

occupation:

A DO-IT-YOURSELF GUIDE

DISCLAIMER: THIS PUBLICATION IS INTENDED FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY. DO NOT ACTUALLY OCCUPY ANYTHING. NOW GET BACK TO WORK!

PREFACE: WHY OCCUPY?

We in the US have been too timid for too long. We are afraid of the cops. We are afraid of losing our jobs or getting expelled from school. No one wants to take risks—no one wants anyone else to take risks—so protests are poorly attended and ineffective. Peaceful marches or rallies reduce us to passive observers of what is supposed to be our own activity. We are told to express our anger and frustration by shouting or chanting but otherwise, we are asked to exercise restraint.

At the UCSC walkout on Sept 24, protestors chanted and carried signs, but they crossed the street only when the 'walk' sign was lit. The striking union had a picket line but did not actively prevent people from crossing that line. They knew that *most unions at the UC have contracts which explicitly force their members to cross the picket lines of other unions.*

In Berkeley, at the general assembly held on the same day, protestors were asked: 'what do you want to do next?' But they were never asked the obvious question—'what do you want to do right now?' Why not decide on an immediate course of action and do it? Organizers complain they are losing members with each successive meeting; they seem to believe that meeting is an end in itself!

This wall of passivity can only be dismantled through action. But equally, we have to avoid the temptation of becoming 'activists'. On Sept 17, activists interrupted a meeting of the UC Board of Regents. They shouted at Mark Yudof, refused to quiet down and were arrested by cops. These sacrificial actions are disruptive—but only momentarily. Activists depend on the media to publicize their grievances, but to gain the attention of the media, they have to provoke the administration into an embarrassing confrontation. Administrators are not so stupid. They know how to neutralize these actions: they simply avoid confrontation. After the activists were dragged from the room, Yudof said, 'the students ought to be angry about the fee increases. I'm angry about it, too.'

These are the problems we face: not only the cuts—not only the crisis which caused the cuts—but the ineffectiveness of our means of fighting them. We need to build a movement, but we have not been able to do so. People will only join a movement if it has the potential to change something, but a movement will only change something if people have already joined it. So everyone does what is in their own best interests: they ignore

the protests and get on with their lives. Better to try to find a new job than waste time failing to get your old one back. The problem is not that people lack a 'consciousness' of their own interests.

It is the *activists* who fail to understand.

Everything is set up in advance to ensure that nothing actually changes. We are given options for managing the crisis and options for fighting the cuts. We attend interminable meetings and plan symbolic actions. These things change nothing. The problem is simple: no decision making body has the power to give us what we want—especially during a crisis. The deans and chancellors making the cuts are subordinate to the UC president. The UC president is subordinate to the Board of Regents. The Board of Regents gets its funding from the legislature. And the hands of the legislature are tied by the the California constitution, which requires a two-thirds majority to raise taxes.

We must reject all options on offer and demonstrate that without negotiations, *it is still possible to act.* That is why we do not make demands. All demands assume the existence of a power capable of conceding them. We know this power does not exist. Why go through the motions of negotiating when we know we will not win anything but paltry concessions? Better to reveal the nature of the situation: there is no power to which we can appeal except that which we have found in one another.

That is also why we reject the logic of representation. No representative, no matter how charismatic, can achieve anything of consequence, except to deprive us of our own agency. Having representatives reduces us to passive onlookers of our own activity. We have to take matters into our own hands. A huge demonstration is not a means for better bargaining; it is nothing if it is not an end in itself. A huge demonstration becomes an end in itself only when people at the demonstration *start to act on their own*; when they reject the leaders who tell people to be 'reasonable', to wait for the 'right moment'.

We *do not* want to wait any longer. We *cannot* afford to wait any longer.

This pamphlet is a guide to immediate action. It explains how to occupy buildings, with particular attention to universities. That is not because we believe students at the university have a special role to play, or because

occupations are the only tactic we use. It is simply because we *are* at the university, we *have* occupied a building and we begin with what we know.

Occupations are a common tactic used at universities and other workplaces around the world. In 1999, students occupied the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the largest university in Latin America. In 2006, students occupied universities throughout France to repeal the CPE amendment. In 2008, workers occupied the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago. In 2009, workers occupied the Ssangyong car factory in South Korea, holding it for two months and fighting a pitched battle against the police. These are but a few examples.

We have been criticized for having acted as clandestine 'adventurists', for ignoring the democratic process. We have seen the results of that process too many times. It is never the case that, after people see the failures of letter-writing campaigns or teach-ins, they decide to try something else. They are disheartened that their hard work has come to nothing, and they return to their everyday lives. When the next crisis occurs, new people get involved and democratically decide to make the same mistakes.

We have lived through too many cycles of failure and seek to do something else.

Our wager is that, when people see what we are doing, they will get involved in our actions. Once enough people are involved, we will no longer have to act in a clandestine fashion. We will openly decide what to do next. Will we march immediately to the administrative building and occupy it indefinitely, without demands? Maybe we march from building to building with bullhorns, calling students and workers out into the street? Perhaps we will march to the base of campus and set up barricades, blocking entrances to the university. These are materially effective actions, rather than forms of symbolic protest.

In any case, we know that our movement will grow only in and through action. We do not have to wait: we can *act now and act later*. If in the past, it has taken longer to organize these 'tactical' actions, it is because people were up against stronger foes than the bumbling administration of a public university. In fact, the reason it took so long to organize this action was simply that many people were afraid to do it.

We respect these fears even if we encourage everyone to push their boundaries. Others will join the movement, not when their consciousness is raised to the appropriate level, but when they decide that participation is worth the associated risks. Some people feel they have nothing to lose and get involved immediately. Others have so much to lose that they will only get involved at the last possible moment. We trust one another to know what to do.

Those we meet—who are neither hostile to change as such nor self-described 'leaders' offended by action taken without their permission—have not criticized us for acting too soon but for occupying an insignificant building. To these we reply: you are not alone in your desire for escalation. Find us. When we have more numbers, we will take more and more buildings until the campus is ours.

The goal is not to shut down campus as an end in itself. Once we demonstrate our collective power to dissolve the university, we will decide together what to do next. By then, people will have taken action at other workplaces, and we decide with them. We know only this: that when we get the chance to strike, we will take it without hesitation. We will take whatever measures are necessary both to destroy this world as quickly as possible and to create, here and now, the world we want:

**A WORLD
WITHOUT WAGES,
WITHOUT BOSSES,
WITHOUT STATES.**

GENERAL THEORY OF OCCUPATIONS

We adapted our methods from European occupations, and also from the recent occupations at the New School and at NYU in Manhattan. In the US, we face three problems above all: in Europe, (1) illegal tactics are more acceptable among the general population (there is less fear of the police); (2) students command more respect because of their role in twentieth-century anti-fascist movements (and for the same reason, the police are more despised); (3) student life is also more politicized: student unions play a larger role in managing student life, so it is possible to rally students at well-attended general-assemblies (when the student government fails to act). We are still figuring out how to maneuver in the US: after each occupation, we change our methods as we learn from past mistakes. Adapt our methods for your own particular situation.

Plan ahead. Whether you occupy as a small group of clandestine adventurers or at the head of an unruly crowd, it is good idea to plan ahead. Scope out the building. How many doors do you have to lock down? What kinds of doors do you have to lock down? What can you use to build barricades both inside and outside of the building? Could you escape, if you need to? Do you need to gather rocks to throw at the cops?

Draw a crowd. Any time there is a confrontation with the police, a crowd will form to gawk at the spectacle. But you want a crowd to get as close to the occupied building as possible before the police arrive. That way, if the pigs build barricades, the crowd will be between you and the pigs, rather than outside of police lines. Draw a crowd by calling a meeting. At the meeting, announce that an occupation is imminent OR, what is better, convince people to occupy with you and then do it immediately.

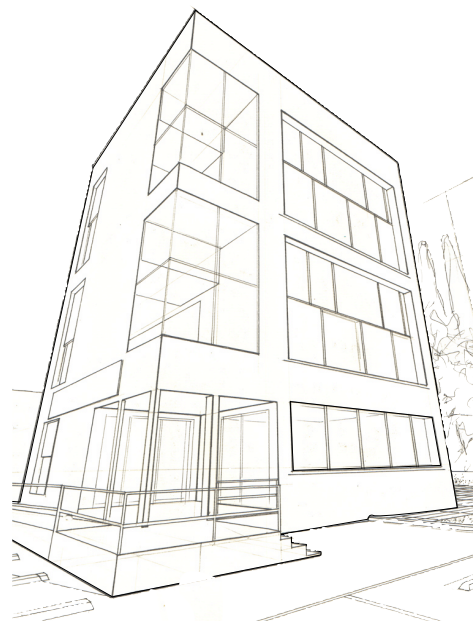
Control a door. When you scope out a building, you want to figure out how you will open up the space to others once the occupation is under way. Choose some means of getting people into and out of the space (for example, a door or window). Lock down that entrance in such a way that it can be opened and closed more easily. If people build barricades outside, make sure they do not overly barricade the one entrance you plan to open.

Open the space. Occupiers often debate whom they should let in to the space, but it is best to let in as many people as possible: the risks of diluting the 'inside' group or of letting in 'sketchy' people are low, as long as you are exercise caution at the door. Also, let people in as soon as possible:

the pigs may disperse the crowd or, what is more likely, the crowd may disperse once the pigs leave. People are safer if they are inside the building, since there are barriers between them and the police.

Transform the space. When you occupy spaces, you are never bound by their 'official' uses: libraries are not necessarily for studying. Take over spaces to transform them: organize to occupy more spaces and build a movement, but also have fun. Throw a sick as fuck dance party!

Occupations are tactics within a broader struggle. There is no reason to get arrested just to prove a point. When all else fails, run away.



RECONNAISSANCE

Choose a building in a central location that has a balcony or big windows (not on ground level). Choose a building with few doors and large, heavy furniture. It is not always necessary to take a whole building: sometimes, you can secure a floor or even a large room, leaving the rest of the building intact. Find out who owns the building and exploit ambiguities in ownership. Do not be afraid to take space from your 'representatives': unions, student government, etc.

At a university, administrative buildings are harder to hold than student or classroom space, but are not for that reason 'better targets'. You are trying to bring the university to a halt. It may be more effective, towards that end, to disrupt classes than to prevent administrators from getting into their offices (especially if they telecommute).

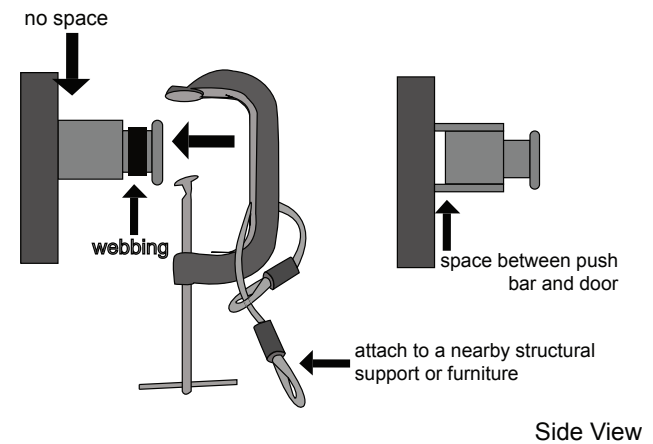
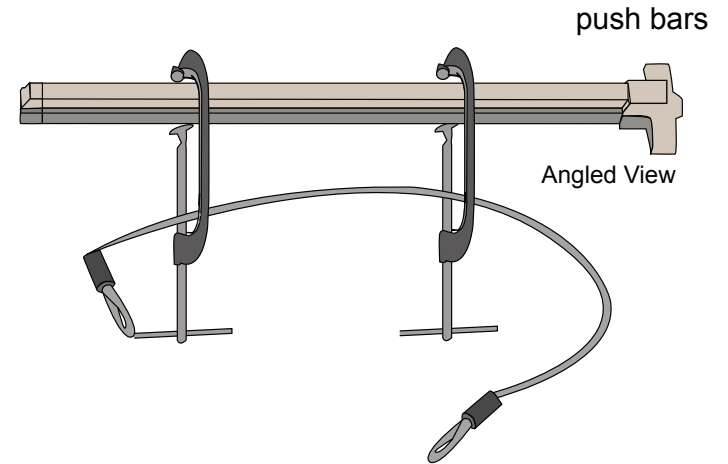
When doing reconnaissance, be discreet but thorough. How many doors do you have to secure (look for hidden doors and fire escapes)? What do the doors look like and how are they opened? Are there any structural supports (pipes or poles) near the doors, which you can use to secure them? What can you use to build barricades? Is there a bathroom? Access to running water? A way to get supplies in and out without opening a door?

Figure out which entrance you are going to use to let people into and out of the space once the occupation is under way. How can you secure it?

If possible, take pictures or at least notes. Take a picture of the escape routes. It is always harder to remember the details than you think!

Burner phones. Before the action, get burner phones, that is pay-as-you-go, no-contract phones (for inside, outside, and media). Make sure everyone involved has the relevant phone numbers.

Locks. Before the action, get the locks you need to secure the doors. Get extra locks. In the moment, people might want to do more occupations.



The "classic" method

SECURING DOORS

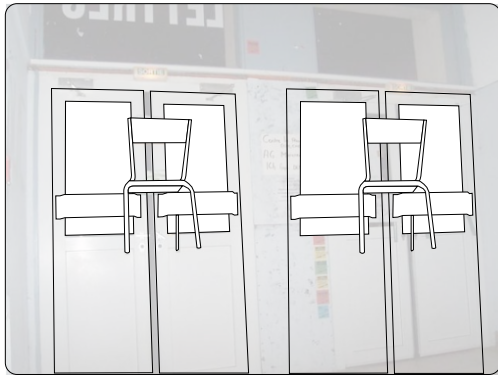
Doors open either into or out from the space you are occupying. For doors that open into the space, you have only one option: barricade them closed. For doors that open out (most doors in newer buildings), you have many options, depending on what kinds of handles are used to open the doors. Here are some examples.

CLASSIC METHODS using cable locks:

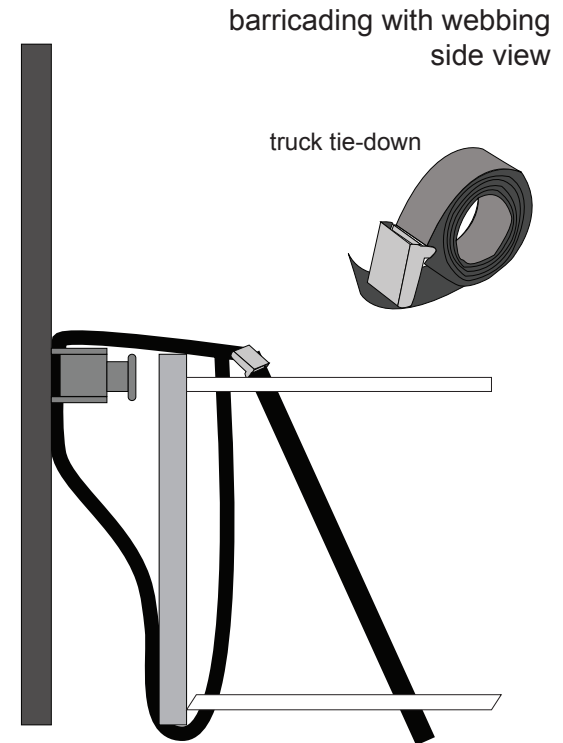
Door with turning handles. Loop one end of a cable lock around the door handle. Tie the other end to a structural support, or loop it around another door handle.

Doors with push-bars. If there is no space between the bar and the door, secure a c-clamp to the bar to create a space. Either (1) loop a cable lock through the space OR (2) clamp a length of webbing to the bar. Tie the other end of the cable or webbing to a structural support. If no structural support is available, tie it around a table.

Doors with no handles. These are almost impossible to secure without damaging the doors. Unless they open into the occupied space, avoid them.



High school occupation during anti-CPE struggle, France 2006



*The "bold new" method.
(All the cool kids are doing it this year.)*

BOLD NEW METHOD using truck tie-downs

Doors with push-bars. Get truck tie-downs from the local hardware store. Find ones with ten feet of nylon webbing attached to a metal buckle at one end. Some of these buckles can hold over 1000 pounds of weight. Loop the webbing through the space between the bar and the door (or use a

clamp to create that space) and around a table (or anything larger than the door frame). Pull the webbing through the buckle as tightly as possible.

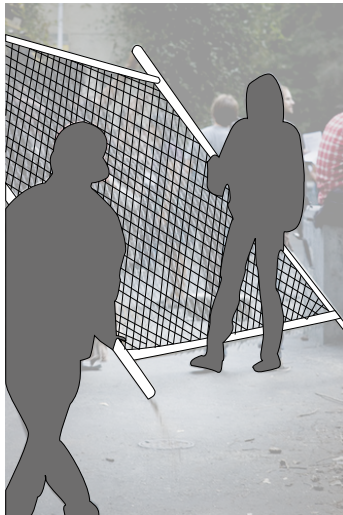
When the pigs try to open the door, the table will not fit through the frame of the door, so the door will not open. If done right, these doors are completely impermeable (unless the pigs can break a window to get in). Use more than one tie-down for each door and make sure there is no give (remember that the nylon will stretch a little bit, so yank on it and readjust). Using tie-downs, two people can carry a table to a door and lock it down in under two minutes.

Make sure the doors are secured as tightly as possible. If the door opens even an inch, the pigs can cut the lock. Use carabiners to tie locks to one another, or to make it easy to open doors without disassembling the locking mechanism. BE CREATIVE: exploit unique door handles!

BUILDING BARRICADES

Whenever possible, build barricades both inside and outside the doors.

For the inside. Use heavy furniture. Distribute it evenly among the doors. Make sure the barricades are actually functional. Don't do anything too complicated or precarious. If pigs are pushing on the barricade from the outside, you should be able to push back from the inside. Do not stack up furniture that can be easily pushed aside once the pigs get through the door (unless you have nothing else). Do not use lock-boxes or chain yourself to anything inside the building.



For the outside. An 'outside' team should roll in, build outside barricades and then disperse. Use dumpsters, trees, wood pallets, chain-link fences, picnic tables, luxury cars, and garbage cans filled with rocks to block the

entrances. Make sure the outside team knows which door you want to control, so they do not overly barricade it.

Note on human barricades. In our first occupation, we relied on human barricades. We got a large crowd to surround the occupied building. They locked arms to protect the doors. But we found that, after a brief period of intimidation, the police left the occupation alone (because the administration wanted to avoid confrontation). Once the police left, the crowd dispersed. Few people stayed all night, especially when there was no immediate threat of police confrontation. It would have been better to get the crowd inside the occupied building. You can trust the physical barricades to protect people inside. Why force the people outside to sacrifice themselves unnecessarily? If possible, have a crowd surround the building during the initial confrontation and then get everyone inside the building as soon as the police leave.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: LEGAL TEAM

Contact a lawyer. Some lawyers are willing to provide free legal support. Many lawyers will want to meet with the occupiers before the action takes place. If at a university, find a lawyer who has some experience with university courts. Have people fill out legal release forms and provide medical information beforehand.

Legal support team. Have someone outside to note or record police abuse. Have someone stationed at a landline, if and when people need jail support. All occupiers should write the jail-support phone number on their arms. Occupiers should have their IDs but little else, since it will all be taken away in the event of an arrest.

Know your rights. Do not say anything to police except your name and that you will not speak until your lawyer is present.

Resisting arrest. If a police officer stops you, ask if you are being detained. If you are not being detained, walk away. If you are arrested, do not resist arrest, since it raises the charges significantly. Do not consent to searches. Do not answer questions. If you have the chance, run away. *Note for Californians.* Concealing your identity while committing a crime raises the charge. If you wear a mask, make sure it is protected by first amendment rights (that is, it has a slogan, etc. written on it).

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDICAL TEAM

Medics. Have medics both inside and outside the building. Medics should know about the needs of specific individuals involved in the action beforehand (medications, allergies). They should have a first aid kit. Medics should have with them, both inside and outside the occupation: water, goggles, latex gloves, duct tape, band-aids, gauze and tape, hydrogen peroxide, milk of magnesia, neosporin, aspirin, benadryl and emergenC. People going inside should wear: comfortable clothing, running shoes, and long-sleeves. Do NOT wear: contact lenses, oil-based make-up or things which can be grabbed easily. Do not use tampons if you may end up in jail.

Pepper-spray. Clean out eyes with a mixture of milk of magnesia and water.

Tear-gas. Cover mouth with a cloth soaked in water; use eye-protection.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT: MEDIA TEAM

This is not a symbolic action, but it is still important to have a media team.

Press Releases. Have an initial statement prepared before the occupation is announced. Pour out your feelings but make sure you also provide a reasonable explanation for what you are doing, since many people will want to know why you did it. Do not have an official line. Do not prevent people from expressing themselves in their own way. Have people on hand to make and distribute flyers about what you are doing.

Media team. Designate one or more people as media contacts on the outside of the occupation. Remember to emphasize the media people as delegates, not representatives of the occupation. Alternative media such as Indybay allows for self-publication of events. Set up an email address and website associated with the occupation. Make this information easily available. Do not use the email of anyone involved in the action.

Media relations for those inside. No particular individuals inside the occupation should become too visible, lest they be branded as leaders. No one on the inside should give televised interviews, or any more information about themselves than is necessary.

OTHER THINGS TO ORGANIZE

Collect phone numbers to set up an emergency mass text-message in case of a police raid.

Bring supplies. It is possible that you will be removed in the first few hours. Do not overpack. Bring some food and water (if you have no access to running water), and medical supplies, but not much else. Pack extra locks, cables and tie-downs in case you need them. Bring a safe computer, in case police confiscate your supplies. If you are successful, people can bring you extra supplies: food, cigarettes, blankets, etc.

Share everything. Inside the occupation, there is no private property.

Break down barriers. Inside, social status and jobs are meaningless.

If you have time, write as much as possible about what you are doing. Keep a diary of daily events for posterity.

If possible, take pictures of building before you leave, for legal reasons.

Use the building as an organizing space. Now that it's ours, it can be a launchpad for more occupations and other actions. It can become a gathering point for the disaffected and pissed-off. Invite members of your community who are being fucked over to come in and help build the struggle.

Our work is never over. The goal of every occupation is to grow, expand and become irreversible.

Occupy fucking everything.

CONCLUSION: NO FUTURE FOR US

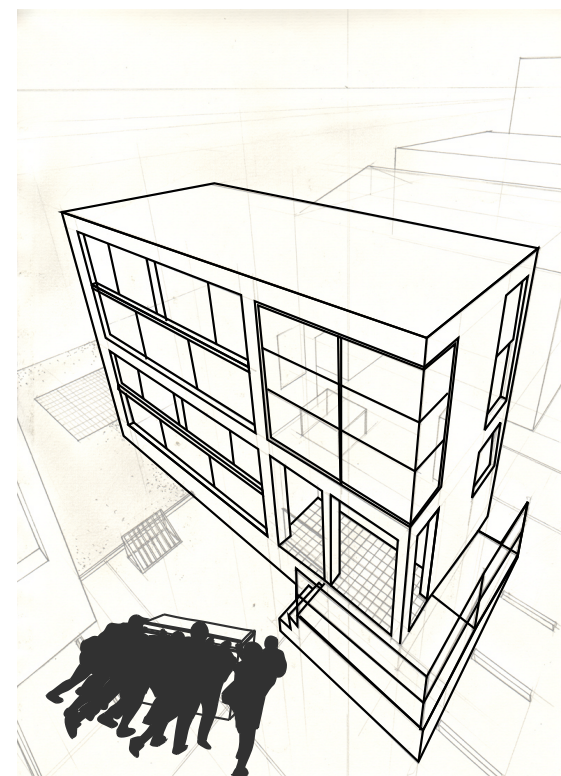
Before the occupation, people in our collective were convinced that we would be dragged away by the cops as soon as we seized the space. However, that was not the case. The shock of victory threw the collective into disarray. Not knowing what to do with ourselves, we were trapped between two modes of being: on the one hand, the present of capitalism, on the other, the occupation, which had ruptured the banality of the normal state of affairs. While we built solidarities and threw some wicked dance parties, we were unable to expand through further tactical actions. We have to remember that *there is always more to be done, that stopping to preserve what you have only destroys it. Keep going!*

In truly escalating, the only demand is of ourselves: to critique constantly, to learn from our past mistakes. 'Fail again, fail better.'

We are not a group. We are not an organization. Groups define themselves through a trivial commerce in vague principles and ideals, rather than through material actions. Groups set parameters on 'how things should be done', subordinating the will of the individual to the will of the group and its leaders.

We are friends. Our friendship is political. Our actions bind us together, orienting us collectively toward our objective: taking over the metropolis and making it ours. Occupations are only one of many ways to create intensive solidarities between formerly atomized individuals. By contrast, a group with an 'official' line merely reproduces the logic of the pseudo-activity of activism, co-opting our struggles through compromise and reducing our autonomous wills to a theatre of *what has already happened*, rather than *what is happening now*. We are no longer spectators, but actors.

GET GOING!



SEE ALSO

University Occupations: France 1968, 2006 Greece 2006 NYC 2008-9 –
The Inoperative Committee

New School Occupation: Perspectives on the Takeover of a Building –
The Inoperative Committee

Preoccupied: The Logic of Occupations – The Inoperative Committee

Communique from an Absent Future – Research and Destroy

Worker-Student Action Committees, France May '68 – Roger Gregoire
and Fredy Perlman

The Class Struggle and its Most Characteristic Aspects in Recent Years
– Francois Martin

The Rebellion in Los Angeles – Aufheben

'Anti-capitalism' as ideology... and as movement? – Aufheben

Two weeks spent in Rennes – Anonymous

The anti-CPE struggle report – Theorie Communiste

Self-organisation is the first act of the revolution – Theorie Communiste

The rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of
time – TPTG

Greece unrest: Like a winter with a thousand Decembers – TPTG/
Blaumachen

Bring out your dead – Endnotes

The Call – Tiqqun

The Coming Insurrection – The Invisible Committee

<http://occupyca.wordpress.com> – UCSC Occupations

<http://reoccupied.wordpress.com> – New School Occupations

<http://wewanteverything.wordpress.com> – Theoretical writings,
Propaganda & Media

DEMAND NOTHING



OCCUPY EVERYTHING