

## **Horizontal Pedagogy in Occupy Wall Street: Operationalizing Andy Merrifield’s Theory of the Encounter**

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Citation: Backer, D.I. (2016). “Horizontal Pedagogy in Occupy Wall Street: Operationalizing Andy Merrifield’s Theory of the Encounter.” *The SoJo Journal: Educational Foundations and Social Justice Education*, Vol. 1 (2), pp.51-63

Andy Merrifield (2011, 2013) calls for a right to the city-as-politics of the encounter. The politics of encounter is a “modality of presence” that will always be an “encounter *somewhere*, a spatial meeting place.” During such an encounter participants find themselves “concretely alongside others,” (2011, p. 475) and a certain kind of “affinity” develops between them, which both expresses and acts on their right to space. Merrifield elaborates:

Here, affinity becomes the cement that bonds...In desiring another reality, in inventing it, in willing it up, people find their kindred souls...and in finding one another they struggle together for the realization of common hopes. People create a group commonality because of a taking hold of bodies and minds in space, on the street, face-to-face through ‘strong-tie’ offline activism and online through virtual ‘weak-tie’ association.” (2011, p.474)

This essay operationalizes Merrifield’s notion of the encounter for educational purposes. When “people find their kindred souls” and “struggle together for the realization of common hopes,”

what does that look like for people learning, teaching, and studying? Can activists and classroom teachers facilitate “a group commonality” where “bodies and minds” are taken hold of? In other words, are there *pedagogies* for Merrifield’s encounter? What are the procedures, rituals, exercises, and habits of such a pedagogy? What is the relationship between encountering, educational interaction, and “taking hold...of space” in the way he describes?

There may be many such pedagogies, but this essay will focus on a particular set of educational practices which emerged during the Occupy Wall Street movement called horizontal pedagogy. While Occupy Wall Street was one big encounter according to Merrifield, horizontal pedagogy specified procedures, rituals, and exercises with which students and activists might “take hold” of their minds and bodies in space to “struggle together for the realization of common hopes” while teaching, studying, and learning. The paper summarizes Merrifield’s notion of the encounter, details the emergence of horizontal pedagogy within Occupy Wall Street, and interprets the pedagogy’s procedures as a set of exercises meant to create encounter. Turn-taking in particular is a ritual that can “take hold” of space, which the paper demonstrates by citing personal correspondence of the horizontal pedagogy workshop activists during their meetings in Trump Tower in Midtown Manhattan, between 2011-2012. The thesis here is that the group *began to take* the privately-owned public space in Trump Tower by taking the floor in turns, and the paper concludes with a reflection on how, in so doing, the group asserted its right to Trump Tower with a politics of the encounter through horizontal pedagogy.

*Merrifield’s Encounter*

The passages from Merrifield above were published in an essay in June 2011--only months before the Occupy movement began in September. In 2013 Merrifield published the book *The Politics of the Encounter*, reflecting on Occupy as a paradigm case of political encounter. While Merrifield's perennial focus is the French philosopher and urbanist Henri Lefebvre, in the chapter of *Politics* called "The Politics of Encounter" Merrifield engages with the French Marxist Louis Althusser, whose later writings take up the theme of encountering. Reading Althusser (who in the text Merrifield interprets as reading the ancient philosopher Lucretius), Merrifield characterizes the encounter in terms of atoms and swerving. Lucretius is known for his ontology of atoms, particles moving in certain directions, which together constitute reality. Althusser interprets this ontology as a theory of history and social change, and, with Lucretius, speculates that there can be a "swerve" in the atoms' movements, where the atoms shift from their set paths to new ones. Conjunctions, for example, are confluences of relatively autonomous actions taken by individuals in different regions of society which, at certain moments of struggle, form contradictions which overdetermine the social formation, weakening it, and leaving the social formation vulnerable to change (Althusser & Balibar 1997, Gramsci 1971, p. 217). Encounters between individuals and regions of society can occur within those conjunctions, which then move, grate, and pressure one another in particular ways like tectonic plates. The urban, Merrifield adds, is one such space in which people get together during such movements and congregate. In so doing they occasion a swerve in society, taking history in a different direction. Towards the middle of this chapter on Althusser there is one passage that is particularly helpful when thinking through what pedagogical form of activity might be best for operationalizing this swerve. Writing about participants in Occupy, Merrifield claims that they

gel because of affinity, because of a common identification, because they share and want to express common notions about themselves and about the world. Meanwhile, the gelling takes hold quasi-anarchically. Decisions are made by consensus, within the General Assembly, facilitated through debate and discussion, not via domination. (2013, p.65)

Earlier in the chapter Merrifield writes that “[t]he world of history gels at certain felicitous moments...takes hold radiantly...” (2013, p. 57) Whereas “gels” in this sentence refers to currents of history, gelling in the above longer passage refers to people getting together in cities, taking to the streets and “emulsifying” into groups with a common purpose. In each case there is an unavoidable density--one of people, the other historical currents--creating a force which “radiantly takes hold” of a certain moment and changes the course of a social formation, like an atom swerving in the Lucretian theory. “Meanwhile,” during such a moment, Merrifield elaborates, “the gelling takes hold” through facilitated “debate and discussions.” As the gelling moment occurs, at the same time, the gelling process “takes hold”--which might mean solidifies, roots, or grips--through forms of concrete communication like “discussion.” Discussion in this case is a way to solidify, root, and grip a swerve: a means to guarantee an encounter’s strength and viability, and ultimately force a change in the social formation. Merrifield does not go further to specify how this happens, and that is the pedagogical task of this essay. People speaking to each other in certain ways (through discussion, e.g.) is one operation or pedagogical activity that can force or occasion swerves at large scales. Discussion can be, in other words, a pedagogy of the swerve.

*Discussing and Encountering: Taking the Floor, Beginning to Take Space*

To operationalize this notion of encounter, we might say that discussing with a mixed sequence of turns expresses a right to the space in which it occurs. People who discuss with a mixed sequence of turns stoke and strengthen an encounter. One phrase from Merrifield's earlier essay stands out in drawing this connection between discussing and encountering, where he writes that the people in an encounter "become space." "For in any politics of the encounter," he observes

it's not in space that people act: *people become space* by acting. Nothing is scenic anymore, nothing is necessarily urban; nothing is frill or redundant, alienating or thing-like; all action, all human connectivity, each body, if it really connects, literally fills the space, breathes, and participants' own bodies become the major scenic element, the spatial form as well as the spatial content. To that degree, the politics of the encounter will always be an encounter somewhere, a spatial meeting place. It will always be an illicit rendezvous of human bonding and solidarity... (p.475)

The first sentence of this passage contains an important difference. Some interactions occur "in space" where people act. A group of workers do their work "in" the factory space; students their learning "in" school; activists do their work "in" a community space. Such interactions where people act "in" a space are not a politics of the encounter. Rather, in a politics of the encounter "people become space by acting." They are not contained by the space. They actually become the space as they interact with one another. Encounters do not happen "in" spaces but rather "become" spaces. Another way of making this distinction in terms of discussion is that participants talking in a mixed sequence of turns do not discuss "in" their meeting place, but rather "become" that meeting place. They do not sit in the space, but the space sits in them. (Backer 2016) The participants take that space for themselves. Thus, during an encounter "people become space" through actions where bodies fill space and become "the major scenic element," enacting a "spatial form" as well as a "spatial content." An encounter happens in a

“meeting place,” which is obviously a ground, land, building, or area. Yet there is something psychological and political--something dangerous, communal, and connected--about this encounter which is not reducible to the meeting space itself. “Nothing is necessarily urban” or “scenic” during the encounter, and the participants’ experiences are neither “thing-like” nor “alienated.” The “illicit rendezvous” of the encounter happens in a “moment” that is concrete, built, and locational (happening in the meeting space) and abstract, subjective, and intersubjective (“human bonding and solidarity”). This is what it means for people to “become space” in an encounter. They are not “in” the space, the space is in them. In this way, they express their right to the city by discussing

Think of the idiomatic expression “taking the floor” in reference to speech and communication. There is a rich tradition in sociolinguistics and conversation analysis, starting with Goffman (1981), which examines the significance of turn-taking. Some scholars identify “having the floor” with taking a turn, whereas others disagree that the two are identical (Edelsky 1993). While they are not exactly the same the two are intimately related, argues Carole Edelsky, in “Who’s Got the Floor?” Summarizing the literature on this subject she writes that “[f]loor? ... is used to mean a space (that part of the chamber occupied by members), participants (members of an assembly), and a right to be heard.” (Edelsky 205) She goes on to define “the floor” as as “the acknowledged what’s-going-on within a psychological time/space.” For her, “what’s going on” can be “developed or controlled” by one or more people, and is “official, in that, if questioned, participants could describe what’s going on” as some subject or object of attention. She later claims, when analyzing data, that the floor is both psychological and spatial and “jointly produced.” (211) Edelsky’s notion of the floor concretizes Merrifield’s encounter in that

it is both a psychological and spatial entity co-created by speakers assembling and interacting through speech. When someone takes the floor, there is both a meeting space and a right to be heard, a collective acknowledgement of what's going on in that place at that time. Reading Merrifield with Edelsky, an encounter is one such interaction where the geographical and intersubjective aspects of an assembly--the people and their bodies in that moment, their feelings, thoughts, hopes--*become* the space when they take the floor in a mixed sequence. The speakers become the "scenic" element of the space, as Merrifield writes above. When each of them take the floor in the space, each of them become what's going on as they speak about what's going on in that space. Merrifield writes that during the encounter "all human connectivity, each body, if it really connects, literally fills the space." Taking the floor is a way of "literally" filling space, each body becoming the "scenic element." The speakers "talk back" to one another, upending traditional relations of production. The people discussing become the space, begin to take the space, in which they discuss. In short: taking the floor in equal and mixed turns begins to take the space.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis about *discussion beginning to take space* advocates a Marxist interpretation of the conversation analysis tradition represented by Edelsky to illuminate how mixed turn-taking in discussion is a pedagogical operationalization of Merrifield's politics of encounter. In a telling phrase, Goffman writes that when a person has the floor, the speaker's body "is a marker of various preserves, such as space and turns." (Edelsky 205) When all the participants in a

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<sup>1</sup> I write "begins to take" rather than "take" to signal that merely talking somewhere in turns with a group is different than actually taking that space for yourself or community. For example, what the horizontal pedagogy group did in Trump Tower (see below) is different than what Occupiers did in Zuccotti Park, which is different than what the Zapatistas did in their province in 1994. Zuccotti did not become an *eijido* (non-enclosed space, see Caffenzitis 2015), nor did Trump Tower become an occupation. However, my speculation is that what happened in Trump could be the *beginning* of what eventually becomes an Occupation or *eijido*.

discussion take the floor in mixed turns, their bodies become markers which preserve the space in which they speak. That marking of preservation is the action of encounter in Merrifield's sense, when the participants no longer interact "in" space but rather *become* the space during interaction. In this case, discussion is the pedagogical procedure which induces the encounter. Again, while Merrifield uses the verb "become," I would propose using "begin to take" in a discussion encounter. Since the members of the discussion each take the floor in their political encounter, they begin to take the space: it is neither a full-on taking of the space (like a Zapatistan *ejido*) nor an occupation of the space (like Zuccotti Park during Occupy Wall Street, as we will see), but rather an operation which takes a first step to taking space.

### *Occupy Wall Street as Encounter*

The Occupy Wall Street movement took Zuccotti Park on September 17th, 2011. The action was advertised in the magazine *Adbusters* beginning in July 2011. From the event description published there we read "#OCCUPYWALLSTREET: On September 17th, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, and peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street." On September 17th protesters went to Wall Street and simply did not leave (see Gould-Wartofsky 2014). They flooded Zuccotti Park in the heart of the financial district only a few blocks away from the New York Stock Exchange. The occupiers established a community through a complex organization of working groups, which used direct-democratic facilitation procedures centered on the daily meeting of a general assembly. The nascent community considered proposals brought to the general assembly, moving forward with actions if all members expressed consent. The occupiers were committed to intentional, consensus-based facilitation practices, and it is



worth noting that the origins of the Occupy Wall Street movement can be traced, in one telling, to an encounter in the Merrifieldian sense: a circle-style, consensus-based general assembly.

The anthropologist David Graeber recounts how the Occupy Movement idea began in this way in an autobiographical piece for the website *Naked Capitalism*. In the following anecdote Graeber walks around with a friend, watching activists confer at an advertised “general assembly” addressing the potential for organizing a large-scale collective action. The “general assembly” turned into more of a rally, and Graeber narrates how he and his friend used consensus-based communication tactics to change the direction of the event.

...as I paced about the Green, I noticed something. To adopt activist parlance: this wasn't really a crowd of verticals—that is, the sort of people whose idea of political action is to march around with signs under the control of one or another top-down protest movement. They were mostly pretty obviously horizontals: people more sympathetic with anarchist principles of organization, non-hierarchical forms of direct democracy, and direct action. I quickly spotted at least one Wobbly, a young Korean activist I remembered from some Food Not Bombs event, some college students wearing Zapatista paraphernalia, a Spanish couple who'd been involved with the indignados in Madrid... I found my Greek friends, an American I knew from street battles in Quebec during the Summit of the Americas in 2001, now turned labor organizer in Manhattan, a Japanese activist intellectual I'd known for years... My Greek friend looked at me and I looked at her and we both instantly realized the other was thinking the same thing: “Why are we so complacent? Why is it that every time we see something like this happening, we just mutter things and go home?” – though I think the way we put it was more like, “You know something? Fuck this shit. They advertised a general assembly. Let's hold one.” So we gathered up a few obvious horizontals and formed a circle, and tried to get everyone else to join us...After about an hour of drama...almost everyone abandoned the rally and came over to our side. We created a decision-making process (we would operate by modified consensus) broke out into working groups (outreach, action, facilitation) and then reassembled to allow each group to report its collective decisions, and set up times for new meetings of both the smaller and larger groups. (Graeber 2011)

These initial circles thought of the 99% concept and planned the initial stages of the occupation of Wall Street. This foundational story carries within it a kind of metaphor for one of the interventions Occupy made as a social movement in general. In a hierarchical environment of

complacency where a certain status quo of interaction reigned, a circular and horizontal pattern of communication interrupted that status quo. Facilitated breakout groups and modified consensus--a prioritization of turn-taking and participatory communication--changed the momentum of activist discourse Graeber describes, just as Occupy, when it became a worldwide phenomenon, changed global discourse and action. Occupy was born out of an encounter which Graeber and his friend facilitated, and Occupy became a large-scale encounter on September 17th.

### *The Emergence of Horizontal Pedagogy*

I found Occupy Wall Street as a graduate student in New York City. I read the Adbuster's call published in an independently weekly, and went to the park shortly after the New York City General Assembly (GA) was formed at Zuccotti. By the time I arrived, there were hundreds of people attending the evening GA. We stood together outside the skyscrapers where Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Bank, Bank of America and other huge firms had offices. The privately-owned public space became a center of gravity drawing and repulsing people. Naked bodies painted with crossed-out dollar signs danced around in a drum circle while men in suits carrying briefcases and smartphones walked by quickly, each group looking at the other. Police lined the sidewalks surrounding the encampment, watching as all manner of pedestrian came and went, joining the occupation for a few minutes, the day, or the week. The People's Library, People's Kitchen, and Think Tank were buzzing with ongoing conversations, meals, and book deliveries among the small regions of tents, sleeping bags, and carpeted areas the occupiers called home.

Construction crews were tearing up the street on both sides of the park that September, so the participants of the GA used the human microphone to amplify the meeting. Agenda items were projected on a huge screen, beneath which activists typed on haphazardly wired networks of laptops, desktops, soundboards, and smartphones. The human mic emanated from the front of the assembly to the back, needing three or four repetitions before everyone could hear. Everyone on the agenda got an opportunity to speak, whether it was a short announcement or a prolonged proposal necessitating clarifications, points of information, and working groups to deliberate. I stood for an hour or so, watching and listening. Members of the assembly periodically twinkled their fingers in the air, which I found out meant that they agreed with what was being said. One of the short announcements was that the Empowerment and Education Working Group (E&E) was planning to meet to agree on an organizational structure in 60 Wall Street, an indoor public space just outside the Wall Street 2/3 subway stop. E&E had become the central working group for those interested in educational issues, and a number of subcommittees formed within it including Open Forum, Occupy Student Debt Campaign, and later the Free University. Another subcommittee, formed early in the occupation, was known as Nomadic University. Cognizant even at the outset that the occupation would end, members of the Nomadic University subcommittee of E&E proposed to create an institution that would carry the flame of Zuccotti Park by teaching, learning, and studying in ways consistent with the occupation.

Nomadic University drew artists, intellectuals, professors, students, and workers to its meetings. Members of this subcommittee formed task forces devoted to particular organizational goals for creating a university. There was a task force devoted to curriculum (what subjects, themes, or ideas would the university address?), a task force devoted to outreach, and another

task force to analyze particular concepts and definitions necessary for the creation of an educational institution consistent with the Occupy movement. In addition to the large working group meetings, and the smaller Nomadic University subcommittee meetings, these task forces met weekly. The final group I mentioned—the Concepts and Definitions Task Force of the Nomadic University subcommittee of the Empowerment and Education working group—held meetings to discuss the meaning and significance of words like nomadism, university, hospitality, and emancipation in the context of creating a university. After one week of work at Zuccotti Park and participating in the first meeting of the Nomadic University subcommittee, I joined this task force, which was called “C&D,” and held meetings throughout October and November in conjunction with the larger Nomadic University meetings and the still-yet larger Empowerment and Education meetings.

The Occupation at Zuccotti Park was violently evicted by New York City police on November 15, 2011. C&D had been meeting in a number of privately-owned public spaces at that time, and was looking for a new home. Searching a website listing all the POPS throughout New York City, the task force eventually settled on the POPS in Trump Tower on 57<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Trump Tower is located at 725 Fifth Avenue in Midtown Manhattan, between 56 and 57th streets. Located around the corner from The Plaza Hotel, Bergdorf Goodman department store, and the Apple Store off of Central Park South, the 68-floor mixed-use skyscraper was completed in 1983 by Donald J. Trump, the builder-cum-presidential candidate. “[J]ust past the bronze-and-obsidian-glass doors” of the entrance to the Tower is “a pair of mahogany counters,” and an atrium “lined with golden mirrors, Gucci logos and an 80-foot waterfall.” (Chaban 2015)

Trump launched his 2016 bid for the presidency next to this building, which includes a privately-owned public space (POPS) in part of its atrium. POPS, like the name says, are spaces designated as public areas within privately-owned buildings. When New York City government passed its 1961 Zoning Resolution it “encouraged private developers to provide spaces for the public within or outside their buildings.” The Trump Atrium resulted from this agreement between private builders and city government. (“History,” Nyc.gov.) This workshop had two functions. First, horizontal pedagogy was an ongoing course offered by Nomadic University. Second, members of this workshop facilitated other courses that Nomadic University offered (and changed its name to Occupy University in January 2011). Members of the horizontal pedagogy workshop facilitated meetings of courses like Studying May Day, Poetry and Political Feeling, Radical Economics, Critical Walking, and Occupy Algebra. The basic list of procedures the group put together was the following.

**Introduction** (say what you’re there to do, where the group has been up until now);

**Check-in** (everyone goes around and says their name, preferred gender pronouns, and something else--typically how they’re feeling);

**Physical Education** (the group agrees to do some kind of embodied movement or exercises);

**Examination** (everyone looks at something closely together);

**Collective Questioning** (participants ask questions about the thing under examination while the facilitator writes them down);

**Discussion** (address the question(s) with equal and various turn-taking); and

**Debrief** (talk about how the discussion went; this procedure may happen either at the end

of the present interaction or at the beginning of the next as part of the introduction). (For more on the history and practice of horizontal pedagogy (see Backer, Biseen, Wozniak *et al* 2016).

These practices form a pedagogy which might be understood as an operationalization of Merrifield's notion of the encounter through discussion. What members of the workshop say about Trump Tower in emails and conversations following our work in C&D speaks to the way in which, by taking turns, we began to take that space. A more detailed history of the pedagogy using email correspondence from members of C&D follows, with an emphasis on descriptions of the group members' feelings about Trump Tower, the space in which their experimentation took place.

#### *Taking Turns/Beginning to Take Trump Tower*

As the set of procedures above took shape through reflection and experimentation, the members expressed sentiments about the space which indicate that the horizontal pedagogy workshop "took" the space: by taking the floor together in Trump Tower, the gaudy skyscraper became a place of warmth, excitement, bonding, and solidarity for some of the members.<sup>2</sup> The key insight is that as the members of the workshop met, conversed, and ensured discussion throughout their educational process they stoked and strengthened their interactions into encounters: taking the floor, taking the space.

Immediately after C&D's first meeting in Trump Tower, before the Levin experiment, one member wrote in an email: "that was a great meeting. made me think a lot, and challenged

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<sup>2</sup> It is essential to note here that not everyone agreed with the warmth, bonding, and solidarity that some of the members expressed in their emails. There were ways in which the group was exclusive to others, who expressed such sentiments in emails as well.

some of my previous assumptions. thanks for that. also, the trump tower was surreal. i'm still shaken by that." This member felt "shaken" by the meeting, saying that "trump tower was surreal." This phrase about the space has at least two meanings. First, the experience s/he had at Trump Tower was surreal, beyond belief, incongruous and uncanny. The second meaning, which is both more literal and more figurative, is that the space itself became surreal. Recalling Merrifield's formulation of "becoming space," an interaction occasions the removal of a space's "scenic" quality and becomes a non-alienating space, a non-redundant space, which Member A's email exemplifies. Perhaps this surreal sensation was the experience of an "illicit rendezvous," as Merrifield writes: a radical leftist group discussing emancipation in Trump Tower. Thinking and challenging previous assumptions there in Trump Tower "shook" them, leaving them with a feeling of gratitude. Member B also expressed gratitude in their response to Member A, "I would like to offer an expression of gratitude to you all for our encounters. I woke up today energized, perplexed, thinking, and with the "feeling of existence" that is so so difficult to encounter." (Personal correspondence, 11/18/11) The first member tended to use the word "encounter" when referring to the meetings in Trump, which came from a prior engagement with the writings of (Lefebvre?). The feeling of being energized through meeting and talking--particularly the "feeling of existence"--is just the kind of thing Merrifield describes in his politics of the encounter. In the meetings that followed, the group continued thinking together in this manner, and began to formalize the procedures they used to stoke and strengthen those encounters.

After the initial meeting at Trump Tower on 11/18, the group proposed a more open "experiment" for the following week to try out some of the ideas it had come upon during the first meeting. They agreed to invite others. Member C wrote and sent a draft of the invitation

which summarized the budding experiment to the group:

Dear X,

So you probably know that I've been working with the Occupy Wall Street movement, specifically with making a new kind of university associated with it. A few of us got together recently and decided to see what a class in this university would actually look like--to give it a shot. So we're inviting a few people to come and attend a (test) class. We're hoping it won't be like a typical university class. Instead, it'll be a facilitated discussion of a short passage from Sen. Carl Levin's report on the 2008 financial crisis (and after that probably a discussion about the discussion we had). No preparation/homework required. It'll be on Thursday, 830-10pm, in the privately-owned public space at Trump Towers--725 5th avenue. Snacks for the group are encouraged!

This invitation is an invitation to experiment with teaching and learning at Trump Tower as a university emerged from a social movement. It is interesting to see the mixture of activity, interaction, and the emergence of pedagogical procedures occurring in a place like Trump Tower. It shows an initial phase of operationalization, attempting to actualize the vision of the university: figuring out “what a class in this university would actually look like.” This shows that the group was not only interested in having the encounters, but also articulating what procedures could be used to repeat the encounter, encourage the encounter, and *learn* in accordance with the encounter, all of it happening at Trump Tower. After two meetings, that operationalization took further shape and Member C wrote:

the last two thursdays have been extremely exciting. we went from 5 to 7 to 11 people, and interest in our 'class' is growing. we've got a little flame here with these learning experiments. last night i felt ecstatic, thinking: *we just fucking talked about human nature and finance capital at Trump Towers!!* (personal correspondence 12/9/11)

Again, this email expresses a mixture of feelings and thoughts in the space of Trump Tower, indicating a transformation of that space from something alienating and corporate to a space of excitement and solidarity. The meetings have been “extremely exciting,” inspiring ecstatic



feelings, and the impassioned utterance (recalling the earlier surreal disbelief) of talking about human nature and finance capital “*at Trump Towers!*” Member B expressed a similar sentiment, saying “i know that we are making lots of things (a world, a community, an encounter, etc)...” (personal correspondence 12/9/11) They saw their work as an encounter and making a world, a community. The procedures for making that encounter took a more solid shape in the coming weeks.

The following is a document several of the members (Members C, D, and B) wrote after an initial experiment to “start processing what we've done thus far into something like a teacher-training model for further experimentation. we put together a schematic for facilitation discussions.” This transition, which took the encounters and “processed [them] into” pedagogical procedures, “a schematic,” was the next step of operationalization: the group formalized the pedagogical methods they had used in Trump Towers to create and recreate the kinds of encounters they had had for the explicit purpose of teacher training. The document is called “draft of draft of teaching-facilitating procedure (what teachers should do when facilitating a class).”

#### 1) *Giving context*

- a) describe what we are: the c/d task force of the university subcommittee of the education and empowerment working group of the OWS movement.
- b) describe what we're doing: we're running experiments to build knowledge together, thinking together, using horizontal and open pedagogy.
- c) what we did last time: how we got to where we were (depends on the class. eg, first we read a passage from Levin's report, got interested in Glass-Steagall, and read a historical piece on that...)

#### 2) *Check-in*

- a) can depend on the facilitator, but should give us a chance to "know where everyone is coming from." Eg, [Member D]’s: Tell us your name and how you're feeling.

### 3) Discussion

a) this is the big show. there are a lot of methods we talked about that are essential to getting the discussion going in the right direction. these have to do with planning (choosing texts/subject matter) and executing. The second involves a lot of specific para-linguistic things: being silent, diverting your eyes, letting silences fester in the group. All in all, we decided the teacher should do two main things:

- 1) **let the questions occur**
- 2) **do everything that OWS facilitators and helpers do: take minutes, take stack, and keep track of time. participants should be totally inside the discussion. teachers should speak only in 'humble' terms.**

### 4) Ending

- a) what did we just do? getting the group to come up with a word or simple sentence to describe the discussion that just happened.
- b) what do we do next? building on the description above, what would the group like to move on to next time?
- c) feedback. we need to figure out how to get thoughts/reactions on the class from each participant. this is a challenge given the POPs and the chaos that happens after class ends. but we can do it.

These are the first procedural notes from horizontal pedagogy: the first written version of the pedagogical tactics the group used to hold encounters. Eventually they would be augmented and expanded into the form presented in the previous section, but the basic structure of the pedagogy is here in these notes: introduction, check-in, examination of something through questioning and discussion, and a debrief period. The group soon had a kind of “method” or approach to their encounters, which was advertised elsewhere in the movement. In the minutes of a “Home for Student Break Meet Up,” a reportback was written and sent to the wider OWS community in New York City saying that Occupy Universities/Nomadic Universities had

formed out of the Education and Empowerment Working Group at NYCGA; thinking about different forms of alternative education, pedagogies of educational emancipation and has been experimenting with classes in front of Trump Tower in midtown. So far the

nomadic university has had three sessions there, mostly on the financial crisis.” (Personal correspondence, 12/31/11)

The themes of experimentation, emancipation, and education are present in this advertisement, juxtaposed with the location of the encounters: Trump Tower. The group continued practicing the procedures. On 1/6/12, one of the members reports having played “musical chairs” at Trump Towers as part of one meeting. Member A noted on 1/8/12, “First just wanted to say that I'm super excited about what we are doing at Trump on Thursday nights. I want to thank all of you for taking part in this with me/us. Developing a new way of learning and being together is tough work, but I think it is extremely rewarding, too.” Again, a sense of excitement, gratitude, and reward suffused the space of Trump Towers through the pedagogical encounters the group facilitated. The “new way of learning and being together” happened there in that space, taking that space and making it something new. On 1/14/12 the group led a class on indebtedness, and Member F “found it quite exhilarating.”

### *Conclusion*

Arguably, turn-taking and taking the floor characterize basic facets of the discursive Occupy Wall Street’s discursive practices. The consensus-based general assemblies, working group structure, and intentional facilitation--horizontalism--try to guarantee direct-democratic participation in decision-making by ceding the floor to all those involved. Facilitators take turns facilitating, participants take turns speaking, and others take turns with various responsibilities like taking minutes, taking stack, keeping time, and managing the agenda. These procedures were practiced throughout the Occupy Wall Street movement. One concluding speculation might

be that, since turn-taking is so closely related to taking the floor, it is a particularly useful tactic when occupying space and asserting a right to the city, since all participants are encouraged to take the floor, which begins to take space. All members of the assembly are encouraged to exercise their right to speak in the meeting space, their right to be heard, inducing that psychological-locational experience of addressing “what’s going on” and being the object of attention. Turn-taking therefore has a spatial significance when read with Andy Merrifield’s notion of the encounter: when everyone takes the floor in a discussion they “become the space” and begin to take the space, transforming it into a non-alienating moment of bonding and solidarity. Discussion is an operation for the politics of the encounter.

Horizontal pedagogy operationalized the political goals of the Occupy Wall Street movement for educational purposes, translating its discursive practices into pedagogical procedures for teaching, learning, and studying. Insofar as Occupy Wall Street was one big encounter, as Merrifield claims, horizontal pedagogy operationalized procedures with fidelity to that encounter, carrying the flame of the occupation to Trump Tower and thereby reconfiguring it into an exciting, exhilarating, and experimental space for education. For myself, and perhaps other members of the group, the name “Trump” has come to mean something antithetical to the offensive, divisive, and gaudy builder and presidential candidate. When I think of Trump and Trump Tower I think of the educational experiments the C&D task force held in that space, the way we made that space mean something radical and positive. While we did not occupy that space, nor did we take it forcibly, we *began to take Trump Tower* by discussing there in a certain way. The central thesis of this article is that discussion was an operation which pedagogically accomplished this becoming-the-space, asserting a right to that little corner of New York City,

and that discussion-centered pedagogies like horizontal pedagogy can induce, strengthen, and stoke other politics of encounter elsewhere. We did not take the space, but the mixed sequence of turns where people took the floor of Trump Tower began to take it by becoming the space. The horizontal pedagogy procedures are therefore a kind of recipe for encountering. Though obviously the presence or absence of a social movement context will increase or decrease its intensity, following these procedures--even in institutional settings--can help a group come close to experiencing the encounter in which those procedures were practiced, becoming the space in discussion.

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