

- 3 Thanks to Anustup Basu for his generous help in the preparation of this article. See, in particular, Carlos Ruiz, *De la república al mercado. Ideas educacionales y políticas en Chile*, LOM Ediciones, Santiago, 2010.
4. José Joaquín Brunner, Hernán Courard and Cristián Cox, *Estado, mercado y conocimientos: políticas y resultados de la educación superior chilena 1960–1990*, FLACSO, Santiago, 1992.
5. María Olivia Monckeberg, *El negocio de las universidades en Chile*, Debate, Santiago, 2007. This volume complements a former one entitled *La privatización de las universidades en Chile. Una historia de poder, dinero e influencias*, Copa Rota, Santiago, 2005.
6. ‘Data from the OECD states that, at relative prices, higher education in Chile is the most expensive in the world. With an average cost of US\$ 3,400 yearly, the rate of domestic tuition fees is equivalent to 22.7 per cent of GDP per capita, higher than nations such as United States, Australia and Japan’ (‘Chile, la educación superior más cara del mundo’, <http://aquevedo.wordpress.com/2011/07/05/chile-la-educacion-superior-ms-cara-del-mundo/>). The cost of tuition has increased by over 100 per cent in the public sector and even more in the larger private sector over the last ten years.
7. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.
8. See the CIA World FactBook, [www.indexmundi.com/chile/distribution\\_of\\_family\\_income\\_gini\\_index.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/chile/distribution_of_family_income_gini_index.html).
9. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, Picador, New York, 2010.
10. Particularly telling is the doctoral dissertation of the current president of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, ‘The Economics of Education in Developing Countries’, Department of Economics, Harvard University, 1976. See also Sebastián Piñera, ‘El Costo Económico del “Desperdicio” de Cerebros’, *Cuadernos de Economía*, vol. 15, no. 46, 1978, pp. 349–405.
11. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1996.

# Occupy time

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Until recently a casual observer might have thought that Occupy had developed a time-management problem: it was increasingly managed by movement a static, essentially timeless image of space. While Occupy Wall Street initially began with the declaration that 17 September would be the starting date and that it would continue for an unspecified period, the focus soon shifted to a general strategy of occupying public space. While this produced many victories, a certain ossification also emerged. What should have been one tactic among others began to harden into an increasingly homogenous strategy. For many of those involved, maintaining this spatial focus became the *sine qua non* of ‘the’ movement, even in the face of the changing of the seasons and the nationwide campaign of police evictions. In nearly every history-altering moment of the past, from the Paris Commune to the anti-globalization movement, it was the element of time that proved most decisive. Indeed, events of the past that are narrated as failures can be renarrated from the standpoint of the *possible* successes they have left behind, which remain to be actualized.

Rather than maintaining this spatial strategy at all costs, what is most interesting about Occupy now is that it is increasingly complicating static images of space by occupying time. This has meant a shift to a more fluid, tactical approach, one not only appropriate to the specifics of constantly changing situations deployed from above, but one that, more importantly, allows it to bring forth new ones, from below. Indeed,

the initial introduction of an open duration for the Occupy events already oriented the subsequent events primarily towards the temporal rather than the spatial. This was truly its greatest strength and is the major reason the spatial strategy did as well as it did. While Ken Knabb and others have linked Occupy to the Situationists' promotion of factory and university occupations during the French Events of May 1968, what was most central for the latter was once again, not simply space, but time as well. What they called for, and what Occupy is increasingly calling for as well, was the 'creation of situations'. In so far as Occupy rests upon an open-ended time frame, this approach is particularly relevant after the US police evictions of mid-November. Hundreds of new 'situations' have been created worldwide. When an occupation was evicted by police, several more would simply spring up elsewhere, or in different domains, such as abandoned buildings or foreclosed homes. As one online commenter put it: while Rome wasn't built in a day, it wasn't dismantled in a day either. The tactical innovation the open time-frame enabled also allowed the coordinates of each situation to be produced by the enactors themselves, on their own distinct terms. Perhaps, then, if transforming the collective situation remains the primary concern, some consideration of the space-time as well as the strategy-tactics relationship is in order.

Consider the temporal quality of the moment in which Occupy has emerged. Today, the experience of time has become greatly accelerated, much more so even than just one decade ago. Whether or not one has access to the social media sites or smartphones that are increasingly turning the old, spatially defined continents into new, temporally defined telecontinents, trillions of dollars in financial transactions still speed around the globe daily. Beyond the rhetoric of the 'digital divide', this continually creates new realities that everyone is faced with. The economic crisis is not attributable only to unsustainable, individually purchased mortgages, but more importantly to what brought them to market in the first place: the massively increased pace at which global financial transactions occur. As Marx argued, capitalist economics is ultimately a matter of time. The less time required to accumulate money, the more time available to mobilize other forces to produce even more of it. This ever-increasing speed of realization is a primary basis of contemporary capitalism.

While speed is often imposed from above, this is not the only form it takes. As accelerated capitalism forces its working subjects to spend more and more of their time working, this is subverted constantly. On-the-job chatting, texting, web-surfing and long breaks are all things that are increasingly taken to be in need of monitoring and management. Indeed, it is often through the very means introduced to control time that such activities are rendered possible. In Marx's terms, the means of production often come into conflict with the relations of production. While today's accelerated capitalism attempts to intensify the accumulation process through constantly revamped social media and smartphone technologies, with each new innovation it also enables movements like Occupy to reverse it, to mobilize these technologies against the ordering of time. Accelerated capitalism produces a 'counter-temporality': the increased capacity of people to engage in the creation of, rather than response to, situations. Paul Virilio has engaged this question, with respect to the tactic of the work stoppage. Rather than just occupying space, as he felt was more effective during the feudal era, he argued that in the modern period it is the strike that is most powerful. For him, this is because 'it spread to a whole duration. It was less an interruption of space (as with the barricade) than of duration. The strike was a barricade in time.'<sup>1</sup> Such temporal barricades have a long history in the United States, especially prior to the New Deal. But in the years prior to today's Oakland General Strike, the Seattle WTO protests were the closest one of its major cities came to pulling one off in many decades. It is worth considering the relationship of these two latest attempts, because in both cases the tension between space and time was as central as that between strategy and tactics.

## Seattle

While it well known that the Seattle WTO protesters eventually occupied the downtown space, the first truly significant event of 30 November 1999 occurred earlier in the day. At that time, thousands of workers and students brought the usual, predictable rhythms of transportation, restaurant, stevedoring and educational industries to a standstill, by walking out, calling in sick or taking the day off. If they hadn't, what occurred downtown later in the day would not have been possible, since many would have been otherwise occupied. Their temporal dimension was also crucial to the eventual success of the later events, even if they were based on a unified spatial strategy. The official plan of the Direct Action Network (DAN) had been that all protests downtown would consist of a nonviolent occupation of every street, sidewalk and green space surrounding the Convention Center. Likewise, that of the AFL-CIO was that they would march in a big circle from Memorial Stadium towards the Convention Center and back to the starting point. Crucially, though, the union leadership assured the Seattle Police and the Secret Service that they would specifically *not* venture into the city's core, where it was well known that direct actions would be under way. The Seattle Police and the Secret Service based their own approach on what they had heard from DAN/AFL-CIO. As a result of this knowledge, their reasoning went, they would simply flush everyone from the downtown actions back into the labour march, as they were making the loop back towards Memorial Stadium. In other words, they would link all three strategies such that the already existing hierarchy of time would not be interrupted and the WTO conference would occur as scheduled.

But that, of course, did not happen. The main reason the Seattle WTO protests successfully forced the cancellation of the conference was that this static image of space was overcome. At the very moment the AFL-CIO members would have been rounding the corner of their circle march back to the stadium, thousands of rank-and-file members of the International Warehouse and Longshore Union, Sheetmetal Workers, Steelworkers and other unions broke off and marched through a line of parade marshals, to join the protests downtown. At that same moment, the black bloc, homeless youth downtown and, as might surprise some Occupiers today, many who had proclaimed nonviolence, began countering the police assault on the protesters, which had intensified long before any windows were broken. Between these two breaks from the interlinked spatial strategy, a new counter-temporality was introduced at the very moment the Seattle Police and Secret Service had intended to use it to their advantage. This is why the two protest groups – around 25,000 mobilized by DAN and about 25,000 mobilized by the AFL-CIO – are not remembered today simply as the 50,000 who were flushed out of the downtown space like so much refuse. Rather, they are remembered as the 50,000 who shut down the meetings of one of the most powerful arms of global capitalism, thereby making a mnemonic of the signifier 'Seattle', without any further qualifier.

What in this, though, helps Occupy? Despite the emergent willingness to change tactics with the changing seasons and nationwide police evictions, Occupy has been ridiculed by the media for not recognizing the largely middle-class pedigree of many of its participants. Even if they are currently in a precarious position, the argument goes, chances are that eventually a good portion of them will end up at least financially stable. Which is a lot more than can be said for the permanent underclass, or many people of colour, or many others who are not showing up in such great numbers. Depending on how the economic crisis unfolds, there may be significant truth to such statements. Or, many in the occupying classes may become what the *New York Times* predicted they would a few years back: 'the formerly middle class'. Rather than seeing time as existing in the same neutral manner for everyone, multiple temporalities coexist, in a stratified manner.

## Complicating space with time

The challenge from his perspective, then, is to begin to perceive in a manner that would allow one to be affected by this fact, whatever one's own position might be. This, Walter Benjamin thought, might well be the key to 'bring[ing] about a real state of emergency'; one that would be 'real' in that it would interrupt an unending succession of false emergencies, whether economic, military or political. Benjamin's concept of multiple, coexisting times might also tell us something about the internal divisions that appear today within Occupy, such as those that followed the Oakland General Strike. Every time a tactic was taken up by one section that another section disagreed with, the claim reverberated throughout many quarters that the actions did not 'represent Occupy'. However, because differences in temporal experience are often imperceptible across social divides, such calls to unity and consensus are themselves questionable. It is no surprise that the dominant perception of space, marked by discourses of property and nationality, continue to hold sway even among those who seek to transform it. But, as Benjamin put it, when the old temporality is interrupted in a fundamental way, this perception will also be interrupted, by a 'historical time-lapse camera' – a new image of time that will reorient our perception of space. This is especially important, since for individuals time is marked by a succession of affective attachments that overgird one another in ever deepening layers over the course of a lifespan. Those who mobilized or were swept up by the movements of the late 1960s, for instance, necessarily experience subsequent events differently from those who came of age in the late 1990s.

Occupy is a divergent assemblage of individual and collective singularities. It will either increasingly resonate and compose a more formidable counter-temporality, or progressively decompose, as occurred with the 1960s' generation following Reagan, and the Seattle generation following Bush. The temporal divisions that organize experience differently must be confronted. While Occupy may be 'occupying together', this 'together' is not simple, and it is not 'one'.

There are many signs that, particularly in the wake of the police evictions, a tactical approach is returning in a manner that could expand this emergent counter-temporality. As winter closes in and public space becomes more difficult to hold, a more complex focus is evident in the move to organize further strikes in cities and institutions, to occupy buildings left vacant by bank foreclosures and capital flight, to acquire buses and other vehicles for enhanced mobility and shelter, to move from permanent to flash occupations, and to concentrate outdoor occupations on the warmer regions as winter intensifies. Similarly, consider the spread within Occupy of networked live video feeds. While the quality of the images is often 'shaky' and 'grainy', they also rely on the long take, which in the absence of editing requires viewers to decide for themselves what element to focus on. When editing does take place, it is often still left up to the viewer. During the Oakland General Strike, the Occupy feed was juxtaposed to corporate television feeds, producing a 'live montage'. And when the NYPD moved in on Zuccotti Park on 14 November, major media outlets ended up simply rebroadcasting the feeds, since they were nimble and decentralized enough to escape the ban on coverage. Ultimately, though, such innovations begin with the loosening, not the tightening, of the relation between perception, affective attachment and possible action.

If Occupy is truly to become *movement*, as it increasingly has of late, it must dispense with the static image of *the* movement. Movement is not the prefigurative realization of a future ideal. Rather, it is that which sets conditions of possibility for continuing movement, situational bases for new temporalities.

## Notes

An earlier version of this piece appeared on *Critical Inquiry's* blog 'In the Moment'.

1. Paul Virilio, *Pure War*, Semiotexte(e), New York, p. 41.