Interface

A journal for and about social movements

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Open issue

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Clashes between police and community protestors during the historic Civic Strike to Live with Dignity in Buenaventura, Colombia during May 2017. The strike lasted for 22 days, paralysing the city and with it the country's most important port. The strike's demands centred around improving living conditions in the city through basic public services and infrastructure, and increasing popular participation in decisions over the city's territory and environment.

Photo by Patrick Kane, cover by Sutapa Chattopadhyay.

About *Interface*

Interface: a journal for and about social movements is a peer-reviewed journal of practitioner research produced by movement participants and engaged academics. *Interface* is globally organised in a series of different regional collectives, and is produced as a multilingual journal. Peer-reviewed articles have been subject to double-blind review by one researcher and one movement practitioner.

The views expressed in any contributions to *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* are those of the authors and contributors, and do not necessarily represent those of *Interface*, the editors, the editorial collective, or the organizations to which the authors are affiliated. Interface is committed to the free exchange of ideas in the best tradition of intellectual and activist inquiry.

The *Interface* website is hosted by the Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland Maynooth.

***Interface**: a journal for and about social movements* *Editorial*
Volume 11 (1): pp. 1 – 2 (July 2019)

Open issue

Laurence Cox

Welcome to the twentieth issue of *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*. As always, *Interface* seeks to share learning between different social movement struggles and movements in different places and to develop dialogue between activist and academic understandings and between different political and intellectual traditions.

This issue has 14 pieces, covering movements in Australia, Catalunya, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Palestine, SANES (the Self-Administration of North and East Syria), South Africa, Spain, the UK and the US.

The issue starts with my personal note appreciating Colin Barker, the socialist activist and Marxist theorist of social movements who died earlier this year. Colin's insistence on parity between activist and academic thinking was a key inspiration behind *Interface*, which was originally planned by enthusiastic participants at the Alternative Futures and Popular Protest conference that Colin co-convened.

Two pieces on conflict and transnational solidarity follow. Majken Jul Sørensen explores the Israeli authorities' successful disruption and containment of the 2011 Freedom Flotilla to Gaza, offering a framework of responses to non-violent campaigns and discussing how activists can engage with these. Ricardo Kaufer's article looks at German left and anarchist solidarity with the Kurdish movement around the Turkish invasion of Afrin, showing how and why movements in Rojava matter for movements in Germany.

These are followed by three pieces on the motivations for social movement participation. Emma Craddock looks at how UK activists experience their resistance to austerity and argues that emotions and normative ideals of care and collectivism are fundamental to sustaining activism in hard times. Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda and Ernesto Castañeda ask what makes people become and remain active in the context of the high levels of violent repression experienced in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, identifying an ideal type of core activist motivated by social justice and committed to a long-term agenda of social justice. Martin Pötz' article explores the potential of utopian imagination for radical activism and offers tools for taking it further.

Two pieces focus particularly on dimensions of autonomist theory. Jared Sacks presents an argument for rethinking how surplus value is produced through reproductive work and explores the political implications for different kinds of social struggle. Miguel Martínez explores the autonomist tradition as expressed in Italian, German and Spanish squatting, with particular reference to the social, feminist and anti-capitalist dimensions of these political practices.

Chris Hardnack's article offers a synthesis of the framing perspective in social movement studies and Gramscian analysis to develop a counter-hegemonic framing approach for the critical understanding of social movement discourses.

The reviews section begins with Beth Geglia's review of Todd Miller's *Storming the Wall*, about the globalisation and militarisation of US borders in relation to climate change and migration. Andrew Kettler's review essay covers two books from the *Posthumanities* series: Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism*, about the need for a more reflexive and effective environmental communication, and David Farrier's *Anthropocene Poetics*, which explores the temporalities of writing on ecology. Alexander Dunlap reviews Jaume Franquesa's *Power Struggles*, about the contested politics of wind energy in Catalunya. Samuel Udogbo reviews John Agbonifo's *Environment and Conflict*, about the Ogoni struggle with Shell and the Nigerian state. Lastly, we have Brett Heino's review essay on Jason Schulman's *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response*, about union-party relations in New Zealand, Britain and Australia.

A call for papers for future issues of *Interface* follows: we publish pieces by activist thinkers as well as academic researchers (and many people who are both), and in many different formats.

We are also looking for a new editor to join the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) group: an activist and / or academic involved in / researching movements in one or more countries in the region. Our regional groups ensure that decisions about what to publish are made by people from, active in or researching the region rather than on the basis of what fits narratives in the "core". Editors are co-responsible for the journal as a whole, encourage activists and researchers to write for us, handle peer review and work with authors on other articles. If you're interested, please contact Anna Szolucha at anna.szolucha AT northumbria.ac.uk.

Call for papers volume 12 issue 1 (May – June 2020) Open issue

The May – June 2020 issue of the open-access, online, copyleft academic/activist journal *Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements* (http://www.interfacejournal.net/) will be an open issue with no themed section. We hope to receive submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fits within the journal's mission statement (http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/). Submissions should contribute to the journal's purpose as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses from specific movement processes and experiences that can be translated into a form useful for other movements.

In this context, we welcome contributions by movement participants and academics who are developing movement-relevant theory and research. In addition to studies of contemporary experiences and practices, we encourage analysis of historical social movements as a means of learning from the past and better understanding contemporary struggles.

Our goal is to include material that can be used in a range of ways by movements — in terms of its content, its language, its purpose and its form. We thus seek work in a range of different formats, such as conventional (refereed) articles, review essays, facilitated discussions and interviews, action notes, teaching notes, key documents and analysis, book reviews — and beyond. Both activist and academic peers review research contributions, and other material is sympathetically edited by peers. The editorial process generally is geared towards assisting authors to find ways of expressing their understanding, so that we all can be heard across geographical, social and political distances.

We can accept material in Bengali, Bosnian / Croatian / Serbian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish and Swedish. Please see our editorial contacts page (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/) for details of who to submit to.

Deadline and contact details

The deadline for initial submissions to this issue, to be published May 2020, is 1 November 2019. For details of how to submit to Interface, please see the "Guidelines for contributors" on our website. All manuscripts should be sent to the appropriate regional editor, listed on our contacts page. Submission templates are available online via the guidelines page and should be used to ensure correct formatting.

Remembering Colin Barker

Laurence Cox

It's hard to imagine the world without Colin in it.

So much of my own life has been shaped by the dialogue with Colin. Even when we only saw each other once a year, those conversations and the extraordinary bunch of friends and comrades he gathered round would give inspiration, food for thought and ideas for the other 360-odd days. At other times it was a constant challenge (in the best of ways) to live up to the intellectual and political level he embodied.

Colin Barker, who died earlier this year aged 79, was a lifelong activist and revolutionary socialist, and Marxism's most important thinker on social movements. I don't want to write another obituary here: there have already been several by people who knew him for longer than I did, including Gareth Dale in the *Guardian*, Ian Birchall for *rs21*, John Charlton for *International Socialism* and Keith Flett for his own blog. The Alternative Futures and Popular Protest conference this year held a celebration of his work, which can be watched on youtube.[1]

So this is a personal note, remembering Colin as a friend and for what he brought to social movements.

Photo: Brecht de Smet

[1] Links to most of these are at https://cedarlounge.wordpress.com/2019/04/24/what-you-want-to-say-24-january-2019/#comment-745084

Alternative futures past

I first met Colin at the second Alternative Futures and Popular Protest conference in 1996. As it was for several other people, AFPP became my intellectual home, a deliberately downbeat and non-"professional" place where ideas and movements really mattered – because there were no status or other rewards to be had from participating. It was sometimes funny to watch career-oriented academics flounder in a space where anyone could talk to anyone, and did. I came back every year afterwards, as often as possible bringing activist students with me. For them, as for me, the contrast to an academia where social movements were marginal and low-status and colleagues knew everything about good schools but nothing about popular struggles was profound. Most participants in those early years were activists first and academics second (if at all).

A huge energy came from the encounter between the different movements and political perspectives of the activists: at first, this was particularly between older Marxist historians of popular struggle and younger anarchist ethnographers on the cusp between the British roads protests and the alterglobalisation "movement of movements"; but also radical researchers from around the world, people from many a different political tradition, movement and generation.

This space was created, and held, by Colin and Mike Tyldesley, deliberately organising things without the hierarchical structure of plenaries and keynotes. All papers were published "as is", in photocopied volumes that felt like samizdat – right up to the point when a conference needed 4 volumes and they moved to CD format instead. The guiding assumption, not just for the proceedings but the conference itself, was that nobody should be refused, unless they were visibly applying to the wrong conference and needed to be gently directed somewhere more safely academic.

Part of what underpinned this was a fiercely democratic understanding of knowledge, the reckoning that "the literature" in an academic sense did not deserve unique deference. But Colin was also not the kind of Marxist who set sectarian knowledge up as something separate from and above other kinds of movement thought: he was consistently interested in activists' attempts to think through their own practice in their own languages. The result was a space for genuine dialogue, for holding ideas up to the test of practice and seeing what they actually meant for people in movements.

This was not the result of any hostility to academic research: Colin's energy for reading was phenomenal and he was always happy to find useful ideas in any context. Until his last year, he continued to read *Mobilization*, the house journal of canonical US social movement studies despite repeatedly complaining how boring it was. A message from May 2018 told a range of friends and comrades that he had just re-read Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* and wanted to know what other people had come across by way of commentary on Thompson – and if any of us had changed our minds about aspects of his work.

Romanes eunt domus

At my first conference I was too awkward and awed to talk to Colin, but the next year we found ourselves skiving off together from sessions at the British Sociological Association in York – the opposite in terms of genuine dialogue and interest in movements from AFPP. Colin enthused about the ducks we were watching, and in a long conversation I asked him what a Marxist theory of social movements might look like.

He took the question on board very fully, leading us a few years later to write a piece he called (with characteristic flair) "What have the Romans ever done for us?" on the relationship between how movement activists theorise about their activity and what academics write about it. Many activists have commented since about recognising themselves and their frustrations in the piece – a recognition due almost entirely to what Colin brought to it.

Neither of us let the question go – as he put it, why does Marxism, one of the main theories developed from and for social movements, have so little explicit theory of social movements, and why does mainstream social movement theory so consistently skirt around Marxism? In 2008 he invited me, John Krinsky and Alf Nilsen to a four-person micro-conference on the subject of Marxism and social movements. On the basis of this we put out an international call, set up a discussion list towards an edited book and eventually got in something like 70 submissions. This became *Marxism and Social Movements*, published in parallel with my book with Alf *We Make Our Own History: Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*.

From this point of view so much of my life and work has been bound up with the conversation with Colin, directly and indirectly. In particular, his refusal to defer to academic theory, and his insistence that activist theorising as well as Marxism were worth paying attention to, gave me a confidence I would not otherwise have had. I had become a researcher to answer questions we were struggling with in our own movements, but the institutional pressures towards seeing "the literature" as the sole source of real value were strong ones, and Colin's perspective was key in helping me in refusing that utterly spurious "argument by authority" and giving voice to my recognition of the feebleness of so much academic writing about our own movements. As a very awkward young activist, with eco and anarchist leanings and a growing interest in community struggles in Ireland, Colin's interest, discussions and friendship made a huge difference to my ability to stay politically active, and to keep researching in an alien environment.

Alternative Futures, of course, provided a strong basis in these islands for a more open and equal form of dialogue; this journal grew out of the enthusiasm of a group of activist researchers at the conference, fired by the encounter between movements that was taking place in the alterglobalisation "movement of movements" and wanting to contribute something real to movements' own thought processes. This is our twentieth issue; along with other projects, and the combined weight of that generation and the generation of the movements of

2011, we can see a turnaround of what – when I began my PhD in 1992 – seemed an inevitable tide towards the drowning of movement thought by academic logics alone.

Over the years since that, much of my own work has been geared in different ways to bringing out activist thinking, not least in the form of attempts to articulate what Marxism as a form of social movement theory might have to offer both to other movements and to intellectual work. I have been lucky enough to work with a series of extraordinary activist researchers doing PhDs and MLitts using different forms of participatory action research on movement practice – a model inspired by Colin – and to bring them to AFPP.

In particular, colleagues in Adult and Community Education and Sociology with backgrounds in different movements were able to create a masters in activism at Maynooth, again with a perspective of helping movements to develop their own thinking around the issues they were struggling with. For the five years the masters ran, we brought the whole class to Alternative Futures to join in the wider dialogue. Through these routes and more indirectly, Colin's work helped encourage many Irish activists to take their own theorising more seriously and think more radically about the possibilities that were available to them. After his death, an activist I'd brought over as a postgrad back in the last century got in touch to say how much Colin had meant to him in just a few meetings, and another organiser told me how glad she was I'd pushed her to go to the conference.

Badge and T-shirt image produced by regulars for the 20th Alternative Futures and Popular Protest conference in 2015

A radical humanism

Something clicked for me when I heard that Colin had almost chosen to study theatre in university: his mode of writing and telling stories is always full of human drama, not as a means of reducing complex social relations to banal clichés but rather as a means of showing their complexity, how they change and how people can act and talk in the most creative ways. The titles of his pieces,

too, often bear witness to this capacity to sum up "the concentration of many determinations" in a single moment:

- "Let me through, I'm a social theorist! – some sceptical notes on social movements and academe"
- "Goliath sometimes wins. A strike of community mental health workers in Manchester"
- "Never go to meet the bosses on your own"
- "Fear, laughter and collective power: the making of Solidarity at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, Poland, August 1980"
- "A modern moral economy: Edward Thompson and Vladimir Volosinov meet in a North Manchester protest"
- " 'The muck of ages': reflections on proletarian self-emancipation"

In her book *Grassroots Warriors*, Nancy Naples talks of how black and Latina women community activists extended their caring and mentoring roles out beyond the family and into the community and its struggles. Colin surely did something similar: he and Ewa welcomed so many of us to visit and to stay, and so many campaigns were hatched or supported from the house. Food played a key role in this: Colin was a dedicated cook (and lover of TV cookery competitions). I have fond memories of him making pasta together with my then seven-year-old daughter. When I was on sabbatical, trying to work on a project that eventually became something else entirely, he and Ewa invited me to stay, and I happily shuttled backwards and forwards across the Irish Sea to their house.

In his everyday life, Colin exemplified how to live a radical humanism that doesn't compartmentalise cooking and revolution, music and theory, but is happy to mingle them both.

Socialism from below

Still in my inbox is Colin's last email to his friends, comrades and family, a very honest, funny and thoughtful one which simultaneously read like a farewell but also seemed like a sign of hope in its energy and lucidity. Its final paragraph reads:

> Back in the early 1960s I started becoming a Marxist. I think the essay that most influenced me, and whose principles I have tried to follow ever since, and whose ideas I have tried to deepen, was Hal Draper's 'The Two Souls of Socialism', first read in winter 1962 after I'd joined the IS. (It's on the web. Read it if you never did before.) It placed revolutionary socialism, or what he termed 'socialism from below' at the centre of what mattered in politics – against and in contrast to all forms of 'socialism from above' whether of the Stalinist or social-democratic/

> parliamentarist kind. Some time later, and still in that lifelong process of *becoming* a Marxist, a friend from Detroit (who introduced me to CLR James) first showed me the passage in *The German Ideology* where Marx explains that the reason that a *revolution* is needed is that there is no other way that the great mass of humankind can get rid of 'the muck of ages' than by actually participating directly in a revolution through which they take direct democratic control of their everyday lives and build a new form of democratic state. As Marx would write later, with Engels' agreement, 'the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.' Those amazing ideas became a lodestone. Few today agree with them, perhaps, but what a measure they provide for grasping the movement of popular history up to the very present moment. Time and again, those ideas have surfaced, and been knocked back. They will revive again, and again. The wager - that they can win out in practice – has given meaning to my life.
>
> Love and solidarity to all.

From this point of view, the reason for being interested in social movements and revolutions is that *they are how popular power develops* and *they are how people transform themselves in large numbers*.

As so many people take the rise of a new authoritarian right to mean the impossibility of any such thing, we see new pseudo-left technocratic fantasies, a grotesque revival of "tankie" celebration of Stalinism, and "radical" academic obsessions with new kinds of despair. In this context, Colin's politics of "socialism from below" – and a deep awareness of the many ways in which popular struggles have reshaped the world – is more important than ever.

I don't want to go too far into analysing his politics or his theory: that is for another time. But I think it is fair to say that he recognised the importance of combining an understanding of class, social movements and revolution into a way of thinking that situated popular struggles in the social realities which they grew out of and sought to change, and that did not exclude the possibility of "revolutionizing themselves and things".

He was perhaps never quite satisfied with any tight formulation of exactly how these things related. Much of his written work is focussed on grasping the "concentration of many determinations", the "unity of the diverse" that is the specific moment of struggle. And then he would take off in another piece, thinking through the theoretical implications of such experiences and trying to articulate the best possible way of understanding them.

His interest in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), the Vygotsky-derived theory of human learning, and most recently in social reproduction, represent versions of this attempt just as much as did his work on class and social movements – or his late attempts to rethink the perspective of *Revolutionary Rehearsals* in ways that fit with what happened in 1989 and afterwards.

While critical of what he saw as the identity politics of the new social movements, Colin never adopted the unacknowledged identity politics of a workerist blindness to race, ethnicity and gender. The working class as he understood it was never homogenous (a central point in his theorising on class and movements); rather, the "whole movement of society" – as he already knew from his reading of Marx and his engagement with the movements of the 1960s – consisted of many different struggles and campaigns, only some of which were explicitly coded in class terms.

His involvement in the Anti-Nazi League was one of the things he was proudest of in the IS' record, and he was delighted to tell stories of seeing white and Asian youth come together around anti-racist concerts. Similarly, in his research on Solidarnosć he was both alive to the powerful symbolic politics of holding a mass at Gdańsk shipyard and to the downsides of Polish ethno-nationalism.

As an organiser, he was less interested in assigning a permanent – negative or positive – value to any particular identity and more interested in seeing how it could be used both "from above" and "from below", within opposing kinds of politics. On a broader historical scale, he consistently understood the US Civil Rights Movement as one of the key struggles of the post-war era – a view that went hand in hand with his love of black American music. Colin's eventual split with the SWP was precisely over its leadership's cover up of a rape scandal – a step that cost him many lifelong friends, but which reflected a deep-seated disgust at patriarchal forms of abuse that I had heard him express in other contexts.

A young Colin trying – and failing – to keep up A Serious Intellectual Image

What I'm (still) trying to learn from Colin

Over the years I brought many activist researchers to Alternative Futures and joined many conversations between Colin and them. Part of what I think I saw in Colin was a lived belief that human beings' creativity in struggle could be the

germ of a new world that was struggling to be born. He was consistently kind, encouraging and helpful towards people's own attempts to think things through around their movements; more inclined to ask a question than jump straight to a possible disagreement. His questions, too, were asked from a place of equality rather than setting up people for an argument or a trap.

More than many left organisers and most academics, he was genuinely curious about activists' worlds and their struggles; whether across the kitchen table or in books, he was consistently enthusiastic when he felt he had discovered a new movement worth thinking about, rather than seeking immediately to dismiss it, pigeon-hole it or use it to justify some previously-held belief. Colin *learned* more, I think, than most people, and was consistently interested in meeting new activists from different places.

Many people have mentioned how kind, generous and gregarious Colin was. It was infectious stuff and helped to bring an extraordinary range of people together at Alternative Futures in particular, learning from each other across many different movements and political traditions, something we then tried to keep alive in other spaces like this, which wouldn't have existed without Colin's inspiration. What struck me was the friendliness and curiosity he brought to the encounter with people whose movements, countries or political traditions he didn't know: he was always open to the possibility that this new thing might represent a different kind of expression of popular struggle. It was a wonderful way to embody the spirit of Marxism, and never stopped him disagreeing or asking challenging questions.

Some people have spoken of Colin as being unfailingly optimistic; that wasn't my experience of him, and of course his own experience had been one of seeing many defeats and unfulfilled expectations. But – in a society where it remains true for many people that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism – he consistently saw revolution as a real possibility that could be achieved from within our own societies. From this point of view, the new discoveries made by movements in struggle and the mistakes and blind alleys are all of a piece: the practical implication of a Marxism without guarantees and without despair, or as he put it "the wager that these ideas can win out in practice".

Maybe because of this, being around Colin was to inhale a great feeling of confidence rather than of optimism – that as Marx wrote in 1859, "humanity only sets itself problems that it is able to solve", and a broad historical and internationalist perspective that refused to give up in the face of overwhelming *local* odds. I remember him talking about the pleasure of being involved in anti-war protests in 2003 when after decades of being a small minority on the losing side of many arguments suddenly the vast mass of the population agreed.

For Colin, the potential for social transformation and revolutionary change was not a matter of theory, but one that drew on his own direct and indirect experience. He regularly told stories of his experience of local strikes he had been involved in, as well as of the highpoints of struggle in Poland – along with

many another story. Talking to him, or listening to his stories, you were reminded that yes, we had faced defeats, even for long periods, but then we came back and had another go. As his comments about "Two Souls of Socialism" and the self-emancipation of the working classes underlined, he knew as a matter of lived experience and theoretical insight that popular agency never really goes away. Even when it is defeated, appears in hard-to-recognise forms or does flat-out stupid things (he was not a blind optimist), people would still struggle against the bosses and the state, and sometimes they would win.

Keeping on after Colin

Two final books are in the pipeline. One is a sequel to *Revolutionary Rehearsals,* looking at what revolutionaries can learn from revolutions since the mid-1980s: *Struggling to be Born? Revolutions in the Neoliberal Era*, edited by Colin Barker, Gareth Dale and Neil Davidson, to be published with Haymarket. The other is a selected works or as he called it "Greatest Hits" – which will certainly have more of the variety of form, style and energy of a rock album than a typical edited collection.

In the meantime, much of what Colin wrote except the books (some of which are available online in pirated editions, or can be found second-hand without difficulty) is on his website at https://sites.google.com/site/colinbarkersite/. It is a fantastic record of an extraordinary mind – and of his intense activist engagement, although it includes only a fraction of the many talks he did for socialist and other organisations.

The Alternative Futures and Popular Protest conference is in safe hands – Colin and Mike arranged its transfer to the University of Manchester's department of sociology, where Kevin Gillan, Simin Fadaee, Luke Yates and others organised a solid opening to this new series. *Interface* too continues on.

In the bigger picture, the project of "socialism from below" remains an open question: people continue to resist oppression and exploitation, to articulate their own "good sense" against official "common sense", and to come together in struggle. The search for the best organising forms, and for theoretical articulations that help, remains a living one.

We left too many conversations hanging. In the introduction to *Why Social Movements Matter* I had talked about the debt I owed him for showing me "how to think dialectically about social movements". When I visited last October, he asked me what I meant by that. It took a little while to gather my thoughts, but the next morning I was able to say something semi-sensible about the centrality of relationship, process and conflict – that different social actors don't start out separate from one another and then engage in conflict and alliance but begin from (often conflictual) relationship – and that they are themselves internally complex fields of struggle … or something. I was a bit embarrassed – but of course the real point was that Colin's own intellectual practice drew on a dialectical vision of the world.

Around the same time, he sent me and others a draft of his introduction to *Struggling to be born?* for comments. Among other things, I asked him why he only saw the October Revolution as a genuine revolutionary success, and not (for example) the Zapatista or Rojava revolutions, but he did not get the chance to answer. Conversely, he saw and appreciated a piece I'd written for *ROARMag* about the revolutionary challenges of the long 1968 – but felt that I needed to think more about the "Lenin moment". Personally and politically, I would have loved the opportunity to finish those conversations – and no doubt start new ones.

My heart goes out to Ewa, Hannah and Nancy who have lived through Colin's appalling and horrible disease and are now coming to terms with his loss. Thank you for sharing him with us.

Colin was a truly remarkable human being, and my life was so much richer for knowing him. He inspired, supported and challenged people involved in struggles of many kinds.

About the author

Laurence Cox was a friend of Colin Barker's and a founding editor of *Interface*. He can be contacted at laurence.cox AT mu.ie

Dynamics of interaction: how Israeli authorities succeeded in disrupting and containing the 2011 Freedom Flotilla to Gaza

Majken Jul Sørensen

Abstract

Groups working for change are met with many types of responses. Most attention has been given to reactions of overt repression or support for movements and campaigns. However, there exist a range of other pacifying responses, such as ignoring, placating, devaluing, disrupting and misinforming. These subtler forms of obstructions pose a different type of challenge and require different types of counter-strategies than violent repression.

This article introduces a framework focusing on four different types of responses – 1. Validating, 2. Discrediting and attacking, 3. Manipulative and 4. Non-interfering. This model can be applied to analyse responses to all types of nonviolent campaigns from opponents and so-called third parties. The Freedom Flotilla to Gaza in 2011 serves as a case study to present the model and to analyse how the Israeli government and its supporters successfully disrupted and contained this flotilla with much more subtle means than the 2010 flotilla where nine activists were killed.

Introduction

When activists and academics think about how opponents and third parties respond to nonviolent action, the first things that come to mind a usually forms of direct repression and support. Research and awareness about all the responses which fall in between is extremely limited. Using the case study of the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza in 2011, I will explore different pacifying responses, such as ignoring, placating, devaluing, disrupting and misinforming. These subtler forms of obstructions pose a different type of challenge and require different types of counter-strategies.

The idea behind the Freedom Flotillas is simple – to break the Israeli state's blockade of Gaza by bringing humanitarian assistance and international visitors to Gaza in solidarity with the Palestinian population. In 2010, the first Freedom Flotilla was met with brutal repression from the Israeli state when nine activists were killed. In 2011, the flotilla organisers had planned for a larger flotilla, but Israeli authorities and its supporters successfully disrupted and contained almost the entire flotilla without any outright repression. Because nine out the ten boats were planning to depart from ports in Greece, one of the main obstacles was the Greek state's issuing of a travel ban on all the boats heading for Gaza. The differences between 2010 and 2011 make the 2011 flotilla a critical case for identifying what the Israeli state and its supporters did differently. The

present analysis of the case involves an in-depth investigation of the events of 2011, something which is lacking in academic research. It has also been the basis for revising my existing framework for analysing responses to nonviolent campaigns (Sørensen 2015).

Below I start with presenting the limited literature on responses to nonviolent campaigns, the methodology used for the case study, and a short background to the blockade of Gaza and the Freedom Flotillas. The main part of the article is the analysis of the 2011 events, which simultaneously presents the revised framework which can be used for studying interaction between nonviolent campaigns and their surroundings. The two final parts discuss how Israeli authorities and their supporters managed to successfully disrupt and contain the 2011 Freedom Flotilla and suggest possible counter-strategies activists can consider when their campaigns encounter these types of responses.

Literature on responses

The literature on responses to nonviolent campaigns is limited, but an interesting journalistic approach to the topic is Dobson's (2012) *The dictator's Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy*. Previously I have explored this topic in the book *Responses to Nonviolent Campaigns: Beyond Repression or Support* (Sørensen, 2015) which investigates the different ways opponents and so-called third parties react to initiatives from nonviolent campaigns. As the title indicates, the purpose was to get beyond the obvious responses where the reaction is either direct support or outright repression. The intention was to produce an analytical framework which was broad enough to be applied to all nonviolent campaigns, yet sufficiently detailed that it could be used for a meaningful analysis of particular cases by both researchers and campaigners themselves. The framework developed was inspired by Martin's work on backfire (Martin, 2007), Mathiesen's writing on power and counter-power (Mathiesen, 1982) and Lubbers' investigation of private companies' manipulation and infiltration of social movements (Lubbers, 2012). The book includes five case studies of nonviolent campaigns, ranging in time from the Norwegian teachers', priests' and parents' resistance to Nazism during the German occupation 1940-1945 to the popular uprising in Egypt in 2011. The present case study applies a slightly revised version of the framework to a completely different case, the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza.

Recently, Kurtz and Smithey's (2018) edited volume *The Paradox of Repression and Nonviolent Movements* has also investigated responses to nonviolent actions. They have overlapping interests with my previous work, but approach the subject from a different perspective. Where I have focused on the various forms of responses and counter-strategies, the aspiration of Kurtz and Smithey is to understand how movements can learn to prepare for and manage the repression to which they are subjected. In their introduction, the editors (Smithey and Kurtz, 2018b) emphasise that their definition of repression goes beyond the conventional understanding of repression as direct violence. Instead

they present repression as a continuum which goes from "overt violence" to hegemony, including "less lethal" methods, intimidation, manipulation and soft repression. Smithey and Kurtz develop this further in chapter 8 about smart repression (Smithey and Kurtz, 2018c). The term "smart repression" is intended to catch the same paradox as when the military use the term "smart bombs" – to reduce a potential backfire effect, demobilize protest and to wage war more strategically in ways that are politically acceptable. While Smithey and Kurtz's effort to shed light on various attempts to control and subdue movements, which are not generally referred to as repression, it makes conversation between academics and activists more difficult when everyday terms are defined in unconventional ways. Likewise, the previous research on repression that Smithey and Kurtz present in a thorough literature review is also using the term in its traditional way. Thus, in this article, I use the term repression to mean direct violence and threats to use direct violence.

Smithey and Kurtz present their continuum with illustrative examples, but unfortunately, they don't use it for any in-depth case analysis. The relatively brief overview creates uncertainty about how the categorisation of empirical examples should be done. Why, for instance is manipulation a category on its own and not part of "soft repression"? There might be good reasons for this choice, but they are not explained. The case studies included in *The Paradox of Repression and Nonviolent Movements*, for instance on Egypt, Thailand and Zimbabwe are primarily covering how activists deal with direct violence so they cannot move the understanding of the subtler forms of responses forward. The only case analysis which systematically considers what they call "smart repression" is Myra Marx Ferree's book chapter "Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements" published already in 2005 (Ferree, 2005). Here she introduced the term "soft repression", and defined it as ways of silencing or eradicating oppositional ideas without the use of violence. Drawing on examples from how the women's movement has been met with soft repression, she introduces the three categories of ridicule, stigma and silencing, which roughly address the micro, meso and macro level. What is especially interesting is how she included other repressive forces than the state in her analysis, for instance the institutional bias in media reporting.

Methodology

Investigating the dynamics of interaction is notoriously difficult, since one can seldom know what would have happened if one actor had acted differently on a certain occasion. For this reason I selected the Freedom Flotillas to Gaza in 2010 and 2011 for this case study. Since the action "design" was almost identical in the two flotillas, which both sent boats with humanitarian assistance and international solidarity activists to Gaza, this creates an interesting point of comparison for investigating what Israel's government and its supporters did differently and how it affected the dynamic of the interaction. One can say that this is a natural experiment which provides unique possibilities for studying how different responses radically change the interaction. After 2011, flotillas

have continued to travel to Gaza and there has been an important learning process taking place among the flotilla organisers. However, subsequent flotilla actions have been different from the first two in so many respects that it makes it difficult to use them as cases in a comparative research design focusing on the reactions to the actions.

The 2011 flotilla is the primary case, but the 2010 events are used for comparison and background. The facts about the case study are based on public information, such as newspaper articles, press releases and websites. This is supplemented with information from one of the participants. Activist-academic Stellan Vinthagen, who participated in organizing both the flotillas in 2010 and 2011 and was in place in Greece in 2011 as the person responsible for trainings in nonviolence, kindly gave me access to his notes which included his perception of how the Israeli authorities and other "western" states responded in 2011. Vinthagen has also provided further information in personal communication. To the extent possible I have tried to confirm this information through public sources, but where this has not been possible it is clearly indicated.

Needless to say, information from more participants would have provided more examples and details, but since the intention is to present the revised framework for analysis and not provide the ultimate analysis of the Freedom Flotilla, more details are unlikely to have contributed much to the present article.

Vinthagen's notes included a list of 16 tactics used against the 2011 flotilla. The list was constructed to analyse the flotilla experience and had no intention of being comparable with other cases. The first step in analysing the flotilla case was to compare Vinthagen's list with my 2015 model, searching for what fit and what did not. On this basis, I have slightly revised the original model to make it even more useful for analysing a variety of cases.[1]

The blockade of Gaza and the Freedom Flotillas

In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza; in 2006, Hamas won the election in the Gaza strip in an election that was considered to be free and fair. In June 2007, Hamas lawfully took power, prompting the Israeli state to declare the Gaza Strip a "hostile territory", a phrase which is not recognised by international law (Sanger, 2011: 399-400). Israeli authorities also initiated sanctions towards Hamas, which consisted of restrictions on the passage of people, fuel, electricity

[1] The main difference is that I have now devised a new main category called "Manipulative responses". This includes the subcategories "placating" and "co-opting" which was previously placed in the main category "pacifying responses". In addition, I moved the category "reframing" to be part of "manipulative responses" and created the new sub-category "misinformation". I also removed the sub-category "containing". What I had previously (Sørensen 2015) described as "containing" can just as well be included in the sub-category "disruption".

and other goods. Prior to the election, Israel's government had declared that it no longer occupies the Gaza Strip, but since Israel remains in control of the borders, airspace, water, electricity and population registry, the United Nations has rejected this statement (Sanger, 2011: 400). The isolation of Gaza has severely affected the living conditions for the civilian population. In April 2010, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that less than a quarter of the goods necessary to meet the population's basic needs were entering Gaza (Sanger, 2011: 401). Israeli authorities claimed it was imposing the restrictions for security reasons and to exert political pressure, but at the same time it has also said that the purpose was to put the population of Gaza "on a diet" (Sanger, 2011: 435). In international law, blockades can be legal, but a blockade that has the effect of causing the civilian population to starve will always be illegal (Sanger, 2011: 414). The consequences of the blockade included a shortage of food in Gaza and lack of building materials.

The Freedom Flotilla to Gaza was one initiative among many nonviolent direct actions where outsiders have attempted to influence the complex conflict surrounding the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. During 2008, the Free Gaza Movement organized several boats to break the blockade and bring humanitarian assistance to Gaza, and some of the boats managed to break the blockade while others were intercepted by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) (Berlin and Dienst, 2012). In 2010, a coalition of organisations organized the first Freedom Flotilla on a larger scale, involving six ships. Carrying around 700 unarmed civilian passengers from around the world and a total of 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid, the ships were boarded by the IDF while they were still in international waters. Nine people on board the Turkish ship *Mavi Mamara* were shot to death by the IDF. Israeli authorities claimed the soldiers acted in self-defence when the activists on board the ship defended the ship with knives, iron bars and firearms, and that 10 commando soldiers were wounded (Mor, 2014).

The flotillas were examples of what is called a dilemma action in the literature on nonviolent resistance, constructed by the activists to be successful no matter how the Israeli authorities responded. In 2010, the dilemma for the Israeli state was choosing between allowing the flotilla to land and using force to intercept it (Sørensen and Martin, 2014). Had the flotillas managed to break the blockade and deliver humanitarian aid that would have been considered an obvious success for the organisers, but the brutal repression in 2010 backfired on Israel (Martin, 2010). Although the loss of life was tragic, it contributed to bringing the issue of the blockade to the agenda internationally, something the organisers could be satisfied with. Killing nine people was a public relations disaster for the Israeli government, although the government maintained that the action was justified and necessary (Mor, 2014). Nevertheless, officials in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "never has Israel's position in the international arena been worse" (Eichner et al. 2010, quoted in Mor 2014). The incident sparked deterioration of relations with Turkey, until then Israel's closest ally in the Middle East, and even the US administration condemned the

Israeli government. The UN investigation of the events found that Israel's use of force had been excessive and unreasonable (Palmer et al., 2011).

However, from the Israeli point of view, the activists also made mistakes which Israel could utilize and which played a role in the 2011 events. Because all passengers on board the ships were detained, the Israeli authorities' version of events dominated the media reporting for the first 48 hours. No matter how justified one might consider the self-defence undertaken by the activists, the Israeli authorities could with some credibility claim that the activists had used violence, something the authorities' representatives used to their maximum advantage. The violence committed by some activists were used to justify the violent response against all passengers and preparations for violence against the 2011 flotilla.

The action did have the effect that the Gaza blockade conditions were changed, although the changes were very moderate (Sanger, 2011) and it is unlikely that Israel's government would have admitted the flotilla was the cause. Israeli authorities also used this fact in their handling of the 2011 flotilla.

A number of people who took part in the 2010 flotilla have written about their experiences in books and articles (Bayoumi, 2010, Löfgren, 2010, Lano, 2014, Kosmatopoulos, 2010). The flotilla has also been used as an example to discuss academic neutrality in relation to ethnography (de Jong, 2012), the notion of dilemma actions (Sørensen and Martin, 2014) as well as the structure of rhetorical defence in diplomacy (Mor, 2014). Academic writing has analysed the juridical aspects of the Israeli blockade and the interception of the ships in 2010 in relation to international law (Sanger, 2011), and Saba (2019) has analysed how the Freedom Flotilla organisers framed the action in legal terms and how the events affected mainstream English language media's discourse on Gaza. However, no academic analysis of the 2011 flotilla exists.

Analysing the dynamics of the 2011 flotilla

The framework for the analysis consists of four main categories: 1. *Validating responses*, 2. *Responses of discrediting and attacking*, 3. *Manipulative responses* and 4. *Non-interfering responses*. For an overview, see appendix A. Below all four are introduced with their subcategories and utilised to analyse how the 2011 responses solved the dilemma for the Israeli state.

Validating responses

The category of validating responses has two sub-categories – *supporting* and *acknowledging*. Below I will focus on all those who expressed disapproval or condemned the flotilla in 2011, but a number of organisations and countries did express outright support. One of these was Hamas in Gaza which urged people to participate in the flotilla (CBC News, 2011), support which the Israeli representatives attempted to use to discredit the flotilla. *Acknowledging* an action means recognizing that it takes place without expressing an opinion

about it. Frequently, media attention is a form of acknowledgement, something which the preparations for the 2011 flotilla did achieve, although not to the extent the organisers had hoped for and little compared to the attention the flotilla got in 2010 after the IDF's attack.

Responses of discrediting and attacking

The category of discrediting and attacking includes the four sub-categories of *devaluing, enforcing sanctions, disrupting* and *intimidating*. *Devaluing* takes place when the actions or initiators of nonviolent campaigns are denigrated, for instance by associating them with something undesirable. *Enforcing sanctions* are when those in charge of rules, regulations and laws enforce them, for instance when fire regulations are enforced rigorously for political organisations critical of governments, but not for anyone else. *Disrupting* occurs when organisations are infiltrated or equipment is sabotaged to make it more difficult or impossible to carry on as planned. *Intimidating* consists of threats or direct assaults on people. All of these subcategories are highly relevant when analysing the 2011 flotilla.

An important strategy from Israel's supporters was to *devalue* the flotilla activists. In this sub-category we find statements that condemn the flotilla activists as being "useful idiots" for Hamas, ignorant of the implications of their actions. The commander of the Israeli navy, Admiral Marom, referred to the flotilla as a "Hate Flotilla", whose only goal was to clash with the IDF, provoke and delegitimise Israel and allow Hamas to gain access to an unlimited number of weapons (Pfeffer, 2011). The IDF claimed that according to its intelligence sources, some of the people on board the ships were planning on killing soldiers and use sulphur as a chemical weapon (Katz, 2011). Israel's foreign minister Lieberman said on radio that the flotilla activists were "terror activists" who were "looking for blood" (Jerusalem Post, 2011). The fact that attempts at devaluation occur does not necessarily mean they have the desired effect of those who use devaluation, and there is no source of information currently available which reveals if and to what degree anyone believed the Israeli authorities' allegations.

Several responses to the 2011 flotilla involved attempts at using rules, laws and regulations to stop the boats, something which is part of the sub-category *enforcing sanctions*. The most severe enforcement of sanctions was the Greek travel ban which forbade all the boats heading for Gaza from leaving the harbours in Greece. Since the large majority of the boats in the flotilla were planning to leave from Greece, this was a severe obstacle the flotilla organisers had not been prepared for.

In addition to the travel ban, there were also a number of other attempts at using laws and regulations against the flotilla. While waiting in Greek harbours, the boats seem to have been subject to an excessive number of inspections from the port authorities and coast guard due to suspected breaches of safety regulations. Vinthagen recalls that minor issues regarding the boats waiting in

Greece received an excessive amount of attention. For instance, the name of the boat *Juliano* that Vinthagen was travelling on was not written on all life-jackets. On other boats, the Greek authorities raised concern about the lack of hot water in the showers, claimed the air conditioning was not good enough, the beds were too small, the life craft had the old name of the boat and that some of the flashlights were old. The captain of *Juliano* was also accused of not answering the VHF radio and blocking the entrance to the port. Activists had video and photo evidence to the contrary, but it did not help and the captain could not continue as captain of the boat (Vinthagen's notes and personal communication with Vinthagen).

When two ships disobeyed the Greek ban, they were intercepted by the Greek coast guard and brought to a Greek naval facility. The American captain of *Audacity of Hope* was arrested and charged with endangering the lives of the 50 passengers and trying to leave the port without permission (CBC News, 2011). According to Vinthagen, the captain had to spend several days in prison and was threatened with "severe consequences". This could have served to deter other boats from leaving and captains from working on the boats.

A major hindrance for the flotilla consisted of all the responses which *disrupted* the preparations but were not related to the enforcement of laws and regulations. Some of this was minor, while other things were far more severe. The website of the Swedish organisation participating in the flotilla was attacked (July 16-17). The boat *Juliano* was told that there was no place for it in the harbour, which was a pure lie according to Vinthagen. The Canadian captain of this boat also said that papers he handed over to Greek authorities mysteriously disappeared. Other disruptions which were not violent were Cyprus' refusal to let the boats refuel on the island, and how governments decided to repeal the flags of boats. For instance, the ships sailing under the flag of Sierra Leone had their flag repealed (Ship to Gaza Sweden, 2011b). None of these disruptions were a threat to anyone's life, but taken together they severely disrupted the flotilla preparations.

For actions and campaigns such as the flotillas, there will always be suspicions about infiltration and *agents provocateurs*. This suspicion can have an equally damaging effect as the actual infiltration because of the distrust it creates among participants. For movements guided by the principles of nonviolence, agent provocateurs that incite violence can be highly disruptive, but such activities are by nature hard to prove. It seems likely that both Hamas and the Israeli authorities had agents in the Freedom Flotilla, and it would have been a severe oversight of the Israeli intelligence service if it had not at least tried to infiltrate in order to gather information.

Another form of disruption was to discourage people from participating in the flotilla. The so-called Middle East Quartet – the US, UN, EU and Russia – urged people who wanted to support the inhabitants of Gaza to do it through "established channels" such as the Israeli and Egyptian land crossings. According to CBC news, the Quartet "urges restraint and calls on all governments concerned to use their influence to discourage additional flotillas,

which risk the safety of their participants and carry the potential for escalation" (CBC News, 2011). When such influential institutions are actively discouraging participation, this marks a severe attempt to disrupt the organizers' efforts. To what degree they succeed is, of course, a different story.

Apart from all the subtle, discreet and manipulative attempts to cause trouble for the Flotilla, the Israeli state also engaged in outright *intimidation*. IDF Officers who were interviewed threatened deadly military violence such as sniper fire "if necessary" (Harel, 2010). In addition, non-lethal weapons mentioned were IDF attack dogs and water cannons (Greenberg, 2010). Vinthagen's notes also mention that key organisers of the flotilla reported receiving threatening phone calls, and someone found a broken doll in his home.

Another form of intimidation was the sabotage of two of the boats which had similar propeller damage. The Irish ship *Saoirse* was docked in Turkish waters and the Greek-Swedish boat *Juliano* in Greek waters. The flotilla organisers suspected the Israeli intelligence service of being responsible (Hass, 2011), but no conclusion was reached. The Irish ship was eventually repaired and together with a Canadian boat it formed the *Freedom Waves Flotilla,* which left from Turkey in order to circumvent the Greek travel ban. *Freedom Waves* approached Gaza in November 2011 and were intercepted by the IDF while it was in international waters. Although it might seem excessive to resort to sabotage, it would not be the first time in history that a state sabotaged ships involved in nonviolent direct action. In 1985 the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* was sabotaged in New Zealand and the Portuguese photographer Fernando Pereira was killed in the explosion. The ship was on its way to protest nuclear testing in the Pacific carried out by France. At first France denied all responsibility but a few months later the prime minister admitted that French intelligence was behind it, and two agents were sentenced to 10 years in prison by a court in New Zealand (Brown, 2005). Although no one has been convicted when it comes to the Freedom Flotilla in 2011, it is obvious that the Israeli state had an interest in stopping the ships, and its intelligence service has been known to resort to far-reaching methods on other occasions. Flotilla activists also reported being suspicious of men "fishing" near gasoline polluted water in the vicinity of the flotilla boats. These fishermen did not have bait or buckets, which caused flotilla activists to think they may be spying on the ships (Hass, 2011).

Manipulative responses

The category *manipulative responses* includes the categories *placating, co-opting, misinforming* and *reframing*. *Placating* takes place when someone is calmed down with minor concessions, but I have not identified any examples of placating from the Israeli state and its supporters when it comes to the 2011 Freedom Flotilla. *Co-opting* tactics have succeeded when radical movements change their behaviour in order to be considered "serious", for instance

participating in meetings with the industry or authorities they were originally strongly condemning. *Misinforming* is when false information is intentionally produced and stakeholders lie and disinforming. *Reframing* takes place when the issue at stake is conceptualised differently.

The category of *co-opting* does not play a major role in the case of the Freedom Flotilla, but the suggestion to move the aid from the flotilla and take it through a channel approved by Israel was an attempt to co-opt the flotilla. Had the flotilla accepted, it would have backed down on the right to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza, and accepted Israel's insistence on setting the terms for delivering humanitarian aid.

The case includes several examples of *misinforming*, even though assigning responsibility for the lies is not always possible. For instance, a fake video was posted on Facebook where a man claimed that the organisers of the flotilla had refused to let him participate because he was gay. It turned out that the video was fake, and that the man featured in it was a public relations expert. When the video was posted on Twitter by a man working as an intern at prime minister Netanyahu's office, this caused the Israeli newspaper Haaretz to speculate that the prime minister's office had also produced it (Ravid, 2011).

One of the participants in the flotilla was the famous Swedish crime novelist Henning Mankell, and an unknown person tried to establish two fake Facebook accounts in his name in order to discredit him while he was onboard the flotilla. Mankell and his publisher discovered the fraud in May 2011 when a journalist wondered whether Mankell really wanted to be his friend on Facebook, or if someone else was fraudulently using his name on the account. At first, the platform was used to communicate statements that resembled the attitudes of the real Mankell, but in mid-May the intentions of the identity hijacker became clear. Then "Mankell" was linking to an article in Jerusalem Post about Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon, saying that he agreed with Nasrallah's statements (Israel, 2011), something the real Mankell did not. This makes it likely that the purpose was to spread false statements from Mankell when he was on board the freedom flotilla in order to discredit him and the flotilla. Mankell and his publisher reported the incident to the police and worked on getting Facebook to shut down the fake profile. Shortly afterwards a new account appeared with the name Mankell Henning, and once that was shut down, "Mankell" started to send messages to the foreign press from a fake gmail account (Israel, 2011). Unless someone who was responsible comes forward to inform on these attempts at misinforming, it will remain uncertain who was behind them. But they were serving the interests of the Israeli state in its attempts to discredit the flotilla.

Framing is a term used in social movement literature to talk about how movements conceptualise the issues they work on and present their issues and struggles to various audiences (Benford and Snow, 2000, Snow, 2004) There is a considerable body of literature on framing, counterframing and adversarial framing for anyone who is particularly interested in this type of response. The literature builds on Benford and Snow's (2000) original work where they

distinguish between three forms of framing that movements engage in: "Diagnostic framing", which identifies problems and their causes, "prognostic framing" which present possible solutions to handle the problems, and "motivational framing" which motivates continued participation in a movement. Framing and *reframing* is a continuous struggle, as this will determine which discourse about a given issue will dominate the agenda and public mind. Although it might be difficult in practice to make a clear distinction between discrediting, misinforming and reframing, in analytical and moral terms it makes a tremendous difference. Even when one might disagree strongly with an opponent regarding how to interpret facts and events, there is a major difference between a legitimate right to a different opinion and the fabrication of lies or "alternative facts."

The main discourse the flotilla organisers used was that the ships were bringing humanitarian aid and solidarity to the suffering civilians in Gaza. The Israeli authorities did their best to reframe this as a provocation towards Israel and support for Hamas. The flotilla organisers faced an additional challenge when Hamas publicly stated it was welcoming the flotilla. Preventing Hamas from getting arms is a legitimate military objective, and when the Israeli state tried to frame the whole blockade, including the blockade of people, food and building material, as necessary to achieve this objective, it was necessary for the flotilla organisers to reframe this as an overly-excessive approach with dire humanitarian consequences.

In order for the Israeli state to promote its perspective, it was essential to cast doubt on the humanitarian aspect of the flotilla. By offering to let the assistance on board the ships get into Gaza, but in another way, the Israeli state attempted to appear to be positive towards humanitarian aid and deflect attention away from the fact that the blockade itself is illegal. When the flotilla organisers refused to accept this "solution", they were the ones who appeared stubborn and inflexible. This made the flotilla appear not to be primarily concerned about getting the aid to Gaza, and it became easier for supporters and representatives of the Israeli state to argue that the main purpose was to seek a confrontation.

Another issue which the Israeli government tried to frame to its advantage was the slight easing of the blockade announced in June 2010 after the critique arising following the interception of the first flotilla (Sanger, 2011). Although the flotilla organisers have subsequently emphasized that the blockade was still illegal and the amount of goods which were allowed into Gaza was only raised slightly and still considered utterly inadequate, there was nevertheless a small concession. Naturally, the Israeli state used this fact to create the image that it was willing to change and that the situation was improving. Other states and observers could "buy" this fact in order to argue for a more moderate approach towards Israel, making the condemnations of the blockade less severe.

The Israeli government stated that the military objective of the blockade was to prevent weapons and ammunition from reaching Hamas, and according to international law Israel would be justified to search ships going to Gaza for such

items. According to Sanger, this was a viable option which made the blockade of Gaza "disproportionate" (Sanger, 2011: 436).

The whole issue about framing and reframing is not likely to affect those who are already strongly committed to support or condemn the flotilla. No matter how well the other side argues its case, such committed people are unlikely to change their viewpoints. However, for all those with less loyalty to either side, such struggles over framing are significant. When it comes to the position of organisations like the EU and UN, it is reasonable to argue that an appealing frame matters just as much as the actual facts.

Non-interfering responses

The category of *non-interfering responses* includes four sub-categories: *ignoring/avoiding, expressing confusion/bewilderment, expressing disapproval* and *misunderstanding*. Regarding the case of the Freedom Flotilla, both ignoring/avoiding and the expression of disapproval are relevant to understand the interaction.

Ignoring/avoiding takes place when opponents and third parties do not give the nonviolent campaign any attention. There might be many reasons why actors decide to ignore or avoid the issue, for instance they might apply a "wait and see" attitude or they hope that the initiators of campaigns might not manage to put the issue on the agenda if they are just ignored. As described above, this was not an option chosen by the Israeli government, but many other states and organisations remained silent about the 2011 Freedom Flotilla for a long time. Ignoring is a response which can be observed when it comes to the initial action, but also when it comes to the subsequent interaction. For instance, when the IDF responded with brutal intimidation in 2010, few actors could ignore it. But in 2011 when Greece issued the travel ban, the situation was completely different. For instance, a leading Swedish newspaper criticised the Swedish government and the EU for its silence. On the editorial page, it said that Sweden ought to protest officially when the free movement of its citizens was restricted, calling the lack of reaction from the Swedish minister of foreign affairs "embarrassing" (Lindberg, 2011). Thus, ignoring/avoiding can be a relevant category to apply on so-called third parties, like the Swedish state, when it comes to actions/reactions between other actors.

In many cases, mass media are very important actors because they are seen as the gatekeepers who determine which information reaches the general public. Many factors contribute to decisions made by editors of newspapers, radio and TV regarding what to publish. The slogan "if it bleeds, it leads" sums up why the 2010 boarding of the Freedom Flotilla made the headlines worldwide, and also indicates why there was much less news coverage of the 2011 events. According to Vinthagen, the organisers of the flotilla felt ignored by the media, but for most editors, a travel ban and bureaucratic obstacles are much less newsworthy than the death of nine activists.

The 2011 events also include the incident where a private company had made an agreement with the flotilla about selling cement. Cement was one of the items Israel was blockading from entering Gaza, but a commodity in high demand for reconstruction work after the bombings. According to Vinthagen, the product had already been paid for when the company said it could not deliver as promised and had to cancel the contract and return the money. It referred to the situation as "force majeure" as a reason for cancelling the contract. One can only speculate about the reasons for this decision from a privately owned company; its leaders might have been supportive of Israel or someone might have put pressure on the company. No matter the motive, it was one more piece of grit thrown into the machinery for the flotilla which had a disruptive effect.

The two sub-categories of *expressing confusion/bewilderment* and *misunderstanding* are relevant for other cases, but I have not identified any such responses when it comes to the Freedom Flotilla. Thus, the last sub-category to be presented here is the *expression of disapproval*. As discussed in relation to reframing, opponents and third parties have a right to a different opinion and it is completely legitimate to express disapproval of the flotilla, which many governments did. However, the border between expressing disapproval and other responses is thin. Disapproval might easily slip into devaluing or reframing.

Analysis: a successful containment

In 2010, the first flotilla created a severe dilemma for the Israeli authorities. Letting the boats deliver humanitarian aid was impossible for reasons to do with the internal political situation, and the chosen option of a violent attack backfired and created a public relations disaster. That the Israeli state chose a different response in 2011 is a clear indication that it was not satisfied with the 2010 outcome. Otherwise it would just have chosen the same means of outright repression without concern for the loss of life.

From the Israeli government's perspective, the management of the 2011 flotilla was a great success compared to 2010 and it seemed to solve the dilemma the activists were trying to create. Combining the responses above resulted in a rather successful containment of the flotilla without Israel being the subject of severe international criticism and without having to make any changes in the blockade conditions. At first the bureaucratic obstacles, the sabotage and the Greek travel ban meant that the travel plans were postponed, something which also resulted in internal frictions within the flotilla coalition about how best to handle the situation. Eventually, all but one boat cancelled their plans to go to Gaza, and the single ship approaching Gaza was very manageable for the IDF. Unlike the killings in 2010 which was an obvious attack, it was much more difficult for the flotilla organisers to present all the low-level pacifying tactics and obstacles put in front of the flotilla in 2011 as excessive.

Many of the responses mentioned above can be reported as facts that something happened, but we will probably never know who was behind it. It is a fact that

two boats were sabotaged, that there existed a fake Henning Mankell page, that flags were repealed, the French office broken into, the Swedish webpage attacked, and the Swiss company decided not to sell cement as promised. Much of this might have been orchestrated by Israeli authorities, but it also seems likely that at least some of it was caused by groups or individuals supporting the Israeli government. When analysing responses, it is important to make a distinction between what *actions* someone took and what the *result* was. Likewise, one should be careful in interpreting conclusions about who is responsible for what. Although the Israeli state had an obvious interest in obstructing the flotilla, motive is not the same as proof.

Counter-strategies

Responses to Nonviolent Campaigns (Sørensen, 2015) also includes some general suggestions for counter-strategies when actions, movements and campaigns come under attack in subtle and less subtle ways. Some counter-strategies can be prepared in advance when activists plan for actions and think about possible scenarios. Below I elaborate on these ideas and use the example of the Freedom Flotilla to illustrate some of the possibilities. General suggestions include how to work on a respectable reputation, documenting what is happening and exposing the strategies of the opponents. Regarding intimidations through threats and violence, possibilities include creating local and international solidarity networks and considering the use of tactics of dispersion in order to reduce the risk. When it comes to reframing, one idea is to see if derogatory terms used by the opponent might be adopted and reinterpreted to the campaign's advantage, like the term "queer" which the queer movement has turned into a mark of pride.

When an opponent or third party is devaluing a campaign or its members, the main issue is how to show that they are valuable members of society. If the participants in a demonstration are being called scum, you aim to get the most respected members of society to walk in the first row, presenting and conducting themselves in ways that would make it difficult to an audience to accept the scum label. Determining who will be widely seen as respectable depends on the society in question, but celebrities, nuns or grannies with a non-threatening attitude are effective in many situations. Formally organised groups might consider who they want to accept as members. On some occasions, a small group of respected citizens might be able to achieve more than an unruly crowd. In the case of the Freedom Flotilla, the participants were devalued as terrorists. To counter this devaluation, it is important to behave in a way that counters the stereotype of terrorists as dangerous, secretive and menacing. An example of this that the Flotilla organisers did was to invite the UN, the Red Cross, the EU or "any other independent body to conduct a thorough search, before and/or during our sail. To pre-empt the argument that we may acquire weapons or other material that can pose a threat to Israel's security, we invite the same inspections of our vessels, cargo and passengers upon our safe arrival

in Gaza" (Ship to Gaza Sweden, 2011a). However, even with counter-strategies like this, it is an unequal battle in terms of resources.

When it comes to countering the sanctions enforced by authorities, the organisations and individuals participating in a campaign must minimize compromising factors that can be used against them. In order to prevent the enforcement of sanctions, it is necessary to think ahead about what might possibly be used as excuses for hindering the campaign, and follow the rulebook down to the comma. Once enforcement has taken place, it is a question of exposing overly-repressive reactions and using these to the campaign's advantage. When it comes to the Freedom Flotilla, there is a major difference between the far-reaching consequences of the Greek travel ban and interceptions of boats on the one hand and the annoyingly rigid enforcement of detailed rules and regulations. Once almost all the boats were in Greek harbours and the travel ban issued, there was probably little the organisers could do about it. The only boat which did leave Greece and approached Gaza was the French *Dignité al-Karama*. Its counter-strategy against the Greek travel ban was deception – it stated that its destination was Alexandria in Egypt, but sailed towards Gaza before it was intercepted by the Israeli military (Sherwood, 2011). However, as a general planning strategy, to avoid situations like the Greek travel ban is a question of not putting all of one's eggs in the same basket. No one saw the Greek travel ban coming, but in hindsight it would have been better if the boats had approached Gaza from different places. When it comes to the numerous small incidents with the harbour authorities, an important counter-strategy would be to document all of them and communicate the absurdity of the demands and the unfairness in being treated differently from other boats.

Some responses are disruptive beyond the enforcement of rules and regulations. Again, there is a difference between thinking ahead to take measures before the possible disruptions take place and knowing what to do after they have happened. One possibility to counter these disruptions is to document the incident. Write down all the trivial and minor incidents, which taken alone do not look like much, but when combined demonstrate a systematic strategy of disruption.

One of the main reasons opponents of nonviolent campaigns engage in intimidation of activists is to create fear, hoping to stop ongoing activities and to prevent others from taking actions. Despite this, how to deal with fear and other emotions has received rather limited attention in the literature on nonviolent actions, although some exceptions exist. One of the case studies in *The Paradox of Repression and Nonviolent Movements* (Kurtz and Smithey, 2018) is Jennie Williams' personal account of how women have organised to overcome fear of repression in Zimbabwe. It is a powerful story of how the women in WOZA have organised to protest the conditions that affect their everyday lives in spite of brutal beatings and the terrible conditions they face in custody. Among the factors Williams mentions as key to dealing with fear is to plan the protests carefully, and to have leaders who are in the front of the protests be the first to get beaten (Williams, 2018). One of the chapters by the editors also deals with

how culture can be used skilfully to face and stand up to repression through what the authors call the "art" of repression management (Smithey and Kurtz, 2018a). Sørensen and Rigby's (2017) article "Frontstage and backstage emotion management in civil resistance" explores how activists aim to influence the emotions of others while simultaneously preparing themselves emotinally for activism. When it comes to intimidation, it is easy to claim that people should refuse to be afraid. But managing one's emotions in the face of repression is not straightforward. Nevertheless, one possible counter-strategy for activists is to use humour. In Serbia, the group Otpor played an important role in bringing down Slobodan Milosevic from power in 2000. In an environment of fear and constant harassment by the regime, Otpor opted for a humorous strategy, with street pranks being one essential aspect. What type of humour is appropriate as a counter-strategy against intimidation will of course depend on the circumstances, but in Serbia the activists have explained that humour was an extremely valuable factor for overcoming both fear and apathy (Sørensen, 2008, Sørensen, 2016, Sombatpoonsiri, 2015).

In the case of the Freedom Flotilla in 2011, the major intimidating responses were the sabotage of two boats. I have already mentioned the importance of documentation as a counter-strategy, but in contested situations, it is also important to consider who is documenting facts. For instance, it was not unreasonable to expect the Freedom Flotilla to be exposed to sabotage, and prepare in advance for an independent and trusted organisation to be ready to document suspected sabotage. Announcing this prepared plan might have discouraged the potential saboteurs, and even if deterrence had not been effective, it could have decreased the risk of a side-tracked discussion about whether an act is sabotage or not.

Regarding the manipulative responses of *placating* and *co-opting,* both are concerned with influencing the campaign, while *misinforming* and *reframing* are more directed towards the general public. In order to deal with the first two, the campaign organisers must be prepared for the response and have a plan before it occurs. To remain united about what is central to the campaign is essential in order to avoid being overwhelmed by the divide-and-conquer approach from an opponent. When facing lies and other forms of misinformation, campaign organisers have the general options of trying to counter it with facts, or simply ignoring it in order to not bring more attention to the misinformation activities. What is feasible and wise will depend on how damaging the misinformation is, its origin and how much attention it gets. A possible counter-strategy is also for campaign organisers to create their own disinformation. As mentioned above, the boat *Dignité al-Karama* managed to leave Greek waters due to deception. However, some people might consider deceptions and misinformation morally wrong or contrary to the principles of nonviolence. On a more general note about reframing, campaign organisers can potentially learn a lot from the marketing and media sectors regarding the possibility of reaching an audience with a language based on emotions rather than rational arguments. As Stephen Duncombe has argued in order to encourage progressive movements to be more visionary and learn from the

entertainment industry, it does not matter how true an argument is if nobody believes in it (Duncombe, 2007). In practice this means that the narrative a campaign can create about its activities are more important than what the activities actually are.

The type of manipulative responses the Freedom Flotilla was facing in 2011 was mainly about misinformation and reframing. Tracing the origins of misinformation that appear online is time consuming and might not always be worth it if a good counter-strategy is available. For instance, when the misinformation that the flotilla was transporting arms to Hamas was circulating, it seemed to be a smart counter-move to invite everyone to inspect the ships.

Another counter-strategy might simply be to ignore some types of manipulative responses. Groups can encourage members to remain focused on the core message and avoid getting side-tracked into meaningless arguments about things that cannot be proved. Since misinformation might be related to devaluing the campaign, it might be worth looking into who can be the most appropriate representatives of the campaign; people with certain professions or respectability which counters the image spread via disinformation can play an important role as public faces for the movement. For instance, when the misinformation regarding the flotilla was about someone claiming to be gay being denied participation, the person countering this can be a member of the flotilla who is openly homosexual.

The non-interfering responses of *expressing confusion/bewilderment* and *misunderstanding* indicate that campaign organisers will have to be clearer in how they communicate their message. This is not something which appear to be relevant for the Flotilla, but many campaigns struggle with the fact that audiences simply do not get what they are trying to say.

The manipulative responses of *ignoring/avoiding* and *expressing disapproval* are completely legitimate responses and campaign organisers will simply have to try harder to convince others. During the 2011 Freedom Flotilla, the flotilla organisers felt that media were ignoring them to a large degree. The bureaucratic obstacles they were subject to from Greece were simply not newsworthy enough from a media perspective. Above I touched on the importance of documenting facts, something which might be useful when exposed to the subtler tactics from opponents and their supporters which might not hit the headlines. Documenting all small incidents systematically might increase the newsworthiness. One incident of a repealed flag, cement which is not delivered or "routine inspection" from the harbour authorities might not look like much, but a list of 100 different interruptions could be a different story.

Both activists and researchers still have much to learn when it comes to developing and understanding the potential of different counter-strategies. Researchers can look into past cases to see how the interaction of campaign initiatives, responses and counter-strategies evolved and if aspects of the

interaction have a more general character. Activists can consciously work on this aspect of their campaign and systematically document the options they consider and explain why they make the choices they do. Researcher-activists with a foot in both "camps" can use their skills as researchers to develop more elaborate participatory action research.

Conclusion

The model of responses presented here is intended to be a starting point for activists and academics interested in analysing how opponents and so-called third parties respond to various forms of nonviolent campaigns. The present version is not to be taken as the final word on this matter, and the different categories are not always mutually exclusive. Yet these can serve as a useful point of departure for comparing cases, analysing what went wrong, planning future action and understanding how to counter undesirable responses. There is much to be learned in the future when it comes to this under-explored area, and activists and academics can work on different possibilities and test them in practice.

When the first Freedom Flotilla approached Gaza in 2010, it was nothing new to attempt to break the blockade of Gaza by boat, but the scale of the action was unpreceded. The event was a severe dilemma for the Israeli state, and the killing of nine activists caused a considerable PR problem for Israeli authorities. Thus, the Israeli government was determined to avoid a similar outcome the following year. Instead, the government used a whole range of strategies designed to discredit, manipulate and disrupt the flotilla's attempt to reach Gaza in 2011. In this analysis, I have primarily focused on the two main actors, the flotilla organisers and the Israeli state and its direct supporters. However, an action like this involves many more stakeholders and future research should address what role their reactions played. For instance, the organisers of the Freedom Flotilla were not only directing their message towards the occupying power, but also wanted to send the message to the population of Gaza that it was not forgotten and support Palestinians both in the rest of the occupied territories and in exile.

This article is based on public sources about the flotilla and the notes of one of the participants. The purpose has not been to make an exhaustive evaluation of the 2011 flotilla, but to better understand the nuances in the reactions and to explore the changes between 2010 and 2011. The limitation of this type of sources is of course that we cannot get further than observing what actions actors take and use reason to get an idea regarding what the Israeli state and its supporters appear to attempt. We can only speculate as to their *intentions*, and whether they *succeed* in their efforts is of course a different question. This leaves many questions unanswered; future research about the flotillas should include interviews with those who represented the IDF and the Israeli and Greek governments in this case to provide more insight into their reasoning and

intentions. One of the key questions in this case is what pressure caused the Greek state to issue the travel ban.

When it comes to the question of the degree to which the Israeli state succeeded in its efforts, it is clear that the 2011 flotilla did not get close to breaking the blockade and did not achieve the media attention it had the year before. The analysis also showed that organisations like the UN, EU and different European countries actively discouraged people from participating in the flotilla. However, important questions for future research would be to find out to what degree the attitudes of "ordinary people" around the world were affected by Israeli propaganda. It seems likely that the "message" of the flotillas was interpreted in different ways by populations and authorities around the world, and there exists no such thing as one definitive interpretation of events.

Appendix A: Framework of responses

Validating Responses

- Supporting
- Acknowledging

Responses of Discrediting and Attacking

- Devaluing
- Enforcing Sanctions
- Disrupting
- Intimidating

Manipulative Responses (new category)

- Placating
- Co-opting
- Misinforming
- Reframing

Non-interfering Responses

- Ignoring and Avoiding
- Expressing Confusion/ Bewilderment
- Expressing Disapproval
- Misunderstanding

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Transnational solidarity: the Kurdish movement and German radical leftists and anarchists

Ricardo Kaufer

Abstract

The Kurdish movement and German leftist and anarchist activists cooperated in 2018 in criticizing the Turkish military operations in Afrin. Radical left wing and anarchist actors and the Kurds argued that the German government supported the Turkish state in its war on Afrin by its armament policy and thereby violating central human and political rights. This cooperation and the visibility of a formerly external ethnic conflict sheds light on the political impact of migrant social movements in Germany and its political culture. By describing and analyzing current protest activities of leftist and anarchist actors against the war in Afrin, the importance of the concept of solidarity to the leftist and anarchist movement becomes evident. The central source for solidarity by the leftist and anarchist actors with the Kurdish movement is the appealing character of the Kurdish federalism in Northern Syria.

Keywords: Transnational solidarity; Kurdish movement; anarchism; leftist social movement; Turkish military operation

1. Introduction

In early 2018, the Kurdish-Turkish conflict escalated not only in Turkey and Northern Syria but also in Germany. The number of Kurdish initiated and organized protest activities was rising significantly since the Turkish state repeated its military operations in Northern Syria against the Kurdish dominated regions. Therefore, the question arises whether and how this conflict influences German street politics, defined as non-institutionalized, elite-challenging contention beyond parliaments. Mariano Torcal, Toni Rodon and María José Hierro found out that "left-wing citizens (especially extreme left-wing individuals) protest more than any other ideological group" in Europe (Torcal, Rodon and Hierro 2016). Left-wing political activists seem to dominate street politics in Germany.

For Germany in 2018, I could identify three larger and more important protest movements concerning media coverage and number of participants. The right-wing protest movement against immigration and the migration policy of the CDU-led Merkel-government (Zukunft Heimat 2018; Pegida), the environmental protests against coal mining and extractive industries, e.g. in North Rhine-Westphalia (Tagebau Hambach), and finally the protests of the Kurdish movement against the Turkish military operations in Afrin in Northern

Syria were central to German street politics[1]. The present case study describes and analyzes how German radical left wing activists and anarchists supported the protests of the Kurdish movement against the Turkish military operations in Afrin (Syria).

In this paper, I therefore shall address the following questions:

- *How and why do German left wing and anarchists react to the Kurdish-Turkish conflict as a non-German issue?*
- *Which purposes do the concept of "solidarity", as a mobilizing resource, and the imagination of a Kurdish democratic federalism fulfil for German left wing and anarchist organizations in relation to the Kurdish movement?*

Answering these questions adds new insights to the existing knowledge on social movements and their mobilization capacities by focusing on (transnational) solidarity relations between heterogeneous movements. By describing and analyzing the actors involved, their activities, their ideological preferences and main frames, I will shed light on the importance of solidarity and transnationalism for the contemporary left wing and anarchist movement in Germany for supporting the non-German, Kurdish movement. The study delivers insights into the ideological preferences of German radical left wing and anarchist activists by analyzing their involvement in the Kurdish-Turkish conflict. The case study reveals the transnational character of the German leftist and anarchist street politics. We can understand this ideological preference towards transnational solidarity as a core belief of German radical left wing and anarchist political actors. Furthermore, we can learn more about the role of the idea of solidarity within contemporary anti-capitalist movements. Besides this focus on German activists mobilizing for the Kurdish issue concerning the construction of a democratic confederalism, the paper contains valuable information on the Kurdish movement using the solidarity bonds with local populations and movements as a resource to bring their issue to new and different audiences in Germany. Nevertheless, we should be aware that radical left wing actors and anarchists have a marginal standing in Germany, thereby constraining the reach of this politics of solidarity. Analyzing the politics of solidarity between the German left and anarchist movement and the Kurdish movement from a political science perspective is still very important due to Germany having the proportionately largest amount of Kurdish people in the European Union (EU).

The Kurdish diaspora is politically very well organized and visible all over Europe and especially in Germany. Germany has had a very conflicted history

[1] Franzmann (2016), Arzheimer (2015) and Berbuir, Lewandowsky and Siri (2014) analyzed the development of the right-wing protest movement in Germany and its final institutionalization within the Alternative for Germany (German: Alternative für Deutschland, AfD). Sander analyzed the German protests against coal mining and the "Ende Gelände"-coalition (Sander 2017) and Kaufer and Lein analyzed the eco-anarchist movement (Hambi bleibt!), which occupied the Hambach forest in Germany to prevent its clearing by the RWE Power AG (Kaufer and Lein 2018).

with its Kurdish diaspora. In the 1990s, the conflict between the Kurdish movement and Turkish groups escalated violently and the German government tried to end the conflict by prohibiting the central organization of the Kurdish movement, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party; Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê). Against the background of the recent EU-Turkey policy agreements on migration control (EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan activated on 29 November 2015) the political mobilization of the Kurdish diaspora in Germany creates tensions with the Turkish government. This policy agreement and the German-Turkish partnership forces German security authorities to observe and criminalize potentially pro-Kurdish and pro-PKK political activities (Bähr 2017).

Some observers and activists, e.g. Schamberger, argued that the Turkish media regulation RTÜK (Turkish: Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurulu; English: Radio and Television Supreme Council) instructed the European satellite operator Eutelsat to shut down Kurdish media in Europe (Dick 2017; Schamberger 2018). In the European history of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, it is a well-known practice and strategy that the Turkish government uses its diplomatic power to prevent the establishment of Kurdish media and a Kurdish public in Europe (Hassanpour 1998). Sinclair and Smets argued that Turkey used "to great effect a discourse of terrorism to frame its case, as well as backroom arm-twisting, Turkey brought its European counterparts to see the flourishing of Kurdish-dominated media in Europe as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Sinclair and Smets 2014: 325). Turkey intervened repeatedly to stop the establishment of an independent Kurdish public in Europe (Smets 2016). We have to recognize this pattern of repressing Kurdish media and political freedom in the ethnic conflict constellation when analyzing the current protests of Kurdish activists and German supporters against the war in Afrin. In February 2018, the police prohibited Kurdish demonstrations against the war in Afrin in the cities of Cologne and Dortmund due to expected violent escalations (Police of Cologne 2018). These bans caused protests in the German civil society. NGOs such as the Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie, which argued that the police violated the freedom to assembly due to foreign policy reasons, criticized these strategies of no-tolerance of the police headquarters in Cologne and Dortmund. This example shows the importance and relevance of analyzing the current aggravation of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict in Germany.

To understand and analyze the nexus between the Kurdish movement and German street politics I will briefly outline the history of the Kurdish movement in Germany, shed some light on the Turkish military operation in Afrin and finally analyze the cooperation of the Kurdish movement in Germany with German leftist and anarchist political actors. The support of German left wing and anarchist actors for the Kurdish movement therefore still delivers a substantial opportunity to test how and on what basis social movements in Germany organize support for and communicate on a transnational conflict.

In the next section, I will discuss my theoretical and methodological approach and define anarchism and left wing activism as well as the concept of solidarity. Afterward, I will roughly sketch a picture of the Kurdish movement, of the

history of the PKK in Germany and of the Turkish military operation in Afrin in section 3. In section 4, I will describe German street politics, the anarchist perspective on the Kurdish movement and analyze the politics of solidarity between the left wing and anarchist movement and the Kurdish movement. Finally, I will draw a conclusion in section 5.

2. Theoretical and methodological approach

In this study, I will analyze how and why German left wing and anarchist actors support the Kurdish movement. This question is relevant since we get a better understanding of how anarchist and leftist activists politicize a non-German issue based on appeals to feelings of solidarity with the oppressed. The question of mobilization for non-German issues and conflicts becomes even more important against the background of the increased migration to Germany since 2015. For labor unions, anarchists and left wing politicians the very idea of solidarity always was an important tool in mobilizing their comrades for taking actions against class exploitation and all forms of suppression by appealing to their class solidarity and the resulting consciousness. Recently, research on the idea of solidarity within social movements in Germany has increased (Bruckmiller and Scholl 2016; Della Porta 2018). In Germany, as well as in other European countries, relations of transnational solidarity have been established between the left wing and anarchist social movement in Germany and other European movements against the politics on the Eurozone crisis. Blockupy was an example for the establishment of these relations of transnational solidarity (Bruckmiller and Scholl 2016). Accordingly, the central theoretical concept of this study is *solidarity*.

I conceptualize transnational solidarity of German left wing and anarchist actors towards the Kurdish movement as the long-term and short-term result of the perceived humanitarian crisis caused by the repression of German and Turkish authorities against the Kurdish movement. Against the felt and observed oppression against the Kurdish movement, which increased after the newest military operations in Afrin, parts of the anarchist and leftist movement tried to mobilize protest to stop the criminalization of the Kurdish movement. According to Scott A. Hunt and Robert D. Benford, solidarity

> has two fundamental foci: internal and external. Internal solidarity is focused on the group to which one belongs and to the members within that group. External solidarity is the identification of and identification with groups to which one does not belong. The construction of internal and external solidarity depends a great deal upon the framing of worldviews or ideologies (Hunt and Benford 2004: 439).

In this specific case of cooperation between the Kurdish and the leftist/anarchist movement a sort of "external solidarity" with the Kurds needs to be developed within and beyond the movement to fight repression. From the perspective of

the leftist and anarchist organizations in Germany, the task was to develop the consciousness of belonging to one collectivity (cf. on this issue Hunt and Benford 2004: 439) or one movement for emancipation to increase participation in the protests against the Turkish military operations in Afrin and against the criminalization of the Kurdish movement in Germany. For mobilizing support for the Kurdish movement a sense of "emotional interest" (Hunt and Benford 2004: 439) towards the Kurdish issue had to be developed. One example for trying to achieve this "emotional interest" is the paper *Understanding the Kurdish Resistance. Historical Overview & Eyewitness Report* (CrimethInc. 2015) by the anarchist group CrimethInc. Taking the existing knowledge of the past mobilizations of the German leftist/anarchist movement against the austerity politics or for global justice, I can easily formulate the hypothesis that *the concept of solidarity is still an important ideological tool for the leftist/anarchist movement to mobilize support for external groups and to mobilize the public for protest*.

2.1 Anarchism

According to Lucien Van der Walt anarchism is

> an anti-authoritarian, internationalist, class-struggle socialism, aiming at a self-managed, stateless, egalitarian global society with collectivised resources and participatory planning; syndicalism is an anarchist strategy wherein revolutionary unions help institute the new world through workplace occupations under self-management (Van der Walt 2013: 341; Van der Walt 2016: 93).

Van der Walt argues for historicizing anarchism and by doing this, we can find its origins and core principles formed in the period beginning around 1864 in "the First International around Mikhail Bakunin and the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy" (Van der Walt 2016: 91/92). In this period the anarchists, building on some ideas of the French anarchist Proudhon and the on the ideas of the British anarchist William Godwin, formulated

> three or four main fundamentals of the movement. These include opposition to relations of domination between human beings, including those expressed in the government (or the state) and those expressed in capitalism, but also including those expressed in all sorts of other ways among human beings (such as national oppression). These positions were expressed clearly in the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin and the movement that was born in the First International (Van der Walt 2016: 93).

By dating the anarchist ideology and movement back to the 1860s, no reasonable definition of anarchism can deny the centrality of the

aforementioned principles to the movement and its ideology. Again, Van der Walt argues:

> Liberals stress the importance of individual freedom and so forth, and Marxists stress the importance of abolishing capitalism, but it is anarchism that took these two parts, and put them together in a way that none of these others really managed to do, with a radical libertarian socialism. So, anarchism is a movement that is against hierarchy and that is against exploitation, and it is a movement that (in other words) links the struggle for individual freedom to the struggle against capitalism and the state (Van der Walt 2016: 93).

Anarchism is a socialist movement with a particular emphasis on individual liberties (see McLaverty 2005for a critique of the term "libertarian socialism"). The German political scientist Klaus Von Beyme also subsumes anarchism to the broader socialist movement and socialist theory (Von Beyme 2013). Anarchism is, according to Von Beyme (2013: 11), one stream of the socialist movement besides "Frühsozialismus" (or utopian socialism), communism, Marxism-Leninism and democratic socialism.

The contemporary anarchist movement in Germany has four main manifestations:

- *Political anarchism* containing different anarchist currents such as anarcho-communism and anarcha-feminism organized within the Federation of German speaking anarchists (German: Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen (FdA-IFA))
- *Anarcho-syndicalism* within the labor union Free Workers' Union (FAU; German: Freie ArbeiterInnen- und Arbeiter-Union)
- *Anarchist activism* in affinity groups and political groups (inspired by the anarchist network CrimethInc. and rather clandestine)
- *Anarchist publishing and anti-militarist activism* in a transnational network of different organizations (such as the publishers of the magazine *Graswurzelrevolution* and the publisher of the same name)

2.2 Left wing activism and leftist radicalism

Left wing activism or leftist radicalism in Germany, as a visible social force, came into being in the 1970s. Its main ideological currents were the communist organizations, anti-imperialist activists and organizations and the Autonomous movement. The protests of students and workers in the late 1960s, also known as the 68er rebellion, influenced the further development of left wing activism in Germany. According to Sebastian Haunss, central issues for left radical protest in the 1970s were the struggles for educational and university reforms, the critique of women's discrimination, a critique of the capitalist mode of production and anti-imperialist and solidarity campaigns (Haunss 2008: 507).

In the 1980s, the focus of the leftist radical movement focussed on environmental issues such as the civic and military use of atomic energy. In the 1990s, the formulation of anti-nationalist protests and organizations became central to German left wing activism. Despite this change of central issues over the time, the critique of exploitation, subordination and discrimination still was central to German left wing radicals. Core issues of this broader movement were and are anti-nationalism (the campaign "nationalism is no alternative") and anti-fascism, anti-capitalism, pro-feminism, anti-gentrification, anti-globalization protest and anti-imperialism and anti-coal protest. Some well-known organizations of the leftist radical movement are the *Interventionistische Linke (IL)*, *"...ums Ganze! – kommunistisches Bündnis" (uG)* (communist alliance), *Rote Hilfe e.V.* (anti-repression organization), *Ende Gelände* (anti-coal protest network) and *Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterjugend (SDAJ)* (German socialist workers' youth organization). Furthermore, I add *Linksjugend ['solid]* to the left wing activism because they are the youth and social movement organization of the left wing party *DIE LINKE*.

2.3 Methodology

Methodologically, I draw on a content analysis to find out which role solidarity plays as a mobilization tool for German leftist radicals and anarchists. I took the data and information concerning the patterns of solidarity between German leftist and anarchist actors and the Kurdish movement from internet statements of political actors, newspapers and oral speeches during assemblies. I analyzed 21 documents concerning:

- *the justifications for solidarity towards the Kurdish movement*,
- *the forms of action by which left wing and anarchist actors express their solidarity with the Kurdish movement* and
- *the policy objectives that left wing and anarchist actors want to attain*.

As this study aims at exploring the reasons and patterns for mobilizing solidarity by German street political actors for the Kurdish movement it seems plausible to search for justifications, forms of actions and policy goals in the documents of left wing and anarchist organizations. I took documents from the *Anarchist Group Dortmund*, the *Anarchist Group Krefeld*, *A & O Kassel* (anarchist organization from Kassel), *Federation of German speaking Anarchists* (German: Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen (FdA)), *Free Workers Union* (Freie Arbeiterinnen- und Arbeiter-Union (FAU)), the *Interventionist Left* (German: Interventionistische Linke), *the Left youth organization* ['solid] (German: Linksjugend) from several cities, the *Left party* (German: DIE LINKE) and from the *Committee on constitutional right* (German: Grundrechtekomitee) (see List of analyzed statements). Further attention was paid to the anarchist group CrimethInc. and its paper on the roots of the Kurdish Resistance *Understanding the Kurdish Resistance. Historical Overview & Eyewitness Report* (CrimethInc. 2015).

To answer the question how the support of the Kurdish movement by the German leftist and anarchist movement is framed in terms of solidarity the content analysis seems to be an adequate method. More specifically, I conduct a protest event analysis. Therefore, I focus on the mobilization and protest activities of German leftist/anarchist actors before and after the protest events (Kurdish demonstrations in Dortmund, Duisburg, Kassel, Köln and Rostock). The goal of the present analysis is to understand the patterns of mobilization against the war in Afrin and the criminalization of the Kurdish movement and more specific the role transnational solidarity plays within it. Thus, I analyze statements, drafts and strategies of German leftist/anarchist organizations. I read the documents to find arguments that support the hypothesis that the concept of solidarity is a central mobilization concept to the German leftist and anarchist organizations and to understand how solidarity matters to the anarchist and left wing movements.

3. The Kurdish movement, the PKK in Germany and the Turkish military operations in Afrin

Between 1993 and 2005, the Kurdish movement discussed and developed the ideology of a democratic federalist order being its central political goal. This concept develops around the ideas of pluralism, democracy and humanism and is in contrast to the political ideology of the Turkish government being anti-pluralist, authoritarian-nationalist and religious. According to Tarrow, social protest or contention is a reaction to state policies and regulation (Tarrow 1994). This is especially true for radical democratic and federalist movements such as the Kurdish movement due to its contestation of Turkish public policies and existing states. The political opportunities in a homeland and in a potential country of destination are important factors, influencing the migration choices of members of these contesting movements. In the case of the Kurdish movement political opportunity structures in Germany, e.g. support infrastructure, already existing Kurdish communities and the economic outlook in Germany (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 931), were decisive for migrating there. In the 1970s, Kurdish migrants applied for political asylum in Germany due to the political situation in Turkey (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 931). These developments led to the increase of the Kurdish diaspora in Germany and enabled Kurdish activists to mobilize political support and resources for the critique of Turkish policies. The strengthened Kurdish diaspora and its resources helped to develop the German arm of the Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK (Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê).

This transnationalisation of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict influenced German politics heavily. Kurdish and Turkish immigration and Kurdish political activism in Germany made the ethno-political rebellion of the Kurds visible to a broader public and it became obvious that Germany took centre stage in the conflict (Baser 2015: 1; Eccarius-Kelly 2002; Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 932). The PKK became a recognizable political actor in the German public sphere and this new actor urged the German government, political parties, the mass media and

extra-parliamentary political activists to adopt a position in relation to the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. The Kurdish diaspora used the political opportunities of freedom of expression and other political rights in Germany, e.g. freedom of association and freedom to assembly, to express their cultural identity freely. One outcome of these efforts was the foundation of cultural associations, which helped the PKK to mobilize activists and financial resources. According to Tarrow the political institutions context can provide incentives to actors to mobilize for their ideology freely. In this respect, the German context differed from Turkey, where the Turkish government and the institutions of the Turkish state sanctioned the Kurdish movement and its protest and restricted its access to political institutions (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 934). The PKK could develop in Germany based on "the contributions of members, the sale of publications, and donations" (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 934) an activity infrastructure, which enabled the organization to mobilize its community for various protest events. Part of the infrastructure was and is a telecommunication and information network (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 934; Smets 2016). TV channels that were in the focus of repression by German and Turkish national authorities were important parts of the communicative infrastructure of the Kurdish and PKK diaspora. Besides strengthening its communication infrastructure the PKK developed good relationships to other groups such as the Alevis to increase the number of potential supportive actors.

In the history of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict in Germany, military operations were recurring reasons for the PKK and its German supporters to criticize the Turkish policies. This is true for the current situation, in which the Kurdish movement and German left wing activists' protest against the war in Afrin led by the Turkish military. In the 1990s, the PKK was able to mobilize large-scale demonstrations in German cities against Turkish military interventions. The Kurdish diaspora dominated these demonstrations. From the perspective of German left wing activists, the Kurds were victims of Turkish authoritarianism and support had to be organized through demonstrations and other activities. This form of providing solidarity towards the Kurdish "comrades" by blaming German authorities for illegitimately repressing the Kurdish freedom fighters continues until today. We can observe protest notes and protest activities by German political actors from the radical left criticizing the authorities for pursuing the Kurdish movement (ANF 2018: Meyer 2018).

Furthermore, the Kurdish movement and the PKK used publicly visible hunger strikes to create awareness for the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the oppression of the Kurds in Turkey and their policy goals, e.g. autonomy. The Kurdish diaspora also had internal conflicts that caused publicly visible assaults of Kurdish individuals and groups that were driven by the tensions between the PKK and KOMKAR (The Association for Kurdish Workers for Kurdistan) (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 936). From the perspective of political stability, sovereignty and conflict limitation in Germany, public policy makers and security agencies, e.g. the Office of the Protection of the German Constitution (Bundesverfassungsschutz), had to reduce the risk of importing the ethnic conflict by the Kurdish immigration and its violent manifestations to a

minimum. In the German public, the Kurdish question came up as a domestic security problem, which derived from intra-Turkey development restrictions and ethnicity problems. Public policy makers connected Kurdish migration with problems of governing ethnic and social conflicts.

The intra-Kurdish conflicts and assaults brought the German authorities finally to assess the chances for banning the PKK. This was not an easy option due to the legal conflict between the constitutional rights of freedom of association on the one hand and the policy goal of guaranteeing public security. The Office of the Protection of the German Constitution had observed the PKK since 1983. The Federal Prosecutor tried to ban the PKK as a terrorist organization. The police intensified its raids against the Kurdish associations in the early 1990s. In early 1993 some Kurdish activists occupied the Turkish consulate in Munich and other European states to put pressure on European governments to influence the Turkish government to end the war against the Kurds, which in combination with ongoing hostilities led finally to the ban (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 938). In November 1993, the German Ministry of the Interior outlawed the PKK as a "terrorist organization" and prohibited affiliated associations. To politicians it was not clear what would follow from the ban but finally there were no options left over to guarantee public security. The Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) therefore supported the implementation of a PKK ban from the perspective of public security while the Green party argued that a ban might lead to further attacks by individuals that would feel singled out and left no other option (Lyon and Uçarer 2001: 939). Baher explains that the Kurdish movement changed its strategy in the aftermath of the ban and the repressive public policies in Germany from confrontational politics to contesting the "criminalization of the movement within Germany". Furthermore "there is also a significant discursive change that demonstrates that the Kurds now perceive themselves as citizens or residents of Germany, and are thus a part of German society and challenging the policy makers in terms of equal citizenship and opportunity frameworks" (Baher 2014: 3).

In the current stage of the conflict in 2017 over the criminalization of the symbols of Kurdish organizations, such as the Northern Syrian Kurdish party of democratic unity (PYD) and the Kurdish-Syrian self-defence organizations YPG and YPJ, Sevim Dağdelen and other parliamentarians from the left wing party DIE LINKE criticized the prohibition of the symbols of these organizations (German Bundestag 2017: 3). The CDU/CSU and SPD supported the prohibition of the symbols by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior. The German government justified the extension of the list of prohibited symbols with the increase of public assemblies related to the PKK and Kurdish organizations since 2016 and the argument that the Kurdish movement would use these symbols to strengthen the cohesion of the prohibited PKK (German Bundestag 2017: 5). The Kurdish movement organized these public assemblies to support from Germany the military operations of the Kurdish-Syrian self-defence organizations YPG and YPJ against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The parliamentary group of the party DIE LINKE questioned the government

whether the Turkish government had influenced its decision to ban further symbols of the Kurdish movement. The German government referred in its answer to the prohibition of the PKK and argued that it was implementing the prohibition of related symbols to guarantee the internal security (German Bundestag 2017: 6). The prohibition of the symbols of legal organizations, e.g. the Association of University Students of Kurdistan (YXK), is legal according to the federal government if the PKK or other prohibited associations use these symbols to strengthen their cohesion (German Bundestag 2017: 7). The Federal Government argued additionally that the prohibition on showing pictures of Abdullah Öcalan, the arrested former leader of the PKK, during demonstrations strengthens the cohesion of the Kurdish movement and causes tensions between the Kurdish and the Turkish diaspora in Germany. These tensions would arise from the violent history of the conflict in Turkey that is inevitably connected to the person of Öcalan. The federal government argued that Turkish activists and citizens in Germany might interpret Öcalan's picture as a provocation, which could lead to hostilities. The current stage of the Kurdish-Turkish conflict develops around the question of whether the security agencies and the Ministry of the Interior interpret Kurdish symbols as a tool for strengthening the cohesion of the criminalized PKK. The federal government argues that the PKK still exists as a hidden network that supports the YPG in Syria (German Bundestag 2017: 11). From the government and security perspective in Germany, the PKK still is a terrorist organization that aims at Kurdish autonomy by using violence (German Bundestag 2017: 15).

Currently, the Kurdish movement in Germany protested peacefully or tried to protest against the military operations of the Turkish state in Afrin and against Germany supporting these operations and the Turkish army by weapon delivery (Huffington Post 2018). Against this background of renewed Kurdish protest against the Turkish military operations in Afrin, German security authorities and police headquarters seem to have aggravated their strategy in relation to Kurdish protest towards a more repressive strategy. In early 2018, the police headquarters of the cities of Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg and Hannover prohibited pro-Kurdish demonstrations (NAV-DEM 2018; Police of Dortmund 2018; WAZ 2018). These strategies of the local police headquarters and the authorities for inner security seem to implement the above-mentioned prohibition of the Kurdish symbols by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior to weaken the cohesion of the PKK. However, though there is until now no clear evidence that local police authorities implement the guidelines of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, it seems to be plausible that the prohibition of the big demonstrations in Cologne, Duisburg and Dortmund followed the revised strategy towards the Kurdish movement and tried to prevent the use of prohibited symbols.

3.1 The Turkish military operation in Afrin

In January 2018, the Turkish military attacked the Kurdish dominated and controlled Afrin district in Northern Syria to fight the Kurdish-led Democratic

Union Party in Syria (PYD), its armed wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). It was the first Turkish military operation in Syria since 2016. The Turkish military called the operation Olive Branch. The Syrian Afrin district borders on Turkey in the north and the west. Turkish officials argued that the operation is necessary to protect the Turkish south from a transgression of the war from Syria. The military conflict is a very complex issue and shall not be discussed or analyzed further. The importance of the military operation for the study arises because the Kurds in Afrin and the Kurds in Germany started to protest against the war immediately after the beginning of the military operation. The Kurds argued that the Turkish state and its NATO allies would weaken the capacities of the Kurdish military forces to defend the territory against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)). Furthermore, the Syrian Kurds argued that the Turkish state would violate the regional sovereignty and become a more imperial power in the region. In Germany, the newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) reported and discussed German military involvement in the Turkish military operations in Syria and the Kurdish dominated regions (Hemicker 2018). The FAZ-author argues that German Leopard-2 battle tanks were used in the military conflict and refers to the "Information Center of Afrin Resistance" (ICAR) from Qamischli. For German political activists and policy observers the political and human rights scandal was the German military involvement (Grundrechtekomitee 2018). The military operation in Afrin seems to put the Kurdish movement in Turkey and its membership in other European states under pressure to protest against the military policy in Turkey and Germany. Therefore, the military operations could intensify the inner-Turkish radicalization processes, which take place against a more and more repressive political background, and the antagonistic political and societal developments in the Turkish-Kurdish question (Popp 2018).

4. German street politics, the anarchist perspective on the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish solidarity movement

In January and February 2018, the Turkish military operations in Afrin captured the agenda of German domestic and street politics. The wide spread Kurdish protest mobilizations against the Turkish military operations in Afrin motivated German left wing and anarchist political organizations as well as other civil society actors such as the networks of #unteilbar and #Seebrücke to join the protest activities. In several German cities, organizations such as Attac, the left wing party DIE LINKE, the anarcho-syndicalist union FAU (Free Workers Union) or the Linksjugend ['solid] organized demonstrations supporting the Kurdish movement and protesting against the German involvement in Turkish war making and the anti-democratic policies of the German state authorities (cf. DIE LINKE – Kreisverband Essen 2018; FAU 2018; Linksjugend ['solid] Bremerhaven und Cuxhaven 2018; Linksjugend ['solid] Konstanz 2018). The Linksjugend ['solid], a youth organization that

supports the left wing party DIE LINKE by contributing a social movement identity and a more radical praxis to its institutionalized party politics, can be identified as a major actor which organized street political support for the Kurdish movement. Linksjugend ['solid] organized and supported in January and February 2018 demonstrations in the cities of Bremerhaven, Cologne, Konstanz, Mainz and Stuttgart (Linksjugend ['solid] Bremerhaven und Cuxhaven 2018; Linksjugend ['solid] Konstanz 2018). Linksjugend ['solid] called for support for the Kurdish movement in Northern Syria as this movement strived for the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria aiming at grassroots democracy, women´s liberation and ecology (Linksjugend ['solid] Bremerhaven und Cuxhaven 2018).

Furthermore, Linksjugend ['solid] North Rhine-Westphalia argued for the necessity of international solidarity due to the emancipatory project of Kurdish federalism in Northern Syria with its seemingly positive prospect for self-government, women´s and minorities right policies (Linksjugend ['solid] North Rhine-Westphalia 2018; Linksjugend ['solid] Ortenau 2018). Moreover, Linksjugend ['solid] criticized that the German government was directly involved in the war on Afrin by approving weapon exports for the Turkish military, which uses these weapons such as tanks against the Kurdish self-organization units (Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz 2018). Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz also criticized that the German government supported the Turkish government, namely president Erdogan, by repressing the Kurdish movement (Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz 2018).

Linksjugend ['solid] argued that the prohibition of symbols of YPG und YPJ, Syrian Kurdish party and women´s organization, suppressed the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and the freedom of association. With reference to the prohibition of Kurdish symbols, the police stopped the demonstration in Cologne and confiscated all Kurdish flags and Öcalan pictures. The Kurdish movement tried to transcend the limits set by the police and the ministries of the interior by continuously showing prohibited symbols. The police stopped and ended the demonstration. Linksjugend ['solid] framed this as a violation of human and political rights (Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz 2018). At the demonstration in Mainz and in their statements Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz and Linksjugend ['solid] generally argued that the police strategies were motivated by German foreign policy interests that are congruent with the interests of the Turkish government (Linksjugend ['solid] Mainz 2018). At this point, it becomes evident that the statements of Linksjugend ['solid] argue for solidarity with the Kurdish movement due to the Kurdish movements' progress in establishing a socio-political order that seems to be in accordance with the ideology of Linksjugend ['solid]. It is hardly possible to say whether the mobilization for the Kurdish movement is based on facts, because I do not know the sources of the argumentation of Linksjugend ['solid]. Finally, I can conclude that all statements of Linksjugend ['solid] focus on the achievements of the Kurdish federalist project in Northern Syria and the attacks on the project by the Turkish military as the central reasons for solidarity (Linksjugend ['solid] Bremerhaven und Cuxhaven 2018a).

The reason for solidarity with the Kurdish movement thus seems to be the congruence of the seemingly realizing emancipatory project in Kurdistan and the desire for change in Germany (there is no explicit explanation by Linksjugend ['solid] why to support the Kurdish movement). The central form of support of Linksjugend ['solid] was the organization of demonstrations or manifestations in which they expressed their solidarity with the Kurdish movement and articulated their critique of the German and Turkish governments. Central policy goals of Linksjugend ['solid] were to mobilize the public against the German government´s armament policy as a reason for the war in Afrin and against the anti-Kurdish internal policies of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior on the prohibition of PKK-symbols or other Kurdish symbols. Besides the activities of Linksjugend ['solid], some local committees of the leftist party DIE LINKE demonstrated against the war in Afrin and expressed their critique of the German government´s involvement in the Turkish war on Afrin (cf. DIE LINKE local committee Chemnitz 2018; DIE LINKE local committee Essen 2018; DIE LINKE local committee Kiel 2018).

Apart from these efforts of Linksjugend ['solid] and DIE LINKE to organize street political support for the Kurdish movement, German anarchist organizations tried to support the Kurdish movement. The anarcho-syndicalist organization and labor union FAU called for solidarity with the democratic federation in northern Syria. In their declaration for solidarity, the FAU accused the German government of supporting the Turkish government by weapon delivery, of illegitimately persecuting Kurdish organizations and their symbols in Germany and by "threatening activists with deportation" (FAU 2018). Through organizing demonstrations in Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Magdeburg and Mannheim the FAU tried to influence the public agenda towards support for the Kurdish movement and to prevent the government from further supporting the Turkish government. The FAU argued that the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish institutions in Northern Syria would enhance the possibilities of women to emancipate from patriarchal suppression, that the new institutions could contribute to a trans-ethnic and basis democratic organization and enable the implementation of a cooperative economy (FAU 2018; FAU Flensburg 2018; FAU Mannheim 2018). Since the Kurdish project in Northern Syria seems to be convincing to the FAU, the organization called for solidarity with the people in Afrin and Rojava. Again the convincing nature of the Kurdish institution building project in Northern Syria combined with the rejection of the war led by the Turkish army are the reasons for solidarity with the Kurdish movement. Accordingly, the FAU demanded that the German government should condemn the Turkish war on Afrin, stop any weapon exports to Turkey and stop the plans of the Rheinmetall Group to modernize Turkish tanks (FAU Mannheim 2018). From the statements of the FAU, I can draw the conclusion that the solidarity with the Kurdish movement followed from two sources: the emancipatory and basis-democratic project in Northern Syria (Kurdish federalism) that needs support and on the other hand the attacks on the project by the Turkish military. Anarchists and left wing activists mobilized external solidarity for the Kurdish because of ideological congruence

with the Kurdish federalist and radical democratic project (cf. Hunt and Benford 2004: 439).

Besides the FAU, further organized anarchist groups, e.g. the Anarchist Group Krefeld, the Anarchist Group Dortmund and the federation of German speaking anarchists (German: Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen (FdA)), tried to support the Kurdish movement in Germany and in Afrin by mobilizing against the German involvement in the Turkish military operations in Afrin. They argued that the German government should stop weapon delivery to Turkey and they called for peace in Syria (Anarchist Group Dortmund 2018; Anarchist Group Krefeld 2018). The federation of German speaking anarchists (German: Föderation deutschsprachiger Anarchist*innen (FdA)) reported about a spontaneous demonstration against the military operation in Afrin in the city of Kassel. On 3 February, approx. 50 people from the FdA, the Kurdish movement and other leftist groups joined a demonstration lead by the slogan "Solidarity with Rojava – Drop the prohibition of the PKK" (FdA 2018). Furthermore, the FdA and the anarchist group A & O from Kassel called and mobilized for a demonstration in Frankfurt (24th of March 2018) against the war in Afrin and for solidarity with the people in Afrin (A & O Kassel 2018).

German anarchist and left wing organizations clearly tried to practice solidarity with the Kurdish movement in Germany and criticized the German and the Turkish governments. Additionally in February and March 2018, in the German cities of Flensburg, Münster and Rostock mixed action groups consisting of Kurdish inhabitants, German citizens and left wing actors such as the Interventionistische Linke protested against the military operations in Afrin using demonstrations and civil disobedience (Interventionistische Linke 2018; Jolly 2018; Münstersche Zeitung 2018). From these public statements, it becomes clear that solidarity and trans-nationalism and anti-nationalism are still core beliefs of the leftist and anarchist movement in Germany. This central element of the socialist ideology can be traced back to the establishment of the First Workers' International in 1864. As a labor union, the International tried to support the economic and political struggles and protests of the working class in different national states against capitalism and domination.

Against this background, I interpret the current solidarity movement of the left wing and anarchist German street political actors to be a practical implementation of transnational solidarity with the ethno-political minority of the Kurdish movement. Since the Turkish governments oppressed the Kurds as a cultural and political minority ranging back to the 1920's, German leftist activists want to show their practical solidarity, thereby realizing two main ideological elements of the leftist movement: activists practice solidarity by contentious politics and the left wing movement develops inter-national, trans-national or anti-national solidarity against any national ideology. Some political actors, e.g. the Social Democratic Parties, challenged this positioning towards inter-, trans-national or anti-national solidarity against the nationalist ideology in the socialist history due to party political strategies, e.g. the German Communist Party changed its strategy in the 1930s towards a national

communist strategy due to the success of the nationalist ideology. Therefore, we can see that in the socialist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a struggle between Social Democratic parties, Communist parties and the anarchist and libertarian-communist movements about the positioning towards nationalism and anti-national solidarity. Today this conflict still seems to be relevant when we compare the policy preferences of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) with the ideological positions of more radical left wing or anarchist organizations.

4.2 The anarchist perspective on the Kurdish movement

In Germany, the anarchist network CrimethInc. has influenced the perspective of at least some streams of the anarchist movement. CrimethInc. published an historical overview and eyewitness report on the Kurdish resistance movement that is the basis for anarchist perspectives on the Kurdish movement (CrimethInc. 2018; cf. also Azadî for crimethinc 2015). In this publication and from the anarchist perspective, the Kurdish movement is a very old resistance movement that continues

> the long tradition of resistance and uprisings in the Kurdish regions across the Zagros and Tauros mountain chains. It's the area that was probably first targeted for colonization by the evolving state system, whose roots lay in Lower Mesopotamia, today's northern Iraq, and which was also the predecessor of today's Western state system (CrimethInc. 2018).

The authors argue that

> the PKK and the Kurdish movement today understand themselves within this long tradition of anti-governmental resistance, counting themselves as the 29th Kurdish uprising in history (Azadî for crimethinc 2015).

The authors refer to the Kurds' decentralized social organization in village confederations that had contributed to the long-standing autonomous cultural development of the Kurdish community. This ideological-historical narrative of decentralization seems to fit perfectly into the anarchist ideology, which contains the political goal of a decentralized social organization to limit the centralization of power. Here we can find the ideological congruence between the anarchist project of fighting any kind of rule, especially states and capitalism, and the Kurdish movement. From the anarchist perspective, the Kurdish movement had to struggle from the beginning of the 19th century with the establishment of the Turkish nationalism that followed the breakdown of the Ottoman-Empire. The anarchist historical narrative contains that Abdullah Öcalan, Kemal Pir, Haki Karer and others combined the Kurdish movement, as a very old cultural community, in the 1970s with a revolutionary socialist

perspective, which followed the 1968 youth rebellion in Turkey. They had organized the movement in accordance with classical Marxist-Leninist theory. The PKK in following years organized a political vanguard to start a revolution to free the Kurdish territories and establish socialism. This revolutionary perspective led to the military conflict with the Turkish state and caused the mass emigration to Western Europe.

What contributes furthermore to the attractiveness of the Kurdish movement from an anarchist perspective is the role that the women played in the aftermath of the civil war with the Turkish state. Women's committees on social and political issues seem to have increased the political influence of women in the Kurdish movement and thereby reducing the patriarchal structures in this region. Additionally the Kurdish youth increased its influence on the movements´ strategy and the organizational power of youth. For the anarchists it seems that the youth and women seem overcome the entrenched legacies of hierarchy in the Kurdish society. Institutionally, the federal structures of assemblies and civil organizations in the Kurdish concept of democratic federalism seems to resolve common problems of hierarchy and to contribute to the self-organization of the whole population through bottom-up democratic processes. From the anarchist perspective, the ideological move in the Kurdish strategy towards these elements and the concept of democratic federalism, taken from the intellectual work of the libertarian thinker Murray Bookchin, has increased the normative acceptance of the Kurdish movement and the need for anarchists to engage in solidarity with this movement. The Kurdish movement seems to provide arguments for the anarchist movement that a social revolution in line with anarchist principles and containing decentralized and rather non-hierarchical structures and institutions is possible in a large region of the world. Thereby, the Kurdish movement sets an example for other world regions to reorganize society according to anarchist principles.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of the Kurdish movement, the German government's support for the Turkish military operations violates the political rights of the Kurdish movement in Syria. The Kurdish movement actors argue that the German government supports the Turkish government by repressing the political opportunities for an independent organization and development of the Kurdish movement in Germany. German left wing and anarchist organizations supported the Kurdish movement in its critique of the war in Afrin by organizing assemblies and demonstrations. The central reason for solidarity and support was that the Kurdish movement seems to build a self-governing federation in Northern Syria, which is congruent at the policy goal level with the ideology of German leftist and anarchist actors. The central form of support of Linksjugend ['solid], FAU and other anarchist groups was the organization of demonstrations or manifestations in which they expressed their solidarity with the Kurdish movement and their critique of the German and Turkish governments. Furthermore, Linksjugend ['solid], FAU and other anarchist

groups published solidarity statements in which they criticized the role of the German government in oppressing the Kurdish movement due to the export of weapons for the Turkish army. This involvement in the Kurdish-Turkish conflict follows from the centrality of the solidarity ideologeme within the left wing and anarchist movements.

Solidarity is still a core belief of the leftist and anarchist movements. We therefore need further research on the importance and effects of the concept of solidarity in contemporary working class movements. We can see, that radical left wing and anarchist actors argue for an international respectively anti-national perspective. This perspective, going beyond the borders of nation states, separates these organizations from other political movements. The article shows that radical left and anarchist organizations differ from the institutionalized left-wing actors, such as the social-democratic party, due to their solidarity politics towards the Kurdish movement. At this point, a further investigation on the question whether the leftist and anarchist support for the Kurdish movement's self-government project follows from its own historiographic narrative of being victim to state violence should be done. According to this historiographic narrative, states always smashed radical, anarchist and emancipatory projects, e.g. the Spanish revolution 1936 onwards, the Machno movement between 1917 and 1921 in Ukraine and the Munich soviet revolution in 1919, and by that, they destroyed the imaginative power of alternative modes of organization. From this perspective of the radical anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian movements, the Kurdish democratic federalism with its council structure is as appealing as the movement of the Zapatistas in Chiapas and the commune of Oaxaca (2006) in Mexico. From the anarchist and left wing perspective, the observation that states put pressure on emancipatory projects by using military violence is a central cause for mobilizing external solidarity with these projects.

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What is the point of anti-austerity activism? Exploring the motivating and sustaining emotional forces of political participation

Emma Craddock

Abstract

The continued resistance to austerity in the UK almost a decade after its imposition raises questions about what motivates and sustains anti-austerity activism. Drawing on 30 interviews with local activists, this article argues that anti-austerity activism is sustained by a combination of emotions and normative ideals. It is about more than opposing austerity and appealing to social protections of the past; it is about imagining an alternative future and situating this within conversations about what it means to be human, as well as enacting these moral values in the present. Activism is conceived of as care not only for austerity and those it impacts but also within activist communities, with the social dimension of activism and the relationships it creates becoming a central sustaining force for continued political participation. This article explores how emotion sustains political participation during periods of disillusionment and the everyday ways that activists resist and subvert the pervasive force of neoliberal capitalism and its discourses. Overall, it asserts the importance of paying close attention to the lived and felt dimension of political participation to better understand the nuanced ways that anti-austerity activism is sustained over long periods of time.

Keywords:

activism; austerity; emotion; empathy; morals; normative; affective; motivation; neoliberalism; capitalism

Introduction

It has been 9 years since the introduction of the austerity programme in the UK, which involved widespread and deep cuts to public spending. Between 2010 and 2015, 35 billion pounds of cuts were made, with a further 55 billion pounds still to be cut by 2019 (Gentleman, 2015). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (2014) stated that 'colossal cuts' to public spending will take government spending to its lowest point since before World War Two and that by the end of this process 'the role and shape of the state will have changed beyond recognition'. Austerity is the guise that enables a drastic shrinking of the welfare state and an increase in privatisation and financialisation, turning citizens into consumers of previously public services. Thus, austerity is more than a solution for managing government debt; it is an ideological extension of neoliberalism.

In response, we witnessed a surge in collective action that sought to challenge not only austerity but the wider neoliberal capitalist system that underpins it, including movements such as the Spanish Indignados, the American Occupy, and UK Uncut. These movements reframed austerity as an ideological attack on the poorest in society, highlighting the growing inequalities between the richest 1 percent and the other 99 percent, and addressed issues of political representation by drawing attention to the democratic deficit. Della Porta (2015) asserts that anti-austerity politics is as much about reconfiguring democracy as it is about defending social protections of the past, such as state welfare. Shannon (2014: 13) remarks that 'living in an age of multiple crises creates multiple possibilities for the widening of antagonisms between privilege and power, on the one hand, and the dispossessed, on the other'. This notion is no better summed up than by Occupy's pitting of the 99 percent - 'ordinary' citizens against the 1 percent - 'fat cats' who were deemed responsible for the financial crash but faced none of the consequences.

Despite such anti-austerity movements, evidence of the damaging impact of austerity on people's lives (Oxfam, 2013) and claims of austerity's ineffectiveness (Blyth, 2013), the austerity regime has been reinforced. While anti-austerity politics has entered the mainstream arena with the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, the re-election of a conservative government in 2017 suggests that we are unlikely to see the end of austerity in coming years. Nevertheless, individuals and groups locally and nationally have maintained the resistance to austerity, resolutely proclaiming that there *is* an alternative. This continued resistance raises questions about what motivates and sustains anti-austerity activism. Put crudely, what is the point? For if anti-austerity activism has had little impact on austerity, then why continue fighting a losing battle? Moreover, how is action sustained in the face of seeming failure?

Drawing on anti-austerity activists' narratives from interviews before the election of Jeremy Corbyn, I contend that anti-austerity activism is motivated by more than simply a desire to impact policy. A central feature of political reactions to austerity is the widespread sentiment that austerity is an infringement of human dignity, demonstrated by the 15M movement's (a Spanish precursor to Occupy) slogan 'We are not products in the hands of politicians and bankers'. This emphasis on the lived and felt experiences of human beings, as humans, as opposed to products and objects of a capitalist system, is reflected by movements' emotional framing of austerity as an affective, lived condition.

Brown et al (2013) suggest that such movements should be understood as a response to a 'crisis of care'. They contend that movements approach this crisis by criticising the government's lack of care for its citizens and by seeking to demonstrate how alternative social relations based on care are possible. In this respect, moments of crisis can open up spaces for reimagining possible, better, futures. Shannon (2014: 2) asserts:

> When historical moments of crisis hit — when people's expectations are undercut by austere social realities — they shake the faith in capitalism that allows it to be continually reproduced in our daily lives. People begin to see that the way that we've organised our lives is one option, but that other possibilities may also be on the table. While global movements have also arisen in times when capitalism has not been in crisis, in the current, historical moment, crisis was a primary spark.

As Holloway (2010) explains, 'cracks' in capitalism begin to show, revealing the possibility for agitation to widen these cracks. Likewise, Butler and Athanasiou (2015) demonstrate the 'double-sided effects of dispossession, including the opportunity to create new social bonds and forms of collective struggle against the suffering, immiseration and violence of austerity politics' (Brah et al, 2015: 5). By focussing on the affective dimensions of movements, the processes of these alternative spaces are revealed.

At the same time as developing an analysis of the micro-level of political participation, it is vital to situate this within the wider macro-level. As Della Porta (2015: 3) asserts, we need to 'look at the specific characteristics of the socio-economic, cultural and political context in which these [anti-austerity] protests developed'. Anti-austerity activism forms part of a wider resistance to neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism's emphasis on the market above the social reflects an immoral economy which anti-austerity activists react to in defence of their dignity. While anti-austerity activism is concerned with material factors and class relations, it is also concerned with wider normative questions and a demand for recognition. In this respect, such activism reinforces Fraser's (1995: 69) claim that 'justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition'.

Anti-austerity activists are motivated by moral and ethical values, 'bridging a moral framing with a political one' (Della Porta, 2015: 68). A key feature of this is a concern with how neoliberalism attacks conceptions of 'humanity'. Brown (2015: 43) demonstrates that:

> Neoliberal rationality eliminates what these thinkers termed "the good life" (Aristotle) or "the true realm of freedom" (Marx), by which they did not mean luxury leisure, or indulgence, but rather the cultivation and expression of distinctly human capacities for ethical and political freedom, creativity, unbounded reflection, or invention.

Neoliberalism is thus framed as inhumane, with activists drawing on widespread notions of humanity in resisting austerity. When stating their reasons for protesting, a YouTube video promoting the 15 May 2011 demonstration in Spain states 'Because we are more humane. Because we are more decent. Because we are more respectable. Because we are more' (Gerbaudo, 2012: 67). Thus, anti-austerity activism reacts to neoliberalism's transforming of humans into 'human capitals [...] [who] do not have the standing of Kantian individuals, ends in themselves, intrinsically valuable' but

are conceived of solely in terms of economic value (Brown, 2015: 38). Questions are raised about the role of morals and the normative within anti-austerity activism, as well as the ways in which universal discourses of humanism are utilised to ground resistance to such perceived attacks on humanity, and how these work alongside particularist concerns about difference. Moreover, the further question arises of how resistance to such a pervasive force as neoliberalism can be sustained over time and what this looks like in practice.

It is argued that to understand the continuing resistance to austerity we need to pay close attention to the lived and felt dimension of everyday political participation, focusing on the central role played by emotion and how it combines with morals and normative ideals to sustain activism. I now turn to a brief exploration of the role of emotions and morals in social movement theory in order to situate this article and its contribution in its theoretical context before presenting a discussion of the research methodology and analysis of the data.

Social movement theory: emotions and morals

Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing emphasis placed on the central role played by emotions in protest (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2000, 2001; Jasper, 1997; Jasper, 2011; Flam and King, 2005). Despite this expanding body of literature, cultural studies of social movements have tended to focus on the cognitive, reflecting the persistence of the traditional emotion versus reason dichotomy where emotions are presupposed to be irrational. Challenging the assumption that emotion and thinking are two separate and even opposed functions, Jasper (2014: 23) argues that 'rather than the opposite of thought, emotions are forms of thinking, and as such are a part of culture mixed together with cognitive propositions and moral principles and intuitions'. Jasper highlights the need to consider the moral dimension of protest and how this interconnects with the emotional, a relationship which has not been sufficiently recognised (Goodwin and Jasper, 2007). Yet, as Calhoun (2001: 50) asserts, 'one of the advantages to taking emotions seriously is to see better how moral norms and injunctions come to have force'. In this respect, emotion is understood not solely as subjective but also social and active – 'doing' things, as Ahmed (2014) suggests.

A key area in which emotion 'does things' is that of sustaining social movements during latent periods (Goodwin et al, 2001). While social movement research tends to explore emotions in relation to how individuals are recruited to social movements (Corrigall-Brown, 2012), it is argued that we need to pay attention to the role of emotion during movements' latent as well as active periods (Melucci, 1996). Linking lived experiences to the emotional dimension of activism, Brown and Pickerill (2009: 27) state: 'there is a need to understand how participants emotionally experience their actions, how action is embodied, and how meaning is constructed out of those experiences and feelings'. This focus on the affective dimension of political participation widens the focus of

research from rationalistic approaches which focus on strategy and the effectiveness of movements, to looking at questions of why and how individuals become and *remain* politically engaged, where emotion plays a central role.

In order to explore the processes of emotions, morals, and normative ideals, and how these interlink to sustain political participation, it is argued that we need to pay close attention to the everyday lived and felt experiences of social movement activity. Alexander (2006: 115) contends that 'we need to develop a model of democratic societies that pays more attention to solidarity and social values – to what and how people speak, think and feel about politics than most social science theories do today'. This article explores how anti-austerity movements attempt to harness and subvert dominant neoliberal discourses and how this is rooted in normative ideals and humanist values. A central part of translating traditionally abstract, normative concepts is to look at the concrete, everyday experiences of citizens and the symbolic codes that they invoke. As Alexander (2006: 551) contends 'rather than an abstract deduction of philosophers, the normative stipulations of civil society turn out to be the language of the street'.

This article draws on data from 30 interviews with individuals involved in anti-austerity activism between 2010 and 2013 to explore what motivates and sustains it, in the context of continued austerity. By paying attention to the lived and felt experiences of political engagement, insights are revealed about the centrality of emotions and how they combine with moral and normative values to produce and sustain action. It is argued that anti-austerity activism has persisted because it is concerned not solely with impacting policy and reversing austerity but with wider concerns about collectivism and what it means to be human. These concerns are both thought and felt, propelling individuals to enact humanist ideals in the present as a way of imagining a better future that is constructed in opposition to the dominant dehumanising neoliberal values. This article demonstrates how neoliberal discourses are subverted and reinterpreted by activists as a way of resisting the status quo while simultaneously being a part of it, a process which Levitas (2012) describes as a hermeneutic of both suspicion and faith, highlighting the complexities involved in social movement's engagement with dominant structures and discourses. Reflecting the approach of the movements researched, this article focuses on the processes rather than the ends of anti-austerity activism. By doing so, it reaffirms the importance of the affective dimension of social movements and builds on attempts to break the 'silence about the sphere of fellow feelings, the we-ness that makes society into society' (Alexander, 2006: 53), that have been made through the study of social solidarity and compassion (Flores, 2014).

Methodological approach

The overall aim of the research was to produce an in-depth understanding, or 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), of local anti-austerity activist cultures and the lived and felt experiences of anti-austerity activism. Such research uncovers processes that are vital to movement life, helping us to understand how

movements are sustained during less active phases and times of pessimism. Qualitative research's attention to the complexity of social interactions and the 'meanings that participants themselves attribute to these interactions' provided the opportunity to explore participants' experiences and meanings of anti-austerity activism. Maddison (2007: 397) contends that 'qualitative research allows for an understanding of how experience, feelings, meaning, and process in turn influence the actions of research participants', which aids an understanding of the connection between emotion and action. I used an ethnographic research approach that combined participant observation in anti-austerity activism over an extended period and semi-structured interviews with local activists. The research method choices will be discussed following a brief description of the local research setting in order to provide the reader with background context.

It was necessary to provide a boundary to the research to enable an in-depth exploration of a particular activist culture. The research therefore focused on Nottingham as a location that has been particularly active in the resistance to austerity. Nottingham is the largest city in the UK's East Midlands, built on a history of heavy industry that includes coal mining, manufacturing and engineering. At the height of anti-austerity activism in Nottingham in 2010-2013, there were several specific campaigns against the cuts that protested on a weekly basis, forming a vibrant and dynamic local activist scene. These included groups that campaigned against specific cuts such as Notts Save Our Services, feminist activism and groups operating from the Women's Centre such as Nottingham Women Campaign for Change, and local branches of wider national movements such as UK Uncut and the People's Assembly Against Austerity. It is important to remember, as Beth (participant) states, "austerity is a thread that runs through many campaigns". Therefore, participants have been involved in various groups and campaigns that resist austerity, with anti-austerity activism being a broad area. Furthermore, the research took place within a specific temporal context, before the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader, and during a time of disillusionment with mainstream politics. This article thus sheds light on a distinct moment in the history of neoliberalism and resistance to it in the form of anti-austerity activism. I will now provide some background information about the two key groups in local anti-austerity activism, to aid the building of a picture of the local activist landscape, before discussing the research methodology in more detail.

UK Uncut

UK Uncut is a grassroots movement that formed in October 2010 to protest against tax avoidance by large corporations and banks. Describing itself as 'taking action to highlight the alternatives to the government's spending cuts', UK Uncut (2010) argues that the cuts are 'based on ideology, not necessity' and seeks to highlight this perceived injustice by taking direct action against tax-avoiding corporations such as Starbucks, Vodafone, NatWest, Lloyds TSB, and Boots, which has local significance having been founded in Nottingham. UK

Uncut have been successful in creating a link in the public imagination between tax avoidance and public spending cuts, utilising the popular discourse of 'fairness' which is also used to legitimise austerity (Bramall, 2016: 34). We start to see how dominant ideologies can be reinterpreted and turned against themselves.

In this respect, anti-austerity activism employs a 'hermeneutic of faith' (Ricoeur, 1981) which is 'an attempt to restore meaning to a narrative and its different voices and silences' (Levitas, 2012: 332). At the same time, such movements read austerity discourses through a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' which involves 'an attempt at unmasking disguised meanings and practical implications' (Levitas, 2012: 332). Thus, we see the complexities and dialectics present in anti-austerity activism. Similarly to how it draws on the 'common sense' of fairness, UK Uncut does not question the need to reduce the deficit, which is a point that has largely been accepted by the public, but instead argues that it should be reduced in a way that does not hit the most vulnerable the hardest. Given that tax avoidance is legal, UK Uncut has to find an alternative grounding for its argument, which it finds in the frame of morality.

According to its website, the first mention of 'UK Uncut' was on October 27th 2010 in the Twitter hashtag #UKUncut. This was the date of UK Uncut's first direct action when approximately 70 people formed a sit-in at Vodafone's flagship London store to protest against austerity measures announced one week earlier. After this single action group in London, Uncut quickly spread to 55 locations across the UK with a diverse range of participants; the movement (2010) states that 'everyone from pensioners to teenagers, veterans to newbies have already joined our actions in towns from Aberdeen to Aberystwyth'.

There is no official membership; people join the movement by organising or attending an action near them (UK Uncut, 2010). Uncut claims to be leaderless, having been formed on and organised through the Internet and has a strong virtual presence. Most participants discovered UK Uncut online. The UK Uncut Facebook page currently has more than 150,000 supporters who are subscribed to its posts (a number that has doubled in two years and is growing every day). The Notts Uncut Facebook page has almost 2,000 likes. Reflecting Castells (2012) notion of 'networked social movements', some participants contend that social media is a central feature of newer horizontal forms of activism. Harry, a participant of the research, states that "a smart phone in the right hands is the nuclear bomb of the activist", emphasising the potential impact that social media can have as well as its accessibility. At the same time, UK Uncut remains concerned with the use of public spaces for protest, reflecting Castells' (2012) contention that networked movements combine online and offline spaces for activism.

Despite its claims to leaderlessness, within Nottingham there was a core group of around 8-10 activists who managed the Notts Uncut social media and organised many of their actions. This core group is included within my sample, as are others who had more casual links to the movement. While UK Uncut is still active, in Nottingham the movement peaked between 2010 and 2012; there

are occasionally plans to revive it and participants describe it as currently "sleeping".

The People's Assembly

The main anti-austerity group currently active in Nottingham is the People's Assembly which is part of the national People's Assembly Against Austerity that acts as a platform for anti-austerity protests and events, attracting several celebrity supporters such as Owen Jones and Russell Brand. It was formed in 2013 and states '[t]here is no need for ANY cuts to public spending; no need to decimate public services; no need for unemployment or pay and pension cuts; no need for Austerity and privatisation. There IS an alternative', demonstrating a similar message to UK Uncut. Whereas Notts Uncut was more horizontal and used consensus decision-making methods, the People's Assembly is a more vertically structured group that is mainly organised by one local activist (who is also part of my sample). This is a point of contention for some participants who choose not to be involved with the People's Assembly because of this.

Reflecting their more organised approach, the People's Assembly support 'The People's Manifesto', a list of policies that the movement proposes to create a fairer society (see http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/what_we_stand_for). The People's Assembly national Facebook page has just over 74,000 likes and the local Nottingham page has almost 4000 likes. Similarly to UK Uncut, though the People's Assembly does not claim to be mainly constituted online, Mary (participant) notes that "we [People's Assembly], have started doing a lot of our stuff, events that we organise we set up Facebook events and that sort of thing and you get very quick shares of things and you get an impact quite quickly".

As previously mentioned, anti-austerity activism is complex and dynamic, comprising many groups and campaigns and a range of protest forms. Furthermore, individuals were often involved in several different groups and campaigns, with there being a considerable amount of overlap between these. Given this diversity and interconnectedness of different groups and forms of protest, it is overly simplistic to refer to only one group or anti-austerity 'movement', instead I have chosen to refer to anti-austerity activism and activist cultures to reflect this complexity. Of course, there are issues concerning how 'activism' is defined and understood, and this is a key topic which I explore in the broader research but which there is not space to go into here. For now, I am using a wide definition of activism that incorporates participation in protests, direct action, online petitions and campaigns, and community groups that are focused on resisting austerity. However, it is noted that the term is fluid and that this definition is open to revision. Furthermore, the focus of this article is not on the organisational features and differences of the groups involved but on the common normative ideals and moral values that anti-austerity activists spread, and the role of emotion in motivating and sustaining action. These central themes, to be discussed later, were present across all groups and most

participants' narratives. I have presented the above background information for the purposes of aiding the reader to construct a picture of the overall local anti-austerity activist landscape, providing broader context.

In order to understand the interactions between activists and the processes and dynamics of wider activist cultures, an ethnographic approach was deemed the most appropriate; as Haiven and Khasnabish (2013: 477-78) contend, 'Ethnography needs to be understood not only as a genre of scholarly writing characterized by "thick description" or even as a set of research methods grounded in participation and immersion in "the field", but as a perspective committed to understanding and taking seriously people's lived realities'. This attitude is reinforced by the research's feminist approach which focuses on lived experiences, feelings, and the subjective.

A feminist approach to research recognises that knowledge is relational, produced intersubjectively, and that the researcher's relationship with participants influences the knowledge produced. Oakley (1981: 49) explains that:

> A feminist methodology [...] requires [...] that the mythology of 'hygienic' research with its accompanying mystification of the researcher and the researched as objective instruments of data production be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is more than dangerous bias – it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives.

Likewise, Hesse-Biber and Piatelli (2007: 147) assert that 'without empathic, interpersonal relationships, researchers will be unable to gain insight into the meaning people give to their lives'. It is therefore important to foster good relationships with participants, something which I achieved through participating in local anti-austerism for 2 and a half years. I attended anti-austerity groups' organising meetings, events, and protests between 2011 and 2013, including those by Notts Uncut, the People's Assembly, Trade Unions, Nottingham Women for Change, and other isolated campaigns against public spending cuts. I entered the field with an open strategy, attending events and protests 'with broad areas of interest but without predetermined categories or strict observational checklists' (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 139). This enabled the research to be led by topics which emerged in the field, preventing a predetermined choice of which data to exclude (Fetterman, 1998). The longer I participated, the more refined my questions and observations became as I learnt how and what to ask (Brewer, 2000), which influenced the topics raised in the interviews.

The research used semi-structured, open-ended interviews to produce in-depth data about participants' experiences and meanings of political activism. This method was chosen because of its ability to 'provide greater breadth and depth of information [and] the opportunity to discover the respondent's experiences

and interpretations of reality' (Maddison, 2007: 399). I interviewed 30 local individuals who self-identified as having been involved in local anti-austerity activism. A mixture of snowball and selective sampling was used with participants helping to recruit subsequent participants by spreading the word that I could be trusted (for which I am very grateful).

The sample included seventeen males and thirteen females, seven of whom were mothers, including two single mothers. Eighteen participants were in their twenties, nine in their thirties, two in their forties and one in her fifties. Just over half of the participants were university-educated. Several worked in the public sector. Fifteen participants identified as working class, seven as middle class and the remaining eight had an ambivalent relationship with class, having been raised in working-class families but now considered to be middle class through education, occupation or marriage. The majority were white with one British Pakistani, one Black British, one Chinese and one white first-generation Eastern European migrant. Participants noted the visible absence of non-white, black minority ethnic (BME) anti-austerity activists and had tried, unsuccessfully, to address this. However, in the post-Brexit political context there are signs that anti-austerity campaigns are attempting to address issues of racism and anti-immigration. The local People's Assembly has held several anti-racism protests, whether this will reflect an increase in BME participants remains to be seen. A central priority of this research is protecting the participants who have kindly given their time and trust to myself as the researcher. In order to preserve anonymity, I offer minimal information about participants' characteristics so that there is no danger of individuals being identified, and use pseudonyms.

While I allowed the interview to be led by the participant in order for topics to emerge which I had not previously considered, I quickly discovered that beginning the interview with too open an approach could be daunting for participants who would often not know what to say. I therefore started the interviews with some general questions and then let the conversation develop more naturally once the participant had relaxed into the situation. The interview guide acted as a prompt only as I was keen to follow the participant's lead, engaging in what DeVault and Gross (2007: 182) have called 'active listening', which required my full attention. Active listening (DeVault and Gross, 2007: 182):

> [M]eans more than just physically hearing or reading; rather, it is a fully engaged practice that involves not only taking in information via speech, written words, or signs, but also actively processing it – allowing that information to affect you, baffle you, haunt you, make you uncomfortable, and take you on unexpected detours, "away from abstract [...] bloodless professionalized questions," toward peoples, knowledges, and experiences that have been disavowed, overlooked and forgotten (Gordon, 1997: 40).

Therefore, my interview guide was altered over the course of the research as areas of interest emerged from early interviews and participant observation. A minimalist structure allowed such freedom, giving the participant the space and time to speak openly about topics. I made sure to finish the interview by asking if there was anything else the participant wanted to speak about so that I did not miss anything that they deemed significant.

The interview situation produces narratives through which participants attempt to make sense of their experiences (Riessman, 1993). It is important to recognise that these narratives are fluid and constantly reshaped by participants during the telling. Kvale (1996: 31) argues that 'the process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness', which was demonstrated by several participants who stated that they had not realised certain things before discussing them during the interview. Furthermore, narratives do not 'speak for themselves', and thus they need to be interpreted (Riessman, 1993: 22).

I transcribed each recording soon after the interview took place and used this as part of the analysis process, noting key themes and interesting quotations, which helped me to begin making connections across the data (Mason, 2002). Themes were constructed by the researcher based on commonalities among the transcripts and added to a codebook of themes and sub-themes which were grouped together into a logical structure (Mason, 2002). A new narrative is thus created by the researcher from the data. Therefore, the product of research is always 'our story of their story' (Oakley, 2015: 14). My analysis is grounded in quotations from the interviews to give participants' voices a prominent place in the research and so the reader can judge my interpretations, as well as make their own.

Before moving into analysis of the data, it is worth noting how, as asserted by feminists, the research process is an interaction between researcher and the researched which has a bidirectional effect. Letherby (2003: 6) remarks that the 'research field' metaphor is useful in thinking about how 'when we enter a field we make footprints on the land and are likely to disturb the environment. When we leave we may have mud on our shoes, pollen on our clothes'. This two-way impact on researcher and researched was demonstrated during my research in several ways. While I had an interest in anti-austerity activism, I had not previously been very active in the local scene (partly due to time pressures), and having to participate for research purposes enabled me to become more politically active. After the research ended I continued to be involved in local activism and to build friendships with many of my participants, some of whom are now good friends of mine. I became involved in administrating Facebook groups and organising events with other activists and have spoken openly about my research to help strengthen groups. While a positivist approach would consider this bias that negatively affects the research, I contend that, following a feminist approach, such experiences enable me to gain a fuller understanding of local activist cultures through sharing activist experiences and being immersed in the research setting.

From my participants' perspective, it was clear that participating in the research had an impact on them. Several participants found the interview process therapeutic and emotional – as evidenced by Leonie who at the end of a 90-minute interview was visibly emotional, stating "I feel all emotional now" and speaking about how good it was to remember. Following this interview and others, participants started to speak to each other about their interview experience and the thoughts and memories that it brought up, which resulted in them deciding to become active again, organising a march which was better attended than any local event in recent years. The interview space can often be a 'welcome space for reflection' (Maddison, 2007: 404), which encourages individuals to reflect upon their experiences more than they otherwise would have done (Oakley, 1981: 48). Leonie and other's experience of the interview as an emotional occasion further emphasises the importance of emotion to our social lives and the necessity of researching this dimension.

Having presented a discussion of the theoretical framework that informs this research and an extended exploration of the research methodology, I now turn to analysis of the interview data focusing on the themes of how emotion and normative ideals motivate and sustain anti-austerity activism (as well as their limits) and the ways anti-austerity activists subvert dominant neoliberal discourses in their resistance to austerity. It is argued that anti-austerity activism is underlined and sustained by care; care about the injustice of austerity, care for the people impacted by austerity, and, importantly, care for one another within the activist community, as activists and fellow human beings. By enacting the moral values of collectivism and care within the everyday and as part of one's activism, anti-austerity activists challenge neoliberal capitalism's dominant narratives about individualism and competition, and create new forms of intersubjectivity that bolster sustained political participation.

Findings and discussion

The affective and normative as motivations for activism

Participants' sustained political engagement is motivated by a combination of emotions and normative ideals. Joe speaks about the 'unfairness' of austerity, arguing that society is currently 'wrong' and 'we need to pull together to change it'. Owain questions 'the way society is run' and Lily contends that 'society shouldn't be this way'. Participants reinforce Turner and Killan's (1987: 242) contention that 'the common element in the norms of most, and probably all, movements is the conviction that existing conditions are unjust'. Significantly it is an emotional response to this perceived injustice that motivates participants to do activism, signifying that emotions and morals combine to produce action.

The initial emotion drawn upon by participants is anger, reinforcing Jasper's (1997: 126) assertion that 'the passion for justice is fuelled by anger over existing injustice'. Owain states that he "hates injustice" and is moved to act by his anger at the current situation. Likewise, Beth says "I'm quite political in that

I get very irate [...] always angry and wanting to do something about it". Martin says "I think there is a lot of anger that is still there, kind of bubbling under the surface", suggesting that this needs to be tapped into by activists to galvanise support. Similarly, Charlotte suggests that "we should be more angry, I think we should be protesting more, we should be demonstrating more", implying that anger incites political action. Adrian suggests that channelling his anger into activism is "therapeutic... 'cause it's like, yeah, my anger can't go at the world 'cause the world doesn't owe fucking anyone anything but it can go at the injustices". Here, protest is a healthy outlet for anger. However, Martin suggests that while anger can be a motivation for action, it needs to be translated into a longer lasting, positive movement: "so I think there is anger there and there is energy, but doing that all the time — getting people on the streets all the time won't work unless people think that it is leading to something positive".

Participants' narratives reveal a widening of emotional responses and motivations; Adrian suggests that activism involves 'channelling emotions full-stop, not just anger'. Martin asserts that he gets involved with issues 'that I feel', Amanda speaks of how austerity 'breaks my heart' and Charlotte remarks 'I am sad about how things are going'. In particular, participants draw on empathy, an emotion which Todd (2004: 339) describes as embodying 'both moral force and political possibility'. Participants affirm Jacobbson and Lindblom's (2012: 57) claim that 'the most important emotions in social movements are morally based emotions'. Jasper's (2011: 291) notion of 'moral batteries' draws our attention to the combination and interaction of positive and negative emotions, where anger at injustice is combined with hope for change and this combination of negative and positive emotions (as in a battery) energises action. Indeed, Jasper (2014: 38) asserts that 'emotions provide the motivational thrust of morality'.

Empathy: the moral emotion that motivates and sustains activism

Empathy and caring for others emerged as a central motivating and sustaining emotion for activism. Charlotte comments that her reasons for becoming politically active were 'just sort of an empathy'. Empathy is a relatively recent Western word that draws on the traditional meanings of the Greek word 'sympathy', which means to feel or suffer with somebody. It connects thought and feeling by translating an idea into a feeling through the use of the imagination. Though the word itself is relatively new, this idea of 'feeling with another person' has a long history which can be traced throughout religious and philosophical traditions (Weber, 2011). Its contemporary use more accurately reflects the traditional use of 'sympathy', however, empathy is possibly used instead by participants because the popular understanding of 'sympathy' evokes ideas of pity, which imply a paternalism and condescension on the part of the empathiser.

Participants use empathy and compassion interchangeably, with Amanda describing her activism as 'active compassion'. In the same way, Lampert (2005: 20) speaks of 'radical compassion' which drives individuals to action, Berlant

(2004: 5) refers to compassion as an 'emotion in operation' that can enable individuals to understand and thus try to change structural conditions of injustice, and Flores (2014) speaks about 'public compassion' as a social force. Emphasis is placed on being moved to act by empathy; Lampert (2005) contends that we must not view empathy as an end in itself but as a spur to social activism.

Many participants suggest that while they may personally be in a comfortable position, they are motivated to act out of empathy for other people's plight. Dermot remarks that despite the fact that 'I don't need to change anything, necessarily' his motivation for doing activism is 'because I have empathy'. This reinforces Slote's (2007) suggestion that action is inherent to empathy as the capacity to feel like another and to imagine their situation is enough to spur an individual to action. Jasper (2014: 31) remarks that 'we must observe the emotions involved in the imagination: empathy and sympathy for the imagined others, which can lead to indignation on their behalf'. This element of 'imagined' loyalty and connection is significant as participants do not necessarily know those who they empathise with and often draw on a common humanity, rather than a tangible relationship with others, as a motivation for doing activism. In a similar way, Castells (2012) stresses the importance of empathy in networked social movements that span large geographical areas and where individuals are connected via communication technologies.

Adrian perceives acting out compassion as a moral duty grounded in care for 'the other'. He notes how 'it's usually questioning for someone else and not for myself' and that even though he may feel uncomfortable, he stands up for others 'because this is important for this person that I do this'. Similarly, Joe suggests that he is motivated to do activism by his "social conscience". Slote (2010: 13) contends that empathy is the basis for an ethics of caring about those who are not kin, and thus the ability to empathise provides the 'cement of the moral universe'. Likewise, Agosta (2011: 7) asserts 'Hume establishes sympathy as the glue that affectively binds others to oneself and, by implication, binds a community of ethical individuals together'. Mary demonstrates this by suggesting that "We have to fight for everybody. I could just go oh well I'm alright, but that doesn't help society generally and I think it is unjust and I think our society is becoming very unbalanced in terms of wealth". Here, Mary links caring for others to the material dimension of economic inequality and suggests that the common good needs to be placed above individual interests.

Participants perceive neoliberal capitalism to perpetuate values that are not only in opposition to empathy and caring for the collective but that actively erode such moral values. Joe contends that "it's that kind of attitude that I just can't make any sense of, you know, it's giving to people in need, in desperate need, is wrong but spending it on luxuries for yourself is fine… it's that kind of self-centred thinking that I want to get away from". Amanda demonstrates how this selfish attitude is part of Conservative (neoliberal) ideology and announces caring for others as its opposite: "I'm not a Tory bastard, that I'm not just out for myself, that I do want to create a caring sharing world". Likewise, Charlotte,

Alex, and Mel speak of the "greed" and "selfishness" of "Tory ideology", contrasting the focus on individual wealth and profit with caring for others and community values. In response, participants attempt to reverse the status quo by emphasising caring and putting others before themselves. Mel contends that "any campaign and particularly the anti-austerity [movement is about] starting to care about people again". Participants therefore construct their activism in terms of care, which involves both caring about austerity and its impacts, as well as caring about the people affected by austerity.

The limits of empathy?

However, the limits of empathy are revealed by the 'authentic' activist identity that participants construct. Different 'types' of activist are constructed and arranged into a hierarchy by participants where those without lived experiences are seen as less legitimate than those with them, who are considered to be 'authentic' activists. Hazel contends that without lived experiences, people's activism is 'inauthentic' and 'fake'. Authenticity is a moral value that reflects desirable qualities such as 'credibility, originality, sincerity, naturalness, genuineness, innateness, purity, or realness' (Grazian, 2010: 191). There is a sense that authenticity is an inherent quality that cannot be earned, yet it is paradoxically something which is defined and attributed by others. Authenticity is 'ascribed, not inscribed' (Moore, 2002: 209); other activists decide who is 'authentic' or not, it is not a quality that is self-declared.

Notably, 'authenticity is so often associated with hardship and disadvantage' (Grazian, 2010: 192), which is reflected by the 'authentic activist' being typically from a working class background who has experienced hardship. The authentic activist is amplified by its inauthentic other — the 'middle class activist type'. Participants paint a caricature of a relatively wealthy, young activist who, at best, is out of touch with ordinary people's lived realities and, at worst, is a 'champagne socialist' who should step aside to make room for 'real' activists:

> It's all well and good to pitch a tent in market square for a few months and claim that you're against capitalism and when you decide you've had enough, go home to your parents. It's not the same as people that have to live with these decisions, day in, day out.

Hazel draws attention to issues of privilege by highlighting the way in which such 'middle class activist types' have the choice to participate in actions and then walk away, not having to live the issue in the same way that those who are affected by austerity do. Therefore, while empathy is emphasised by participants as a motivation for activism, it appears that there are limits to this, and that to have an authentic understanding of certain realities (and thus an authentic motivation for activism), one must have lived experiences of them. In this respect, a distinction is created between the person experiencing the problem, austerity, and the person who seeks to alleviate it out of empathy or

compassion. Berlant (2004: 4) summarises this relationship, emphasising the divide that is created between the two individuals: 'the operation of compassion describes a social relation between a sufferer and a compassionate one. In alleviating the pain of others – who are *over there* – the compassionate enact their social privilege'.

However, unlike Hazel who contends that only those with lived experiences of issues can speak about them, Alex argues that limiting activism in this way is problematic as it creates divides between 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> I don't like this idea of insiders and outsiders as far as things are concerned because if you go down that path then people in comas perhaps should be the only people who can advocate for people in comas. You know what I mean? So, we have to be, we have to have solidarity with each other. And that's not about co-opting and taking over people's movements when you pretend to have, to know their interests more than they do, shouldn't be doing that. But as far as supporting, according to what people wish you to support them in then yeah, I'm all for that but yeah, I don't wish to speak for other people.

Here, solidarity is distinguished from empathy as it does not require one to understand another's experience. In the absence of understanding, we need motivation for reducing the other's suffering, which can be provided by an ethical responsibility to the other. Thus, we can have solidarity with another because we recognise our shared humanity, vulnerability, and the possibility that the other's suffering could be experienced by ourselves, all of which are underlined by the responsibility that we each have to the other (Levinas, 1969). By drawing on a shared human condition and vulnerability, solidarity does not position or privilege one individual above another (the 'onlooker' or the 'compassionate one' above the 'sufferer') or invoke pity, which compassion arguably does or can do (Berlant, 2004; Vitellone, 2011).

Despite tensions around 'authentic' motivations for activism and the limits of empathy, participants still seek to ground their reasoning for doing activism in universalist discourses about shared humanity, reflecting Harvey's (2007: 178) assertion that as dispossession is fragmented, it is difficult to fight without recourse to universal principles. Della Porta (2013: 15) speaks of activists' indignation remarking that 'indignant is a definition of the self which manifests the outrage at the disrespect for the right of a human being, which then resonates with a widespread claim: humanity'. Reflecting this, Hazel argues that everyone having enough food to live is 'a basic human principle'. Similarly, Jared argues that we need to respect people's inherent worth as fellow human-beings, rather than attaching a value to individuals based on their productivity or monetary worth. Likewise, Holloway (2010: 39) argues that it is not only the assertion of our own dignity that matters but others' also, rooted in 'mutual recognition and respect'. Empathy is thus utilised by participants as a way of redefining and reasserting what it means to be human in the face of neoliberal

capitalism. Alex states that 'having the capacity for empathy' means 'to be human in that sense'.

However, assumptions of a core human nature and shared humanity rest on the problematic notion that a universal 'core' of humanity exists once all other layers are stripped away. This is problematic because the stripping away of such layers results in differences being ignored that prevent people from being treated the same. This casts doubt on our ability to build understanding on ideas of a universal humanity and raises questions about the tension between universalism and difference. Furthermore, while such universalist discourses may have a wide appeal, there is the risk that their abstractness may result in the concepts becoming empty and lacking a real-world application. Participants overcome this by translating abstract universal concepts of empathy and humanity into concrete, particular actions in the everyday context.

Making a (small) difference and the everyday

Participants demonstrate activism as care by helping individuals and creating change in the local community. Dermot asserts "just because I might not ever change the system, you can help individuals. Which is worth doing". He reinforces this by giving the example of a recent local protest against an individual being evicted from their property: "I haven't stopped people being thrown out of their houses but for now we've stopped Tom from being thrown out of his house". Maeckelbergh (2013) observes how in the aftermath of the crisis, across the world, 'informal networks of solidarity' functioned as 'mechanisms for survival', providing much needed material support to individuals. This understanding of solidarity as physical acts emphasises how emotion 'does' things (Ahmed, 2014), and links together the material and symbolic dimensions of protest. Similarly, Alison says:

> I can help a person that day, so I think that's important and I think you can fight back in your everyday life like, I don't know, I really sort of believe in the stuff that Gramsci wrote about the everyday, like the battleground of common sense.

Mel reinforces that politics is an everyday, lived phenomenon rather than an abstract concept that is out of individuals' control: "Because everyone has a little thing they can do, the problem is the way the propaganda machine works for politics is 'oh politics is this huge serious thing that happens in the houses of parliament'- bollocks it does!" Mel suggests that making individual choices is a relatively easy way to start making a difference and to empower individuals. She speaks about conversations with members of the public that aim to "educate and empower" people to boycott unethical companies and to take up a more environmentally sustainable approach. The notion of individual responsibility and being able to make a difference through our choices is attractive in how it shifts away from the notion of individuals as powerless victims, instead giving them agency that can lead to mobilisation and political change.

However, neoliberal capitalism draws on and utilises people's desire to be ethically responsible, accumulating money by doing so. As Brown (2015: 27) asserts, 'caring' has become 'a market niche' with 'social responsibility' representing little more than 'the public face and market strategy of many firms today'. Often, ethical consumption choices require money as well as knowledge. While Mel attempts to help with the latter, the former is rarely recognised by participants, hinting at the ways in which privilege goes unnoticed in some respects, forming invisible barriers to becoming politically active and revealing that individuals are not equal. Indeed, neoliberal capitalism relies on individuals being unequal, creating competition between them.

Therefore, while actively fighting against neoliberal values, activists also problematically reinforce them, revealing the tensions present here and the difficult reality of resisting such a pervasive force as neoliberal capitalism, which we are all complicit in upholding. Kennelly (2014: 250) asserts how 'even within activist subcultures contesting neoliberalism, we see the cultural effects of neoliberalism at play, in particular via the belief that young people might "choose" to "change the world" through their individual actions'.

While it may not be possible to always and completely resist neoliberalism, attempts can be made to utilise and subvert its dominant discourses in ways that create an alternative, emancipatory meaning.

Activism as (individual) responsibility to the collective

Participants draw on the neoliberal responsibilisation discourse but reinvent it in ways that both appeal to the public and undermine the dominant narrative, demonstrating both a hermeneutics of faith and suspicion (Levitas, 2012). Amanda states that the neoliberal narrative says "you should stand up for yourself, take responsibility" and counters this, saying "we're not saying people shouldn't take responsibility, for me that [doing activism] is taking responsibility". Amanda's use of "we" suggests a collective identity and an activist community that is opposed to neoliberal ideology. This discourse of responsibility is transformed to mean having a duty to stand up for others and against injustice. Joe notes how, for him, activism is a responsibility to others less fortunate than him and speaks of it as "serving society". Similarly, Hazel quotes Alice Walker, saying: "activism is the rent I pay for living on the planet". There is a sense of 'giving something back', which Mel draws on raising the questions: "What is my gift? What can I give back?" Similarly, Chatterton (2005: 547) discusses 'autonomous geographies' as a collective project concerned with 'an ethic of responsibility and reciprocity'.

Participants suggest that individuals have a responsibility to make choices that alleviate suffering, as Alex says "to reduce harm", and that this is rooted in morals, ethics, and empathy. In this respect, activism is a moral duty and something that everyone should and can do. Mel asserts "it's about doing what you can, where you can". Though participants acknowledge that attempts to change things may be futile, they contend that "there is no excuse for not doing

so" (Dermot). Here, "doing something is better than doing nothing". Dana says "Unless I try I can't say I've tried… so I might be whistling in the wind but I'll just keep whistling". We start to see how participants place significance in the process of doing activism, regardless of its outcomes; Jasper (1997: 82) acknowledges that 'bearing witness and "doing what's right" are satisfying in and of themselves, lending dignity to one's life even when stated goals are elusive'. Reinforcing this, Alison notes "but you have got to fight the fight, haven't you? Even if you know that you're going to lose". While this seems negative, Alison makes the point that "although it might feel like you are arguing with people and it seems pointless I kind of think that it is important to have those arguments and to raise awareness and that by doing that you are changing things".

While anti-austerity activism imagines an alternative future based upon normative ideals, it is simultaneously grounded in the present through every day acts. Lydia contends that 'you can't just do everything straight away, but activism is something that you can do'. This approach emphasises choices that can be made in the present in people's daily lives and reflects the prefigurative politics notion of 'be the change you want to see in the world'. Here, 'change is possible through an accumulation of small changes, providing much-needed hope against a feeling of powerlessness' (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006: 738). Moreover, Mel asserts that small actions add up: 'let's really make a difference, let's have everybody make tiny small differences and have a bigger society that really works'.

Participants speak about individual choice in ways that emphasise working together as part of a collective, and being aware of the wider impact of small actions, rather than in terms of isolated individual acts. Thus, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Were we to consider society as a machine, in the eyes of participants it is empathy, or solidarity, which acts as the oil that maintains its functioning. This holistic thinking is constructed by participants in opposition to the dominant, neoliberal notion of individualism which instead reflects selfishness, competition, and therefore disconnect from others.

Despite the difficulties that they face, participants' narratives are underpinned by a sense of possibility. Mel quotes the Chinese proverb: 'keep a green tree in your heart and maybe the singing bird will come'. Crucially, she emphasises the importance of 'maybe': 'it *might* happen, but it also may not. However, wouldn't you feel better at the end of your life having done something? You've got to at least try'. This element of possibility and uncertainty, rather than leading to doubt or despair, inspires hope which compels participants to 'keep whistling', regardless of the wind. Again, we see how emotions combine with moral values and a sense of wider responsibility to propel individuals to action. Solnit (2005: 5) reinforces that 'hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope… because hope should shove you out the door'. Furthermore, Kiwan (2017: 134) suggests that action in turn creates hope: 'it is the *act* of doing, its performativity, which creates hope through possibility. This does not mean that they envision that change is imminent, but rather, it reflects an individual

commitment to an ongoing process, rather than expecting a "result" or arriving at a particular moment in time.'

For many participants, doing activism is in part about how they wish to perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others. As Jasper (1997: 136) asserts that 'doing the right thing is a way of communicating, to ourselves, as well as others, what kind of people we are'. To not do activism is seen to be a negative reflection on an individual's character; Owain states: "I can't not fight, I wouldn't be able to look myself in the mirror if I didn't". Participants refer to doing activism as a "moral imperative", emphasising its vital importance. This is different from the notion of activism being a moral duty that everyone should do, as it forms a key part of participants' identity. Anti-austerity activism, then, becomes a way of being for participants who attempt to forge spaces of resistance to the wider neoliberal society, where the collective is privileged over the individual and humanist values are enacted. This reflects what Kiwan (2017: 123) refers to as 'understandings of social change as a "way of living"', where it is the 'activity of activism' that is important, conceiving social change 'not as a vocation but as a way of life'. In this respect, activism has value in itself, regardless of the outcomes. Lily refers to activism as her "purpose in life" and Harry says it is "a defining part of my identity". Alison says:

> I guess that [activism] motivates me in my life and for some other people that's money. They will probably get a bit further than I do, but that is what motivates, that is what gets me up in the morning, I suppose.

Alison contrasts activism with neoliberal, capitalist values reflecting the construction of a selfish individualistic attitude versus caring about the collective, though she appears to have internalised part of this narrative that progress is related to monetary gain.

Significantly, participants enact such values of community and solidarity within their activist culture, demonstrating the emotional and personal benefits of caring for others through their relationships with one another.

The sustaining force of the social and affective dimensions of activism

Participants' narratives reveal the varied ways in which social relations and emotion motivate and sustain activism. A key element of this is the strong sense of solidarity and community between activists that developed through their shared emotion and activities.

> It felt and to look around and see all these people, wow, actually this is something that people care about and people think this is wrong. And it makes you feel, sometimes you feel like you are on your own, you are the only one who has

> noticed this or who is bothered about this, and it makes you feel actually it is not just me. (Leonie)
>
> I just don't feel like anyone was taking these issues serious and it was just reassuring to see that there was loads of other people out there that not only had your views but were passionate about them to… go and do something about it. I guess that's why they [Uncut] were really appealing… it wasn't just me out there thinking 'oh my god, I can't believe all of this crap is happening'. (Tony)

Adrian suggests that meeting new people "who are exciting and speak their mind" can reinvigorate his participation when he is feeling disillusioned or fed up: "it [meeting new activists] sort of ignited a flame again". Forming these relationships through activism enriched participants lives; Mary says "I just meet loads of people. I have developed so many friends in a whole sphere of places over the years that I have been active and I would miss all of that. If I hadn't engaged in it I wouldn't have all of those links really".

The bonds between activists that developed through shared experiences were enduring; Joe explains that sharing political beliefs and joint experiences of activism is "quite intimate" and helps friendships to develop. Similarly, Amanda speaks of the special bonds she shares with other activists as a "deeper thing" and Alex asserts that such bonds are "empowering and inspiring". In fact, Adrian recalls meeting Alex as "almost something spiritual… it was just an understanding that came without words" and describes them as "almost like brothers". Likewise, Leonie speaks about a particularly difficult time for her:

> That year was a horrible, horrible year for me and, probably one of the worst years that I have had […] and the people that were there for me and kept me going and were like my family, were the people that I met through Uncut. Whereas longer standing friends didn't really get it so much. They [Uncut people] were the people who bolstered me when I was really at my lowest point.

Corrigall-Brown (2012: 84) suggests that social ties can be developed during engagement which help participants deal with the emotional impact of difficult times. Similarly, Brown and Pickerill (2009: 33) emphasise the significance of *caring* for one another; one of their interviewees remarks "the connections we have at that level are incredibly deep". Here, we see the importance of caring for other activists as well as the issues and those who are affected by them, with these new relationships that develop through shared emotion and morality helping to sustain on-going activism in the face of perceived failure to impact policy.

Conclusion

It becomes clear that anti-austerity politics is about more than merely preserving social protections of the past and influencing social policy. It is also

about challenging neoliberalism and raising normative and moral questions about how society should function and how human beings should act. Haiven and Khasnabish (2014: 3) contend that anti-austerity politics encapsulates the 'radical imagination' which imagines society in ways it might be, considering possible, positive, futures and finding a way to 'bring these back' to '*work* on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today'. In this sense, it involves a prefigurative political approach, acting in ways that constitute better alternatives to the current situation. The radical imagination builds upon this to aid feelings of empathy for others and produces solidarity. Crucially, the radical imagination is 'not a thing that individuals *possess* in greater or lesser quantities but [...] a collective *process*, something that groups *do* and do together' (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2014: 4). Here, the active, intersubjective, and affective dimensions of movements are emphasised.

Rather than conceiving of social movements as 'things' but 'as products of the collective labour and imagination of those who actually constitute them' (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2013: 479), exploring the everyday processes of lived and felt experiences of political participation, reveals that activists are concerned with spreading wider moral and normative ideals of equality, justice, empathy, community, and humanity. Further, these normative ideals are not merely rational values but are *felt* by individuals as an emotional response to the current context of neoliberal capitalism, demonstrating the intertwining of thinking and feeling, and challenging the traditional emotion/reason dichotomy. The combination of such moral ideals and strong emotions sustains anti-austerity activism over a long period of time because it is about more than achieving the instrumental goal of ending austerity.

Furthermore, sharing such emotions and morality with others forms the foundations for enduring social bonds and new relationships that bolster individuals and sustain their activism despite apparent failure to impact policy. The continued existence of anti-austerity activism, then, encourages academic analyses to widen their understanding of political engagement and to refocus attention on the process rather than the ends, reflecting the approach taken by the movements themselves. In this respect, we move towards an understanding of movements as 'living spaces of encounter, possibility, contestation, and conflict' (Haiven and Khasnabish, 2013: 479) which involves 'the formation and continuation of new social relationships, new subjectivities, and a new-found dignity' (Sitrin, 2012: 14). It is important to recognise such processes and their impacts given the ways in which they help to sustain activism and combine individualism and collectivism in a neoliberal capitalist context that pitches the two in opposition to one another.

This article has explored how anti-austerity activism is motivated and sustained by a combination of the affective and the normative, with a focus on the moral emotion of empathy, normative ideals about how society should be and how individuals should act towards one another. It has demonstrated that such abstract, universal ideals and discourses about empathy for a shared humanity are translated into concrete, particular actions through how participants enact

activism as a form of care in the everyday. Here, participants emphasise "doing something rather than nothing" and suggest that small acts can make a significant difference. Anti-austerity activists challenge neoliberal capitalism's and austerity's attack on human dignity by reaffirming what it means to be human, understood as feeling and caring for others, constructing notions of a common humanity in the process. This involves the reinterpretation and subversion of dominant neoliberal discourses to emphasise the collective and common good over selfish individualism and to conceive of activism as an individual responsibility to others.

Anti-austerity activism, then, becomes a way of being for participants who attempt to forge spaces of resistance to the wider neoliberal society, where the collective is recognised and nurtured, and where humanist values are enacted. While this article has focused specifically on anti-austerity activism, it is worth remembering that, often, a combination of aligned political causes comprise such spaces of resistance, with anti-austerity activism forming one part of a wider, holistic activist community and vision that seeks to create a more caring and fairer society. However, anti-austerity activism is an intriguing case study given the diversity of its participants, with activists being "not just the usual suspects" (as one interviewee explained). Further, as previously noted, austerity is a thread that runs through many campaigns, meaning the wider anti-austerity movement is made up by a range of groups with porous boundaries. It is the over-arching notion and experience of activism as care for the issues, people affected by issues such as austerity, and, crucially, for one another as activists and as human beings, that is the thread which runs through and connects such individuals and groups within a wider space of resistance to the dominant power structures. This is revealed by paying close attention to the lived and felt dimension of political participation and listening carefully during the quiet mundane moments of social movements. Doing so loudly reaffirms the central role of emotions and relationships to social life, thus contributing to the rising voices that seek to shatter sociology's 'silence about the sphere of fellow feelings, the we-ness that makes society into society' (Alexander, 2006: 53).

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Activists' motivations and typologies: core activists in Ciudad Juárez

Luis Rubén Díaz Cepeda and Ernesto Castañeda

Abstract

This paper investigates the factors that make people become engaged in social movements, in particular, what makes people who were not directly affected by the violence in Ciudad Juárez get involved in social movements. We find out that a strong commitment to social justice can explain their participation. We present a typology of social activists in terms of the degree and length of participation in social movements. We propose a core activist ideal-type, then we analyse the factors that helped shape a core activist identity, and the roles they play in movements.

Keywords: activism, leadership, social movements, core activists, altruism, mobilization, social change, activist identity, ideology

Introduction

On March 7, 2007, eleven days after being sworn in as Mexican President, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa announced the "Comprehensive Strategy for Crime Prevention and Combating Crime" (Aguilar V. and Castañeda 2009). The strategy not only included the deployment of the military personnel but also contained constitutional reforms in regards to criminal justice and law enforcement, which were approved in March 2008 (Chabat 2010). These legal reforms allowed the military to perform police work. The term of President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006-2012) was marked by the war on drugs by the military, on the grounds of the supposed "co-optation of police institutions by organized crime, increasing public concern regarding the high rates of violence and the traffic of weapons from the United States" (Carbonell 2010). In Ciudad Juárez, the so-called Chihuahua Joint Operation began on 27 March 2008 with 10,000 members of the federal police and the army arriving at the city to battle drug cartels and reduce crime rates. Far from diminished violence in the city, their presence increased the level of violence exponentially.

The war strategy of the Calderón administration cost many lives. Julia Monárrez Fragoso, a well-known feminist scholar, documented an attitude of disdain for life by this militarized strategy. She pointed out that General Jorge Juárez Loera, an important commander of the Joint Operation Chihuahua asked the press to report the murders in Ciudad Juárez as positive news, "instead of saying one more dead, say a one offender less" (Siscar 2011 , quoted by J. E. Monárrez Fragoso, 2013, p. 260) . In 2008, the murder rate increased from 25.5 to 215 men killed per 100,000 inhabitants, and from 2.8 to 16 women murdered

per 100,000 inhabitants (INEGI 1994-2008). During the climax of violence in 2010, it reached a daily average of 8.3 murders. The violence reached a point where, in 2008, Ciudad Juárez was called "the national dump of the dead" (Turati, 2009, p. 11). Little was it known at that time that the violence would continue to the point where according to Monárrez (J. E. Monárrez Fragoso, 2013, p. 214) 6,000 people would be killed only in two years of the Joint Operation Chihuahua. Molly Molloy, at the State University of New Mexico, documented 11,114 murders from January 2007 to October 21, 2012 (Esquivel, 2012). In addition to the murdered people, the Paso del Norte Human Rights Center — an NGO located in Ciudad Juárez that has worked since 2001 on cases of forced disappearance and torture — documented 44 cases of torture committed by the Army and the Federal Preventive Police in 2011 and 2012. Moreover, Chihuahua's Human Rights Commission received 1,450 reports of human rights violations committed by the security forces during the Joint Chihuahua Operation (WOLA and Centro Prodh 2010, 10).

Social activists opposing the militarization of the city were especially targeted. On May 30, 2009, Manuel Arroyo Galván, social activist and professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez (UACJ), was killed. This marked the beginning of the repression against social activists either by direct actions of the State or by its inability to protect social activists. Violence continued with the killings of Géminis Ochoa,[1] on 30 June 2009; Marisela Escobedo Ortiz[2], on the afternoon of December 16, 2010, Susana Chávez,[3] whose body was found on January 6, 2011; and the murder of members of the Reyes-Salazar family[4] in 2008, 2010 and 2011. Social activists were also victims of intimidation. They were forced to ask for political asylum in the United States on the grounds that the Mexican army threatened them. Cipriana Jurado and some members of the Reyes-Salazar family are public examples of this need to leave their homes because of political persecution simply for belonging to an extended family that had some activist members. The violence became so generalized that an estimated 135,000 people left Ciudad Juárez looking for a safer place to live (Sandnæs 2011).

[1] Géminis Ochoa was a well-known leader of street vendors Juárez downtown.

[2] Marisela Escobedo became very vocal against impunity after the self-confessed murderer of her daughter Ruby was released free of charges by local judges. She was murdered in front of the city hall in downtown Chihuahua.

[3] Susana Chávez was a poet allegedly killed for her open and public opposition against femicides.

[4] Reyes-Salazar family had been involved in political activism since 1998 when it opposed the Sierra Blanca nuclear dump. Arguably, they were killed because they were denouncing the military human rights violations in Juárez Valley.

Figure 1: "We are all Manuel"

Figure 2: Candlelight vigil in protest at the killing of Professor Manuel Arroyo Galván. Mega bandera, Ciudad Juárez. 04 June 2009. Photograph: Diana Ginez. Used with permission.

The question then is: Why is it that even when these adverse conditions affect a vast majority of people, only a few choose social activism as a response? We found out that many residents of Ciudad Juárez trusted governmental institutions to fix the problems and remained politically inactive. Others did not trust the government institutions and did not expect the solution to come from them, but they remained passive with an attitude of resignation. Yet, there is a

small group of people who believe that another world is possible, and they actively pursue this goal themselves - we call them core social activists.

Our research question and theoretical concern here revolves around understanding altruistic action by core activists. We find that our respondents' extreme commitment to social activism helps them to survive the adverse conditions they are subjected to going from lack of support from fellow citizens, state repression, and in some unfortunate cases even to their own assassination as in the case of activist Miguel Angel Jiménez (Andrade et al., 2017). However, they persist in their efforts due to their commitment to the movement and their conviction that social change is possible and necessary. This is not to say that core activists are only committed to an abstract ideal. In fact, one of the reasons they remain active despite the adverse circumstances is their sense of personal responsibility towards different victims of oppression they meet during their participation in social activism. Levinas' concept of the "Other and the other" is useful to understand this notion (Levinas 1989). In Levinas' philosophy, the "other" (*autre)* represents the abstract notion of an impersonal other, while the "Other" (*autrui*) is the face of a person calling the "I" to meet his duty towards him (Levinas 1981). We proceed to the literature review, followed by a description of our methodology, and then to a detailed analysis of biographical aspects of core activists.

Literature review

We are influenced by the work of Charles Tilly and the literature on contentious politics (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). Besides Tilly's discussions around narratives and identity, his work on social movements often explicitly avoids looking at individual motivations and biographical events in the lives of social movement leaders and activists in favor of collective action and history from below (Castañeda and Schneider, 2017). While avoiding an over-emphasis on "great men" guiding history and dispositional accounts (Tilly 1984), Tilly overlooked the real influence that core activists have in starting and continuing social movements.

We ask then: What makes people participate in social movements? Some of the academic literature calls this question "differential participation." Oliver (1984) divides participants into nonmembers, token members, and active members; McCarthy and Zald (1977) distinguish between beneficiary and conscience constituents; Wiltfang and McAdam (1991) point out the difference between low risk and low-cost participation from high risk and high-cost participation, and Passy and Giugni (2001) have written on the influence social networks have in differential participation. Even though they present the idea in different ways, their main claim is that differential participation is explained by microstructural factors such as social networks and affective interaction, expectations of other's people involvement, structural, and biographical availability.

As important as these approaches are, they obviate the role that personal beliefs play in participant's behavior. However, beliefs are important because "actions

depend in part on the meanings attached to our objects of orientation, differences in imputed meanings can yield differences in action, *ceteris paribus"* (Snow, 2004, p. 404). Snow's approach is a necessary first step because it explains the collective construction of meaning, but it is not sufficient because it leaves untouched the individual cognitive level. In order to bridge these two dimensions, Gillan proposes the "orientational frame," which he describes as "an analytical abstraction from various individual beliefs" (2008, p. 253). An orientational frame identifies a worldview that is used by individual members of a social movement to create an understanding of the events, to justify their response, and to formulate alternative social arrangements.

Even though Snow and colleagues use the terms "ideology" and "frame" almost interchangeably, there are important differences among these two terms. Allow us to explain them by first defining ideology and later compare this definition to the concept of orientational frame. Sometimes ideologies are viewed pejoratively as if they did not have epistemic content (Railton, 1995, pp. 392–393). Other times they are recognized as the set of ideas held by social movements participants that bring them to support or contest specific political arrangements (Freeden, 1996). Both these positions take ideology for granted and do not explain how it comes to be. Freeden moves in the right direction by describing ideologies as "ubiquitous forms of political thinking" that are "produced by, directed at, and consumed by groups" serving functions of "legitimation, integration, socialization, ordering, simplification and action-orientation" (1996, pp. 22–23)

Even though both orientational frames and ideologies refer to a structure of beliefs and they are very close in definitions, they should not be mistaken. Orientational frames look at particular kinds of action-orientation, while ideology motivates larger strategic planning. Also, opposite to ideology, which can be conceived as an elite activity (Oliver and Johnston, 2000), orientational frames work on a grass-roots level. Finally, ideologies tend to fix meanings, which are adopted by a large collectivity, whereas the orientational frames approach focuses on the analysis of the belief structures adhered to by individuals. Ideologies then are strong beliefs shared by a collectivity while an orientational framework refers to the structure of beliefs held by an individual.

This signifies that there can be several SMOs - with divergent ideologies - making up a large social movement. At the same time, there may be several orientational frames within a social movement organization (SMO). By looking at the constitution of the social movement against militarization, it is possible to see the difference between ideology and orientational frame. The movement was made up of different SMOs with divergent ideologies (Marxists, human rights activists, progressive liberals, among others (Díaz Cepeda, 2015a). To elaborate on the argument, while there was a consensus that the military presence was causing an increase on violence, members of a Marxist SMO claimed that capitalism is the source of all evil, including, of course, militarization. At the same time, human rights activists may argue that it is not a matter of an economic system, but a matter of basic human rights. Clearly they had different

ideologies. However, divergences did not end there, as there were differences between individual members of any given SMO. For example, within a Marxist SMO, members differed about who should lead the revolt against capitalism. Some favored the proletarian, others the students, and a few the peasants. These differences can be explained by the different orientational frames that individual members hold.

Building on the idea of differential participation, we make a distinction between people that get involved in social activism for a short time and people that make a long-term commitment to creating social change. On the one hand, the first group participates in social protest as a response to a specific situation that is affecting them – e.g. tuition increases, labor conflicts, the disappearance of a family member - but leave as soon as their problem is solved or forgotten. On the other hand, there are people whose involvement in social activism is not limited to the solution of a specific problem that may or may not affect them directly; but rather they are committed to long-term social change. Our research suggests a correlation between this long-term commitment and the structure of beliefs in the need and possibility of a better world. It is also important to notice that this belief does not seem to be attached to any particular ideology, as our research shows that individuals with divergent ideologies – e.g. Marxist, progressives, and liberals - hold the same belief and acted in consequence.

Methodology

We conducted this study in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México during the period of 2007-2012, the years when violence was at its highest level in this large border city. The rationale behind this was that only people that are extremely committed to social change would participate in social movements in a context of extreme violence. This allowed us to isolate superfluous factors that influence social activists in easier contexts. We used two methods:

Participant observation was conducted for several years (2008-2012) in Ciudad Juárez. During this period it was possible to follow and participate in several social movement organizations (SMOs) and perceive first-hand the birth, growth, and decline of some of them. The first author attended public demonstrations and meetings with the permission of leaders and assemblies. Participant observation, e.g. the research is overt and the research is friendly with participants (Denzin 1989), was conducted to gain a better understanding of the specific circumstances of the city's movements, their context, as well as to be able to cross check the information provided by the interviewees.

In-depth interviews. We selected social activists that participated in the social movement against the militarization during the period of 2008-2012. The first set of informants were identified through participant observation, social networks, and mass media reports. Once the first contacts were made, we asked these initial informants to lead us to other people that could be relevant for our study using the snowball sampling method.

Core activists were estimated to be around sixty people. Gender, age, and social class of our informants were chosen in such a way that accurately represented the population. Twenty-five core activists were interviewed. Fifteen of the interviewees have more than ten years of experience as activists, including 6 with more than 30 years of activism. The age of the sample ranged from the late 20s to late 50s and averaged 46 years. Interviews took an average of two hours. To improve security and anonymity, most interviews were conducted in El Paso, TX. In situations where the informer was not able, i.e., a lack of visa, or willing to come to El Paso, interviews were conducted in Ciudad Juárez.

Historical Context

Ciudad Juárez is a key point of contact between the United States of America and Mexico. Its geographical location gives it a special place in the economic and cultural exchange between both nations. The strengthening of this exchange was crystallized with the Border Industrialization Program (PIF) launched in Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana in the mid-1960s. This program was the antecedent of the massive presence of maquiladora industries – tax favored factories that employ workers with lower salaries than U.S. based factories. With the arrival of these shops to Ciudad Juárez, demand for workers was generated and had to be satisfied. In consequence, a large number of people from southern México came to Ciudad Juárez looking for job opportunities, which led to the exponential growth of the city. Such rapid urbanization presented unmet planning challenges by the governments' low concern to create the conditions for economic development, social integration, and human development (Sánchez and Ravelo 2010). This brought about the weakening of a sense of urban belonging among the inhabitants of the city (Castañeda 2018). The sum of the economic inequalities and the traffic of influences, weapons, money, and drugs, created a fertile ground for impunity and injustice on this border city.

For at least two decades, there have been several efforts by several local SMOs and individuals coming from different backgrounds to revert, or at least alleviate these social problems. Julia Monárrez was one of the first scholars to research and systematize knowledge about femicides (J. Monárrez Fragoso, 2009), the killing of women because of their gender. Ana Laura Ramírez Vázquez (2014) documents how this violence reached even police women. Susana Báez (2006) highlights the value of literature, which keeps the memory of femicides. In *Courage, Resistance and Women in Ciudad Juárez: Challenges to Militarization in Ciudad Juárez*, Staudt and Méndez, (2015) both feminist scholars and border activists, analyze from a feminist perspective the paradigmatic cases of the cotton field, the confrontation of Luz María Davila — mother of one of the students killed in Salvarcar — with then-President Felipe Calderón Hinojosa), and the arrival to Ciudad Juárez of the "Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity" led by Javier Sicilia. Through this analysis they find that "women initially made the hidden public and joined with other men and women who challenged militarization with principles like peace, justice, and a changed culture" (Staudt and Mendez, 2015, p. 160).

David Barrios Rodríguez (2013) also discusses some of the organizations that protested against militarization, especially the actors who did not negotiate with the government, i.e. Pastoral Obrera, #I am 132, adherents to the Zapatista organizations Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle and of the Other Campaign, and Center of Human Rights Paso del Norte. Barrios argues that there was no war against the drug cartels, but that there was a process of social cleansing. In words of an activist from the Other Campaign, "all you see is poor people being killed. We know that the people from below are being killed, but never the drug lords or the powerful" (Barrios Rodríguez, 2013, p. 131).

We divide the organizational ecology of Ciudad Juárez into four categories according to their primary ideologies and zone of influence.

1. Leftist groups

This block was among the first to denounce that the presence of the Army would increase human rights abuses. They were also one of the first groups to question the objectives of Calderón's war. In this sense, they argued that the war on drugs was taking place in the context of a class struggle, in which the army was being used by the bourgeois State to avoid a possible uprising of the population and to make a social cleansing of the young and poor. The participants in this group were perceived and often self-identified as radicals, seeking substantial changes in the political system, as they rejected the bourgeois State. Their demands included not only a halt to militarization but also the resignation of State authorities. They also organized demonstrations against the United States government for its intervention in the internal affairs of Mexico. This group was mostly made up of social organizations declaring themselves close to or fully Marxist, such as the National Front against Repression and the Left University Committee.

2. Human rights groups

People in this category were also close to the left but were more moderate. They actively opposed militarization based on a discourse to defend human rights. Their strategies included a combination of pressure and dialogue with the State and institutions. They operated as much in protest in the streets as in the negotiating room with local and state authorities. This ability allowed them to organize mass events such as the hearing of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal, and obtain permission to use the facilities of the local university to host the Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity. They also served as liaison with United States solidarity organizations, mainly from El Paso, Texas. One of the most influential groups was Pact for Culture, later called Articulation Group Justice for Juárez.

3. Business groups

In a third area we find groups of small businessmen and professionals who have an ideology closer to the right, but given the insecurity lived in the city during these years, they became politically activated. The participation of this group contributed to legitimize, in spheres outside of militant social organizations, the rejection of militarization. The Medical Citizen Committee was among the most relevant organizations.

4. International Groups

As Ciudad Juárez is a border community, the important contribution of SMOs beyond the border cannot be ignored. Among others, there were humanist, college professors, Chicano groups, and Zapatista-affiliated, political-partisan groups. This diversity carries with it a range of ideologies, which makes it impossible to name one as the dominant group. The common factor was solidarity with Ciudad Juárez. Some of the organizations that participated were the Border Network for Human Rights, Annunciation House, among many other organizations and individuals.

Typology of activists

The increment of violence in Juárez that started in 2007 and climaxed in 2010 affected the majority of its inhabitants. During this time, there was virtually no individual that had not suffered directly or indirectly through an act of violence. Some people blamed the violence on a war between drug cartels for the control of Juárez, and they expected that once there was a winner, the violence would stop. Others wanted the government to take control of the situation so that the violence could stop. A third position held that there was no war on drugs, but it was only an excuse to control the population. These different diagnoses caused different reactions, in Waldo's[5] (age 54) words, "the medical doctors marched demanding peace, victims demanding justice, other movements demonstrated against militarization."

It is important to note that at the beginning of the militarization process, most people, including other social organizations, did not agree with the first social activists that argued that the military was at least partially responsible for the increase in violence levels in the city. Nevertheless, as more people were directly affected by the violence and noticed that the military presence had increased the violence, some of them started to share the belief that in order to diminish the violence it was necessary for the militarization process to stop. In consequence, a larger number of people joined the movement against the militarization, either as an individual citizen or as a member of one of the different social organizations that were demanding the federal government to withdraw the military and federal police presence in the city.

[5]All names have been changed to keep confidentiality.

A large segment of our interviewees, then, agreed that the vast military presence in Ciudad Juárez had come to aggravate the already violent situation, which caused the killing and disappearance of more people, resulting in an average of eight murders per day during 2010. Some groups thus demanded the withdrawal of the military from Ciudad Juárez. The government started to brutally repress them, which triggered a strong feeling of solidarity among them. For every time they were repressed, more people joined the movement. Based on participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, as well as conversations with different participants in social activism, we found that there are different levels of commitment among social activists. In order to make these distinctions clear, we divide them into different categories according to their level of commitment with progressive social change. These categories range from people that occasionally participate in a social movement, to people whom social activism is one of their highest priorities. These categories include faddish activists, occasional activists, part time activists, and core activists. These terms are defined as such:

Faddish activists

This is the largest group in numbers; as such, it serves as the main source of new activists. They are people that get involved in activism when there is a lot of media attention. Most of them cannot make a lifetime commitment. Only a small fraction of them will move to a larger level of personal investment. They leave activism because of a lack of strong interest in the issues, or because they did not find an inviting environment in the activism scene.

Occasional activists

They stay longer in social activism and have a large interest in social change. They attend protests and marches regularly, but they do not participate in the organization that holds these protests and marches. They are not affiliated with any social organization. Their participation in activism is subordinated to other interests such as school, work, and personal life. Most of them are young and will leave social activism soon after they make major commitments such as marriage and professional jobs.

Part timers

They already developed a strong commitment to social change. They actively participate in protests, as well as other forms of social change events. They are part of social organizations, but social activism is not their priority. Their life is not strongly tied to social activism, as they have other obligations, and activism is an activity done in their free time or in rare events. Mostly they stay tied to friends with whom they share their social change interest. The largest cause for their abandonment of social activism is due to personal disagreements with the other members of their social organization. Others are not active beyond their

organization. A few of them will be in active contact and later work to develop larger social movements.

Core activists

They are deeply committed to social change. They organize their life largely around social activism. They have contact with local, national, and international activist networks. They became politically involved because they want to help people living in oppressive conditions. They are not involved because they are looking to pressure the government to solve only a specific situation that is affecting them, but rather to change the social conditions for all people living under those conditions. They are fully committed to a long-term agenda of progressive social change. They work with or create different social organizations as they fight different battles throughout the years.

Allow us to go deeper on the core activist description, as, for the most part; they are the ones that carry the long-term social movements.

Core activists' profile

Core activists' main goal is to create a larger positive social change beyond what may affect them directly. They accommodate their life to the demands of social activism. Their commitment to the movement goes beyond their mere direct participation in organizing or attending events. This includes staying informed about the country, state, and city's political life, so they can have a sound participation that allows them to work on promoting social change.

Our research shows this group in Ciudad Juárez in the period of 2008 to 2012 was a group of approximately sixty people strongly committed to social change. It was composed of similar proportions of men and women with ages that range from their late twenties to late fifties. It is also important to note that social organizations that work on femicides, most of them women, are an exception to the otherwise fairly equal gender distribution.

In contrast to the people that leave when a movement demand is addressed or not, a core activist remains involved long after the immediate feelings of courage, indignation, or sorrow have gone. People who are heavily interested in social change, stay and make contact with other organizations, creating larger networks. It is possible to see this process in Julio's (32) words,

> I started in a leftist university committee, it was a committee of students who had a number of concerns about the high fees in UACJ [University of Juárez], and so we did activism for that. I first met ... a group of young people that were already organized and me and others with similar concerns joined them. Once there, I began to understand discussion mechanisms, the assembly method, and we discussed other problems. For example, we started discussing what was going on with the state-owned companies that were being privatized, why public education

> was being privatized too, the looting that was happening in PEMEX, and all those discussions took us to the conclusion that they were just different aspects of the same problem; that it was a wider systematic problem.... All problems had a common axis, which I later realized was capitalism.

Core activists stay involved in social activism even after the personal circumstance that leads them to get active has been resolved. They continue to do so because their commitment to social change is substantial and they believe that their actions can bring a new social order. In consequence, once one specific problem has been solved or is in the process of being solved, they continue working on another issue. This can be seen in how the core social activists who demanded the demilitarization of the city, later participated in movements that asked for the overturning of the 2012 presidential election and have also participated in the Ayotzinapa social movement, among other causes. It is also important to note that other activists like the ones working on femicides have remained working on the same issue for more than two decades now, because, unfortunately, this problem has not been resolved.

The process of becoming a core activist

The circumstances in Ciudad Juárez mobilized some people to at least alleviate the situation. They got organized in different SMOs, some of them already existed, while others were created *ex profeso* against the militarization. Members of the different SMOs have different ideologies – e.g. Marxists, progressive, liberals, among others- and, consequently follow different forms of struggle (Díaz Cepeda, 2015a). However, after analyzing the interviews, we identified that the most committed members share the desire for a better society. In this section we identify, describe, and analyze the common factors that influence life-long participation in social movements.

Role models

The first factor appears at an early age when a person meets a role model that shows the actor alternatives to the status quo. The notion that another world is possible is communicated to them through book recommendations, conversations, advice, and in the case of social activists whose parents are already social activists, through direct participation in political protests, organization meetings, assemblies, training camps, etc.

This role model can come in the form of a mentor, parent, family member, and often a teacher or professor. It is important to notice that the importance of a mentor was mentioned by all of our interviewees regardless of class. As the Doctor said: "My family was poor, there were no books at my house, but my elementary teacher let me borrow his books and talked to me about a more just

world."[6] In Mexico, "the average number of books read per year per person is 0.5 books a year" (Marcelino 2009). However, our research shows that core social activists are raised in an environment where reading is encouraged. Consequently, book reading levels of core social activists are higher are than the national average. Our respondents read at least two different newspapers, magazine articles, and several books weekly; e.g. Bernie (45) reads eight newspapers before he leaves home to work. This constant reading results in a high level of politicization and in-depth knowledge about current social problems as reported by mainstream and alternative media.

These early reading habits later become crucial for their involvement and permanence in social activism. Most social activists are well educated, not necessarily in the academic sense, measured by the degrees and credentials that they hold, but in their familiarity with the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that affect their city and the world. Their education helps them make more in-depth analyses of the political environment around them and conceive of possible alternatives. Even though the notion that it is possible to improve adverse social conditions is already embedded in their minds, it needs to be fed by the following factors.

Critical event

It is often the case that an event in someone's personal life detonates their participation in social activism. This personal circumstance can be what they consider to be an unfair arrest or intimidation, as in the case of Evaristo (28). He was arrested under false accusations, and he views the government's response to drug trafficking through those lenses,

> Seeing the police closing the streets, to see the power that these state agents have, right? They are inside the government, to how many have they done this [acusse them falsely]? I mean I felt it, how many people have they killed, scapegoated… Later, [Subcomandante] Marcos came with the Other Campaign caravan and walked here and I got filled with emotion… then Calderón came with his militarization; I think it started in 2007 and several citizens we took the streets in protest.

This process can also start because of the killing or disappearance of somebody close to the core activist: a family member, a close friend, a student, or a neighbor. In Daniela's (52) words,

> In 2001, an event changed my life and my family's life, it was the disappearance and later murder of one of my students; she had been my student for three years

[6] All the interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated by the authors who are Spanish native speakers.

> while she was attending high school, her name was Lili Alejandra Garcia Andrade… We have to keep fighting in memory of those who have been killed; they are not collateral damage, they have a name and surname.

The direct suffering or the witnessing of these cases awakens the sense of solidarity that core activists already have embedded in their mind.

In another example, after José Darío Álvarez Orrantia (19) was shot by the federal police in front of the University of Juárez while he participated in a protest against the militarization of the city where a group of students occupied the campus and demanded the end of militarization in Juárez. Also, despite the fear of being attacked again, they organized a march under the banner, "If they Shoot one, they Shoot Us All" (Angestra, 2010) on November 2, 2010. Approximately 3,000 people participated in this march, which by Ciudad Juárez standards was numerous. They shouted slogans like:

> "Juárez is not a barrack, take the military out," "We want schools, we want work, we want hospitals, we don't want the military," "people listen, this is also your fight," "Dario lives, the fight is on" as well as "you said no, but we are back on the streets".

These chants reflected the shared idea that the military was causing more problems than they were solving, as well as their call to other people to join the *movimiento* despite the risks it implied because they too have suffered or witnessed an act of violence during those years.

Participation within large social movements

A person is more likely to become a social activist if that person believes that another world is possible, this is to say if she believes that her efforts will have an impact on the social and economic conditions of her community. This belief is strengthened by participating in large social movements.

An advantage of a large social movement is that it provides activists with protection, a safe place to talk to other people with similar interests, and reinforcement of the idea that the fight is worth it and possible to win (Tilly, Castañeda, and Wood 2019). A large social movement that has achieved some tangible results shows a social activist that a change is in fact possible. A case in point: according to our interviewees that now are in their 30s and 40s, Zapatism is one of the most important movements that directly influenced them. Some of them participated in Zapatista support networks to bring national and international resources in solidarity with the movement of the Lacandon Jungle. Sometimes, as in the case of Kiko (34), where his parents were deeply involved with the Zapatista Army, they were sent out to summer training camps in the Zapatista communities where they helped build schools and farms, interact with the indigenous community, and learn about the Zapatista ideology.

Consequently, it is possible to see how this movement, as with other large movements, has a considerable influence in today's activism, in the form of "history - and memory – of contention (Castañeda, 2012; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Tarrow, 2011, p. 29)

Younger activists in Juárez influenced by the Zapatista movement, as well as the femicides, the violence, and the strong military presence have created several social movements to fight back against those elements. Several social organizations were founded in Ciudad Juárez after an extreme event occurred, leading people to get organized in demand of solutions to the event. Some of these organizations include, Bring Our Daughters Back Home (*Nuestras hijas de regreso a casa 2001)*, which was created after the murder of Lilia Alejandra Garcia Andrade; Citizens Plural Front (*El Frente Plural Ciudadano* 2010), created after the killing of sixteen students in a high school student's party in Villas de Salvarcar neighborhood; Pro-Culture Pact Movement *(Movimiento Pacto por la Cultura 2001)* was constructed out of a concern about how the city was being ruled; *Lomas del Poleo (2006)* was organized to defend the inhabitants of an informal settlement neighborhood being displaced; and more recently the local chapter of the national student's movement *#Yo Soy 132* (2012) was created as a response to what was perceived as an unfair presidential electoral race (Díaz Cepeda, 2015b).

Figure 3: Participants getting ready.

Figure 4: Performance during the protest

Figure 5: Well attended march

Figure 6: End of the march in front of the Santa Fe International Bridge

Ire, Sorrow, and Amends March (*La Marcha de Coraje, Dolor y Desagravio*. 31 January 2010, Ciudad Juárez. Photographs: Diana Ginez. Used with permission.

When a social movement is able to deliver its message to the general audience, its numbers will increase. When that is the case, a larger number of people feel that the relation between effort and results is more adequate than when they have to start a movement from scratch. Since the meetings are open and rely on the number of attendants, it is easier for newcomers to find people that share the same interest. Large social movements then become a place where people can socialize without any major risks. A good number of faddish activists leave the social movement, once it is no longer popular and it loses momentum, but other people- part-timers and core activists- will stay involved in social activism. As stated above, they are the ones that join or create another social organization. Although there are some cases where a social organization does not go as planned and disappoints, a person, in consequence, may decide not to get involved. As Charlie (38) said,

> I did not like my first experience in social activism. To be honest, it seemed very chaotic, disorganized; I got a bad impression when they could not even agree in when the next meeting would be. It left a bad aftertaste and it lasted several years before got involved in activism again, now many of the leaders are my buddies.

Getting organized

One way people get involved in social movement organizations is that they get invited to participate in an organization that already exists. These invitations by larger groups reinforce the sense of belonging and achievement in the newly developing activist and make his or herself develop a stronger sense of commitment. As people get together and socialize under the same umbrella of a larger social movement, they get to know each other. Most of the time, they come in groups of friends where they are already part of an informal network and meet with other people with similar interests — thus reinforcing their belief of the validity and usefulness of the particular movement.

A second way to get organized is by starting a new organization. Activists get to know each other not only during organized meetings but also in other places such as schools and social events not necessarily related to social activism. It is during these occasions where they start talking in an informal and relaxed environment of ways to get organized and promote social change.

At first, some of these organizations function around a friendship nucleus when they are teenagers or in their twenties. It is not rare to see that some of them join the activism scene for a pure sense of belonging, just like a person joins a sports team or a student club. Others do it out of a sense of ethical duty. New activists, then, may create an organization, starting from scratch. They are unstable at this first stage; their permanence is based more on personal loyalties to the other members of the group than to the social cause itself. As a consequence, members are susceptible to leave social activism due to internal conflicts that are not related to the social cause. It is often the case that these groups break apart because they do not get along in a personal way or because their personal issues have been resolved; e.g. as Simone (55) said "I just want to find my daughter and forget about this nightmare, as soon as I find her, I am gone, and I cannot take it anymore." In these cases, individuals participate in social activism, but due to the stress and anxiety that comes with activism, they may either leave as soon as their problem is solved or will lose all hope that the problem will ever be solved and eventually will give up and leave as well.

If those who attended a meeting, an assembly, a protest, or some other sort of social activism overcame these difficulties, felt comfortable, welcomed, and with a feeling of a possibility of contributing to bringing about social change, it was more likely that they would remain and participate and become a core activist. As established before, core activists are not responding only to a specific problem, but rather are looking for social change. Therefore, they may not have a sense of urgency to get as quickly organized as would somebody who has a family member illegally taken by the military. They take the time to build an SMO or to join one that already exists.

Influences on core activists

Ideology

A good number of social activists have a leftist political ideology; however, there are important differences within this leftist ideology. Some of them claim and/or are perceived to be Zapatistas, Marxists, Trotskyists, Neo-Zapatistas, or anarchists. Most of them declare to be politically involved, but not to be affiliated to any political party. These different ideologies influence the way social activists lead the social movement and are both: a source of union and division, for their understanding of the circumstances in Ciudad Juárez, thus compelling them to act in different ways. For example, activists with a strong commitment to their ideology are more reluctant to negotiate and work with other sectors of the movement; i.e., social organizations with a strong commitment to an open decision-making method such as the use of assemblies are reluctant to work with activists who are used to working in closed groups and vice versa.

Another consequence of the differences in ideologies is how far people think it is necessary to go and are willing to go. Some progressive and liberal activists think that the change needs to be fought in small battles, step by step, working to some degree with the system. Others, self-identified as radical Marxist, want to overthrow the state and argue for the need for a revolution based on the antagonism between them and us (Laclau, 2005). This difference makes them take different paths.

Socioeconomic status

Social activists come from different economic statuses. Some of them, especially the youngest ones, struggle to stay out of poverty. However, living in a precarious economic situation does not prevent them from being involved in social movements. On the contrary, this first-hand experience of the consequences of an unfair social and economic system encourages them to challenge it. Most of them take less time-consuming jobs, so they are able to spend a larger amount of time in social activism. They take free-lance jobs, live with their families, teach, travel to different cities where they are supported by the solidarity of the social activists' community, and a few have made social activism a paying career in government positions or in NGOs. Clearly, the kind of job they get depends on their age, education level, and the particular skills they have.

There is also a portion of activists that enjoy a more comfortable situation where they have access to more resources. They work as college professors, medical doctors, small business owners, or managers. Politically active college professors have played essential roles in the building of SMOs against militarization, i.e. BASTA and a support group for the People's Tribunal audiences in Ciudad Juárez in November 2014. In fact, some of them teach out of concern for others. As Doctor (54) stated, "Freire said 'teaching is an act of love.' I try my best to respect my students' ideas and not to attack their ideas."

Often academics also function as brokers between groups of different social and class origins.

As our research shows, the difference in access to economic resources plays an important role when it comes to making decisions about what is the best strategy to use in order to enact positive social change. Allow us to develop our argument. On the one hand, there are activists that, due to their positions, have more access to resources, but have more time limitations and prefer to work towards a specific goal. They are more willing to work with the authorities, make alliances with businessmen, and make decisions in closed groups made up of representatives of different social organizations, e.g. some of them accepted the invitation of the federal government to join the Security Board (*Mesa de Seguridad*), which is in charge of coordinating the efforts of local, state, and federal governments altogether with organizations of civil society. On the other hand, usually, activists with low-income jobs are more inclined to engage in direct actions such as demonstrations, sit-ins, and wall paintings. As their power comes from their numbers, they prefer to get organized in public assemblies where it is easy for new people to join. As many of them have directly experienced abuse from the military or police officers, they are reluctant to work with the government.

At the beginning of the militarization process in 2008, there were strong differences between the groups that protested militarization and upper-class people that supported the presence of the army so that the State could take control of the situation. However, by 2010 groups of medical doctors, lawyers, managers, and business owners that usually would not agree on using strong collective reactions became more involved as they were becoming more directly affected by the violence and perceived that the government was not doing enough to help them. Before this, they trusted that governmental institutions would solve or at least alleviate the violence and other social problems. When they saw this was not the case, they also took to the streets and used other strategies to pressure the government to stop the violence.

Belief that another world is possible

Core activists are committed to change the social system as a whole for one they consider to be juster. This, of course, is a long-term project that can only be sustained if it is met with the idea that a better social order is possible. Social activists spend a considerable amount of time in the company of other activists with whom they share the belief that another world is possible. This shared time, as well as the success of the activities they organize together, reinforces this belief, and keeps them working in favor of social change. This belief is supported by the existence of a major social movement and reinforced through social interaction with other activists and through the support of certain segments of the population. As long as this belief that the activist's efforts contribute to making this change possible exists, it is more likely that a social activist will remain involved in the movement.

A fulfilling life

An important experience shared by core activists is their ability to draw fulfillment from activism. This helps explain their willingness to take the risks and financial limitations that come with honest social activism. In contrast to the economic advancement that most people pursue in life, social activists find self-actualization in helping other people as well as the joy that comes with social interaction with other members of social movements, cultural, social, and political scenes. Beatriz (35) said humorously,

> Thanks to my activism, I have a richer life, I have been able to do things that otherwise, I would not have been able to do, I had dinner with [writer] Elena Poniatowska, among others; I have traveled, but more importantly, I see how the children are looking forward to coming to the library on Sundays.

Beatriz is an exceptionally intelligent and talented person. She had plenty of job offers but decided to reject all, except for a position in Chihuahua Cultural Institute (ICHICULT), so that she could spend her time developing their art collective's project*: Biblioteca Independiente Ma'jauna* with the other two core members of *Palabras de Arena* (Words in the Sand), their feminist collective. This library opens every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. for the children of colonia Virreyes, a dangerous and poor neighborhood. The library is part of the house where she lives, which is in poor condition. However, instead of dedicating her efforts to bettering her living conditions, she uses her talents and skills to improve the library, i.e. Beatriz has a project for a better library at a cost of $40,000 USD.

Private life and social activism

There is a small but very important difference between social activists' private lives and their social activism. As Charles (38) said,

> The person and the profession are the same, and that makes me get involved in these issues, because even if I wanted to be content with my specialized academic work and just give numbers… since I share the idea that knowledge must be shared and not to be kept among the elites, I open this extension of my profession to issues that could be considered activism, but they are part of the same calling… It is hard to live as an activist all the time, it is quite exhausting, and then if you do not have the resources to cover your expenses, you starve to death… I also have to work. Besides I am not sure to what point it is healthy not to keep a private life, right? To completely give up your life, as some kids did in the 70's. They enrolled in the guerrilla. That is praiseworthy, they gave up their lives, but then you think: was that the only way? [If they had not gone that route] Maybe they could still be alive and contributing. Yes, activism is a way of live, but it should also take place according to your possibilities.

Interviews show that in order for core activists to support the pressures that come with social activism, they need to keep a private space outside of social activism. This place allows them to get some distance and enjoy some well-needed breaks from activism in order to maintain some mental stability. As Beatriz told us, "Sometimes I get depressed; you need to be in constant therapy. This is not going to change, I got too involved in my work, and there must be a balance otherwise there is nothing." If social activists do not take these breaks, their likelihood of getting tired of activism increases exponentially, and as a result, they will eventually abandon or considerably diminish their involvement in social activism.

Core activists that also gather meaning and fulfillment from spheres outside of activism are more likely to make decisions in function on what is best for the movement, not for them. On the contrary, people that draw all their meaning, pride, identity, and friends from their activism are more likely to bring personal conflicts to the movement, and to look for photo-ops and positions of power within a movement.

Family environment

Family pressure to leave social activism exists, but it is not a detrimental factor. On the contrary, the activists' families are aware of the risks they are taking, and even when they worry and take some precautions; for the most part, family members support their activism. There are different reasons for this support. In some cases, they come from a family tradition of social activism. Their parents were social activists, so they grew up used to this type of danger. In other cases, during their involvement in social movements, they met their spouses, as they were part of the social activism scene. Their spouses, then also, know the risks that come with social activism. This does not mean that families are not afraid; they are, but they overcome this fear. In this respect Waldo said,

> My family worries, especially when I publicly say things they consider very strong words. In general, they support me, but sometimes they reprimand me. It depends on what is happening in the city. There were hard times in the city [for social activists] when they killed Marisela Escobedo, members of the Reyes family, Susana Chavez, etc.[7] In times like this, they get more worried, but I cannot say that they do not support me.

[7] In 2010, four members of the Reyes Salazar family, a life-long social activist family, were killed, arguably because they were denouncing human rights abuses by the military. They were declared missing. After there was local, national, and international political pressure, state police found the bodies a few yards away of a military post. Marisela Escobedo was shot to death in downtown Chihuahua, Mexico in front of the city hall around 7:00 p.m. The place where she was killed is surrounded by surveillance cameras and a strong police presence, yet nobody stopped the murderer. She had several disruptive tactics to pressure the legal system to enact justice for her daughter Ruby who had been murdered and the murderer had been set free by a court of law. Susana Chavez was a poet and activist that was murdered with extreme cruelty.

In other cases, young activists gain support from their families when family members see the repression and abusive treatment social activists suffer. Let us take, for example one of the last massive protests against the militarization: a march by the *Indignados* of Juárez on November 01, 2011. During this march, sixteen people got arrested for protesting against the violence in Ciudad Juárez, and twelve people were arrested later while protesting outside the police office. They protested by sticking plastic adhesive crosses on the walls and windows of banks, McDonald's, ATMs. These crosses represented the over 7,000 people that have been killed in Juárez as a consequence of the war on drugs.

A police officer said that they would allow a group of parents to see the detained, but later the judge denied the visit. This caused supporters and family members to be angry and to worry. They started to stick crosses in the police station as a form protest. The police then arrested a second group of people. Rose (23), one of the interviewees, was arrested on this second group of 12 people. She was detained when she was trying to prevent a partner from being arrested. In total, 28 people were detained for over 36 hours, the legal limit to present charges or free them. The police presented charges against them, and argued that the protesters had damaged their uniforms.[8]

Some family members got involved in social movements when they witnessed this unfair and abusive treatment towards social activists. Arguably, the repression that young activists suffered caused this group to deactivate. When we asked Rose if she was going to protest a later visit of President Calderón to Ciudad Juárez, she told us that she was not: "It is messed up, I do not want to end up in jail again, to be honest, I am a little afraid, besides I have tests coming up in the university."

Social activists say she was murdered because of her social activism, while the police declared it a crime of passion.

[8] In May 2012, the indignados lawyer informed them that the cost of repairing the damage to the uniforms had been covered with the bail and that the charges had been dropped.

Figure 7: Police presence in "Los indignados march"

Figure 8: Represssion of los Indignados.

Figure 9: Detainees released after 36 hours
Photographs: La Unika. Nov 01, 2011. Used with permission.

Solidarity

While the Indignados were detained, there were around 150-200 people protesting outside the courthouse day and night during the 36 hours that it took to set them free. They were members of all types of organizations that, despite their ideological differences and lack of cooperation in regular circumstances, remained there during that whole time. This, of course, is not a reaction unique to Ciudad Juárez, as most social movements gain support after repressive tactics are used against them, but it does prove that given a strong common goal they can work together.

These actions show the deep sense of solidarity that social activists have towards other social activists even when they may have political and strategic differences. They know that being the visible faces of protests makes them the main target of police oppression. Several social activists have been assassinated or forced to leave the city because of circumstances that suggest the direct involvement of the federal government or at the very least its inability to protect its citizens. It seems that when most people perceive their lives and possessions to be in danger, they will run away from those circumstances. To the contrary, core social activists' determination grows stronger when facing threatening

conditions. When there is a danger for one or more social activists, they unite, organize, and become stronger.

It is possible to see this pattern by analyzing the peak years of violence in Ciudad Juárez and the militarization of the city. It was during this time that several prominent social activists such as Marisela Escobedo, Susana Chavez, and members of the Reyes Salazar family, were assassinated. This is "a family that [in Sapphire's (55) words] was hunted beyond death when they wanted to bury the Elias and Malena brothers, they did not allow the family to bury them in the town's cemetery". The repression continued in 2011 when Marisela Ortiz and Norma Andrade, Cipriana Jurado, and surviving members of the Reyes family, among others, had to leave the city fearing for their lives. Some of the social activists that left the city asked for political asylum in the United States; others went to unknown places within Mexico. Nevertheless, most of them continue with their involvement in social movements in Juárez. They just do it using different strategies like publishing blogs and organizing campaigns abroad.

It was during these sad occasions that activists gathered together the most frequently and, overcoming their fears, they took to the streets again and organized some of the most attended marches; as Julio said "to kill an activist is like throwing water to a gremlin, by trying to silence one, you get more."

Figure 10: Supporting activists setting up a camp outside the courthouse.

Figure 11: Supporting activists collecting money to pay the Indignados bail.

Photographs: La Unika. November 2, 2011. Used with permission.

Crucial roles of a core life-long activist

Networking

A core activist serves several important functions within a social movement. Being fully committed to a social organization and the movement, in general, allows them to build influential networks. These networks give them the possibility to pressure Mexico's government from the outside; i.e., as Marisela Ortiz, one of the founders of *Nuestras hijas de regreso a casa* observed that Mexico's government reacted faster when there was international pressure. She found invaluable assistance in Amnesty International. In her words: "since 2001, when we started, I looked to make contact with Amnesty International, because we needed to learn from the people that know."

Most of them use this brokering position to make a movement grow faster. However, others are cautious about who they connect to their networks. There are at least three main reasons for doing so. The first one is to keep their networks safe from government infiltrators. The more radical the movement, the more secrecy there is. Another reason to keep control of these networks is to keep the prestige and reputation that the core activists may have. That is to say, a core activist who has built a reputation of being trustworthy and responsible will hesitate before she recommends a new person to an organization. In some occasions, a new member may need to prove their commitment before they are put in contact with other members of the organization and/or with other organizations. This is especially done in closed groups where they prefer to work with the same people in order to have faster results. A third reason is more personal. It is the case that sometimes core activists do not share their networks because they want to keep control of them and remain as the leading figures of

the movement with the privileges that come with that position. Sometimes, this attitude comes in the form of a confrontation where they hold the position of sole leaders. In Sapphire's experience some core activist leaders

> ... think that only they hold the true, and that they should impose it. I think there is activism that instead of welcoming participants, rebukes them, e.g. when people attend marches [in an irregular basis] they reprimand them and ask, why you had not come to the previous marches and meetings.

On the contrary, when an activist performs her networking function well, she serves as a hinge between groups with different ideologies. When they communicate with various groups, they carry messages between groups of people who are not able or willing to communicate directly with each other. This requires a humble attitude where they are open to learning from other perspectives. As Charlie said,

> Assumptions about strategic planning may be in conflict with your opinions, but that is a good place for you to say: damn, I do not have the whole truth neither do they. Also, there you have to tie together all this knowledge because it may change your life or you may change somebody's life.

Networking allows them to build much-needed agreements and enlarge the number of participants in a social movement. It also serves to protect social activists. As Marisol (56) explained, being in contact with international organizations,

> Somehow protected us, because we had a commitment from international human rights organizations. Therefore, it was not so easy for the government to harm us with things staying quiet; we had become known in the world.

This is a vital surviving tool for activists because the more visible they are, the higher the political cost of repressing them. The higher the cost, the less willing the state is to attack them.

Mentorship

Another function of fully committed activists is that they serve as mentors to the new generations. Amid the internal factors, core activists play a vital role in the possibilities of success of a social organization because they have a substantial influence on the people that join that social organization. For example, Rose, a relatively new member in the social movement scene, said she got her

information and inspiration from a pair of prominent and well-known social activists,

> I read the newspaper, but there are issues that I understand better when one of them explains it to me. It is not that I do not understand the issues, but since they have more experience… I mean they are older and have read more than I have, so they can see the larger context better than I can.

Due to this level of influence on faddish activists, core activists can lead an organization to become an inclusive institution where different approaches on how to fight social injustices can be used to work together or they can lead it to become an exclusive organization where only people that think in the exact same way are welcome. As Sapphire said,

> We should not start with ideologies, but instead start talking about the things that we have in common, students, factory workers, the medical doctors, etc. because we all have suffered. Because sometimes the discussion starts with how to organize a protest, and then it devolves in let's start a Bolshevik revolution by Wednesday…

It is clear then, that if a core activist does not evaluate properly the level of commitment and the different belief systems at play in a social movement, he or she may try to impose his/her own agenda. By doing so, memberships may decline, because now the social movement would be attractive only to the people that already share an ideology. On the other hand, if a core activist is tolerant of divergent sets of beliefs and levels of commitment, more people may be willing to join the social movement. Depending on what activists do, they will have growing numbers in their organizations and a stronger position to force social change. In other words, core activists play a very important role in mentoring the new activists who want to participate in pushing for a social change as well as making their movement appealing to more people.

Fire-keeping

Another important function of activists is their role as fire keepers, motivators, and guardians of the movement. Core activists keep a movement alive while it grows in numbers of participants and hence in political influence. This is to say, for them, it is not a matter of how much support their cause may have or how popular a struggle is or how extreme the conditions of repression they work under are. This is the life they have chosen, and they stick with it, sometimes to the ultimate consequence of being killed. This attitude keeps them working in an organization despite the low number of members during harsh times. This permanence on social activism makes them the natural point of reference to which people turn to when there is a breaking point that gains the attention and

participation of more people in the movement. They then lead to emerging social movements. We are not making a case for the necessity of a single leader, spokesperson or *caudillo*, but core activists often become default leaders due to their knowledge, experience, and contacts gained through the long participation on social movements. Although, sometimes new movements may bypass established union leaders, core activists, and leftist politicians not without causing tensions and resentments. For example, the social movements #YoSoy132 in Mexico City (Díaz Cepeda 2015), or the *Indignados* on Spain (Castañeda 2012) relied on new activists rather than on core activists. Nonetheless, the core activists were quick to come to the camps and to engage in discussions with the movement leaders.

Willingness to stand up when others will not

Selections from the poem "And the Risen Bread," written by life-long core activist Father Daniel Berrigan, S.J. in memory of Washington DC homeless core activist Mitchell Snyder, summarizes the motivations and findings of this paper,

Some stood up once and sat down,
Some walked a mile and walked away.
Some stood up twice then sat down,
I've had it, they said.

Some walked two miles, then walked away,
It's too much, they cried.
Some stood and stood and stood.
They were taken for fools
they were taken for being taken in.

Some walked and walked and walked...
Why do you stand?
They were asked, and
why do you walk?
Because of the children, they said, and
because of the heart, and
because of the bread.

Because
the cause
is the heart's beat.

Conclusion

We have presented a typology to refer to different levels of participation in social movements. We have discussed the reasons why people may join social movements and their levels of commitment. There are people that get involved for selfish reasons, such as solving a problem that directly affects them in their

own private sphere. However, there are also people that participate in social movements as a way to pursue social change for the community. We divided them into faddish activists, occasional activists, part-time activists, and core activists. The formation of core activists is a long process that starts from a young age with the appearance of a mentor that, in accordance with existing literature, shows the young person that another world is possible.

Some will stay involved in activism because they find a place where they feel they can build a sense of community and purpose. For a vast majority of activists, social activism even when important is not their highest priority. They remain more loyal to friends or a specific cause than to a long-term social commitment. For the remaining activists, social activism is their absolute highest priority. In consequence, they build their life around social activism. They choose jobs, friendships, personal commitments, and so on in terms of their participation in social movements. If something is getting in the way of their social activism, they remove it from their lives. Building their lives around activism reinforces their identity as social activists, which at the same time increases their willingness to keep building their lives around social activism and to organize for the rights of strangers.

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Utopian imagination in activism: making the case for social dreaming in change from the grassroots

Martin Pötz

Abstract

Social, economic, and environmental inequalities are becoming ever starker. Unrest grips certain areas of the world occasionally, but no structured and promising movement beyond neoliberal capitalism is on the horizon. The status quo is consolidated as the only alternative. Grassroots activists working towards better worlds are often put down for being utopian, thus unrealistic. Therefore, some of today's activism is rooted in a position of resistance and opposition working towards little reforms to prevent the worst.

This research aims to uncover whether utopian imagination could be one option leading in a new direction, and subsequently how this imagination could be fostered. The findings of a qualitative survey with mostly young, white, western European, well educated, and radical anarchist activists suggest that while conceptions of a better world motivate and inform their activism, they are often hidden and rarely used in a structured way. These activists see many benefits in utopian imagination. Only a few manageable negative side-effects were discovered and a toolbox for fostering utopian imagination was compiled. However, it became clear that beyond fostering the imagination there is the need for a framework to translate visions into actions and transformation. Prefiguration, story-telling, and popular education are promising concepts and open the space for further research.

Keywords: utopia, activism, radical imagination, grassroots, strategy, transformation, social change

Introduction: There is no alternative?

> Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand. (Albert Einstein)

"There is no alternative": TINA. Thatcher's narrative, the idea of Fukuyama's "end of history" and their modern actualizations have permeated the fabric of western society throughout, including some members of social movements. This closes down our minds so that we only think in terms of that which is, finding it harder and harder to imagine that which could be. This has also influenced the way some activists do activism, leading to mostly resistance based, reactionary approaches to activism using a fixed set of old tactics. At the same time, neoliberal capitalism has survived its heaviest crisis and emerged even stronger, despite all the efforts activists have put into affecting change. Is neoliberalism just too intelligent and too powerful for any resistance to be successful, or is there a need to revise activist strategies and tactics?

For the purpose of this project I am mainly drawing from activist networks I have been or am part in. While nothing certain can be said about the exact make-up of these networks[1], let alone the beliefs and identities of their members, some tendencies that I observe need to be mentioned: members are mostly in their 20s and 30s, white, western European, and well educated anarchists who focus on direct action to achieve radical changes. The gender make-up is diverse.

Many of these activists' actions (from here on 'this activism') seem motivated by the rejection of how a certain aspect of life is at the moment, or by protecting a current state from a change that might lead to an even worse situation, inspired by the idea that a better world is possible. Therefore they try to exert influence on "policy, institutional and organizational systems, or cultural norms" (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, 8), especially for those who do believe that the problems are rooted in the foundation of the system. However, as Reinsborough (2010, 70) says, "people will only go someplace they have already been in their mind". This shows the importance of a continual collective process of imagining a new narrative, a new vision for a post-capitalist order. In the last forty years, it has become more important for many activists to create the social norms and values they wish for in the here and now, mainly in their internal processes, an aspiration called prefiguration (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, 9–11).

Drawing from and combining the ideas of utopianism (Levitas 2010, 2007b; Sargisson 2007; Jacobs 2007) and radical imagination (Haiven and Khasnabish 2010, 2014; Khasnabish and Haiven 2012), this research project uses the concept of utopian imagination:

1 See "Prefiguring activist research" below for more information on the networks.

> Utopian Imagination is something we *do* together, envisioning and working towards a better future that is radically, from its roots, different to the present. Utopian Imagination grows by bringing conflicts and differences into the open, leading to multiple, rough, and fussy[2] ideas of how things could be better. It serves to give direction, inspire, and mobilise to action. It can be seen as a dynamic process of small steps, of trying out and leaning into[3] with constant re-evaluation of values, horizons, and directions.[4]

The aim of this project is to explore utopian imagination as one method for making changes more likely, and for providing movement actors with any learning gained. By doing so it will hopefully contribute to movement actors' ability to incorporate utopian imagination into their practices and lead towards a narrative of 'There are many alternatives (TAMA)'[5]. Therefore, this research set out to explore the following questions:

1. To what extent does utopian imagination play a role in this activism?
2. What is the state of utopian imagination in this activism?
3. Is utopian imagination beneficial or detrimental for this activism?
4. How could utopian imagination be fostered?

These questions were explored by conducting a qualitative survey with these activists as well as a literature review. For the purpose of this article, the focus will lie on exploring the benefits and detriments of utopian imagination. The other aspects are only mentioned briefly, and can be found for detailed exploration in the full thesis[6] on which this article is based.

In the following section this research will be placed in context by exploring what it could mean for activist research to be itself a project of prefiguration, creating insurrectionary knowledge in solidarity and with relevance to activists. This is followed by a short description of the methodology of the research. After a brief literature review, the findings of the survey are presented. Subsequently, the findings are analysed and discussed, exploring the implications for the theory and practice of utopian imagination. The paper ends with a conclusion and outlook for further research and action.

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2 Language mistake: fuzzy. Left in the original for authentic reporting.

3 Please note: in the sense of: to try out, to experiment. Not a reference to "Lean in" by Sandberg.

4 This definition was compiled by the author and used as the basis for survey questions.

5 A full list of acronyms used can be found here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-ListOfAcronyms.pdf

6 https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UtopianImaginationInActivism-web-1.pdf

Prefiguring activist research

> "Be realistic. Demand the impossible!" (Graffiti, Paris, 1968, cited in Moylan 1986, 15)

As the project of an activist-researcher, this research tries to challenge power and knowledge as it is usually reproduced in academia, producing information that is of value to "struggles for collective liberation" (Luchies 2015, 524). In order to do that, Luchies (2015, 524) proposes ethics of *relevance*, *anti-oppression*, and *prefiguration* which this thesis aspires to follow. This research is relevant to and beneficial for the advance of theory and practice of social movements. Further, results were made accessible to movement actors[7]. As prefigurative research, this paper aims to shift the focus away from understanding movements towards imaginative activism that contributes to radical imagination (Khasnabish and Haiven 2012, 411) and social change.

Locating this research within a postmodern ontology helps to question power and knowledge, contesting what "truth" and "reality" really are. How people think about things becomes highly relevant when reality is "co-created by mind" and by the environment (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 102; Lincoln and Guba 2005, 195). Imagining what *could* be can play a big part in making these wishes come true.

According to Heron and Reason (1997), there are four aspects of knowledge in a postmodern frame: "experimental, presentational, propositional, and practical" (in Denzin and Lincoln 2011, 103). This research concerns itself with the propositional aspect, aiming to show why it is relevant to concern ourselves as activists with the conscious re-production of society using utopian imagination. This doesn't devalue other approaches to activism or to a conscious re-production of social environments.

The research starts with a literature review focused on defining and learning lessons for utopian imagination as a strategy for social change, including the benefits and potential dangers. As most of the literature is based on and revolving around utopia in fiction and theory, the review was combined with consultation of activists. An online qualitative-survey focused on the research questions was designed using a data and privacy conscious open source provider[8], while leaving space for any other thoughts people wanted to share. No meta-data such as location was recorded.

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7 The location of this information was communicated to participants in the invitation to the survey. It can now be found at: https://ggnetwork.blackblogs.org/fostering-radical-imagination/ & https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UtopianImagination-Resource-v0.0.2.pdf

8 The open source platform used was LimeSurvey (available at http://www.limesurvey.com) using their hosting platform LimeService (available at https://www.limeservice.com/en/).

The survey was sent to two activist friends for testing[9]. The revised form of the questionnaire[10] was sent out in personal emails to 27 activist friends spread over Europe and partly followed up with face-to-face conversations. Additionally, it was sent to the Galway Grassroots[11] email list (about 50 subscribers), to an email list of about 20 anarchists in Ireland, and to the anarchist activist network Rhythms of Resistance[12] centred in Europe with a few situated beyond all over the world (about 400 subscribers, some of which represent groups with an unknown number of members). Additionally, survey respondents were asked to forward the invitation for the survey to email lists and/or activist friends of theirs (a snowballing approach). In the two weeks that the survey was available, 24 people left complete and 5 people incomplete responses.[13] It cannot be said to which extend the actual respondents fall within the general tendency of the networks described above in the introduction.

The survey responses were analysed using a thematic analysis following the approach adopted by Savin-Baden and Major (2013, 439–440). Certain limitations and difficulties emerged from the research design that was chosen for this study. In alignment with the ontology and epistemology, no certain 'truth' could be found, nor was this a desired outcome. Further, the scope of replies could be limited and biased in favour of the utopian imagination. The findings cannot be generalised to a higher level, but do provide insight into what the surveyed activists think. The discovered insights and approaches can be used to investigate other activist networks and their practices, checking for applicability

Learning from utopian studies

> "Things are too urgent now to be giving up on our imagination". (Morris cited in Giroux 2014, 105)

Activists are often dismissively confronted with word "utopian" when they fight for the betterment of certain aspects. This research aims to reclaim the word utopian,

9 Some of the responses were used as well and are accordingly labelled.

10 You can view the full invitation and the questions here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-SurveyQsAndInvitation.pdf

11 About Galway Grassroots Network: https://ggnetwork.blackblogs.org/about/

12 See https://www.rhythms-of-resistance.org/spip.php?rubrique7&lang=en

13 The answers of respondents are given using the ID the survey software assigned to them. Simple visitors also were assigned an ID, thus the highest ID-number is much higher than the number of participants. No meta-data on the respondents was collected. The full responses can be viewed here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-Survey-Responses.pdf

promote a new, positive understanding of it, and use it boldly to promote ideas and emphasise that change is possible. Both critiques and praise of utopianism and the lessons learned are briefly mentioned below.

Authors who have voiced critique about the utopian method such as Popper, Schapiro, Fukuyama, Marx, Arendt, and Dahrendorf serve as a learning ground to draw conclusions informing a utopian activist practice. Among others, these aspects can be found in the literature: Distraction from urgent work (Arendt 1998; Fitting 2007; Sargisson 2007), diversion of transformative energy (Moylan 2007; Sargent 2007), perfectionism (Popper as quoted in Levitas 2007b; Popper 1966), closure (Moylan 2007), ideological fixation (Dahrendorf 1958) as well as authoritarianism (Schapiro 1972).

Working towards an activist utopianism and reclaiming the word utopian in a positive sense can lead to using dreams to energize practices, and support them with hope and direction. Making sure energy is directed accurately and avoiding closure and control keeps any project open to dissent, change, and adaptation.

Most of those who write and think positively about utopianism go back to the original writings of Bloch (1959) and Polak (1973). Utopianism is seen as necessary for change (Sargent 2007; Strasinger 2010; Geras 2000) and can be used to pull the future into the here-and-now with thoughts and dreams (Bloch cited in Gunn 1987; Gunn 1987; Polak cited in Sargent 1982). It can further function to show alternatives and give direction for achieving change (McManus 2007; Goodwin 1980; Sargent 1982; Geras 2000). Hopes, dreams, and visions are central aspects for motivation and for inspiration (Sargent 1982; Hobbes cited in Gunn 1987; Bloch, n.d.; Albert and Hahnel paraphrased in Moylan 1986; Grossman 2006).

Further, utopianism can serve to raise consciousness and empower people, supporting the necessary step to move from imagination to transformation (Geras 2000; Zikode 2006; Levitas 2010). Utopianism can also be used as a tool to avoid accidentally perpetuating current oppressive structures (Gloria Anzaldua cited in Strasinger 2010; Maria Lugones cited in Strasinger 2010a; Strasinger 2010).

Attention needs to be paid to transforming the utopian thoughts into utopian actions, to alter the social matter in the general direction of utopia. As Sargent (1982) argues, one of the potential downsides of utopianism is exactly the fact that the need for transformation away from the status quo gets forgotten and all "practical difficulties" of the change are ignored (Sargent 1982, 580, 583). That should not mean reducing the utopian strivings to only fit within what is possible or realistic, but concerning oneself with potential pathways. Prefiguration is a useful concept for this purpose. By transforming ideals into means, the achievable can be tested on a small scale and can be continuously adapted.

What activists say

"We must do and think the impossible." (Derrida cited in Giroux 2014, 105)

Participants were asked to provide three words to describe the world they are trying to create through their activism. These were processed[14] and a tagcloud was produced using Wordle[15] as an unscientific method that nicely illustrates a snapshot of the most common values expressed by participants[16].

Illustration 1: Wordle of values

In the following, the findings of the survey are reported in relation to the questions that were asked, and structured along the themes that emerged from this, as well as those anticipated through the literature review.[17]

14 Some words have been combined, as they can be seen as holding similar meaning: free-dom, just-ice, equal-ity, peace-ful

15 http://www.wordle.net/create

16 Two annotations were removed in the processing:
"free (in all senses of that word…)" (Respondent 1 (tester))

"Freetogether (i.e. free, but not in the individualist, consumerist sense, rather in a more collective together sense of free)" (Respondent 33)

17 Simple typos and other errors were emended for easier readability.

The state of utopian imagination in this activism

Some respondents put their statements on the state of the utopian imagination in the context of what they think the state of this activism in general is. According to the respondent with the ID 43 (from here on always short 'Respondent ID'), activists "lack hope", "work on auto-pilot" and "can't imagine a different reality". Respondent 23 adds that activists are afraid to mention, let alone act on, their ideals:

> "Imagination might seem very far out from what is today, so people don't dare go act out with it a lot" (Respondent 23).

Furthermore, "activism will never solve the problems it claims to attempt to solve, but essentially depends on for fuel" (Respondent 33). Some respondents describe a situation of activism at the moment as being reactive:

> I have the impression that many activists are very concentrated on what is wrong about the status quo and what to do against that. (Respondent 15)
>
> In the last years we constantly were forced more to defend then to extend our possibilities. (Respondent 24)

Looking at how much utopian imagination is used in this activism, many respondents did make clear that they can only talk about the utopian imagination in their limited experience of activism. One person reported too much imagination in "the ultra radical left, or anarchism" (Respondent 6) and two people (Respondent 8 and 26) stated that they were quite happy with its extent at the moment and that it exists widely:

> Utopian Imagination plays a big role in the activism I have part taken in and experienced so far. (Respondent 26)

Three respondents (15, 23, 25) acknowledge the existence of utopian imagination but state that it is enveloped in silence:

> Although I believe that most activists have their idea of how things should be better [...] people's different utopias aren't discussed so much. (Respondent 15)

Eight persons stated that there is little utopian imagination. For example:

> Limited! Activism has either been hijacked through the government funding of NGOs or limited in a narrow window of political possibility, even in the left. (Respondent 18)

Five people stated that there is little imagination connected with the need for more. For example:

> I think it could be used much more. (Respondent 9)

Benefits of utopian imagination for this activism

The respondents reported a wide array of ways in which utopian imagination could benefit this activism. From bringing people into activism through emotional support to giving direction, the findings suggest that people see it as a worthwhile endeavour.

Some influence on potential activists was mentioned: it can serve in "getting people politically active and engaged" (Respondent 8), it can "arouse" (Respondent 18), it can "broaden horizons and highlight how constructed and normalised a lot of the organisation of life on this planet is" (Respondent 22) as well as "enlighten [and] inspire" (Respondent 40).

Some respondents stress that there are certain emotional benefits related to utopian imagination. It can support "psychological satisfaction" (Respondent 5), it can "give social and spiritual strength ... to change world, first in our minds and hearts ... [and] allow us to continue to think that we will make it, it is possible" (Respondent 19). Respondent 24 states that it "trains the brain to imagine a time after revolution :-)". It can further "create desire" (Respondent 9) and give "energy" (Respondents 17, 23) and "motivation" (Respondent 17).

Four respondents see utopian imagination playing a big role in motivating and driving this activism: it is the "main driving force and main motivator for activism" (Respondent 26), it can "remind ourselves that there's something worth fighting for" (Respondent 43). Respondent 39 shows interest in "how it can play a role in keeping the sparks that originally drove one into activism not just glowing but also bursting into flame." Two respondents stress the importance of hope and of dreaming: "it can bring hope" (Respondent 43) and that "if we don't dream about it, it won't become reality. it's like Che Guevara's quote 'Let's be realistic, demand the impossible'. try to get 150% and you will get 100%." (Respondent 24).

Eight respondents stress the function of utopian imagination to give struggles a goal and direction (Respondents 5, 8, 9, 18, 21, 25, 33, 41). For example:

> It can be very powerful when there's a bigger amount of people imagining the same or a similar future [...] because then, there's so much energy created to pursue this aim that it is more likely to become true. (Respondent 9)

> Utopian Imagination could help provide the goal or the "for" part as juxtaposed to the "anti" part of activism. [...] While utopian imagination can help focus on DIRECTION, it too doesn't necessarily focus on the "PROCESS". Process is as important as goal in many cases. (Respondent 33)

Three respondents mention that Utopian imagination is not only about a goal, but also about the means: "it helps to try things out, to change them in practice, creating pockets of change within society from time to time" (Respondent 23). Respondent 25 points out that utopian imagination also manifest "in how we do it - in the way we treat each other, we talk to each other, we live together... creating the utopia we envision for the world in our own small contexts". Respondent 22 adds that it could empower people if visions "were enriched by concrete little steps".

Detrimental effects of utopian imagination on this activism

One respondent rejects utopianism, as they understand it, in principle. Speaking about the "ultra radical left, or anarchism", Respondent 6 thinks of utopian imagination as ideologically closed:

> Utopian thinking dominates to a point of blindness and inertia. There is a constant reiteration of how we want the world to be [...], whilst ignoring how the world currently is and [...] an avoidance of tactical and strategic thinking, and a "if you don't agree with our style of thinking and philosophy almost instantly, go fuck yourself." [...] It is [...] mostly concerned with its own egotistical survival and [...] it fails to account for real, tangible, material inequalities that people face. [...] The focus should be on short term gains that we can actually achieve rather than blind, repetitive rhetoric that never amounts to anything. [...] the means must be strategically considered in terms of *how society works now* rather than how we want it to work in the future [...]. (Respondent 6)

Some respondents offered their opinions on potential dangers or problems with utopian imagination: Respondent 17 sees the risk that "stronger voices can dominate the direction of a vision". Respondent 5 warns that it might be dangerous to "compare it [the image] too rough with what we live in; and expect it to change to radically and on a big scale [...]. Such things lead to burn-out and seeing no meaning in activism."

Another detriment that came up was the potential to distract from more important work:

> Making the case for utopian thinking is a good thing to do I think, but it should be as grounded in reality as possible and any such efforts should emphasise the greater importance of actual activism work. (Respondent 8)

Other respondents, while being not fully opposed to the idea of utopianism in activism, do see the need to focus on transformation and strategic thinking.

> The aim of imagining, for me, should always be to make more clear how I/we might work towards actually achieving our imagined futures. (Respondent 44)

Respondent 9 stresses the importance establishing a "link to connect [...] [thoughts and reality] and to use it to go forward". Respondent 19 sees the detriment when "utopia becomes something only theoretical", requiring little steps and the need that "words [...] become facts, even if they seem small" (Respondent 19). Lastly, Respondent 40 warns of the risk of "not be[ing] strategic enough to recognize the forces working against you".

A few respondents were wondering how to turn utopian imagination into action:

> I find the concept quite difficult to engage with. I can see its relevance but I am unclear how it could be "operationalised" systemically in my activism. [...] I wonder what my activism would look like if it was really guided by an approach of utopian imagination. (Respondent 44)

Some of the respondents already ventured some ideas on the question of application, reported in table 1[18]:

Table 1: Tips for the application of utopian imagination

Tips for application of utopian imagination	
Application	"One of the sticking points could be the translation of imaginings that emerge into actions that engage, energise and transform." (Respondent 39)
	"Keeping a kind of two-focused approach can help with this the big picture is held while at the same time the small steps and gains along the way are worked with and where possible celebrated." (Respondent 39)
	"I would find it beneficial to have a framework to help me integrate utopian imagination better into my work." (Respondent 44)

18 Some also offered thoughts on general activist strategy. See https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-GeneralActivistStrategy.pdf

Discussion

> When you told me about the spark
> I said it was a firefly
> She said it was a rocket,
> gone astray from the fireworks at the funfair
> and someone murmured
> from behind a dark corner
> it was just the glowing eyes of a cosmic leopard,
> staggering across our skies tonight
> and as the blackberries ripened
> at the side of the national road
> and the smell of gasoline filled our nostrils
>
> the answer touched down
> softly on the black asphalt
> neither of us understood
> its language
>
> And left. (Respondent 22)

This research project began with one central concern in mind: how can activism become more successful? Following one possible lead, an investigation into the potential of positive thinking in the form of utopian imagination was conducted. While exploring briefly the state of this activism and utopian imagination, the paper focused on the question of the potential benefits and disadvantages of utopian imagination for this activism, based on utopian studies and as seen in a survey of mostly young, white, western European, and well educated radical anarchist activists. Thoughts on barriers as well as tools to foster utopian imagination are also briefly mentioned.

Levels of engagement with the survey seem to indicate interest and enthusiasm for utopianism in their activism. Most people were not familiar with the term utopian imagination but could relate to the concept with their thoughts and experiences. However, some people had the popular understanding of utopian strongly in their minds, leading to a confusion of terms or a rejection of the definition provided in the survey.

The crisis of activist imagination can be seen as an opportunity. Looking at how the respondents talk about the current state of affairs in their activism leaves us with a bleak picture. They seem to be stuck and losing a defensive battle that leads to inadvertently spending energy for the further consolidation of the the status quo. However, activists think that utopian imagination is important for changing the world. While a fertile ground for utopian imagination exists in these activists' contexts there is the need for more place and time to foster it.

Utopian Imagination is a worthwhile process that can be experienced in spaces of prefiguration and community. There seems to be value in utopian

imagination for leaving behind habitual, purely resistance based activism towards building new strategies of change in activism. The extent to which utopian imagination is practised in activist circles at the moment justifies efforts in introducing and improving the process more widely. Turning resistance into proactivity, prefiguration, emphasis on the sustainability of activism[19], and a model of dual power[20] could be pointing in a good direction.

The many benefits for this activism

Utopian Imagination offers a big array of benefits for this activism and these activists. It can bring people into activism, support optimism and positive thinking, motivate people to keep going and prevent burn-out. It can further impact the construction of the material world, point activists towards prefigurative politics and give direction through focusing on what one wants.

Utopian Imagination has the to power to pull people into this activism. The findings suggest that it can raise consciousness and awareness in a way that is more sustainable than the motivation based on rejection of present ills. This adds the additional potential, but also challenge, of how to engage people who are not yet activists in utopian imagination and expose them to its practice.

Utopian Imagination is beneficial for motivation and hope. The findings reflect the statements of the pro-utopian writers in many ways. It seems to supply motivation and energy that drives these activists as well as create and strengthen desires and the hope that positive change is indeed possible. This can support and be supported by optimism and positive thinking. Emphasis on our thoughts and our (day-) dreams can help to pull the future into being with the power of our imaginations. In "real" dreams at night, our mind is able to construct whole worlds with their own rules, assumptions, and functioning. I suspect that the mind also could have a profound impact on the "material" world that goes beyond what can be observed.

Utopian Imagination can make this activism more sustainable and enduring. Resistance based activism runs the high risk of burn-out and a frequent turnover rate that makes activist circles very volatile, often leading to iteration of processes and to limited knowledge transfers. Some respondents see the role of utopian imagination as lying in keeping people going through a more long term involvement and development. This keeps individuals active over long periods of time and thus allows movements and groups to evolve, learn, and grow over longer time periods. This means putting emphasis on sustainable activism and activist self-care.

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19 See this zine on sustainable activism: http://cre-act.net/sustainable-activism/sustainable-activism/ or this web-resource: http://knowyourix.org/dealing-with/dealing-with-activist-burn-out-and-self-care/

20 See also https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/scott-crow-anarchy-and-the-common-ground-collective and http://www.fifthestate.org/archive/390-fall-2013/mutual-aid-times-crisis-ecological-economic-political/

Utopian Imagination can give this activism direction. As many of these activists seem to be stuck in resistance and opposition, the utopian imagination can help create a positive pole as a balance. When fighting against one issue after another, the direction can get lost. Utopian imagination can serve as a tool to help activists align their actions with their visions and goals. This opens the chance for fighting against the worst present ills while making sure that strategies and tactics have the potential to go beyond resistance. For many respondents, the function of utopian imagination as giving direction to their activism seems to be a very important one.

The idea of prefiguration is the probably most concrete way forward for an activist practice of utopian imagination. What aspects of our utopian image can we actually start with in the here and now? Not only do these efforts at realising utopia provide vital lessons for learning but they also offer small steps people can do. The findings suggest that there is value in creating free spaces like camps or zine projects, as they provide opportunities for experimentation and learning as well as bases for spreading new ideas and concepts. The ideas of free spaces and prefiguration are closely interlinked. The hope is that they will become more permanent and grow in diversity, size, and number. However, a future practice of utopian imagination needs to go far beyond today's understanding of prefiguration.

The idea of agency wasn't mentioned in the responses. This non-appearance suggests that activists already see themselves as agents of change. However, it could also mean that it is difficult to admit that one is being active while not believing in their own power. Is much of this activism actually limited by a disbelief in the existence or strength of one's own agency, leading to the stuck state of this activism as some respondents have described? I do think that utopian imagination has the power to help people realise that they have the ultimate agency to change and not technology, the economy, or the elites.

Limited detrimental effects

The potential downsides of utopian imagination can either be used as a valuable opportunity for learning and creating best practice utopian imagination or be discarded. The process of imagining needs to be interlinked with transformation, free from oppression, transparent, and sustainable. Prefiguration is one way to show the value of utopian imagination as actual work.

The anti-utopian opinion of Respondent 6, quoted above, gives a good insight into the currently dominant understanding of utopian as well as in the recurring reform vs. revolution debate. While I would agree that there are certain covert restrictions on thoughts and actions in anarchist circles, this might be largely due to a lack of imagination and to predominately resistance based tactics. At the same time the efforts that many anarchists put into projects of prefiguration do show that there are many forms of anarchism and that the experience of those circles can vary widely. I would also agree that many of the strategies and

tactics should be informed by the present state of things. But that doesn't mean failing to think about where one wants to go in the long run or only selecting those tactics that are offered by the system. This leads towards a revolution through the everyday act, be it by prefiguration or in challenging and subverting existing tactics.[21]

The risks of dominant voices, communication, secret agendas, and being overly self-critical also need to be considered. Attention needs to be paid to who is contributing how much to the visions that a group is creating for themselves to avoid reproducing patterns of dominance within activist groups. There is the need for transparency and openness to avoid secret agendas. Lastly, it seems to be important to go easy on oneself. There is the risk of constant disappointment that might lead to despair and burn-out. All the energy created through utopian imagination in the first place could be lost if there is limited acceptance of seeming failure as part of success. This calls for sustainability within utopian imagination and activism to keep the energy going.[22]

Utopian Imagination is valuable and actual work. There was little evidence for the idea that this activism would be distracted from its real purpose if at all or too involved with utopian imagination. However, is "real" activist work more important than utopian imagination? Utopian imagination in the form of prefiguration plays a major part in the work of anarchist activists at the moment and also spreads increasingly into other organisations and networks who would be hesitant to call themselves anarchist. Thinking of utopian imagination as actual work might help to legitimise the time and space that is devoted to it.

Utopian Imagination and transformation need to be linked. The argument for focusing on transformation as part of utopian practice was made by a few respondents. The danger of staying in a space of purely theoretical, even if artistic, conceptions of utopia relates to the criticism of utopianism as mentioned in the literature review. This means nothing more than acknowledging the realities of the present moment, as they are necessarily the point of departure for any transformation. Seeing utopian imagination and transformation as two ideas that are closely interlinked in a strategic concept helps to use the power that is ascribed to utopian imagination in those processes of transformation and might make them more successful.

21 Such as holding a protest march, but not announcing, or even asking for permission, where the law might require this.

22 See this zine on sustainable activism: http://cre-act.net/sustainable-activism/sustainable-activism/ or this web-resource: http://knowyourix.org/dealing-with/dealing-with-activist-burn-out-and-self-care/

Learning from the barriers

Looking at the barriers[23] to utopian imagination is helpful as it provides information on how to create and sustain practices of it.

Utopian imagination could play a role in approaching differences in activists' motivations, opinions, and practices in a new light and see them as something positive and something that improves activism. This is partly the case within the Global Justice Movement (GJM) where it is understood "as a resource and a value at the same time" (Teske and Tetreault as cited in Strasinger 2010, 88).

Activist self-care and sustainable activism are needed. How could utopian imagination play a role in providing the space for these very personal and subjective but also highly political processes of mental health in a collective manner? Could activists see crisis as an opportunity for change, as its original Greek meaning suggests?[24]

A first collection of tools

A full collection of all the tools people have suggested in the survey can be found in the online appendix[25]. For example, people suggested looking at utopian (science) fiction writing, immersing oneself in any form of utopian cultural production, making use of rituals, and making use of reflective spaces of self-publishing, such as zines. The importance of intersectionality was also mentioned. Additionally, a lot can be learned from people and movements who are already making steps towards concrete utopias. Meetings and workshops were a further tool that was suggested. This emphasises that utopian imagination needs to be a collective process and not something people do at home on their own. That supports the learning and the spontaneous ideas that can only emerge when creative minds share common space.

Finally, some answers

1. *To what extent does utopian imagination play a role in this activism?*

Utopian imagination plays a limited role in this activism at the moment. Where it exists, it is hidden as a basic understanding that is not openly, let alone methodologically addressed. Activists see the importance of visioning processes.

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23 See in the online appendix: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-Barriers.pdf

24 "Latinized form of Greek krisis 'turning point in a disease' (used as such by Hippocrates and Galen)" (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=crisis)

25 Full appendix here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-All-Appendixes.pdf and only the toolbox here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-Toolbox.pdf

The wish for things to change positively forms the basis for many activists' motivation but rarely informs strategies and tactics.

2. *What is the state of utopian imagination in this activism?*

Utopian imagination is in crisis, with sparks of hope. Creativity and imagination is limited in the context of strong hegemonic conditioning through the status quo and habitual, mainly resistance based activism. Activists identified the lack of space and time as major barriers. However, prefiguration is increasingly practised and shows a path out of the crisis.

3. *Is utopian imagination beneficial or detrimental for this activism?*

Utopian imagination can have many benefits for activism and achieving positive change. After thorough consideration of the few draw-backs, valuable learning can complement its many benefits such as bringing people into activism, keeping people going, and giving direction. Utopian Imagination can lead to more sustainable activism, support new and creative strategies and tactics, and help to re-construct the world in thoughts and action.

4. *How could utopian imagination be fostered?*

Utopian imagination can be fostered with a wide array of tools and methods ranging from exposure to utopian literature through intersectionality and working with children to formal and informal meetings and workshops. Retreats from the status quo, systems thinking, and popular education can help break the conditioning. Getting inspired by other movements opens thought horizons. It is necessary to promote the usefulness of utopian imagination as an important and collective endeavour to facilitate the introduction of those tools.

Implications for the literature

The understanding of utopia as a process was found as expected. Looking at the results more broadly in light of the theory discussed in the literature review, it becomes clear that academic definitions and thoughts about what utopianism is are very much in line with what these activists think about it. This might, however, be influenced by the definition given in the survey. Further research into the understanding of what utopian imagination means to activists would need to be formulated more openly. The replies from some of the respondents confirm that prefigurative politics is a concept that is used and practised without necessarily referring to the term itself. The responding activists confirmed the idea that this activism is rooted in resistance and opposition and emphasised the need to go beyond it.

Only one of the respondents saw any real danger in practising utopian imagination, casting doubt on the warnings even of some advocates of

utopianism. In terms of its potential shortcomings, the idea that utopian imagination is a distraction from real activist work did come up, confirming the theory. It is further interesting that none of the respondents spoke about the possibility of their utopia being someone else's dystopia. This could mean that the surveyed activists assume that there are fundamental values that are widely shared, or that the sample was not diverse enough. The idea that utopia requires, or leads to, perfection didn't come up, showing that this is an outdated conception of utopianism.

Implications for the streets

These findings show that there is the need to practice utopian imagination in activist contexts. The expected benefits make it worthwhile. The toolbox collected through this research project can be a good starting point for activist self-research, workshops[26], and further development of the concept as well as the practice. However, it became clear that fostering utopian imagination alone is not enough. Some respondents were rightly wondering how to systematically turn utopian imagination into a practical approach for action.

How can the missing link between imagination and transformation be built? How can utopian imagination be practised by activists? First leads point in the direction of prefiguration[27,28], dual power[29], intersectionality, popular education, and narrative story-telling[30]. Some of the respondents already ventured some ideas on the question of application as reported in table 1 above.

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26 During the process of writing this thesis, I hosted two workshops on radical imagination. The outlines of those workshops can serve as a further resource and can be found here: https://utopianactivism.blackblogs.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/667/2018/08/UI-App-RadicalImaginationWorkshops.pdf

27 According to Antliff (2010), one precondition for utopian and radical imagination is an anarchist version of prefigurative democracy and "political federation" (Antliff 2010, 61), as methods of self-governance.

28 A lot was written about prefiguration in wake of the alter-globalisation movement (Maeckelbergh 2011), such as prefiguration and emotion (Brown and Pickerill 2009), prefigurative politics in Tahrir Square (Sande 2013), prefiguration in interpretation collectives (Baker 2013), prefiguration and actualization (Murray 2014), in relation to state engagement (Petray 2012), and rethinking prefiguration (Yates 2015), to name a few. See Boggs (n.d.) for a the concept of prefigurative communism.

29 Dual Power: "resisting while building counter institutions" (https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/scott-crow-anarchy-and-the-common-ground-collective.pdf) See also a short video interview: http://www.submedia.tv/stimulator/2016/02/17/dual-power/ & http://www.scottcrow.org/#/interview-video-on-dual-power-transitions/

30 Selbin (2009) writes about the role of story in achieving change. As stories can be used to tell tales from the future, they can give direction, warn, motivate and make things seem possible, affecting the ideological as well as material world. Stories can empower and connect people to work towards change together (Selbin 2009, 3, 16, 189).

What could such a framework look like? What does this mean for overall activist strategy? How can small steps of activist work be kept in orientation towards long term goals? And how could those actions be designed in a way that they support sustainability in activism?

Initial research brought up three books that could be used as points of departure for researching this important aspect of practising utopian imagination:

- *From Anticipation to Action* (Michel Godet 1994)[31]
- *Creating Futures* (Michel Godet 2006)[32]
- *Sociology of the Future* (Bell and Wau 1971)

Directions for further research

This research provides important and valuable first insights into the power of utopian imagination for activism. What next? Many questions that need to be addressed come to mind:

How can imagination be translated into transformation? What conditions would enable activists to engage in processes of utopian imagination? Are there any concrete and successful movements, campaigns, or projects based on utopian imagination? What can be learned from intentional communities and autonomous zones around the world? How can a balance be achieved between building autonomous zones while at the same time having a wider influence beyond? Will practising utopian imagination actually make activism more successful?

Most pressingly, further research into the issue of finding concrete ways of how people can transform the power and benefits of utopian imagination into real change are needed and offer exciting possibilities. For example, a group, campaign, or movement[33] with a positive vision that is interested in experimenting with the tools and concepts could be the basis for a long-term intensive case study aiding activist self-research. This would offer the opportunity to see how thoughts are translated into action and what impact this has on the group of activists, their well-being, the sustainability of the cause, as well as any concrete successes in relation to the vision.

31 http://en.laprospective.fr/dyn/anglais/ouvrages/from-anticipation.pdf

32 http://en.laprospective.fr/dyn/anglais/ouvrages/creatingfutures2006.pdf

33 One interesting project is "Equilibrismus e.V." which tries to consult with small island states to establish their ideas. They aim at "a complete change of paradigm in regard to ecological and social issues", presenting "new concepts instead of reforms" (Equilibrismus e.V., n.d.). See their website for further information: https://www.equilibrismus.org/en/.

Conclusion: There are many alternatives!

> I am hopeful for the state of utopian imagination, even on this island!
> (Respondent 44)

This research set out to find a way to make activism more successful. After describing the situation that some activists find themselves in and stating the research questions that serve as pointers towards finding a possible solution, the research project was placed in the context of anti-oppression, prefiguration, and movement relevance. The following literature review offered crucial insights into the state of knowledge in utopian studies at the moment and provided useful lessons for utopian imagination as an activist practice. The findings from a qualitative survey conducted with over 24 mostly young, white, western European, and well educated radical anarchist activists were presented and subsequently analysed.

The research showed that the state of utopian imagination in their activism is mostly bleak. But there are also aspects of it hidden in these activists' lives and organising. Many of them see valuable uses in utopian imagination for their activism and for achieving change, and the detriments are light if practices are designed carefully with the risks in mind. The research provided a big collection of ideas on how imagination can be fostered in activist circles to reap the benefits of utopian imagination as an approach in this activism. However, fostering the radical and utopian imagination alone can only be the first step in an activist strategy based on utopianism: there is a need to link the imagination with action and transformation.

The findings of this project legitimize the use of time for utopian imagination as part of activist practice as well as giving an array of ideas to start from. They form an important step in translating the idea of utopia from literature and other art-forms into a strategy of achieving fundamental change that can be applied by activists on the ground. Such an activist strategy based on utopian imagination could start with prefigurative internal processes of horizontality, inclusion, and empowerment. Messages and communication could focus on positive framing and alternative institutions could be created. Further, emotional spaces could be mutually supportive and power and resources redistributed. These are first starting points for groups and movements to experiment with and develop further.

The crisis of neoliberalism offers an opportunity for activists to create, live, and spread their alternative visions of the world. Projects such as the Self-Administration of North and East Syria (SANES), the unemployed workers movement in Argentina, as well as the autonomous zone of the Zapatistas in Chiapas all show that cracks in the system can be occupied with alternatives. The impact of austerity measures in Greece made way for the raise of solidarity economics. The Mondragon collective based in the Basque area shows that different forms of production and reproduction are possible. The situation looks

bleak but offers so many chances and opportunities that need to be imagined and created.

There is no alternative to exploring the many alternatives. It is high time for activists to leave pure resistance once and for all behind. Enough fighting for small little reforms that strengthen the system! Let's start to build in the cracks that the status quo leaves behind. Let's get active and start creating, first in our minds and dreams – and then in the "real" world. There are many alternatives!

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Rethinking surplus-value: recentring struggle at the sphere of reproduction

Jared Sacks

Abstract

Since the 1970s, autonomist feminists have critiqued Karl Marx for failing to appreciate the sphere of reproduction as a key driver of capitalism. They have shown how unpaid reproductive work contributes to the production of surplus-value – something orthodox Marxism has refused to reckon with. This is in part because of a fetishisation of categories such as productive and unproductive labour as the theoretical building blocks of Marxism. However, if we understand Marx's critique of political economy as a method for understanding capitalism in terms of process, we are forced to rethink our understanding of categories such as surplus-value. Within current debates around the production of value under capitalism, it is useful to make an explicit conceptual distinction between where surplus-value is produced and where it is extracted. In doing so, we are foregrounding the sphere of reproduction and the key role it plays in upholding capitalist social relations.

This contrast, then, can inform the struggle against capitalism in the following ways. Firstly, it advocates for social movement unionism that transcend boundaries of production and reproduction. Secondly, it provides theoretical justification for withdrawing and disrupting reproductive labour, supporting a decentred politics of resistance outside the factory. Finally, it speaks to the importance of building autonomous movements for the production of "the commons". This paper uses examples from recent struggles in South Africa and South America to theoretically valorise the diversity of struggles that have emerged since the 1960s.

Keywords: reproduction, surplus-value, production, productive labour, unpaid labour, commons, social movements, disruption, South Africa, autonomy, Marxism

> The labor of a woman, who cooks for her husband, who is making tires in the Firestone plant in Southgate, California, is essentially as much a part of the production of automobile tires as the cooks and waitresses in the cafés where Firestone workers eat. And all the wives of all the Firestone workers, by the necessary social labor they perform in the home, have a part in the production of Firestone Tires, and their labor is as inseparably knit into those tires as is the labor of their husbands.
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> – Mary Inman, The Role of the Housewife in Social Production (1940)

> Whatever the shape and direction of black liberation struggle…domestic space has been a crucial site for organising, for forming political solidarity. Homeplace has been a site of resistance.
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> – bell hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics (1990)

Argument

In *Yearning* (1990), feminist author bell hooks takes on the common belief that gender equality must be fought for primarily in the workplace. Her essay, "Homeplace (a site of resistance)", can be seen as part of a history of feminist de-centring of the factory and re-centring of the sphere of reproduction as part of her call to resist 'Imperialist White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy'. While hooks stays clear of Marxist analysis and draws no genealogical linkages with with autonomist feminist critiques of orthodox Marxism, her theoretical convergence with feminists like Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Silvia Federici helps us spatially reorient the way we theorise the struggle against capitalism.

In this article, I will seek to bring Marx's theory of value into conversation with non-Marxist thought, such as that of hooks. Understanding capitalist value through a feminist lens not only broadens the scope of the Marxist tradition; it also forces a critique of political economy that is better engaged with the lived experience and living ideologies[1] that emerge out of reproductive struggles.

Using this autonomist feminist critique, I argue that within the debates around the production of value under capitalism, it is useful to make an explicit conceptual distinction between where surplus-value is *produced* and where it is *extracted* and that Marx only made provision for the latter. This will make visible the relationships of exploitation that transcend various spheres of society. In doing so, I will be employing a long line of "open Marxist" and "autonomist feminist" theories with the goal of rethinking Marx's critique of political economy so that it relates better in practice to existing struggles against

[1] The term "living ideologies" seeks to rework S'bu Zikode's "living politics" that "comes from the people and stays with the people" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2009) into an expression of ideas, beliefs, and concepts emanating from non-institutional spaces of struggle. This is an important reorientation of the way we understand the source of theory. As Robin Kelley's puts it, "Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge" (2002, p. 8).

capitalism. In this way, theoretical abstraction is not an end in itself, but rather a process within organic thought that is meant to engage with, rather than replace, living ideologies.

In this article I first explore Karl Marx's distinction between the "productive" and "unproductive" worker through his understanding of the reproduction of labour and his theory of surplus-value.

Second, I analyse how the scientific materialism of traditional Marxists has used these conceptual categories to privilege the "productive" male factory worker as the revolutionary subject of the working class, thereby creating a false hierarchy in relation to other workers. I will focus specifically on the orthodox approach with its origins in Friedrich Engels' reading of Marx's work, but also show how this way of thinking has often been embraced by other strands of Marxism.[2]

Next, I distinguish Marx's own approach from his interpretation by orthodox Marxists. Although Marx has to a certain extent been misinterpreted by many who followed him – particularly regarding the scientific nature of his theories – he remained committed to certain narrow and rigid categories which contributed to the reification of his theories.

Fourth, I argue that autonomist feminism's decentring of the factory and its recentring around the sphere of reproduction, particularly what is traditionally viewed as women's work, provides an important corrective to this reductionist approach. Orthodox Marxism, and even the work of Marx himself, has not sufficiently valued such work in their theorisation of capitalism. In reformulating Marx's theory of value through a reproductive lens, I propose an alternative definition of surplus-value with respect to productive/unproductive labour. Redefining surplus-value by making a distinction between where it is produced versus where it is extracted will lead to a rethinking of Adam Smith's framework[3] of productive/unproductive labour whereby a further distinction will be made between "directly" productive labour and "indirectly" productive labour. The purpose of doing this is not to contribute to some sort of new Marxist political economy – indeed Marx himself was against such an endeavour[4] – but rather to modify Marx's labour theory of value so that it can engage more thoughtfully with the countless struggles permeating the social landscape.

In the final section, I show that this contrast can inform the struggle against capitalism in the following ways. (A) It champions struggles such as the

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[2] In some other versions of Marxism, the primacy of the factory worker has been replaced with that of the productive worker – a broader category which nevertheless maintains the same hierarchy in relation to the sphere of reproduction. While my analysis will focus on the former for the sake of simplicity, the critique remains applicable to this broader category.

[3] While maintaining the overall productive/unproductive distinction, it should be noted that Marx extensively critiques certain elements of Adam Smith's definition of productive labour in *Theories of Surplus-Valu*e (1969, pp.144–256).

[4] Marx was pretty clear that his method was a *critique* of political economy rather than an attempt to create a new one. See for instance Smith (1997).

Marikana miners and farmworkers' strikes that transcend the boundaries of production and reproduction, building towards social movement unionism. (B) It provides theoretical justification for road blockades that withdraw and disrupt reproductive labour – a militant decentred politics that seeks concessions from capital and the state. (C) It speaks to the relevance of building autonomous movements, such as the Zapatistas, for the production of "the commons". In sum, redefining Marx's theory of value in a way that is more dynamic and open helps us engage with non-Marxist analyses as well as with the living ideologies of actually existing struggles. It also forces us to see concepts such as surplus-value as embodied social relations that are not quantifiable or compatible with the futile ambition that is Marxist economics.

Marx and the value of work

Marx's understanding of capitalist accumulation was based on his theory of surplus-value, distinguishing it from David Ricardo's theory of value, a key problem with classical political economy (Marx 1887, p.57). According to Marx, all value accrues from a worker's labour-power. Under capitalism, labour-power is purchased by a capitalist at its value of reproduction – i.e. the subsistence cost at which it would be able to reproduce. Here, the distinction between labour-power and labour-time is essential. Once the worker has completed the labour-time which corresponds to the value of his[5] labour-power, he continues to work and produce for the capitalist. The "exchange" value of what is produced beyond that point is its surplus-value. As Marx puts it, "surplus-value results only from a quantitative excess of labour, from a lengthening-out of one and the same labour-process" (1887, p.137) and further that the worker "creates surplus-value which *for the capitalists*, has all the charms of a creation out of nothing" (1887, p.152). I emphasise the subjective nature of this statement because, from the worker's perspective, surplus-value certainly is not produced out of thin air.

Surplus-value is the capitalist's raison d'être; their "one single life impulse" (Marx 1887, p.163). Capital seeks only to maximise surplus-value and it does so through a range of strategies including expanding the work-day, reducing wages and increasing productivity. This capitalist production, thus, not only produces the worker, commodities and surplus-value, but (re)produces the capitalist relation itself, thereby separating the worker from what they produce (Marx 1887, p.407).

[5] I use the male gender tongue-in-cheek because theorising the industrial worker as male has a long history in Marxism. This has played an important part in concealing women's central role in the rise of the factory and their eventual relegation to the home through the manufacture of the nuclear family - although both Marx (1887) and Engels (1970b) do write in a limited way about this process. Hereafter, unless making an explicit political point about a person's gender, I use the pronouns "their", "they" and "them" to refer also to a singular individual without assuming that person's gender. "Him/Her" is insufficient because many people do not fall within such gender binaries.

This is where the difference between "productive" and "unproductive" labour comes in. The content of labour and its use-value is not important here. Rather, labour-power is productive only where it produces capital through the extraction of surplus-value (i.e where it results in the production of commodities for sale) (Marx 2008, pp.388–392). In *Theories of Surplus Labour*, Marx goes into more detail about this relationship: "Productive labour, in its meaning for capitalist production…reproduces not only this part of the capital (or the value of its own labour-power), but in addition produces surplus-value for the capitalist…Only that wage-labour is productive which produces capital" (1969, p.144).

On the other hand, labour is considered unproductive where it does not work for a capitalist to produce surplus-value. This can include a range of paid work: that of a mercenary, a government worker, or teacher, is unproductive so long as the labour does not produce directly for capital. Put another way, "it is labour which is not exchanged with capital, but directly with revenue, that is, with wages or profit" (Marx 1969, p.147). Following Marx's discussion of reproduction of capital,[6] this kind of labour is that which is purchased via capitalist profit in the form of consumption or that which an entity such as a government institution is funding through taxes on this profit.

In the same way, the sphere of reproduction – i.e. the unpaid labour of housework or the paid labour of working-class consumption – counts as unproductive labour as well. David Harvie,[7] whose work questions Marx's definition of productive/unproductive labour, identifies in Marx three types of unproductive labour: (a) labour whose product reproduces labour-power itself, (b) the supervision of others' labour (e.g. a factory manager), and (c) labour which is involved in the circulation and consumption of commodities (2005, pp.135–136). Because unproductive labour is such a broad category, for Marx it is therefore key to the circulation of capital and to the reproduction of capitalism as a whole.

However, before addressing how feminists have rethought the question of value in Marx, it is important to contrast it with the dominant interpretation of Marx throughout the first half of the 20th Century.

Orthodox Marxism

There is much contention regarding the methodology Marx employed in his work. Many traditional interpretations of Marx have embraced a highly structured and rigid understanding of categories such as surplus-value, production, reproduction and various "laws" of capitalist society. The origin of the various strands that emerged as orthodox Marxism (such as the work of

6 There are two ways in which Marx uses the term reproduction: the reproduction of labour-power (Volume I) and the reproduction of capital (Volume II). This paper focuses on the former, and reference to the 'sphere of reproduction' is that which reproduces the worker.

7 David Harvie the political economist, not David Harvey the geographer.

Daniel de Leon, George Plekhanov and Karl Kautsky) is generally attributed to the scientific materialism of Friedrich Engels who, in his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, linked the natural sciences with Marx's theory of capital:

> These two great discoveries, the materialistic conception of history and the revelation of the secret of capitalistic production through surplus-value, we owe to Marx. With these discoveries, Socialism became a science. The next thing was to work out all its details and relations (1970a, p.34)

Furthermore, "Engels tended to focus almost solely and one-sidedly on economic and technological change as factors in societal development" (Brown 2014, p.4). According to Brown, this included capitalism's repression of women, which Engels understood as being driven deterministically by the privatisation of property. Engels therefore implied that patriarchy would not exist in a communistic society sans private property (Engels 1970b).

This approach has not been limited to orthodox Marxism. From this scientific perspective, many other Marxists have focused on the technical aspect of Marx's definition of surplus-value. The work of the Marxist theorist Ernest Mandel is a good example of how value has been used to drive the sole focus on the productive worker as a revolutionary subject. Quoted sympathetically by Ian Gough in *New Left Review*, Mandel claimed that Marx and Engels "'assigned the proletariat the key role in the coming of socialism not so much because of the misery it suffers as because of *the place it occupies in the production process*'...Here employment in the process of production, hence involvement in the creation of surplus-value, makes this group of workers potentially revolutionary" (Gough 1976, pp.171–172).[8] The converse is implied: any group of workers that does not produce surplus-value directly for the capitalist, no matter how low their wage, their alienation from the means of production, and the extent by which their labour contributes to the reproduction of capitalism, should not be considered revolutionary. At very least, such Marxists argued, the unproductive worker should be led by the revolutionary vanguard class of productive labour.

While Lenin, too, renounced certain orthodox positions he still centred the productive worker as the revolution's vanguard. John Holloway explains it thus: "the concept of scientific socialism has left an imprint that stretches far beyond those who identify with Engels, Kautsky or Lenin" (2002, p.132). This methodological approach had serious consequences for how Marxism has understood, not only capitalism, but the revolutionary position of the worker.

[8] Gough's emphasis

Questioning the revolutionary subject

Marx's understanding of the production of surplus-value has long informed the way Leftist intellectuals, particularly orthodox Marxists, have struggled against capitalism. While this economistic reading has not been the only reason for this prioritisation of the "productive worker", it has certainly been an important one. Since, as some Marxists have understood it, only labour directly hired by a capitalist produces surplus-value, it was only within this sphere that capitalists exploit the worker through extracting a portion of their labour value as profit (Marx 1887; Marx 1969).

In contending that only this sphere produces value for capitalists, such theories framed the "productive" factory worker as the revolutionary subject of the working class, therefore orienting a hierarchy of struggle around him. As I have already pointed out, theorising the revolutionary industrial worker as male has a long history. Much traditional Marxist theory has gendered the factory worker as male even while many of the first factories including workplace organising were dominated by women and children[9]. Beyond the factory, those whose only knowledge of the Paris Commune came from Marx (1871) , increasingly understood the revolution in terms of male factory workers. What had to be rediscovered, as Manuel Castells and Kristin Ross have shown, was how the insurrection was organised around the territorial neighbourhood because the Communards' link to the factory was precarious and because mobilisations were primarily driven by women (Castells 1983; Ross 2008). Not only did this mean that many Marxists and communists tended to privilege the factory and the trade union in organising resistance, but, occasionally, struggles autonomous from the factory were on this basis isolated and even destroyed (Federici & Caffentzis 2007).[10]

However, it was incorrect for them to imply that non-workplace struggles were ineffective. In fact, although unacknowledged by many orthodox Marxists, the majority of 20th century revolutionary struggles were first and foremost peasant struggles – a group many had relegated to the back-burner of theory, even sometimes considering them counter-revolutionary. As Federici explains: "starting with the Mexican and the Chinese Revolution, the most antisystemic [and anti-capitalist] struggles of the last century have not been fought only or primarily by waged industrial workers, Marx's projected revolutionary subjects, but have been fought by rural, indigenous, anticolonial, antiapartheid, feminist movements" (Federici, 2012, 92).

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9 See for instance the struggle staged by the Lowell Mill Girls (Robinson 1898).

10 An additional point of clarification may be necessary here. Even though orthodox Marxists tended to centre the male factory worker in his discussion of productive labour, Marx's categorisation still holds for all non-factory workers who are productive. That said, while Marx's abstract categories can theoretically be extended beyond the factory as well as to women who are doing productive labour in the workplace, over the years most Marxists and even Marx himself have empirically and theoretically centred their analysis on the male factory worker.

Thus, while most orthodox Marxists posited the factory worker as the revolutionary subject, when anti-capitalist revolutions actually took place, including in places like China and Cuba, the centre was overwhelmingly outside the factory and primarily based among the peasantry and urban underclass. Yet, how does Marx's work actually stack up against orthodox interpretations of it?

Marx in relation to orthodox Marxism

Even though Marx first situated the industrial worker as the revolutionary subject, he was more ambiguous as to whether his theories are indeed "scientific". On the one hand, his numerous chapters on various "laws" of capitalism lend credence to Engels' claims; on the other hand, Marx also asserted that his methodology was primarily process oriented. He was therefore against the idea of a scientific method as such. Marx explained this to Lassalle in 1858:

> "The work I am presently concerned with is a Critique of Economic Categories or, of you like, a critical exposé of the system of the bourgeois economy. It is at once an exposé and, by the same token, a critique of the system." (Marx & Engels 2010, p.270).

In an important journal article on this topic, Cyril Smith goes further into detail on this point and against interpreting Marx's *Capital* using the scientific method that Engels had prescribed: "Marx's critique of political economy was not a proposal for a new, 'socialist economics' – for Marx, socialism implied the withering away of economics." (1997, p.124).[11] Selma James makes a similar point in her critique of Mandel: "Marx negated political economy in theory and the working class negates it in practice" (2012, p.52).

Holloway, similarly, points out that much of Marx's later work (including Volumes II and III of *Capital)* were edited by Engels with, he claims, the purpose of promoting a certain scientific interpretation of Marx. In Engels' supplement to the "Law of Value and Rate of Profit", for instance, he "presents value not as a form of social relations specific to capitalist society but as an economic law" (2002, p.133). Engels' interpretation by orthodox Marxists finds resonance even today. Contemporary Marxist economists, such as Mohun, assert that the distinction between productive and unproductive labour is one of Marx's "fundamental building blocks" (1996, p.31), misunderstanding Marx's methodological critique of political economy.

[11] "I believe that the reason for these controversies is not so much the different ways in which Engels' own work has been interpreted, but that the Marxist tradition has fundamentally misunderstood what Marx was trying to do in his life-long critique of political economy. I shall argue that, even after all these years, Marx's fundamental insights have not really been grasped, and that, despite all his devotion to Marx's chief work, this misunderstanding actually begins with Engels himself" (Smith 1997, p.123).

But if Marx's method understands capitalism in terms of process, then the fetishisation of such categories are curtailed. Indeed, following Holloway's point, Marx himself warns against the reification of categories such as the commodity because it obscures the underlying social relations of production (Marx 1887, pp.47–48,52; Holloway 2002, pp.138–139). This process-oriented understanding, in contrast to Mohun's "building block" approach, is essential to Marx's theory of value. It sees production under capitalism as a "continuous connected process…[that] produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage labourer" (Marx 1887, p.407).

From this perspective, reproduction is not only understood as the "sine quâ non of capitalist production" (1887, p.403), but it also underscores a relationship that is continuously evolving and reciprocal. Or as Marx puts it more eloquently: "The conditions of production are also those of reproduction…If production be capitalistic in form, so, too, will be reproduction" (1887, p.401).[12] This is a more open way of understanding surplus-value and distinctions such as productive and unproductive labour. It implies resisting the fetishisation of theory into hard and fast categories by keeping concepts living and fluid.

At the same time, Holloway warns us that, "It is convenient to see the positivisation of science as being Engels's contribution to the Marxist tradition, although there are certainly dangers in over-emphasising the difference between Marx and Engels: the attempt to put all the blame on to Engels diverts attention from the contradictions that were undoubtedly present in Marx's own work" (Holloway 2002, p.119). The key tension in his work was this: the desire to build a universal theory that explains all of capitalism versus the recognition that attempting to do so removes it from its particular material and process-oriented foundation. The very fact that Marx has been interpreted in so many different ways attests to the unresolved tension between 'fetishism' and 'process' within his theoretical paradigm.[13] In attempting to resolve this tension, one can see a long history of attempts to decentre the factory and defetishise Marx's concepts.

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[12] In more recent work on social reproduction theory, Bhattacharya – following Lise Vogel – has argued differently, claiming that Marx understood labour power as being "produced outside the circuit of commodity production" (2017, p.73). Similarly, Hopkins, in drawing on Paul Smith, claims that the reproduction of labour power "takes place outside the capitalist mode of production" (2017, p.135). In the same volume, however, Mohandesi and Teitelman seem to have hedged this point, underscoring the way reproductive work has become part of this capitalist process: "We might say that the history of capitalism can be understood as a complex process of subsuming forms of social reproduction under capitalist relations" (2017, p.62). However, I think that these arguments miss the point of what Marx was trying to get at; the capitalist relation is one that traverses imagined boundaries between the factory and the home, between paid and unpaid work – an argument that I will take up later in this article.

[13] Because of the limitations of this article, I will not be able to go into more detail in order to demonstrate this tension. Instead, I will be relying on the work of others, particularly that of John Holloway and the wider tradition of Open Marxism.

Decentring the factory

In the 1950s and 60s, a range of theorists drawing especially on Mao and Gramsci, and informed by popular struggles at the time, began critiquing the theoretical situating of the factory as the primary site of anti-capitalist organising. In the struggle against colonialism, intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon resurrected Marx's *lumpenproletariat* – the slumdweller urban-underclass – as the more promising revolutionary subject of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements (Fanon 1963). This influenced a range of movements from the Algerian revolution to the Black Panthers. Similarly, intellectuals such as CLR James and George Padmore began centring race in their theories around the revolutionary potential of workers.[14]

Italian Workerism *(operaismo)* was influenced by many of these currents, particularly James' previous work in the Johnson-Forest Tendency (Wright 2008). It was Workerism which set the stage for a re-evaluation of Marxist interpretations of the value theory of labour, extending the analysis of workers' struggle outside the shop-floor and into the community to connect with students around a range of working class issues (Fortunati 2013). This became known as the "social factory". According to Mario Tronti:

> The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus-value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-exchange-consumption inevitably develops...At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society (Cleaver, 1992, 7).[15]

However, this concept, while expanding struggle outside the traditional factory, ignored the home as a key site of the production of surplus-value and therefore a key site of revolutionary resistance to capitalism. This is the contribution that a feminist analysis has brought to such previous debates about labour value.

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[14] They defined the worker more broadly. For instance, CLR James (2001) argued that we should consider Haitian slaves as a revolutionary proletariat despite them not being "free" labour.

[15] Marxist economists might argue that this interpretation of Marx flattened out the specificity of the commodity as a bearer of value under capitalism. In a sense, then, Workerism can also be understood as a critique of the utility (of at least traditional forms) of Marxist economics that focus on the calculation of commodity value – preferring to see Marx's work less as a science and more as a political tool of struggle.

Redefining surplus-value

Influenced by the decentring of the traditional factory worker as the revolutionary subject, Italian autonomist feminists[16] began writing critiques of Marx that turned the relationship between labour and value on its head. Militant intellectuals such as Dalla Costa, Selma James and Leopoldina Fortunati argued that surplus-value was also produced in the sphere of reproduction – including the unwaged work of producing the worker.[17] James has expressed it even more simply in her critique of trade union's blindness to housework: "When capital pays husbands they get two workers, not one" (2012, p.66). In other words, the capitalist system did not *just* rely on the exploitation of the worker in the factory to extract surplus-value, but *also* on the exploitation involved in the reproduction of the worker in the home (Dalla Costa & James 1975; Fortunati 1996).

Whereas previous feminist theory tended to see the movement of women from the home into the workforce as the solution to patriarchy,[18] this re-theorisation of value production understood the social experience of women[19] as being constituted, controlled and exploited by capital through the patriarchal family structure itself. Federici put it thus:

> At the the center of this critique is the argument that Marx's analysis of capitalism has been hampered by his inability to conceive of value-

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16 It should be noted that well before this strand of feminism emerged, Mary Inman had made a similar critique. Her "The Role of the Housewife in Social Production" (2015, originally 1940) got her chased out of the Communist Party USA.

17 There has been some debate over the details of whether in fact reproductive labour produces value or merely produces the productive worker. Whereas Fortunati (1996) asserts that value is produced from within the reproductive sphere, Dalla Costa, Selma James (1975) and some others imply that it is enough to show that the reproductive sphere produces the productive worker. James in particular, as part of a different intellectual tradition, has refused to see her approach as a critique of Marx himself, but rather an extension of what Marx had actually intended regarding the importance of the reproduction of labour-power (2012, pp.143–160). The journal *Aufheben* has a searing critique of Fortunati on this point arguing that she misrepresents Marx in claiming that labour-power is a commodity like any other. They assert "labour power as a special commodity different from others" (2005). Maya Gonzalez tackles this question, and *Aufheben*'s critique, by asserting its irrelevance: "if the debate revolves around whether reproductive labor is value-productive, we are still missing the point" (Gonzalez 2013). To her, the issue is that the wage relation is structured both in terms of those who are paid, but also in terms of those workers who are unpaid. While sympathising with Gonzalez's stance, I argue later in this article that redefining surplus-value to be inclusive of the reproductive sphere remains relevant and politically useful in rethinking Marxism for the 21st Century. This is precisely because it foregrounds surplus-value as a relationship and breaks down a rigid distinction between productive and reproductive labour.

18 See for instance Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (2001) among others.

19 In this article I employ the term "women" similarly to James: "Women act as a group because they are treated like one" (2012, p.25). "Women", in other words, are not a mere essentialist category, but are the expression of a social relation.

> producing work other than in the form of commodity production and his consequent blindness to the significance of women's unpaid reproductive work in the process of capitalist accumulation (Federici, 2012, 92).[20]

If, however, Marx's theories are truly opened up in an attempt to put them in conversation with real-life social processes, what would it look like? If we are to take seriously Marx's insistence that the reproductive sphere is an essential condition of capitalist development and Federici's insistence that reproductive work produces value for the capitalist that is indispensable for capitalist accumulation, then we would be forced to re-define the concept of surplus-value in such a way that housework and other reproductive work are appreciated.[21]

Cleaver, in re-reading Dalla Costa, attempts to underline how Marx's theory of value is not a theory of the value of labour in general, but specifically of value of labour *in relation* to capital. Its production in the home isn't merely a thing to be measured, but a social relation. He writes, "value is that quality of the labor/work [capital] imposes that consists of its means of social control" (2011); value is a social relation, not a quantifiable category. Dalla Costa further points out that as a critique of bourgeois capitalist accounting, Marx's work also needs to "account" for the way labour reproduces labour power. This can be done by thinking of how reproductive social relations actively produce surplus-value.

I will resist taking Harvie's sweeping approach and asserting only that "all labour produces value" (2005) thereby losing the important distinction between different kinds of value. Rather, in order to see surplus-value as a process rather than a category, it would be useful to make a distinction between where surplus-value is "produced" and where it is "extracted". The latter is already pretty clear: according to Marx, surplus-value is extracted from the work of the labourer at the point of production (such as, but not limited to, the factory).[22] Here, Marx is not very discerning in his terms since he uses production and extraction interchangeably, and sometimes (though inconsistently), he even makes a strange distinction between the production of surplus-*value* and the extraction of surplus-*labour*.[23]

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[20] Hopkins, thus, misreads Federici's argument as being about unpaid labour directly producing commodities (2017, p.134). One does not have to directly produce commodities or exchange value, in order to produce value for capital through the capitalist social relation.

[21] Some critics claim that Federici uses value simply as a moral category rather than as an analytical one. One of the aims of redefining surplus-value within this paper is to show how Federici's approach is useful both politically and analytically.

[22] Technically, as Cleaver points out, value isn't "produced" in the way commodities are. Rather, value is the accounting inherent in the relation of labour to capital (2011) – it is our conceptualisation of the flows of labour in relation to capital. The distinction, therefore, between production and extraction is a *political* one that helps us better understand these flows analytically without necessarily quantifying them economically.

[23] See for instance his use of the terms on pages 153, 194, 231, 400 and 420 (1887).

If one were to think critically in terms of process, however, one could make three related points regarding labour under capitalism:

a) Surplus-value is not a thing that a person has, nor is it a number that can be quantified. Rather it is a relation that a person can embody at particular points in time.

b) The production of surplus-value necessarily, by definition, precedes its extraction.

c) Finally, and most importantly, the production and existence of surplus-value is contingent upon its eventual extraction (and not solely the other way around).

In other words, surplus-value can only exist as a relation to capital on the basis that it is eventually extracted and turned into capital through the sale of commodities. If this relation is disrupted at any point, surplus-value ceases to exist.

Or put more generally, Marx's surplus-value can only be produced for the capitalist within social relations that are capitalistic. If then, as Marx points out, the sphere of reproduction is necessarily capitalistic (1887, p.401),[24] it must follow that surplus-value (understood as a social relation) *can* be produced at any point in the process of reproduction and conveyed, in terms of labour-power, through the exploited worker (who can then store it and embody it as a relationship on behalf of system of capitalist social relations[25]) in anticipation that it is eventually extracted from their labour-power.[26]

This makes sense, as Fortunati (1996) as well as Dalla Costa and James (1975) point out, from the perspective of an unpaid worker doing housework. *She* not only feeds her husband who labours for a capitalist, but also bears children and raises them to also become productive and reproductive labourers for capital. She is producing labour-power and therefore simultaneously also producing a relationship which embodies surplus-value for potential extraction by capital.

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[24] That is, the sphere of reproduction can produce for the capitalist even if the capitalist relation may not be immediately evident and may *seem* to be "non-capitalist" (for example relations of slave, subsistence, unpaid and communal labour, etc.)

[25] The worker stores or embodies surplus-value only in a conceptual sense since it really only exists within the entire set of capitalist social relations. That said, because the worker exploited directly by the capitalist can conceptually embody surplus-value, it does imply a certain (patriarchal) relation of exploitation between the unpaid houseworker(s) and this (usually male) paid worker. Recognising this has important implications regarding whether the male worker can be considered an exploiter of labour in *his* own right.

[26] Marx does not make this distinction between production and extraction of surplus-value with regards to the reproduction of labour-power. However, in *Capital* (Volume III, Chapter Nine), he does say that, with regards to the different sectors of production, surplus-value can be accrued in one (where it is in surplus) and realised in another (where it is lacking). This is not the same thing as saying it is produced in the sphere of reproduction and extracted from directly productive labour. However, this does demonstrate Marx's point that surplus-value is best understood, not as a number, but as an accounting of social relations.

This also makes sense from the perspective of the capitalist who often knows that, in purchasing an individual's labour-power, they are also potentially purchasing the labour-power of an entire family. For the capitalist, "the value of labour-power was determined, not only by the labour-time necessary to maintain the individual adult labourer, but also by that necessary to maintain his family" (Marx 1887, p.272). In other words, though Marx didn't recognise this, the family not only produces value in general, but specifically produces surplus-value for the capitalist. The surplus-value is then embodied as labour-power via capitalist social relations so that it can eventually be extracted by capital.

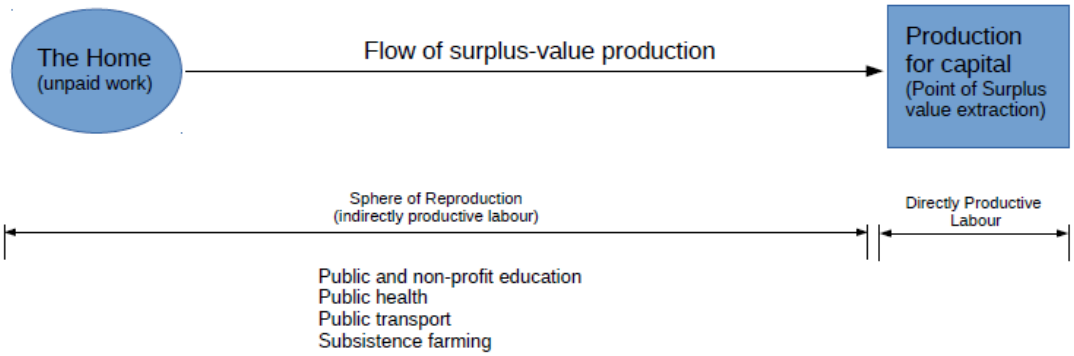
Even though Marx asserts that for the Capitalist, this "is a process which occurs behind his back, one he does not see, nor understand" (1999, p.123), this does not seem to always be the case. Recognising the value of reproduction in the home is why, for instance, apartheid era mining capital was so supportive of segregation through the Group Areas Act. In South Africa, subsistence farming in the "Bantustans" reproduced Black labour thereby making its purchase much less expensive (Wolpe 1972). Wolpe shows that, in this context of internal colonialism, the capitalist is aware that cheap labour-power (and therefore, as I argue, surplus-value) is produced in the sphere of reproduction. But this argument can be posited beyond the South African colonial context to all forms of reproductive work. As Cleaver puts it, "Capital can achieve higher rates of surplus-value if it can shift the burden of meeting the reproduction needs of the working class from commodity production to domestic work" (2011). This process should certainly be seen beyond mere value production, and specifically as the contribution to higher rates of surplus-value extraction for capital thereby demonstrating why reproductive labour in the Bantustans should be considered "productive" – even if only indirectly. Consequently, contrary to Hopkins' argument (2017, p.135), unpaid domestic labour actually effects and is affected by changes in the market price of directly productive labour power.

Given the reformulation of surplus-labour, the productive/unproductive distinction also needs to be retheorised. Some, such as Antonio Negri, advocate doing away with the distinction altogether (Harvie 2005, p.132). On the other hand, Harvie himself attempts to expand productive labour to include all labour that produces and reproduces for capitalism; the struggle to make such labour unproductive is part of the struggle against capitalism itself (2005, p.133).

Still, I would suggest taking a third approach whereby one would make a tripartite distinction[27] between "directly" productive labour, "indirectly" productive labour and unproductive labour. The first fits well with the more traditional definition of productive labour. On the other hand, the concept of indirectly productive labour suggests the existence of labour that contributes to

[27] This would necessarily be a soft distinction that would err towards being more conceptual than material. It would resist the idea that these boundaries are rigid and impermeable – that labour can simultaneously embody productive and unproductive elements in tension with one another.

surplus-value production while not being directly extracted by the capitalist.[28] Being "indirect", it flags for us the way surplus-value is hidden in the reproductive relationship with the productive worker. Unproductive labour,[29] therefore, would include any labour that has not been made to produce for capital, or which has refused/resisted capitalist forms of production and reproduction altogether.[30] In making these distinctions, it then becomes easier to conceive of a theoretical centring of the sphere of reproduction.



Centring social reproduction

Through this redefinition, a few points become clear. Firstly, there is a difference between directly and indirectly productive labour, but, while that is worth engaging with, this distinction is limited by the very fact that both remain part of the same social relation. It is not worth hardening this distinction: the difference is therefore not a value-laden one implying a hierarchy in the realm of struggle. Secondly, the indirect nature of productive labour in the sphere of reproduction tends to *further* obscure the capitalist social relation in comparison with directly productive labour. This means that those struggling in the sphere of reproduction need to also struggle for their labour to be seen and ideologically valued in the first place. Finally, both types of productive labour suggest different but overlapping and complementary ways of resisting capitalism. This suggests a feasible confluence of, for instance, labour union and other social movement struggles.

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28 Marx was clearly against considering this type of labour as productive. Following Adam Smith, he writes that doing so "would open the flood-gates for false pretensions to the title of productive labour" (1969, p.158).

29 This, of course, does not make such labour 'unproductive' in a material sense, but only 'unproductive' in relation to capitalism.

30 I provide examples of such resistance against producing surplus-value near the end of this article. Contrary to Harvie's assertion, "we" do not struggle against value in general, but against the production/extraction of surplus-value in particular because it is the latter which produces the capitalist social relation within the current system.

Theoretically, one could then trace value extracted by capitalists back to every site where it is produced thereby exposing the way it operates within the capitalist social relation.[31] Contrary to counter-critiques, this does not corroborate Ricardian theories of value, wherein one can add up different types of labour in varying sectors and measure them against one another (Ricardo 1817). Rather, the factory itself becomes decentred - being better understood as a collection of social relationships throughout society mobilised for profit by the capitalist.[32]

The re-articulation of value theory requires understanding that the logic of capitalism - or as Tronti put it, the 'social factory' - pervades most aspects of life. When the capitalist purchases the labour-power of the worker, this person is purchasing more than their hours worked. The capitalist is also indirectly purchasing the labour of entire families who produce the worker, of the teacher who educates the worker, and of the doctor who ensures the worker's adequate health to work.[33]

I distinguish between the locations where surplus-value is extracted by capital and where it is produced to demonstrate how capitalist work flows operate in practice. Whereas surplus-value can be extracted from a single node, it is social relations within society (within the community, various institutions and the home) that allow for this value produced in the social factory to circulate. Understanding that surplus-value is produced before it is extracted forces us to centre the sphere of social reproduction in our understanding of the workings of capitalism.

This is not because of a hierarchy in struggle or because factory work is no longer important,[34] but because of the fact that such social relations are doubly obscured. Not only are such social relations hidden by capitalism as a whole, they are also concealed by the fact that its work is unpaid and therefore not

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31 Fortunati is sometimes mocked for writing that a mother smiling at her child can be considered value producing work (*Aufheben* 2005). The relevant question, however, is to what extent "mothering" produces value in the child that at some stage in the future can be extracted from them. This depends not only on the act of mothering, but also on socio-economic circumstance and the relationship of the mother and child to current and future capitalist production.

32 Quantifying surplus-value runs into a number of problems including the fact that such values cannot be fixed or aggregated – hence the necessary distinction between understanding the social relation as a process which produces value and futile Ricardian attempts to measure it. This, likewise, questions economistic attempts to use Marx's method to do the same.

33 Under "socialised" education and health systems, the teacher and doctor are paid by taxes on profit (realised surplus-value). The liberal capitalist rationalisation for such forms of welfare is that this redistribution of profit ends up producing a more productive worker and therefore assisting in the extraction of more surplus-value in the long run.

34 Indeed, despite de-industrialisation in the Global North, the factory has become a central part of the working experience in much of Asia - most prominently within China. While valuing the reproductive sphere, this should not be undervalued.

officially recognised.[35] Centring social reproduction allows us to challenge exploitation and other forms of oppression at the same time. Seen this way, the entire social factory as re-articulated above, starting from "point zero" (the kitchen, bedroom and home), becomes recentred as a potential site of resistance to capitalism (Federici 2012).

This reformulation, then, serves a political function: on the one hand it demonstrates that capital has an interest in *coopting* and *managing* all value-producing work and, on the other hand, it implies that those resisting capitalism must be able to understand how capital uses and benefits from this work. Understanding how and where one can create obstructions to the circulation of value produced for extraction and ways one can reorient value production away from such purposes is key to theorising resistance today. In evaluating strategies of anti-capitalist action, we must also evaluate whether such action is preventing the continued production and circulation of surplus-value for capital.

Recentring anti-systemic struggle

In seeking an alternative to bourgeois political economy, orthodox Marxists have created a new form of crude positivism under the rubric of "scientific socialism". However, challenging this entails more than returning to a strict fidelity with Marx.

One alternative has been to challenge Marxist claims to universalism: despite being based on real abstractions, Marx's method can never fully capture the complex diversity under which capitalism works throughout the world. New approaches that rethink Marxism have sought to go beyond the assumption that scientific materialism is capable of articulating the essence of capitalism. This, for instance, is the method undertaken by thinkers in the Subaltern Studies tradition such as Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* (2000) and by those in the Black radical tradition, such as Cedric Robinson in *Black Marxism* (2000).[36]

Although I share much affinity with this approach, the goal of this article has been to take on Marx's theory of surplus-value using his own categories of analysis as per a libertarian Marxist tradition (thereby taking this universalist project for granted). From there, I have attempted to re-work Marx's theory of

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35 While the capitalist often comprehends the value of this unpaid work, he is simultaneously interested in making sure it is not *recognised* as such.

36 In Alberto Toscano's "The Open Secret of Real Abstraction" (2008), he engages with Finelli's assertion that Marx's method of theoretical abstraction is "capable of articulating an entire society" (2008, p.276) simply because it is drawn from the real abstraction of labour under capitalism. But such a claim, I would argue, is a fool's errand. A deeper discussion of this cannot be the focus of this article – suffice acknowledging Subaltern Studies and Black radical critiques. As Robin Kelley points out in his new Foreword to *Black Marxism*, "Eventually, Robinson came to the conclusion that it is not enough to reshape or reformulate Marxism to fit the needs of Third World revolution; instead, he believed all universalist theories of political and social order had to be rejected" (Robinson 2000, p.xvi).

value in such a way that it is brought back into conversation with actually existing struggles against capitalism.

Re-evaluating where surplus-value is produced has centred the reproductive sphere as an important space of struggle because, without it, extraction by capital simply cannot take place. If in the old conception, disrupting the production of surplus-value could only happen at the site of extraction (such as in the factory), this new formulation understands that the surplus-value mobilised through the worker is produced, and therefore could be challenged and disrupted, in all spheres of capitalistic work. This informs at least three overlapping ways of conceptualising anti-systemic struggle: (a) combining struggles in all value producing spheres through social movement unionism, (b) disrupting surplus-value production at various levels of society, and, finally, (c) building alternatives that operate against the production of value for capital.

(A) Linking the chain of value production

Autonomist feminist decentering of surplus-value production has the ability to illuminate the linking of social movement and union struggles. If the 'housewife', as an unpaid worker, produces value that is then extracted by capital, social movement approaches to unionism would not treat her as a mere member of the organisation; rather, it would actually centre strike action around working-class homes and communities. In doing so, the power of strikes and other actions are strengthened – forcing capital to contend with labour withdrawal and surplus-value disruption from multiple angles.

For instance, South Africa has a long history of this type of struggle driven specifically by workers doing unpaid labour in the home. During the 1960s, the well-known boycotts of Simba Chips and of Colgate were synchronised with with strikes in those factories. As Camalita Naicker notes, it was women in the home who were "at the centre of these activities and [made] decisions about which household good to buy and where to buy them. They are certainly the ones who keep these boycotts alive" (2014, p.54).

Boycotts, of course, are linked to the other side of the productive sphere where the collective goal is to disrupt the circulation of commodities which allow for the realisation of extracted surplus-value as profit. However, it is no coincidence that women who make decisions about what to buy as part of their reproductive work in the home have historically driven most boycotts. In this sense, when women take ownership over strike and boycott action, they are recognising the centrality of their own labour in linking commodity consumption to the home and in coordinating (and often bearing the brunt of) the withdrawal of labour of various family members. This recognition of the power of the reproductive sphere usually happens without explicit reference to surplus-value; still, their understanding of how their work is central to the realisation of profit and the reproduction of the factory worker is clear.

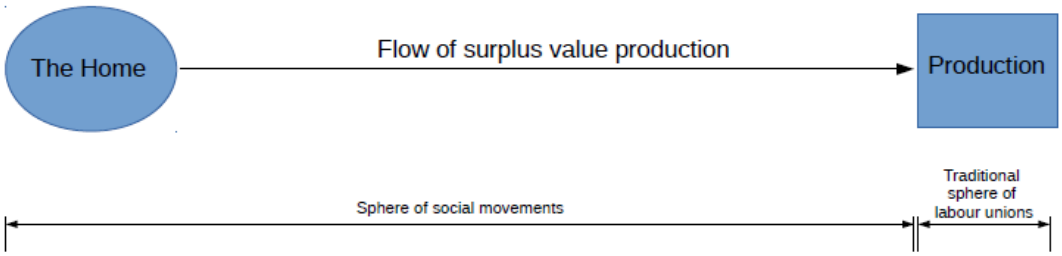
A similar recognition was also at play during the 2012 Marikana miners' strike in South Africa. As the primarily male workers of Lonmin went on a wildcat

strike, the action grew into a general strike in the shack settlement of Nkaneng that included both waged and unwaged women and children as well as informal traders and minibus taxi operators. The women's association, Sikhala Sonke, not only fed strikers occupying a nearby hill, but led their own actions such as shutting down local commerce and organising women's marches against police brutality (Naicker 2015).

Likewise, during the 2012/2013 wildcat farmworkers' strike in the Western Cape, South Africa, whole communities erupted in protest around wage and service delivery issues. Blocking roads, protesters convinced even petty traders and minibus owners to join, thereby making it difficult for other workers to get to the farms. Women were key in expanding the strike to include reproductive issues such as housing and service delivery. When established trade unions attempted to end the work stoppage, it was the poor and unemployed – i.e. those doing reproductive work – who refused to toe the line, pressuring farmworkers to maintain the strike (Davis, 2013; Sacks, 2012).

As with the boycotts, these community actions drew on the recognition that reproductive strikes prevent labour-power from reaching the site of surplus-value extraction (e.g. the mine or the farm). In preventing the operation of public transport and shutting down local businesses in these towns, along with the rank-and-file organising women were doing in the community, this was not simply a matter of striking at the point of production. Rather, it was the recognition by reproductive labour that their work in the community had value for capital. In particular, taxi operators and informal traders should be understood also as providing reproductive services, circulating the surplus-value embodied in the directly productive worker. Without such services, strike-breaking workers would have to do more reproductive work themselves in order to reach the the point of extraction at the mine or farm. In other words, these general strikes contribute to the disruption in the flow of surplus-value.

Because women, as Federici explains, are especially oppressed and exploited within the reproductive sphere, the home and community constitute a particularly effective space for organising resistance through disrupting the production of surplus-value (2012). What these struggles have in common, what drove their ability to pressure both capital and the state to negotiate, was the linking of different sites of surplus-value production. In all these cases, it was the *combined* pressure of a strike in the spheres of production and reproduction, not merely the withdrawal of labour by the 'productive' workers, that eventually forced capital's hand.



Strategy #1: Social movement unionism. The power to disrupt the flow of surplus-value can happen throughout both spheres of reproduction and production. It can also happen beyond the production process where commodities need to circulate.

(B) Disrupting surplus-value production

Even where social movement unionism is not present to drive struggles, the concept of new social movements has been used to understand the proliferation of community-based struggles outside the factory. These are usually driven by women who have focused on reproductive issues such as housing and service delivery. Whereas orthodox Marxism tended to relegate such concerns to the periphery, centring the sphere of reproduction, or "point zero" (Federici 2012) can show how disrupting value production puts pressure on the extraction of surplus-value. One general example should suffice in making this point.

The road blockade is a common protest tactic of the world's poor and unemployed. As Anne Harley explains, "these [tactics] are the functional equivalents of factory workers downing their tools...Instead of directly stopping production, they stop input and outputs from production" (2014, 9). Her article specifically refers to the struggle of unemployed *piqueteros* in Argentina and the shackdwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo in South Africa. Both movements utilise road blockades to disrupt the normal workings of capitalist society. The road blockade can not only undermine factory production and prevent goods being delivered to the market, it can also keep children from getting to school, create shortages of food, and can prevent workers from getting to their jobs (Harley 2014).[37] In other words, the road blockade specifically acts to disrupt reproduction on a societal level by putting a spanner into the works of surplus-value production.

This is why the road blockade (and relatedly: the barricade) has become a powerful tool of resistance in many societies, particularly in Latin America (Zibechi 2012; Zibechi 2010). In Bolivia, Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar has documented its extensive use by Aymara movements to not only make their

[37] Even disrupting logistics in the productive sphere can affect reproduction at the community level. If the petrol stations or supermarkets are empty, reproduction is disrupted.

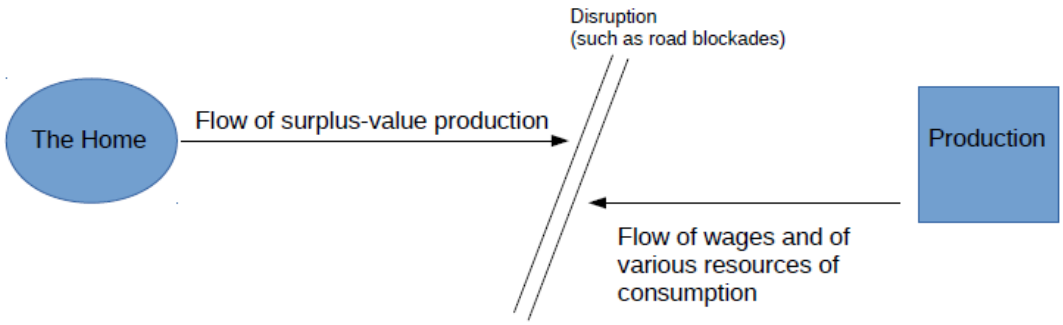
struggle visible but also disrupt the normal functioning of the state and the capitalist economy while laying the groundwork for the assertion of indigenous autonomy (2014). Even more recently, the road blockade has emerged as one of the most powerful protest tools of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States (Badger 2016).

This tactic can be particularly effective if the target goes beyond a specific business sector and attempts to force concessions from capital in general and its representatives in government. In preventing the general circulation of commodities, it disrupts the systematic realisation of surplus-value as profit. However, at the very same time, it prevents the consumption of these commodities which effects the sphere of reproduction, making it also difficult for the reproduction of labour to take place in targeted spaces. Further, in disrupting the normal reproductive processes, such as grocery shopping, schooling and transport to work, significant pressure is put on government to intervene to forestall wider effects on the economy caused by a drop in the production, extraction and circulation of surplus-value.

While the road blockade affects various different spheres of the production process, its base tends to be drawn from workers in the reproductive sphere who recognise that their position as producers of value for capital in communities enables them to have significant economic effects on all capitalistic spheres, not just that of the formal workplace. In other words, a factory strike can shut down the extraction of surplus-value at one specific point; a road blockade can have much wider effects beyond that specific node. This pressure by movements drawn from the sphere of reproduction can reverberate powerfully throughout society, forcing even the strongest economies and their governments to cede to protester demands.

While the road blockade may be especially disruptive, other strategies abound: from the general reduction in birthrates since the 70s (Chamie 2015), to the politicised refusal of women to provide sexual pleasure – which they considered a form of labour – to their husbands (Braw 2012), to the 1975 general women's strike in Iceland (Vishmidt 2013) which interrupted forms of unpaid and paid labour throughout the country. Such pressure primarily from the reproductive sphere can, at times, be strong enough to force significant concessions from capitalists and governments alike. Understanding the relevance of these struggles outside the factory is therefore essential towards rationalising their political force.

At the same time, such an approach has its limitations, especially over an extended period. As Federici points out, "reproductive labour is important for the continuation of working class struggle…if we refuse it completely we risk destroying ourselves and the people we care for." (Vishmidt 2013). Therefore, such disruptive strategies can only be a partial strategy of resistance. Refusing to produce surplus-value needs to be accompanied by the activation of "unproductive" labour in the sphere of reproduction that is explicitly de-linked from capitalist commodity chains (Federici, 2012, 144).



Strategy #2: Disruption of surplus-value production: This can be effective in terms of disrupting value production and circulation at specific companies but also for society as a whole. This cannot be a long-term strategy as the sphere of reproduction is deprived of the necessary resources for consumption and further reproduction

(C) Reproduction and "the commons"

Disruptive struggles that demand concessions and reforms from the capitalist system can only take resistance so far. Since, as Peter Linebaugh has explained, "reproduction precedes social production" (2009, 244), the extraction of surplus-value cannot happen without its production by women's labour in the reproductive sphere. Theorising reproduction as 'point zero' of surplus-value production and at a temporal distance from where it can be extracted, forces us to think of long-term strategies that refuse to work for capitalism. Given the lackluster history of state-centric attempts at revolution (Holloway 2002), alternatives have emerged in the concept of "the commons", physical or intangible property held in common by groups of people. As Linebaugh has shown, the commons have existed throughout history – in particular, as part of struggles resisting capital accumulation through enclosure (2009). Practically, and with varying effectiveness, the reproduction of the commons can take the form of a communal urban farm in New York, a cooperative kitchen such as "ola communes" in Peru, or a reorganisation of the neighborhood for collective housekeeping and childcare (Federici 2012).

The ultimate goal – even if not explicitly – is the reproduction of life for itself rather than in the interests of capital. The Zapatistas, for instance, have harnessed indigenous communal traditions and the collective power of their members (who would otherwise be increasingly exploited on capitalist farms or in maquiladora factories) to occupy land[38] and grow food for their own internal consumption, to provide free education and healthcare in its villages, and to

[38] They have "recuperated" hundreds of thousands of hectares of land from latifundistas (Grubačić and O'Hearn, 2016, p. 129)

create cooperatively-run organisations producing coffee, as well as artisan and other products to non-Zapatista consumers (Ramírez, 2008; Grubačić and O'Hearn, 2016). This has, simultaneously kept members from starvation under the precarious post-1994 NAFTA economic conditions, while also kept them insulated from oppressive and exploitative working conditions outside their collectively organised communities. Instead of creating surplus-value through reproducing the capitalist farm or factory, they have defended existing indigenous communal practices while also building entire communities de-linked from this process.

The political and economic consequence of this is that neither the sites of production or reproduction among the Zapatists produce much surplus-value for capitalists; in other words, the primary function of their communities is not as a reserve army of labour for capital. Rather, they reproduce unproductive labour, as well as services and goods which have a collective social value for their collective commons.[39] Thinking of surplus-value in this way does not make it possible to track rates of exploitation, but it does allow us to see what kinds of values are being produced through various social relations. It forces us to look directly for anti-capitalist communal forms of organisation that refuse capitalistic social relations.

However this does not mean that all or even most commons are sites of resistance. For instance, urban farms, especially when there is a breakdown in the food distribution market, can exist quite comfortably as a reproductive bulwark for other capitalist social relations. For this reason, Dalla Costa and James warn that:

> The question is not to have communal canteens. We must remember that capital makes Fiat for the workers first, then their canteen. For this reason to demand a communal canteen in the neighborhood without integrating this demand into a practice of struggle against the organization of labor, against labor time, risks giving the impetus for a new leap that, on the community level, would regiment none other than women in some alluring work so that we will then have the possibility at lunchtime of eating shit collectively in the canteen (1975, 23–24).

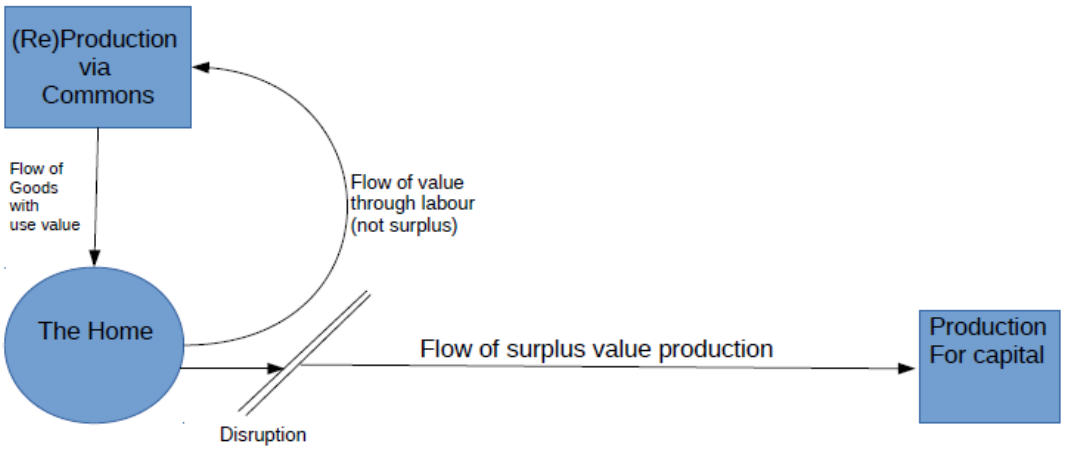
In other words, collective and *seemingly* anti-capitalist "modes of production" can paradoxically be of service to capital by creating more efficient and unseen ways of reproducing the worker for capital. This is the upshot of Wolpe's famous

[39] It is worth noting that despite the objective success of struggles such as that of the Zapatistas, no current project to reproduce the commons is fully divorced from capitalist social relations. The Zapatistas are no exception; their ability to resist is limited by a number of factors and capitalist social relations tend to eat away at the long-term efficacy of communal ones. For instance, a significant number of Zapatistas have migrated to work elsewhere in Mexico or to the United States (Fuller, Werman and Estey, 2011). This has a number of implications which cannot be dealt with here. Still, what is important to note, is that their commons remain resilient in the face of these threats.

thesis on "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa" (1972): Subsistence and even radically egalitarian ways of organising groups of people can have the effect of reproducing the worker so that capital can extract more value by paying wages below normal costs of reproduction. Indeed, certain sectors of capital know this and therefore specifically seek in many instances to maintain unpaid communal forms of reproduction outside the state – thereby obscuring its worth as surplus-value producing work.

This way of looking at social organisation is also the rationale behind mainstream economics' recent focus on social capital and gift economies. These economists have attempted to show how the commons can "be made to produce for the market" (Federici, 2012, 140). Our praxis, then, must conceptually link the struggle for the commons to the issue of disrupting surplus-value production. "Commoning" can only be anti-systemic when reproduction happens for its own sake rather than for the sake of capital. Put another way, the struggle for the commons must simultaneously also be a struggle to make labour 'unproductive' through disrupting the flows of surplus-value. Federici extols us therefore to "disentangle those aspects of domestic work that reproduced us from those that reproduced capital" (Vishmidt 2013).

Taken to its logical conclusion, the understanding that surplus-value is first produced at the site of reproduction forces us to rethink our whole approach to revolutionary struggle. Instead of systematic change being understood as the capture of state power by a party that represents the working class, revolution is reconceptualised as the prefiguring of a more just society through a reorganisation of reproduction outside of capitalist exploitation while at the same time disrupting social relations that extract value from people's labour. It is precisely through this debate about the (re)production of capitalism, that resistance can be re-articulated in the service of the struggle for an alternative society.



Strategy 3: The Commons. This is a form of reproduction for its own sake. Strategies can include communal forms of reproduction and cooperative forms of production. As such reproductive/productive spheres tend to collapse into one another.

Conclusion

History demonstrates that the struggle against alienation and exploitation do not only take place within the productive factory – however important it may be. Resistance also materialises in the home (hooks 1990), in the social factory (Cleaver 1992), and throughout society in general. When bell hooks sees the homeplace as a site of resistance, she is not disregarding the home as a space of exploitation and oppression. She recounts growing up in a household in which her mother, more than her father, imposed patriarchal discipline and gender norms in the process of reproducing the working family (hooks 1987). In thinking reflexively about her past, she is able to understand this process without the lens of Marxist political economy. As with her own experiential understanding, past struggles at the site of reproduction have not necessarily needed Marxist theory to legitimate its validity.

Rethinking Marx's theory of value becomes a useful tool for these struggles precisely because it helps link oppressive experiences foregrounded by hooks and other feminists with how this is simultaneously a form of economic exploitation for capital. In doing so, one is not just critiquing how many Marxists have – like their pro-capitalist counterparts – obscured the value of unpaid housework; one is also opening up new ways of seeing the surplus-value flows within the capitalist system and how this can be resisted through collective action.

The urban poor (often without a permanent homeplace) have also become a key radical actor as the majority of humanity has migrated into cities. While much of this underclass works long hours in factories, many live and work much more

precariously. As a result of urbanisation under capitalist dispossession, land occupations and eviction resistance are reasserting the home as a primary site of resistance, latching on to new strategies for disrupting value production for capital. Such forms of struggle, therefore, can be considered acts of "insurgent commoning". They not only affirm bell hooks' focus on homeplace but also substantiate an autonomist feminist recentring of labour value theory at the sphere of reproduction. As such, the urban poor, of whose struggles woman usually predominate, are reinvigorating such theory – as the renewed interest in Marx's value theory and the work of people like Silvia Federici shows.

Many current social movement struggles are being informed by a diverse new range of leftist theory. Breaking the hold that orthodox Marxism once had on political action and concentrating theoretically on the sphere of reproduction in the building of resistance to capitalism has been essential to the increasing diversity of reflexive thinking within many of these struggles. This has taken many forms – from social movement unionism, to disruptive struggles that seek concessions from the state and capital, to the broadly territorial movements building a new commons. The goal of this article has been to rethink the way we understand Marx's theory of value so that it can be brought back into conversation with social movement theories that are not necessarily "Marxist". New concepts that see value in reproductive space, particularly through differentiating between where it is produced and extracted, have the capacity to influence these struggles – but only if the relationship is reciprocal in the way that autonomist feminist praxis has always demanded. Let this be, then, part of a call towards such a potential convergence.

Acknowledgements

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The autonomy of struggles and the self-management of squats: legacies of intertwined movements

Miguel A. Martínez

Abstract

How do squatters' movements make a difference in urban politics? Their singularity in European cities has often been interpreted according to the major notion of 'autonomy'. However, despite the recent upsurge of studies about squatting (Cattaneo et al. 2014, Katsiaficas 2006, Martínez et al. 2018, Van der Steen et al. 2014), there has not been much clarification of its theoretical, historical and political significance. Autonomism has also been identified as one of the main ideological sources of the recent global justice and anti-austerity movements (Flesher 2014) after being widely diffused among European squatters for more than four decades, which prompts a question about the meaning of its legacy. In this article, I first examine the political background of autonomism as a distinct identity among radical movements in Europe in general (Flesher et al. 2013, Wennerhag et al. 2018), and the squatters in particular—though not often explicitly defined. Secondly, I stress the social, feminist and anti-capitalist dimensions of autonomy that stem from the multiple and specific struggles in which squatters were involved over different historical periods. These aspects have been overlooked or not sufficiently examined by the literature on squatting movements. By revisiting relevant events and discourses of the autonomist tradition linked to squatting in Italy, Germany and Spain, its main traits and some contradictions are presented. Although political contexts indicate different emphases in each case, some common origins and transnational exchanges justify an underlying convergence and its legacies over time. I contend that autonomism is better understood by focusing on the social nature of the separate struggles by the oppressed in terms of self-management, collective reproduction and political aggregation rather than highlighting the individualistic view in which personal desires and independence prevail. This interpretation also implies that autonomy for squatters consists of practices of collective micro-resistance to systemic forms of domination which politicise private spheres of everyday life instead of retreating to them.

Keywords: Autonomy, squatting, feminism, anti-capitalism, Europe

Introduction

Once squatters' movements become visible, articulated, durable and challenging to the status quo, there is an increasing elaboration of political discourse. This process is usually controversial, both internally and externally. Not all branches or factions of the movements agree with the major narratives about the nature of squatting. Some of these narratives in circulation are so intimately related to academic debates that the boundaries between both realms can also appear relatively blurred. This is the case with the notions of 'autonomy' and an 'autonomous movement' which have permeated many theoretical understandings of squatting over time, despite the indifference or disdain of some activists. In this article I argue that autonomist approaches have widely circulated among squatters all over Europe and provided an often implicit or vague identity for most of them. However, what is the meaning of autonomy? By revisiting the accounts of autonomist and squatters' movements in Italy, Germany and Spain, I will show the relevance of the social aspects of autonomy, which are sometimes obscured by more individualistic interpretations. In addition, I suggest that anti-capitalist stances, feminism and solidarity with migrants have significantly contributed to the ideological meaning of autonomy, which has especially influenced the way squatters—especially its most politicised branches—manage their occupied spaces. This approach delineates the prevailing left-libertarian tenets as well as the squatting practices of houses and social centres, while helping to distinguish them from the occasional cases of far-right squats.

Autonomist politics emerged first from radical workers' struggles but squatters followed suit. During the 1960s and 1970s, squatting combined autonomist, countercultural and feminist inputs, although the latter are not so frequently highlighted by the literature. The connection of struggles across urban territory and different social issues found fertile ground in the squatted social centres, usually in tight connection with housing campaigns and squatting actions too. Principles, memories, and examples from these autonomous experiences became adopted by the global justice movement around 2000 and, again, by the anti-austerity mobilisations a decade later (Flesher 2014), which indicates their long-lasting influence.

In my interpretation, the main misunderstanding about autonomism is the role played by 'individual autonomy' as a 'politics of the first person', a 'politics of desire' or the prevalence of individuals over organisations (Flesher 2007, Gil 2011, Katsiaficas 2006, Pruijt and Roggeband 2014). Although most authors mention this individualistic feature to distinguish autonomism from the more authoritarian, hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations of the institutional left, I do not find this view very informative. Instead, as I shall argue, the expression 'social autonomy' seems to capture more accurately the central concerns of the collective practice of horizontal direct democracy and self-management fostered by autonomists. Even the feminist insights reveal that issues usually considered personal and private are politicised by making them socially visible and publicly debated. In addition, the radical independence of

both the struggles and the oppressed groups is always voiced in a relational manner, not as individual independence: first, by identifying the social sources and dynamics of oppression; and second, and in a collective way, by empowering those who cooperate with each other in order to get rid of their perceived oppressions. More than a tension between the individual and the social dimensions present in all social phenomena, I argue that it is the specific emphasis given to the 'political method' of autonomism (self-organisation and self-management, autonomy from capitalism, patriarchy and racism) and their 'immediatist' engagement in various contentious campaigns that makes it distinct compared to other political identities.

Although massive occupations of houses took place in some European countries in the aftermath of the Second World War, and many housing movements resorted to squatting as their main protest action (Aguilera 2018, Bailey 1973, Mudu 2014), squatters' movements developed their autonomist bases starting in the mid-1960s with the eruption of countercultural groups such as the Provos in the Netherlands (Dadusc 2017: 24, Smart 2014: 113) and the Situationist International group (see, for example, Debord 1967, Knabb 1997, Sadler 1998). Moreover, feminism provided a framework to challenge 'everyday life' around social reproduction and housework beyond the housing question at large (provision, access, affordability, policies, etc.). However, the self-management of social relations and spaces within squatted houses and social centres did not imply a fully liberated space from capitalism, patriarchy, and racism (Kadir 2016). Feminist groups and campaigns thus proved crucial in persuading autonomists and squatters of the need to incorporate their demands into radical politics (Bhattacharya et al. 2017, Federici 2012, Fraser 2008).

In the next sections, I review the main references in the literature that help to make my case. Only three countries are selected (two from Southern Europe and one from the North), but it suffices to disentangle the intertwined relations of autonomist struggles and the historical origins of the notion of autonomy. I recall this debate because I noticed its legacies in the squats I visited, read about or joined as an activist during the past two decades all over Europe. However, the allusions to the autonomist notions and related events were seldom unequivocal.

Italy: from the factory to metropolitan struggles

The influences of anarchism, heterodox (anti-state) Marxism, anti-institutionalism and countercultural anti-authoritarian politics in the 'new social movements' and the 'new left' after-1968 were pervasive in squatting activism, although at different paces in each country (Van der Steen et al. 2014). These first trends of a vague autonomist movement had another precedent in the Italian Marxist-inspired *Operaismo* (workerism). This intellectual and political group had been sowing the seeds of autonomist politics since the early 1960s by focusing on the autonomy of workers' struggles from political parties and from labour unions. They also launched activist self-research (*coricerca*)

with factory workers and favoured wildcat strikes, absenteeism and sabotage on the assembly line (Balestrini and Moroni 1997, Katsiaficas 2006: 17–57). Leftist intellectuals and students engaged with class struggles in which the lowest tiers of the proletariat and the workers' viewpoint were expected to take the lead. A full opposition to salaried work and an invitation to take over the factories were a decisive inspiration for those who started occupying empty buildings and setting up squatted self-managed social centres (*Centri Sociali*) some years later, especially around the large mobilisation peaks of 1967–69 and 1976–77.

This move, as Geronimo recalls, had its roots in the defeat of many labour struggles, the transformation of the productive system and the rise of the precarious class, which merged impoverished university graduates, casual workers and unemployed people: "[Militants] looted supermarkets… rode public transport for free, refused to pay for rock concerts and movie screenings… [and some] used guns… ravaged hotels, and hundreds of cars and buses [were] toppled and torched." (Geronimo 2012: 42–45) Both Geronimo and Kastiaficas (2006: 65–66, 188) acknowledge that the Italian *Autonomia* was so influential in German extra-parliamentary politics that these activists changed their own name to the *Autonomen* by 1979–80. Danish political squatters did the same in the late-1980s, precisely when most political squats were evicted and anti-fascism, anti-racism and anti-imperialism replaced the priority hitherto enjoyed by squatting (Karpantschof and Mikkelsen 2014: 188–193).

Workerism was the origin of autonomism, but the occupations of houses and social centres, along with tenants' struggles, were already in place and often supported by the Italian Communist Party (Mudu and Rossini 2018: 100). The turn to autonomism started with a wave of occupations around 1968, especially in large cities such as Milan. For example, located in Piazza Fontana, the very heart of the city, was the squatted "Ex Hotel Commercio". Run by university students in alliance with many political groups and the local tenants' union, it was considered "the largest urban commune… in Europe" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 276; Martin and Moroni 2007). Despite the call for the autonomy of the struggles, and as a reaction to harsh state repression and several fascist murders (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 363, 542), workerist activists set up multiple extra-parliamentary parties and organisations (Lotta Continua, Potere Operaio, Avanguardia Operaia, etc.) over the 1970s who joined anarchists, feminists, situationists, students and housing activists in the squatted social centres of the following decades. These groups were short-lived, but their promotion of workers' autonomy has left a strong legacy among squatters, mainly since 1973: "The proletarian sociality defines its own laws and practices in the territory that the bourgeoisie occupies by force." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 451) As a consequence, beyond independence from electoral and institutional politics, autonomists fostered the autonomy of workers' power, knowledge, cooperation, needs, resistance and struggles in order to take back the time, money and spaces from the hands of the capitalist class. A diffuse political identity, multiple points of conflicts and insurrections, and decentralised actions aimed at mobilising large amounts of the proletariat were translated into the politicisation of new squatting waves from the mid-1980s

onwards (Mudu and Rossini 2018: 101).

The Indiani Metropolitani and the Circoli del Proletariato Giovanile represented one of the countercultural echelons that connected autonomist politics and squatting. For example, a celebrated pamphlet of the latter from 1977 declared: "We want it all! It's time to rebel!... We occupy buildings because we want to have meeting places to debate, to play music and do theatre, to have a specific and alternative place for family life." (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 524) In addition to demands for affordable housing, the constraints experienced through conservative family traditions, a deep opposition to commodified and state-controlled leisure as well as the alienation engendered by salaried work motivated this mixture of autonomism and, often joyful and satiric, Situationism applied to urban squatting.

Internal ideological controversies among squatters adhered to different branches of autonomism, anarchism and feminism were very frequent, but they also contributed to the creation of a vibrant political milieu in many cities (Mudu 2009: 217–225, 2012: 416–418). In contrast to Anglo-Saxon countries, where anarchism and autonomism are almost synonyms, both branches had different historical trajectories and stances in Italy and Spain (Mudu 2012: 414–418). During the 1977 protest waves, for example, both shared an anti-authoritarian approach, but autonomists tended to lead and hegemonise the movement (Mudu 2012: 417). Nonetheless, in my interpretation, the collective self-management of squats, either for living or for socialisation, and in tight connection with the autonomy of the working-class and oppressed groups, represents the best theoretical and political coincidence among all the politicised squatters. This has hardly been noted in the literature on autonomous politics where squats are often seen as just another strand of activism (Wennerhag et al. 2018). However, due to the decline of struggles at the workplace, the self-management of squats all over the metropolitan area took the lead, affecting different spheres of social life and helping to unite anarchists, punks and autonomists in the second-generation social centres during the mid-1980s, as argued too by Mudu (2012: 420) and Piazza (2018: 503). In short, by considering all the above insights, a dominant politics of what I designate 'social autonomy' increasingly found its own way, its own proponents and its own practitioners in urban politics beyond the institutional labour unions and the parliamentary political parties of the left. Furthermore, this notion was also crucially nurtured by feminism.

Although less mentioned by the literature, during the 1960s and 1970s an innovative and challenging feminist movement emerged in tight connection with Italian autonomism. Active women in leftist politics called for their self-organisation without men in their groups, meetings and protest actions. By doing so, they were able to politicise many issues conventionally considered personal and private, such as housework, sexuality and violence against women. These topics were not yet at the centre of institutional feminism, which at the time was more focused on gender equality in terms of voting rights, access to education and managerial positions. "We learned to seek the protagonists of

class struggle not only among the male industrial proletariat but, most importantly, among the enslaved, the colonized, the world of wageless workers marginalized by the annals of the communist tradition to whom we could now add the figure of the proletarian housewife, reconceptualised as the subject of the (re)production of the workforce." (Federici 2012: 7) Autonomous feminists contributed to identifying housework as a pillar of the social-metropolitan factory. Instead of a consideration of domestic life as informal social relations or mere consumption, reproductive labour, even under a wageless condition, was seen as crucial for the continuation of capitalism. Adding to the state provision of welfare services (education, health, pensions, subsidies, etc.), feminists revealed that the production of meals, shopping, cleaning, having and raising children, taking care of the ill and the elderly, etc. was reproductive work, or 'housework', and it was an arena where women are oppressed, hidden and dismissed by other male-driven struggles (Federici 2012: 18–19).

Campaigns such as Wages for Housework during the 1970s, demonstrations for the right to abortion and marches to "re-appropriate the night" (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 499) initiated a long-lasting wave of autonomous feminism that pervaded most squats as well as autonomist and anarchist groups. The frustrating experience of the sexual division of labour within radical organisations and the dominance of men when it comes to speaking out and writing, in addition to other forms of sexism in leftist politics, motivated the creation of only-women groups, campaigns, demonstrations and squats (Balestrini and Moroni 1997: 491–494, 506; Martin and Moroni 2007: 162–163). Autonomy meant a separation from men that was conceived as a necessary step to demystify femininity, to make visible women's subjugation and resistance, and to further forge the unity of all the social categories of subordinated groups, including workers, but also gay people, prostitutes, ethnic minorities, migrants, etc. Autonomy also implied an exercise of women's power apart from state institutions, even from dominant discourses about women's rights: "Feminism risks becoming an institution." (Federici 2012: 61)

In order to appreciate the shifting contents of autonomy, it is also worth mentioning that Italian post-autonomist groups split during the 1990s into various factions (with anarchists also taking sides) mainly due to three contested issues that constrained the reach of self-management: the legalisation of squats, the participation of radical activists in electoral politics and the introduction of waged employees in social centres. In particular, individual autonomy was a key basis for many anarchists who, in turn, were less interested in the social dimension of class struggles. Individual leadership was criticised by all but was not a big issue for many post-autonomist groups represented by well-known spokespersons. The call to 'exit the ghetto' of the squats and reach out to a larger social sphere indicated a crucial concern for all kinds of radical activists—the size and scale of the 'social' feature of autonomous struggles. Therefore, the Italian radical-left scene was subject to "both movements of convergence and divergence between post-autonomists and anarchists" (Mudu 2012: 421).

A landmark moment that signalled the main division between anarchist and post-autonomist squatters was the 2001 anti-G8 mobilisation in Genoa. Since then, their mutual interactions in practice have been scarce and limited to broader campaigns, such as the NO-TAV struggle against the high-speed train to connect Italy and France (Della Porta and Piazza 2008) and the referendum against the privatisation of water (Mudu 2012: 422). However, recent developments of squatted social centres and houses over the 2010s have kept reproducing the tenets of social autonomy while adding new meanings and tensions. For example, housing movements have included more subaltern groups such as poor migrants and homeless people in the squatting movement (Aureli and Mudu 2018, Feliciantonio 2017, Grazioli and Caciagli 2018). The occupations of abandoned theatres and cinemas stirred larger political debates on the grassroots production of culture as a common good and the increasing precarious working conditions of the youth (Maddanu 2018, Valli 2015, Piazza 2018). Although these experiences remained attached to the legacies of autonomous self-organisation of oppressed groups and their active involvement in the self-management of squats, they were more prone to negotiating legal agreements with the authorities, and more experienced activists often led the initiatives.

Germany: mobilisation and liberation of everyday life

Even before being adopted as a political identity, autonomism in West Germany reshaped extra-parliamentary politics and urban struggles in a different manner compared to the 'new social movements' that had already emerged around 1968. For example, instead of focusing on self-management, Katsiaficas (2006: 3–6) recalled situationist and Lefebvrian concepts—'alienation' and 'everyday life', above all—to define autonomy in that context: "By 1980, a movement existed which was clearly more radical and bigger than that of the sixties. The new movement was more diverse and unpredictable, and less theoretical and organized than was the New Left. Despite their differences, they shared a number of characteristics; anti-authoritarianism; independence from existing political parties; decentralized organizational forms; emphasis on direct action." Katsiaficas' interpretation of autonomist ideas in Germany highlights two aspects that might resemble individualistic views of autonomy: the 'politics of the first person' and the 'decolonisation of everyday life'. Within the autonomist scenes, individuals would feel free from party discipline, state control, capitalist-induced compulsive consumerism and patriarchal domination. However, he also insists that German autonomist activists were well organised in small groups of militants and as a coherent movement. Furthermore, his definition also included 'self-managed consensus', 'open assemblies' without leaders and 'spontaneous forms of militant resistance' to domination in all domains of life, society and politics, which very much resembles the collectivist anarchism approach (Ward and Goodway 2014). Despite the frequent references to the 'politics of the first person', autonomy is defined as collective relationships, or 'social autonomy' on my terms, not as individual subjectivity: "The

Autonomen… see their ideas as a revolutionary alternative to both authoritarian socialism (Soviet-style societies) and 'pseudodemocratic capitalism'… The Autonomen seek to change governments as well as everyday life, to overthrow capitalism and patriarchy." (Katsiaficas 2006: 8)

But what is 'everyday life'? And how can it be decolonised? According to Katsiaficas, everyday life is the sphere of civil society which is separate from state institutions. It is also a political sphere where direct democracy is possible in contrast to both the delegation of power to formal organisations and aspirations to conquer state power. Activism focused on everyday life tries to change the whole political and economic system through direct actions against established powers but, at the same time, against its manifestations in every domain of life (education, family life, friendship, dwelling, workplaces and urban settings in general). Hence, Katsiaficas defines autonomism as an emergent social movement aiming to promote feminism, migrant rights and worker cooperatives—for example, while suggesting that autonomy opposes universalising forms of oppression (Katsiaficas 2006: 14–16, 238). In particular, what he designates as the 'colonisation of everyday life' refers to the rise of 'instrumental rationality' worldwide. This means that the forces of capital intend to commodify every aspect of our lives and needs (food, shelter, air, water, communication, mobility, affects, etc.) and make profit out of it. Individualisation, atomisation, privatisation and alienation are the tools used by the capitalist colonisers. As a response 'collective autonomy' as it is represented in squats, appeals to the emancipatory will of youth, women, ethnic minorities and precarious workers: "communal living expands the potential for individual life choices and creates the possibility of new types of intimate relationships and new models of child rearing." (Katsiaficas 2006: 247)

Although there is no agreement about the meaning of autonomism, the "theses" formulated by German activists in 1981 are eloquent: "We fight for ourselves and others fight for themselves… We do not engage in 'representative struggles'. Our activities are based on our affectedness, 'politics of the first person'… We fight for a self-determined life in all aspects of our existence, knowing that we can only be free if all are free. We do not engage in dialogue with those in power! … We all embrace a 'vague anarchism' but we are not anarchists in a traditional sense. We have no organization per se… Short-term groups form to carry out an action or to attend protests. Long-term groups form to work on continuous projects." (Geronimo 2012: 174) This political approach led to solid opposition to fascism, imperialism and capitalism on the one hand, but also to the creation of lasting networks of self-managed occupied houses, social centres, women's groups and cooperative initiatives on the other. The influence of Italian autonomism was noted in some publications and debates of various political groups during the 1970s, which sometimes intersected with the squatting initiatives of the decade (Geronimo 2012: 48–57, 61–66).

However, more elaborate contents were explicitly added to the German version of autonomism in the early 1980s due to the resurgence of squatters' mobilisations (Geronimo 2012: 99–106). Originally, the remnants of 1968 anti-

authoritarianism and the new peace, environmental, and feminist movements merged with multiple residents' protests (*Bürgerinitiativen*) all over the country and with countercultural situationist-inspired politics, such as the *Spontis*: "Like the Metropolitan Indians in Italy, *Spontis* loved to poke fun at their more serious 'comrades' and used irony rather than rationality to make their point. In 1978, *Spontis* in Münster helped elect a pig to a university office, and in Ulm, a dog was nominated to the Academic Senate." (Katsiaficas 2006: 63, 65) In this milieu, according to Katsiaficas, feminists centrally contributed to the definition of autonomy (Katsiaficas 2006: 67). They fought for the decriminalisation of abortion, equal pay for equal work, housing affordability, shelters for women subject to male violence and public subsidies for mothers, but, and no less importantly, they also focused on a radical change in the sphere of 'everyday life', demanding men (activists included) share domestic chores with women, creating self-help groups, launching campaigns to "take back the night" and setting up feminist publications, centres and residential spaces (squatted ones included) in which men were not allowed (Gaillard 2013). "From the first big squatting wave in 1980/81, in which more than 200 houses in total were occupied, until 2013, around 20 houses in West Berlin and (united) Berlin have been squatted by female/ lesbian/ gay/ queer/ trans people." (azozomox 2014: 190) Their large mobilisations, direct actions and even guerrilla groups added new meanings to what I term 'social autonomy' as women's power against male violence and complete independence from hierarchical structures and institutions (Katsiaficas 2006: 74–75). Although the motto 'the personal is political' might obscure this collective dimension, it was the politicisation of all hitherto considered private topics and 'everyday life', by questioning the social domination inside them and by making it visible, that justifies their autonomist insight.

Two other specific components of the German political context were the long-lasting peace and anti-nuclear movements, first, and the institutionalisation and co-optation of a substantial share of those activists by the Green Party, next. Members of those camps, as well as the Autonomen, were less involved with workers' struggles than their Italian counterparts due to the more generous welfare state and labour unions effective in obtaining concessions, which softened the precarious condition of many activists and attracted more middle-classes to activism as well. However, squatting became a key icon for the autonomists, and, in neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg in Berlin, poor Turkish immigrants, marginalised youth, punks, gays and artists also became fully engaged in the movement. "They were more a motley collection than a self-defined collectivity of mainly students like the New Left was. As living behind barricades became a way of life for many squatters, the illegality of their everyday lives radicalized their attitude toward the state." (Katsiaficas 2006: 91, 168–173) From the late 1970s to the early 1980s, squatters took over hundreds of houses (at least in the large cities)—, performed street fighting and demonstrations in which the black colour was dominant in both flags and dress codes, and created leaderless organisations, although they also had to face harsh police attacks, arrests and prosecution. This phase ended in partial legalisations

that depoliticised part of the movement (Holm and Kuhn 2011) but still kept squatting as the primary identity sign for its remaining militant wing, especially where it was considered a victory against overwhelming repression, such as the Hafenstrasse squatted buildings in Hamburg in the late 1980s (Katsiaficas 2006: 91–96, 124–128, 178).

More generally, it is also worth recalling that another attempt to define autonomism in 1983 combined the general anti-capitalist stance with concern about all forms of domination: "Aspiring autonomy means first of all to struggle against political and moral alienation in life and work… This is expressed when houses are squatted to live in dignity and to avoid paying outrageous rent; it is expressed when workers stay at home because they no longer tolerate the control at the workplace; it is expressed when the unemployed loot supermarkets." (Geronimo 2012: 115) This author engages with the view of autonomy as collective self-determination. This implies the capacity of every social group to define the norms that will rule their own collective life. Most people are deprived from this right and basic source of power in both representative and authoritarian regimes, although to different extents. In so doing, autonomists need to deliberate in public, justify their stances and reach consensus. This intense process of communication occurs prior to making decisions about the norms and actions to follow.

Eventually, autonomists had a contradictory relationship with the post-1968 alternative movement that became one of the moderate electoral bases for the Greens and for social-democratic politics. Although food cooperatives, bars, bookstores, cultural events, self-managed clinics, playgrounds, etc. formed a convenient and ideologically sympathetic environment for autonomists, they usually criticised alternative infrastructures and enterprises because of their limited anti-capitalist impact (Geronimo 2012: 103–105). The contributions of autonomism to squatting were also accompanied with conflicts of violence among activists; sexism, homophobia and transphobia (azozomox 2014); subtle forms of social control and uniformisation within the scene; extreme measures to prevent police infiltration; and even a nihilist rejection of intellectual analyses and affirmative political alternatives (Katsiaficas 2006: 177–180; Geronimo 2012: 174).

Squatting movements in Germany unfolded especially during the early 1980s and, after a combined policy of legalisation and repression of new squatting attempts, at the crossroads of its reunification with former East Germany, around 1990 (Holm and Kuhn 2011). As an illustration, between 1979 and 1984, there were 287 squatted houses and wagon places in West Berlin (azozomox and Kuhn 2018: 148). Another peak was reached between 1989 and 1991 when 214 buildings were squatted in Berlin, mostly in the former Eastern boroughs (azozomox and Kuhn 2018: 152). The issue of the squat legalisation was highly controversial and engendered splits among autonomists of the first period, but it became more widely accepted after the 1990s. In cities such as Hamburg, the language of social autonomy permeates both legalised initiatives (Hafenstrasse in the late 1980s and Gängeviertel in the 2010s) and those partially tolerated

(Rote Flora), but the strains with the authorities' attempts to institutionalise and co-opt autonomist activists keep going. On the one hand, the large numbers of legalised squats in those periods granted the Autonomen a long-lasting material infrastructure for continuing their political projects and struggles. On the other hand, although the German autonomists remained the main proponents and supporters of squatting actions, the more repressive contexts forced them to shift focus towards other campaigns, such as solidarity with migrants, anti-capitalist summits, environmental protests, tenants' rights, anti-fascism and feminist claims at all the levels of politics.

Spain: diffused autonomy and interdependence

Autonomism was well spread in other European countries such as Spain. The fascist dictatorship that lasted from 1936–9 to 1975 made a striking difference compared to other Western political regimes based on liberal democracy. Many workers' unions and strikes had to operate underground until the late 1970s when they unfolded massively in most industrial areas. Despite the hegemony of the Spanish Communist Party in many of these struggles, workers' autonomous organisations and assemblies were quite significant in many sectors. Extra-parliamentary politics also consisted of manifold leftist organisations that often engaged with the demands of residents in urban neighbourhoods (Castells 1983). The practice of squatting buildings was not very frequent, but the revival of anarchism contributed to the establishment of Ateneos Libertarios, occupied social centres run by anarchist unions and various affinity groups, and countercultural social centres (inspired by the hippy and alternative movements around 1968) in the period known as "transition to democracy" that lasted until the early 1980s (Martínez 2018, Seminario 2014: 23–77).

During the first wave of political squatting in the mid-1980s, the autonomist identity was more imported from round-trip visits to Italy, Germany and Holland than linked to their own legacy of autonomous factory struggles. Many squatters also preferred to associate their ideological roots with the core vigorous anarchist tradition from the decades before the dictatorship, which sometimes produced frictions with the 'vague anarchism' and heterodox-Marxism embraced by the autonomists. Against this backdrop, it is worth mentioning that the successful anti-militarist movement at that time (Martínez 2007: 380) achieved a high legitimation of non-violent direct action among most social movements, especially those who fully supported the anti-conscription campaign like most autonomists and squatters. In addition, nationalist-independentist militants and members of left-parties took part in some squats or initiated their own, especially in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country.

An autonomous branch of the feminist movement was also very active over the decades and was especially engaged in the squatters' movement, even founding their own social centres exclusively for women, such as Matxarda, La Karbonera and Andretxe in the Basque Country (Padrones 2017: 227–235), Eskalera

Karakola in Madrid (squatted in 1996) and La Morada-La Fresca in Barcelona (1997–8) (Gil 2011: 77–97). In a similar vein to what happened in Italy and Germany, there were endless debates between 'diffuse' and 'organised' forms of autonomy, especially among those who participated in the political scene around Lucha Autónoma in Madrid (Casanova 2002, Seminario 2014: 121–182). By 1987, the autonomists had presented a political agenda with an explicit social orientation in the squatted social centre Arregui y Aruej based on self-management, anti-authoritarianism, direct action and anti-capitalism (Casanova 2002: 36–37). During the next decade and a half, squatted social centres and houses became a focal point of activity for all the autonomists, but there were many more squats in which 'autonomy' was no more than a package of multiple radical ideas in circulation. Anti-fascism as a political priority, for example, distinguished a certain number of squats from the rest (Seminario 2014: 130–131), which denotes the existence of significant social and political diversity in the squatters' movement. However, the regular practice of assemblies, direct democracy, self-organisation and engagement with numerous social struggles around the squats disseminated a 'diffuse' politics of social autonomy among the most active and politicised squatters (Salamanca et al. 2012).

An abundant publication of short pamphlets, fanzines (*Resiste, Sabotaje, El Acratador, Ekintza Zuzena, Etcétera, Contrapoder*, etc.) and some radical newspapers occasionally served to discuss theoretical and political aspects of autonomism. In Madrid, the squatted social centre Laboratorio (initiated in 1997) was one of the most prolific in recalling the post-workerist views and engaging with the Zapatista uprising (1994 to date) and its anti-neoliberal discourse: "We aim to experiment with how to embed the squatted social centres in the metropolitan territory: struggles against real estate speculation against the deterioration of the urban peripheries, against the expulsion of residents in the city centre, against the militarisation of the land and CCTV surveillance, against total institutions, against the authoritarianism of urban planning, against new forms of fascism… We aim to express the potential of an insubordinate life facing the void of capital, … forms of cooperation against hierarchy, control and separation." (Casanova 2002: 162–163) As in Italy, precarious young workers and students were the most active social composition of the squatters' movement, although residents of all ages, migrants, artists and activists from many other social movements were often attracted to participate in the squats. Therefore, anti-capitalism and concerns about labour conditions (precariousness) were crucial in their political approach to reclaim urban spaces and neighbourhoods.

In addition, the autonomist branch of Spanish feminism since the 1980s was intimately attached to squatting (see, for example, their publication *Mujeres Preokupando*), although not all the groups occupied spaces, and their political concerns were much broader (Gil 2011, Seminario 2014: 303–357). Interestingly, they nurtured autonomist urban politics by building upon insights from other international trends of radical feminism and by raising debates that were beyond the usual agenda of squatters. On the one hand, 'autonomy' for

them meant independence from both institutional politics (parties, unions and state agencies) and male domination in different spheres of life, including squats and autonomist organisations (Gil 2011: 57); on the other hand, 'autonomy' invited women to take matters into their own hands, to empower and liberate themselves by cooperating with each other and by establishing 'networks of counter-power' (Gil 2011: 46).

The legacy of the 1960s and 1970s in terms of the politicisation of private and personal matters (seclusion of family life, abortion, contraceptive methods, sexual freedom, domestic work, harassment and rape, etc.) paved the way for more ambitious concerns in the 1990s: rights for LGBTQI people; opposition to militarism; the precarious labour of women, especially those making a living through prostitution and domestic work; immigration; and even feminist porn. These topics hardly recalled the attention of the more institutionalised branches of feminism but, in turn, found a fertile ground of expression in the squatted social centres and, above all, in the feminist squats (Gil 2011: 46, 68–97, 295–298). Conversely, this development questioned sexism, LGBTQI-phobia and racism within the squats and autonomist scenes. Furthermore, it revealed how neoliberal capitalism manipulates the notion of 'autonomy' in order to promote free individuals to consume, vote and comply. This is manifest in the so-called 'crisis of care' for children, the elderly, the ill, the disabled and its gendered and racialised dimensions. Self-determination and cooperation of the oppressed, thus, entail an essential 'inter-dependence' with one another and a systemic (anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal and anti-racist) search for alternatives to the crisis of care, which is on the shoulders of women, in order to halt the reproduction of capitalism: "Capitalism… has turned personal and collective autonomy upside down…: atomised experiences, competition with each other, self-entrepreneurialism… no future prospects… vertiginous rhythms of survival and production… fragile communities… loneliness…The ideal of independence… [only applies to] personal and social situations in transit, casual ones, based on youth, health, strength, power, wealth, and without care for other people (their offspring, the elderly, the ill, etc.)." (Gil 2011: 305) Therefore, when individual autonomy is introduced in this approach, it is always defined together with issues of social interdependence and the constraints set in place by capitalist society.

Self-critical analyses within Spanish autonomist politics and squats are illuminating too; for example, the short-lived span of many organisations and squatting experiences, the superficial discussion of feminist concerns and the ineffective practices against sexism, the rejection of experts and professionals (except lawyers, to some extent) as well as accusations of vanguardism to the most devoted and politicised activists (Carretero 2012), to name just a few. When the autonomist experience cross-fertilised the global justice movement in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Martínez 2007), other shortcomings were brought forward: multi-militancy, irreconcilable tensions with the 'institutional left', scarcity of resources, a high diversity that resulted in the alter-globalisation movement's fragmentation and a limited capacity for mass mobilisation (Flesher 2007). Nevertheless, autonomists contributed to this larger protest

wave (and also to the 2011 upheavals [Flesher 2014]) with practical skills rooted in assembly-based organisations and with engagement in urban politics while bridging self-managed squatted buildings and more global issues: "The autonomous actor actively attempts to negate the isolationism created by capitalist consumer society, through the nurturing of social relations that create community.... Just as single total identities (e.g. worker) do not make sense from an autonomous perspective, neither do single issues." (Flesher 2007: 340)

Although squatting was criminalised in 1995, the movement kept active in many cities over the following decades and even experienced a remarkable upsurge in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008 (Martínez 2018). Since the 2000s, an explicit autonomist identity has been reshaped by networks of squatted and non-squatted social centres, especially those more inclined to legalise their spaces and to interact more directly with some public policies and state institutions—despite all the difficulties they faced—such as the Casa Invisible shows in Málaga (Toret et al. 2018). A common theme of the so-called 'second generation of social centres', shared with many Italian post-autonomists, was their intention to get rid of stereotyped identities and to engage with broader publics—neighbourhoods, social and political organisations, migrants, precarious workers and artists. However, a diffused notion of autonomy quite intertwined with anarchism and a strong anti-institutional standpoint has to date prevailed among the squatters of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville and Zaragoza, for instance. The main turning point was represented by the emergence of a housing movement led by a formal organisation, the PAH (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages), in 2009. This movement also occupied buildings but rarely developed social centres. Many of their activists had an autonomist background and still endorsed it, but they mainly claimed affordable housing, the increase of social housing and substantial changes in housing policies. As a consequence, a more institutional approach was combined with the social empowerment of those who became homeless due to the widespread financialisation of housing.

Conclusions

The term 'autonomy' has been rightly criticised because it is charged with the burden of liberal and individualistic connotations, even when adopted by countercultural and anarchist trends (Bookchin 1998). As Flesher noted: "Although the legitimate political actor is the autonomous individual, acting collectively, this does not translate into a rejection of collectives or affinity groups." (Flesher 2007: 340) She also argues that organisations are dispensable for autonomists because they only "exist to serve the desires and goals of the individuals participating in them" (Flesher 2007: 339). Therefore, it is not uncommon to see individual self, subjectivity, autonomy and independence as the pivotal bases of the autonomist political identity. This is explicit in widely-circulated texts such as the Temporary Autonomous Zone (Bey 1985: 114) and pamphlets engaging with individualistic anarchism and the "radical criticism of any authority principle" (Mudu 2012: 414). Some post-workerist and feminist

activist-scholars also attached the language of desire and subjectivation to autonomy (Berardi 2016, Gil 2011: 100), although they always interpreted them according to broader social conflicts of domination in late capitalism, not as an individualistic approach to autonomy. In particular, squatting movements following an autonomist orientation represented a practical way to refuse salaried labour and establish free spaces for the emancipation of women and LGBTI-Q people. However, artistic squatters in France and Germany, for example (Aguilera 2018, Novy and Colomb 2013), have been frequently accused of adhering to the creative and individual view of autonomy rather than its more subversive, organised, prefigurative and collective forms of class struggle and self-management. Squatted social centres such as Tacheles in Berlin and Gängeviertel in Hamburg, for instance, would exemplify individual self-interests in "the seizing of cheap studio spaces" (Novy and Colomb 2013: 1828) and were instrumental to neoliberal city-branding policies aiming to attract well-educated but precarious creative classes. An additional feature that populates the distinctions between the autonomous and institutional left refers to decision-making processes. Autonomists oppose delegation and most prefer face-to-face assemblies and consensus over voting (Piazza 2013). This implies that specific individuals may veto collective decisions or force the collective into long discussions, postpone agreements and even into stalemates and internal splits. Notwithstanding these risks, the relatively small-scale size and the decentralisation of autonomist networks posed no substantial threats to the persistence and predominance of consensual principles over time, although majoritarian voting has also been adopted by many squats.

In this article, I have argued that the meanings attached to autonomism by Italian, German and Spanish squatters, in tight connection with the activists from intertwined movements, prompted me to prefer 'social autonomy' in order to represent their novel contribution to urban politics. This approach reminds of 'social anarchism' or 'libertarian communism' in its aspiration to set up 'communities of equals' (Bookchin 1998; Graeber 2004: 2, 65–66). Nonetheless, autonomists go beyond anarcho-syndicalism, the factory walls, the central role of the working-class and the utopian models of a post-revolutionary future (Foucault 1982). Rather, they oppose all forms of domination spread throughout the metropolitan space by seeking cooperation with all oppressed social groups and by focusing pragmatically in the oppressions they all experience at present. Therefore, the emancipation is conceived as the political responsibility of the oppressed themselves. Instead of following vanguard leaders and external organisations, autonomists set direct democracy, assemblies and horizontal cooperation at the top of their political agenda and practice. To fight the oppressors implies becoming separated from them and affirming the identity of the oppressed, temporarily, while the subordination and the resistance persist (Fraser 2008). Social autonomy thus indicates: (1) separation from the oppressors and the social relations where oppression occurs; (2) self-affirmation of the oppressed groups in direct social conflict with the oppressors; and (3) self-determination of the norms, decisions and goals through the collective self-management of resources and spaces.

Their disbelief in future utopias and essentialist differences leads autonomists to attempt any possible revolution here and now. Thus, they aim to shape, in a prefigurative manner, spaces of equality, creativity and resistance among those struggling together. As I argued above, the self-management and socio-political aggregation provided by squats (Piazza 2018) and other autonomous social centres (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006) are the best materialisations of autonomist politics. Illegal and disruptive means of protest, when targeting empty buildings, supply affordable spaces to those who wish, in turn, to separate themselves from patriarchal domination and the capitalist dynamics of labour exploitation, mass consumption and urban speculation. Squats also provide safe and self-organised spaces for immigrants and refugees (Colectivo Hinundzurük 2018, Refugee Accommodation 2018). Buildings are rehabilitated, resources are shared, domestic life is often articulated through collective decision-making, an ethics of do-it-yourself (DIY) and do-it-together (DIT) is put in practice, counter-cultural expressions and radical left ideas are promoted, and other movements' activists and campaigns are hosted (Cattaneo et al. 2014, McKay 1998, Notes from Nowhere 2003, Van der Steen et al. 2014). Everyday life as the sphere of social reproduction, consisting of welfare services as well as the collective self-management of the buildings and urban areas where they live, become a central concern for autonomism and squatting: "the rediscovery of reproductive work has made it possible … to redefine the private sphere as a sphere of relations of production and a terrain of anticapitalist struggle." (Federici 2012: 97)

As a common thread shared by most autonomist and anarchist traditions, both state-driven socialism and capitalism (and, in its late stages, as global neoliberalism and financialisation as well) are confronted. Autonomism is nurtured by a strong anti-authoritarian concern that seeks the experience of freedom in all spheres of social life, for all, and as immediately as possible. This entails the need for the oppressed to exert their available power and to use their own capacities in order to be released from the chains of domination, which can be designated as an 'immediatist struggle': "In such struggles people criticize instances of power which are the closest to them." (Foucault 1982: 780). Not only are 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and one-party regimes resisted, but also all state institutions and formal organisations in liberal democracies that may reproduce social domination and inequality. Capitalism, patriarchy, racism, fascism and imperialism are thus seen as notoriously resilient in both authoritarian and pluralist regimes, which determines the multiple points of bottom-up resistance and the corresponding autonomous struggles. Squatted spaces are manifestations of this micro-politics (Dadusc 2017, Yates 2014) of the 'everyday life' (Katsiaficas 2006) in small living and self-managed communities, domestic and small-group relations, and horizontal affinity groups, while the squatters themselves also organise protest campaigns broadly and foster networks of solidarity with other autonomous and grassroots struggles worldwide (Mudu 2012).

My emphasis on the social features of autonomism also involves a long-lasting commitment to women's, LGBTI-Q, migrants' and ethnic minorities' struggles.

The feminist call to politicise, disclose, question and abolish oppression in every sphere of private life pervades the internal spaces of squats, which makes them more open and public but with a broader anti-systemic stance. Despite being subject to forced temporality and nomadism, squatters who take over abandoned buildings usually aim to stay as long as possible. The persistence of squatters' movements also indicates the existence of networks that make them more challenging to the status quo than isolated activism and insurrectional uprisings. The autonomist ethos, regardless of being expressed through vague and diffuse political identities, radiates from the specific urban spots of the squats to the neighbourhoods and other urban struggles intertwined with them, as far as coalitions are forged and are capable of articulating commonalities.

Nonetheless, autonomist projects are, more often than not, seriously constrained and menaced by the political and economic conditions that surround them. On the one hand, state repression and manoeuvres to institutionalise, integrate and neutralise autonomous struggles severely reduce their radical reach and engender or accentuate splits among activists (Karpantschof and Mikkelsen 2014). Privatisation and outsourcing of collective consumption by the state also threaten how squatted social centres relate to social needs, public services and the market (Membretti 2007, Moroni and Aaster 1996). Frequently, urban activists need to break apart from the isolated 'ghettoes' of many autonomist and countercultural scenes and connect with the society at large through institutional actors, professionals and mass media (Castells 1983: 322) or use the resources of the 'institutional left' (Flesher 2007: 345). On the other hand, the concern for everyday life implies a continuous warning about the reproduction of social dominations inside autonomous movements. Sexism is the most prominent and overtly debated one but is far from unique. Tendencies towards dogmatism, retreating to individual and neoliberal forms of autonomy, *alternative* performances of vanguardism and hierarchy (Kadir 2016), exclusionary lifestyles and aesthetics (Flesher 2007: 350), exhaustion from long lasting conditions of illegality, an excessive and unwanted fragmentation of politicised groups and endless dissatisfaction with the political achievements of the struggles, due to their *limited* revolutionary capacity (Koopmans 1995), have been raised as the major internal troubles which would deserve further investigation.

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Gramsci and Goffman, together at last: toward a counter-hegemonic framing approach to movement research

Chris Hardnack

Abstract

This article offers a synthesis of the framing perspective and Gramscian hegemony. Framing processes in social movements have been linked to discussions of how social movements subvert hegemony. However, a link to Gramscian hegemony has not been fully developed. This article proposes a counterhegemonic framing approach (CHFA) which can be used to examine the discursive work within social movements that is contextualized by capitalist hegemony. The CHFA corrects for the myopic and ahistorical tendency to ignore capitalism's relationship to social movements; allows for researchers to situate frames within a conjuncture while acknowledging power differences; and is equipped to navigate the contradictory, and contested nature of framing within social movements, organizations, and coalitions. By bringing the framing approach into theories of hegemony, a ready-made system of empirical observation of debates that make up counter-hegemonic practices of demystifying social relations and undermining the hegemony can be observed, and provides useful historical templates for movements seeking to build counterhegemony.

Keywords: Hegemony, frames, Gramsci, movement discourse, Marxism

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to develop a theoretical approach to study collective action frames and framing processes within counter-hegemonic movements. By drawing on a wide range of literature in the areas of social movements, social theory, and political economy, this paper proposes a counter-hegemonic framing approach (CHFA) to study the discursive work of movements. I argue that a synthesis of the framing perspective and Gramscian hegemony provides a theoretical lens to systematically examine how social movements engage in framing which demystifies social relations and orients movements to contest hegemony. Framing and hegemony are commonly used terms in both academic and activist spaces. Framing refers to how movements draw in participants, and identify and describe important issues, grievances, and possible solutions. Hegemony, rooted in Marxism, describes how cultural and ideological leadership achieved by social groups. Usually hegemony is applied to how a ruling class exercises domination through consent. In tandem, framing is how movements explain and highlight aspects of capitalist modernity and systemic oppression they contest. Moreover, through framing grievances

movements undermine the legitimacy of the status quo and articulate alternatives.

This theoretical synthesis shifts the framing perspective from one that is solely associated with the cultural turn, to one that emphasizes the historically specific nature of capitalism, as well as the sense making of movement actors. Furthermore, the CHFA emphasizes the dialectical unity between movements, framing, and historical conjuncture, while acknowledging the contradictory notions of resistance and consent to capitalist hegemony. This approach assumes that the ideational and discursive work of framing is not divorced from the historical balance of forces and neoliberal accumulation strategies. At the same time, it acknowledges the fact that organizations often deploy contradictory frames that affirm hegemony, while other frames may contest it. In debates within movements (frame disputes), counter-hegemonic actors try to win leadership and consent of other movement actors. Therefore, the target of framing is not necessarily a movement's opposition, but their allies and potential constituents. I intend to cover two broad topics before arriving at a theoretical synthesis that will orient my research. First, I will briefly review the literature on social movements stemming from Marxism and political-economy. Second, I will review Gramsci's theory of hegemony and its application to social movement studies.

Marxian and Political-Economy Approaches

In contemporary social movement studies, very few scholars have incorporated capitalism into the analysis of social movements. Nevertheless, there are a few recent exceptions that examine anti-austerity movements, such as the emergence of Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring that resulted of a crisis in neoliberalism's legitimacy (Cox and Nilsen 2014; Della Porta 2015). One of the most notable is Hetland and Goodwin's (2013) widely discussed paper on political economy and social movement studies, appropriately titled "The Strange Disappearance of Capitalism from Social Movement Studies." They question the theoretical turn away from capitalism and make the case for re-incorporating capitalism into social movement studies. This review endeavors to bring the political-economy back into social movement analysis, and is situated within a newly revitalized body of Marxian social movement studies (Boswell and Dixon 1993; Hogan 2005; Cox and Nilsen 2007; Nilsen 2009; Carroll 2010;). Barker, Cox, Krinsky, and Nilsen 2013).

Within this body of Marxian movement studies, I propose a theoretical position between orthodox Marxist explanations of social movements and post-Marxist explanations (see Boggs 1986). I strike this balance by incorporating three elements: 1) from the framing perspective, taking discursive and symbolic practices of social movements seriously; 2) from Marxism, historicizing movements within the balance of class forces and political economic conjuncture; and 3) from both framing and Gramscian theory, maintaining an acknowledgement that consciousness develops unevenly.

For an example of the balancing act we can examine my approach in relation to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), perhaps the best example of the post-Marxist perspective, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* which argues that objective categories such as social class are no longer necessary, that new social movements with "hegemonic articulations" may represent the expression of a radical pluralist and democratic alternative to capitalism. Further, they argue that the primary practice of social movements is discursive, but they reject any logical connection between movements and the metabolic, social reproduction, and accumulation problems inherent in the capitalist system. At first glance, this seems satisfactory and useful for understanding social movements in the late capitalist society. However, questions remain as to the extent that "objective historical forces" can be theorized out of existence. In social movement terms, this also poses questions about whether and how organizations are built that can transcend these problems, as well as how resources are mobilized in ways that tangibly engage with the existing social structure. After all, goods and services are still produced and distributed, and someone needs to produce and distribute them. Nevertheless, if we acknowledge that these material factors exist and can be understood to some degree, we can then choose whether to ignore these material and economic factors through a process of abstraction. Likewise, we can choose whether to ignore the cultural and semiotic aspects of society as well. The fact remains that political struggles include both objective and subjective conditions that determine the success of social movements. Understanding how social movements acknowledge and articulate the objective conditions they find themselves in, may require interpretive and discursive methods, but does not require that we fall into the postmodern abyss. In terms of these discursive methods, the framing approach from mainstream social movement studies is incredibly useful.

The framing perspective

The analysis of collective action frames has become the dominant approach to studying the ideational and discursive work of social movements. Framing is an important tool in the sociological study of social movements but lacks the ability to systematically address power relations that are rooted in the political economy, and the strategic imperative of social movements to explain and interpret a given historical conjuncture and social relations.

The framing perspective can be traced to symbolic interactionism, which has its own roots in American pragmatism, where it is applied to cognitive frameworks that "define the situation" for actors (Goffman 1974; Johnston 2005). The concept of framing relies heavily on the work of Thomas and Thomas (1928), who argued that actors behave in accordance to an agreed upon "definition of the situation." Goffman (1974) seeks to identify the "basic elements" of a definition of a situation, which he refers to as "frames," and offers frame analysis to "try to isolate the basic frameworks of understanding available in our society for making sense of events and to analyse the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject" (p.10).

Research on framing has moved from within the confines of symbolic interactionism to become one of the most widely used approaches to the study of social movements. The use of framing in social movement studies is credited to the work of David Snow and his colleagues (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986). They sought to outline the process of frame alignment which is concerned with "the linkage of individual and SMO [social movement organization] interpretive orientation, such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and SMO activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complimentary" (p. 464). These frames, which social movement actors deploy, are defined by Snow and Benford (1992) as "interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of one's present or past environments" (p. 137). To simplify, frames can be thought of as "slogans" that are constructed by movements and organizations, which dramaturgically present the values and ideologies of these movements, and as definitions of reality. Most importantly, "By rendering events and occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986:464). Methodologically, they penetrate the "black box of mental life" in movements and contribute to meaning making and meaning maintaining for constituents and bystanders (Johnston 2002:63).

Beyond a method of analysis, scholars recognize that framing is an important task for social movement actors. Movement actors utilize framing tasks and processes to identify and present grievances, propose solutions, and make attributions of blame. Snow and Benford (1988) identified three core framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. Diagnostic frames identify what movement actors identify as the problem. For example, the modern environmental movement devotes a significant amount of time to pointing out that pollution and climate change are indeed problems that need to be addressed by policy makers. In many cases, movements must define the actions of an antagonist as a problem. Prognostic framing offers solutions, or presents a positive vision of what a given movement would like to bring about, or makes an argument for a strategic plan. An important aspect of prognostic framing is that it "typically includes refutations of the logic or efficacy of solutions advocated by opponents," as is the case in counterframing, "as well as a rationale for its own remedies" (Benford and Snow 2000:617). Finally, motivational framing focuses on the agency and efficacy of social movements, as well as the urgency of action, and severity of a given issue.

Framing also provides a linkage between structural threats/opportunities and mobilization. As Gamson and Meyer (1996) point out, "There is a component of political opportunity involving the perception of possible change that is, above all else, a social construction" (p. 283). In other words, a political opportunity is a situation that social movements need to define. On the other hand, political opportunities shape framing, while framing shapes political opportunities. In a similar vein, Borgias and Braun (2016) argue for the incorporation of the political process model and framing by pointing out that frames are often

shaped by factors that are often defined as political opportunities. Most importantly, seizing on opportunities as they present themselves impacts the resonance of these frames.

In addition to framing tasks, processes, and political opportunities, it is important to discuss how framing is carried out. Within organizations and coalitions, frames are often generated through contested and mediated processes. The most well-known concept that attempts to capture differences of opinion is the frame dispute (Benford 1993). Benford's main contribution is that he makes the case for studying frames at the meso-level, and that there are often nuanced differences within and among coalitions. As I will argue in more detail below, the analysis of frame disputes provides an entry point to analyze how counter-hegemonic movements, and even organizations within coalitions, attempt to gain leadership. Rather than simply exploring the differences that occur between radical and moderate fractions, which Benford sees as a force which undermines movements, I characterize these frame disputes as major aspects of how different segments of movements attempt to win hegemony.

In terms of integrating these differences within and among activists, Croteau and Hicks (2003) push the analysis beyond SMOs to focus on framing processes in coalitions by building on Curtis and Zurcher's (1973) and Klandermans' (1992) characterization of movements as being composed of a "multi-organizational field," and that we should conceptualize coalition frames as "the emergent products of ongoing intra- and inter-organizational dynamics, and help specify framing's links to mobilizing structures and political opportunity" (p. 251). In other words, coalition frames are the product of negotiation between and among the various SMOs and factions within a given coalition. These form a "consonant framing pyramid" that "integrates into a consonant whole people's individual frames, with the organizational frames developed by coalition members, with the coalition's own frame" (p. 253).

Why not simply assess the ideology of a given movement? While framing and ideology are distinct but related concepts, framing is the most empirically available. The differences and linkages between ideology and framing are complex, and have generated substantial debate in the field, starting with Oliver and Johnston's (2000; 2005) argument that framing is not an adequate replacement of ideology, and should be used as a separate concept. They criticize the "…concomitant tendency of many researchers to use 'frame' uncritically as a synonym for 'ideology'" (2005). Thus, they explain that "framing points to process, while ideology points to content" (186). In response, Snow and Benford (2000) argue that while frames and ideologies are distinct concepts, they are not unrelated. Frames are often derivative of ideology, and constrained by ideology. They critique Oliver and Johnston's (2005) argument that frames are purely cognitive phenomena, arguing that framing is more accurately described as signifying work. However, in terms of social movement research, "framing in contrast to ideology, is empirically observable activity," which is analyzed through various texts generated by movements (Oliver and Johnston 2005).

To sum up, I reviewed the origins of framing, explained some key processes, and explained why framing can lead to more empirical research than ideology. But there is one area where Gramsci's work has already inserted itself. In the process of framing, movement actors can work to undermine hegemonic conceptions of reality. Furthermore, given the assumption that social movements help alter and undermine commonly accepted notions about society, they therefore generate "oppositional knowledge" (Coy and Woehrle 1996:290). In relation to generating this oppositional knowledge, Snow and Benford (1993) take the time to cite Gramsci to remind us that framing is also involved in the battles over hegemonic ideas, though the linkage is underdeveloped. To further solidify this link, I turn to Gramscian hegemony.

Gramscian hegemony

The concept of hegemony cannot be understood in isolation from Gramsci's larger ensemble of concepts, which he generated as part of his ambitious intellectual project. His goal was an "attempt to elaborate a political theory which would be adequate to give expression to—and, just as importantly, to shape and guide—the popular and subaltern classes' attempts to awaken from the nightmares of their histories and to assume social and political leadership" (Thomas 2009:159).

The concept of hegemony was first used in Russian Social Democratic circles (Anderson 1976; Thomas 2009), then popularized by Antonio Gramsci (1971). The concept emerged in response to economic determinism and an overemphasis on institutional politics, at the expense of culture, social movements, and civil society. The concept of hegemony has been articulated in several different ways as a result of the conditions under which Gramsci's prison notebooks were written. Anderson (1976) argues that the guiding thread in Gramsci's thought is coming to grips with how to carry out revolutionary socialist praxis in "western" parliamentary democracies.

Most explanations of Gramsci's thought begin with hegemony and then explain other Gramscian concepts. Following Thomas' (2009) advice, I begin with the integral state, which was "intended as a dialectical unity in the moments of civil society and political society. Civil society is the terrain upon which social classes compete for social and political leadership or hegemony over the other classes" (137). This conception of the state has strategic consequences. Thomas (2009) explains:

> The state was no longer merely an instrument of coercion, imposing the interests of the dominant class from above. Now in its integral form, it had become a network of social relations for the production of consent, for the integration of the subaltern classes into the expansive project of historical development of the leading group…Hegemony, then, emerges as a new "consensual" political practice distinct from mere coercion (a dominant means of previous ruling classes) on this new terrain of civil society; but like civil society, integrally linked to the state,

> hegemony's full meaning only becomes apparent when it is related to its dialectical distinction of coercion. Hegemony in civil society functions as the basis of the dominant class's political power in the state apparatus, which in turn reinforces its initiatives in civil society. The integral state, understood in this broader sense, is the process of the condensation and transformation of these class relations into institutional form (143-144).

For Gramsci, bourgeois democracy, along with civil society, present a unique challenge to revolutionary socialist practice. Parliamentary democracy magnifies the temptation of opportunism for subaltern groups. In other words, the openness and legitimacy of western states leads to an illusionary situation where these states could represent the interests of the working class, and its allies, while providing a path for significant social change. Here, "…the state constitutes only the outer ditch of civil society, which can resist demolition" (Anderson 1976:10). Civil society represents the system of fortresses and armories behind the metaphorical front line or outer ditch. From this, two important concepts emerge: war of position and war of maneuver.

Gramsci contrasts the metaphors of "war of maneuver" and "war of position" to explain hegemony as a strategic approach. War of maneuver involves quick decapitating strikes on the enemy. In the context of social movements, this means attacking the state apparatus and taking power. On the other hand, the war of position represents long drawn out trench warfare with an extended front line. In Gramsci's thought, the main strategy employed in a war of position is hegemony. However, social actors on both sides of the conflict exercise hegemony. Going back to the trench warfare metaphor, holding the line in this type of battle requires a unified force, or united front, composed of the working class and allied subaltern groups. Hegemony, especially in Lenin's earlier conception, is the process of providing leadership and gaining consent to build this united front (Anderson 2017). On the other hand, drawing on Marx's point that the "the ruling ideas in every society are the ideas of the ruling class," the ruling class utilizes hegemony to maintain their rule, and subaltern classes consent to their own subordination. Considering that the ruling class constitutes such a small minority, winning hegemony is crucial to maintaining power.

Within this framework that emphasizes politics and culture, the traditional definition of hegemony makes more sense. According to Gramsci (1971), hegemony is "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (p. 12). In other words, hegemony is the prize which belongs to a class, which is used as a floating referent, which establishes political and social leadership (Anderson 1976). Furthermore, hegemony is the manifestation of their rule in a historically specific mode of production (Sassoon 1988). However, classes come to rule through a complicated process of revolutionary struggle and mediation.

Therefore, one should not overlook the contested nature of hegemony, especially when examining social movements.

Hegemony is a dynamic and socially constructed process. As Raymond Williams points out, "hegemony is not a metaphysical force, it is actively created, maintained, and reproduced" (Williams 1973, cited in Ransome 1992). This works in two ways. On one hand, hegemony is generated and maintained by subaltern groups, who consent to their own domination. On the other hand, subaltern groups are also subjects of history who have agency. If hegemony is created and reproduced, it can be undermined through social movement practice and possibly replaced by a new "subaltern" hegemony during the course of a revolutionary transformation of society, which is a long and complicated process to say the least.

In contemporary capitalist society, hegemony takes on a historically specific form. Carroll (2010) lists three parameters of contemporary hegemony: postmodern fragmentation, the neoliberalization of political-economic relations, and capitalist globalization. First, the postmodern fragmentation includes the commodification of everyday life and the hybridity of social identities. Second, the neoliberalization of political-economic relations refers to the attempt to impose the self-regulating market into all aspects of society. Finally, capitalist globalization refers to the increasingly transnational scope of multinational corporations and trade networks.

A key aspect of Gramsci's theorizing is that subaltern groups must win hegemony in the "battle of ideas" about the nature of society. This is where social movements come into play. Social movements organize counterhegemony, which Carroll and Ratner (1996) describe as "a political project of mobilizing broad, diverse opposition to entrenched economic, political, and cultural power, counterhegemony entails a tendential movement toward *comprehensive critiques of domination* [emphasis added] and toward comprehensive networks of activism" (p. 601). One aspect of organizing counterhegemony, aside from building civil society organizations, is to challenge the existing hegemonic "common sense" or *senso comune* through providing alternate definitions of the real (Adler and Mittelman 2004).[1]

The counter-hegemonic framing approach

Linking the framing perspective, and Gramsci's theory of hegemony helps extend the reach of each perspective in its application in social movement research. By taking cultural and discursive aspects of resistance seriously,

[1] Common sense is a literal translation from the Italian *senso comune,* which has different connotations in Italian than it does in English. Following Thomas (2009), I use the Italian term because it is a central philosophical concept in Gramsci's thought, which "places a strong emphasis upon those elements that are 'common' i.e. a subject's integration into an existing system of cultural reference and meaning, tending to devalorize processes of individuation and often with negative connotation" (cf p. 61).

linking these battles over definitions of reality to political and economic context, and the power relations inherent within it, a more complete picture of the difficult work that social movements do is possible. Moreover, I argue that the CHFA provides an entry point of analysis that allows for a more logical, and empirically observable, connection between the theories.

There are a handful of scholars who integrate framing and hegemony (Carroll and Ratner 1996; Smith and Weist 2012.) Using a world-systems approach, Smith and Wiest (2012) briefly describe how framing can be integrated into an approach utilizing insights from political economy. They argue that world-systems theory acknowledges the link between framing, ideas and hegemony, and argue that resonance tends to vary, but is highest during periods of crisis. However, the argument that crisis makes frames resonant lends itself to the same critiques as relative deprivation theories. One could always argue that the world-system is in a state of accumulation, legitimation, and ecological crisis. Nevertheless, Smith and Wiest are correct to argue that "Movement frames can challenge concepts that are essential to the world-system and its supporting geoculture, such as markets and sovereignty, and can disrupt dominant logics that define collective identities, agendas, and priorities" (2012:40). For example, within the Global Justice Movement of the early 2000s, activists seized on a "race to the bottom" frame to explain how sovereignty is eroded by trade agreements such as NAFTA and the WTO. In a more contemporary example, Occupy Wall Street deployed a "We are the 99%" frame to establish a wide class based collective identity.

In a more explicit attempt to incorporate Gramsci, Maney, Woehlre and Coy (2005) ground their analysis of framing in the US Peace movement in Gramsci's theory of hegemony, defining it as "persuasion as a form of control" and "cultural processes that contribute to the legitimacy of power holders and their policies." Their analysis is useful because it situates the social construction of reality within differences in power. In addition, they argue that social movements can respond to hegemony by challenging it, harnessing it, or some combination of the two. However, their approach uses the commonly used version of hegemony to purely signify dominant cultural ideas. This effectively drops the strategic aspect linked to the war of position and the "leadership based on consent" aspect that subaltern social movements are aspiring to.

Gramsci's thought is integrally concerned with social movement strategy. As Humphrys (2013) explains, "Gramsci's theory of social change, as set out in the Notebooks, represents a thoroughgoing and systematic attempt to link Marxist conceptions of historical development—and hence class struggle—with the nature of strategic questions raised by, and within, actually existing social movements in the advanced capitalist world" (p. 369). I argue that frame disputes within coalitions are arenas of counter-hegemonic practice where these strategic questions are raised.

The CHFA corrects for the myopic and ahistorical tendency to ignore the relationship between capitalism and social movements; allows for frames to be situated within conjuncture while acknowledging power differences; and is

equipped to navigate the contradictory, and contested nature of framing within social movements, organizations, and coalitions. In addition, viewing frame disputes as examples of the "war of position" in practice within civil society helps explain the broader political and strategic issues behind frame disputes. This is an insight that Goffman (1974) made in *Frame Analysis*, where he makes the disclaimer that,

> This book is about the organization of experience—something that an individual actor can take into his mind—and not the organization of society.... The analysis developed does not catch at the differences between the advantaged and disadvantaged classes and can be said to direct attention away from such matters. I think that it is true. I can only suggest that he [sic] who would combat false consciousness and awaken people to their true interests has much to do, because the sleep is very deep. And I do not intend here to provide a lullaby but merely sneak in and watch the way people snore (13-14).

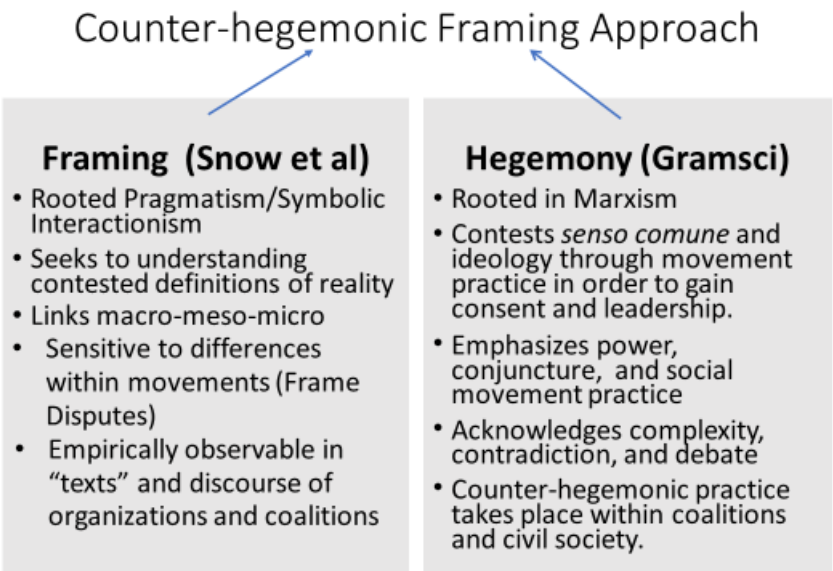
By bringing the framing approach into theories of hegemony, a ready-made system of empirical observation of debates, that make up counter-hegemonic practice of undermining the existing *senso commune* can be observed. Moreover, this provides useful historical templates for movements seeking to build counterhegemony. For example, eco-socialists of different types make use of the "system change, not climate change" slogan, and peace activists have often recycled frames critiquing the political economy of war making for frames such as "money for jobs, not for war."

Most importantly, the framing perspective in social movements is drawn from the social constructionist approach which is congruent with aspects of Marxism that emphasize historical agency, as well as objective social conditions. This runs counter to some arguments made by Marxist and political-economy oriented social movement scholars, who have counterposed research on framing and with their research on social movements. If counter-hegemonic practice requires undermining existing *senso comune*, it is indeed necessary to "watch people snore" by examining framing that is complicit with hegemony, as well as how they "awaken from historical nightmares" through counter-hegemonic practice. In Table 1, I outline how framing and hegemony complement each other. The strength of this synthesis is that the framing perspective provides an entry point for an empirical analysis of how social movements engage in counterhegemony.

Developing theoretical syntheses of concepts is a practice that is often amounts to simply using multiple theoretical lenses, rather than a synthesis. Synthesizing theory is analogous to grafting different plant species together. For example, the pomato plant is a hybrid plant where a tomato plant is the scion and the rootstock is a potato plant. The key point is that you cannot graft any two plants together. There must be something in common. The same holds true for a theoretical synthesis. While framing is rooted in symbolic interactionism and hegemony is rooted in Marxism there are several points where they provide a

basis for grafting. First, they both seek to understand and examine how dominant notions *of senso comune* or a socially defined reality is constructed and even undermined. Second, the practice of building hegemony plays out within a multiorganizational field in which different actors put forth differing frames. These differences of opinion, or frame disputes, constitute the arena in which counterhegemonic practice occurs. After all, counterhegemonic actors must win the consent of those involved as well as undermine and overcome the hegemony of the ruling group. Third, the units of analysis are parallel. Counterhegemonic practice and the deployment of frames occurs within the text and discourse of organizations and coalitions.

Table 1. Theoretical Components of the Counter-hegemonic Framing Approach



Conclusion

In this paper I reviewed recent attempts by scholars from political economy and Marxian approaches to interpret social movements. Within this the main takeaway is that capitalism matters. I also outlined the framing perspective in social movements alongside the Gramscian concept of hegemony and its application within social movement theory. I used these approaches to generate the CHFA, which combines theories of hegemony and the framing perspective from social movement studies to examine how social movements contest hegemony.

There is potential for future research that utilizes the CFHA. First, applying the counter-hegemonic approach to more contexts than the neoliberal era would be fruitful for historical sociologists seeking to understand the intersections between political-economies, and framing practices of movements. Second, there is much more work to be done in terms of the relationship between movements, organizational repertoires, and modes of decision making. Possible questions that emerge would look at how counter-hegemonic framing takes place in horizontalist or hierarchical and centralized movements. Third, the frames deployed by movements are only one aspect of contentious politics. Therefore, future studies could also include examinations of the resonance of counter-hegemonic framing. This could possibly be done with the inclusion of public opinion or polling data. Finally, qualitative and archival research along with formal quantitative methods of measuring waves of contention and discursive phenomena could also yield important findings that would more easily have access to mainstream publishing outlets.

Social movements draw upon the historical economic context as a cultural resource. Within movements, framing which contests *senso comune* entails attempts to persuade and win potential allies within coalitions to counter-hegemonic viewpoints and strategic outlooks. Here, frame disputes within coalitions, take on a much more profound meaning and significance. The CHFA provides an entry point for analysis of the discourse of movements from a perspective that sees these movements as the product of the historical trajectory of capitalism, and the balance of class forces, while still taking culture and discourse seriously.

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Books reviewed in this issue:

Todd Miller. 2017. *Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers. (272 pp; Paperback $12.00).

Review Author: Beth Geglia.

Review essay: *Posthumanities, Environmental Activism, and Anthropocentric Terminology*

Nicole Seymour. 2018. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (306 pp; $26.95).

David Farrier. 2019. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (164 pp; $23.00).

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Book Review: Todd Miller. *Storming the Wall*: *Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*

Review author: Beth Geglia

Todd Miller. 2017. *Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers. (272 pp. Paperback $12.00).

"More dangerous than climate disruption, was the climate migrant. More dangerous than the drought were the people who can't farm because of the drought. More dangerous than the hurricane were the people displaced by the storm."

-*Storming the Wall* (p. 67)

One cannot read Todd Miller's *Storming the Wall* without thinking immediately about the concentration camps forming at the U.S.-Mexico border, the enlistment of facial-recognition software from companies like Amazon and Palantir to track down and criminalize immigrants, and the "migrant caravans" that confronted the violent repression of security forces from three countries (Guatemala, Mexico, and the U.S.) as they pushed past checkpoints and border crossings for a chance at asylum in the U.S. All these things have happened since Miller released *Storming the Wall*, which was written as Trump was coming into power. The kind of escalation of xenophobic state violence[1]we are seeing today was something we could only imagine on the horizon in 2016.

The crisis that the U.S. is currently facing on the border is of its own making. This is true in two senses: first, the influx of migrants arriving from Central America and seeking asylum are fleeing desperate conditions shaped by U.S. policies, and second, inhumane government "deterrence" strategies are forcing immigrants into overcrowded detention facilities and subjecting them to grave abuses. As the U.S. military, Customs and Border Patrol (CPB), and private companies continue to fortify the U.S. Southwest border, grassroots groups are struggling to coordinate an opposition to the anti-immigrant machine and shed light on the root causes of the crisis. In *Storming the Wall*, Miller focuses our attention on one of the root causes rarely discussed - the growing impact of climate change on global displacement and migration. His exposé takes a deep and broad look into the "worldwide border regime" that is being consolidated to enforce global climate apartheid.

There are over 700 million low-elevation coastal dwellers at risk to rising sea levels around the world. Floods are now impacting 21 million people worldwide, a number expected to double to 54 million by 2030. The United Nations

[1] The violent "deterrence" and deportation policies exacerbated by the Trump administration were started under the Obama administration, as Miller points out.

projects that 250 million people will be displaced globally by 2050. An average of 21.5 million people were displaced every year between 2008 and 2015 from the "impact and threat of climate-related hazards." These are just some of the harrowing statistics cited in *Storming the Wall* that demonstrate the imperative to see climate change among the many compounding factors fueling mass migration today, but also as a factor that will take on greater significance into the future.

Miller is careful not to isolate climate change as a factor, but to instead understand is as part of a "catastrophic convergence" – the economic, political, and ecological factors that compound each other to create unlivable situations across the globe. In some ways, Miller's book picks up where Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* leaves off. While Klein calls on us to understand climate change as a systemic problem of neoliberal capitalism, Miller shows us how border militarization and anti-immigrant authoritarianism have been, and will continue to be, a consequence of both of these systemic failures. While three decades of neoliberal restructuring have generated new levels of inequality, climate hazards will only exacerbate such inequality as the world's poor will be the most vulnerable to its effects. The militarization of borders, Miller argues, the predominant response to the influx of human displacement around the world, is incapable of reaching the root of the problem because it serves to further perpetuate the status quo. As he states, "Just like super-typhoons, rising seas, and heat waves, border build-up and militarization are by-products of climate change… the theater for future climate battles will be the world's ever-thickening border zones and not, as national security forecasts constantly project, in communities where individuals fight each other for scarce resources" (27-30). To demonstrate these links, Miller takes us to the main sites where struggles over climate change, migration, and militarization are playing out.

Storming the Wall is not intended to be social movement theory. In contrast, it provides insights into how the military apparatus has co-opted the concerns of climate change and the language of sustainability to further a project of U.S. military domination. First and foremost, Miller explains how global elites are organizing themselves in response to pending climate catastrophe in order to reinforce the status quo. For example, Miller takes readers to the Defense, National Security, and Climate Change conference to show how the U.S. military, fully aware of the reality of climate change and the climate refugees it will produce, has deemed climate change a "stresser," "threat multiplier" and "accelerant of instability." The climate security doctrine, as Miller calls it, uses this impending threat to bolster border security operations and push forward a project of "sustainable national security." While the U.S. military is one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world, "greening" the military apparatus by transitioning to so-called renewable energy sources, is not being done principally to mitigate climate change but instead to maintain a comparative military advantage as the world moves further into climate chaos. Technology developers and contractors have eagerly seized the opportunity to profit in the emerging climate-security business.

The conversion of a humanitarian crisis into a security threat and then into a business opportunity has led to a build-up of mass surveillance on the border, an expansion of constitution-free zones, and a "prevention through deterrence" strategy that has turned the borderlands into a deathscape. Around 6,000 bodies have been recovered in the U.S. side of the desert since the mid-1990s (The International Organization for Migration reports that 40,000 people have perished crossing borders worldwide from 2000-2014). Miller takes us along the migrant routes through Mexico and Guatemala to show how such spaces of exception and "prevention through deterrence" strategies implemented at the U.S.'s behest, have pushed south. Stripping migrants of their rights and forcing them into the most dangerous forms of passage, such as hopping cargo trains (known as *la bestia*) has led to countless deaths and loss of limbs.

One of *Storming the Wall's* most compelling chapters takes us to rural Honduras. Many of the bodies maimed and violated on the grueling trip north come from here. In 2015 and 2016, Central America experienced one of the longest droughts in history and farmers lost entire seasons of crops. The farmers Miller talks to about their state of calamity did not find solutions with their government. Rather, they're still dealing with the fallout from 2009, when the U.S. tacitly supported a military coup that ousted the elected President and allowed a right-wing military regime to take over. Since then, violence and drug trafficking have become rampant, poverty has risen, and rural farmers, including Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous communities have faced dispossession of their lands for african palm production, mining, and tourism. The "solutions" to these crises from above have been two-fold: further disenfranchisement through the creation of privately-governed cities/territories (called ZEDEs), and an elaborate system of check-points throughout the country, or in other words, increased border militarization with funding and training from the U.S.

While more focused on the global forces of militarization, *Storming the Wall* is very-much told through the voices of those directly impacted around the world, and through grassroots groups fighting for both human mobility and planetary survival in places like Honduras, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Arizona. Miller provides a conceptual roadmap for understanding the links between climate change, migration, and border militarization, as well as clues for a greater integration of disparate struggles and broad-based solidarities.

Storming the Wall ends on a hopeful note. Written as a beautiful message to his unborn son, the last chapter invites us into imagination, reminding us to, in the words of poet Mary Oliver, "always leave room in (our) hearts for the unimaginable." The call is more than a sentimental pick-me-up at the end of a devastating exposé. Given the enormity of the existential threat that is climate change, a fundamental shift in consciousness and the ability to imagine alternatives to our current model of development are essential to seeing past false solutions and militarized responses to climate change.

Miller calls for change from the grassroots, an economy "based on ecological function" instead of growth, a re-directing of border resources and labor to

grassroots ecological restoration projects that would transform devastated areas. Above all, Miller argues that this must be combined with cross-border solidarity, in particular, cross-border mutual aid. Such work challenges the very paradigms of the nation-state and its borders that will, in coming years, uphold and enforce global climate apartheid, unless we do something about it. The kind of borderless aid Miller is calling for is the kind we are currently seeing criminalized at the U.S. Mexico border and in the Mediterranean Sea. Lawyers, journalists, and NGO workers are being harassed and barred from international travel. The cases against Carola Rackete, Pia Klemp, Scott Warren, and other humanitarian aid workers with No More Deaths, further demonstrate Miller's point that the border regime will use state violence to enforce its classification of which human lives deserve saving, and which do not.

In our present moment, *Storming the Wall* is nothing less than a gift. Miller's poetic writing, unapologetically humane and injected with raw emotion, presents an antidote to the extreme dehumanization that is the topic of much of the book. *Storming the Wall* shares the first and last names of those profiting off of impending ecological collapse and the punishment of those most vulnerable to it. It also arms us with a language of urgency against the humming-along of business-as-usual.

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***Interface**: a journal for and about social movements* *Reviews*
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Review Essay: *Posthumanities*, Environmental Activism, and Anthropocentric Terminology

Review essay author: Andrew Kettler

Nicole Seymour. 2018. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (306 pp; $26.95).

David Farrier. 2019. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (164 pp; $23.00).

There is no better academic imprint for the ongoing environmental moment of repetitive, numbing, and everyday crisis than the University of Minnesota Press. Within their prized *Posthumanities* series, or as part of the general run of the press, the monographs that arrive from the printers in Minneapolis are consistently the most attractive, engaging, and dialectically important works for modern conversations of eco-criticism. Two recent works from the press continue to offer this level of excellence through engagement with socially active narratives on the proper use of complex language within environmentalist movements.

Nicole Seymour's *Bad Environmentalism* (2018) is a new and volatile addition to Minnesota's eco-critical canon. The book explores how irony and transgression can be used to expose spaces where modern environmentalism has left itself open to critique from the Right due to an often sentimental, demanding, and pedantic tone that creates vast emotional paralysis for the general population, who are tired of being shamed for their imperfection. Applying both queer theory and affect theory, Seymour's book searches these arduous and perfectionist requirements within modern environmentalism that harm the movement by limiting how actively ecological narratives can be mobilized within multivalent classes of the public sphere.

Through a tone of personal self-critique that Seymour offers as a new paradigm for environmental movements, *Bad Environmentalism* suggests modern environmentalism is not appropriately self-reflexive. This lack of awareness allows the political Right to repetitively define many activists through singular hypocritical actions. Generally, to explore these concerns, Seymour searches how some visual media about the environment uses irony, perversity, and camp, and suggests we approach environmentalism as a performance that should apply affect over class and expertise.

Essentially, *Bad Environmentalism* argues that environmentalism can better engage more diverse class and racial groups through appealing to emotions rather than to socially constructed forms of expert knowledge that can easily be dismissed as pedantic, austere, and hypocritical.

The first two chapters focus on eco-cinema and television programming. Together, they offer a valuable contribution that should be read by any academic

who is concerned with anti-intellectualism, environmentalism, and narratives surrounding expert knowledge. The first of these chapters engages a narrative of pedantic eco-cinema, focusing on Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). Films like that award-winning documentary, Seymour argues, burden the environmental movement with demands for an unattainable and easily critiqued form of perfect environmental morality.

Rather, as *Bad Environmentalism* unswervingly proposes, environmentalists do not need to be perfect. Demands of flawlessness often allow those who deny climate change to consistently define activists as hypocritical when those campaigners drive gas-powered cars to protests, use jet fuel to fly to movie premieres, or load trash bins with protest signs.

Seymour suggests environmentalism should take on more ironic, sarcastic, or benign messaging strategies, as with the narrative of anti-intellectualism within Mike Judge's film *Idiocracy* (2006) and the anti-narrative aspects of Hannes Lang's *Peak* (2011). *Idiocracy* has specifically become a cult phenomenon and sub-textually important eco-cinematic film that is being read ironically as a pseudo-documentary which presaged the coming of Trumpian fascism, dipshittery, and environmental foolhardiness.

The next chapter focuses on how the carnivalesque and the transgressive are being used to create forms of non-knowledge that may better introduce audiences to narratives of environmental care. Rather than teach directly through demanding language, the texts chosen for this chapter work through acceptance of non-knowledge to engage audiences through irony, comedy, and a focus on the queer, refuse, genitalia, and sexuality.

Focusing on the progeny of the *Jackass* (2000-2002) television and film franchise with *Wildboyz* (2003-2006), and the absurd imagery of Isabella Rossellini's *Green Porno* (2008-), Seymour highlights how environmental programs that provide the transgressive absurdity of nature and joke about the genitalia and sexual behaviours of animals can offer anti-expert non-knowledge for audiences that do not wish to be spoken to through pedantic or scientific language. Such shows can help to remove a reverence for nature that often prevents many from participating in environmental movements due to fears of being shamed as hypocritical or as not living up to the class standards of the many public forms of upper-class, settler, or book club environmentalism.

The third chapter, which comes from Seymour's earlier articles, provides a direct analysis of spaces where queer culture and camp are used to offer similar narratives of engagement that do not need expert knowledge. This investigation looks at Idyll Dandy Arts (IDA) and the Eggplant Faerie Players in Tennessee, the Lesbian National Parks and Services (LNPS), and Queers for the Climate to portray the performative nature of environmentalist discourse.

Seymour shows how the inherent bourgeois performances of environmentalism that occur when shopping at places like Whole Foods or speaking to friends about veganism can be queered and sneered at in environmentally positive ways that explore class bias within green discourse. Seymour's analysis of the "It Gets

Wetter" movement by Queers for the Climate specifically shows how disrupting the narratives of masculine expertise within climate science can provide more inventive and productive spaces for environmental engagement through the emotions.

The penultimate chapter summarizes concerns that the central aspects of the modern environmental movement are based on choosing to become an environmentalist rather than being subjected to environmental degradation. Thus, the chapter centres on questions of race and class by showing how many modern texts question the still prevalent and static categories of the Ecological Indian who respects the environment inherently and the Urban African American who could care less about environmental issues. Focusing on the literary works of Sherman Alexie and Percival Everett, this chapter shows how performativity can be used to question these false categories through the application of self-critique and humour about the very categories that subjugate and other minority populations through environmental discourses.

Bad Environmentalism offers a final chapter that specifically focuses on class and environmentalism through a direct exploration of the phenomenon whereby environmentalists are held to an impossible standard of perfect behaviour and are consequently considered immoral for breaking a single environmental code that they may espouse as important for others to follow.

Articulating an ideal of "aspirational environmentalism" and "trashiness" within environmental literature, this chapter depicts narratives that critique the impression that environmentalists must follow upper-class identities of environmentalism.

From among tropes within *Kath and Kim* (2002-2012), *The Goode Family* (2009), and *The Simpsons Movie* (2007), Seymour locates spaces where lower class heroes critique narratives of environmental perfectionism. She argues these criticisms can help the movement through exposing where settler colonial behaviour within the environmental crusade has reached places worthy of review. The conclusion uses the campy vegan film *Carnage* (2017), by comedian Simon Amstell, to further highlight spaces where scholars can apply forms of bad environmentalism to critique aspects of the environmental movement that have become overly doctrinaire.

Reading *Bad Environmentalism* allows the reader to see sub-textual, often ironic, and sometimes campy narratives in many spaces of the public sphere. For example, *Aquaman* (2018) offers a type of bad environmentalism where the ecological narratives are sub-textual and penetrate by osmosis rather than through the perfectionist hammer of the modern environmental movement. Within the film, the desire of the leaders of Atlantis to attack the surface world comes partly from a hatred of the trash that enters the ocean, an emotion that is relayed to the audience as an obvious fact that needs no more justification within the campy and queer narrative of royal warriors who ride on lighted and large seahorses.

For another example of such bad environmentalism, akin to Lang's *Peak*, the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) movement, which offers often confusing and heterogeneous imagery and music to elicit biological responses, frequently delivers films of the environment and sensory engagements with nature that do not meticulously teach or depend on reverence. Rather, these films repeatedly offer images and sounds that can be both revered or considered repulsive, as with pictures of insects or penetrative natural sounds.

Posthumanities and Anthropocene poetics

Bad Environmentalism is a strong example of how the University of Minnesota Press continues to take risks with their eco-critical texts that few other presses would provide. By comparison, David Farrier's *Anthropocene Poetics* (2019) is a more academic treatment of similar topics related to language, textual diffusion in the public sphere, and modern environmental dialectics. Farrier's work examines poetry that uses environmental language to explore different temporalities of the Anthropocene.

Farrier's work fits nicely into the tradition of exceptional editions that arrive from the celebrated *Posthumanities* series. Each monograph from *Posthumanities* reads like a new album in an intellectual discography. Knowing about each work, admiring the cover art, and being excited when each new edition arrives distinguishes the entire series as innovative and eye-catching. Like any good discography for a favourite band, each work in *Posthumanities* does not stand alone, as the series consistently builds upon a conversation with earlier editions.

Edited by Cary Wolfe, the *Posthumanities* series provides leading scholars a relatively uncluttered outlet to offer developing theses on cutting edge humanities scholarship related to understanding how humans interact with objects and animals in the environment. The series includes works from Michel Serres, Jacques Derrida, Isabelle Stengers, Donna Haraway, Timothy Morton, and Julian Yates.

The focus that the series provides upon an internal academic dialectic offers that *Posthumanities* is partially an experiment in collective modern problem solving, whereby quick engagement between authors within the series drives important conversations for an academy that is otherwise woefully slow to engage with the social problems of modernity.

Engaging these problems through reading a *Posthumanities* edition offers scholars a sense of academic pride, jouissance, and intellectual freshness, often akin to the impressions gained from accessing works from similar series in presses like *Prickly Paradigm* or *Open Library*. This theoretical intensity, whereby the academic reader can engage through a commonly used and complex intellectual language without the projected or performed confines of

ivory tower pomposity, is an important aspect of creating new languages that can alter public sphere sympathies about environmental activism.

Editions from *Posthumanities* frequently use this common jargon to walk a fine line between activism and the academy, while habitually blurring this boundary through honest forms of self-reflexivity that implicitly teaches readers to think like both an academic and activist in the same moment. *Anthropocene Poetics* continues these traditions of critical dialogue, activism, and the use of a conversational academic tone even when engaging complex languages and important modern issues of environmental survival.

Anthropocene Poetics starts from the visual, providing signifying artworks to begin each chapter. For the introduction, Farrier chose Alex Chinneck's *A Bullet from a Shooting Star*, an industrial sculpture in London. He uses this image to portray how the questions of temporality, meaning, and conversation can connect with poetics to better understand, engage with, and assist in reversing the degradation of the modern Anthropocene.

In *Anthropocene Poetics*, poiesis is positioned as a novel pathway for accepting the temporal variances of the Anthropocene, as defined by a human population whose spatial and linguistic relations are partly demarcated through how the meanings of the Anthropocene consistently shift.

The first chapter in Farrier's short publication offers readings of intimate poems that show geologic connections to a deep time that creates awareness for the place of humans within broader temporal scales. The use of poetry to disrupt human understandings of temporality, space, and measures of size arise, for Farrier, from understanding intimate relationships with these mineral objects.

Sensory engagement with these geologic forms, especially through the tactile, can provide a way for humans to understand their place within a longer lithic history of the universe. Partly through queering the ideas of geology within the works of Elizabeth Bishop and Seamus Heaney, whereby rocks and minerals explored within poems have agency to speak of their temporal existence, Farrier guides the reader through a new sensuality of deep time.

Borrowing from Jason Moore's *Capitalism in the Web of Life* (2015), *Anthropocene Poetics* next looks at how plastic remnants will live forever, and what that understanding of permanency does to human understandings of time and the environment. These death-less objects are accordingly used by poets to show how human connections to a new understanding of deep future can portray the various entangled relationships of objects and living beings in a currently threatened world. Farrier expands into discussions of these resources that Morton calls "hyperobjects," like Styrofoam and marine waste. He then provides that poets can help us understand that spaces on the globe are already considered what Naomi Klein has termed "sacrifice zones," or spaces that are forfeited to allow for the fetishized lifestyles of neoliberalism.

The third chapter of *Anthropocene Poetics* engages the work of Haraway through exploring the importance of kin-making within poetic narratives. This

chapter sifts through the complex scientific and humanities representation of the clinamen, the frequently random, often connected, and difficult to analyse swerving of atoms understood often through ideas of free will. Farrier looks at this ideal through the writings of Mark Doty, Sean Borodale, and Christian Bök to show the importance of merging literary and living conditions into knotted narratives for a better understanding of deep time.

Important in this discussion is the creation of the *Xenotext*, a poem fashioned through combining human language with the agency of micro-organisms within set literary and biological limits. These knots between humans, nature, and language, whether written with jellyfish, bees, or micro-organisms as *Xenotext* within biological confines, are also essential in the Coda that ends *Anthropocene Poetics*, which analyses the rise of industrial forests to again question the use of different terminology to define the Anthropocene.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of environmentalist language

What terms should scholars use to define the eco-critical moment humanity now faces? In *Bad Environmentalism*, Seymour suggests that the use of seemingly positive but often pedantic language from environmental activists falsely shames many away from ever pursuing environmental causes. She consequently affirms why the public hates the very people that are aiming to save humanity from environmental degradation.

Her solution is to make academic choices that raise narratives which engage the environment without expertise, as expert knowledge frequently cordons off those who either cannot understand advanced environmental information or see experts as overly educated, hypocritical, altered by funding, and falsely magnanimous. Affect consequently takes centre stage in *Bad Environmentalism*, whereby environmental narratives that arrive through comedy, sub-textual osmosis, and catharsis should be pursued above those that speak through expertise, sentimentalism, and pontificating and ugly forms of shaming.

Within *Anthropocene Poetics*, Farrier answers similar questions through offering that the language scholars choose to use within the academy is also often important for determining the efficacy of environmental causes within the public sphere. The nominal and significant choices made by activists and academics are not only important for how audiences receive eco-critical information, but also are active enough to alter understandings in random and often unassuming ways.

Both of these books from the University of Minnesota Press point to understanding the careful expenditure of language and texts within eco-criticism as vital for the future of environmentalism. Whether for messaging to disaffected working class populations or speaking with academics about abstruse topics like queer mineralogy, clinamen, or the Capitalocene, language

remains an important structure for coming to terms with how humanity has altered the earth to a space possibly beyond repair.

These and other texts from the North Star State offer the finest academic treatments for understanding the difficulty of coming to terms with these environmental sins. *Posthumanties* continues to drive these questions for the broader academy through engaging questions of language and survival in the new technological and literary spaces of the Anthropocene, and her many different terminological and natural iterations.

As human populations are facing a problematic and emotionally taxing moment of environmental concern, scholars must remain vigilant about their linguistic choices and the affect their studies may place upon different populations. Hopefully, with time, more people and communities will be able to access come-to-Gaia moments, through either the irony of bad environmentalism or a new intellectual poetics of kin-making with an interactive Anthropocene.

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Book Review: Jaume Franquesa. *Power Struggles: Dignity, Value, and The Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain.*

Review author: Alexander Dunlap

Jaume Franquesa. 2018. *Power Struggles: Dignity, Value, and The Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain*, Bloomington, University of Indiana Press (236 pp; US$ 35.00)

The future is renewable energy. This, according to various NGOs, corporations and governments, who claim "clean" renewable energy will triumph over "dirty" fossil fuels, saving global capitalism, industrial patterns of consumption and, consequently, humanity from the onslaught of ecological and climate catastrophe.

Anyone looking, feeling and, often—but not always—living in close proximity to industrial-scale renewable energy projects knows this is patently false and only justifiable through the narrow and abstract economic gymnastics of carbon accounting. Jaume Franquesa's *Power Struggles: Dignity, Value and the Renewable Energy Frontier in Spain* takes on these questions head on, revealing the harsh realities that arise from the renewable energy economy.

Franquesa is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and *Power Struggles* is his third book, but the first published in English. Based on "eleven months of discontinuous fieldwork between 2010 and 2014" in Southern Catalonia's Terra Alta (High Land) county (p. 12), *Power Struggles* offers a rare, comprehensive ethnography and history of the development of a mixed energy regime over a period of fifty years.

Situating his inquiry in post-Spanish Civil War political tensions, Franquesa takes readers on a journey to Terra Alta, documenting local opposition to hydroelectric dams in the 1960s, nuclear plant development in the 1970s-1980s and, finally, natural gas, wind power and corresponding infrastructures into the present . *Power Struggles* maps shifting and complementary energy regimes, and the corresponding local contestations, while providing analysis supported by a breadth of critical theory, from Walter Benjamin, to eco-Marxism, through to energy anthropology and critical agrarian studies. Franquesa used archival research, oral history interviews, and participant observation to understand the process of social and energetic change.

Charting an enormous amount of energy development projects taking hold in Terra Alta, *Power Struggles* "challenges the idea that renewable energy necessarily involves a stark rupture with former modes of energy production" (p. 9). Franquesa documents the arrival of various hydro, nuclear, natural gas and wind energy projects, the political factions responsible for promoting these projects, as well as the social discord they produce. *Power Struggles* demonstrates that "energy transitions are not technological shifts, they are

sociopoltical processes fraught with conflict" (p. 131). On display here is the continuity between energy regimes and, perhaps surprisingly for some readers, the "extractive character" of wind energy development in the region (p. 131).

Franquesa offers a sense of place through an ethnographic account, and proceeds to review the literature and terms —"periphery," "dignity" and "waste"— as well as the key theories and arguments of the book. He then lays the socio-political foundations and dynamics engulfing the agrarian Terra Alta region. This leads into a discussion of the onset of hydroelectric dams, the energy politics of Spanish fascism and its fixation with nuclear power.

Franquesa documents how nuclear power was militantly resisted across various sectors in defense of the territory, but also to avoid becoming relegated to a peripheral "wasteland"—a landscape devalued for profitable development. *Power Struggles* then examines in greater depth the "morality of *la nuclear*" (p. 87) which threatened local livelihoods and agrarian culture for many, while arousing interest and opportunity for others. The transition between nuclear, natural gas and wind energy development is then explored, with a discussion on the internal colonial relationships enacted through energy development as well as the policies that made this situation possible.

Power Struggles then delves into the history, politics and hopes of wind energy development from within and from without. The book affords privileged testimonies of wind energy development from multiple and often hard to access perspectives from within the wind industry. After discussing the collisions and contradictions between "developers" and "developed," Franquesa digs into the politics of land grabbing and control. Land control for wind energy was accomplished by various means, which accompanied inadequate public consultations and concerted efforts at widening and/or manipulating social divisions as well as enrolling "mainstream environmental organizations in a media campaign to improve the image of wind energy development in Terra Alta" (p. 182).

In conclusion, Franquesa revisits and analyzes the dignity expressed by inhabitants who refuse to be relegated to becoming an "energy sacrifice zone" for Barcelona, or other city centers in Spain. The author successfully makes distinctions between indignation, resistance, livelihoods and the revitaliziton of space undergoing processes of devaluation/revaluation. The reader is left with a fuller undestanding of how people cope with the reality of infrastructural colonization.

The depth and breadth of this book is astounding, even exhausting. The interweaving of critical theory, academic literature on energy and development, and intense ethnographic detail with secondary research is a monumental accomplishment. Examining the relationships, shifts and ethos between multiple energy regimes—and their continuity—in Terra Alta makes *Power Struggles* a foundational contribution not only to the anthropology of energy or to critical agrarian studies, but more widely. It allows us to understand the

reproduction of ecological catastrophe and its forced—or structured—composition.

Power Struggles comes in light on the destructive impacts of industrial-scale wind energy development. While understandable, this raises larger issues with the hegemonic politics situating and conditioning the book.

While the book begins to unravel the distinctions between dirty fossil fuel and clean renewable energy, wind energy exists next to nuclear power in the Terra Alta (and elsewhere). Beside nuclear, wind energy appears clean, friendly and ecologically sustainable, and this is apparant in a subtle way in the book. Readers are taught to accept the development documented by the author, but also implicitly and explicitly asked to forget about the mining necessary to manufacture and build energy infrastructure systems.

Once placed next to nuclear, it is easy to forget the (serious) socio-ecological impacts of wind parks, as they appear negligible in comparison. In reality—depending on geography, quantity, turbine placement and energy use/consumer policy—they are not. There is a lack of questioning regarding the large quantities of raw materials mined—iron, copper, cement rare earth minerals and more—processed and manufactured for wind energy infrastructure. All of this happens before we enter the phase of wind energy extraction exposed so well by Franquesa. This is compounded by the popular imaginaries and hopes regarding renewable energy, many of which have been co-opted by corporations and dysfunctional governments, as *Power Struggles* discusses in Chapter 5. Advertising campaigns, public relations firms and half-hearted environmental policies continually reinforce the green washed (and nuclear conditioned) perception of wind energy.

Though it is perhaps outside of the scope of Franquesa's book, there is an urgent need to acknowledge the first wave of natural resource extraction and refinement that is also associated with land grabbing, ecological destruction, labor, systemic repression and human rights abuses. Acknowledging this reality is the first step to beginning an honest conversation about renewable energy systems. *Power Struggles* is an exceptional inquiry into energy transition suitable to anyone interested in the politics and conflicts surrounding energy development projects. This book helps move toward a more honest conversation regarding the reality of energy development and transition, and it deserves a place on classroom syllabi.

About the review author

Recently awarded post-doctoral research fellow position at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo, Alexander Dunlap's previous research examined the social impact and conflict generated by wind energy development in Oaxaca, Mexico. Other Publications by Alexander appear in *Anarchist Studies*, *Geopolitics*, *the Review of Social*

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Book Review: John Agbonifo. *Environment and Conflict: The Place and Logic of Collective Action in the Niger Delta.*

Review Author: Samuel Udogbo.

John Agbonifo. 2019. *Environment and Conflict: The Place and Logic of Collective Action in the Niger Delta*. London & New York: Routledge (137 pp., hardcover, £92.00).

Despite the existance of varying theories and discussions by scholars on the Nigerian Niger Delta issue, the Ogoni struggle has remained a major topic of debate on the global stage. In *Environment and Conflict,* John Agbonifo, a Nigeria born scholar and a senior lecturer at Osun State University, gives a contextual analysis that clearly defines the Ogoni struggle. He explores the environmental history of conflict and collective action in Ogoniland (p. 3) and looks at the damaging legacy of environmental degradation through oil exploitation by Shell Oil, supervised by the Nigerian State. The brutality meted out on the Ogoni people and society has found a concrete expression in *Environment and Conflict*. Decolonizing the environment, as Agbonifo suggests, is key to what it means to be an Ogoni. This is an intellectual insight into the colonial oppressive establishment perpetuated by Shell and the Nigerian state. *Environment and Conflict* argues that the long-time resistance to oppression and exploitation of the Ogonis be understood from various contexts, from national and regional to cultural.

Agbonifo's analysis is rooted in a decade of personal experience and extensive empirical research on the Ogoni people and society. It draws from in-depth conversations and interviews with social movement activists in Ogoniland. An interest in the environmental history of conflict and collective action in Ogoniland is apparent in this well researched book, which makes an immense contribution to our understanding of the Ogoni struggle to transform their lives and society and in making social change driven from below. There is no doubt that the social movement approach *Environment and Conflict* contributes a great deal to movement scholarship in Africa.

Environment and Conflict begins with an overview of different theoretical perspectives on the Niger Delta conflict, drawing substantial evidence from social movement theory. Agbonifo draws from several literatures on the Ogoni conflict, which "…underlined the causative role of environmental crisis, economic crisis, and political instability" (p. 4), while the role of culture in the emergence of the conflict is neglected and "treated as insignificant background"

(p. 4). Although the Ogoni struggle is shaped by global factors, Agbonifo argues that there is continuity between the Ogoni mobilisation and its institutional context.

The challenges the mobilisation generated and the frames it deployed emerged from within its own particular cultural universe (p. 4). Agbonifo demonstrates this by using a place-sensitive social movement approach to examine the Ogoni conflict. *Environment and Conflict* analyses how place and environment can be understood from the perspective of local communities. It offers the reader an idea into why and how community mobilise. "It is more than a question of why the movement emerged; but more of why specific people decided to join the movement in particular places and time" (p. 6). This requires us to understand the environment from a decolonised perspective, and place is significant because it shapes the structure and dynamics of a movement.

What follows is a contextual analysis of the Ogoni people in terms of its geographical location and the formal and informal settings where the everyday social interaction are constituted. The author argues that land and culture for traditional communities are the most valuable possessions and one cannot exist without the other; to separate the two is a modernist thing. It is therefore important for any analysis on the Niger Delta and the Ogoni show "how human culture shapes biodiversity and the transformation of the Niger Delta landscape..." (p. 16). Despite the colonial obstruction of cultures and environments in Nigeria, Agbonifo argues that it is of great importance to note that the relationships between communities and nature determine how we see and exist in the world.

Environment and Conflict explores the formal national political space the Ogoni found themselves in during the colonial and post-colonial eras. The new postcolonial formation of states, which lumped several ethnic groups within one state, exposed the Ogoni to numerous ethnic groups, necessitating their struggle against ethnic domination both regionally and nationally (p. 38). The violent subjugation of the African people by the British propelled a political competition amongst Nigerian political elites, who engage with whatever will satisfy their objectives rather than deliver what benefits the people.

It is important to note that regionalisation politics is the foundation of the unending struggle between the three ethnic majority groups who think that Nigeria is a natural tripod (p. 29). Interestingly, well over two decades into colonial rule a pan-Ogoni consciousness did not exist due to communication difficulties between the Ogoni cultural zones. However, Ogoni contact and interaction with common institutional settings and processes organised by the colonial government deepened the critical need for an Ogoni identity. The discovery of oil was initially a big hope for the Ogoni. However, this hope was soon dashed due to the massive environmental degradation that came with oil exploitation (p. 38).

KAGOTE, which is an abbreviation for the four clans (Khana, Gokana, Tai and Eleme) in Ogoni, was an elite group established in the early 70s. Its

organisations and clientelistic ties with the state and multinational oil corporations allowed them access to juicy political positions and wealth. These elites did not defend the interests of the ordinary Ogoni people; youth and women had no place in KAGOTE, and the pre-colonial Ogoni system of self-governance, called the *Yaa*, was excluded (p. 37). The exploitative relationship between Shell-Ogoni led to the construction of an Ogoni identity by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People.

Agbonifo then goes on to examine landscape, capital and violence. The author looks at the relationship between the Nigerian state and the Niger Delta. He shows how the arrival of the "oil firm led to the transformation of socio-physical space and the emergence of a new socio-environmental landscape" (p. 39). Agbonifo states that "mega-development projects, such as pipelines, petrochemical plants, roads and ports are inherently displacing" (p. 39), and a "...ruthless attempt to destroy the cultural, ecological and cultural differences intrinsic to a place and embodied in local practices" (p. 39). Furthermore, he argues, "oil development in the Niger Delta is a geographical project embodied by intense spatial transformation" (pp. 39). Hence, the alteration of nature and society reflects the inherent contradictions of development.

On the idea of 'Clash of Logics', Agbonifo shows how the Western models and approaches differ from African understandings of the environment. Whilst the Western worldview is "...predominantly anthropocentric and individualistic" (p. 45), the African perspective is what he calls eco-biocommunitarian, which is "...not metaphysics of domination, consumerism or greed, but ideas and claims rooted in myths and taboos that serve to conserve ecological balance" (p. 45). Though conflicting actors do exist, there is also collaboration amongst elements of conflicting groups of actors; to understand these dynamics, *Environment and Conflict* uses the metaphor of development as trans-local strategic action field.

Agbonifo acknowledges that development is inherently conflictual and as a result, the best approach to such development is not as impersonal phenomenon or structure but as a process involving identifiable actors and associations amongst people and places where expert knowledge is required (p. 50). "The conflict in the field is conceptualised as social conflict defined by three elements: identity of the protagonist, the opponent and the stake over which both struggle" (p. 51). Here, Agbonifo clearly presents the relationships between the Nigerian state, the Ogoni people and the oil. The idea of development, which is expressed in the context of oil extraction, resonates with the problem of socio-economic marginalisation and poverty.

Environment and Conflict then looks at the factors that shaped the Ogoni mobilisation: elements such as place, location, locale and sense of the place. Agbonifo goes beyond meta-narratives to look at ideational factors and micro-mobilisation activities of activists in order to understand the emergence of the conflict. He uses the idea of *framing* to explain the Ogoni conflict. Framing deals with how actors read and define a situation, apportion blame and advance arguments for change; Agbonifo argues this is a worldview that mobilises inactive groups. He shows how literatures on the Ogoni issue have ignore this

dimension and instead paid so much attention to the external orientation and roots of the Ogoni frames. Instead, Agbonifo explores locally informed and oriented frames, of which there are three.

First is the oppressive order master frame, in which conscious and strategic efforts by a group of people with shared understanding of their world and themselves form a clear understanding of the reason for collective action. It explores Ogoni grievances in structural terms and places them "...in global frames as a marginalised powerless minority group at the receiving end of the powerful State and Shell whose actions are to blame for Ogoni environmental and social problems" (p. 79). Second is the *miideekor* frame: by using everyday Ogoni vocabulary, the *miideekor* allows every Ogoni to understand the rationale behind their participation in the protest. Third are the otherworldly frames, which capture the Ogoni traditional religious beliefs. *Bari*, the supreme goddess, offers the Ogoni support in their struggle against oppression. These provides insight on how the Ogoni combined various frames to mobilise themselves and external support simultaneously.

Environment and Conflict goes on to focus on the challenges that are involved in understanding the role of culture in the Ogoni struggle. Analysing scholarly views on the issue of what defines the Ogoni sense of mobilisation, Agbonifo contends that the Ogoni pre-existing cultural codes and structures, Christian and traditional religious cultures shaped the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). This expresses the ordinary Ogoni cultural life, including constraints that come from Nigerian society's rules of democratic participation, equality and federalism.

Thus, the "long acquaintance with oppression and the untouchability of the elites which concretise the culture of silence and difference" (p. 89) was met by MOSOP's method of inclusiveness, opposing KAGOTE's exclusive ethos. The inclusion of all Ogoni in decision making characterised MOSOP's *modus operandi*. Hence, the Ogoni struggle is approached in this section from the point of view of cultural challenge than a reaction to systemic dislocation.

Agbonifo then examines the moral basis of the Ogoni struggle as opposed to those literatures that looks at selfish provincial interests or materialistic considerations as factors that facilitate the conflict. Exploitation of oil and destruction of the environment is an offence against the Ogoni, their land and deities. The Ogonis sees this act as ahistorical and out of place and it is therefore necessary to fight in favour of re-establishment of what constitutes the Ogoni.

Amongst the literature on the Ogoni struggle, is Ike Okonta's *When Citizens Revolt*, which re-examines the evidence concerning the Ogoni struggle for self-determination and raises questions about its origins and implications for a postcolonial Africa still grappling with the persistence of ethnic identities and the communal politics they engender. Agbonifo's *Environment and Conflict* is the best-structured and down to earth analysis on the Ogoni situation to date. The contextual analysis presented gives a substantial view of what constitutes the Ogoni people and demonstrates how social protest is at the heart of Ogoni

culture. It is difficult not to like Agbonifo's style. Most importantly, *Environment and Conflict* is a major contribution to knowledge, especially on the Ogoni space in the Niger Delta region and Nigeria as a whole. The place-sensitive social movement theory adopted by the author provides a clear understanding of the Ogoni conflict, capturing its uniqueness and capacity to mobilise.

It would have been more beneficial to African readers to have had the Ogoni metaphors adopted so as to speak to other socio-cultural movements in Nigeria, like the Movement Against Fulani Occupation (MAFO) in Benue and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in Igbo land, which have thus far lackeded the stark social force of the Ogoni. Similar knowledge lies hidden in so many social movements in Africa, and it would do us good if African scholars address this practical lacuna in order to put in context the aspirations, grievances and worldviews of African people. In addition, such an approach would have contributed to the current debate between global south and north social movements (Dwyer & Zeilig, 2012); strengthening our understanding of activists and movements on the African continent.

Social transformation will not take place in a vacuum but in a society, and employing an empirical image from below shed light on the Ogoni social world, which has an impact on their action. Hence, an analysis of grassroots struggle needs a more robust and ambitious account that clearly presents the tension between culture and movement. The author fails to examine this crucial point and I urge that this be looked at in the next edition of the book.

We ought to challenge the Afropessimists (Dwyer and Zeilig, 2012), by critically presenting the role of African grassroots social movements on the world stage in order to address the rival narrative of failure that is unleashed on Africa by scholars from the global north. Collective action is inevitable. Hence, in order to achieve impossibility collectively, the starting point must be of people's interests and identities (Neocosmos, 2016). Hence, the Ogoni struggle is sustained by their collective interest and identity; it tells us about why and how the Ogoni struggle started and it is going on (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

Though Agbonifo referenced a number of social movement theories, there is no clear evidence of any interaction with ideas from below. It must be clear that activists' actions are informed by theories since activists know how to theorise their own actions. Using the idea of framing, the book demonstrates how the Ogoni mobilised. However, the author uncritically romanticised the Ogoni socio-cultural context and failed to recognise the complexities that exist amongst the Ogonis, which is a major obstacle to their movement: internal grievances are a major *bête noire* in the Ogoni struggle. Finally, since colonial politics is a major factor in the Ogoni issue, subsequent editions should suggest strategies for political and economic alternatives against the policies that the oppressors have created.

Environment and Conflict: The Place and Logic of Collective Action in the Niger Delta provides a valuable and absorbing window of knowledge, making Ogoni issues accessible to scholars for further investigation. The Ogoni struggle remains a challenge and a major issue of concern in the Niger delta and Nigeria in general. I would recommend *Environment and Conflict* to anyone who wants to understand the Ogoni issue and the socio-cultural ideas associated with it.

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Review Essay: Jason Schulman. Neoliberalism, Labour governments, and working-class power-resources: a tale of the tape

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Jason Schulman. 2015. *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response: The Politics of the End of Labourism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (172 pp; hardcover, €88.39).

The 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis represented a violent close to a two-decade period of ascendant neoliberalism. Although in the aftermath of the crisis the political and economic structures of neoliberalism remain more-or-less intact, the system is enervate, increasingly fragile and, perhaps most importantly, lacking the sense of legitimacy and inevitability which had once been its armour: 'dominant but dead', in the words of Smith (2010: 54). For the first time in years, there is the sense that history is open, that alternatives to neoliberalism are taking shape on both the Right and the Left. Invigorating yet dangerous currents of anger, disenchantment, hope and energy swirl in our polities: invigorating, in that they can be harnessed in the creation of a progressive and inclusive vision of life after neoliberalism; dangerous, in that such forces can equally be pressed into the service of a resurgent far Right. To realise the former is the pressing task confronting progressive forces across the globe. However, if the Left is to proffer a cogent post-neoliberal future, it must first come to terms with the circumstances of neoliberalism's birth and the painful truth that social democracy was complicit in its genesis. Only by identifying and acknowledging past mistakes can the ground be cleared for the progressive alternative to neoliberalism that we so sorely need.

Jason Schulman's *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response: The Politics of the End of Labourism* is an important contribution to this process of introspection. His object of analysis is labourism, a distinctive sub-species of social democracy that sees 'trade unionism extended into the arena of the government' (p. 10). Labourism was historically premised on a vision of the one embracing labour movement assuming two forms in the struggle to improve the lot of the working class: the industrial wing centred on trade unions, and the political wing crystallised in the party. Understanding the evolution in this union-party nexus and its status in the context of neoliberalism is the main task Schulman sets himself. In particular, through a focus on the experience of union-party relations in New Zealand, Britain and Australia, he posits that the degree and rapidity with which labour parties assumed a neoliberal trajectory was largely a function of the success or failure of the trade union movement in controlling 'their' party.

In the space of what is a short book, Schulman raises some very important questions regarding how trade unions have lost their parties to neoliberalism and the form this loss took. His account of 'working-class power resources' as an explanatory model for why labour parties stray from their historic mission of civilising capitalism is similarly thought provoking, and joins a promising line of 'labour-centric' research that stresses the agency of unions and the importance of union strategy (see, for example, Humphrys, 2018; Humphrys and Cahill, 2017; Lloyd and Ramsay, 2017; Heino, 2017). As will be demonstrated in the course of this article, *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response* is a timely work that, although theoretically flawed, speaks strongly to the present conjuncture.

In order to understand both the achievements and limitations of Schulman's work, however, it is first necessary to put in hand an understanding of his approach and his findings.

Neoliberalism and 'working-class power resources'

At the very outset, Schulman foregrounds the problem facing trade unions in the Western world; the embrace of neoliberalism by notionally working-class parties. He notes that '[o]ver the past 25 years, virtually all social democratic parties have presided over some degree of market deregulation, commercialization, and privatization of the public sector, and at least the piecemeal implementation of welfare-state retrenchment' (p. 1). Identifying labourism with social democracy (a problematic contention, but one which I follow in the course of this analysis), he notes that this pattern of change has characterised labour parties as much as their European brethren. The key question which Schulman addresses himself to is 'why'?

For Schulman, many of the traditional answers forwarded to this question, such as economic globalisation, the shrinking proletariat, and the declining relevance of class identification and ideology, are insufficient in and of themselves to explain the abdication of labour parties to neoliberalism. How, for example, can one explain Australia and New Zealand's very different paths on the neoliberal road in the 1980s when both were small, export-oriented economies? Conversely, why did the UK and New Zealand seemingly share a rapid neoliberal turn, despite their profoundly different economic structures and insertion into the global economy? While the globalisation issue might be a necessary condition of the neoliberal embrace, it is not a sufficient one. Some other explanatory theory is required.

Schulman finds this theory in the literature on working-class power resources (for some representative works, see Western, 1997; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Korpi and Palme, 2003). This is essentially a mid-range institutional theory which 'claims that variations in organizational assets such as unions and left-wing political parties account for cross-country disparities in distributional outcomes' (p. 12). The nub of the working-class power resources perspective 'suggests that the stronger the relationship between the working class and left-

wing parties, the likelier it is that the interests of workers will be reflected in left-wing party policies' (Han, 2015: 603). According to Schulman, this highly useful approach has tended to focus on macro-issues such as the retrenchment of the welfare state, paying little regard to 'the decline of organized working-class power *within (historically) working-class parties* and the subsequent programmatic change that these parties have undergone' (p. 13). To plug this lacuna, to account for how and to what degree trade unions ensure a labour party is *their* party, is the main contribution of the book.

Neoliberalism in New Zealand, Britain and Australia

To flesh out the intra-working-class dimension of power resource theory, Schulman embarks upon three case studies centred on periods of labour government in Anglophone countries:

- New Zealand and Australia through the 1980s and, in the case of the latter, into the 1990s;
- Britain in the 'New Labour' period of the late 1990s and 2000s.

The choice of these states is easily justified – each has a long tradition of labourism being the main form of political mobilisation of organised labour. The temporal limits of the case studies, however, see a plane of cleavage introduced into the analysis; whereas the New Zealand and Australian labour governments of the 1980s were at the vanguard of the neoliberal project, the Blair New Labour government acquired a more-or-less fully formed neoliberalism from its Thatcherite predecessor. Schulman can hardly be blamed for the historic timing of labour governments, however, and he largely addresses this seeming contradiction by making it clear he is focused on the *behaviour* of labour parties in office, rather than fixating on the distinction between them as creators versus inheritors of neoliberalism per se.

Whatever the temporal asymmetry, the crux of Schulman's case study analysis is that, despite the various institutional differences that make the union-party link unique in each country, a broad trend can be observed: whereas New Zealand and British unions were generally ineffective in exerting meaningful control over their parties, Australian unions experienced much greater success which certainly affected, if not the outcome, than at least the tempo and form of neoliberal change.

In order to understand how Schulman arrives at this conclusion, it is necessary to plot briefly how his analysis proceeds. Each case study is interrogated according to two main criteria:

- Changes in economic, social and industrial policy; and
- The structure of union-party relationships/union strategies in relation to labour governments.

In terms of macro-economic outcomes, Schulman acknowledges that, despite some progressive changes in the Australian taxation system over the 1980s

(such as the introduction of capital gains and fringe benefits tax), the differences between the three study states 'were not especially great' (p. 93), with all labour governments embracing policies of privatisation of government assets, financial deregulation and the broader marketisation of social life. Regarding industrial policy, Schulman paints the British New Labour government as the most actively hostile towards trade unions, clashing with public sector unions repeatedly, whereas both New Zealand and Australia left their fundamentally collectivist systems intact.[2]

It is in the field of social policy that Schulman observes a distinct difference between New Zealand and Britain on the one hand, and Australia on the other. Due to a combination of expansions in the 'social' wage (for example, through increasing some payments to low-income earners and the provision of superannuation funds), 'the case of the Australian Labor Party governments' social policies between 1983 and 1996 is less ambiguous and overall *less neoliberal* than those of Britain under Blair or New Zealand under Lange…' (p. 96 – my emphasis).

To the extent that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was more successful in articulating impulses to neoliberalism with traditional social-democratic concerns, or was at least slower traveling down the neoliberal road, Schulman credits the greater ability of Australian unions to influence outcomes within the party itself. In particular, he draws attention to several key points of difference between the Australian union movement and its New Zealand and British brethren:

- The greater concentration of the Australian union movement under the banner of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). By contrast, the peak bodies of the New Zealand and British union movement (the Federation of Labour and Trade Union Congress respectively) couldn't change the reality of a fragmented, decentralised movement.
- The ACTU had developed a more-or-less cogent corporatist vision, symbolised in the Accord agreement with the Labor government, whilst the other bodies had not.[3]

These factors enabled the ACTU to organically insert itself into the policy wheelhouse of the ALP government, in a way that simply was not open to New Zealand or British unions. Of these, the former consistently presented

[2] In this respect, Schulman doesn't adequately tease out the aforementioned distinction between labour 'creators' of neoliberalism (New Zealand and Australia) versus labour 'inheritors' of neoliberalism (Britain).

[3] In Britain, initial attempts at a corporatist compact between the TUC and Labour Party in the 1970s came undone after a wave of union militancy in the late-1970s and were not revived in the New Labour era. In New Zealand, a cogent corporatist vision only came to cohere in the late 1980s as part of the formation of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (the successor peak body to the Federation of Labour). By this stage, much of the damage of neoliberal reform had been done and, in any event, the new peak body did not enjoy the policy access and control over affiliates enjoyed by their Australian counterpart.

themselves as loyal critics of the Lange Labour government, whilst the latter, desperate to free themselves from nearly two decades of conservative rule, allowed Blair's New Labour to maintain the essential structure of Thatcherism. In short, Schulman holds that these case studies are prime examples of the efficacy of working-class power resource theory.

With this outline in hand, we can now move to a consideration of the strengths and limitations of the project itself.

Neoliberalism and the utility of power-resource theory

As mentioned previously, Schulman explicitly identifies working-class power resource theory as the guiding thread running throughout the entire account. He states the case plainly in the conclusion:

> The more a labour party has lost its base in the working class – the less directly a political expression it is of organized labour – the easier it is for the party leadership to quickly and radically impose neoliberal policies. That is, the policy shift is a result of the *diminishing power resources* that unions have within their historic parties (p. 111).

Given this centrality, it is necessary to more deeply interrogate the explanatory potential and limitations of this approach, in particular focusing on what it illuminates and what it occludes.

It is necessary at the outset to note what working-class power resource theory *actually is* – it is fundamentally a mid-range institutional theory. In Schulman's hands, it focuses on the ability of the working class to establish control over a distinct institutional body, the labour party, and to use that body to realise the essence of the labourist movement – the extension of the trade union principle into the political sphere. As Schulman notes, power resource theory's traditional focus, however, has been in explaining variation in the welfare state and in welfare state retrenchment.

It is useful in this context to revisit briefly the foundations of the approach. Rothstein, Samanni and Teorell (2012: 3) note that:

> The PRT grew from an effort by a group of scholars who, during the late 1970s, tried to find a 'middle way' between the then popular Marxist–Leninist view that the welfare state should be understood as merely a functional requisite for the reproduction of capitalist exploitation, and the alternative view that welfare states follow from a similar functionalist logic of modernization and industrialization.

In this context, power resource theorists stressed two key issues:

1. The fact that variation existed in key indicators of the welfare state. These differences could not be dismissed out of hand, but had to be explored and explained; and
2. The significance of the political mobilisation of social classes in constituting these variations (Rothstein, Samanni and Teorell, 2012: 3).

In light of these goals, Schulman's use of power resource theory has to be analysed according to two over-arching considerations, formulated at different analytical levels: how well does his account address the issues foregrounded by power resource theorists?; and to what extent does Schulman's work share in the broader strengths and weaknesses of the approach?

On the first score, it is clear throughout the analysis that Schulman has grasped and conceptualised the fact that there is no one generic neoliberalism that has subjected New Zealand, Britain and Australia to a common temporality and processes. Rather, neoliberalism was constructed, and is maintained, by unique combinations of social forces and institutional structures, and one of the key determinants was indeed the degree to which trade unions were able to keep labour parties as *their* parties. Schulman is at his best in describing in razor sharp detail the fundamentally different experience of Australian unions in this regard compared to their New Zealand and British brethren. As recounted above, the former, due to a greater level of organisational centralisation and coherence, succeeded, both in terms of policy and personnel, in securing a much closer relationship with the ALP, and were thus in a position to inflect a different tenor and temporality to the process of travelling the neoliberal road. With equal clarity Schulman notes how the inability of New Zealand and British trade unions to maintain such a tight embrace with their respective parties saw them recast as obstacles to be overcome by a party leadership that was increasingly both organisationally and socially distinct.

However, by impliedly positing formal control over labour parties as *the* prime working-class resource, Schulman misses out on other factors which might qualify the strength of a claim which, although made in the specific context of social policy, nevertheless appears at times as a broader point:

> Australian Labor's social policy *essentially reflected a social democratic ethos which had to make concessions to powerful neoliberal interests*, while the British Labour government's social policies reflected a neoliberalism which had to make concessions to the social democratic heritage and expectations of the electorate (p. 97 – my emphasis).

In this he shares a broader criticism of power resource theory (particularly where it is associated with the literature on corporatism, as it often is): that it conceives of power mechanistically, focusing on the ability of top union officials 'who barter their control over a disciplined labour movement for power via a social democratic party' (Howe, 1992: 14). The union-party link is regarded as

the privileged site of working-class struggle, with union leaderships and party members the prime agents. Forms of struggle and organisation outside of this party model are typically conceived as a demonstration of weakness, rather than strength (Howe, 1992: 14). If we expand the analysis beyond formal political control, it can be demonstrated, on the basis of the criteria Schulman himself sets (economic, social and industrial policy), Australia was rather more neoliberal and less social democratic than he supposes.

In order to pose these questions, however, it is necessary first to forward my own conception of what neoliberalism actually is. To say that neoliberalism means different things to different people verges on a cliché. Indeed, some scholars such as Dunn question the utility of the term at all (2017). I concur that, like most terms employed in both strict scholarly analysis and in political polemical discourse, neoliberalism can sometimes appear hazy and is, to use the expression of the great jurist Hart, surrounded by a 'penumbra of uncertainty' (Hart, 1979: 12). However, to jettison the term neoliberalism is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Like any concept, we must distinguish between the intrinsic merits of a concept and the imperfections of its use.[4] Moreover, the fact that the term neoliberalism serves as a useful focal point of Left anger at the current state of capitalism should make us doubly careful about rejecting it.

I maintain that, with due caution in formulation, neoliberalism can and should remain a useful concept in the scholarly toolkit. 'Due caution' in this context means explicitly locating neoliberalism historically and understanding it as *both* a structure and a process. Using the concepts and methodology of the Parisian Regulation Approach (PRA), I have elsewhere noted that capitalism can go through more-or-less coherent, stable periods, where the crisis tendencies of capitalism are contained, deferred and/or ameliorated (Heino, 2015; Heino, 2017). These periods represent capitalist epochs, or models of development, combining:

- An industrial paradigm, governing the social and technical division of labour (Aglietta, 1979);
- An accumulation regime, a stable combination of capital's economic forms that synchronises production and consumption (Jessop, 2013; Heino, 2017);
- A mode of regulation, 'a concrete hierarchy of capital's juridic forms, the extra-economic struts that allow capital to move through its circuit' (Heino, 2017: 16).

It is precisely at the level of a mode of regulation that I, following Lipietz, situate the concept of neoliberalism (Lipietz, 2013). Modes of regulation, centred on

[4] A useful parallel I have explored previously is the very similar debate as to the status and utility of the terms 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism'. There too I found that the terms remain useful, despite the fact that they are often ill-served by popular usage. Given that I proceed to locate neoliberalism by reference to Fordism, this parallel assumes more than a casual importance.

the state and law as root juridic forms, represent an arrangement of several key extra-economic struts, including wage relations, state forms, enterprise relations and linkages (such as competition) and money (Jessop, 2013). This characterisation serves to tighten the ambit of the neoliberal concept. It is not a synonym for globalisation or a catch-all term for any state project that disadvantages the working class; rather, it refers to a distinct process of evolution of structural forms which leads to a more-or-less durable and distinctive mode of regulation.

What this neoliberal mode of regulation actually does, and why it evolves the way it does, is a question that can only be answered historically. The idea of the post-World War II 'Long Boom,' 'Golden Age', '*Les Trente Glorieuses*' and/or 'Fordism' is more-or-less ubiquitous in economic history/political economy. In line with PRA concepts, I have argued that the best way to conceive of this epoch is one characterised by the paramountcy of the Fordist model of development (Heino, 2017). Like any model of development, Fordism brought about a period of coherence and stability through explicit efforts to regulate and regularize capitalism's crisis tendencies, in particular the dangers represented by working-class underconsumption and the explicitly anti-capitalist attitudes of influential sections of the proletariat. Fordism's mode of regulation crystallised provisional and temporary solutions to these otherwise intractable problems. The state's assumption of an explicitly welfarist form, dominated by Keynesian thinking; the generation of a highly specific wage-labour nexus that integrated trade unionism into the fabric of Fordism through trading productivity-linked wage increases to subordination in the labour process; oligopolistic linkages between firms; and the status of currency as an adjunct to a system of financial regulation centred on the nation state – these were constituent elements of a mode of regulation that simultaneously answered the crisis of the Great Depression and ensured the coherence of Fordism. In short, one cannot understand Fordism's mode of regulation without also understanding the crisis tendencies it was responding to and the means by which it addressed them.

What is true of the Fordist period is just as true today. The crisis of Fordism in the 1970s has, through a process of punctuated evolution, been at least partially solved through the ascension of a new model of development, variously called 'post-Fordism' or 'liberal-productivism' (Vidal, 2011; Vidal, 2013; Lipietz, 2013; Heino, 2017). Importantly, this model of development, secured by a neoliberal mode of regulation, rose to a position of paramountcy precisely because it answered, in a provisional and contingent way, the crisis tendencies that had torn Fordism apart. Growing disaggregation of the manufacturing process (and its concomitant internationalisation), the slowdown of productivity in lead sectors and the increasingly dysfunctional institutionalisation of trade union power had combined to shear Fordism of its coherence and usher in the economic stagnation and crisis of the mid-1970s (De Vroey, 1984; Elam, 1994; Heino, 2017). The key characteristics taken as defining neoliberalism, including 'financialisation, trade liberalisation, deindustrialisation, deregulation, privatisation and the privileging of market principles over activities of the state' (Watson, 2016: 133), can only be fully understood and articulated if we

acknowledge them as part of a suite of structures and policies designed to answer the crisis tendencies of Fordism.[5] The destruction of the Fordist wage-labour nexus (namely, the inversion of wages from a source of domestic demand to a cost of international production); the dissolution of the Keynesian state-form and its replacement by the competition state extending the commodity principle; the destruction of trade barriers and facilitation of hypermobile credit money – these structural features of neoliberalism perform exactly this function of Fordist crisis resolution (Heino, 2017).

Acknowledging the fact that neoliberalism is a response to the crisis tendencies of Fordism (and is thus an explicitly historical product) leads to two logically derivative points:

- Neoliberalism must be understood not merely as a complete, self-sufficient structure, but as a process, the unity of which can best be expressed as *a process aimed at answering the crisis tendencies of Fordism in particular ways*. Depending upon a host of factors, this process of 'neoliberalisation' can be fast or slow, incremental or violent, but provided it is tending towards the structures and rhythms of neoliberalism identified above, it is quite artificial to distinguish between 'degrees' of neoliberalism.
- Acknowledging that the crisis tendencies that the neoliberal mode of regulation answers are broader than the state strictly construed, a focus on the formal political sphere (such as that proffered by working-class power resource theory) is likely to omit important parts of the neoliberalising process and social actors outside of the union-party link.

On both counts there are difficulties with Schulman's analysis. Regarding the first, whilst Schulman is undoubtedly correct in stating that union influence over the ALP, particularly in the form of the Accord, affected the form and speed with which neoliberalism was rolled out, he doesn't systematically address the fact that this led to no durable impact on the long-term result i.e. the ascendancy of the neoliberal mode of regulation. That is of course a perfectly reasonable conclusion, but one which is not explicitly made in the book. Moreover, a causal mechanism accounting for this lack of long-term difference between the case study states is not at any time advanced, a lacuna I argue below relates to the use of working-class resource power theory in isolation from more grand theoretical concerns.

More broadly, the idea of neoliberalism as a process has usefully been discussed by Humphrys and Cahill in a recent significant piece (2017). Understanding neoliberalism as such, they undercut the somewhat rosy picture Schulman

[5] Indeed, this was partly how the neoliberal revolution marketed itself, albeit in a fetishized and highly simplistic way (Cahill and Konings, 2017).

paints,[6] describing how, throughout the 1980s under the Hawke Labor government:

> ...free tertiary education was abolished and taxation, which was to be progressively reformed to ensure that corporations paid a 'fair share', moved in the opposite direction. Other neoliberal measures implemented by Labor and often supported by the union leadership included restrictive monetary policy, extensive industry deregulation, privatisation of public assets, corporatisation of government departments, dismantling of tariff protections and promotion of 'free trade', tendering for previously publicly provided services, and the increased targeting of welfare assistance (Humphrys and Cahill, 2017: 675).[7]

The basic thrust of these changes is the same as those effected in New Zealand and Britain, a point that Schulman accepts in places. The working-class power resource approach, whilst capturing the fact that the process of neoliberalisation in Australia was forced to adopt a different tempo precisely because of the reality and necessity of union input, is not extended to that period which might have operationalised the model on a broader scale, that is, the early to mid-1990s when union ability to affect outcomes in the ALP waned severely. At several points Schulman notes how the ALP's 'movement to neoliberalism gathered speed' (p. 88) under the Keating government at this time without even cursorily indicating why. This silence is perhaps instructive as to the limitations

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[6] It is interesting to note in passing that, despite the large institutional differences between the New Zealand and Australian experience of neoliberalism in the 1980s, labour's share of national income declined more precipitously in the latter (Conway, Meehan and Parham, 2015). Such a development reiterates the need for a sense of working-class 'resources' broader than formal political party control.

[7] Space precludes me from dissecting this highly important article at length, but the authors perhaps take the idea of neoliberalism as process too far from neoliberalism as structure. For example, they argue that the Accord, as a species of corporatism, 'was nonetheless part of the form that neoliberalism took in Australia and central to the roll-out of neoliberal policies' (Humphrys and Cahill, 2017: 676). It is certainly true that the Accord broke the cycle of industrial militancy and wage-and-conditions flow on central to the antipodean Fordist model of development, and it is also true that towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s it was used as a tool to stimulate workplace and award restructuring. However, the fact remains that the Accord intensified and accentuated the role of institutions, such as the federal arbitration commission and trade unions, which are regarded as pathologies within neoliberalism itself. Moreover, as I have indicated previously, the Accord process itself is better conceived as part of a period of institutional experimentation where different models of crisis resolution, *not all of them neoliberal in essence*, existed alongside each other. The Accord combined numerous, deeply contradictory planes within it, and certainly many on the established left saw in it not a neoliberal vision, but a road to greater union control and an elevation of the class struggle to the political sphere. There is no doubting that the Accord was a condition precedent to the full-rollout of neoliberal policies, and increasingly took on a neoliberal bent towards the end of the 1980s. However, it is demonstrative that the Accord disappeared at exactly the time the neoliberal mode of regulation came into full bloom. For more, see Ogden (1984) and Heino (2017).

of power resource theory – the ALP appeared to more fully embrace the neoliberal road despite the fact that the formal organisational ties between the party and the union movement remained intact (particularly in the form of the Accord, which was still on foot). In the same vein, it would have been fascinating to see Schulman grapple with the fact that the British Labor Party veered to the left in the early 1980s after the ascension of Michael Foot to the party leadership. The Party's 1983 Election Manifesto was strongly left-wing in tone, committing the party to democratic socialism, economic planning and nuclear disarmament (Labour Party Manifesto, 1983).[8] This occurred at a time when unions generally were starting to wear the hostility of the Thatcher government. Investigating this period would have been salutary but challenging for the power resource theory perspective. The suspicion must be that these episodes are omitted precisely because they are hard to explain in terms of the working-class power resource theory. Had such analyses been forwarded, however, they would have immensely strengthened the central thesis.

Even with such a buttressing, however, it remains the case that, as a mid-level institutional theory that focuses on the ability of unions to exercise control in the formal political sphere, power resource theory suffers shortcomings. At the broadest level, like all institutional theories, it rises well above pure empiricism, but does not necessarily connect with broader 'grand' theoretical traditions that offer cohesive and systemic explanations of social phenomena (Vidal, Adler and Delbridge, 2015). Accounts which combine theoretical rigour with empirical sensitivity typically construct a rigorous 'hierarchy of abstraction', whereby the explanatory potential of grand theory is articulated with concepts more targeted at explaining specific phenomenon. Echoing Marx, such a hierarchy allows us to move from the study of the concrete, the world as it presents itself to us, up to abstract concepts which can then be reapplied to that reality to appreciate the 'concrete in thought' (Marx, 1973).

When not explicitly located as part of such a hierarchy, mid-level institutional approaches such as working-class power resource theory typically struggle to account for why the studied change was necessary in the first place. The conception of neoliberalism forwarded previously demands an awareness of the fact that it was evolving in response to the degradation of the Fordist model of development, which was coming apart under the weight of several of capitalism's most deeply-set crisis tendencies. It is those tendencies that generate the impulses to which proximate institutional developments, such as the changing balance of union-party relations within the labour movement, are responses.

Schulman generally does not link the evolving union-party bond to the specific crisis tendencies which spawned neoliberalism, and is thus unable to rigorously account for why working-class power resources changed in the first place. In the case of New Zealand and Britain, there is some mention of the changing

[8] The British Labour Party had espoused and acted upon a socialisation objective to a much greater degree than their antipodean cousins.

demographic of party membership (particularly insofar as this was increasingly of a professional, middle-class character) and changes to the voting rights of trade unions within labour parties, but these are proximate mechanisms which were themselves responses to the crisis and ensuing coherence of neoliberalism. Had such a link between grand and mid-level theory been made, not only would it have improved the explanatory potential of power resource theory itself, it would have also allowed Schulman to suggest possible future developments and evolution in labourism itself.

In a more specific sense, Howe's (1992) warning regarding power resource theory, that forms of struggle/organisation outside the realm of the party are often elided, is pertinent here. For example, despite the fact that the Accord as corporatism represents an unprecedented institutional insertion of Australian unionism into the political sphere, deep changes in rank-and-file organisation at the shop-floor level were taking place at the same time. The 'no extra claims' provisions of the Accord were often enforced with an iron discipline by union leaders themselves, choking shop-floor organisation and demobilising grassroots networks of militants (Bramble, 2008). Whilst in a political sense, therefore, the 'power resources' of Australian unions appeared to be waxing, the Accord was severely depleting other resources, such as the capacity for direct industrial action which had powered upsurges in union militancy in the early 1970s and early 1980s. Such a development made Australian unions particularly vulnerable to the more openly neoliberal programmes of conservative governments,[9] which can be usefully contrasted with the greater resilience of British trade unions where the shop steward movement, although hit hard in the latter half of the 1980s (Forth, 2008), proved a point of ongoing resistance to the neoliberal project at the plant level (Spencer, 1985; Danford, 1997).

This neglect of power resources outside the political sphere also bleeds into another aspect of the book which is otherwise its greatest asset – the restoration of some sense of union agency in the movement toward neoliberalism.

The role of unions in the rise of neoliberalism

I earlier mentioned how one of the great strengths of *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response* is that it joins a promising line of 'labour-centric' research that stresses the agency of unions and the importance of union strategy. Of particular note in this regard is the aforementioned article of Humphrys and Cahill, which stresses that unions are not only or necessarily the passive objects of the neoliberal movement – rather, in some countries, such as Australia, they can indeed be regarded as active subjects in that process (Humphrys and Cahill, 2017).

[9] A threat realised by the election of the Liberal/National Party coalition in 1996.

Schulman stops short of such an assertion. His sense of agency is the agency unions had to control their parties. Such a perspective, firmly rooted in the working-class power resource perspective, carries latent within it the assumption that unions themselves can't be agents of neoliberalism. Rather, it is the party which is identified as the prime mover, and union agency is executed, with varying degrees of success or failure, to retard that movement. This is essentially a negative sense of agency – the agency to facilitate or prevent an outcome determined by others.

There is no doubting the fact that this negative agency was indeed the powerful factor Schulman identifies. As he so lucidly illustrates, more than a decade of Tory rule had convinced British unions of the need to get their party elected at any cost, whilst their New Zealand brethren saw their gravity within the party supplanted by a socially-differentiated strata closely linked to the Treasury. Such case studies are demonstrative examples of unions surrendering some of the control and influence they might otherwise have exercised.

In this respect, Schulman's book represents a highly useful complement to the work of prominent neoliberal theorists, such as Harvey (2005; 2007) and Duménil and Lévy (2011), who conceive neoliberalism principally as a purposive ruling-class programme to restore class power and funnel surplus value to the top of the income chain. Such a view is not incorrect, in that it captures the raison d'être of capital's project, but is incomplete, primarily because it tends to render labour as a passive object being acted upon, rather than as a social subject in its own right. Duménil and Lévy's (2011: 18-19, 85-87) conception of neoliberalism as a function of a social compact between, and hybridisation of, the capitalist and upper managerial classes leaves the working-class (or 'popular masses' in their tripolar model) on the sidelines, whilst Harvey, to the extent that he acknowledges working-class contribution to the neoliberal project, constructs it as 'self-inflicted wounds' (2005: 198) and consistent voting against ones material interests (essentially a form of false consciousness) (2007: 40). By drawing attention to the impact union strategy and tactics can play upon the assumption of the neoliberal road, a more nuanced and complicated picture comes into focus. Schulman illustrates the importance of looking within labour parties in explaining the neoliberal turn, rather than conceiving it purely as an environmental pressure leading social democracy by the nose. His account is thus an invaluable, 'labour-centric' companion to the more 'capital-centric' perspectives of Harvey and Duménil and Lévy.

However, this conceptual innovation is only half-done, precisely because the positive union agency described by Humphrys and Cahill features very little in the account. There is no real sense in which union officials *might themselves* be an active part of the neoliberal agenda, as could most graphically have been demonstrated by reference to the 1989 Pilots Dispute in Australia, where a cabal formed of the Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke, airline owners and (most importantly for our purposes) the ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty conspired to crush the Australian Federation of Air Pilots (Taylor, 1992). Something similar could be said about the scheme to deregister the militant Builder's Labourers

Federation, led by the Hawke government and its extraordinary *Building Industry Act 1985* (Cth) (Hawke, 1985), but aided and abetted by the peak body and other unions. The breaking of the most activist segments of organised labour was a hallmark in the take-off phase of neoliberalism,[10] and active union involvement in that process in Australia cannot be regarded as anything other than that of an active neoliberal subject (or at least a subject which assumes a neoliberal role in that specific conjuncture).

Only by appreciating both the negative and positive senses of union agency can the Left begin to carry out the task I identified at the beginning of this essay; identifying and acknowledging past mistakes so that the ground can be cleared for a progressive alternative to neoliberalism. If unions, particularly their leaderships, can be neoliberal subjects themselves,[11] then it stands to reason that greater union control over labour parties might not necessarily produce that neoliberal alternative, contra the implicit suggestion of working-class power resource theory. Such a development will be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of the emergence of such an alternative. Just as important a consideration is the *nature* of that greater union control, and the political purposes for which it is being pressed.

Also necessary for Left revival is a transcending of the aforementioned exclusive focus on the union-party link that is at the heart of power resource theory. In this article I have largely confined myself to an interior critique of Schulman's analysis, accepting the theoretical premises that he adopts and demonstrating the shortcomings of analysis that result. However, there are myriad forms of working class action that exist outside of the union-party relationship, including wildcat strikes, unemployed workers movements, and community struggles (all of which have a rich heritage in Britain, Australia and New Zealand). Indeed, as Schulman notes at points in the book, some of the more important struggles over his study periods, such as those around the environment and nuclear weapons,[12] are not clearly linked to class, or are at least linked in complex (and sometimes contradictory) ways. As important as Schulman's effort in

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[10] Replicated in the UK with the Thatcher government's 1984-85 confrontation with the National Union of Miners and the Reagan administration's showdown with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization.

[11] Indeed, Humphrys (2018) traces in detail how union leaderships themselves came to accept and work within the fundamental ideological framework of neoliberalism. Empowering union leaderships thusly minded would be unlikely to have progressive impact anticipated by working-class power resource theory.

[12] As Schulman notes, environmental activism and opposition to nuclear power helped the New Zealand Labour Party retain support from people who were otherwise negatively affected by its neoliberalising tendencies. He might also have noted contemporaneous movements in Australia, including the ultimately successful effort of the Hawke government to prevent the construction of the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam in Tasmania and its "three mine" policy to limit uranium mining to already operational sites. This demonstrates the fact that labour parties also can rely upon resources outside of the union-party link, a fact Schulman indicates but does not subsequently explore.

understanding the union-party link on its own terms is, equally important is charting how this link articulates with other forms of working class and social struggle, a task that requires as a necessary precondition an engagement with the grand theoretical concerns outlined above.

Conclusions

It may seem to the reader that I have been overly critical of *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response*. Some of the shortcomings I have identified reflect tasks that Schulman didn't set for himself. In its core function of providing an historical account of how and to what degree New Zealand, British and Australian trade unions ensured their respective labour parties truly were *theirs*, the book is incisive and engaging. It clearly demonstrates how, in each study state, different union strategies, forms of organisation and links with labour parties prevailed, which affected the tempo and pace of change in the case of New Zealand and Australia, and explained the fact that British New Labour did not resile from the neoliberal policies of the Thatcher era.

The chief virtue of Schulman's 'labour-centric' work is that it draws our attention to the significance of the union-party link at a time when social democratic parties generally, and labour parties specifically, appear to be moving to the left after decades of comfortably inhabiting the centre of the political spectrum. In Australia, the ALP recently forwarded an election platform that was more left-wing than any other over the past three decades, with genuine progressive reforms over franking credits, negative-gearing of investment properties and climate change.[13] In New Zealand, the Labour Party went from the doldrums to forming a government, partially by promising genuine left-wing policies such as three years free university tuition, opposition to the Trans Pacific Partnership and genuine environmental action (Shuttleworth, 2017). By far the most radical shift has occurred in Britain where, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party has adopted a suite of radical policies, such as targeted programmes of nationalisation, higher tax rates, the scrapping of tuition fees and the ending of 'zero-hours' contracts (Elledge, 2017).

Such rhetoric, of course, does not mean that these Labour parties will, or even can, deliver a genuine post-neoliberal alternative. The theoretical construction of neoliberalism forwarded above, as a mode of regulation answering Fordist crisis tendencies, militates against such an optimistic view. Schulman's vivid description of the betrayals perpetrated by the New Zealand and British labour parties dovetails with a broader scholarship drawing attention to the structural limitations of such parties in delivering meaningful social democratic policies

[13] At the time of writing, the ALP had, contrary to most predictions, lost the 2019 election. Commentators are already suggesting that the lesson Labor figures will take from this episode is that ambitious reforms are not vote winners, and that in future the party will present a much smaller policy target (Crowe, 2019). This suggests that even the rhetorical shift to the left might be at risk.

when they run up against the accumulation imperatives of capital (see, for example, Bramble and Kuhn, 2010). Nevertheless, the rhetorical shift is important, not least because it creates expectations that can animate working class action and provides a standard by which labour governments can be judged in office.

In the midst of these developments, framed by the 'dominant but dead' (Smith, 2010: 54) hulk of neoliberalism, Lenin's call for the necessity of correct answers to theoretical problems comes to mind (Lenin, 1963). *Neoliberal Labour Governments and the Union Response* is, for the reasons I have identified, not without its share of theoretical issues. Critique on this front is not intended to devalue the approach but to help it achieve its purpose of understanding the union-party link and, in so doing, illuminating ways to break the neoliberal mould within which labour parties have operated for the past three decades.

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