

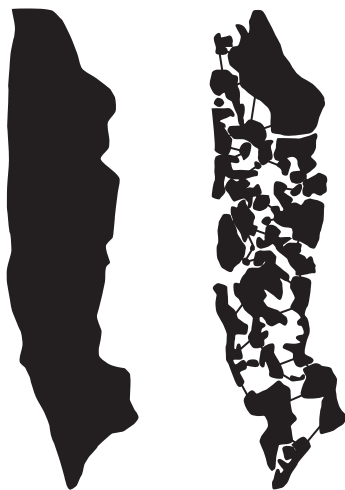
THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS  
VOLUME 05



# OCCUPY WALL STREET

Edited by Léopold Lambert  
September 2013

**THE FUNAMBULIST  
PAMPHLETS VOLUME 05**



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**THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS**  
**VOLUME 05: OCCUPY WALL STREET**  
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# INTRO

## MY BODY IS A POLITICAL WEAPON

At the beginning of the *Occupy* Movement in the fall 2011, many of us, however enthusiastic to be part of this political energy, were perplexed by the proliferation of the term “occupation.” To *occupy* Wall Street was clearly expressing the antagonism against the financial world but why would we occupy the Bronx, Philadelphia or San Francisco? Little by little, we came to realize that such a notion did not necessarily involve a colonial attitude towards the space we were occupying. What this term reveals is that, in order to *occupy* a space, we need our body, and that the very act to assemble our bodies in public was already a political act. At any given moment, we are confronted with a choice of where to locate our body in the world. This observation made me call this choice a “necessary yet radical political gesture, reenacted at each moment of our life. To chose to be a body in public, susceptible to encounter other bodies, or to stay in the protected space of the private: that is the elementary dimension of that choice. To form a collective body or to insist on the individuality of one’s body; that is another one. If we recognize architecture as the discipline that organizes bodies in space, we can understand how crucial is its impact as the political weapon that it cannot avoid to be.





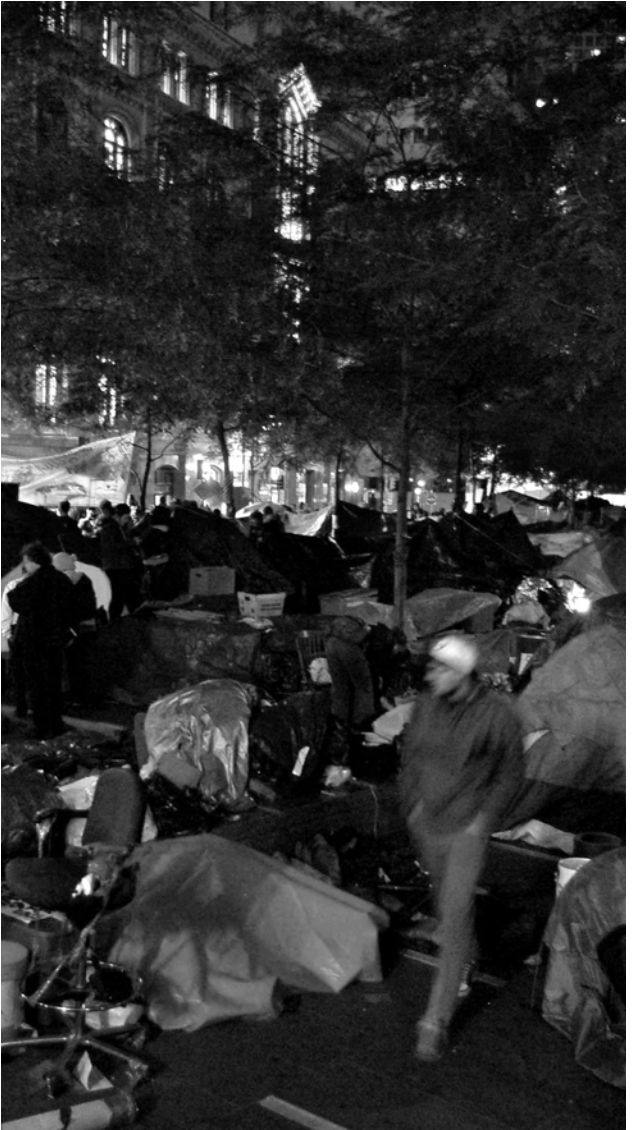
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## PHOTOGRAPHS OF OCCUPY WALL STREET

All photographs by the author (Sept-Nov 2011)













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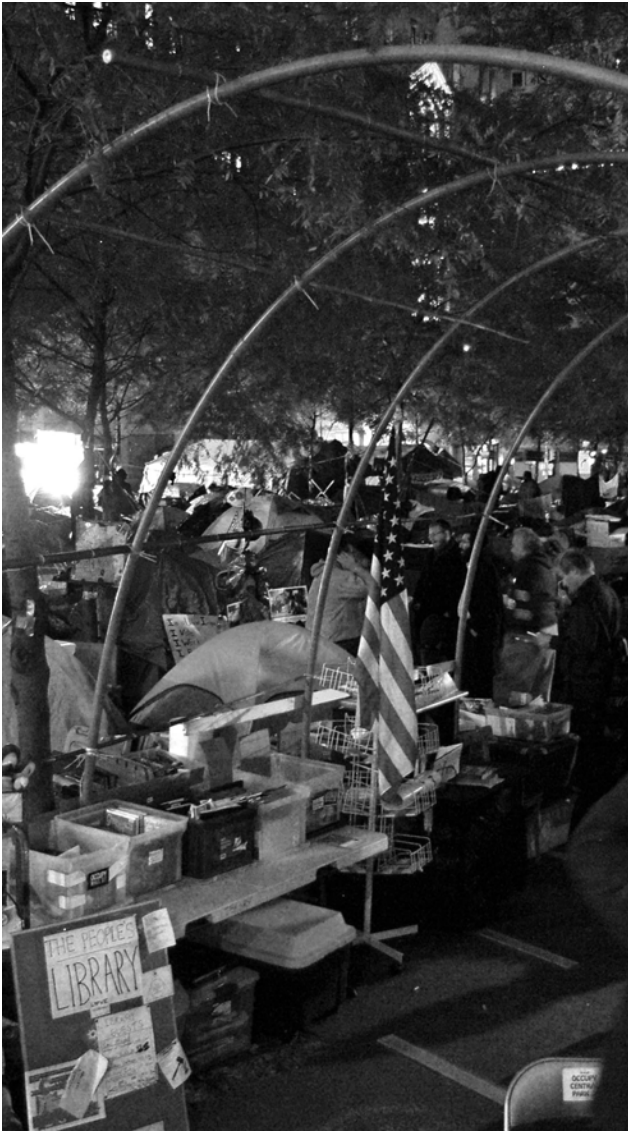


















# 01

## “I AM A CITIZEN OF LIBERTY SQUARE”

For the last twelve days, Liberty Square, also known as Zuccotti Park, has been occupied by the political activists of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and the Press remains more or less silent — the *New York Times*, for example, released only one small article in the “New York” section five days ago, entitled “Gunning for Wall Street, With Faulty Aim.”<sup>1</sup> In these extraordinary conditions, this silence clearly appears as a passive participation in the denigration of the movement. When one knows that such a political movement requires communication to fully emerge, the refusal to write about it constitutes a form of suppression.

The Police should know that its brutality is only bringing more reasons to resist the injustice of capitalism and its present result, the acute social inequalities. Nevertheless, the movement voluntarily remains absolutely non-violent and leaderless. Organization is the key notion here. A computer lab on site is relaying information directly to the Internet, a kitchen supplies food for the occupiers, and several working groups gather every day to discuss and create the means for this micro-society to sustain itself in time and implement outreach actions. The National Lawyers Guild is also present to monitor the Police’s behavior and make sure that each arrested-

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<sup>1</sup> The twelve first chapters of this book were written between September and December 2012 during, and right after the occupation of Liberty Square.



person is acknowledged and followed.

At the end of each day, a General Assembly gathers and propositions and votes are put forward in a communal way characterized by the means used by the indignants to make themselves heard: one person speaks and whoever can hear him/her repeats for the crowd. This means constitutes a strong symbolic union of voices.

Many people outside of the movement blame Occupy Wall Street for its lack of specific demands. However, I would claim that this group has understood something about revolt: they create a micro-society, two blocks away from the embodiment of the way of life opposite to theirs — Wall Street. They *de facto* implement the democracy and the solidarity they are calling for as a model of society. Just like for the recent Egyptian Revolution, the moment of liberation is not so much the achievement (and therefore the termination) of the resistance movement but rather the process of this movement that encourages people involved in it to develop a collective identity.

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Originally published on September 29, 2011

# 02

## **URBAN INSURGENCIES: ALGIERS' LABYRINTHINE CASBAH VS. NEW YORK'S WEAPONIZED GRID PLAN**

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*  
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

It has now been three weeks since the start of the occupation of Liberty Square near Wall Street. After two weekends of confrontation with the New York Police Department (NYPD), a short reflection on weaponized urban design seems appropriate. The massive arrests of about seven hundreds occupiers by the Police on the Brooklyn Bridge this Saturday, October 1st 2011 confirmed the highly controllable characteristic of Manhattan's grid plans, of which its bridges are a part. It was not difficult for the NYPD to let the demonstrating crowd to walk onto the Brooklyn Bridge and then stop it in the center of the bridge in order to arrest its members one by one. Liberty Square itself is not defensible without difficulty for the occupiers who are continuously surrounded by the NYPD without any form of possible retreat nor protection in case of a potential assault. This situation applies almost to the whole of Manhattan: it offers absolute control to the dominant force in an asymmetric conflict.

On the contrary, a form of urbanism that has been effectively active in the history of revolts, revolutions and wars of independence is embodied by the traditional North African city,

the Medina in Tunis or the Casbah in Algiers. Please note that I do not compare the content of the anti-colonial struggle with the anti-capitalist struggle, but only the urban space in which they are taking place. From 1954 to 1962, the Algerian resistance against the French colonizers was nurtured within the old labyrinthine district of the Casbah. Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film, *The Battle of Algiers*, banned in France until 1974, shows how the urban condition proposed by the Casbah has been instrumental in the Algerian struggle for independence. The film shows a rhizome of narrow curvilinear streets and stairs added to an additional layer of connecting roofs in a dense urban fabric that strongly contrasts with the New York grid plan discussed above. French paratroopers, in charge of the suppression of the struggle, were often lost and sometimes fell into a trap set by the insurgents despite the overwhelming advantage the paratroopers had in terms of equipment, weaponry and organized institutional army. Eventually, Colonel Bigeard, in charge of the operation, managed to suppress the rebellion almost completely by transforming the heavy army into a 'swarming' counter-guerrilla force. The struggle first triggered in Algiers was then taken up by a provincial resistance, leading to Algerian independence in 1962.

I always associate Algiers's Casbah's struggle with two other examples, one older and one more recent. The first is contemporaneous with the colonization of Algeria in the first part of the nineteenth century. The transformation of Paris by Napoleon III and the prefect of Paris, Baron Haussmann, put an end to the insurrections that regularly occurred in the first part of nineteenth century, including two revolutions (1830, 1848) led by tactics elaborated by Auguste Blanqui, who theorized and practiced a revolutionary urbanism (my translation):

This labor done, we put the two lateral barricades together by piercing the thick walls that

separate the houses situated at the front of the defense. The same operation is executed simultaneously in the houses on the two sides of the barricaded street up to its end, then backwards, on the right and left, along the parallel street, on the defense's front and back. Openings have to be created on the ground floor and top floor in order to obtain two ways; this work is done in the same way in four directions. All the blocks of houses of the barricaded streets should be pierced in their perimeter, in such way that fighters be able to enter or exit by the back street, out of sight and out of reach of the enemy.

[...]

It would be useful to organize companies of non-fighters such as workers, masons, carpenters, etc., in order to jointly complete work with the infantry. When, on the frontline of defense, a house is more particularly being threatened, we demolish the ground floor staircase and we make an opening in the various rooms' floor of the second floor in order to shoot potential soldiers who would invade the ground floor to place bombs. Boiling water can also play an important role. If the attack encompassed a large area of the front line, we cut the staircases and pierce the floors in all the exposed houses." (Translated from Auguste Blanqui, "Esquisse de la marche à suivre dans une prise d'armes à Paris," in *Maintenant il faut des armes*, Paris: La Fabrique, 2006, 280).

Blanqui, the thinker and activist of the revolutionary urban space had a military *alter ego*, Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud, who elaborated tactics of urban counter-insurrection that one can read in his manual, *La guerre des rues et des*





*maisons* (*War of Streets and Houses*), written in 1849, one year after the uprising that can be called the third French revolution. Bugeaud is associated with the colonization of Algeria, where he won important military victories, including against the most active leader of the resistance, Emir Abd El Kader. Bugeaud then organized the military occupation of the country in order to lead to its complete “pacification.” Part of this strategy involved the destruction of an important part of Algier’s Casbah by the French army, apparently already aware of the danger that such a district could constitute if left intact.

I do not know if Blanqui read Bugeaud’s manual when he wrote his own, cited above, in 1866, but there is a clear symmetry between the two that illustrates the binary aspect of the insurrectional conflicts that regularly took place in the streets of Paris and other French cities during the nineteenth century (my translation):

This way, we would choose houses that control several streets, bridges and large avenues of popular neighborhoods. These houses would be closed to public use. Openings to the street would be walled and fortified up to the necessary height to cover the defenders while the other openings will bring light in. Entry doors would be also fortified with iron bars in such a way that bullets would not pierce them; we would establish another fortified spot for second defense in case the doors would break.

[...]

Are barricades too strong to be taken by skirmishers? If so, we penetrate in the first houses on both sides of the beginning of the street. That is when small bombs are very useful, because

we reach our goal quickly: we go up to the last floor and then successively pierce every wall in order to reach the sides of the barricade. As soon as we succeed, they are doomed because the infantrymen in these houses see the back of the barricades and can kill their defenders with their guns, or by throwing furniture, tiles or any other kind of projectiles to their heads. (Marshall Thomas Robert Bugeaud, *La guerre des rues et des maisons*, Paris: Jean-Paul Rocher, 1997, 120)

If Blanqui was Bugeaud's contemporary *alter ego*, Brigadier General Aviv Kochavi of the Israeli Army, may be his recent avatar. In the 2002 siege of Nablus' refugee camp in the West Bank, Kochavi led an attack that saw the Israeli soldiers moving through the walls of the camp rather than walking in the exposed streets. This attack is revealed and analyzed from an architectural point of view by Eyal Weizman in *Hollow Land* (2007):

The manoeuvre conducted by Israeli military units in April 2002 during the attack of the West Bank city of Nablus, was described by its commander, Brigadier General Aviv Kochavi, as 'inverse geometry,' which he defined as the reorganization of the urban syntax by means of a series of micro-tactical actions. Soldiers avoided using the streets, roads, alleys and courtyards that define the logic of movement through the city, as well as the external doors, internal stairwells and windows that constitute the order of buildings; rather, they were punching holes through party walls, ceilings and floors, and moving across them through 100-metre-long pathways of do-



mestic interior hollowed out of the dense and contiguous city fabric. [...] This form of movement is part of a tactic that the military refers to, in metaphors it borrows from the world of aggregate animal formation, as 'swarming' and 'infestation.' Moving through domestic interiors, this manoeuvre turned inside to outside and private domains to thoroughfares. Fighting took place within half-demolished living rooms, bedrooms and corridors. It was not the given order of space that governed patterns of movement, but movement itself that produced space around it. This three-dimensional movement through walls, ceilings and floors through the bulk of the city reinterpreted, short-circuited and recomposed both architectural and urban syntax. (Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, London: Verso, 2007, 185-186)

The space in which a given insurrection is taking place, as well as the interpretation and use of this space by the insurrectional and counter-insurrectional forces, are fundamental to the way advantages emerge in a given conflict. Manhattan grid plan is, at first sight, detrimental to the insurgents but the labyrinthine characteristics of the Casbah, suitable to insurrectional movement, might be found in a non-physical dimension: immaterial networks of communications. The latter will never substitute for a strong and sustainable presence of bodies on site but it helps, coordinates and broadcasts this presence in a way that never realized before. We must invent our own Casbah.

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Originally published on October 5, 2011

# 03

## **“MIC-CHECK!”: HUMAN TRANSMISSION TECHNOLOGY ON LIBERTY SQUARE**

An important aspect of revolts and revolutions are the inventions they produce. The old left criticised the Occupy Wall Street movement, claiming that this spontaneous organization leads nowhere in terms of agenda and expectations. I think the old left missed the main point: the end point is not as important as the continuous production of desire. Each day spent on Liberty Square is a victory over a dehumanized system. I realize that evoking a “dehumanized system” sounds cliché; however, I would like to insist on the fact that many of the mechanisms that characterize the capitalist system are operating through a certain inertia and do not require anything else than a human passivity to continue.

Creativity is the materialization of production of desire and each invention needs to be acknowledged as one of the movement’s achievements. The one described in this section is characteristics of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, and whoever was on Liberty Square knows about it. “Mic-Check!” is the scream that precedes any speech from anybody speaking on the Square and during the marches when (s)he requests the oral transmission of what (s)he will say. The ban on any form of voice amplification device (microphone, loudspeaker, etc.), rather than weakening the move-

ment, made it stronger and resolutely leaderless, as nobody can hold a 'magic' object that would make her/him the unique person heard by the rest of the crowd. Whoever has something to say, speaks. Whoever hears her (him) repeats it, thus increasing the range of audibility, and by extension the amount of people participating. Regular General Assemblies have from one to two (sometimes even three) waves of oral transmissions for everything being said, and last Friday, at the meeting on Police Square near New York City Hall, one could easily count five waves of sound. Of course, sometimes, this process ends up like the telephone game, missing or confusing fragments of information, rather than a viable mean of communication. Everything that needs to be said also takes substantially more time than normal discourse. Nevertheless, one could argue that such constraints force speakers to go straight to the point — though let's be fair, this is not always the case — and therefore to purge speeches of any verbal ornaments. It is also another way to consider time, freed from the notion of profitability and extreme efficiency that characterize capitalism.

An other advantage of this means of communication — that can also be problematic at times — is that it depersonalizes the person speaking, — which is an issue only for a few celebrities and unions leaders who want to be acknowledged — thus transforming one voice into a multitude. Of course, this would be a critical issue if one person was always speaking, but that is resolutely not the case. The device allows anybody to be heard and the movement can thus continuously proceed thanks to an immanent process.

One last thing about the "Mic-Check!" Human Technology is that, as low-tech as it seems, this means of communication is a representation of the high-tech networks used to communicate with the multitude of other delocalized bodies

who participate in the movement in some ways, even without being physically present. As I wrote in the conclusion of the previous chapter, these rhizomic connections are our lines of flights, our invisible defenses...

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Originally published on October 6, 2011

# 04

## **“THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE“ IS NOT JUST A SLOGAN**

More than three weeks into the occupation of Liberty Square, the amount of occupiers keeps increasing. Now that the press cannot ignore the movement anymore, criticism and mockery are the response. The main argument emerging from the sea of contempt is that the movement did not come up with any consistent demands. This observation is symptomatic of a profound misunderstanding (including leftists). There are no demands for a good reason: there is nobody to whom these demands can be directed. Addressing a demand to a specific person or institution would simultaneously give them a political legitimacy, and therefore contradict the very principle of the movement that consists in more direct democracy.

For the last three weeks, hundreds of New Yorkers have experienced and demonstrated what a system of direct democracy looks like. They did it without asking the authorization of anyone and gained their legitimacy retroactively by an absolute openness and strict ‘leaderlessness’ of this occupation. “This is what democracy looks like,” regularly chanted by the occupiers, is not just a slogan: it is a manifesto of what is currently happening on Liberty Square. What comes next, detached from the thread of the present, has no importance.

Only the continuous effort to make this movement live according to its collective principles matter. This process is a beautiful thing to witness and in which to participate. Each person comes to Liberty Square with a set of skills that (s)he can teach, communicate and, more importantly, apply in the most direct way.

I am well aware that this interpretation of the movement created on Liberty Square can be seen as somehow pessimistic as it recognizes that the refusal to formulate demands will eventually lead to the extinction of the movement with no practical progress in the laws that rule the United States and in the foreign policies they implement. However, I would like to argue that we have reasons to be happy about this interpretation: First of all, because we do not depend on anybody else other than ourselves; second, and that is much more important, because more than gaining a microscopic change authorized by condescending institutions and their representatives, we will have modified the political imaginary of every person who will have seen us or have heard about us with an open mind.

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Originally published on October 10, 2011

# 05

## **WHY WE SHOULD STOP CALLING OCCUPY WALL STREET A PROTEST**

Since its beginning, the movement Occupy Wall Street has been called by many names but one comes back often enough to be analyzed here: protest. Of course, one can legitimately argue that terminology is nothing compared to action and that while some people are looking for words, other are directly acting. Nevertheless, this movement has been characterized by a great sense of self-awareness in order to maintain a strict non-hierarchical organization. It is therefore probably worth considering what terminology to use in order to properly communicate what this movement is about.

“Protest” not only seems like a weak word to describe the amplitude of the movement, but it also misses a point. The idea of a protest is often legible on the various signs around Liberty Square. They express anger towards a system that does not reflect the principle of a true democracy. That is what emerges from a shallow reading of the movement reported by the press that, subjected to the pressures of time and money, does not spend enough time on site to understand the following: what is happening on the square is not fundamentally anchored in the negativity of a criticism for what surrounds us but rather in the positivity of a construction of a collective alternative.

The General Assembly, held every day, is an example of this construction, but its slowness due to the numbers of people present and the means of communication used (see Chapter 03) does not register, given the speed parameters of the news industry.

Another reason that makes this movement so much more than a protest are the numerous working groups born from the movement that gather regularly to participate actively in this construction. These groups range from the most pragmatic aspects of the occupation (logistics, security, food, hygiene, medical) to the more reflective: build-up an alternate micro-society in the mist of a larger one, a “Temporary Autonomous Zone,” as theorized by Hakim Bey. Anybody can join an existing group or create a new one, attached to the mother-ship of the General Assembly. The following is a list of the existing working groups in the form of an inventory that can be read as a political manifesto:<sup>1</sup>

- Arts & Culture
- Craft-In-Everywhere
- Comfort
- Laundry and Shower Donations
- Design
- Direct Action Committee
- Education and Empowerment
- Facilitation Committee
- Food Committee
- Free/Libre/Open-source (FLO) Solutions
- Info / Front Desk
- Internet
- Legal

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<sup>1</sup> This list reflects the existence of working groups at the moment of the original redaction of this text (October 15, 2011). The number of working groups and their fields of action/reflection continued to substantially increase after that.



- Media Committee
- Medical
- Outreach Committee
- People of Color
- Political and Electoral Reform
- Sanitation Committee
- Student Engagement
- Tactical Committee
- Town Planning Committee
- Treasury Committee
- Students Committee

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Originally published on October 15, 2011

# 06

## SPATIAL ISSUES AT STAKE IN OCCUPY WALL STREET: CONSIDERING THE PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 4: LEGAL THEORY*]

Occupy Wall Street raises an interesting spatial issue that, despite its specificity to New York, evokes a broader urban problem about public space.<sup>1</sup> The legal status of Liberty Square — also known as Zuccotti Park — as well as other squares used by us, *occupiers*, for our working group's sessions, is a "privately owned public space." That legislation results from a 1961 deal between the City of New York and private corporations who wanted to transgress the urban code by building higher towers: in exchange for a significant area of public space on their parcel, corporations and private owners would be authorized to build their towers higher. The legislation is not detailed and it remains easy for the owners to strictly control access and activities in these spaces.

Despite an appearance of openness, privately owned public spaces are more or less directly selective of their public.

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1 This article was written in October 2011, when several hundreds of people were occupying Liberty Square in downtown Manhattan as part of the Occupy Movement about which the Volume 5 of *The Funambulist Pamphlets* is dedicated.

Employees working in the towers are of course welcome; these open spaces are part of a biopolitical capitalism that falsely appears to take good care of its subjects. People who spend money on those sites to buy coffee, hot dogs, or newspapers are also wanted. Others are regarded as unwelcome, if not suspect, and can be asked to leave if they are involved in “subversive” activities such as playing ball, taking pictures, or picnicking.

Both corporations and governments are satisfied with these public spaces: corporations are able to build taller skyscrapers, to provide open space for their employees, and to develop commercial activities, while governments see their public space maintained by private actors and any potential space of gathering controlled and supervised...until now. We *occupiers* reclaimed a territory that should have been simply declared public rather than left to a legal ambiguity that ultimately favors their owners.

This point is really important as it raises a problem that is not only specific to New York City. The right to public space has been too often abandoned, as the regular suppression to which we are often subjected is so embedded within our imaginary. Most public parks close at night, signs prohibiting to play ball games, skateboarding or walking on the grass have proliferated everywhere without making us react. Although these activities do not seem as crucial in a human existence as the right to assembly or simply to be present in that space, the fact of forbidding them continuously contributes to normalize our imaginary and behaviors.

In January 2002, Bordeaux Mayor Alain Juppé — also former French Secretary of Foreign Affairs during Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency — passed a decree that prevented sitting or laying down in the street if it was somehow obstructing

the path of pedestrians. Whatever stops the flux, and thus constitutes a small speck of dust in the cogs of the machine, is considered antagonistic, and for this reason, declared outlawed.

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Originally published on October 20, 2011

# 07

## THE TREMENDOUS POWER OF SPACE

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*  
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

In this chapter, I would like to share a strong architectural experience I encountered last Saturday. The working group at Occupy Wall Street of which I am a part, Education and Empowerment, and more specifically *The Nomadic University*,<sup>1</sup> was invited to the New School where we would be provided with a classroom. The President of the New School, David E. Van Zandt, actively supported the movement and encouraged students and professors of the New School to participate in various events organized by Occupy Wall Street. That is also how our working group was granted a classroom for whenever we would need it.

Notwithstanding this generosity, people in the group including myself experienced the violent power of architecture as we rarely did before. It would seem pretty obvious to anybody that having ideas as a group of people in public space does not happen in the same way as in a classroom; however, experiencing it is another thing: I have been writing a lot about the hurtful inherent characteristics of architecture's physicality, but I very rarely felt it violently to that extent in a somehow domestic environment. We usually gather in the public space in an open atrium (see page 15) often crossed by pedestri-

<sup>1</sup> Since the redaction of this text (October 25, 2011), *The Nomadic University* has been renamed *Occupy University*.

ans. Having a working group meeting in that space is fundamentally expressing the openness and the generosity of the Occupy Wall Street movement. On the contrary, meeting in a classroom on the 6th floor of an academic institution brought us back to a well-known situation where knowledge is explicitly owned by one or a few people and secretly distributed to a selected audience. Architecture changes the way we think and act. "Walls have ears": we certainly feel this way when we are in a closed environment. We self-censor and become embarrassed to waggle our fingers as a sign of approval like we do on Liberty Square.

Liberty Square and the other spaces of social movements around the world are places of production of knowledge; not an academic one that can be peremptorily declared correct or incorrect. It is, rather, the formation of a collective knowledge that allies a theoretical background with a continuous experience of the real. The space in which such an alchemy occurs is never innocent. The issue might be that those who understand that the best, are precisely the ones who produce the spaces of control (classrooms, hospitals, factories, offices, prisons).

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Originally published on October 25, 2011

# 08

## THE ARCHIPELAGO AS A TERRITORIAL MANIFESTO

The following map is a document I produced to express the new form of territorial manifesto that the Occupy Wall Street movement has been implementing by its very existence. It is an archipelago composed of various islands that all have one thing in common, yet develop their own identity within the territory they occupy (see Chapter 19 for a more extended articulation of these ideas).

The practice of direct democracy exercised in this space registers the latter as a territory within a broader system, a *heterotopia* as Michel Foucault would describe this type of space, or more simply, an island. Occupations started on Liberty Square, then Washington Square Park, Harlem, the Bronx, Brooklyn but also all over the American territory, thus composing an archipelago of “liberated” islands functioning in a precarious yet effective autonomy. This idea is fundamental in the construction of the movement, as it differs from ‘traditional’ revolutions that aim to conquer the centralized power’s territory. Rather, the movement propagated by the constitution of those islands as it applied a form of society only for the bodies present in these territories. Of course, this territorial means of acting is more difficult and requires more time than the traditional ones; however, this seems to be an appropriate way to achieve an awareness of the implications of each person’s presence in a given territory.

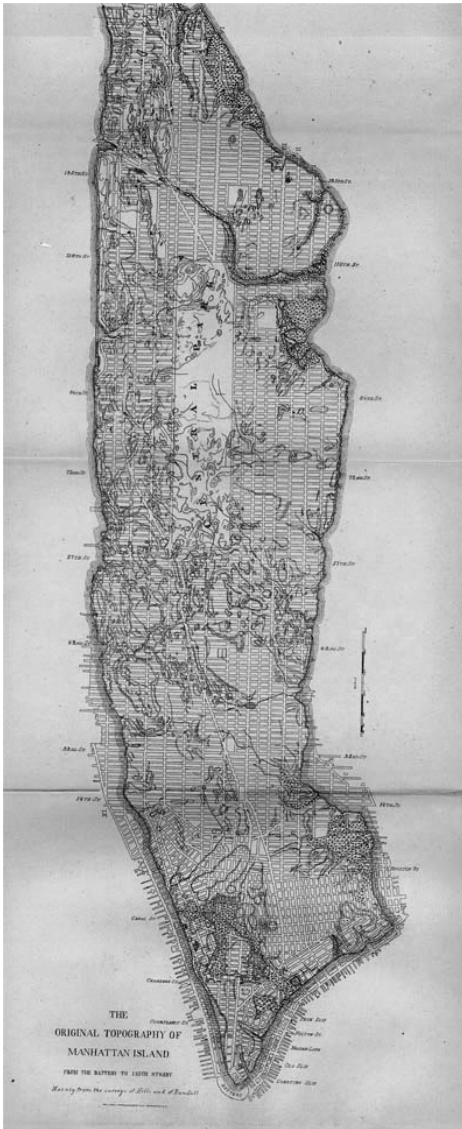
The model of the archipelago also helps us to think not necessarily in terms of totality, but to accept the fragmentation of a territory into smaller territories, each with its own individuality, and where it is easier to approach consensus. The very principle of the archipelago is to construct a collective essence with various identities specific to each island. The image of the interstitial water also allows to imagine a fluctuation of each island's borders that can continuously evolve through time.

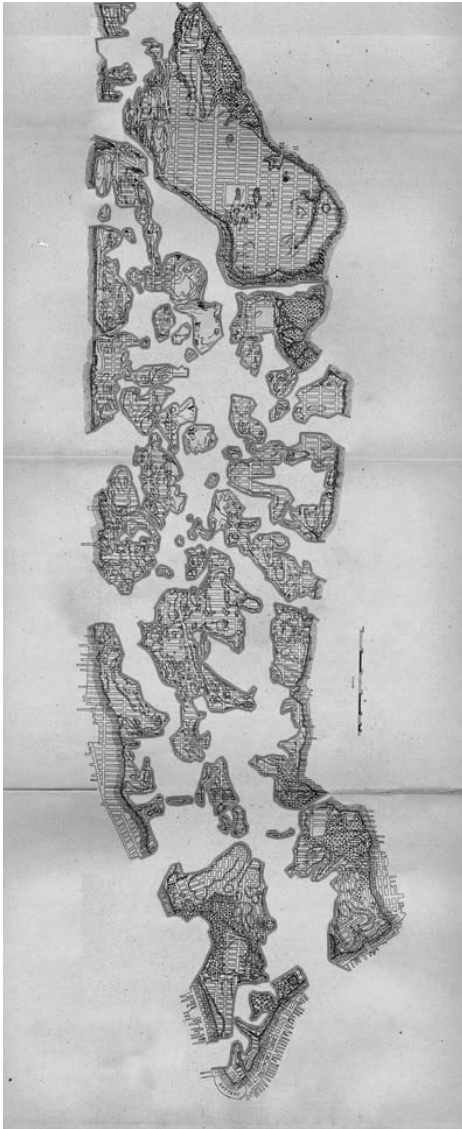
Following illustration is by the author (2011).

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Originally published on November 1, 2011







# 09

## ABOUT THE NOTION OF OCCUPYING

There has been a few debates since the beginning of the Occupy movement about its name. This name presumably carries an amartial connotation against Wall Street and some of us, who could not dissociate this notion from a colonial context, were fairly surprised that this name had been extended to the other 'islands' of the movement (Occupy Oakland, Occupy Los Angeles, Occupy Harlem). We considered problematic and were trying to orient the terminology towards the more inclusive notion of "99%."<sup>1</sup> However, I am now convinced that we were missing an important point that was probably obvious to the occupiers themselves. There was an important emphasis on the importance of bodies since the beginning of the movement — I remember a General Assembly at the end of September that already addressed that notion — as well as an acknowledgment that, while some people bring skills and knowledge to the table, others simply brings their bodies. Our body can only be at one place in the world at any given moment. This place is the place we chose to *occupy* and although it is an unavoidable choice, it constitutes a radical political attitude by the exclusivity of the space it stands on and, by extension, the exclusion of all others.

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of the "99%" consists in their opposition against the 1% of the World population that owns 39% of the global wealth.

Occupying a public space therefore carries a certain violence that is in part similar to that unfolded by the colonial occupation, for instance in the West Bank. However, while a military backed occupation violates the right of a nation to govern itself, occupation of a public space constitutes the full expression of a right agreed upon at the foundation of the nation.

21st century social movements are not the same as 20th century thanks to the tools of communication they use; however we should not fool ourselves: the importance of the bodies' presence in the occupation has never been as strong.

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Originally published on November 24, 2011

# 10

## **JUDITH BUTLER TO THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT: “THIS IS A POLITICS OF THE PUBLIC BODY”**

Judith Butler spoke twice at Occupy Wall Street on October 23, 2011. As a theoretician of the bodies, she brought this anatomical and biological dimension to the debate. Using the “human mic” (see Chapter 03) has the advantage to force people who use it to reduce their speech to the essential, and in that case, gives us this beautiful ode to the physicality of the occupation:

It matters that as bodies we arrive together in public, that we are assembling in public; we are coming together as bodies in alliance in the street and in the square. As bodies we suffer, we require shelter and food, and as bodies we require one another and desire one another. So this is a politics of the public body, the requirements of the body, its movement and voice. (Judith Butler at Occupy Wall Street, October 23rd 2011)

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the radical choice that we make when we occupy a space as a body. It is as bodies, considered for their race, sexuality, age and appearance that this system oppresses us expressively. We have to re-

sist as bodies or, as Felix Guattari describes in the text “To Have Done with the Massacre of the Body” that he originally published anonymously for the French journal *Recherches*:<sup>1</sup>

We can no longer allow others to repress our fucking, control our shit, our saliva, our energies, all in conformity with the prescriptions of the law and its carefully-defined little transgressions. We want to see frigid, imprisoned, mortified bodies explode to bits, even if capitalism continues to demand that they be kept in check at the expense of our living bodies. (Félix Guattari, “To Have Done With the Massacre of the Body,” in *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972-1977*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007, 209)

This manifesto against the capture of bodies by capitalism is in direct resonance with the one written by Judith Butler for the *Occupy* Movement four decades later. The multitude of voices repeating her speech through the “human mic” reinforces the insistence on the idea of assembled bodies that develop a collective political expression:

I came here to lend support and offer my solidarity for this unprecedented display of popular and democratic will. People have asked, so what are the demands that all these people are making? Either, they say, there are no demands, and that leaves your critics confused. Or they say: that demands for social equality and economic justice are impossible demands. And impossible demands are just not “practi-

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1 Félix Guattari, “Pour en finir avec le massacre du corps,” in *Recherches no. 12: Trois Milliards de Pervers, Grande encyclopédie des homosexualités (Three Billion Pervers: Great Encyclopedia of Homosexuals)*, March 1973.

cal.” But we disagree. If hope is an impossible demand, then we demand the impossible. If the right to shelter, food, and employment are impossible demands, then we demand the impossible. If it is impossible to demand that those who profit from the recession redistribute their wealth and cease their greed, then yes, we demand the impossible. Of course the list of demands is long. We object to the monopolization of wealth, we object to making working populations disposable, we object to the privatization of education when education is a public good, when we support the right to education. We oppose the billions spent on wars, we oppose the expanding number of the poor, we rage against the banks that push people out of their homes, the lack of health care for increasing numbers of people; we object to economic racism, and call for its end. None of these demands are up for arbitration.

It matters that as bodies we arrive together in public, that we are assembling in public; we are coming together as bodies in alliance in the street and in the square. As bodies we suffer, we require shelter and food, and as bodies we require one another and desire one another. So this is a politics of the public body, the requirements of the body, its movement and voice. We would not be here if elected officials were representing the popular will. We stand apart from the electoral process and its complicities with exploitation. We sit and stand and move and speak, as we can, as the popular will, the one that electoral democracy has forgotten and

abandoned. But we are here, and remain here, enacting the phrase, “we the people.”<sup>2</sup> (Judith Butler at Occupy Wall Street, October 23, 2011)

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Originally published on December 2, 2011

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<sup>2</sup> This last sentence evoking the well-known locution “we the people” used in the 1788 *Preamble to the United States Constitution* is further used by Butler in a later text published in French by *La Fabrique*, in *Qu’est ce qu’un peuple?* (What Is a People? Paris: La Fabrique, 2013). See Chapter 18 for more information on this text.



# 11

## OCCUPY THE DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

On November 15, 2011 the mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg and Brookfield Properties, “owner” of the public space of Liberty Square, triggered a police operation that evicted the occupiers from the square, in order to “re-open” the square to the public. One month later, the square is still barricaded and controlled by employees of a private security company.

A few weeks ago, I read the entire text that organizes legally the privately owned public spaces only to find that, if there were ambiguities in the law that we could have used in the context of a legal action, many were certainly in favor of the owners. For example the public space at 180 Maiden Lane in downtown Manhattan is open only from Monday to Friday from 8.30AM to 5:30PM. What these restrictions reveal is that so-called public space is mainly organized for the people employed by the corporations owning offices in the neighboring buildings. Similarly, the space in which many Occupy Wall Street working groups gather at 60 Wall Street, was recently restricted by additional rules that considerably restrain its use by the public: the right to move the table and chairs from their position, for example.

The group *whOWNSpace* decided to legally react to these abuses by inviting anybody to file a request for the New York

Department of Buildings to inspect Liberty Square. The New York zoning legislation indeed requires that “at least 50 percent of the public plaza frontage along each street line or sidewalk widening line shall be free of obstructions.”

I copy here the redacted complaint from *whOWNSpace* in order to illustrate how such an inspection request can be filed:

“I have observed a violation of zoning rules at 1 LIBERTY PLAZA (Manhattan Block 62; lot 7501). Rails on all sides of privately owned public space plaza are blocking nearly 100% ACCESS FROM the STREET; the same rails also block access to the circulation paths in the plaza. Design of the plaza is governed by the section of the Zoning Code that governs design of all privately owned public spaces. The sidewalk frontage of a public plaza is required to have a minimum 50% of its area free of obstructions (NYC Zon. Res. Art. 3, Ch. 7, S. 70, 37-721). The rails currently obstruct more than 50% of the frontage on all sides. Mandatory circulation paths are required to connect each of the street frontages (37-723). The rails currently interfere with path connection to the street frontages.”

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Originally published on December 16, 2011

# 12

## CREATING THE URBAN LABYRINTH IN AN ORTHOGONAL STREET GRID

Yesterday was the one year anniversary of the Arab Spring as well as the three months anniversary of Occupy Wall Street. One of the celebratory events in which I participated was particularly interesting in terms of the practice of the city. Following the arrest of fifty people for attempting to occupy a vacant lot in New York belonging to Trinity Church, we marched heading North with, as usual, many policemen on scooters along the sidewalk preventing us from walking on the roadway. When we arrived at the street that was supposedly our destination, it was entirely blocked by an important amount of policemen who had no intention to let us in. This destination might have been a decoy to deceive them, because the crowd — about 400 people — did not stop and soon began to run on the sidewalk, turned to the next street, ran, turned, ran one more block, turned again until finally the police, completely overwhelmed, gave up chasing us. This allowed the crowd to walk for thirty blocks in the middle of the 7th avenue as a joyful parade, disrupting the banal order of the urban routine. I could not help but think of this celebratory intrusion as the real embodiment of Michelangelo Antonioni's subversive street parade in the opening scene of *Blow Up* (1966).

Two months and half ago, at the beginning of the movement, I was calling for the invention of an “Algerian” labyrinth in the middle of Manhattan’s orthogonal grid (see Chapter 02) in order for us to escape the excessive police control to which we are subjected. I was then far from thinking that this labyrinth could be created by the speed of our movement within that grid, as well as the spontaneous and continuous reconfiguration of trajectory of a crowd that, thanks to it, becomes unstoppable. Physical space has a tremendous influence on how the bodies can be controlled; however, this control is primarily based on an anticipated speed of the bodies. Modifying the speed constitutes a means to resist this control.

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Originally published on December 19, 2011

# 13

## NATIONAL SECURITY DRONES VS. LIAM YOUNG'S ELECTRONIC COUNTER-MEASURES

Many of us are afraid of the development of drone technology that regularly allows the US and Israeli Army to assassinate people in violation of various national and international legislations. During the last ten years, the limits between Western police forces and their national armies have increasingly become blurred, both in terms of methods and equipment. It is relatively clear that it is simply a matter of time before national security drones would be implemented in Western cities. Some experiments are known to have been made already. On July 14, 2006, for example, a drone was seen in the sky of Paris's Northern suburbs, in what was probably a first real scale test of surveillance.

A form of resistance against what appears as an unavoidable movement towards a robotic management of national security uses the same technology. In December 2010, some Iraqi insurgents managed to hack the video transmission of an American drone. More recently, British architect Liam Young created now forms of drones, entitled *Electronic Counter-Measures*, in the context of his research with *Tomorrow Thoughts Today* (with Darryl Chen) and with the *Unknown Fields Division* (with Kate Davies). These small drones were created in collaboration with Eleanor Saitta, Oliviu Lugoian-Ghenciu, and *Superflux*. Their drones are inspired by the national internet blackout triggered by Hosni Mubarak in

January 2011 in order to prevent the Egyptian revolution from organizing itself. They provide a wireless internet signal to whoever is in their radius of action. The idea is to be able for a crowd to coordinate its action via the internet provided by these autonomous drones, even though the dominant power would have shut the network down.<sup>1</sup>

I maintain a certain skepticism when one addresses the relationship between revolution and technology. Fast assumptions lead many people to naively attribute the success of the various Arab Spring revolutions to tools like facebook or twitter. The very fact that the Egyptian revolution occurred despite the fact that the internet had been shut down is a good argument in favor of such skepticism. Another argument consists in recognizing that the same technology is rarely owned and used by the lowest social classes, who should be at the heart of revolutionary movements.

However, one has to recognize that vast numbers of people own a mobile phone, a fact that would have probably seemed completely illusory two decades ago. Liam's project may be possible in a near future when the access to internet on a mobile apparatus would be more generalized than now. The fact that his team managed to build these four drones and to make them operative in November 2011 forces us to be optimistic about the proliferation of resistive drones.

Around the same time, in Warsaw on Polish Independence Day (Nov, 11), a talented handyman managed to film the anti-riot police movements from the air by setting up a camera on a RoboKopter drone, providing useful footage for protesters

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<sup>1</sup> Since this article was written, in March 2012, the executive order "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Communications Functions" was released by the Obama Administration (July, 2013). This executive order gives the power to the American Department of Homeland Security to shut down civilian communications in case of a national crisis.







in the streets. I can certainly see the use we could have made of it during the December 17, 2011, Occupy march, when we escaped the control of the police for about twenty minutes (see Chapter 12) before they caught up with us.<sup>2</sup>

Previous illustrations are courtesy of Liam Young. *Electronic Countermeasures*, 2012, photographs by Claus Langer: *A flock of GPS enabled quadcopter drones that broadcast their own wifi network as a flying pirate file sharing infrastructure were built to drift autonomously through the city.*

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Originally published on March 11, 2012

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<sup>2</sup> Since the *Occupy* movement, activist reporter Timothy Pool has been live streaming many social movements around the world with the help of a small drone and *Google Glasses*, instrumentalizing technology in favor of the spreading of such movements.

# 14

## **AESTHETICIZING VIOLENCE + CAPITALIZING ON THE REVOLT IMAGINARY**

The new videoclip of Jay Z and Kanye West, entitled *No Church in the Wild* (2012) and directed by Romain Gavras is problematic in a number of ways. During five hyper-aesthetic minutes of film, we see a slow-motion of a scene involving a violent fight between an angry mob — composed strictly of men — and a less angry — yet more methodical in its violence — group of anti-riot geared policemen. The scene is recognizably occurring in Prague and Paris, thus offering us a modern version of the various European revolutions and insurrections of the nineteenth century. The ‘aesthetization’ of violence is optimal in order to directly stimulate our testosterone, which then helps us to identify with this hyper-male insurrectional standard that corresponds in no way to the various 2011 Arab revolutions or civic movements around the world. The society of spectacle is not interested in long pacific democratic construction and, through its various media, — including the most serious and so called ‘liberal’ of them — prefers to capitalize on the violent side of the revolt imaginary in order to both discredit and co-opt a movement that originally found its essence in anti-capitalism. In this regard, it is not innocent that the rioters in this video do not seem to seek anything else than a simple fight with the police force — almost like a sport. It is capitalism’s great strength to be

able to include its opposing forces within itself, and furthermore to be able to capitalize on them. Jay Z and Kanye West are a good example of such phenomena, as they represent the nec plus ultra of the anti-pro system components of a hip-hop music that was originally invented as a pure form of resistance against this very same system.

However, this short film is interesting to look at, as it might touch a line of risk that capitalism is taking against itself. Capitalist's cinema has been aesthetizing violence for quite a long time now; nevertheless, when doing so, it is always careful to subject this violence to a tangible and specific form of otherness, embodied by aliens, enemy armies, gangsters, cops — always corrupted and individualized in one way or another — or any other instance characterized by its binary mode of existence: it is either alive or dead, victorious or defeated. A short film like *No Church in the Wild* participates in the construction of an imaginary where intangible yet ubiquitous system is being fought against. Of course, the society of spectacle is still strongly present and the policemen are contributing to the anthropomorphism of an antagonism; nevertheless, it is clear that something outside of this visible fight is engaged and is therefore developed in our imaginary.

Let us not forget that the opportunists tell us something interesting about our era, as they carry more or less consciously the awareness of capitalism's mutation at work. The fact that Jay-Z's and Kanye West's videoclips are no longer introducing phalocratic (chauvinist) orgies playboy style, but rather a more serious representation of today's society (even if it is still chauvinist and incredibly simplistic) reveals the impact on people's imaginary of the political movements that started in 2011. Far from rejecting the product of such opportunism, we should attempt to study how a sound political action can be used against the very logic of its own production. Using the

system against itself is probably the only means to counter its faculties of mutation and adaptation. The inverse logic is used by capitalism: everything is done to convert this current political energy into the very object against which it was originally constructed. It is up to us to consolidate this energy into a base for a new critique of society.

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Originally published on May 30, 2012

# 15

## IMPETUS

IMPETUS ///

(text originally written for the book *Approach* edited by Gustavo Utrabo, Juliano Monteiro, Pedro Duschenes & Hugo Loss with the help of Lucas Issey in 2012).

The year 2011 seems to have reconciled us with history. Of course, people my age, born in the mid-1980's, have already experienced the end of the Soviet Union, the development of the Internet, the terrorists attacks on New York's World Trade Center. However, the Arab Spring and other social movements (protests in Greece, the *Indignados* in Spain, *Occupy* in the USA, etc.) which followed worldwide appear as the only events that put history back on track where Francis Fukuyama stopped it in 1992. In many parts of the world, crowds gathered, learning to recreate the social link that once tied them together, and resisted against the oppression of authoritarian or capitalists regimes.

Our peers architects did not miss the fact that these events restored the essence of public space that seemed to have disappeared in favor of circulation in streets and squares, sterilization and securitarian control. Let us note the current emphasis on politics within the architectural discourse from which politics all but disappeared years ago. Competitions are organized or won around the topic of democratic assemblies, calls for papers on this subject abound and studios in

architecture schools are dedicated to public space and its participative characteristics. The inescapable question these days is: what can this impetus possibly mean for the future or our discipline?

We can make two hypotheses: the first would consider this phenomenon as trend, a wave to surf, an intellectual surplus value used to bring legitimacy that an architectural project would not be able to generate alone. When we observe the opportunism that seems to animate some elements of this recent cooptation, I think it would not be unreasonable to predict that this architectural concern will disappear as fast as it appeared. A second hypothesis, nevertheless, would recognize this return of politics in the architectural discourse as an achievement for these thinkers and practitioners who have been convinced for a long time that architecture cannot possibly be separated from its political origins and consequences. In that case, such return would prophesize the next architectural decade where political statements will be considered as an unavoidable element driving the essence of each new project.

This text will not bring any answer to the question which of these two hypotheses is closer to reality; I think that answer lies somewhere in-between them. Nevertheless, the very fact that we wonder about this problem influences the process and that is why I want to write about it.

In a recent article in *The Architectural Review*, Patrik Schumacher claims that it is doubtful “that architecture could be a site of radical political activism” and that architects “are neither legitimised, nor competent to argue for a different politics or to disagree with the consensus of global politics.”<sup>1</sup> Every

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1 “Schumacher Slams British Architectural Education,” *The Architectural Review* (January, 2012)

argument affirming a voluntary detachment from the political debate often hides a conscious or unconscious discourse in favor of the existing political conditions. Schumacher's claim struck me as the exact opposite of my own thesis.<sup>2</sup> I believe that architecture cannot escape from being a political weapon, whether it has been conceived as such or not. In fact, when architecture is not conscientiously thought as such, it has all the chances to serve the means of the dominating ideology. It takes a lot of efforts and reflection to reverse/pervert the violence of architecture against the logic of its traditional means of production. The lines traced by architects contain the power of their future materialization and we must use them with great caution and concern. A line on a white page has the ability to split two milieus from each other in reality. That is why I think of the funambulist (tight rope walker) as a strong symbol of subversion as (s)he experiences the paradoxical freedom of her/his five centimeters wide world. By walking on lines of power, (s)he is not imprisoned in any of the two milieus that the line delimits. The most famous photographs of November 9, 1989 do not show East Berliners crossing the wall to reach West Berlin after twenty-eight years of separation. Rather, they show thousands of Berliners who sat or stood on the edge of the wall as an expression of its power's obsolescence.

Whether they think of it in these terms or in different ones, it seems that many architectural projects are becoming aware of political power. A number of projects, professional and student ones, lack criticality and research. What is preferable for the sake of the political debate? Should we favor projects that systematically ignore various political consequences of their existence and therefore embrace the dominant ideology, or

2 I wrote a response, "Open Letter to Mr. Patrik Schumacher: Yes, Architects are Legitimized and Competent to Address the Political Debate" (February 2, 2012). It was followed by an epistolary exchange with him: "A Conversation with Patrik Schumacher" (February 11, 2012) on thefunambulist.net

should we encourage political statements, however ignorant and naïve they might be? The second hypothesis could allow the formation of a new generation of architects who will embrace their social and political responsibilities.. Of course, put it this way, the answer is relatively obvious. Politics is not a discipline as such; it is present in all disciplines, even in its enunciated absence. Democratic processes cannot be triggered without consideration for the contribution of anybody who would like to take the risk of a political attitude.

Anyone interested in a creative process that includes its political implications should work on achieving and distributing it within the academy and the professional world. We will need to achieve it as architects, but also as citizens. This weekend was the sixth month anniversary of the Occupy movement and more people have been arrested and brutalized by the police for simply gathering in the public space and applying *in vivo* a democratic process and debate. The opportunity for change is here, for architecture and for society; we should not miss this occasion.

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Originally published on September 19, 2012



# 16

## OCCUPY GEZI: THE REASON WHY POLITICIANS ARE SO AFRAID OF BODIES

For the last five days, the public park of Gezi near Taksim square in Istanbul has been occupied by dozens of thousands of people protesting, at first, against the urban development project for this site, which involves a shopping mall.<sup>1</sup> Such a project that transforms a public space into an instrument of capitalism is part of a long series that changed Istanbul's urban landscape and politics in the last decade. Very quickly however, the protest generalized itself and reached other cities in Turkey (Ankara, Izmir) in an attempt to constitute a strong resistance against the conservative and religious Turkish government and its Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The latter used to be Istanbul's mayor and still has strong interests in its development. The police violently attacked the protesters, severely injuring some of them, but also reinforcing the movement's determination and legitimacy.

It is interesting to observe that news was spread much more rapidly at the international level than nationally. Turkish press, just as the American at the beginning of the *Occupy* movement, did not communicate about this, clearly in deference

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written on June 2, 2013, five days after the social movement in Turkey began. It is included in this volume because the Turkish protesters also used the name *Occupy* for their movement.

to the political *status quo*. In New York, hundreds of occupiers went back to Zuccotti Park (Liberty Square) to show their international solidarity with the Turkish movement.

For the last two years, many 'professional politicians' in power learned to be afraid of the multitude. All answered with brutality, from Cairo to Santiago, *via* Benghazi, Damascus, Athens, Montreal and New York. Some stepped down, some remained in power, others are ordering massacres against their own people, but all of them fear the power of the crowds gathered by common will to resist totalitarianism and capitalism. One thing must be understood: despite all the media attempts to 'surf' on these political waves through a common emphasis on the use of social media as a new form of political act – to a certain extent, this is accurate – what impacted the *status quo* is the gathering of bodies in the public space.

Of course, some gatherings of bodies are less political than others – sports events related, for example. There must be a certain performativity involved in the process; however, there is something inherently political in this act of forming a group of bodies in the public realm. As I have often said about the notion of occupying, our body can only be at one place at a time and, because of its materiality, no other body can be at the very same place at the same time. This involves a certain necessity, as our body is always spatialized but, at the very same time, it also involves the radical choice of this space at the exclusion of every others in the world. At each moment of our life, we have therefore to re-accomplish the necessary yet radical choice of the localization of our body. When thousands of bodies choose to be localized together in the streets or on a square, in such a way that they are not participating in the economy and might even have to confront the physical, violent encounter with the various forces of suppression, rather than choosing the comfort of the private realms, a strong po-

litical gesture is being made.

It would be too easy to applaud any political gesture of this kind. Numerous demonstrations of catholic extremists and other right wing activists in France against the legislation authorizing gay marriage prove it well.<sup>2</sup> In this latter case, the demonstrating bodies represented the norm: white Christian heterosexuals. The latter do not really suffer from the way society is organized, since they constitute the bodies that society considers as it organizes itself. The streets of Istanbul, on the other hand, are filled by people whose bodies are getting more and more constrained by the conservative religious dominant ideology. By dominant, I don't imply majority but rather the relationships of power.

As always, architecture is not innocent here. The fact is that these bodies are gathering in the public realms, but more precisely, outside, in the streets, on the squares, in the parks. Architecture through its internality has a limitation of the amount of bodies it can host (the maximum occupancy as the urban code defines it); the outdoor world does not. Choosing for our body to be outside is to potentially contribute to a crowd that theoretically won't be limited in its number by physical borders, hence the fear of politicians to see the movement spreading. Architecture inherently participates in the striation of space. Nevertheless, it can attempt to create a substantial porosity between the space it contains and the public one that surrounds it, in such a way that the political bodies can appropriate it.

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Originally published on June 2, 2013

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<sup>2</sup> This article was written a few weeks after the legislation authorizing same sex marriage was approved by French Parliament. The legislation, carried by French Secretary of Justice, Christiane Taubira, provoked a strong and sometimes violent reaction from a segment of the Catholic population and other conservative right wing movements.

# 17

## THE REPUBLIC OF TAKSIM

The Republic of Taksim: that is this title that French newspaper *Libération* chose for its first page today. The title is associated with a picture taken on Taksim square in Istanbul showing the crowd of occupiers and a Turkish flag with Atatürk's portrait, an explicit homage to the original Republic of Turkey declared in 1923, whose strict secularism is reclaimed by the Turkish occupiers. The idea of a Republic of Taksim was used in various articles about Occupy Gezi. Of course, this is a bold poetic name for the movement – at least the Istanbul part of it – but, in this article, I would like to propose to take it seriously. That is not necessary to say that Taksim should become its own nation, welcoming all those who do not want to live in conservative Turkey, like the New York Commune project on which I am currently working (see Chapter 20). To explain what I mean, I need to go back to September 2011, when I entitled my first article about Occupy Wall Street “I am a Citizen of Liberty Square.” That was a similar manifesto of belonging to a smaller piece of territory than the national one to which we usually refer when talking about the notion of citizenship.

The Republic of Taksim exists. It lives as I write these words. Maybe it won't exist anymore in a week, in a month or in a year, although it seems difficult to believe that it won't continue to exist in another form by that time, but for now, it exists. This territory, like any other territory, can be defined through

its spatial characteristics, but more importantly, and that is where lie all the difference, it is defined by the bodies that inhabit it: the citizens of the Republic of Taksim. For this reason, the limits fluctuate and mutate continuously. Sometimes, the Republic of Taksim swarms out of Taksim and flows into the streets of Galata or other parts of Istanbul. It started out as a movement to protect a piece of public space from the forces of autocracy and capitalism, but quickly deterritorialized itself to other places in Istanbul and other cities of Turkey.

The bottom line of such a Republic is that, wherever it is territorialized, only the bodies who inhabit it are citizens who participate in collective decisions. That is the meaning of occupying. A citizen can leave the Republic of Taksim for a few hours, to work, take a shower, sleep in a real bed, and during that time, (s)he is no longer a citizen. Only when (s)he makes the radical choice of forming a political collective can (s)he be a citizen. That does not mean in any way that those who stayed longer within the Republic of Taksim would be better or superior citizens; no. Whoever enters it, even for a few minutes, is a citizen of the same status, with the same rights as any other. It is needless to say that there is no problem of immigration in the Republic of Taksim! All are immigrants in the processes of deterritorialization that characterize them and, at the same time, none are immigrants because all have the same rights as long as their body occupies the same space, or rather, a space adjacent to the ones already occupied and that thus participates in increasing the collective territory.

The Republic of Taksim does not mind its ephemerality; it knows that nothing is eternal. One day, for tactical reasons, it will have to spread around, fragmenting the Republic into many islands that will have to continue the resistance as a political archipelago. Its citizens won't have the same visibility that they currently have, but the quasi-invisible link that ties

them together will still be operative. They will be able to form a central political island again whenever it will be needed. The Republic of Taksim is already part of an archipelago, the one of the *indignados*, occupiers, Arab Springers, Chilean and Quebecois students and the Greek youth who fight somehow together against the various agents of capitalism and totalitarianism.

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Originally published on June 11, 2013

# 18

## WHAT IS A PEOPLE? BUTLER, BADIOU AND BOURDIEU FOR LA FABRIQUE

La Fabrique is a bold publishing house with an impressive production rate. In past articles in *The Funambulist*, I already evoked *Maintenant il faut des armes* (Now We Need Weapons) by Auguste Blanqui, *L'insurrection qui vient* (The Coming Insurrection) by the Invisible Committee, *Paris sous tension* (Paris Under Tension) by director of La Fabrique, Eric Hazan, *Capitalisme, désir et servitude: Marx et Spinoza* (Capitalism, Desire and Servitude: Marx and Spinoza) by Frédéric Lordon and *De Canguilhem à Foucault: La Force des Normes* (From Canguilhem to Foucault: The Strength of norms) by Pierre Macherey. In this section, I will focus on La Fabrique's new book *Qu'est ce qu'un peuple?* (What is a People?), a collection of six texts by Alain Badiou, Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Georges Didi-Huberman, Sadri Khiari and Jacques Rancière. I will focus on the three first texts of the book.

Judith Butler's chapter, "We, the People: Reflections on the Freedom of Assembly" is an excellent complement to her speech at Occupy Wall Street on October 23, 2011 (see Chapter 10), where she insisted that a political movement was essentially a "politics of the public body." Butler uses the first words of the 1788 Preamble to the United States Constitution, "We the People," and examines what this locution — Butler

uses the word illocution, i.e. a phrase that provokes an action — unfolds in terms of physicality and legitimacy. For her, the political act materializes into the risk taken by the bodies that “comes down in the streets” (my translation):

When we actively make our appearance in the street, we are vulnerable, exposed to all sorts of aggression. It is mostly true for those who demonstrate without authorization, those who go, unarmed, and confront the police, the army or other security forces, those who are transgender in a transphobic environment, those who do not have visa in countries that criminalize those who wants to become their citizens. However, not to be protected is different from being reduced to the state of “bare life.” On the contrary, not to be protected is a form of political exposition. It is to be simultaneously vulnerable, breakable even, but also potentially and actively rebel if not revolutionary. Gathered bodies that find themselves and that constitute themselves as “we the people” shake abstractions that would make us forget the body’s demands. (Judith Butler, « Nous, le peuple » : réflexions sur la liberté de réunion, dans *Qu’est-ce qu’un peuple*, Paris : La Fabrique, 2013, 75)

Alain Badiou’s text, “Twenty Four Notes on the Uses of the Word People” is a questioning of the legitimacy of the claim for the notion of people by a given political group. Badiou examines the very grammar of the phrase that effectuates this claim. He distinguishes the use of identity-based or national adjective before the word People when such a use is made in an “official” context and when it is made in the context of a political process, in other words, when the very notion of



people is forbidden to those who claim it (in the case of colonization, for example). Similar to the notion of minor becoming elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Badiou thinks that the people always refer to a minority, not necessarily in terms of number, but rather in term of relationships of power (my translation):

We need to abandon to their reactionary fate phrases such as “People of France”, as well as other expression in which “people” is compromised by an identity. Currently, “people of France” only signifies “inert ensemble of those to which the State has given the right to be called French.” We should only accept this word assemblage where an identity is in fact, a political process in progress, such as “People of Algeria” during the French war in Algeria, or “People of China” when this phrase is pronounced from the communist basis of Yenan. In these cases, we notice that “People of + national identity” exists only to violently oppose to another “People of + national identity”, the one that carries the colonial army, the one that claims to forbid to the insurgent any right to the word “people,” or the reactionary State’s army, the one that desires the extermination of “anti-nationalist” rebels. (Alain Badiou, « Vingt-quatre notes sur les usages du mot peuple », in *Qu’est-ce qu’un peuple*, Paris : La Fabrique, 2013)

Finally, Pierre Bourdieu, in his text, “Did You say Popular?” explores how language is used as tool of oppression on behalf of the highly educated social class — who owns what Bourdieu calls “the linguistic capital” — against the lower classes, as well as an instrument of domination of men over

women. Bourdieu evokes the alternative form of institutional language, in French *argot* (that we could approximately translate as slang), considered by the higher classes as improper or vulgar, but that actually dissimulates the entire range of emotions in social interactions. *Argot* would therefore be a linguistic apparatus that constitutes a people. In the following excerpt, Bourdieu continues to use the model of capitalism with words like “market” or “price” in order to explain how the production of goods and the production of language follow the same schemes (my translation):

No one can fully ignore the linguistic or cultural law, and each time they exchange with owners of the legitimate competency, and even more when they are placed in an official situation, the dominated are condemned to a practical and corporal acknowledgement of the formation laws of the least favorable price for their linguistic production. They are condemned to a more or less desperate effort towards correction or silence. [...] The affirmation of a linguistic counter-legitimacy and, simultaneously, the production of a discourse based on the more or less deliberate ignorance of conventions that are characteristics of dominating markets are only possible within the limits of free markets (*marchés francs*), ruled by price formation specific to them. That means spaces that are specific to dominated classes, shelters which constitute of the excluded and from which dominant classes are themselves excluded. (Pierre Bourdieu, « Vous avez dit populaire ? », in *Qu'est-ce qu'un peuple*, Paris : La Fabrique, 2013, 38)

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Originally published on July 10, 2013

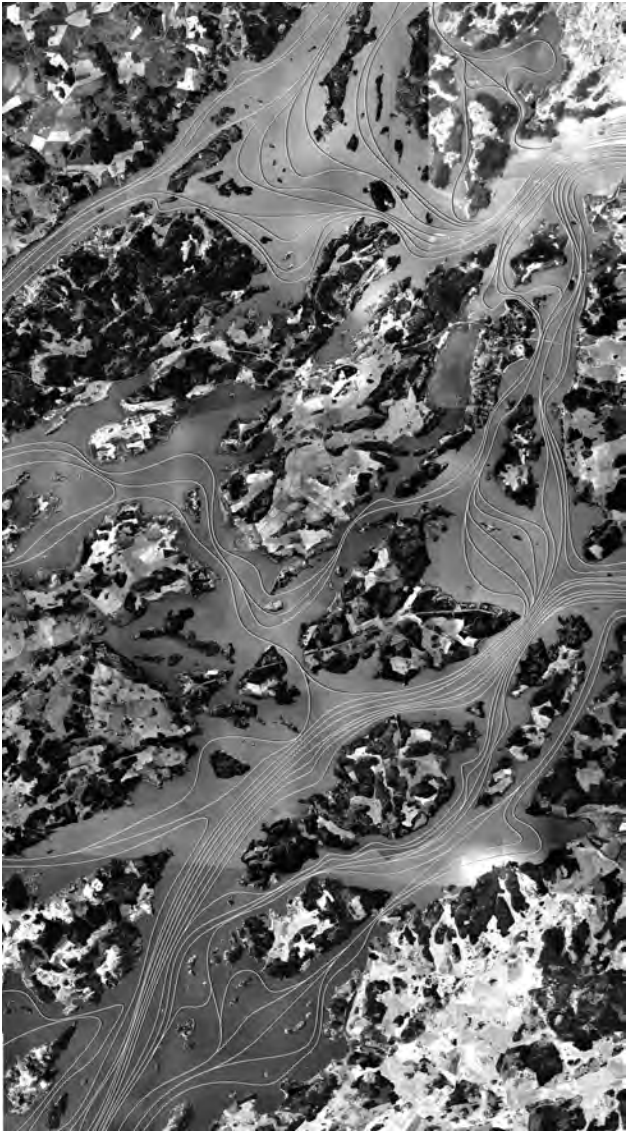
# 19

## THE POLITICAL ARCHIPELAGO: FOR A NEW PARADIGM OF TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY

“The World is an archipelago” was the calm philosophical scream of the late philosopher Edouard Glissant. An archipelago shares a common history, but each of its islands preserve an identity that it continuously constructs with its inhabitants. In this text, I would like to describe the archipelago as a new way to perceive territories as well as their political sovereignty.

The archipelago is not intrinsically a figure of emancipation. For the needs of my first book, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (dpr-barcelona, 2012), I elaborated a metaphorical map of the West Bank as it is experienced by Palestinians on a daily basis: an archipelago whose islands occupy only 39% of the West Bank territories that belong to Palestinians. The ‘sea’ around them represents regions controlled by the Israeli army and the ‘reefs’ embody the Israeli civil settlements that keeps occupying illegally the territory of another nation. In this metaphorical archipelago, an island inhabitant often cannot access the neighbor island because of the frequent Israeli military checkpoints.

However, there exists a form of archipelago that was not forced, but rather that emerged in an immanent way through



the political action of its inhabitants. That was the case for the 1871 Paris Commune that was not thinking itself as a citadel surrounded by a hostile territory, but rather as an island among others — other cities in France like Toulouse, Marseille or Saint Etienne also succeeded to declare their commune for a little while — and also included the countryside in its sovereignty scheme, as Karl Marx pointed out in *The Civil War in France* (1871).

Similar phenomena have been observed since 2011 on multiple territories of the world. The archipelago of the revolt counts many islands whose names resonate in the relation that link them together: Sidi Bouzid, Tahrir, Douma, S'derot Rotshield, Dawwar Al-Lu'Lu, Puerta del Sol, Zuccotti, Oakland, La Petite Patrie, Natal, Bayda, Taksim, Megaro Tis ERT and so much more. These small territories gathered millions of bodies and some of them continue to be inhabited as I am writing these words, embodying a new way to live politically.

These islands do not have any immigration problems: all bodies are welcome and it is their very presence on that territory that defines them as inhabitants and citizens. Each body has to choose at each moment the space that it occupies. It can be only at one place at a time and only this given body can be present on this given place. That is the principle of occupation and its political implication, whether we talk about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, or the Occupy movement. At each moment, we are confronted with an oxymoronic choice, simultaneously necessary — since we cannot not choose — and radical — since our choice of a space excludes every other — of the space that our body occupies.

The islands of the archipelago are formed by groups of bodies that accept, implicitly or explicitly, to create a politi-

cal community. These groups, through the materiality of the bodies that form them, define territories whose limits are continually redefined. Elsewhere, other islands are formed and, despite the fact that each develops its own identity, dialogues between them are effectuated and thus, they can acquire the status of political archipelago. The 'sea' that separates them is a region of flux. Fast fluxes, slow fluxes, just like the ocean, they constitute the ambient milieu of the islands whose name, "occupation," informs about their 'sedentary' nature. One has to understand this term, not as the absence of movement or as a permanence, but rather as the space of a constructive intensive movement that lasts as long as the island exists; in other words, as long as bodies form a political community on this territory.

Far from the representative democracy's scheme that we know too well, the political archipelago incarnates a paradigm in which the notion of majority, and therefore the notion of norm, are considered less important than the one of political intensity, i.e. the corporal and spatial engagement of an ethical community. This is the condition for new political practices to emerge without being synonymous with the domination of a group — even if it is a majority — on another. As I was attempting to demonstrate above, this political archipelago already exists in coexistence with the recognized sovereignty paradigm. Nevertheless, we can imagine it as the only form of worldwide sovereignty and forget about the obsolete concept of country. Such a reformulation of the notion of territory also implies important redefinition of architecture that currently carries the symptoms of the political paradigm in which we live.

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Originally published on July 24, 2013







# 20

## OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE QUESTION OF THE SO-CALLED NEW YORK COMMUNE

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*  
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

*Beginning of the transcript...*

It all started two weeks before the declaration of the Commune. Thousands of us invaded the incomplete structures of the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan. We took action when most of us were getting evicted from our homes after the rents doubled in the last few years. The occupation started as a form of protest, but quickly evolved towards a real alternative-society model. We set up camps on the hundreds of slabs of the towers and started to live in them in a new form of urban living. Multitudes of hoists were ensuring the vertical communication of food, essential goods and reclaimed construction materials from the ground.

The first time that the NYPD attempted to take back control of the site, we were disorganized and managed to make them retreat only after having outnumbered them. When they came back a few days later, our defensive strategy was more responsive, and the hundreds of policemen did not even succeed in entering the site. Every day we were gathering in small assemblies to debate and construct the particulars of our small society. Many people were exhausted and dis-

cussions could quickly become harsh and long, but only a limited number of people left the movement during the occupation.

One night, after a little less than two months of common life in the towers, we were suddenly awakened by the loud noise of a flock of helicopters that quickly invaded our space with their powerful spotlights. While Special Forces were landing on the roofs, hundreds of police officers in full riot gear were climbing up the structures, arresting all the people they encountered. The surprise of the attack led to a general panic that reached a dangerous level on some overcrowded floors. It was only after a few hours of systematized and serial arrests, when the towers were almost emptied, that the event that would make history occurred. Even today, it remains unclear what really happened. A small number of us were still on the ground, ready to be brought away in the MTA buses requisitioned by the NYPD, when we heard a terrifying scream and made out in the darkness of the dawn the fall of a frail body from one of the highest floors of the main tower. Whether it was a suicide, an accident, or murder was irrelevant to us. What we knew is that this tragic event would have never occurred without the police's armed attack. Our rage was growing on the way to Rikers Island, where thousands of us who were arrested were eventually corralled in the central courtyard.

A few hours later, nobody in New York could possibly be unaware of the story and many of us left our offices and homes to join the various gatherings that were organizing everywhere in the city. A portrait of the young man who died was spread on the internet and became quickly visible on many signs in the streets. Little by little, we started to move again and joined a march that started in the North of Harlem and was determined to reach City Hall.





The Police Department was overwhelmed as many officers had been sent home after finishing the night-eviction operation. It also had to face an important number of resignations and defections by the officers who had witnessed the dreadful event of that morning. Reinforcements were called from Newark and Hoboken Police, but the newcomers were quickly outnumbered by our crowd, which included a good part of the city's population.

When we reached downtown, there were several tens of thousands of us. Barriers were organized around City Hall and the Police troops gathered there were armed. One of the white collar cops shouted himself hoarse through a megaphone promising us to have his men shooting if we went ahead. However, after we ignored the first warning shot and continued to march forward, the troops did not dare fire and let us go.

Our crowd continued to grow until the evening. At that point, we were surrounding the entire City Hall area. A few clashes with the police occurred during the last hours, when little groups of people tried to infiltrate the buildings of the Financial District, but nobody died that night.

Around 11pm, we saw the police forces retreat from every place we were occupying. Some of them even joined us in the crowd, accompanied by chants and screams. The mayor had fled the city. New York City had no executive power.

All through the night that followed, we engaged in numerous conversations to address what needed to be done in the coming days. The process of collective discussion was long and sometimes painful but it became clear that we needed to gather the next day to take a definitive decision about the future of our city. Minor yet multiple arguments occurred as to

determine the place to meet, because the location of this historical event emphasized the feelings of neighborhood identities throughout the five boroughs. Eventually, it was agreed that we would meet in Harlem, the neighborhood of the dead young man who brought us together.

## DAY ONE OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

When we woke up the next day, the streets were empty and the silence underscored the importance of the coming hours. Around mid-day, we all found ways to reach Marcus Garvey Park and joined thousands of people who were already there. We needed to determine whether we should organize new municipal elections or be more radical and declare the independence of the city. Each of us who wanted to participate in the debate saw their voice repeated by the crowd in an expanding circle around them. Many of us invoked our foreign nationalities or origins, talked about our feeling of belonging to New York but not to the United States, and called for the creation of a universal city. Others questioned the economy of such a city and the potential suppressive consequences that might have already been undertaken by the federal government. By the middle of the day, we could read in the news about President Giuliani's television appearance in which he stated that, despite his regret for the death of the young activist, his administration would have no mercy whatsoever for those whom he called, savage violent rioters. From there, the conversation in New York City took a radically different turn. We understood that our time was limited and that a decision had to be made. Only few people had not yet been convinced of the necessity of independence and, grasping the ineluctability of history, left the crowd as a form of protest.

A few hours later, the Commune of New York City was declared. The five boroughs constituted the parts of the first







Universal City of modern times. Everywhere in the city, more or less formal ceremonies were being held to dramatically take down the star-spangled banner from the many flagpoles where it flew. Those ceremonies were followed by a multitude of spontaneous street parties favored by the unusual warmth of the weather. Only a few violent fights between small groups of nationalists and independentists were reported, despite the absence of the police, whose chief commissioner officially resigned from the post after the declaration of independence.

## DAY TWO OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

Most of us, citizens of the Commune, refused to go back to work at our former jobs. We were simply walking around randomly in the streets of the city, discovering neighborhoods that were previously unknown to us. In the evening, everyone could read the first issue of the *Liberated Time of New York City* where, among other stories, an old man explained: "I have lived for seventy-five years on the Upper West Side and I had never crossed the Harlem River before!" For the first time, the territorialized cleavages between social classes seemed to have been forgotten. From Chinatown to Cypress Hills, from Fordham Heights to Flushing, we drifted tirelessly between various social geographies that composed the city. At night, block parties were organized, crystallizing social diversity in many neighborhoods. In downtown Manhattan, the Municipal building hosted everyone who did not have a home and wanted to find somewhere to sleep for the night.

## DAY THREE OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

That morning, we started our day without power. By then, we were off the American grid and the small power plants in New York could not feed the entire city by themselves. Our past

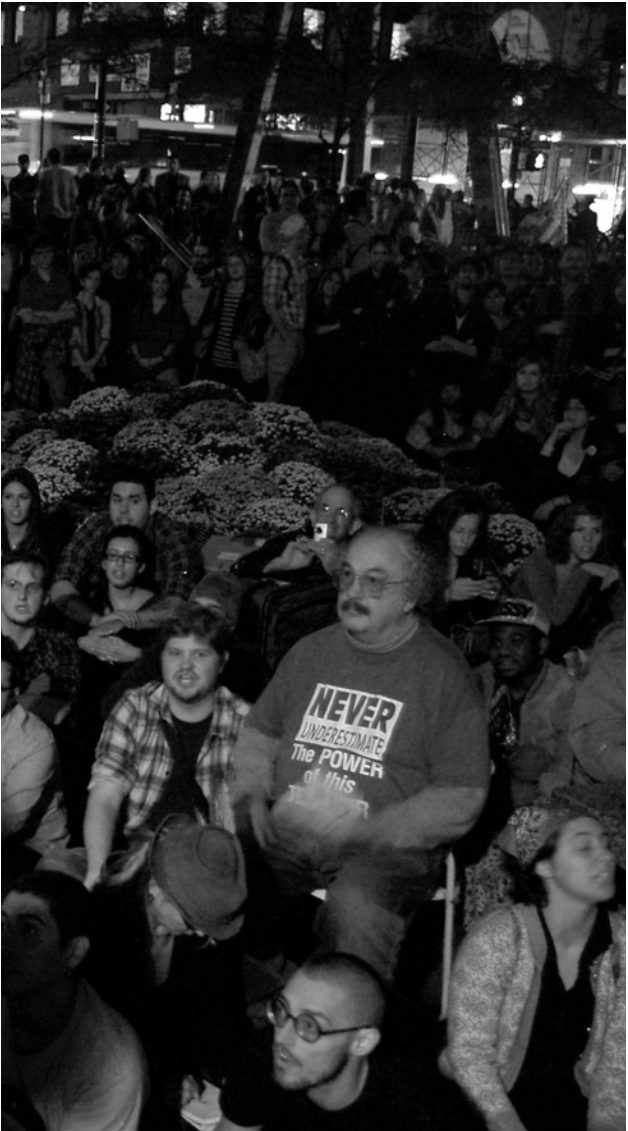
way of life had been absolutely dependent on electricity, and we were going to experience what it means to live without it. Later that day, many neighborhoods were equipped with mobile generators which helped provide power for essential needs. Every one of us understood rapidly that there would soon be a shortage of gas, too, and most streets were now empty of cars. At night, the neighborhood mobile generators were providing rare sources of electrical light and meals were cooked and shared around them. Electricity was somehow what kept us inside our houses as individuals; its absence brought us together, to get through the difficulties, as a collective.

#### DAY FOUR OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

While we continued to drift in the city, a zeppelin appeared in the New York sky and dropped tens of thousands of leaflets which fell on the city's sidewalks. They read: "Citizens of the United States of America, you have been fooled by a group of provocateurs who have slyly taken New York City hostage. Arrest the rioters and affirm your loyalty to your country. Any citizen who does not actively distance himself or herself from the so-called Commune will be punished to the full extent of the law." Official propaganda was, however, not the only information spread around that day. Helped by local printers, we distributed thousands of copies of a small manual that we designed to facilitate the creation of local forms of government for which one has to be physically present to be part of the decision-making process.

Somewhere else in the city, a small number of us vandalized every floor of the Seagram Building, throwing desks, chairs and computers out of the windows. The skyscraper designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe quickly turned into a ruin surrounded by cadavers of office furniture lying on the sidewalk.





Although most of us ignored the fact when we attacked the building, the Seagram was a symbolic paradigm of the past New York, one of “open space” and profitability. We needed new architectural experiments that corresponded to the social one which we were living.

## DAY FIVE OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

The food blockade that President Giuliani wanted to impose on New York City was judged unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, which gathered for an emergency session. The Supreme Court based its decision on the effective non-recognition of the independence of New York City and therefore affirmed that no citizen of the United States could possibly see his own government actively preventing him from having access to food. We were saved by a legal loophole but, back then, we could not have cared less.

Our population was continuously changing during the preceding five days. Thousands of us, scared by the change that the independence of the city represented, fled while thousands of others joined us enthusiastically from other parts of the world. The Governor of New Jersey, following what appeared to be the American President's direct orders, had closed both the Holland and Lincoln tunnels and forbidden access to vehicles on the George Washington Bridge. On the other side of the Hudson River, we were worried about a potential counter-revolutionary attack, and thus filled the exits of both tunnels with concrete and secured the bridge with barricades and observation towers. Nevertheless, we were still welcoming anyone who wanted to join the New York Commune. In order to continue to accommodate the voluntary transfer of population, many of us who owned a motorbike offered to ensure continuous transportation service between New Jersey and Washington Heights on Manhattan. Gas was

siphoned from unclaimed cars in the city, and one could observe a peculiar scene where long lines of bikers were driving back and forth with one or two persons seated behind them.

## DAY SIX OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

The small manual on self-governmentality, which had spread all through the city was starting to be applied locally in many neighborhoods. However, we rapidly observed that only very few public spaces of the former city offered appropriate conditions for hosting political assemblies. Until then, public space had been designed for circulation, control and commercial concerns. The invention of a space that would facilitate democratic processes was harder to undertake than we originally expected. Our assemblies, held in empty parking lots, squares and parks, were starting to feel the need for a proper public infrastructure in order to sustain their function over time. On the other hand, we were also only a few people who knew that all design work is unquestionably related to mechanisms of power and we feared reproducing the schemes that required so much effort from us to fight against.

Meanwhile, many of our communities in Brooklyn and Queens, worried about the US President's threats of a food blockade, decided to organize in order to multiply the means of local food production. Empty lots and rooftops were reclaimed and organized into small farms to provide a minimum amount of food for their direct neighborhoods.

## DAY SEVEN OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

Many of us considered our daily stroll as our primary occupation. We, drifters, were often recognized as such and were regularly given joyful greetings and refreshments when







we entered a new neighborhood. Before the Commune, we would have never considered walking as a form of urban exploration and socialization. Even our Sunday walks had adhered to well-known comfortable routes. As citizen drifters, we stopped experiencing the city as a sum of disconnected spaces and started to explore the logics of economic and social production.

## DAY EIGHT OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

Several dozens of us, women and queers, — we retrospectively called ourselves the *pétroleuses* — armed with Molotov cocktails, marched towards City Hall and undertook to burn down the central building of the former executive power. Others intervened and claimed that the building should be saved, not for its symbolism, but for its architectural heritage. We, *pétroleuses*, replied that nothing from the former regime should survive if a new society were to exist, and soon we, protesters were outnumbered by the mob throwing the rest of their Molotov cocktails through the windows of the building. The scene of the nineteenth century landmark burning down fascinated us, an apocalyptic painting and a beautiful spectacle of a monumental torch at dusk.

## DAY NINE OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

Engineers, architects and artists among us invited the rest of us to gather in front of the Public Library to build the first architectural agora. We thought of the structure primarily as a sort of stage surrounded by several stair towers which could be connected to each other. We were thinking of it as a space ready to form potential rhizomes to similar structures. Rapidly after the beginning of the construction, dozens of us who were involved undertook to build shelved walls on the side of these stairs. We argued that we wanted to take advantage

of this opportunity to transfer some books from the Public Library to the agora. Our small team of architects complained that none of that was part of the original design while engineers claimed that the structure was not strong enough to support the books' weight.

It took us some time but we all finally understood how the agora could constitute a place of assembly but also, a theater, a place of rest, a library and some sort of immanent fortress if counter-revolutionary forces were to be sent against us. The well-organized and professional design of the agora was supplemented by an enthusiastically assembled chaotic structure made out of tree-trunks found on a truck nearby.

## DAY TWELVE OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

The construction of the agora had been accomplished after three full days and nights of work. The structure's shelves then harbored about 20,000 books written in more than forty languages. They had not been placed following any particular order but most people were able to find a book in a language that they could read while seating on the agora's steps.

At night, concerts, lectures and discussions were being held on and around the structure. We still thought that things were far from perfect. That is why, many of us formed collectives to start building other agoras in our respective neighborhoods based on our own need and critical understanding of the Public Library's one. Architects, never had so much work. The notion of design was not really the same as the one we used to know but we were acting as advisors to enthusiastic groups of amateurs and professional builders wanting to construct architecture with and for the collectivity.





## DAY SIXTEEN OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNE

The rumor had spread that many former officers of the NYPD who had fled the Commune, had been re-organizing in New Jersey and were preparing an attack. Although the American Congress was still refusing to give emergency powers to the President of the United States, it fully legitimized the NYPD as the appropriate authority to enforce American sovereignty over the Commune.

*This fragment found in the cell of patient Martial Donatian at Bayside State Prison's Behavioral Health Department (New Jersey). Experts agree that this text ought to be associated with the eighteen photographs (attached to the report below) found on detainee Aziza Delville at Chicago Metropolitan Correctional Center and Martha Milstone at the psychiatric wing of the Indiana Women's Prison (Indianapolis). An important sum of other pieces of evidence collected at the Eastern Louisiana Mental Health Hospital (Baton Rouge) requires examination but seems to tally with Donatian's written version to a reasonable extent. The commission notes that this concordance is remarkable. It therefore recommends further studies to determine what would be an appropriate response to the recent release of documents evoking in different forms the so-called New York Commune in the prison and psychiatric environment.*

*End of the transcript.*

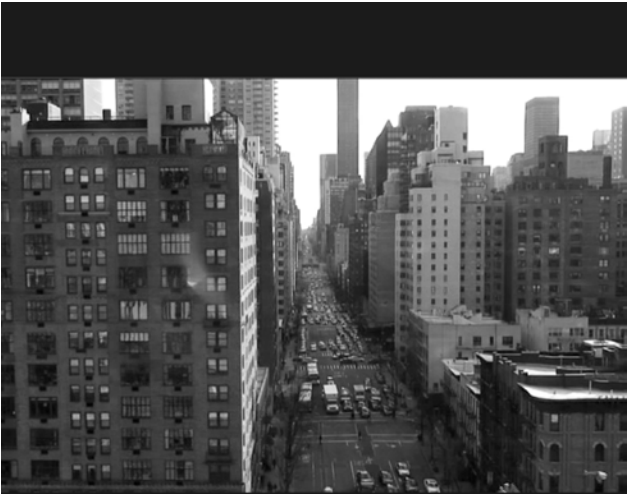
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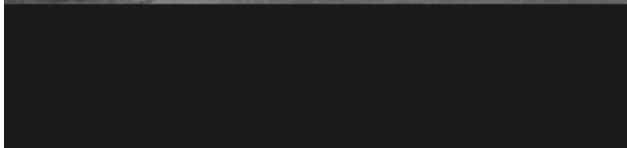
Originally published on November 4th 2012

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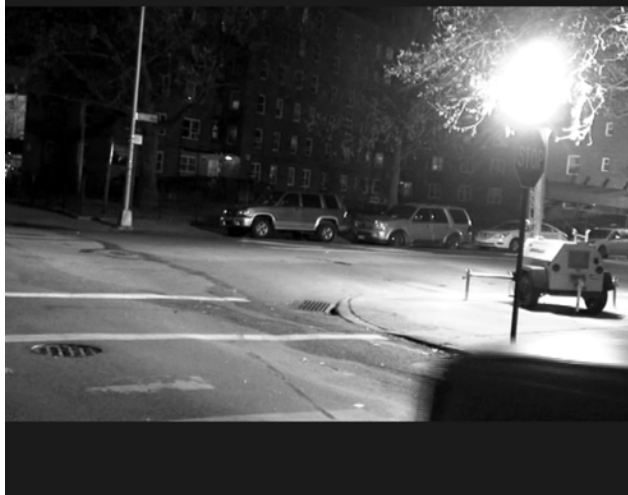
## THE NEW YORK COMMUNE [FILM IN PROGRESS]

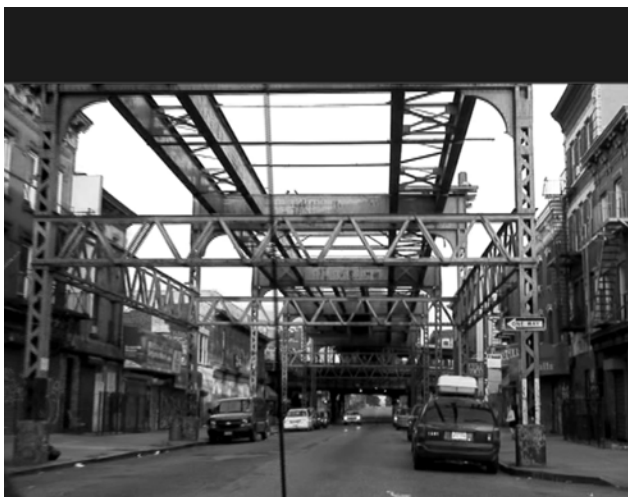
In November 2012, I undertook to make a film based on the story of the New York Commune introduced in the previous chapter. The idea for it was — and remains as I am writing these words — to use only footage that I would be able to film in ‘existing’ New York, thus introducing the plot only through the subjectivity of these images as well as the superimposition of the verbal narrative collected in various improvised interviews. The footage of the aftermath of hurricane Sandy as well as of various political marches and events triggered by Occupy in 2013 proved useful to convey the idea that the city was experiencing a strong historical shift that, in the story, led to its declaration of independence from any sovereign state, to prefer the status of universal city. The insistence on not using any visual effects was motivated by the idea that it used the same depiction means as any other documentary (TV or film), and therefore would reveal the inherent subjectivity of any historical document/testimony. The choice of this technique is strongly influenced by the cinema of Chris Marker and Peter Watkins, who regularly used this strategy to strengthen a criticality of the historical events they insisted on exploring. The film is expected to be released in January 2014. Many thanks to Frederic Tcheng, Martin Byrne, Kendra James, Xinyang Chen, Christopher Brown, Yojiro Imasaka, Hannibal Newsom, Nikolas Patsopoulos, Sadia Shirazi, Buke Kумыol and Felicia Yong for their collaboration to the project.



















# ABOUT

**THE FUNAMBULIST:** a blog written and edited by Léopold Lambert. It finds its name in the consideration for architecture's representative medium, the line, and its philosophical and political power when it materializes and subjectivizes bodies. If the white page represents a given milieu — a desert, for example — and one (an architect, for example) comes to trace a line on it, (s)he will virtually split this same milieu into two distinct impermeable parts through its embodiment, the wall. The Funambulist, also known as a tightrope walker, is the character who, somehow, subverts this power by walking on the line.

**CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MEDIA,** Parsons The New School for Design: a transdisciplinary media research initiative bridging design and the social sciences, and dedicated to the exploration of the transformative potential of emerging technologies upon the foundational practices of everyday life across a range of settings.

**PUNCTUM BOOKS:** spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion is an open-access and print-on-demand independent publisher dedicated to radically creative modes of intellectual inquiry and writing across a whimsical para-humanities assemblage. punctum books seeks to curate the open spaces of writing or writing-as-opening, the crucial tiny portals on whose capacious thresholds all writing properly and improperly takes place. Pricking, puncturing, perforating = publishing in the mode of an unconditional hospitality and friendship, making space for what Eve Sedgwick called “queer little gods” – the “ontologically intermediate and teratological figures” of y/our thought. We seek to pierce and disturb the wednesdayish, business-as-usual protocols of both the generic university studium and its individual cells or holding tanks. We also take in strays.



## **THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS VOLUME 5: OCCUPY WALL STREET**

*To chose to be a body in public, susceptible to encounter other bodies, or to stay in the protected space of the private: that is the elementary dimension of that choice. To form a collective body or to insist on the individuality of one's body; that is another one.*

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