Heterotopias as SMOs' protest weapons in modern globalized capitalism

Y. Bazin - ISTEC

P. Naccache – ESCEM Tours, COMUE Centre Val de Loire

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Abstract

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Introduction

In an age where new technologies and virtual interactions are becoming an integral part of our social lives, physical sites have proven to remain necessary in order to contest and resist. From Tahir Square in Egypt to Occupy Wall Street at Zuccoti Park in New York City, spaces are being embezzled to allow for collective actions and resistance. Protesters in Istanbul have used the Ramadan as a reason to keep occupying the Taskin Square, forbidden to demonstrators after the violent protests of June 2013. And more recently, Hong Kong streets have emerged as a site for spontaneous democratic contestations. It appears that every square-inch of public spaces encompasses the potentiality for poaching, appropriation, resistance and creation of new mobilizing structures and governance structures (McAdam and Scott 2005) in order to challenge the existing order. These phenomenons show how much spaces cannot be reduced to their rational, well-defined, efficient representations.

New York, Madrid, Cairo, Istanbul, Hong-Kong, … These social movements are spread all over the globe, and could appear to be decoupled since very little elements connect them. Indeed, besides knowing their respective existences through medias and social networks, very few actors or organizations circulate from one to the other. Nevertheless, as Sassen (2014: 7) remarks, "multisited materializations" can be connected by "subterranean trends". Indeed, these social movements strategically aim at creating arenas of expression, resistance and protest in symbolic and central areas in order to expose the causal mechanisms (Sayer 1992, Davis and Marquis 2005, Leca and Naccache 2006) of expulsion processes which trigger crises in multiple forms: unemployment, bankruptcy leading to poverty and exclusion, territorial eviction and extinction of natural resources leading to dead lands, damage to the biosphere, etc.

These creations of contesting spaces within public areas by social movement organizations (SMOs) appear to be proliferating in modern capitalism. Yet, so far, little attention has been paid to collective space in the literature on SMOs (Haug 2013). We suggest here that this dimension is crucial in order to grasp what is at stake in the "uprising" (Berardi 2012) we witness all over the world. Physical spaces appear to be pivotal in the anchoring of the mobilization process and in the shaping of the contestation itself, especially when considered as social productions rather than abstract objects (Lefebvre, 1991). The aim of this article is to provide a theoretical

conceptualization of these very specific modes of spatial protest that we can see in New York, Cairo, Istanbul, or Hong Kong. Inspired by Foucault (1986), we offer to consider them as heterotopias, "counter-sites (…) absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about", and which enable "a kind of contestation (…) of the space in which we live" (Foucault 2000: 179). Consequently, our paper contributes to the research on social movement and organizations by offering a conceptualization of their recent modes of geographical unfolding.

To ground this conceptualization, we start with the work of Saskia Sassen on globalization (Sassen, 2007; 2014) that showed the emergence of strong trends of exclusions in the recent phenomenon of shrinking economies. Building on this, the present article makes four contributions. First, we will follow Sayer (2002) to underline how much space matters for the analysis of SMOs. The very nature of the areas in which protests emerge and unfold is important regarding their organization and demands, and we extend on this. Second, we will use the foucaldian notion of heterotopia to characterize some of these spaces, therefore contributing to the literature on that specific concept in organization studies (Hjorth, 2004). Third, we will offer to see these "other spaces", not only as areas of chaos and protest, but also as creative sites from which social, organizational and entrepreneurial innovations can occur. The fourth contribution will emerge from the first three, and answers Sassen's call to conceptualize "the spaces of the expelled" (Sassen, 2014: 222).

The article is organized as follows. First, we consider how causal mechanisms of exclusions have triggered a reconfiguration of social movements and SMOs' modes of protest. More especially, we will show how these mechanisms of exclusion in the context of globalized capitalism have lead SMOs to create new spaces of contestation within global cities. To extend this spatial anchoring, we then offer to view them as heterotopias in the second section. Finally, we discuss the implications of this heterotopological approach for further research on SMOs in global cities and for organization studies.

I. Literature Background

From a capitalism of inclusion to exclusive shrinking economies

Capitalism as an economic system was rooted in a logic of integration with often strong social dimensions. According to Richard Sennet (2006), Bismarck was constantly trying to create social bounds amongst German workers in order to provide a place for everyone: "realistically, Bismarck was fattening institutions in order to maintain peace; avoiding conflicts by offering something to all. The political and social justification for such a plethoric administration was therefore integration more than efficiency" (Sennet, 2006: 32). This policy regime was based on public demand and often labelled as the "Keynesian welfare state". This type of capitalism consists in an accumulation of wealth based on a combination of mass production and mass consumption supported by the increased of the workers' wage earning (Boyer and Saillard 2002). It was as "a system with the capacity to generate the expansion of prosperous working and middle classes in the Global North" (Sassen 2014: 14). In this expansion, integration within the economy, as workers and as consumers, was the crucial engine of the economic growth. Yet, since the 1980s, a new rationale seems to have taken over.

This social capitalism was constantly under the attacks of an "impatient capital" (Harrison 1994) for which stability is a sign of failure and changes are always beneficial. This tendency is still present, made even stronger with modern technologies of communication and the rise of modern finance. This has lead to a slimming of bureaucratic pyramids, which consequently limits the number of subordinates and institutes a logic of exclusion rather than inclusion (Sennett 2006: 42). This has led to "a new phase of advanced capitalism in the 1980s" linked to the development of "predatory formations, which are a mix of elites and systemic capacities with finance as a key enabler" (Sassen 2014: 13). This policy regime is a sort of privatized Keynesianism (Crouch 2009), and appears now to be the latest neo-liberal stage of capitalism.

Inclusion was not only a given right, but also constantly defended thanks to spatial physical anchoring. Indeed, the Keynesian form of capitalism was protected partly by the workers' control over specific spaces of production and circulation, rendering strikes and social movements influential and thus powerful. Workers were able to disrupt the whole system through their presence and partial control over production sites. For example, coal miners had the possibility to slow, disrupt or cut off the coal supply due to their control over mines. In other words, the fact that miners had the control of spatial structures (Sewell 2001) of mines lead them to gain political power and favour the emergence of mass political parties which supported workers' claims

(Mitchell 2011). Strikes, disruptions and sabotages were potentially powerful as long as control over physical spaces was maintained. Indeed, this potential control over sites secured the "formalization of the employment relation in this period (which helped) implement a set of regulation that overall, protected workers and secured the gains made by often violent labour struggles" (Sassen 2014: 26). In England, the evolution from coal to oil and gas has weakened the local workers who had no direct spatial control of the energetic flows anymore, and transferred the power to new production sites in oil countries. Through this evolution, Thatcher's government was able to eliminate "the Enemy Within": the National Union of Mineworkers (Seumas 2004, Peace 2011).

In the 1980's, the strong emergence of the neoliberal doctrine has actively delegitimized Keynesian capitalism by following a logic of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2005: 116). To Sassen (2014), this period is characterized by new tendencies: rapid growth in corporate profits, increases of government budget deficits, population displacements in the Global South – partly due to the acquisition of lands by foreign corporations and governments -, and rising rates of incarceration in the Global North. These trends lead to the expulsions of people "from life projects and livelihoods, from membership, from the social contract at the centre of liberal democracy (…) It entails a gradual generalizing of extreme conditions that begin at the edges of systems, in microsettings." (Sassen, 2014: 29). Consequently, what appear as extreme cases, such as the Greek situation for example, are in fact the "deeper structural condition in this phase of advanced capitalism, which took off in the 1980s and became entrenched in the 1990s" (Sassen, 2014: 37). This has lead to a shrinking of the spaces of the economy, meaning that less and less people are part – and share – the wealth created by corporations and social activities. This logic of exclusion - not only financial, but also social and symbolic – is fundamentally opposed to the one of inclusion during the Keynesian period.

Facing these multiple situations of exclusions, individuals can feel and be seen as powerless, but still often protest. Their resistances take both old and new forms in order to express their opinions and stand up for their demands. The logic of expulsion being fairly recent, new forms of contestations emerged in reaction during the past few years. In this article, we focus on how they came to create spaces of resistance at the very heart of the global cities, sometimes far from the actual sites of injustice.

Social movements in Global cities and the creation of "other spaces"

In today's global financial capitalism, interconnected actors tend to often be at a great distance. The time when owners of the mine lived close to disgruntled employees is over. Moreover, decision-makers are not easy to identify anymore, and accountability and responsibilities unfold "in an increasingly complex system that combines persons, networks, and machines with no obvious centre. And yet there are sites where it all comes together, where power becomes concrete and can be engaged, and where the oppressed are part of the social infrastructure *for* power. Global cities are one such site" (Sassen, 2014: 10-11). These global cities are not sites of production anymore; outsourcing and globalisation have rendered this unnecessary. They are concentrated areas for decisions with world-wide impacts. Consequently, there is a social division of spaces which offers the possibility for a new kind of contestation. This novel contestation strategically embezzle and create spaces at the very centre of global cities: "among the actors in this political landscape are a variety of organizations focused on transboundary issues, such as immigration, asylum, international women's agendas and anti-globalization struggles. While these organisations are not necessarily urban in their orientation or genesis, they tend to converge in cites" (Sassen 2007: 193).

Since global cities appear as the symbolic core of inequalities, and are often also sites of local exclusions themselves, protesters recently started to purposefully and creatively use them to express their demands, impose their agendas, or disrupt the system. Beyond struggles, these movements also illustrate a will of re-appropriation: a way to re-personalize and re-humanise cities. "By constructing a free community in a symbolic place, social movements create a public space, a space for public deliberation, which ultimately becomes a political, a space for sovereign assemblies to meet and recover their rights of representation (…) in our society, the public space of the social movement is constructed as a hybrid space between the Internet social networks and the occupied urban space: connecting cyberspace and urban space in relentless interaction, constituting, technologically and culturally, instant communities of transformative particle" (Castells 2012: 11).

Through these re-appropriations of specific arenas, social movements attempt to recover "their right of representation, which have been captured in political institutions predominantly tailored for the convenience of the dominant interests and values"

(Castells 2012: 11). As such, these arenas are "insulated from the control of elites in organizations and societies" and thus challenge their authority (Scott 1990: 118, Rao and Dutta 2012). In the literature, these spaces are often described as "small-scale setting within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilization" (Polletta 1999: 1). In other words, these embezzled public spaces provide a physical place in which "resistance is developed and codified" (Scott 1990: 118) in order to favour the mobilization of a broader base of support (Polletta 1999, King and Haveman 2008) with a lesser pressure from power-holders. Being seen as the core of the new capitalist system, global cities became perfect sites for spatial embezzlements, offering to social movements many symbolic arenas to protest, contest, rebel or rise up. Activists strategically use the topology of these cities to create symbolic areas, to produce "other spaces" within these mainstream central areas in order to protest.

Social movements organizations such as "Occupy Wall Street" struggle to create and foster spaces that open resistance and contestation. The shared characteristic of these social movements that embezzle and occupy public spaces is that they are not isolated areas far from power centres. They unfold in the middle of global cities which are « first, as highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy; second, as key locations for finance and for specialized service firms, which have replaced manufacturing as the leading economic sectors » (Sassen 2001: 3). They occupy symbolic spaces and their localisation appears to be an important part of their message. These social movements do not necessarily focus on the space where an injustice takes place, but rather in areas closer to where decisions are made. They make visible and palpable the distance between these injustices and power centres that tend to render the causal mechanism of exclusion hard to grasp. Hence, they can be seen as strategic and purposeful physical manifestations of the expulsions causal mechanisms.

As such, these movements are not based on free space or on insulated spaces from the dominant groups, there are organized in "contested spaces" by informal political actors which are involved in the "constituting alternative political geographies" (Sassen 2007: 194). This phenomena suggest "a potential for developing a politic centred on places understood as locations on global networks" (Sassen 2007: 196-197).

II. Heterotopic spaces as SMOs' protest weapons

Michel Foucault first presented the concept of heterotopia in a conference he gave at the *Cercle d'etudes architecturales* published in the famous text "*Des espaces autres*" ("Of other spaces"; Foucault, 1986). He defines heterotopias as places "which are something like counter-sites (…) absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about" (Foucault, 1986: 24). As Foucault often does, the definition evolves all along the text, slightly changing from one example to another. This has given birth to many studies in geography (Bonazzi, 2002; Johnson, 2013), urbanism (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008), architecture (Defert, 1997; Fontana-Giusti, 2013) and a few in organization studies (Hjorth, 2004; 2005; Beyes & Michels, 2011; Chatzidakis, Maclaran & Bradshaw, 2012). The result can be unsettling for readers who might end up thinking that heterotopias are everywhere. As a matter of fact, Foucault does not exclude any specific location from potentially being an heterotopia, but he indicates important characteristics: they ought to be counter-spaces, areas in which taken-for-granted assumptions are questioned, where power is contested, illusions are revealed and crisis are created. Heterotopias are not necessarily dis-ordered or chaotic, but they challenge the institutionalized order. As such, working on the emergence of these heterotopic "others spaces" constitutes an important contribution to understand how SMOs actually organize their protests.

Spatial agency in heterotopias

From "Occupy Wall Street" to "Occupy Central with Love and Peace" in Hong-Kong, SMOs use public spaces of global cities to stage their protests. They embezzle and poach symbolic arenas and transform them, at least momentarily. For a few days, weeks, months, and sometimes years, these public spaces become something else, a site for protests and demands. All of the sudden, places are changed in nature, and actors explore and use them with a sense of renewed freedom. This spatial component of SMOs' activism is far from insignificant. Indeed, "social movements and revolutions not only are shaped and constrained by the spatial environments in which they take place, but are significant agents in the production of new spatial structures and relations" and if "insurgents accept the physical environment as a given, (they) produce space above all

by changing the meanings and strategic uses of their environments" (Sewell 2001: 56). Strategically occupying certain public spaces is a strong statement for SMOs alongside their actual demands. It was the case for Tiananmen Square in Bejing which was, during the Maoist period "a key point of contact between the Chinese 'masses' and the Communist Party leadership" and "became a microcosm of the new order projected by the students, an inspiring site of political discussion, debate and self-government, where the protesters acted out and lived with maximum intensity the form of democracy they envisaged for China as a whole" (Sewell 2001: 66).

This example shades light on the way actors can resist to the social structures by creating alternative worlds (Fligstein and MCadam 2012: 6). This spatial anchoring emphasizes the role of the spatial structures in which individual and collective actors are embedded. Indeed, actors and groups use strategically their skills (Fligstein 2001) and reflexivity (Archer 2007) in order to explore, circumvent, embezzle and undermine spatial structures. Hence, although global cities are often seen as homogeneous and striated, activists and SMOs strategically use their fragmentation to exploit the strong symbolic power of specific areas, such as central historic squares, financial districts, governmental area and so on. While occupying some of these spaces, they turn them into "other spaces". They re-create spatial indeterminacies, triggering an inability to predict how spaces will be used, appropriated and poached - therefore allowing for more resistance and embezzlement. For instance, the Israeli "social justice protest" in 2011, also known as the "tent protests" (Lidman, 2011), began when a few dozens people – coordinating via Facebook – installing their tents on the most expansive boulevard in Israel in order to denounce the high cost of housing. The whole area quickly became a sort of camping site that fostered heterogeneous demands and protests, crystallizing many latent frustrations. These embezzlements and poachings were not done by passive followers, but rather by strategic activists using a spatial opportunity to express their demands. The same process occurred in the "Takism Gezi park" in Istanbul, which started with a few environmental activists and local resident protesting against a real estate project (Gökay & Xypolia, 2013). This specific location was not insignificant: it was previously named "Ismet Inönü park" after one of the main architect of the Turkish democracy, the "Monument of the Republic" is located in this park, and it is located at the beginning of the "Istiklal Caddesi", the Independence Avenue. Actors do not randomly occupy public spaces, they strategically choose symbolic, relevant areas.

In today's globalized capitalism, SMOs purposefully set up heterotopias in symbolic areas of global cities in order to create alternative spaces within public spaces. In these "other spaces", domination and authority are questioned, sometimes even directly contested, and power plays are renewed. In doing so, heterotopias open an important space for agency.

Heterotopias as creative spaces for alternatives and innovations

Heterotopias are not only about contestations, they are also places where alternative orders come to exist and potentially last. Consequently, they provide sites in which social changes are considered, tried out, experienced and eventually spread (Hetherington, 1997; Soja, 1996; Hjorth, 2004). They offer some kind of social laboratory in which other social orderings can be experimented. Moreover, these heterotopias are rarely peripheral, they can – and often – unfold close to centres, next to them, in-between them, if not right in the core. Heterotopic sites can even be spaces for contradictory social logics to juxtapose, face each other without seeking resolution (Foucault, 1967). What makes heterotopias contesting spaces is not necessarily a specific demand or discourse, but their inherent alternative nature. Indeed, according to Hetherington (1997: 54), they come into existence "when utopian ideals emerge from forms of difference which offer alternative ideas about the organisation of society". Following Balibar (1997), we will consider these other spaces as potential areas of innovative experimentations.

Heterotopias emerge every time an area becomes heterogeneous and non-hegemonic, when and where domination is questioned and outcomes are rendered uncertain: "a place where alternative are considered, 'common sense' is questioned and business as usual stops for a moment" (Baillie, Kabo & Reader, 2012: 2). The instability of today's spaces - brought by new technologies, modern work conditions and innovative practices - generates uncertainty, which leads to opportunities for poaching, appropriation and resistance. Hence, these areas become multi-dimensional spaces of dissonance in which ambiguity and uncertainty prevail as leading actors can constitute them with different senses of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991; Naccache and Leca 2008) or using multiple evaluative criteria (Stark 2009). Heterotopias are not directly hierarchical; they mingle and blur actors, relations and roles by fostering horizontal power struggles (Graeber 2013).

Heterotopias foster ambiguities and uncertainty, allowing actors to keep open multiple ways of protesting in redefining goals, and recombining resources. It enables them to operate "in more than one game" (Stark, 2009: 15), thus leading to experiment several repertoires of actions. These repertoires are contextual to the protest target (Walker, Martin et al. 2008), and allow for diverse SMOs to coexist, connect and coordinate more easily. On this, the case of "Occupy Central" in Hong-Kong between October 2011 and August 2012 is a good illustration. Indeed, the occurrence of this movement is partly due to the convergence of three very different organisations around areas of protest. The first one, "Occupy Central with Love and Peace" gave an impulse to occupy the financial district in the centre of the city, and provided logistics and financial aspects for the protest. The second one was the "Hong Kong Federation of Students" which triggered the strike and made the movement influential, and visible on a large scale. The third one, "Scholarism" was at the origin of the merger between all the different organizations, strategically using the police brutality during the strike as a motive for cohesion and coordination. Then, the coexistence and collaboration of these SMOs relied on the localized interactions between their repertoires of actions. The areas in which all this occurred over time contributed to the emergence of bricoleur activists "in the sense that they use whatever resources and repertoires they have at hand" (Duymedjian and Rüling 2010: 134). Hence, following of Fligstein and McAdam (2012: 16), we can argue that these spaces of coexistence and protest were heterotopias, alternative loci in which heterogeneous groups create new rules of action and adhere to them. Heterotopias are not just chaotic spaces of protest, there are also sites of creative experimentation, and social and organizational innovations.

III. Discussing avenues for future heterotopologic research

Heterotopias are "other spaces", alternative spaces in which actors encounter and collaborate differently, lightened from the burden of institutionalized frames for actions. From time to time, social and organizational alternatives emerge from these heterotopias and can set up stable meso-level social worlds, thus producing, reproducing and transforming their fields (Fligstein and MCadam 2012). Through this process, actors come to engage in collective strategic actions that contribute to create

new organizational and social orders from seemingly unorganized spaces in which they creatively explore alternatives and experience a sense of agency and freedom. From our focus on new SMOs modes of protest in global cities, we now propose four avenues for future research: heterotopias in global cities, heterotopic entrepreneurship, relationships between organizations and heterotopias and organizational heterotopology.

Heterotopias in global cities. As we have done for SMOs, focusing on heterotopias could allow us to better understand global cities outside of the managerialist lens (Kornberger & Carter, 2010). Indeed, these heavily organized and urbanized cities are often wrongfully understood, as homogeneous, controlled and "clean". Yet, all cities are always sites for poaching and embezzlement (de Certeau, 1990) and studying the many "other spaces" that emerge within them would teach a lot about their very nature, leading scholars to a more balanced focus between the organizing urban processes and the strategic planning of cities.

Heterotopic entrepreneurship. We have seen how much all these "other spaces" are not necessarily destructive and creative; they even often encompass potential innovations that could, and sometimes are, institutionalized outside heterotopias. Ideas, demands and experiences that emerge in these spaces of the expelled might give birth to innovative entrepreneurial initiatives that are enriched by all these alternatives. Being born in other spaces, in the middle of contestations and protest can provide a competitive advantage, an advance in serving the needs of many who are inaudible because peripheral, if not expelled. Serving these communities, even the marginalized ones, and creating value in doing so, is not necessarily the work of NGOs and welfare states. Shrinking economies have created areas in which corporations come to be less and less omniscient, allowing for other creative and innovative enterprises to arise. If serving communities could be to future of a "capitalism under siege" (Porter and Kramer 2011), heterotopias might constitute prolific sites for (social) entrepreneurs.

Relationships between organizations and heterotopias. SMOs do not only target states, and corporations also have to face these heterotopic modes of protest. Activists might very well see headquarters often located in global cities as perfect sites to spatially anchor and loudly express their demands. How can organizations handle these new situations and especially how can they adapt to this trend? All the more since these social movement in heterotopias tend to promote horizontal (Graeber 2013) and lateral

(Rifkin, 2011) power relationships which ought to impact how corporations are organized. Especially since, as Davis, Morill and al. (2008) argue, organizations are place in which social movements can blossom and flourish.

Toward an organizational heterotopology. The SMOs' heterotopias we worked on in this article emerged within global cities' public spaces, but what about organizational heterotopias? Organizations are also sites of local expulsions, embezzlements and poaching; there are many "other spaces" that organization scholars need to better explore and conceptualize. Many studies highlight the importance of physical space in the understanding of organizations and organizing processes. Yet, organization studies have been primarily concerned by what Deleuze & Guattari (1980) called striated spaces: areas that can be controlled (the productive spaces in organizations, i.e. offices, open spaces, workshops, etc.), areas in which performance is measurable through technologies of monitoring (Power, 2004), validating a reductive unidimensional approach to organizational space (Kornberger & Clegg, 2004). However, insightful recent studies have begun to overtake this perspective, often using de Certeau (1990) and Lefebvre (1991) on the social practices of space (Cairns & Robertson, 2003; Jones, McLean, & Quattrone, 2004; Watkins, 2005; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011; Zhang, Spicer, & Hancock, 2008; Wasphott & Mallett, 2011). The instability of today's organizations - brought by new technologies, modern work conditions and innovative practices - generates uncertainty, which leads to opportunities for poaching, appropriation and resistance within and around organizational spaces. As we have seen, these "other spaces" will be potential areas of experimentation, deviance, and/or innovation (Balibar, 1997).

Consequently, organizational heterotopias cannot be simply overlooked and dismissed as marginal, peripheral, unproductive or bad-for-business; they participate to the organizational life and its performance in much subtle ways that need to be explored Heterotopic "other spaces" are not secondary or minor, they have a function regarding the whole site that they take place in, and an organizational heterotopology will contribute to a better understanding of organizations.

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