and the outsized influence of finance and the wealthy and how all of this is related to capitalism and alternatives to it.

Claiming physical space has been a way to carve out the intellectual and political space that has been denied to us by a ruling order that has control over the means of communication and education—*hegemony*, to use a term from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. (The one area where ruling elites have had less success at controlling discourse and information is in the realm of new communication technology—the internet and social networking. This explains their central importance to recent popular resistance, from the Arab Spring to *Los Indignados* to Occupy.)

Gramsci drew a distinction between "common sense" —"the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society"—which, on the whole, represents the perspective and interests of the ruling class, and "good sense," which are those parts of common sense that can help us, collectively, tackle the problems we face in our societies and communities. But it takes a lot of individual and collective effort to sort out "good sense" from "common sense," to overcome the ruling elite's hegemony and to clarify the wishes and struggles of the age.

From the Greenway to the Red Line

Boston's Occupy encampment, which lasted from October 3 through December 10, was located at Dewey Square, on the edge of the financial district and across from the Federal Reserve building. Its location on a parcel of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway made transportation and public space relevant from the beginning. For one thing, the Greenway was created out of land made available when the Central Artery was put underground in the project known locally as the "Big Dig," now synonymous with graft, cost overruns and egregious overspending on behalf of passenger automobiles. A largely unaccountable private non-profit, the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, leases the public land of the Greenway and runs it using mostly public funds, mostly in the service of neighborhood business interests. The Conservancy played a role in getting Occupy evicted from public lands, thereby preventing Occupy activists from exercising their rights to free speech and assembly.

There were mixed feelings and opinions about the loss of "camp." While it was clearly a key to the visibility of the movement, it took a lot of energy to maintain, especially as winter approached. Some viewed it as a distraction from other important activist work. Indeed, Occupy Boston has gone in many directions since early December—from anti-foreclosure work, to resisting the push for a "three strikes" law in Massachusetts, to opposing immigrant detentions, among other struggles. But in early January, when the MBTA announced two draconian scenarios for fare hikes and service cuts, resisting the MBTA's plans quickly became high on Occupy Boston's agenda. The issue combined finance and debt, the push for austerity, environmental dangers and the privatization of public resources and space—all key issues for Occupy all along. Plus, transit users are the 99 percent, and there was almost universal opposition to the MBTA's proposals. This was an opportunity for activists to show ordinary people that Occupy "has their backs," and to unite this historically segregated city through struggle in the process.

The MBTA had raised fares in 2004, when it eliminated tokens and introduced plastic fare cards (which make it all the easier to raise fares in the future). In what could be attributed to either cluelessness or hubris, the agency called the new cards "CharlieCards" and adopted as the T's mascot Charlie, the hero of the song made popular by the Kingston Trio in the 1950s. Informally known as "Charlie on the M.T.A.," the song is about a man who is trapped in the Boston subway because he can't afford the five cent exit fare. Many have pointed out the irony of the fact that a song that complains about the high cost of the T was appropriated by the MBTA as part of a fare increase.
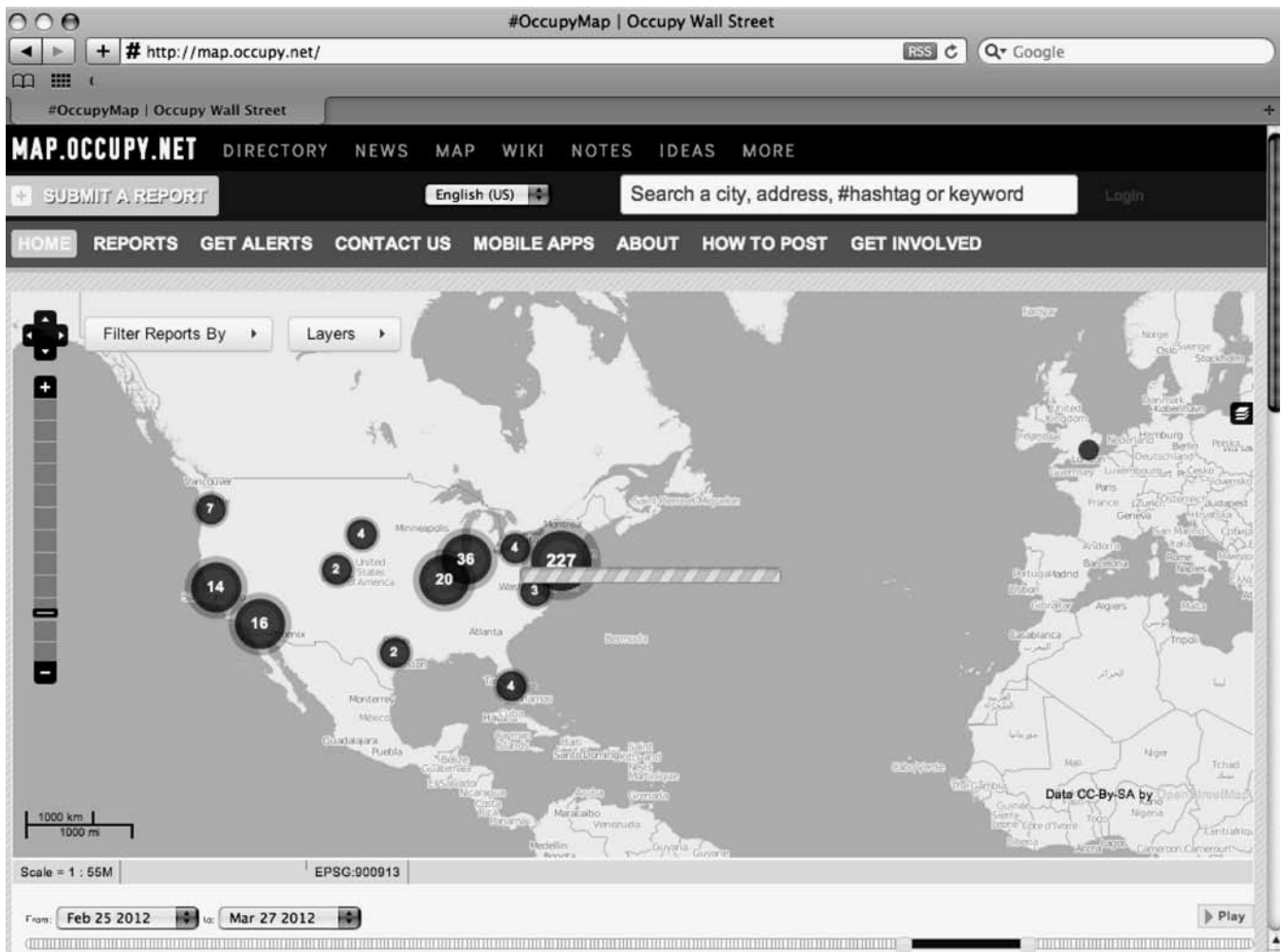
Fewer people know that the song was commissioned in 1949 by Walter A. O'Brien, a socialist mayoral candidate who campaigned on a wide range of Left issues, from public transit to militarism to affordable housing.By adopting and modifying the Charlie graphics from the MBTA's PR campaign and adopting the slogan "Free Charlie," Occupy the T is reappropriating Boston's Left history, continuing the struggle for "a comprehensive, affordable and sustainable transportation plan that works for the 99 percent."

But organizing around the proposed cutbacks has been a challenge and has required political education. The MBTA's financial situation is complicated. Helping people move beyond grumbling about proposed fare increases and service cuts involves educating them about how draconian the cuts are, but also on more arcane matters about where the MBTA's debt comes from. One key source was the State Legislature's 2000 decision to fund the MBTA from a percentage of sales tax; when sales tax revenues faltered, the agency's debt ballooned. The state also shifted $3.3 billion in debt onto the MBTA, most of it from the Big Dig itself, so that public transit users are ending up subsidizing drivers (as well as oil and car companies). There are also complex derivatives—"interest rate swaps"—that the agency took on in the hopes of reducing the debt, but the financial crisis and changes in interest rates have meant that the agency now owes three banks— Deutsche Bank, UBS and JPMorgan Chase—around $26 million more each year to service the debt.

Occupy the T and other organizations, including local labor unions and a T Riders Union that had formed a decade earlier, have conducted research about the origins of the MBTA's debt, staged teach-ins on the MBTA's finances and the public health effects of reducing mass transit and run articles in the *Boston Occupier*.

And then there is "riding the rails." We hope to train dozens of occupiers to ride the rails as a way of communicating with T riders and building opposition to the cuts. Riding the rails also functions as a communication medium when most others have been co-opted, captured or monopolized by the 1 percent and its "common sense." It provides an entree to the necessary political education that participants in the movement, and the general public, will need to resist and develop alternatives to the neoliberal agenda, in transportation and beyond.

Perhaps the most important role of riding the rails, though, is simply to remind people that it's okay for them to talk about matters of mutual concern, and to do so in shared, public spaces, like T cars, public parks and the statehouse. Indeed, it is high time that we do so. P²

The Occupy Map

Put Your Voice on the Map

*By Lea Dyrup Jensen and
Simon Mertner Vind*

Lea Dyrup Jensen and
Simon Mertner Vind are pursuing
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New York.

A FRIEND OF OURS, referring to Occupy Wall Street
after its eviction from Zuccotti Park, asked us,
"The movement is dying, isn't it?" Many outside
the movement, even those who support it, share this
perception. Now, a partnership between students
from Hunter College, ourselves included, and the
TechOps group from the Occupy Wall Street move-
ment is working on a project that will prove that the
reports about the movement's death are greatly exag-
gerated and that the movement is actually growing.

The project is called Occupy Map, a user-based interac-
tive map designed to shed light on the movement's short
but effective history. With millions of protesters around
the world, thousands of events and one hundred dif-
ferent working groups just in New York City, Occupy
Map is also a solution to the compelling need to have an
overview covering past and future events. Many of us

know that a lot of things have been going on during the last six months, but since the major media outlets no longer report the information, many people, like our friend who asked if the movement was dying, think not much is happening. This brings to mind the 1965 Bob Dylan song "Ballad of a Thin Man," in which Dylan asks, "Something is happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you, Mister Jones?" With Occupy Map, we hope all the Joneses will find out what's happening and also join in to tell the story.

How the Map Will Work

Occupy Map will make it possible for everybody to publish real-time reports from Occupy actions worldwide and thus to create a common archive of the moment-by-moment history of the movement. Occupy Map is a user-friendly database where all *occupiers*, hardcore or peripheral, are invited to tell the story

of the movement through videos, text, pictures and tweets. Everyone can browse through the database and find inspiration for a future event; comment on or "like" a video; learn about the latest events through the integrated calendar; upload a professionally-edited homemade documentary or just a 15-second clip from a pop-up occupation; and tweet or read other real-time tweets about the location of demonstrations. At the same time, the map serves as a platform where people from different working groups can connect and find information about occupations, general assemblies or educational board meetings, and to follow up on meetings.

When a user uploads a type of media it will appear as an icon on the Occupy Map at the location where it was recorded, and it will "pop up" when the cursor points on the location. Past and coming events will have a different look. The Occupy Map also has a timeline. If you focus

the timeframe on events and reports around the fall of 2011, for example, you will mainly see a cloud of activity around Zuccotti Park since this was where most Occupy activities were centered. But if you extend the timeframe to include events in all of 2011 and the first months of 2012, you will see that the movement is spreading throughout New York, the U.S. and the world.

We envision that the Occupy Map will serve as a complete virtual and visual reflection of the movement's development over physical space. A fundamental aspect of the movement is to empower people to create real change from the bottom up. It is important that there be physical places for participatory democracy, where people from inside and outside the movement can meet and exchange and develop projects and points of view.

The American philosopher and historian Noam Chomsky emphasized how Occupy Wall Street has created small social systems of solidarity, mutual support, health services and general assemblies—systems that are greatly needed in modern neoliberal American society. According to Chomsky, the next big challenge is to engage the rest of the 99 percent. By developing the Occupy Map, we hope to create a useful tool and virtual place where the 99 percent from all over the world will engage and interact.   P²

The beta version of the Occupy Map (*http://map.occupy.net/*), which is built on the free open source Ushahidi platform developed in Kenya, is being prepared by a partnership between students from Hunter College and the TechOps group from the Occupy Wall Street movement. The project is inspired by the progressive mapping tradition and will be re-launched during spring 2012. The TechOps working group within Occupy Wall Street will maintain and develop the Occupy Map in the future.

Occupy UCLA

Insurgent Spaces at a "Public" Campus

By KT Bender and Andrew Newton

UCLA is ostensibly a public university, but plaques stating "Property of the Regents of the University of California" embedded throughout campus grounds hint at another truth.

IT'S NOT HARD to fathom how the Occupy movement spread to the University of California last fall. Just as the economic issues addressed by Occupy Wall Street did not begin with the economic crisis of 2008, the problems faced by the University of California system are not new—though they've certainly gotten worse in recent years. Tuition has more than tripled since 2000 in what has been the largest and longest sustained sequence of fee increases in fifty years. It is the first time in history that fees paid by students make up a larger portion of the operating budget than state support, and what's worse, students are paying more for less. Class sizes are increasing while undergraduate teaching positions are disappearing. The ballooning administrative body now outnumbers faculty, channeling more money to the top as students, workers, staff and faculty face the brunt of austerity measures.

The university system is adopting the practices of the corporate world it attracts to campuses, complete with a growing propensity for combining private profit

with public risk. In a two-year span starting in 2008, the UC system hemorrhaged $22 billion due to high volatility investments. Bob Samuels, president of the UC-AFT, writes: "Until 2000, the UC investments were one of the highest performers in the country, and they were handled in house by the treasurer, but after 2000, they were farmed out to external money managers, and now the investments have under-performed almost all comparable institutions."

There is little incentive for the administration to address this. At the top of the UC hierarchy are the corporate elite who are appointed to serve twelve-year terms as the Regents of the University of California—some of whom have been using their positions of power to invest the UC's money into firms in which they stand to make personal financial gain. In the wake of massive losses, student money continues to be funneled into venture capital firms that are described by Chief Investment Officer Marie Berggren as "high-risk, high-octane," as if there is nothing to be learned from the past.

A tipping point came when the Regents developed a multi-year plan that would raise student tuition by 81 percent if the state did not increase funding, which was unlikely at best in this time of state fiscal crisis. Given the Regents' questionable financial practices, this proposal came as no surprise to student organizers. Only three days after the UC Regents presented this proposal, a group of protesters on the opposite coast of the country walked into a small park in Lower Manhattan and set up an encampment under the name Occupy Wall Street. As that movement grew, it helped shape our own ongoing struggle at UCLA.

KT Bender is a Ph.D. student in geography at UCLA, studying the role of digital media in transnational solidarity movements in Japan and elsewhere.

Andrew Newton is an student dissident at UCLA and has worked as an ally for social justice causes in Skid Row, Los Angeles; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; the Volta Region of Ghana; and elsewhere.

Insurgent Spaces

The heterogeneous motivations and manifestations of the Occupy movement have been difficult for the mainstream media and even its own participants to pin down, but one of its more salient impacts has been its contribution to the rapid diffusion of occupation of physical space as a tactic in counterhegemonic struggles and, more generally, a resurgence in the use of direct action in American activism. When the Occupy movement converged with the student movement at UCLA, it brought with it the inspiration to revive civil disobedience as a means to protest the pervasive privatization of the University of California system.

The direct actions of Occupy UCLA were also less something new than something we knew. Occupations in the forms of sit-ins, Hoovervilles, building takeovers and so on have helped define the physical character of insurgency in social movements throughout history, and indeed they are not new to the UC system. Nelson Mandela himself claimed that the UC's divestment from South Africa was a major catalyst in the movement to end apartheid in the 1980s and 90s, thanks in part to the sixty-one UC Berkeley students who were arrested after building a shantytown in front of their chancellor's office. In 1993, ninety UCLA students were arrested in an encampment on campus during a hunger strike that managed to successfully turn Chicana/Chicano studies into a full-fledged major. In 2009, students responded to a proposed fee hike by coordinat-

Photo: KT Bender

Photo: William Leibzon

ing a series of building occupations across UC campuses, this time using the distinct language of occupation and popularizing phrases like "Occupy Everything," which would echo through to the broader social movement that was to come. While the student movement of that time was ultimately unsuccessful in stemming fee increases, the resurgence in popularity for the tactic of

occupation helped shape the resistance to a new wave of fee hikes, as well as the long-standing struggle for academic freedom, quality and accessibility in the academy.

Occupy UCLA's first major action involved the takeover of one of the busiest intersections in the United States. Traffic had to be redirected while hundreds of bodies filled the

cross-street and eleven students were arrested. This was followed by the establishment of an on-campus encampment that attracted around 300 people to its general assembly. The peaceful cluster of tents was raided at five o'clock in the morning by over sixty police in riot gear, with a team of administrators looking on as fourteen students were arrested for failure to disperse/unlawful assembly. The administration claimed the twilight arrests were timed so as to "avoid conflict" like that on other UC campuses—the beatings of Occupy protesters assembled to protect a single tent at UC Berkeley, or the brutal pepper-spraying of peacefully protesting students at UC Davis. Word of a protest planned for a Regents' meeting forced a meeting postponement—out of fear, the Regents claimed, of "rogue elements." The meeting was rescheduled as a teleconference between the campuses in order to limit the effectiveness of a protest, but concerned students across the state were not deterred. A statewide coordinated action successfully shut down each location in the teleconference by first filling the allotted sixty seconds of public comment per person, then using the "mic check" tactic to disrupt the meeting using student voices. When the Regents shuffled into a private back room to conclude their meeting, students declared a "People's Regents' Meeting" to discuss the future of our university.

Tents, by then a signature of the Occupy movement, were prohibited by a campus policy forbidding "temporary structures," so we playfully and pointedly referred to them as "teaching aids," covering them with signs meant to educate about the crisis of the university and inspire self-reflection about our positions in its power structure. A rotating cast of people used a series of encampments as sites to converse with curious onlookers, host autonomous classes called "teach-outs," discuss personal and political matters in free-form dialogues and determine our direction and values in general assemblies. A central mission was to educate about the politics and finances of the UC system, but this did not preclude discussion and organizing surrounding the militarization of the campus, student homelessness, food sovereignty, racism, feminism and how we could best act in solidarity with others engaged in struggles for democracy. The conversations shared there reflect an overarching theme in all our struggles: the reclamation of a public institution for the people it was intended to serve.

Beyond Physical Space: The Next Phase

Forcing issues to be addressed through the tactic of physical occupation is one of the only remaining options for an increasingly delimited public told when, where and how to speak—a "free speech zone" was delineated in a small outdoor area in the center of campus that many have no reason to venture to. Occupy UCLA has used insurgent physical space as a way to visualize, among other things, the absence of student, faculty and staff input—in short, democratic governance of our public institution. Occupation requires the deliberate disavowal of UCLA policy. The process of physical confrontation and retaliation exposes the power structures that govern access to the UC system through its price tag and apply the same economic pressures to the practices of teaching, learning and research. However,

Photos: KT Bender

while the encampments are of major material and symbolic consequence, they represent only one tactic out of many. Administrative, legal and police intimidation may have been intended to suppress protest, but instead, it has provoked concerned people at UCLA to think creatively about ways to produce different kinds of spaces for critical thought, spaces that force users to question preconceptions and articulate arguments based on values.

While our occupations and arrests gained media exposure for our cause both on and off campus, they were only part of a much broader effort to incite a critical examination of our university's tendencies toward what Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades call "academic capitalism." This is an ideology that is made manifest in the UC through the increasingly common conceptualization of knowledge as a private good, the pervasive mentality and practice that make research about ownership and schooling about credits and degrees. By stressing principles of radical democracy instead of a permanently functioning encampment, Occupy UCLA pushed campus discourse away from one of alternately ignoring and endorsing the crisis of privatization facing the UC. The strategically reductive "99 percent" rhetoric of Occupy Wall Street was less important in the work of Occupy UCLA than language that stressed that education in the UC system and other state schools must be treated as a public good and not a market commodity.

As we move forward into the next phase of the student movement, it is increasingly clear that the space for critical pedagogy, not just the tents, puts the university's values and its lack of democracy and transparency in question. The physical occupations served as visual reminders of crisis to onlookers, but the quality of the insurgent space created there also empowered participants to engage in a strong community that has defined itself not only in opposition to the neoliberal privatization of the school, but also by taking a principled stand for democratic values and academic freedom. It's our hope that through our work we will continue to be inspired by the struggles of people in our communities and around the world and be confident enough to develop or revive creative ways to facilitate a critical reevaluation of the way we practice "the public" without reifying oppressions. P²

British Columbia Planning Students Plan to Occupy

By Rupert Campbell,

Josh Taylor, Debra Rolfe,

and Tamara White

The authors are graduate students at the University of British Columbia School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP).

A S THE OCCUPY movement spread from Wall Street's Zuccotti Park to public spaces around the globe last autumn, students from the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP) were drawn to downtown Vancouver by the tumult and ideas that spilled from the steps of the city's art gallery and across its tented lawn.

Something about this spontaneous and self-propelled encampment spoke to us, not just as concerned individuals, but also as future planning professionals. "What," we asked ourselves, "can planners learn from Occupy?" As the human megaphone bellowed over our heads, we recognized clear connections between the messages of the movement and the issues that planners face every day, particularly our profession's role in entrenching, tolerating or, when at its best, fighting the structural inequality that brought millions of people onto the streets last year. Vancouver has one of the most unaffordable housing markets in the world, and the Occupy movement here brought together struggling families, students, unhoused people and others concerned with the inequalities that are intensified by the demand for homes in our city. The cost of land in Vancouver affects planners at a fundamental level: new development has become politicized and affordable housing is both badly needed and difficult to provide.

Vancouver's Occupy movement also shined a light on more con-crete issues related to our city's urban form, raising questions about public space and rights to the city. Unlike most cities of its size, Vancouver lacks a grand public square in the downtown core. The absence of a truly public gather-ing point was the focus of a 2009 design competition sponsored by

Vancouver Public Space Network, a local NGO, but none of the designs have been implemented. Finally, we found lessons in Vancouver's Occupy experience about how public processes can be more fun, engaging, inclusive and focused on creating community spaces.

Occupy Planning

Inspired by the global Occupy movement and how it resonated with us as planners, a group of SCARP students used two recent conferences to organize open space sessions exploring the theme "Occupy Planning." The first was at the Canadian Association of Planning Students Conference, and the second was at the annual SCARP Student Symposium, both of which took place in February.

Open Space Technology is a facilitation method in which participants set their own agenda, form discussion groups based on topics of their choosing and are free to move between groups at any time. By organizing sessions in this way, we hoped to bring some of the spirit and ideals of Occupy into the formal world of planning conferences, engaging with attendees and generating original ideas.

A key question that arose from these sessions was how Occupy's message could be separated from the tactics and controversies of the movement's campsites. Another crucial question concerned the role of planners in working for the public interest, such that when the public self-organizes to express its dissatisfaction or desires, how can planners tap into this energy and what role can planners play as liaisons to "keep the possible alive?" In using a loosely structured participatory and non-hierarchical approach to elicit ideas, we were reminded how difficult it can be to create coherent messages from a fully inclusive, essentially unstructured process.

Spring has finally arrived in Vancouver, and with it, the potential—indeed likelihood—that the Occupy movement will return to a public space in Vancouver. Our small Occupy Planning group continues to meet, and as the end of the school year draws close, we are beginning to make plans for engaging next year's new planning students in this discussion.

What we learned during our open space sessions echoed the message of the Occupy movement all over the world: this is just the beginning of a very important conversation. P²

Tahrir Square

The Production of Insurgent Space and Eighteen Days of Utopia

By Nabil Kamel

On the morning of Tuesday, January 25, 2011, countless small groups of demonstrators converged towards Cairo's Tahrir (Liberation) Square—the focal point of the largest metropolis in Africa and the Middle East. Similar gatherings took place in several other cities in Egypt. These demonstrations were called by a coalition of opposition groups and were timed to protest police brutality on "Police Day," when the Egyptian government celebrates the "achievements" of its security forces. As more citizens joined in, the gathering in Tahrir Square reached over 20,000 people. By late afternoon, orders to evacuate the square were accompanied by the deployment of anti-riot troops and tear gas. This was still the "good and fresh tear gas, not the deadly one they used in later demonstrations," as one activist put it. By the dawn of Wednesday, the last few hundred protesters retreated—injured, cold, hungry and tired—and the square was cordoned off by massive numbers of security forces.

Later that day, thousands of demonstrators were prevented from entering Tahrir Square by security forces and mobile and internet communications were shut down. Criminals were released from prisons across the country and looted homes and businesses. These actions increased the indignation and anger of most Egyptians, who felt that the state had lost all legitimacy. Throughout Cairo, people took to the streets to seek and exchange news. Street by street, ordinary folks spontaneously organized themselves in "citizen committees" to protect their families and neighborhoods. As calls for a demonstration resonated with more people, opposition groups prepared to retake the square on the "Friday of Rage." They did, and despite heavy casualties, were able to hold on to the square. Police brutality, violence from armed pro-state militia, sniper killings, a passive-aggressive military and speeches with concessions, pleas and threats by an increasingly isolated President Hosni Mubarak failed to thwart the swelling movement and furthered the resolve of Egyptians from all regions of Egypt and from all walks of life. Eighteen days after their first gathering in Tahrir Square, Egyptian citizens ended Mubarak's 30-year rule—an extremely rare event in the over 5,000 years of Egypt as a unified nation.

The account of these eighteen days and of the events following them galvanized world attention and have been chronicled in all major media outlets, blogs and some academic publications. I will look instead at key aspects of the events in Tahrir Square since January 25, 2011 from the perspective of the social movements, anarchism and the actual production of insurgent space.

Root Causes and Grassroots Mobilization

As the situation reached crisis proportions, with a million Egyptians gathered in Tahrir Square (calling for Mubarak's resignation), Obama calls Mubarak: "I think you should prepare a farewell speech to your people." Mubarak: "Why? Where are they going?"

Nabil Kamel is an assistant professor in the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning at Arizona State University. He is extremely grateful to everyone who joined the Egyptian revolution, and is especially grateful to his research assistants who helped organize and conduct interviews, collect data and document events from the first day. All opinions expressed here are his alone.

This joke reflects the longstanding opinion among Egyptians about their former president, Hosni Mubarak, as dim-witted and disconnected from Egyptian sentiments. But this fails to answer the questions of how he could have ruled Egypt for thirty years, why his rule ended now and how it was possible to remove such an entrenched ruler.

There are three factors that allowed Mubarak to remain glued to the presidential seat for such a long time, but with time, each of these factors turned into a reason for his forced removal. First, Mubarak kept a relatively low profile compared to his predecessors. The main logic of his rule was to maintain the status quo and to distance himself from economic policy decisions. This left ample room for his family and friends in the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) to control the country's resources and use them to secure their grip on power through clientelism, legal maneuvers, intimidation and control of the media. Second, Mubarak adopted a relaxed attitude towards secular opposition groups and the media as long as his immediate family was spared from criticism. Having satisfied the modicum of tolerance needed to avoid embarrassing his Western partners in the "War on Terror," he was able to pursue a heavy-handed policing of Islamic movements, which he perceived as the main threat to his regime. The third factor that permitted such a long-lasting presidency was the failure of formal opposition political parties. Repressive practices by security forces, blatant electoral fraud, and thirty years of emergency law stunted public political life in Egypt. Without new cadres and a space for political action, opposition parties lacked an actionable agenda and ossified. This rendered them an ineffective political force and irrelevant to the Egyptian public.

With time, and the regime's self-indulgence and over-confidence, these three factors produced an explosive mixture with a life of its own and beyond state control. The impunity of the president's family and friends from prosecution, their insatiable greed and their reach into all economic spaces spurred anger across classes. Even upper middle-class residents and business elites outside the ruling clique saw their real disposable income shrink and their investments threatened by the manipulation of laws to favor the ambitions of the ruling class. Upper middle-class residents and business elites also, like the rest of Egypt, increasingly felt the threat of

state violence from a police force immune from prosecution. Similarly, the deep disenchantment with the political scene, which in Egypt traditionally fed mainly the ranks of Islamic groups, produced a wide range of opposition groups led by professionals and intellectuals. Human rights groups as well as groups promoting a variety of rights—legal, health, and economic, as well as rights for prisoners—surfaced and gained traction. With Islamic movements receiving the brunt of state repression, secular and worker movements had relatively more leeway. Online bloggers, forums and social media were more difficult to control and were considered entirely harmless by the police. In a televised speech, referring to opposition groups, Mubarak literally said: "Let them entertain themselves." Just weeks before the onset of the revolution, Mubarak's son Gamal ridiculed a reporter who asked him what he thought of youth opposition groups on Facebook. However, a critical factor that shaped the outcome of the revolution was and continues to be the role of the Egyptian military.

Resistance Movements and the Production of Insurgent Space

A rich network of formal, rights-based civic organizations emerged alongside many less formal opposition groups that focused on specific issues or that were workplace-based. The early strikes of mining and textile workers of 1994 in the industrial cities of Egypt were limited in their demands and had weak unions backing them. However, as discontent grew over the last ten years, protests expanded beyond workplace issues and started to address root causes, including government inefficiency, widespread corruption and loss of political and economic rights. For example, in 2000, large demonstrations swept major Egyptian cities in support of the second Palestinian intifada. In 2003, Tahrir Square saw its first occupation by demonstrators condemning Mubarak for his support of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Solidarity committees emerged from these protests and, in 2004, the Egyptian Movement for Change, also known as Kefya! (Enough!), was formed from a grassroots coalition that included over 300 public figures and intellectuals with a wide range of political orientations.

The movement explicitly criticized Mubarak's regime and gained wide popular support for its open oppo-

sition to Mubarak's re-election in 2005. In order to draw more participants, the movement created several subgroups such as Mothers for Change, Women for Change, Youth for Change, Students for Change and Writers for Change, as well as local neighborhood-based committees. These groups sought opportunities for broad alliances and mobilization and supported strikes by judges, universities and workers throughout Egypt. In December 2006, more than 200,000 textile workers in the Egyptian delta organized strikes for six months, followed by strikes of truck drivers, poultry workers and workers in other sectors. These strikes benefited from the participation of grassroots organizations such as Kefaya!, Socialists for Workers Rights and the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the participation of a number of journalists, artists, public figures, intellectuals, professionals, activists from civic organizations and university students and professors.

As protests became more frequent and larger in number they coalesced and stressed the demand for regime change at home. In doing so, they gained further credibility and drew more people. An activist in his thirties who was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood for twelve years until 2007, when he joined Kefaya!, explained the appeal of the movement: "It was the first time in my life I saw posters of Mubarak being ripped and calls for his resignation. It made more sense than the usual protests for burning the Qur'an here or there or complaining about the ban of the veil in France or bemoaning the loss of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. This went to the heart of the problem."

Within this rich and complex institutional web, formal civic organizations and their allied opposition groups played complementary roles. Civic organizations adopted an approach similar to Peter Marcuse's "expose, propose, and politicize" recipe. In doing so, they played a subversive role with professionals, relentlessly documenting and publicizing state violations, from police brutality to corrupt privatization deals. Opposition groups, on the other hand, capitalized on these opportunities to cultivate insurgency skills by documenting the response of security forces recruited, trained, and mobilized to respond to the protesters.

The efforts of this coalition culminated in the initial call for protesting police brutality on January 25

and shaped the insurgent space of Tahrir Square for eighteen days. Despite the wide range of political and class factions in the square and despite a number of protests that exceeded a million people on some days, this coalition was capable of sustaining a high degree of integrity. Tahrir Square was virtually a working city with hundreds of thousands of people eating, sleeping, playing, teaching, debating and, later on, working in the square as well as cleaning and defending it from thugs, security forces and the military. Layers of barricades prevented thugs and pro-state militias from entering the square and were staffed around-the-clock with rotating crews. Volunteer physicians ran field hospitals to treat the injured (ambulances transported the injured to central security headquarters rather than hospitals). Field pharmacies provided improvised remedies for tear gas and medication for people with chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Stages were set and a microphone and loud speaker—a "radio station" —provided outlets for speeches, entertainment, news and debates by public figures, opposition politicians, journalists, artists and the general public during "open mic" hours. Sleeping quarters that started as mere blankets evolved into full-fledged campsites with tents, electricity rigged from street lights and supervised children's quarters. Memorials for fallen martyrs, artistic expressions, songs, dances, poetry and paintings were the spontaneous products of people from all classes and religious backgrounds. "We all danced, boys and girls, peasants and professors . . . we all sang together the good old resistance songs and lyrics of Ahmed Fouad Negm" recalled a Muslim Brotherhood leader.

As one activist that joined the square from the first to the last day told me: ". . . despite police violence, [and] the blood, not knowing what may happen next, these eighteen days were the best days of my life… young and old, poor and rich, the veiled woman and the young girl in tight jeans, Muslim and Christian, we were all equals, brothers and sisters, we ate, laughed, fought and cried together, we protected each other with our lives without having ever met before… I never felt so alive." "It was utopia," reminisced another activist with nostalgia. This euphoria was echoed by everyone I met that camped in Tahrir Square. The production and organization of a harmonious insurgent space the size of twenty football fields, filled with hundreds of

thousands of people with political demands, and resisting ruthless state violence was possible through an extremely high spirit of determination, volunteerism and cooperation with distinct anarchist overtones.

The success and perseverance of this anarchist moment for eighteen days was the product of several factors. The foremost was the simple and unanimous call: "The People Want to Topple the Regime" that resonated with almost all Egyptians, from ultra-orthodox Islamists to rabid soccer fans. This simple call was fundamentally different from other demands. Demands made in previous strikes and demonstrations usually satisfied both protesters and authorities, even if neither fully met their objectives. Protesters were satisfied for winning some gains, and the authorities for retaining their power and bolstering their legitimacy as grantor of rights. The call for overthrowing the regime was what Slavoj Žižek calls an "impossible demand." It is a strategically selected, precise and critical demand that the regime could not meet and leads to a confrontation that can end with only one party standing.

What furthered the resolve of protesters—aside from flagrant mistakes by authorities that are too many to recount in this short essay—was the flat organizational structure in Tahrir Square in which no single group or movement could claim that it represented the square. Without a hierarchical command structure and official representatives, Mubarak's authorities were unable to negotiate and secure a compromise. The absence of a hierarchical structure also encouraged individual initiatives, responsible participation, volunteerism and leading by example.

Another factor that shaped social dynamics in Tahrir Square has origins in an "insurgent citizenship." In order to navigate oppressive and often irrational state practices, Egyptians mastered adaptation and survival tactics based on contingencies, mutual aid, deceit and humor. This is especially true in the poor informal settlements where more than 12 million Egyptians live, most of them in and around Cairo. This way of navigating everyday life relies on the ability to seek and capitalize on opportunities, make do, redefine the use of the physical and built environment and opportunistically exploit events for local and international media and image-building.

Finally, a defining characteristic of the energy in Tahrir Square was the strong anti-patriarchal sentiment. This was especially prevalent among the youth who associated the ailments of Egypt with its aging rulers and mainstream political as well as religious leaders. This anti-patriarchal sentiment was immune to pro-state media pleas to treat Mubarak as a "father" and not to humiliate him in his last days. It motivated young members of the Muslim Brotherhood, men and women, to participate in the demonstrations even though the organization formally abstained from joining in. This sentiment also energized women who felt emancipated and empowered as they fought and camped in the square. This is why there was great consternation, especially among young women, when latecomer, ultra-orthodox Salafis, who advocate female circumcision and keeping women at home, won a large number of seats in the parliament. "Is that what I fought for? Didn't we start the revolution and fight alongside men? " asked a waitress who was referring to Asmaa Mahfouz, the young woman activist whose YouTube video called for the march to Tahrir Square on January 25 and mobilized youth from both genders.

Epilogue

It is not only women or the youth who are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs. Egypt's January 25 revolution has not run its full course. After more than a year, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces continues to rule the country. The constitutionality of parliamentary elections is now contested in court. Crime and violence are rampant. Strikes and sit-ins continue. Unexplained shortages of gasoline, domestic gas and foodstuffs add to the daily stress. Nevertheless, January 25 will remain a significant landmark in Egypt's history and the country will no longer be the same. A major political barrier has been breached and people realize that they hold the power to remove the most entrenched of rulers.   P²

Tahrir Square

Choosing the Right Place for the Wrong Reasons

By Hazem Kandil

I N THE *Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848,* Eric Hobsbawm draws a vivid image of how radicals in the mid-nineteenth century believed their hoped-for revolutions would unfold:

> "Barricades would go up in the capital; the revolutionaries would make for the palace, parliament or the city hall . . . and proclaim . . . a provisional government. The country would then accept the new regime . . . [which] would then give brotherly aid to other revolutions which, almost certainly, would have also occurred."

Clearly, the first step in this grand vision was to occupy a number of key locations in the capital, and the hope was for revolution to spread from one country to the other. Little wonder then that the popular uprisings that seized the Arab world in 2011 have triggered a flurry of articles (including one by Hobsbawm himself) comparing the so-called Arab Spring to the 1848 revolutions in Europe. One of the primary causes of this far-fetched analogy is that Arab and European revolutionaries supposedly employed the same tactic, namely, the occupying of public spaces and the setting up of barricades to resist fierce attempts by the security forces to brush them away. But similarities in tactics should not overshadow the differences in strategy. A closer look at exactly where nineteenth-century revolutionaries erected their barricades—"palace, parliament or the city hall"—reveals this vital difference.

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A revolutionary situation is defined by sociologist Charles Tilly (building on the practical wisdom of unmatched revolutionary strategist Leon Trotsky) as one of "dual power," a situation where rising and incumbent regimes contest authority in a way that splits the state apparatus into two and destabilizes the established order. Thus, to render a situation truly revolutionary, dissidents must concentrate enough state power in their own hands to credibly claim that they are representing a new government and demand domestic and international recognition and aid. The types of public spaces one needs to occupy to support such a claim are key state institutions, institutions that not only embody state sovereignty (parliament, for instance), but also ones essential to everyday government (state media, police stations, public banks, municipal buildings, etc.). Occupation here is geared toward helping revolutionaries participate in managing state and society, or at least preventing its rival—the soon-to-be *ancien régime*—from running them as smoothly as it did before.

With this theoretical background in mind, let us move on to consider what actually happened in Cairo, whose

Tahrir Square became the symbol of all Arab revolts. The popular uprising, which began on January 25, 2011, culminated in a Friday of Rage three days later, when no less than a million demonstrators made their way to the city's historic downtown neighborhood, built in the nineteenth-century to resemble the circular layout and architecture of central Paris. Although demonstrators poured into the area from different directions, the bulk of them got stuck in a daylong tug-of-war with the security forces on the Qasr al-Nil bridge, the western key to downtown. After an epic battle, police units pulled back and the road ahead was clear. At this critical point, the revolutionaries had a choice to make: where should they turn to next? Leftward, to the Egyptian Radio and Television Union building, the regime's central media organ, with the Foreign Ministry adjacent to it; or rightward, to the seat of parliament, the cabinet headquarters and the Interior Ministry, the nerve center of Egypt's police state; or straight ahead, as was originally intended before the sudden police collapse, to Tahrir Square. They opted for the latter, providing the regime with valuable time to dispatch military units to each of these strategic sites. And so when a few dozen demonstrators, suspecting they might have made the wrong choice, tried to make their way to some of these sites later that night, the roads were already sealed by tanks and armored vehicles.

Let us consider why the demonstrators preferred to occupy a giant public square (approximately 490,000 square feet with the capacity to host perhaps a million people) rather than sensitive state organs, and how their choice on that fateful night determined the revolt's trajectory. Everyone knew that seizing a central downtown plaza would not stifle life in a sprawling city like Cairo, nor was it likely to make traffic on its congested roads any worse than it already was. Also, unlike the narrow alleyways and crammed-up buildings in the capital's popular neighborhoods, the square was an open ground with nowhere to hide. So if the demonstrator's plan was neither to paralyze the city nor to be able to maneuver if forced into street battles, then what did they have in mind? It seems obvious that the only advantage such an expansive and exposed location offered was *visibility*. For a strategy based on galvanizing domestic and world opinion and daring the regime to shoot civilians in front of hundreds of cameras and news reporters, Tahrir Square (and other
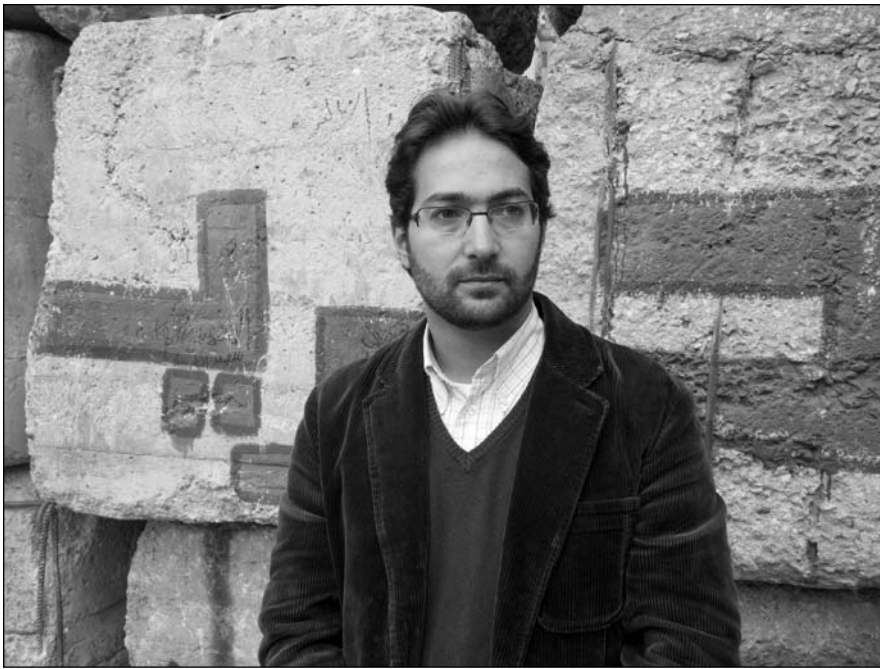
central squares throughout Egypt's provincial cities) fit perfectly. And it seemed to work. After more than two weeks of occupation, the military were induced to settle old accounts with their political masters and pressure the president to resign. Only then, however, did the defects of this choice of location become clear.

With the distraction of world opinion (with its familiar short attention span), and the disillusionment of most Egyptians (as inevitably happens in any revolution), Tahrir Square sit-ins no longer stirred public sympathy.

Tahrir Square in the 1940s at left and in 2011 above.

And out of the limelight, the square proved to be nothing more than a giant trap. By force of habit, continued state repression (which occurred in monthly cycles throughout the previous year) would drive protestors into the square, where they would be quickly surrounded by military and security forces using hastily built concrete walls to block off the protestor's access to strategic sites. The square would then be effectively sealed off as life outside continued as normal, and government troops waited for the revolutionary steam to run out. First, furious activists would set up their tents and vow to occupy the square until the regime was fundamentally reformed. Within a few weeks, however, they come face to face with their worst enemy, what Egyptians now mockingly refer to as "revolution-

Author in front one of the concrete walls that block access from Tahrir Square to the Interior Ministry.

ary boredom." Ignored by rulers and citizens alike, with nothing to do in this open-air prison but to chant or debate, and at the mercy of cruel weather conditions (too hot or too cold depending on the season, given the lack of shelter), their numbers would dwindle from tens of thousands to a hundred or less, allowing government forces to chase them away with relative ease. The square was then opened to traffic until a new cycle began.

Why did the revolutionary activists think it would go any other way? Arab revolts that have succeeded in overthrowing their regimes (such as in Libya) or are probably on the road to doing so (as in Syria) have managed to produce the dual sovereignty character of revolutionary situations by activists occupying government buildings, entrenching themselves in crowded neighborhoods, seizing entire cit-

ies and using all these as bases for incrementally supplanting the regime. But Egyptian demonstrators drew inspiration neither from 1848 Europe nor from neighboring Arab experiments in 2011, but from an entirely different revolutionary wave: Eastern Europe in 1989. The dazzling success of peaceful and civilized demonstrators in overturning their communist regimes was enviable, and occupying plazas and wide boulevards seemed to be a viable strategy. But the missing ingredient in Egypt was, of course, the radically different international situation. With the Soviet patron of the ailing communist regimes of Eastern Europe retrenching, and the anxious capitalist world, spearheaded by the United States and the European Union, determined not to allow the chance to slip by, demonstrators in 1989 were offered every possible form of help, including sustained media attention and Western ulti-

matums against the regime's violent repression. In Egypt, by contrast, the authoritarian regime had been serving the interests of the strongest regional and world powers. After the initial wave of international support subsided, the country's military rulers were allowed (regardless of American and European rhetoric) to slowly liquidate the revolt, or do whatever was necessary to return to business as usual.

This strategy of occupying visible (and harmless) spaces makes sense when the goal of the demonstrators is to draw public attention or to shock people out of their lethargy, as the Occupy movement in the United States purportedly aims to. It could also work when you have major international powers lined up behind you. At most, massive and persistent sit-ins could delegitimize the regime, persuading its leaders that the time has come for wide top-down sociopolitical reforms, whether real or cosmetic. But if the goal is not to spread political consciousness or to mobilize public opinion, but rather to "Overthrow the Regime" (the signature chant of the Arab Spring revolutionaries), then occupying strategic sites is the necessary first step in the uphill struggle for regime change. In this situation, channeling the sea of angry demonstrators into occupation of innocuous open grounds stakes the future of the revolution on three unlikely factors: that popular energy would not dissipate; that (domestic and international) media attention would not be diverted elsewhere; and that the regime's coercive organs would remain forever patient—a gamble which amounts to political suicide. ℙ²

The *Indignados* of Coyoacán, Mexico
Window into the Soul of a New Generation

By Laura Collin

As in other parts of the world, young people are occupying public spaces in various Mexican cities. In Mexico City, among the three occupied spaces, two represent political symbols. The encampment in front of the *Bolsa Mexicana de Valores* (Mexican Stock Exchange) mirrors Occupy Wall Street, and the one at the Monument to the Revolution seems to signal a demand for governmental change. The third place also carries symbolic weight. In this case it doesn't point to the enemy or the need for another revolution, but rather it reflects who the occupiers are. Their location in Coyoacán Gardens defines them as *fauna coyoacanensis* (animals of Coyoacán). While each Occupy site is unique, these *fauna* may help us understand the broader Occupy phenomenon, by representing its potential implications in a particularly developed countercultural form.

The term *fauna coyoacanensis* was coined some time ago to describe young people who live or like to spend time in Coyoacán, the neighborhood where the national university is located, along with libraries, theaters and other cultural facilities. Quite a few come from intellectual families and share artistic and intellectual concerns, and many are students. Such a background implies several things. First, while their families are not necessarily rich, they typically have a comfortable income; they are hardly deprived. Second, most of them have been stimulated since childhood with the arts and a wide-ranging education, making the *coyoacanensis* habitués of movies, concerts and art exhibits.

This distinctive background explains the activities these occupiers have chosen. As in other parts of the world, the occupation doesn't follow the classical forms of political protest. Since decisions require consensus, the encampment, like many other Occupy encampments, includes lots of deliberative assemblies. But it also includes a wide variety of other activities: lectures on varied topics, community-oriented action such as clothing and toy drives, social experiments such as an exchange without money and physical-spiritual activities like yoga and meditation. In January the *coyoacanensis* began to extend their movement by organizing assemblies in poor and working-class neighborhoods.

Why such a wide variety of activities? One explanation is simply that the occupiers (called *indignados* in Mexico, as in Spain) spend all day in the encampment and have lots of time. But beyond this very pragmatic account, the shape of their daily routines tells us about who the *indignados* are, what they think and what political stance they hold. It also provides an implicit refutation to those who argue that they don't have an ideology.

Young *indignados* are part of Generation Y. If the previous Generation X believed in the neoliberal promise of getting rich, the new generation knows that they are not even going to reach the social

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Photos by Acampada Sur

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ME INDIGNO, LUEGO ACTUO

position of their parents. They know or at least believe that regardless of what they do, there are few or no opportunities. They are convinced that it would be hard to find a job, and even if they found one, it probably would not be enough to support themselves, requiring them to stay with their parents or share an apartment with friends, and precluding them from living alone or getting married. Probably their only chance for some kind of autonomy would be accumulating multiple academic degrees, relying on a series of scholarships.

In Europe they call these young people "€800 kids," referring to a monthly income insufficient for autonomy. Their economic shortfall is the main reason for indignation and disappointment.

But these activists have gone beyond protest and have begun to reject the blandishments of the system in their entirety. They express their harmony with nature and concern with global warming, both in public discourse and in ordinary conversations. More than other Mexicans, they recycle, practice ecological tourism and prefer organic products. They oppose consumerism and express this opposition in their appearance. Some might argue that rejecting consumerism and embracing simple living is simply sour grapes, that they affirm these choices because they are unable to afford the alternative. But it also can be understood as a rejection of what the system offers as symbols of success. Consistent with this interpretation is the fact that some of these young adults are moving to rural communities and trying to develop sustainable projects guided by an alternative economic logic, while others are engaged in social organizations as volunteers.

In short, some of the participants in new social movements are shifting from indignation to refusal, concluding that the problem is the system itself, and not simply that some are successful while others not. In this transition they have begun to believe that *other worlds are possible*. That is why they are exploring the alternative economy, experimenting with other forms of exchange, like a gift culture or moving to the countryside to develop localized and sustainable economies. They are moving from lamenting the impossibility of being rich before the age of thirty-five to asking whether it makes sense to struggle to be rich at all.

In this context, activities in the Coyoacán Gardens encampment, rather than expressing a lack of ideology, reveal a search for new meanings: more concern with personal growth (yoga, meditation, learning about new subjects); an economy focused on people (alternative currencies, barter, gift giving); and reestablishing a relationship with nature (recycling, urban

agriculture, organic products), all of which demonstrate interest in new and different ways of living.

There are different ways of confronting power. It is common to identify political action with people organized in parties fighting for power. In this line of thinking, parties should present a platform of policies, which must define the principal problem and propose a solution. For example, Marxists consider private property to be the main problem and propose collectivization of the means of production. Wealth concentration is considered the main problem by social democrats, with redistribution the goal, while neoliberals identify government intervention in the economy as the problem and deregulation the solution.

Critics of the new social movements argue that because these movements are not organized in parties and lack a platform, they have no ideology. But though they may not have a program or a party, they do not lack an ideology. What is an ideology? An ideology is a worldview, and radical refusal of the system's structure of rewards is indeed an ideology—just one that the system cannot accept. The system is prepared to deal with people eager for money and power, who can be corrupted and seduced. But it has no adequate response to movements that deny the importance of money and power, incorporate horizontal, democratic decision-making, refuse to establish leadership structures, adopt gift exchange and barter instead of money and search for the meaning of life in things outside the market relationship: social relations, spirituality, creative activities. The mainstream's response is therefore to mock and denigrate such movements.

Movements that refuse the logic of the dominant system are *countercultural* precisely because they run counter to cultural patterns, in this case against those that privilege wealth as the goal and the measure of success, and competitiveness as the way to achieve it. There are many examples of countercultural movements in history, from the recent hippies to antiquity's primitive Christians. Hippies were denigrated in their era, just like the *indignados* of today, as young people without

an ideology, as lazy, as losers. Certainly they did not destroy the system they rejected, but we must admit that we still benefit from the changes in lifestyle produced by a generation that challenged cultural norms. Countercultural movements don't make revolutions, but they *can* change values. At this moment the *fauna coyoacanensis*, and the participants in the Occupy mobilization in general, are few, a minority in terms of class and education. But perhaps this is a minority that can once more reshape public opinion. P²

South Africa

Land Occupation as a Strategy for Agrarian Reform and Climate Justice

By Sara Mersha

In South Africa, land occupation is expanding as a strategy for achieving genuine agrarian reform, food sovereignty, and climate justice. These are critical issues for all people, and land occupations, both rural and urban, are an important, but often unrecognized, part of global movements.

In December 2011, the "Conference of Polluters," otherwise known as the 17th Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-17), dragged on for nearly two weeks in Durban, South Africa. The outcome of the meeting was to again delay addressing the real causes of climate change. Meanwhile, social movements of peasants, indigenous peoples and urban communities also gathered in Durban, as well as in cities and towns around the world, to counter the corporate-dominated U.N. meeting and to propose real solutions.

Members of social movements who had accreditation to enter the U.N. space (which involves an application process that takes place months before the meeting) worked to raise awareness about the dangers of false solutions, such as those which commodify forests and agricultural lands. While U.N. regulations make it extremely difficult to conduct any kind of public demonstration inside the U.N. space, movement groups were able to pull a few demonstrations together, including a press conference calling for a moratorium on the Reducing

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Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) program. A Kyoto Protocol carbon offset mechanism, REDD allows corporations (such as oil companies) and governments to keep polluting in the Global North, while supposedly "offsetting" their pollution by buying rights to forest lands in the Global South (and often displacing indigenous peoples from their lands). While the U.N. still appears to be paying more attention to the corporations promoting these kinds of carbon market mechanisms, the growing resistance both within and outside the U.N. process is an important step forward. The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) describes REDD as a "gentrification of the forests," and many groups have become part of the struggle to stop it because of its impacts on indigenous territorial rights, its perpetuation of environmental injustices at the sources of pollution (such as oil refineries in communities of color in the U.S.) and its ineffectiveness in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

While corporate interests pushed false solutions to climate change and governments delayed any further commitments to cut emissions years into the future, social movements came together at an alternative civil society space to expose the root causes of climate change and to lift up real solutions coming from the experts—the communities experiencing frontline impacts of climate disruption, and the climate scientists and policy analysts that have been sounding the alarm for decades.

"Small Farmers Cool the Planet"

Among multiple climate change impacts, the effect of increased temperature on food production and water resources in Africa is projected to be one of the most

immediate and severe. Indeed, the Stern Review indicates a probable beginning of "severe impacts [on food production] in the marginal Sahel region" as a result of less than 1°C increase in global temperature, relative to pre-industrial levels; increasing numbers of people "at risk from hunger," especially in Africa and West Asia beginning with a 1.5°C increase; and "significant" water shortages (which also have direct impact on food production) in Africa beginning with a 2°C increase. Indeed, with a global surface temperature increase already having reached 0.8°C, these impacts are well underway.

At the same time that climate disruption impacts food production, there is now a clear scientific consensus on the fact that industrial agriculture contributes significantly to climate change. While an analysis of farming alone may lead to a conclusion that agriculture's contribution is no more than 15 percent, an examination of the whole food and agricultural system—including agricultural production, land use change, processing, transportation and waste—leads to a much higher calculation. The international agricultural research organization GRAIN reports, "There is compelling case that the current global food system, propelled by an increasingly powerful transnational food industry, is responsible for around half of all human-produced greenhouse gas emissions: anywhere between a low of 44 percent to a high of 57 percent."

For both of these reasons, some of the most inspiring and potentially far-reaching climate justice solutions coming from impacted communities are the concepts of food sovereignty and agrarian reform. Food sovereignty was first described in 1996 by *La Vía Campesina,* an international social movement made up of more than 200 million families of peasants, family farmers, fishers and other small producers in over seventy countries around the world. In 2007, delegates from eighty countries came together in Mali to further promote the idea of food sovereignty, creating the Declaration of Nyéléni to elaborate on a collective vision. The declaration defines food

Photos: Grassroots International

TOP
Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Against REDD and for Life: Press conference within the UN COP-17 space.

LEFT
Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign in International Day of Action for Climate Justice March in Durban

sovereignty as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems."

What's the connection to the climate? Studies confirm that small-scale farmers can actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions while building more resilient food systems by using agroecology—a practice that combines ecologically sound science with local knowledge to conserve water and nourish the soil, while protecting the health of both ecosystems and local communities.

In Durban, movements for food sovereignty continued to take important leadership roles in overall climate justice efforts. Peasant farmer and ecological justice groups from across the continent decided to launch the new Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA)—an alternative to the Gates Foundation-supported Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)—at the civil society space. AFSA members explained their decision to hold the launch in Durban during U.N. negotiations as a way to emphasize food sovereignty as a strategy to "feed the world, regenerate ecosystems, rebuild local economies and cool the planet—all at the same time." Likewise, the Southern African Rural Women's Assembly chose the Durban civil society space as its meeting place for several days. *La Vía Campesina* organized a demonstration through the streets of downtown on December 5th, an International Day of Action for Food Sovereignty and Agroecology.

Throughout all these activities and more, thousands of small farmers and landless workers came together to share experiences and strategies for promoting food sovereignty as a solution to climate disruption. Johan Jantjies, convener of the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign (a South African organization of emerging farmers, farmworkers and landless peoples from both urban and rural areas of the Western and Northern Cape provinces), explained why he and sixty other members of the campaign traveled twenty-four hours by bus to attend the climate negotiations in Durban. "It's a must for us to go to Durban so that the world can hear our voice, telling the government that we, as small-scale farmers, have got the solution to cool down the earth. That solution is the agroecological way of farming."

Agrarian Reform through Land Occupation

In order for communities to achieve real food sovereignty, La Vía Campesina articulates the importance of agrarian reform, including land redistribution that can make it possible for communities to grow the food they need. According to the Vía's seven principles of food sovereignty, "A genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people—especially women—ownership and control of the land they work and returns territories to indigenous peoples. The right to land must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology; the land belongs to those who work it."

As part of the civil society space in Durban, the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign organized a day-long summit on land occupation as a strategy to advance agrarian reform. This summit brought together

Photo: Grassroots International

Davine Witbooi, a member of the Food Sovereignty Campaign on her way to a workshop on land reform through land occupations

small farmers and landless farmworkers from South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and the United States in order to discuss lessons learned from decades of struggle for land reform, as well as to develop common approaches to advance this vision.

When a new post-Apartheid government was elected in South Africa in 1994, the government agreed to a plan for agrarian reform, including a commitment to redistribute at least 30 percent of the land back to landless black South Africans from whom the land had been stolen during colonization and Apartheid. Since that time, only 7 percent of the land has actually been redistributed. Johan explained, "Land reform has failed our people. I don't think the state has any solution for how they will get the land out of the hands of the capitalists, the greedy and the rich. And that's why for us, land occupation is the new form of land reform. . . . We will go on and we will promote it as far as we go."

Johan joined the campaign as part of the Ithemba (Hope) Farmers Association , a group of families living and farming on government-owned land in Cape Town. The occupation by urban landless families started twenty-seven years ago with one person, and today has over 300 families growing vegetables and raising livestock to sustain their families and local communities. Marina Witbooi has been a member of the association for four years, and she is now head of plots and a member of the executive committee. She also made the twenty-four-hour bus trip to Durban. Marina explained, "Growing up, my father had pigs, chickens, and I think it's in my blood, that's why I came here [to Ithemba]. When I was a kid, we came here to pick firewood, and after we got the wood, we played there in the river. So I can't understand when the minister says I'm not from here . . . I don't think it's right because most people who stay here were born here. . . . When I was growing up, my family had land, and the government took it. You understand? They don't ask for it, they take it. So I take this land back."

Marina's reference to government ministers reflects the reality that the Ithemba farmers' struggle has not been easy. Over the last three years, they have had to defend their land against attempted evictions by three government departments and a mining company. Marina described a variety of tactics that the association has used to hold onto their land amidst these threats of displacement, from negotiations to legal strategies to direct actions in the streets to literally prevent the mining trucks from coming through. With the combination of tight communication and coordination among the Ithemba families, as well as support from the other associations within the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign, the Ithemba farmers have succeeded in staying on their land.

During the summit in Durban, Johan put out a challenge to members of this growing movement: "Were we afraid to fight the Apartheid regime? No. We weren't afraid. Some of us or some of our families are dying! Why are we now afraid to challenge our government? We must organize and mobilize ourselves. When there's a land occupation in Cape Town, there must be a land occupation in KwaZulu Natal, at the same time. When there's a land occupation in KwaZulu Natal, there must be a land occupation in JoBurg. We must force the government to give back our land." To Johan and others in the room, this level of joint struggle is key to building the power it will take to create the scale of agrarian reform necessary to both achieve food sovereignty and address the crises of hunger and climate.

Ricado Jacobs, an agrarian studies scholar and member of the Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign, situates this call to action within an historical context. "We see we have to transform the entire system in order to have climate justice. And we have to create a society based on solidarity and cooperation....This is what history teaches us—that land occupation has done more for agrarian reform than any other government has ever done before in history. So we are just calling up history and taking the struggle for land forward."

From large-scale alliance-building to local associations of farmers, the growing movement for food sovereignty and agrarian reform in Africa is perhaps one of the brightest rays of hope for a continent struggling to deal with the impacts of a climate crisis it did not create. Those of us in the United States have a valuable opportunity to learn from the courageous energy, clarity of vision and bold action embedded in these movements, to seek ways to apply their lessons to local contexts and to build solidarity and connections between our respective struggles. P²

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