Foreword

All of the writing and images we have included in this collection were created and circulated by their authors as part of their active participation in Occupy/Decolonize. Some have been read widely and are understood as key contributions to the movement's evolution – Manissa McCleave Maharawal's 'So Real It Hurts', for example. Others have reached far fewer people, like the Mortville Declaration of Independence, but are no less significant for that. Still others are part of the ferment of largely anonymous cultural production that has accompanied Occupy – photoshopped graphics featuring Lieutenant John Pike (the 'Pepper Spray Cop') or 'Occupy Sesame Street' images. The selections are strikingly different in tone: earnest, ironic, hilarious, somber, enraged, or all of these by turns. What they share is intensity of feeling; what they do, collectively, is create the movement.

Without these cultural producers, without their work, and without the commitment to social protagonism that animates it, Occupy would not exist, any more than it would without the cooks, trash-haulers, librarians, livestreamers, medics and residents of the encampments. This is no less true of the thousands of other writers, photographers, photoshoppers and so on whose work we have not included. We have chosen these particular works because we feel that they, together, show the scope and the depth of the whole.

Among these selections can be found:

Celebrations of the range of Occupy's success – from Sara Marcus' appreciation of the OWS livestream to Jaime Omar Yassin's love letter to the Occupy Oakland kitchen to photographs documenting the range of creative responses to tent bans from Melbourne to Berkeley.

Diagnoses and analyses of the movement's recurrent problems, internal and external – for instance, Emma Rosenthal's indictment of the inaccessibility of Occupy LA to disabled would-be participants, and the Occupy Boston Women's Caucus statement on behalf of the 52 per cent.

Assessments of the strategies that Occupy/Decolonize has used, and strategies that have been proposed to it – Mike Konczal on Occupy Foreclosures, the 'Clarification on Nature of Call for West Coast Port Blockade' and low end theory's discussion of Occupy Oakland in relation to class politics within African-American communities.

Interventions in the movement's internal debates – such as Morrigan Phillips' 'Room for the Poor', Sonny Singh's assessment of the OWS Spokes Council from the perspective of the People of Color Caucus, and the American Indian Movement of Colorado's indigenous platform proposal.

And work that does several of these at once, and other things entirely.

*   *   *

We have borrowed the names of OWS Working Groups to organize the sections of this book. They provide a loose thematic structure, across which other threads of discussion emerge. So, for example, the fraught relationship between Occupy and pre-existing homeless populations runs through work appearing in the sections titled 'Safer Spaces', 'Sustainability' and 'Town Planning', among others. Our object is not to turn the reader's attention away from the pervasive concerns of the movement, but to highlight the ways in which these flow into all working groups and caucuses, whatever their precisely defined purview.

Two sections require additional comment. The 'Arts & Culture' section brings together verbal and visual material showcasing the creativity of Occupy/Decolonize manifested in internet memes, in propaganda posters, in street actions and in the never-quite-explicable catchphrases that bind together what Anne Tagonist calls 'the tribe'.

The one section not named for a working group – 'Elsewhere' – is intended to intimate the global reach of the movement. In part, it takes up Occupy as it has appeared in the UK. From London to Wigan, a distinct movement grounded in the anti-austerity organizing and popular unrest of the past few years has, like others around the world, adopted 'Occupy' as a gesture of solidarity with the US movement. The work we have included here makes clear both the particularities of the UK movement and its affiliation with movements elsewhere. Another part of the section glimpses the real and affective history of the movement. Accounts of Spain's 15-M plaza occupations in 2011 and the protest camping tradition that includes the feminist anti-nuclear Greenham Common encampment that lasted from 1981 to 2000 offer different useable pasts for Occupy/Decolonize, as does a short history of masking as a protest tactic. Finally, Emmanuel Iduma's writing makes no mention of Occupy. When he describes needing 'this revolution', however, he evokes the affinities that knit Nigeria to the global phenomenon of Occupy and the Arab Revolutions that began in

North Africa in 2011.

* * *

The work in this collection appears in the form in which it originally circulated (with a few exceptions noted in the text). The one change made throughout has been to bring the texts into conformity with the style of our UK-based publishers.

However, one of the unavoidable difficulties in presenting in paper form texts which originally appeared online is dealing with the specific structures of online writing: both its social aspects and the intertextual possibilities it affords writers.

In only one case have we included any of the comments which accompany a piece originating on a blog. While we have included pieces that originated on Tumblr, we have not traced their re-postings and comment streams. We have included no tweets except those quoted in more extended pieces of writing.

We have included as footnotes some of the links that appear in these texts – primarily those that serve as citations and those that point to material that expands the reach of a piece. We have omitted those that direct readers to reference material – the websites of organizations named in the text; wikipedia definitions of terms of political theory; etc – and those that are more narrowly illustrative examples. We encourage you to look at the pieces in their original forms, and to follow the links, comment streams, and trails of breadcrumbs you will find.

The images we have included are, likewise, drawn primarily from online sources. Many of them make that origin visible in their resolution and clarity, despite our attempts to use the highest-quality versions we could locate. We make no apology for this; we've chosen the images that we feel are important, revealing, or typical, rather than the ones available at a high resolution. And, as with the writing we've selected, we encourage you to seek out the many alternative versions, remixes, and other developments of the same memes towards which these images can lead you.

* * *

Without the generosity of the tireless chroniclers of the Occupy movement, this volume would not have been possible. Our first and greatest thanks are to them, for their words, their pictures, their suggestions, and their advice on this project.

All the work here appears courtesy of its creators, under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licenses. Details

of the license terms can be found at http://creativecommons.org/licenses/. The creators retain all rights to their work.

A number of publications and organizations have allowed us to reprint materials they originally published. We would like to express our particular gratitude to:

> *The Los Angeles Review of Books* for Sara Marcus's 'C-SPAN for Radicals'
> *Alternet* for Sarah Jaffe's 'Occupy Wall Street Prepares for Crackdown – Will Bloomberg Try to Tear It All Down?'
> *Rabble.ca* for Harsha Walia's 'Letter to Occupy Together Movement'

> And the other publications which first presented this work: *Black Agenda Report, Black Looks, The Boston Review, Bully Bloggers, ColorLines, El Enemigo Común, Hyphen Magazine, In Front & Center, Jadaliyya, Left Turn, N+1, The Nation, New Internationalist, The Occupied Times of London, Occupy Writers, Possible Futures, Social Text, Z Communications*.

We were not able to identify the creators of some of the images we've included. If you can put us in touch with any of these creators, we would be very grateful, and pleased to be able to give them the credit they deserve.

Friends, comrades, and relations have supplied us with a stream of postings, videos, and reports from their own encounters with Occupy – from the activities of the women's caucus in Boston to the tent boat in the 2011 Los Angeles Harbor Holiday Afloat parade. To Emily Achtenberg, Emily Forman, Grace Goodman, Michele Hardesty, Jamie Kelsey-Fry, Emma Lang, Bill V Mullen, Lenny Olin, Lily Paulina, Jane Queller, Jen Ridgley, John Simon, 'Pirate' Jenny Smith, Megan Wolff – our thanks.

Our love and gratitude go especially to Julie Abraham who, in addition to supplying our private encampment with all the comforts of home, lent us her skill as editor and photographer.

Amy Schrager Lang and **Daniel Lang/Levitsky**

Anonymous

NO I'M THE POET

NO YOU'RE THE POET

NO HE'S THE POET

NO THEY'RE THE POET

NO SHE'S THE POET

NO THAT'S THE POET

NO THIS IS THE POET

NO I'M THE POET

(repeat)

Eileen Myles
Over the human microphone at Liberty Plaza.

Introduction

The Politics of the Impossible

Amy Schrager Lang & Daniel Lang/Levitsky

> *I know that what I am asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every*
> *time, the impossible is the least that one can demand . . . .*
> – James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963)

Zuccotti Park lies about halfway between Wall Street and New York's City Hall, across the street from the construction site where the World Trade Center once stood. A dim, one-block-square paved plaza caught on all sides between looming office towers, it was constructed by US Steel in 1968 in exchange for a height bonus on an adjacent building. Once named and now again referred to by its occupiers as Liberty Plaza, Zuccotti Park is a 'privately owned public space', one of New York's many POPS, as they are dubbed, built in return for zoning variances granted to real-estate developers beginning in the 1960s as the wholesale privatization of public space transformed New York and other US cities.

On 17 September 2011, it was the fallback position for that day's planned action in the New York financial district to protest the dramatic and rapidly growing economic inequality and the equally dramatic increase in the political influence and impunity of corporations and financial institutions for which Wall Street is a metonym. Unlike city-owned parks (and most POPS), which have a curfew allowing the police to remove homeless New Yorkers, and anyone else, Zuccotti Park had no posted rules about hours of access.

The Occupy Wall Street encampment – which began as soon as it became apparent that the city could not order instant eviction and lasted until 15 November when, in a co-ordinated effort to disband Occupy sites all over the US, it was sacked by the police – grew steadily from September on. Locals and new arrivals to the city slept in the plaza; even larger numbers of people spent hours there each day. Working groups formed to meet the encampment's needs for food, sanitation, medical care, cultural and intellectual sustenance; a general assembly convened daily as the central decision-making body. In a remarkably short time, hundreds of Occupy encampments sprang up across the United States and elsewhere, particularly but

not only in Europe. In some places, organizations or clusters of individuals initiated planning meetings; in others, an online call brought people together for an initial action. While local histories, individual experiences, and specific strategies varied wildly, the first move in most places was to reclaim a public space and establish a full-time presence there in an effort to make concrete the outrage, hopes, despair and dreams of those who answered the call.

Our aim in this volume is neither to compile a narrative history of the events that began in the fall of 2011 nor to assemble contributions from the enormous and rich pool of writing about Occupy in journalistic, academic and other venues outside the movement. Nor do we mean to claim what can only be, especially at this stage of the movement, a fictional comprehensiveness. The multiplication of Occupy sites within and outside the United States alone would prohibit any such attempt but so, too, does the historical moment at which we are gathering these documents. With most Occupy encampments banned and dispersed, the open-ended communal space in which Occupy figured a politics of what we are told is impossible is, at least temporarily, gone. The question now is how to carry forward what we learned there. We are convinced that bringing together documents (verbal and visual) about Occupy by participants in Occupy – by those who are Occupy – will help mark the way.

Throughout this collection, we use 'Occupy' and 'Occupy/Decolonize' interchangeably to designate this new movement as a whole. Our reasons are multiple. We want, first, to credit the arguments against 'occupation' and the ways in which the word Occupy erases both histories of colonialism and experiences of military rule. But beyond this, our own active opposition to existing military occupations – in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Iraq – means the unmodified term 'Occupy' makes us queasy, even though OWS is, as a sign at Zuccotti Park says, 'an occupation a radical Jew can get behind.' Nonetheless, 'Occupy' has become the commonplace name for the movement, no matter how many of its participants feel, as we do, that 'Reclaim' or 'Decolonize' better suit its realities and aims.

Dreaming in Public is, then, an assemblage of documents, both texts and images, produced within the political movement that emerged in the wake of Occupy Wall Street largely for its own use. What binds these documents together is their producers' efforts to address their own role in the development of a new politics. They record interventions in the movement's actions and its understanding of itself, and articulate essential, if often painful, disagreements among participants. They recount attempts on the part of individuals

to explain what they, themselves, are doing in the movement. They capture and reflect both the ethic of participation that drives Occupy and its remarkable inventiveness. They grow out of, and feed, the crucial sense shared by individual actors in Occupy of their own centrality to the movement – and their commonality.

*   *   *

If we appear to seek the unattainable, as it has been said,
then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable.
– Port Huron Statement (1962)

Once, it might be argued, progressive political discourse in the United States was dominated by the idea that the Truth, if revealed with sufficient force, would not only set us free but also return us to a path immanent in the founding documents of the nation. Martin Luther King Jr's promised land was, after all, 'promised', there to be seen from the mountaintop by a new Moses, and guaranteed moreover by the national rhetoric of civil rights, human equality and justice; were the Constitution only respected, the war in Vietnam, being both immoral in its conduct and illegal in its basis, would, of necessity, be ended; women having at long last attained full legal citizenship, their rights would seem to be self-evident. In short, a 'true' America was lurking within the real one, if we could only recover it. The political Jeremiad, with its appeal to the nation to return to its 'ideals' and thereby avert imminent downfall – now intoned primarily and vociferously by the Right – was, if nothing else, politically useful to progressives at a time when reform seemed possible, when to demand voting rights, the end to an unauthorized war, political and social equality was only, after all, to ask America to be 'America' again.

If this account seems to impute naïveté to 20th-century social movements, that is emphatically not our intent: the architects and the actors in these movements were hardly ignorant of either the reality of power relations in the United States or the difficulty of the tasks they assumed – or, for that matter, the lengths to which their opposition would go in order to thwart them. Likewise, we do not mean to imply some monolithic agreement within or among movements on the Left about the nature (or plausibility) of 'demands,' much less about the most effective language of political persuasion. Nonetheless, the invocation of a 'true' America, which defined the political and social landscape for so long, is precisely what Occupy steps away from, however tentatively.

If there is one consensus apparent in the documents in this volume,

it is that 'demands' cannot be made, that they are not meaningful in a time when an apparently seamless social and economic order is able to absorb and sell back to us anything that can be contained and marketed. As relentlessly global in its scope as it is intensely personal in its reach, this all-encompassing world system can, after all, appropriate a demand as easily as it can a political icon, a 'subversive' lifestyle, a 'progressive' ideal. As the 'Declaration of the Occupation of New York City' proclaims, its hand, no longer invisible, can be seen everywhere in a country in which extremes of poverty and wealth have reached historic levels without any attention to their redress, in which the electoral process has been sold to the highest bidder, in which both unemployment and actual or prospective homelessness are understood as problems to be solved by the private corporate interests that now control the greater part of the national wealth, in which 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people' seems, in fact, to have perished from the earth. 'This list,' as the Declaration is careful to remind its readers, 'is not all-inclusive.'

If ideas of the 'general welfare' or 'the common good' have been met and vanquished by the privatization of everything from prisons, utilities, schools and social services to emotional life; if contingent (or, in the case of interns, unpaid) labor is an increasingly acceptable norm; if retirement pensions and healthcare are luxuries to be bargained away by unions or flatly withdrawn by employers; if Congress need not declare war or acknowledge peace, US citizens can be summarily executed without trial, and non-citizens held in 'indefinite detention' at Guantánamo or in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers; if clean water, food, and air – or even planetary survival – are no longer matters of governmental concern, then what? If everything and, therefore, nothing constitutes a 'community', which is to say a target market for commodities, policies, or both – from 'the Intelligence community' to 'the Public Broadcasting community' to 'the knitting community' – if, in short, there is nothing but *this*, what is there to demand except everything?

Part, then, of what has been taken by insiders and outsiders alike as radically new in the Occupy movement is its stalwart refusal to proclaim an authoritative set of putatively answerable demands. To yield to the demand for 'demands' would be to credit existing social and political institutions with the will and the ability to correct the ills that afflict us. It would be to put faith in the self-correcting power of the state or of capitalism, in the ameliorative power of NGOs or the mythical transcendent force of 'civil society'. And this in the absence of all evidence.

In this respect, the rejection of demands on the part of Occupy mirrors a broader rejection of older terms of political struggle. Rather than assuming that the shape of the world we want to build can be found in a pre-existing blueprint – the Constitution, *Das Kapital*, or the Algerian, Cuban, Nicaraguan revolutions – Occupy offers 'continuous practice' in the present – that is, a process of trying things out, seeing what works, and changing direction based on the results – as a method both for letting go of existing structures of living and for devising new ones. Unlike 'progressive' movements that work to prefigure a particular improved future, Occupy assumes neither a single answer nor an endpoint to social transformation.

Which is not to say Occupy is unprecedented. The history of its various elements can, needless to say, be traced back into the 19th century and before, but Occupy draws most directly on forms within US social justice movements since World War Two. The emphasis on daily practice, on experimentation with new structures for directly meeting the needs of participants and communities, follows examples set by the Black Panther Party's citizens' patrols and free breakfast programs, the Women's Liberation Movement's autonomous feminist health clinics and safe houses, and other similar projects in the 1960s and 1970s. Its insistence on total transformation rather than a list of demands echoes the Gay Liberation Front and the Women's Liberation Movement of the same period, as well as projects inspired by the May 1968 uprising of students and workers in Paris and the Situationist politics connected to it. The principles and practices of participatory democracy that have become a hallmark of Occupy have a long history, most conspicuously in Students for a Democratic Society and among second-wave feminists. Finally, the ways in which Occupy/Decolonize weaves together global and local scales of struggle and analysis mirror the practices developed in the 1990s and 2000s by parts of the radical environmental movement, by No Borders collectives and encampments that combine analyses of the economics that drive migration and the state policies that seek to control it, and by ACT UP-Philadelphia, which, far more than other chapters, has successfully addressed global access to treatment for HIV/AIDS alongside local access to services.

More immediately, however, the reclamation of public spaces, and the language of 'occupying' them, that gave Occupy its initial shape emerged from a strategic shift that took place over the late 2000s. After the crest of the urban squatting movement of the 1980s, building and space reclamation actions became much less common in the US. When they did happen, they were almost always symbolic,

looking to media impact or public visibility as the source of their effectiveness. From corporate and government office takeovers to university building occupations, holding space indefinitely was a largely rhetorical goal, not part of these actions' concrete strategy. Longer-term reclamation and squatting continued, but almost never as public actions.

Soon after the start of the foreclosure wave of 2008, however, several groups – most notably Miami's Take Back the Land – began a public campaign of moving evicted families into vacant houses. Other projects focusing on housing and homelessness took inspiration from Take Back the Land and brought its strategies to bear elsewhere in the country. The tactic emerged in other movements as well, to a limited degree – in 2008, the workers at Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors held a 10-day sit-down strike to prevent a plant closure, the first in decades; and in February 2011, workers, students and community supporters set up a fully functioning community of occupiers within the Wisconsin state capitol building in an attempt to block anti-union legislation proposed by Governor Scott Walker.

Each of these uses of long-term reclamation – of 'occupation' – wears on its sleeve connections to movements outside the US. Take Back the Land (and other housing justice organizations like New York City's Picture the Homeless) takes the ongoing Brazilian Landless Movement (MST: Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra), begun in 1985, as a model and reference point. The workers at Republic cited as a precedent the many factories reclaimed in Argentina after the 2001 financial crisis alongside the US auto and steel sit-down strikes of the 1930s. And at the Wisconsin state capitol, the Egyptian revolution, taking place simultaneously, was frequently invoked. This desire to understand what's happening as part of something international, to think of local events as intimately linked to movements outside the US, carries on into Occupy/Decolonize.

In other aspects of the movement as well, local and international prehistories intertwine. Many of the specific methods used in Occupy's participatory democratic structure come from particular recent histories in the US. The hand-gestures used at OWS to show agreement and make various kinds of process intervention, which have come to signify Occupy's process as a whole, are a good example. They were adapted from those used in 1999-2002 by the NYC Direct Action Network, which in turn extended the adoption of American Sign Language applause by activist groups in California to speed up meetings by replacing clapping (which cuts off spoken discussion) with a silent show of approval. Similarly, Occupy/Decolonize working

group and spokescouncil structures come directly out of a lineage leading back through the global justice movement of the early 2000s through ACT UP and the continuing movement to close the School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Co-operation) to feminist anti-militarist organizing of the 1970s and 1980s.

But, again, international sources abound: the non-hierarchical leadership structures the Zapatistas have developed in the years since their rebellion against the Mexican state began in 1994; the Popular Assemblies through which neighborhoods in Argentina organized themselves against austerity measures and international debt in 2001, ousting four presidents along the way; the subsequent, rather different, forms of assemblies developed in Oaxaca, Spain and Italy. These models share Occupy's approach of building towards an unknown other world through continuous practice, perhaps best summarized in the words of Antonio Machado adopted as a motto by many Zapatista-inspired groups: *se hace el camino al andar* – 'we make the road by walking'.

Just as the interweaving of recent local and international influences on Occupy/Decolonize reflects resistance to neoliberal economics, to Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund, and to 'austerity' budgets both within the US and elsewhere, so too were the local post-World War Two movements which make up the movement's earlier prehistory intertwined with those abroad – the US face of anti-colonial struggles from Vietnam to Algeria to South Africa, student uprisings from Paris to Tokyo to Mexico City, and so on. The felt affinity that has produced the slogan 'Arab Spring, European Summer, American Fall' is the same affinity alluded to in the phrase 'Two, Three, Many Vietnams', drawn from a 1966 speech by Che Guevara. But the basis of that affinity is radically different. Whereas the earlier phrase announces solidarity against a common enemy – colonialism and US imperialism – the current one evokes the shared *form* of struggle: participatory, leaderless, horizontally structured, inclusive and demanding everything.

* * *

In the day I would be reminded of those men and women
Brave, setting up signals across vast distances,
Considering a nameless way of living, of almost unimagined values.
– Muriel Rukeyser, 'Poem' (1968)

If the problem with 'having no demands' is that a movement can

slide – or be thought of as sliding – into demanding nothing, Occupy suggests that the antidote lies in building something, together, that can begin to provide what people feel is missing from their lives. The names of some of the first OWS Working Groups speak to those lacunae: Comfort; The People's Kitchen; Town Planning; The People's Library; Sustainability; Sanitation.

Many of the essays and photographs in this collection detail the infrastructure of Occupy encampments, which are widely understood to embody the movement's strengths and its ethos. The effectiveness of this infrastructure at meeting the basic needs of participants in Occupy/Decolonize – food, clothing, medicine, human connection, intellectual and cultural excitement – has made it possible for the movement to devote its energy to stubborn problems that many political movements shelve. In the absence of 'a demand', and in the presence of an ethic of participation, there is no need – or excuse – to postpone addressing these lasting tensions until after the moment of struggle. The shared assumption is not merely that there is no value in deferring conflict, but rather that fully engaging conflict is itself generative, necessary and valuable.

Perhaps the biggest tension afflicting the movement – as an internal matter and a constantly repeated challenge from outside – revolves around the meaning of 'the 99%', as a rhetorical device and as a description of Occupy's constituency. In New York City, for example, where the slogan originated, the 53 per cent of New Yorkers who are women, the 67 per cent who are people of color, the 37 per cent who are immigrants, pose a demographic complication to any assumed common interest or shared experience. The very things the slogan implicitly appeals to as a basis of unity – unemployment, debt, foreclosure and eviction, 'middle class' status – weigh so differently in different communities that fractures appear, however strongly felt is the desire for unity.

But, as this volume makes clear, the problem exceeds demography. Who counts as the 99%? Cops? Ron Paul libertarians? Sectarian leftists? Can a movement committed to inclusivity draw a political boundary around itself? Must it allow full participation to all comers? By what means can these questions be decided, and how can a decision, once reached, be enforced?

Beyond demographic complexity and political boundary-marking lies another facet of this same tension – one in relation to which the slogan of 'the 99%' is never invoked. One of the most fraught and contentious debates over inclusion within Occupy concerns 'disruptive behavior' – what constitutes it, who is understood

to engage in it, and who can be excluded from what because of it. Undoubtedly, the heat of these debates is generated in part because they conjure up questions of demography and boundary-marking yet allow decisions about exclusion to be presented as wholly individual, and by this means depoliticized. So, for example, from Oakland to London, 'bad behavior' is ascribed more often than not to participants in Occupy/Decolonize encampments who arrived already 'homeless' or impoverished, who are people of color, who are (or are assumed to be) substance users, who are read as disabled. The greater the number of these descriptions that can be applied to a given person, the more likely their actions are to be labeled as 'disruptive'.

Which is not to say that Occupy's decision-making processes and daily practice are immune to genuinely problematic behavior or the genuine misuse of process. Both problems do indeed exist. But the terms in which 'disruption' are usually broached mask their deeply political nature and allow 'bad behavior' to be dealt with as an issue of etiquette.

If the meaning of the 99% is one broad question through which the tensions within Occupy play out, the value of encampment – of holding public space, in full view, with no planned end-point – is another. First of all, there is deep disagreement over the strategic value of encampment as opposed to other forms of activity – over putting in place a new kind of space to demonstrate (on however small a scale) the viability of change, as opposed to movement-building strategies not tied to a specific location, such as direct actions, closer relationships with labor unions, neighborhood assemblies, popular education projects, and so on.

Beyond that strategic difference, some see the daily life of the encampments as checking antagonisms and building unity by creating an arena in which strangers meet and talk under a presumption of easy, direct communication across a wide range of differences, and in which resources are owned by no one and available to everyone. Others see the encampments as a source of division. From their point of view, the silver lining to the wholesale eviction of Occupy encampments during the winter was that it put to rest disputes between those for whom the movement's future centers on the encampments and those advocating movement-building in other forms.

Behind both of these positions lies the question of space itself. The unquestionable impact of maintaining a long-term physical presence in public space is what allowed Occupy/Decolonize to capture the world's imagination and proliferate with such astonishing rapidity. In part, defying the apparent impossibility of successfully taking control

of public space away from its usual corporate and government keepers both literalized and symbolized the power of the people, of the 99%. Taking space in this way also made participation – working in the kitchen, hauling trash, screenprinting t-shirts, amplifying someone else's voice during a mic check – the basis of the movement, rather than adherence to a political platform or social compact. By allowing the lines between observer, visitor and active participant to become permeable, by reclaiming space and time, Occupy encampments simultaneously instantiated a better future and spoke clearly to the present.

But what happens when a material space reclamation – one that insists on and defends its permanent autonomous control of its terrain – becomes symbolic, that is, temporary, existing as an idea not a place? We don't yet know. That, in large part, is the question that Occupy/Decolonize faces in 2012. We do know, however, that the relationships between Occupy and other movements and organizations will change as the structure of their activities becomes, in some respects at least, more similar. How those relationships play out will itself affect the movement's decisions about re-establishing encampments, and indeed may make available wider possibilities. The continuities between Occupy as encampment, as direct-action movement, as educational and organizing project, as cultural force, remain an open question, one that participants will work out through practice and argument over the next few months and in the longer term – finding different answers as the movement's needs and conditions change.

*   *   *

Thus we presume to write, as it were, upon things that exist not, and travel by maps yet unmade, and a blank.
– Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1871)

It's tempting to see Occupy as a 'prefigurative' project. We've become accustomed to using that phrase for endeavors that are based on participation, and that point to concrete possibilities for a different, better, world. And Occupy can look like that.

But implicit in 'prefiguration' is the idea that the present can only be a foreshadowing of a future reality, not a reality itself. It assumes a fundamental separation between our present work and the world we hope to bring into being. We want to argue that what Occupy has accomplished is not the shadowing forth of a promised future, but rather the creation, on however small a scale, of a present reality.

Not an act of prefiguration but an act of construction. That is to say, its energy – in encampments, in meetings and in street actions – is devoted to building present alternatives to failed structures and policies. However utopian, Occupy does not proceed in accordance with an abstract blueprint for the future; on the contrary, its design emerges from daily process and practice.

What Occupy creates, though its participatory ethos and its commitment to continuous and self-conscious reconsideration of what it does and how, is a sense of social protagonism: a sense that each of us is at the center of an ongoing and, crucially, a *collective* history. Neither the mediated communication of cyberspace nor the putative individualism of the corporate marketplace will do; we must all talk face to face and together about how to reshape a world gone awry.

None of us knows what comes next; we will build it together.