The "Risk" of Absence: Saving Space for Emergence in Disaster Response

Meghan M. Dunn, PhD, Communication Studies
Participant & researcher, Occupy Wall Street
Organizer, Occupy Sandy
Co-founder, Boulder Flood Relief/ Boulder Relief Co.

11

Thirty spokes join together in the hub.
It is because of what is not there that the cart is useful.
Clay is formed into a vessel.
It is because of its emptiness that the vessel is useful.
Cut doors and windows to make a room.
It is because of its emptiness that the room is useful.
Therefore, what is present it used for profit.

But it is in absence that there is usefulness.

-*Tao Te Ching*, Lao Tzu

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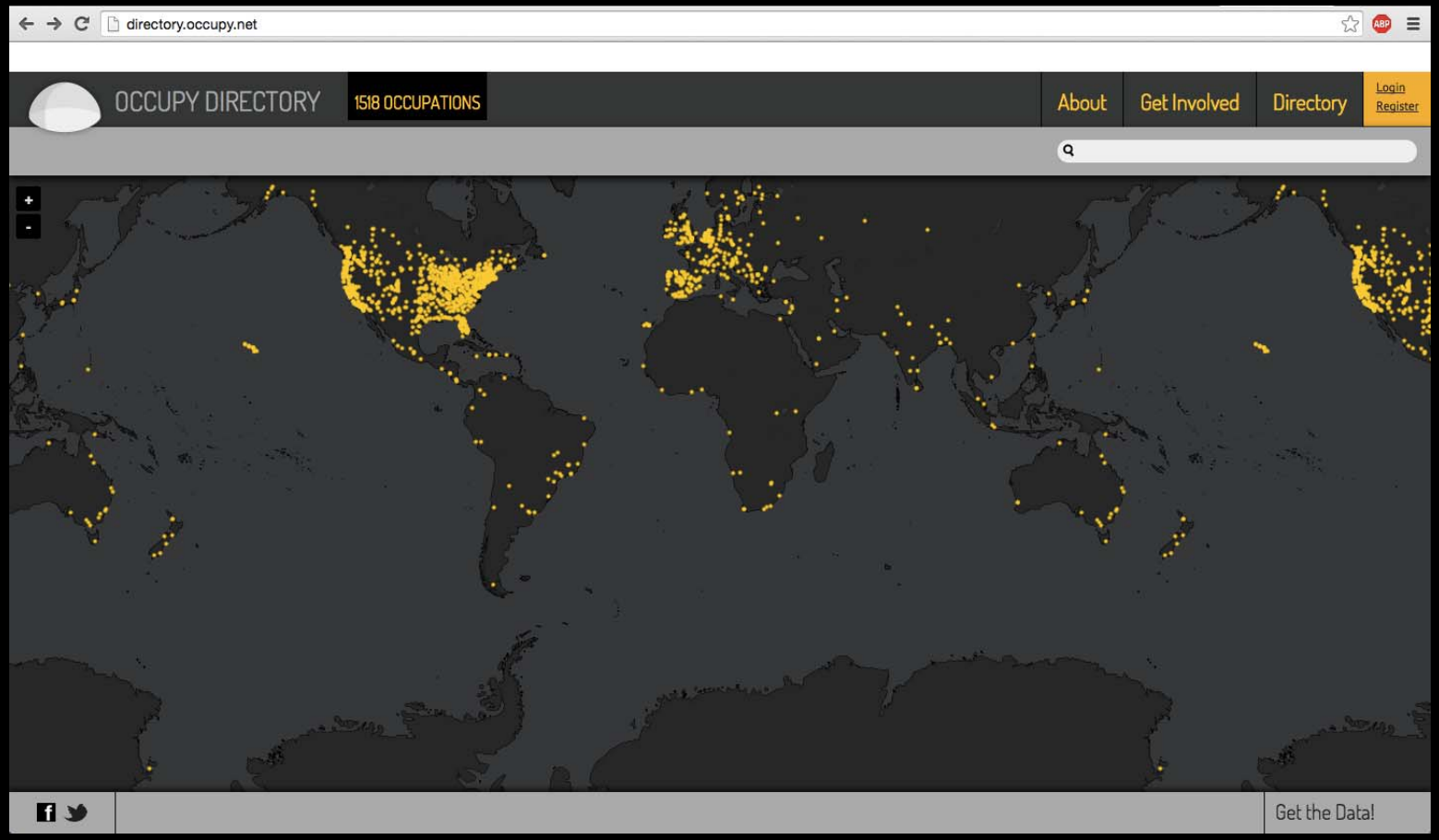
BOULDER
FLOOD
RELIEF

#OCCUPYWALLSTREET

Are you ready for a Tahrir moment?

On Sept 17, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents,
kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street.



Source: "The Occupy Directory" at http://directory.occupy.net/

What was/is “occupation”?

occupation, *n.*

Text size: A A

View as: Outline | Full entry

Quotations: Show all | Hide all Keywords: On | Off

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˌɒkjəˈpeɪʃn/ , U.S. /ˌɑkjəˈpeɪʃ(ə)n/

Forms: ME **occupacioun**, ME **occupacioune**, ME **occupacoun**, ME **occupacyone**, ME ... (Show More)

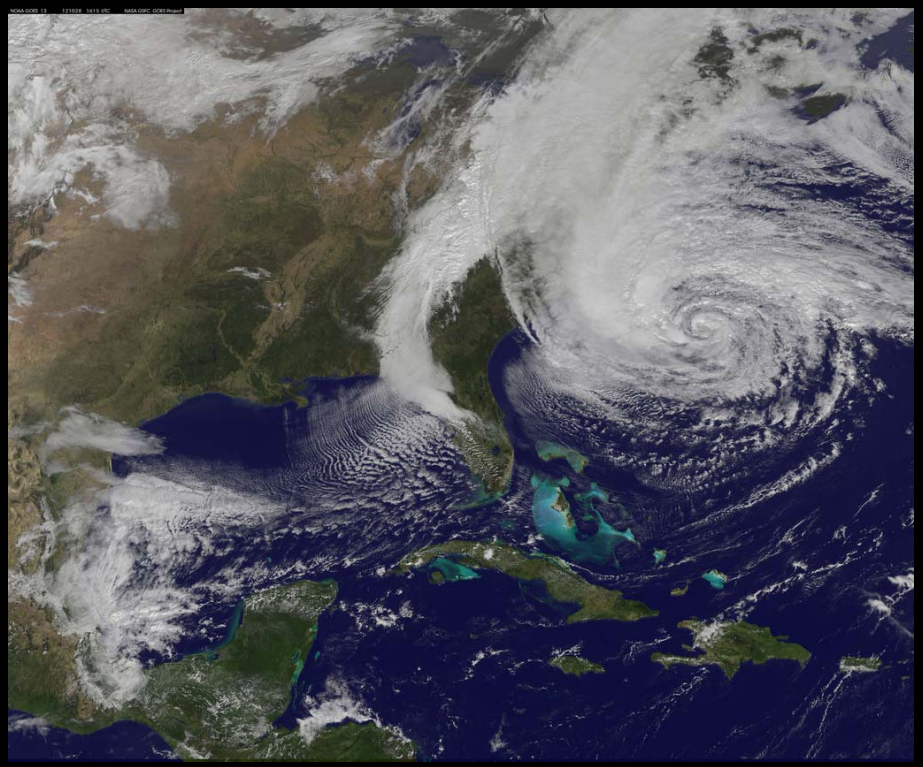
Etymology: < Anglo-Norman *occupacion*, *occupacioun*, *occupaciun*, *ocupacioun* and Anglo-Norman and Old French, Middle French *occupation* activity, employment (c1175), the action of taking possession (late 13th cent.), actual possession (1372), rhetorical figure in which the objections of an opponent are anticipated and defeated (1636) < classical Latin *occupātiōn-* , *occupātiō* seizing, taking possession, preoccupation, employment, in post-classical Latin also the rhetorical figure of anticipation (4th cent.), land occupied by a tenant, holding (from 1086 in British sources), tenancy (from 1335 in British sources) < *occupāt-* , past participial stem of *occupāre* OCCUPY *v.* + *-iō* -ION *suffix*[1].

With sense 8 compare OCCUPATIO *n.* With *occupation army* (see Compounds 1a) compare *army of occupation n.* at ARMY *n.* Phrases 2 and French *armée d'occupation* (1835).

(Show Less)

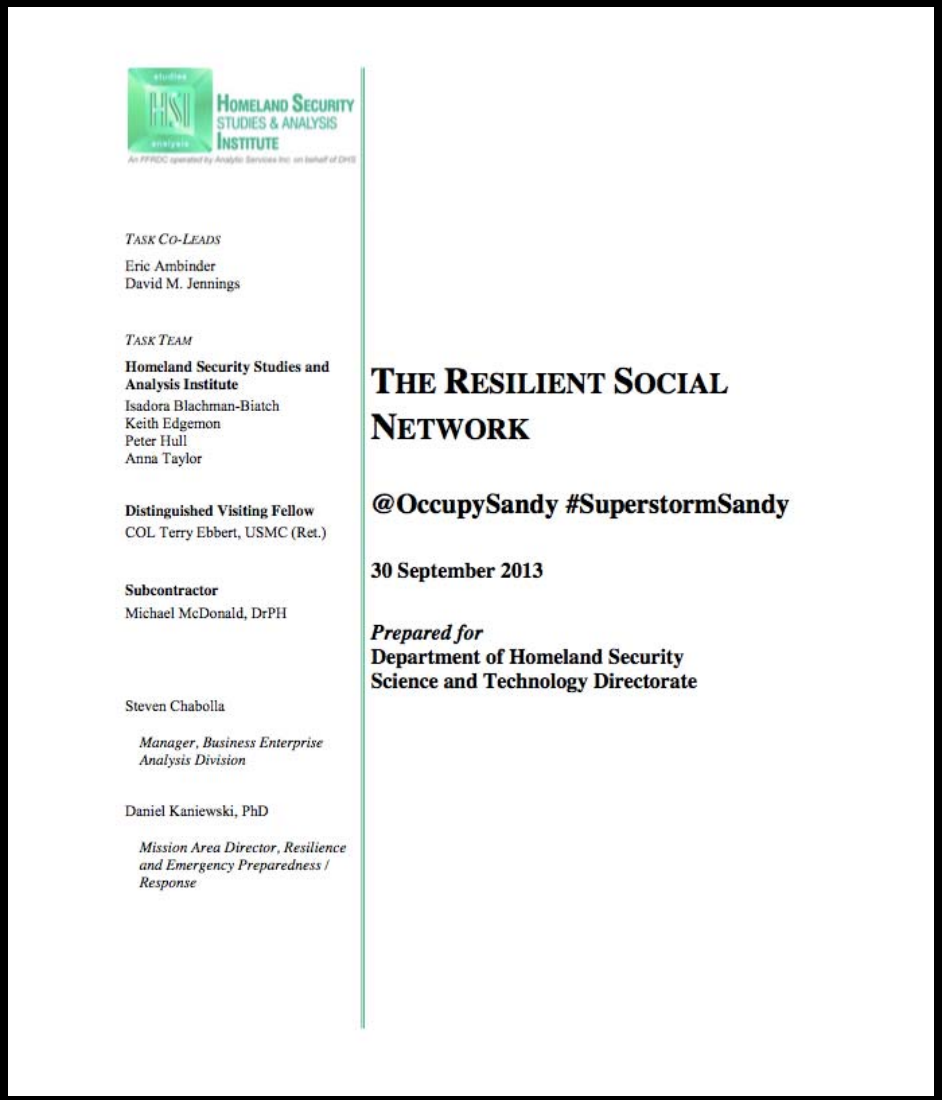
Source: The Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd Edition, 2014, s.v. “occupation, n.”

Hurricane/“Superstorm” Sandy



- The largest Atlantic hurricane on record (by diameter)
- Second costliest storm in United States history
- Caused over 65 billion dollars in damage and 159 deaths across 24 states.

- Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service, *Service Assessment: Hurricane/Post-Tropical Cyclone Sandy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, October 22-29, 2012), 10.



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TASK CO-LEADS

Eric Ambinder
David M. Jennings

TASK TEAM

Homeland Security Studies and Analysis Institute
Isadora Blachman-Biatch
Keith Edgemon
Peter Hull
Anna Taylor

Distinguished Visiting Fellow
COL Terry Ebbert, USMC (Ret.)

Subcontractor
Michael McDonald, DrPH

Steven Chabolla

Manager, Business Enterprise Analysis Division

Daniel Kaniewski, PhD

Mission Area Director, Resilience and Emergency Preparedness / Response

THE RESILIENT SOCIAL NETWORK

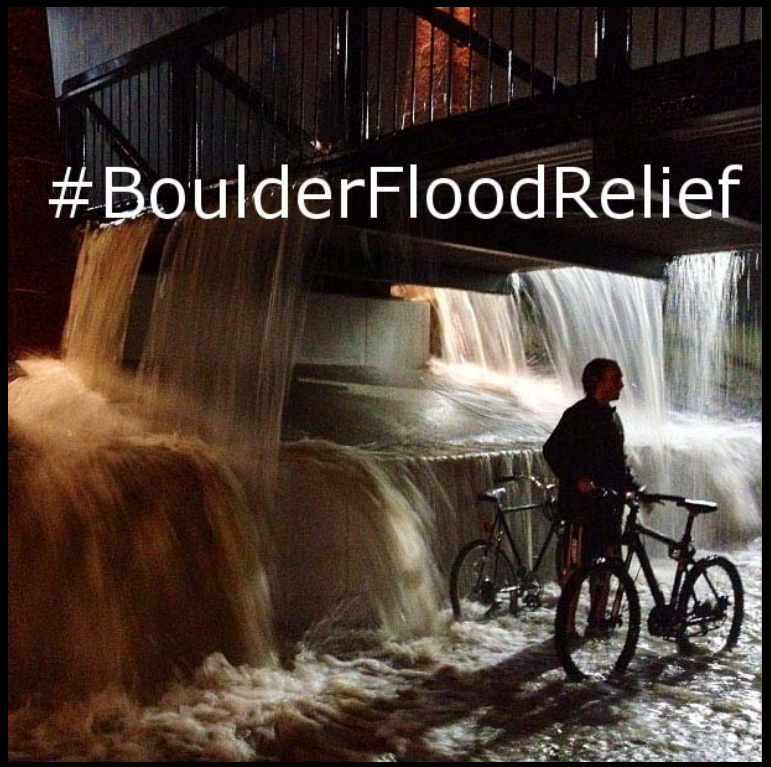
@OccupySandy #SuperstormSandy

30 September 2013

Prepared for
Department of Homeland Security
Science and Technology Directorate

Source: http://homelandsecurity.org/docs/the%20resilient%20social%20network.pdf

"*Unlike traditional disaster response organizations, there were no appointed leaders, no bureaucracy, no regulations to follow, no pre-defined mission, charter, or strategic plan. [...] There was just relief.*" -HSI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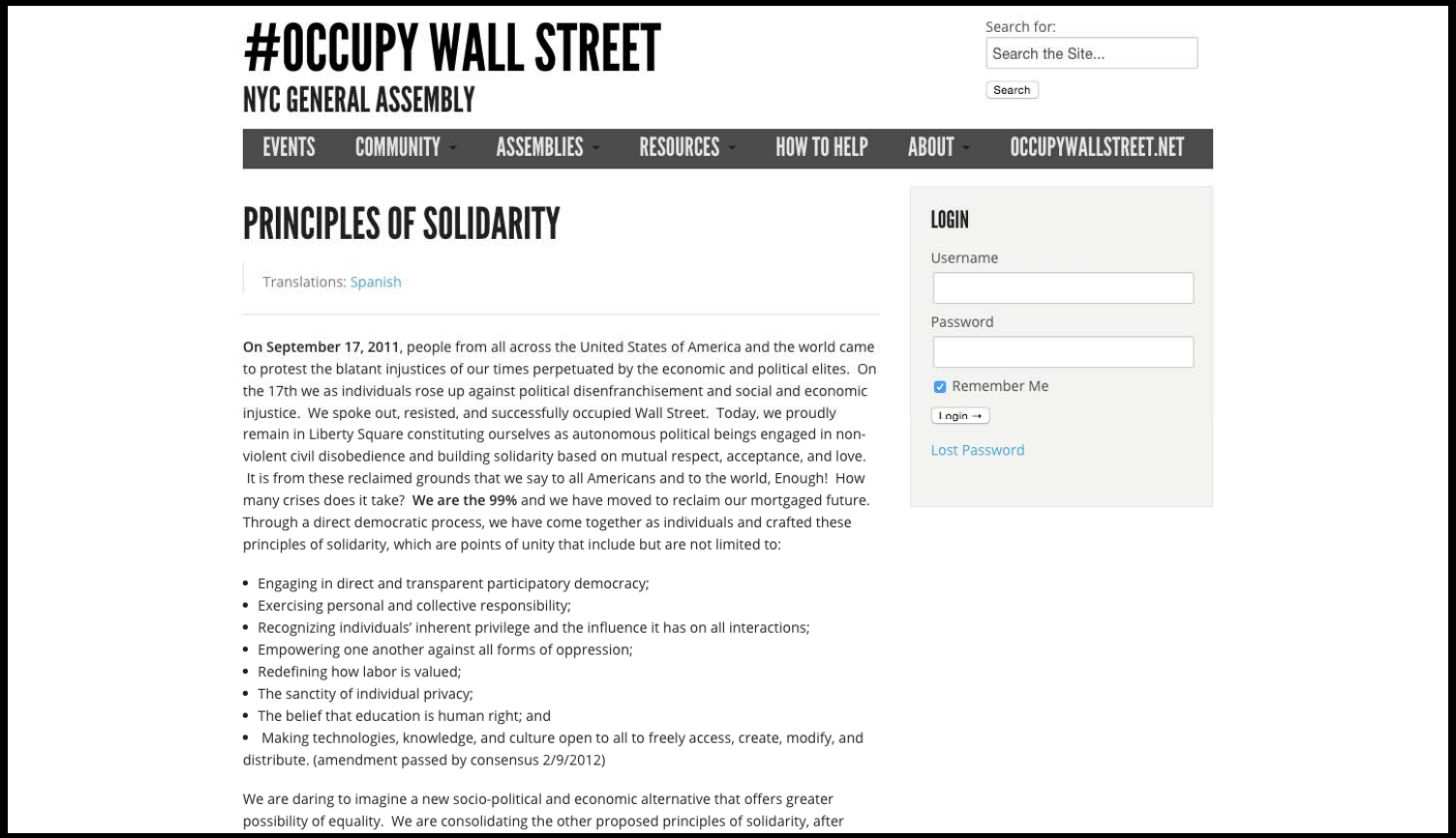

#OCCUPY WALL STREET

NYC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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PRINCIPLES OF SOLIDARITY

Translations: Spanish

On September 17, 2011, people from all across the United States of America and the world came to protest the blatant injustices of our times perpetuated by the economic and political elites. On the 17th we as individuals rose up against political disenfranchisement and social and economic injustice. We spoke out, resisted, and successfully occupied Wall Street. Today, we proudly remain in Liberty Square constituting ourselves as autonomous political beings engaged in non-violent civil disobedience and building solidarity based on mutual respect, acceptance, and love. It is from these reclaimed grounds that we say to all Americans and to the world, Enough! How many crises does it take? **We are the 99%** and we have moved to reclaim our mortgaged future. Through a direct democratic process, we have come together as individuals and crafted these principles of solidarity, which are points of unity that include but are not limited to:

- Engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy;
- Exercising personal and collective responsibility;
- Recognizing individuals' inherent privilege and the influence it has on all interactions;
- Empowering one another against all forms of oppression;
- Redefining how labor is valued;
- The sanctity of individual privacy;
- The belief that education is human right; and
- Making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute. (amendment passed by consensus 2/9/2012)

We are daring to imagine a new socio-political and economic alternative that offers greater possibility of equality. We are consolidating the other proposed principles of solidarity, after

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Lost Password

Source: http://www.nycga.net/resources/documents/principles-of-solidarity/

- "*Exercising personal and collective responsibility*."
- "*Making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute*."

… @OccupyWallSt → @OccupySandy → {@OccupyRelief + @OccupyBoulder + Boulder} → @BoulderFlood → @BoulderRelief ...

What is an ECG?

"*The coming together in formal and informal groupings of private citizens concerned with some preparedness and/or recovery aspects of actual or potential disaster from some natural agent or technological accident.*"*

*E. L. Quarantelli, *"Final Project Report #33: Emergent Citizen Groups in Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Activities,"* 1983.

Characteristics of ECGS:

ECGs are traditionally characterized by:

- their *newness*
- their *absence of formalization*
- and their *lack of tradition* (Stallings and Quarantelli, 1985)

ECGS create or possesses, in their purest form:

- *a new structure* (i.e. social relations) and
- *a new function* (i.e., goals or tasks) in their response to an emergent event or situation or convergence on the same problem.

Why do ECGS come into being?

- When *demands are not met by existing organizations* (Auf der Heide, 1989).
- When *traditional tasks and structures are insufficient or inappropriate* (Stallings and Quarantelli, 1985).
- and when *the community feels it necessary to respond to or resolve their crisis situation* (Wenger, 1992).
- Ultimately: to "fill critical gaps" and "attempt to fill important societal functions made evident by an extreme event" (Drabek and McEntire, 2002)

What do ECGS do?

Most of the research has focused upon volunteer participation during search and rescue, but ECGS are not limited to this task. Other activities include:

- Collecting food
- Receiving supplies, monies, donations
- Providing shelter
- Serving as translators
- Providing transportation
- Offering medical and psychological aid
- Solve immediate, critical problems
- Initial damage and needs assessment
- Handling of the dead
- Setting policy

The “520 Clinton Hub” of Occupy Sandy at The Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew, November 2012. Brooklyn, NY.

Perception of ECGS

- "Public officials often do not take them into account in community emergency management planning and misunderstand both the reasons behind their emergence and the roles they play in disaster-related community problems. **This is especially unfortunate because these kinds of emergent citizen groups are likely to be even more prominent in the future than they are at present**" (Stallings and Quarantelli, 1985, p. 94).

- "On many occasions, [*sic*] the new behavior or group may represent the most effective way of coping with the problem. **This is not to say that emergence always represents the best solution, but emergence is a manifestation of an effort to deal with the problem**" (Quarantelli, 1995, p. 24).

Increasing knowledge around innovation and emergence…

Little-no resources = a situation where solutions to problems MUST BE created "from scratch."

- New routes/paths/process for decision-making
- Creation of new tasks, new ties, new technologies
  - Ex: Occupy Sandy's Amazon Gift Registry, Sahana, CiviCRM.

Formal responders, on the other hand, typically already have resources at hand & protocol for handling disasters.

(Which is a good thing, but…)

Not typically familiar with the area, the resources/goods in that area, the social connections and networks available, the lay of the land.

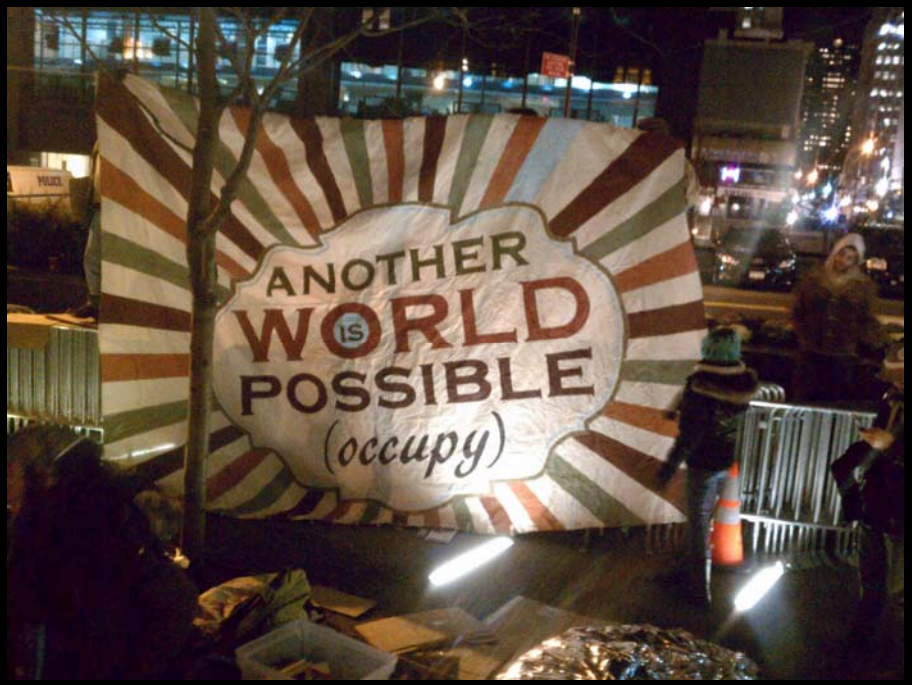
Disaster provides an opportunity for:

- Community members to reach out to those inside and outside their normal “sphere of influence” for decision-making, collaboration, and input/feedback.

- Ideally, an idea to be judged by its merit than by the position of the person who had it.

- Application or re-purposing of occupational skills in disaster or “in-house” innovation.

In Conclusion:



Meghan M. Dunn

Co-founder, Executive Director: Boulder Flood Relief/Boulder Relief Co.
Organizer, Internal Operations: Occupy Sandy
Email: meghan.m.dunn@colorado.edu
Twitter: @Schmeggelz, @OccupyRhetoric

Org Email, Twitter: boulderfloodrelief@gmail.com | @BoulderFlood, @BoulderRelief