

Interface

A journal for and about social movements

Vol 12 Issue 2 www.interfacejournal.net



Interface volume 12 issue 2
Open issue

Interface: a journal for and about social movements
Volume 12 issue 2 (December 2020)
ISSN 2009 – 2431

Table of contents (pp. i – iii)

Editorial

Open issue

Laurence Cox (pp. 1 – 4)

Call for papers

Call for papers volume 13 issue 2 (EN)

Rising up against institutional racism in the Americas and beyond (pp. 5 - 11)

Convocatoria vol. 13 no. 2 (ES)

*Los levantamientos contra el racismo institucional
en las Américas (y más allá)* (pp. 12 - 18)

General pieces

Kyoko Tominaga

*Protest journey: the practices of constructing activist identity to choose and
define the right type of activism* (peer-reviewed article, pp. 19 – 41)

Márcio Bustamante and Bruno M. Fiuza

*Autonomist political culture in Brazil and the Peoples' Global Action Oral
History Project* (peer-reviewed article, pp. 42 – 69)

Jonathan Langdon, Kofi Larweh and Wilna Quarmyne

*“E yeo ngo” (Do they eat salt?) Learning in a movement from a 5 year PAR
study of the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum, a social movement in Ghana*
(peer-reviewed article, pp. 70 – 86)

Régis Coursin (FR)

*Le sommet du G7 dans Charlevoix, 2018: résistances et subalternités locales,
de l'évènement à la longue duree* (peer-reviewed article, pp. 87 – 120)

Björn Herold and Margaux DeBarros

“It’s not just an occupation, it’s our home!” The politics of everyday life in a

long-term occupation in Cape Town and their effects on movement development (peer-reviewed article, pp. 121 – 156)

Ryan A. Knight

Autonomous struggles, political parties, recognition politics and state (re)production in Oaxaca, Mexico (peer-reviewed article, pp. 157 – 181)

Mark Purcell

The project of democracy and the 15M movement in Spain (peer-reviewed article, pp. 182 – 214)

Pearly Wong

Linking “local” to “global”: framing environmental justice movements through progressive contextualization (peer-reviewed article, pp. 215 – 243)

Phil Hedges

“It is people who make education work”: a content analysis of UCU teach-outs in Russell Group institutions (research note, pp. 244 – 253)

Reviews [single PDF] (pp. 254 - 290)

Daniel Sonabend, 2019, *We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain*. Review author: Alex Khasnabish

Susana Draper, 2018, *1968 Mexico: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy*. Review author: Plácido Muñoz Morán

Amber Day (ed.), 2017, *DIY Utopia: Cultural Imagination and the Remaking of the Possible*. Review Author: Evangelos Chrysagis

Isabel Wilkerson, 2020, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. New York: Random House. Review author: Isaac Oommen

Brian Whitener, 2019, *Crisis Cultures: The Rise of Finance in Mexico and Brazil*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. Review Author: Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe

Touré Reed, 2020, *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism*. Review Author: Jay Arena

Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (eds.) *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*. Review Author: Tomás Mac Sheoin

Miguel A. Martinez, 2020, *Squatters in the Capitalist City: Housing, Justice, and Urban Politics*. Review author: Ben Duke

Cover art

This photograph is part of an artistic research process carried out in 2019 in the surrounding areas of the Térraba Sierpe National Wetland, a protected wetland in the southern area of Costa Rica. Specifically, this photograph portrays one of the members of the Association of Piangueros, Recursos

Marinos y Afines de Ajuntaderas (APREMAA). This association groups the community of Ajuntaderas, a community formed by fishermen and fisherwomen and piangüa gatherers. The piangüa lives in the barred soil of the wetland. It is a small mollusc, which is extracted in order to eat it or to sell it. The piangüa extraction has a long tradition that goes back to pre-Hispanic times, when the native peoples who lived in the area also consumed it, as it is proven in various archaeological findings. The piangüeras and piangüeros go through the mangrove at low tide looking for those small shells in the mud; some phrase the labor as going to ‘harvest’. Every time the tide goes up and down, the piangüas swim and change places, so at each tide they must find the small but visible traces inside the mud. After the gathering, the piangüas are broken, extracted and cooked. The piangüero is, according to Alberto Vargas (president of the Association), a freshwater fisher (wo)man. Their work, like the mangrove, is ambiguous, an in-between. The sea becomes their frontier, they sail, fish and harvest between fresh and saltwater, perceiving from the rivers the changes of the tides and moving through them. The tides determine their rhythms of movement, fishing and rest.

In addition, APREMAA works together with the Ministry of Environment and Energy and different non-governmental organizations in the conservation and sustainable use of the species that inhabit the mangrove of the Terraba Sierpe National Wetland. The main objective of this association is to unite and fight to improve the living and working conditions of its community and the wetland which is their home.

Credits: Diana Barquero Pérez, 2019

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.

Open issue

Laurence Cox

Like many radical spaces around the planet, *Interface* has struggled in the coronavirus pandemic. It is fundamentally a volunteer project depending on the time and energy of a changing mix of people whose lives have been in some cases hugely disrupted over the past year, like so many people around the world. As activists and/or as academics, we have struggled in solidarity with our movements, people immediately in need, students and others who have had first call on our time. Many editors have had to step back temporarily from the project for the duration of the crisis in order to attend to these things, or have not been able to do as much as they had hoped.

In early 2020, Lesley Wood, Sutapa Chattopadhyay and I put out a call for stories of movement struggles around the world in Covid-19. We published those accounts week-to-week and then brought them together in an extraordinary special edition in July. Since that point, many other movement journals have started to publish comparable collections, and movements have moved on once again. This issue reflects that change: with many other spaces to publish in, both activist and academic, it is marked particularly by longer and less immediate pieces.

They are none the less important for that: despite much rhetoric, there will be no “building back better” unless movements are able to win their struggles; and the bigger challenges, whether marked by the sidelining of the extraordinary popular uprisings in the US in favour of a new statist centrism or by a new wave of repression in Hong Kong, by the continued ecological crisis or femicidal violence across the planet, call for much greater dialogue and learning between movements “from below and on the left”.

In this issue

As Tomás MacSheoin’s recent overview of “international” social movement journals noted, *Interface* has always been less confined to the global North than most, while still having far to go. A key principle for our work is to have regional editors and editorial collectives, so that what is relevant, and how movements can be thought about, is not something decided by a purely metropolitan editorial board.

If we genuinely want to learn from each other’s struggles, that cannot mean (as so often) projecting the interests and concerns of a US-based (or UK-based, or West European) understanding onto the wider world and selecting the movements that fit into that narrative: it has to mean creating space for the many worlds of our movements to speak, and to listen to each other directly.

This issue's table of contents underlines this: its 18 pieces (9 articles, 8 reviews and a call for papers) cover movements in Brazil (twice), Canada, Ghana, India (twice), Japan, Mexico (twice), South Africa, Spain, the UK, the US, the Americas and globally (and appear in English, French and Spanish).

It starts with Kyoko Tominaga's exploration of the "protest journeys" that global justice movement participants make in constructing their activist identities. Exploring Japanese activists' narratives, she shows how these individual journeys connect them to movements' collective identities. Márcio Bustamante and Bruno M Fiuza's oral history work on Peoples' Global Action discusses the decline of autonomist political culture in 20th century Brazil. They show how PGA activists contributed to its renewal and re-emergence on a large scale in the early 21st century.

Jonathan Langdon, Kofi Larweh and Wilna Quarmyne present a five-year participatory action research study of the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum in Ghana. They explore how participants learned "in, through and to" struggles over communal access to West Africa's largest salt flat.

Régis Coursin's French-language article explores local resistance to the 2018 Charlevoix (Québec) G7 summit. Besides the activism of organised urban groups, the multiple infrapolitical responses of local groups highlight the complexities and ambiguities of subaltern politics. Björn Herold and Margaux DeBarros discuss "Reclaim the City" in Cape Town (South Africa), looking at one of its major occupations. They argue that the intense challenges of everyday life in a large-scale squat can paradoxically lead to individual withdrawal and a general shift away from external political engagement.

Ryan A. Knight's essay starts from the contrast between Indigenous forms of community self-organisation and political parties in Oaxaca (Mexico). He argues that the disruption of the PRI's hegemony has led to new forms of clientelism, with party-political pluralism and the politics of recognition channelling demands through the state and once again undermining Indigenous forms of politics. Mark Purcell explores the relationship between an autonomist project of democracy and the 15M movement in Spain¹. The article explores the 15M's multiple and conflicting desires around power and how they can contribute to the long-term process of practicing democracy.

Pearly Wong uses the framework of "progressive contextualization" to examine how environmental justice movements connect local problems to challenging wider power structures. Looking at the Narmada anti-dam movement and Brazilian rubber tappers, she shows how this frame may help movements reflect constructively on their own practice. Phil Hedges' research note discusses teach-

¹ I wish to apologise to Prof Purcell for the late publication of his article, scheduled for publication in *Interface* vol 12 issue 1 and left out by accident during the pandemic.

outs organised by British academics on strike in 2020, developing a content analysis to see what trade unionists teach when they are free to do so.

Book reviews

Lastly, we have a wealth of reviews of new books about a wide range of social movement struggles.

Alex Khasnabish reviews Daniel Sonabend's *We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain*. Susana Draper's *1968 Mexico: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy* is reviewed by Plácido Muñoz Morán.

Evangelos Chrysagis reviews Amber Day's collection *DIY Utopia: Cultural Imagination and the Remaking of the Possible*. Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents* is reviewed by Isaac Oommen

Brian Whitener's *Crisis Cultures: The Rise of Finance in Mexico and Brazil* is reviewed by Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe. Jay Arena reviews Touré Reed's *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism*.

Tomás Mac Sheoin reviews Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring's edited *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*. Miguel A. Martinez' *Squatters in the Capitalist City: Housing, Justice, and Urban Politics* is reviewed by Ben Duke.

Writing for Interface

A call for papers for future issues of *Interface* follows. *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. That means we publish pieces by activist thinkers as well as academic researchers (and many people who are both), and in many different formats. If you'd like to write for us, please start by getting in touch with your local editors, whether your piece is an academic one or an activist one.

Interface doesn't have a "line" - or rather, the line is that we want to hear from movement participants who are thinking about strategy, tactics, movement theory, history etc., and from researchers on movements who are committed to working with activists rather than for purely academic goals. It is movements "from below" - movements of the poor, the powerless and those at the bottom of cultural hierarchies - who most need this reflection. Conversely we are opposed to racism, fascism, casteism, and religious fundamentalism. This dialogue and audience should also shape writing for *Interface*.

Please, please don't write us pieces aimed at convincing a general public to support your cause! Most of our readers are already very heavily engaged in

their own movements: if you have a good piece for a general public, why not publish it somewhere that public will actually see it? Similarly, please don't send us pieces which are all about the theoretical analysis of social structures, economics, culture, biopolitics or whatever. Again, *Interface* readers do get it: but what they are interested in is what people actually do to resist and / or change these structures, what happens when they resist and how they can struggle better. Lastly, some academic and political styles of writing are all about showing that you're part of the in-group: using a vocabulary that people in other movements / traditions / disciplines can't make sense of is fine if you're writing for that kind of journal, but it isn't *Interface*.

What do we want? Clearly-written pieces that don't assume your readers know your country / movement / academic discipline / theoretical tradition but focus on what readers can learn from the movement you're writing about, including from its mistakes, dilemmas, challenges and conflicts. Something you would find interesting and useful if you were reading it about a different movement, in a different country! Have a look at our past issues to get a better sense of who our readers and writers are – and try writing for them. Our guidelines for contributors and "About *Interface*" pages have more details.

Call for papers

Our next issue (November / December 2021) will be on the theme of "Rising up against institutional racism in the Americas and beyond", with guest editor Layla Vincent-Brown and *Interface* editors Elisabet Rasch and Heike Schaumberg. Please read the full call for papers (in Spanish as well as English) – and circulate it to people you feel may be interested in contributing, as activists, researchers or both!

As always, contributions on other themes are also welcome.

Interface editors – leaving, arriving, needed!

With this issue we welcome Farhang Morady and Dounya Salehi as editors of our new Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa group, while Manuel Mireanu will be joining our Central and Eastern Europe group.

We also say farewell to Sara Motta and Melanie Kryst. Our thanks go out to them for all the work they've done over the years in developing the journal, keeping it going in hard times and making connections with new generations of activists and movements.

We're also looking for a new editor with IT skills to join the IT / website working group. Like all our editorial work, this is voluntary and collective. If you're interested in helping make radical media, please contact Laurence Cox at laurence.cox AT mu.ie.

**Call for papers volume 13 issue 2
(November-December 2021):**

**Rising up against institutional racism
in the Americas and beyond**

Issue editors: Elisabet Rasch and Heike Schaumberg

Guest Editor: Layla Brown-Vincent

The November-December 2021 issue of the open-access, online, copy left academic/activist journal *Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements* (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/>) will focus on themes relevant to understanding and registering the popular responses and uprisings to racism.

The geographical scope will be focused on the Americas, but we also encourage relevant submissions from other geographical regions with significant ant-racist movements. We also welcome contributions that critically analyse the deeper social constructions of racism and the absence of, or barriers to the development of, protest movements. Contributions on other themes, as always, are also welcome.

We encourage authors to submit a 250 to 500-word abstract to help us engender a coherent conversation between the various contributions to this issue. For non-standard academic contributions (interviews, audio-files, literary writings, social movement and activist notes, etc), we recommend you provide us with a short description of the content and form of your submission. This is not mandatory for your submission to be accepted, but it will also help you prepare your submission.

Timeline and deadlines:

Abstracts and descriptions of submissions:	1 March 2021
Deadline for all submissions:	1 May 2021
Review and production process until publication:	November/December 2021

Rising up against institutional racism in the Americas and beyond

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on racism as a structural and institutional ill of capitalism. The vicious police killing of George Floyd on 25 May ignited uprisings and protests against the institutional racism not only in the US but across much of the 'Global North'. This happened just at a time when most of the world was in lockdown and activists wondered how the Covid-19 pandemic and, in particular, the quarantine would affect our ability to organise

collectively against injustice and discrimination and fight for a better world.

Over the past decades, the Americas have witnessed growing radicalisation and movements of indigenous peoples that has raised awareness of structural racism across these continents. Yet, with Latin America as the new pandemic's hotspot at the time of writing, energies in this region are still focused on Covid-19 itself and the social and economic consequences; we are yet to see whether the anti-racist movements in the north will reverberate more strongly in the south.

There is a plethora of structural, political and historical reasons for anti-racism to crystallize countless issues of contention and articulate as a movement. For instance, there have been allegations and reports of racially motivated police abuses in several countries in the region, where poverty is also racialized (see for example: Grimson and Grimson 2017; Mondon and Winter 2019; Sears 2014; Hale 2005; Guano 2003; Gordillo 2016). Indeed, the rage underpinning the rising against racism is fuelled also by the connected economic injustices. The pandemic also highlights this: poorer sectors pay with disproportionately more lives for a pandemic that they have not helped to spread across the globe, but for which they have fewer means for protective measures and treatment.

Institutional racism, police brutality and racial profiling are well-known and documented issues right across the Americas, in many countries steeped in a history of state terror and/ or exploitative, and frequently violent, Latifundista social relations.

Today, political conditions are both combined and, characteristically of a general crisis, jarringly uneven across the Americas. With Trump only being trumped by Bolsonaro in Brazil, Chile's popular uprising halted by the pandemic was countered by Bolivia's right-wing coup, which now faces uncertainty due to elections and popular pressure, to name just a handful of examples. In a historical move, the recently elected Argentine government has taken legal action against the superpowers of the police in Salta province for recurrent abuses of powers, including unlawful detentions (El Portal de Salta 2020). It is the first time for the national government to recognize the institutional nature of police violence targeted at the poor, indigenous peoples, and political adversaries such as Human Rights, social movements and trade union actors.

The Black Lives Matter uprising in the 'North' has put the struggle against institutional racism onto the global agendas, which prompts a variety of questions. Will the Black Lives Matter Movement inspire forms of collective action against institutional racism in Latin America? In what ways would such movements re-shape the region's political landscape and could they re-invigorate the leftist social movements' agendas? Indeed, does the 'Black Lives Matter' movement offer an opportunity to unearth the institutional racism from the various origin myths and its historical legacies of slavery (Shilliam 2009)?

In what ways have these legacies shaped national and ethnic identities across the Americas? How does the imaginary of a 'white' European colonial past still obscure and/or marginalise non-white collective identities? How has this been

resisted? Have the nature and content of anti-racist resistance, or the conditions for such resistance changed? How does the racialisation of working-class poor articulate during the Covid-19 pandemic? What does this tell us about social, cultural and political conditions for confronting the ills of capitalism today?

Drawing on the Afro-Pessimist claims that (US) civil society is inherently antithetical to all manifestations of Black social life, (Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2016; Sharpe, 2016; Wilderson, 2010) scholars Adam Bledsoe and Willie Jamaal Wright argue that global expressions of anti-Blackness are necessary for the perpetuation of global capitalism. They go on to argue that “regardless of the particular expression of capitalism, anti-Blackness conditions the possibility of capitalist reproduction across different global contexts” (Bledsoe and Wright, 2018). Taking seriously the primacy of anti-Blackness, while also pushing back against assumptions of Black exceptionalism often animating Afro-Pessimist thought, this special issue seeks works that not only recenter the reality of anti-Blackness as it impacts the masses of people, as a primary manifestation of structural racism and racial capitalism but that also thinks about and with anti-Indigeneity as parallel or interconnected concerns. In addition to the necessary intellectual work of reiterating the primacy of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity, we are particularly interested in works that highlight the shared nature of Black and Indigenous struggles against institutional racism and more fundamentally the dehumanization of the masses of Black and Indigenous peoples. In the Americas, concerns about Blackness and Indigeneity appear as distinct issues, however, works that think about questions of Blackness and Indigeneity on the African continent and elsewhere are also welcome.

This issue aims to explore the diversity of historical and political articulations of institutional racism and their antagonists in the Americas, and why it is now, under the difficult circumstances of lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, the anti-racism movements have erupted into the public sphere in the North.

How does the Covid 19 pandemic shape anti-racist and indigenous rights struggles? We invite in-depth empirical, historical and theoretical analyses, case studies and regional explorations, reports, opinion pieces, relevant interviews and other significant material, short contributions centred on ‘events’ of collective action against racism primarily in the Americas. Reflections on racism and anti-racism from other parts of the world that do not relate to the Americas will be covered by the ‘open section’ of this issue.

Some general questions seem to be particularly important, but this is not an exhaustive list:

1. What are particular and general constructions of racism in the Americas?
2. How is contemporary racism, and resistance towards it, rooted in the colonial history of the continent and how is it confronted or challenged?
3. How did anti-racist protests emerge during the pandemic and what is its meaning?
4. How does the COVID19 pandemic shape the work of anti-racist and indigenous movements?
5. What is the composition of the anti-racist and indigenous movements and why?
6. What are the (local) historical legacies of racism in ideological constructs and identity and cultural politics?
7. How do anti-racist movements in the North articulate with non-white and indigenous groups in Latin America?
8. How do indigenous movements (and their indigenous rights' agenda) articulate with other anti-racist agendas in the Americas?
9. What are racism's 'hidden transcripts' and how do they shape collective subjectivities?
10. How do social (indigenous) movements, trade unions and left-wing parties construct and frame anti-racism?
11. How is the operational space of anti-racist and indigenous movements limited by governments, the private sector, armed actors, and others?
12. How are poverty, violence and class racialised and how does this shape resistance and protest?
13. How is racism gendered within the home, the family, in public spaces and at work?
14. Finally, how are social movement activists, intellectuals, and scholars ensuring that the particular struggles of Black and Indigenous peoples are not further invisibilized under the banner of anti-racism?

In this issue, we would particularly encourage in-depth ethnographic, historical and political analyses, comparative approaches, activist accounts as well as event and practice analyses.

Principles for contributions

Interface is a journal of practitioner research, meaning that we welcome work by movement activists as well as activist scholars, and work in a variety of formats which suit these different kinds of writing as well as our very varied readership – which includes activists and researchers across the world, connected to many different movements and working within very different intellectual, theoretical and political traditions.

We are interested in pieces in many formats – peer-reviewed articles and interviews with movement activists, research and teaching notes, book reviews and key documents and other formats that work well for their purposes – that tackle some of the questions raised above.

All contributions (including those for the special issue and the special section) should go to the appropriate regional editors by the deadline of 1 May 2021.

Please see the editorial contacts page

(<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/>) – and use the appropriate template. Please see the guidelines for contributors

(<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/>) for more indications on content and style.

General contributions

As always, this issue will also include non-theme related pieces. We are happy to consider submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fit within the journal's mission statement

(<http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/>). Pieces for *Interface* should contribute to the journal's mission 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, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish and Swedish. Please see our editorial contacts page (<https://www.interfacejournal.net/contact-us/>) for details of who to send submissions to.

Deadline and contact details

The deadline for initial submissions to this issue, to be published in November-December 2021, is 1 May 2021. For details of how to submit pieces 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 (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/>) and should be used to ensure correct formatting. *Interface* is a completely voluntary effort, without the resources of commercial journals, so we have to do all the layout and typesetting ourselves. The only way we can manage this is to ask authors to use these templates when preparing submissions. Thanks!

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Convocatoria Interface Vol. 13, No. 2 (noviembre-diciembre del año 2021)

Los levantamientos contra el racismo institucional en las Américas (y más allá)

Editoras de la edición: Elisabet Rasch y Heike Schaumberg

Editora Invitada: Layla Brown-Vincent

La edición de noviembre-diciembre del año 2021 de la revista *Interface: una revista para y sobre movimientos sociales* – una revista académica-militante en línea y de acceso abierto – se enfocará en temas relevantes para comprender y registrar las respuestas populares a, y los levantamientos contra, el racismo. El alcance geográfico son las Américas, pero también alentamos trabajos relevantes de otras regiones geográficas con movimientos importantes anti-racistas. Aceptamos contribuciones que analicen las construcciones sociales de racismo y la ausencia del, o barreras al, desarrollo de movimientos sociales anti-racistas en una forma crítica y profunda.

Contribuciones sobre otros temas, como siempre, también son bienvenidas.

Para esta edición especial, alentamos a los autores a enviar un resumen de 250 a 500 palabras para ayudarnos a generar una conversación coherente entre las diversas contribuciones a este tema. Para contribuciones académicas no estándar (entrevistas, archivos de audio, escritos literarios, movimientos sociales y notas de activistas, etc), le recomendamos que nos proporcione una breve descripción del contenido y la forma de su envío. Aunque no es una condición obligatoria para la aceptación de los envíos, creemos que les ayudará también a los autores y contribuyentes a preparar sus envíos.

Cronograma y plazos:

Resúmenes y descripciones de las presentaciones:	1 de marzo de 2021
Fecha límite para todas las presentaciones:	1 de mayo de 2021
Proceso de revisión y producción hasta publicación:	noviembre / diciembre de 2021

Los levantamientos contra el racismo institucional en las Américas (y más allá)

La pandemia de Covid-19 ha puesto el foco en el racismo como un elemento estructural e institucional del capitalismo. El brutal asesinato policial de George Floyd el 25 de mayo (2020) no solo encendió levantamientos y protestas contra el racismo institucional en Estados Unidos. También tuvo repercusiones en

otras partes del “Norte Global”. Esto sucedió en un momento en que la mayor parte del mundo estaba cerrado y los militantes se preguntaban cómo el Covid-19 y la pandemia y, en particular, la cuarentena, afectarían su capacidad de organización colectiva contra la injusticia, la discriminación y la lucha por un mundo mejor.

En las últimas décadas, las Américas han sido testigo de una radicalización creciente y un surgimiento de los movimientos indígenas, construyendo una conciencia sobre el racismo estructural en estos continentes. Sin embargo, con América Latina como el centro nuevo de la pandemia al momento de escribir esto, las energías en esta región todavía están enfocadas en el propio Covid-19 y sus consecuencias sociales y económicas. Todavía no queda claro si los movimientos anti-racistas en el norte reverberarán más fuertemente en el sur.

Hay una gran cantidad de razones estructurales, políticas e históricas por las cuales el antirracismo cristaliza innumerables cuestiones en disputa, articulándose como un movimiento. Por ejemplo, han habido denuncias e informes en varios países de la región, que evidencian casos de abuso por parte de la policía, motivados racialmente. En estos casos, la pobreza también está racializada (ver por ejemplo: Grimson y Grimson 2017; Mondon y Winter 2019; Sears 2014; Hale 2005; Guano 2003; Gordillo 2016). De hecho, la rabia que sustenta los levantamientos contra el racismo, también es alimentado por las injusticias económicas. La pandemia también destaca lo siguiente: los sectores más pobres sufren en una forma desproporcionada por la pandemia, mientras no tenían un rol en la difusión de la misma. Al mismo tiempo, estos sectores tienen menos recursos para medidas de protección y tratamiento sanitario. El racismo institucional y la brutalidad policial racializada son problemas bien conocidos y documentados en todas las Américas. En muchos países son inmersos en una historia de terror estatal y relaciones sociales que se caracterizan por ser relaciones sociales Latifundistas violentas y de explotación.

Hoy, las relaciones políticas y económicas son profundamente desiguales en las Américas: con Trump solo siendo superado por Bolsonaro en Brasil, el levantamiento popular de Chile detenido por la pandemia y contrarrestado por el golpe de derecha en Bolivia, que ahora enfrenta incertidumbre debido a las elecciones y la presión popular. Eso solo es un puñado de ejemplos. En un momento histórico, el gobierno argentino recientemente elegido, ha iniciado acciones legales contra ‘los superpoderes’ de la policía en la provincia nortea de Salta por abusos de poder, tales como las detenciones ilegales (El Portal de Salta 2020). Es la primera vez que un gobierno nacional reconoce el carácter institucional de la violencia policial; una violencia dirigida contra los pobres, los pueblos indígenas, y los adversarios políticos como los defensores de los derechos humanos, los movimientos sociales y actores sindicales.

El levantamiento de Black Lives Matter en el “Norte” ha puesto la lucha contra racismo institucional en las agendas globales, provocando una variedad de preguntas ¿El movimiento de Black Lives Matter inspirará otras formas colectivas de acción contra el racismo institucional en América Latina? ¿De qué manera los movimientos reconfigurarán el panorama político de la región y

podrían revitalizar las agendas de los movimientos sociales de izquierda? De hecho, ¿El movimiento Black Lives Matter ofrece una oportunidad para desenmascarar el racismo institucional de los diversos mitos de origen y sus legados históricos de esclavitud (Shilliam 2009)? ¿De qué manera estos legados han dado forma a las identidades nacionales y étnicas en las Américas? ¿Cómo sigue el imaginario de un pasado colonial europeo “blanco” oscureciendo y marginando a las identidades colectivas no-blancas? ¿Cuáles son las resistencias a estos procesos? ¿Ha cambiado la naturaleza y el contenido de la resistencia anti-racista, o las condiciones por tal resistencia? ¿Cómo se articula la racialización de la pobreza de la clase trabajadora durante la pandemia de Covid-19?

¿Esto, qué nos explica de las redes sociales y las condiciones culturales y políticas para poder enfrentar estos males del capitalismo hoy?

Partiendo de las afirmaciones afropesimistas de que la sociedad civil (estadounidense) es inherentemente antitética a todas las manifestaciones de la vida social negra, (Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2016; Sharpe, 2016; Wilderson, 2010) los académicos Adam Bledsoe y Willie Jamaal Wright argumentan que las expresiones globales de anti-negritud son necesarias para la perpetuación del capitalismo global y, siguen argumentando, que “independientemente de la expresión particular del capitalismo, la anti-negritud condiciona la posibilidad de reproducción capitalista en diferentes contextos globales” (Bledsoe y Wright, 2018). Tomando en serio la primacía de la anti-negritud, y a su vez contrarrestando los supuestos del excepcionalismo negro que a menudo anima el pensamiento afro-pesimista, este número especial busca contribuciones que no solo vuelvan a centrar la realidad de la anti-negritud en la manera en que impacta a las masas populares, como un manifestación primaria del racismo estructural y el capitalismo racial, sino que también reflexionen sobre y con la anti-indigeneidad como preocupaciones paralelas o interconectadas. Además del trabajo intelectual necesario de reiterar la primacía de la anti-negritud y anti-indigeneidad, estamos particularmente interesados en trabajos que destaquen la naturaleza compartida de las luchas negras e indígenas contra el racismo institucional y más fundamentalmente la deshumanización de las de las personas negros y los pueblos originarios. En las Américas, las preocupaciones sobre la negritud y la indigeneidad aparecen como temas distintos, sin embargo, también son bienvenidos los trabajos que piensan sobre cuestiones de la negritud y la indigeneidad en el continente africano y en otros lugares.

Esta edición de *Interface* tiene como objetivo explorar la diversidad de articulaciones históricas y políticas de racismo institucional y sus antagonistas en las Américas.

¿Por qué es ahora, en las difíciles circunstancias de la cuarentena durante la pandemia de Covid-19, que los movimientos anti-racistas han estallado en la esfera pública en el Norte? ¿Cómo moldea la pandemia de Covid-19 las luchas

indígenas y anti-racistas? Invitamos a análisis empíricos, históricos y teóricos, estudios de casos y exploraciones regionales, informes, artículos de opinión, entrevistas relevantes, contribuciones breves centradas en “eventos” de acción colectiva contra el racismo principalmente en las Américas. Reflexiones sobre el racismo y antirracismo de otras partes del mundo que no se relacionan con las Américas estarán presentadas en la “sección abierta” de la revista.

Algunas preguntas y áreas generales parecen ser especialmente importantes:

1. ¿Cuáles son las construcciones particulares y generales del racismo en las Américas?
2. ¿Cómo se arraigan el racismo contemporáneo y la resistencia al mismo en la historia colonial del continente y cómo se enfrenta o desafía?
3. ¿Por qué surgieron las protestas antirracistas durante la pandemia y cuál es su significado?
4. ¿Cómo moldea la pandemia del COVID19 al trabajo de los movimientos anti-racistas e indígena?
5. ¿Cuál es la composición de los movimientos antirracistas y por qué?
6. ¿Cuáles son los legados históricos locales del racismo en las construcciones ideológicas y la identidad y la política cultural?
7. ¿Cómo se articulan los movimientos antirracistas del Norte con los grupos no blancos de América Latina y el Caribe?
8. ¿Cuál es el papel, los impactos y las limitaciones de los movimientos indígenas en la configuración del antirracismo en América Latina y el Caribe?
9. ¿Cuáles son las expresiones habituales de racismo no reconocidas como tales?
10. ¿Cuáles son las construcciones del antirracismo en los movimientos sociales, sindicatos y partidos de izquierda?
11. ¿En qué formas quedan limitados los espacios operativos de los movimientos antirracistas e indígenas por el actuar de los gobiernos, el sector privado, los actores armados y otros?
12. Exploraciones que investigan la racialización de la pobreza, la violencia y de la clase social y sus impactos en la resistencia.
13. La confluencia del racismo y género en el hogar y la familia, o en los espacios públicos y en el trabajo.
14. Finalmente, ¿cómo se aseguran los activistas de movimientos sociales, intelectuales y académicos de que las luchas particulares de los pueblos negros e indígenas no sean invisibilizadas aún más bajo la bandera del antirracismo?

En este número, alentamos particularmente los análisis de eventos, las comparaciones y los análisis de prácticas enfocados en comprender las

estrategias de la derecha y las contraestrategias de los movimientos antifascistas, antirracistas, de justicia migrante, judíos, feministas, LGBTQ e indígenas.

Principios de las contribuciones

Interface es una revista de investigación académica-militante, lo que significa que damos la bienvenida al trabajo de activistas de movimientos, así como a académicos- militantes, y trabaja en una variedad de formatos que se adaptan a estos diferentes tipos de escritura, así como a nuestros lectores muy variados - incluyendo a militantes e investigadores de todo el mundo, conectados a muchos movimientos diferentes y trabajando en tradiciones intelectuales, teóricas y políticas muy diversas. Nos interesan contribuciones en diversos formatos – artículos con referato y entrevistas con activistas del movimiento, notas de investigación y de enseñanza, reseñas de libros y documentos clave y otros formatos que funcionan bien acorde de sus propósitos – que aborden algunas de las preguntas planteadas anteriormente.

Todas las contribuciones (incluyendo las del número especial y la sección especial) deben enviarse a los editores regionales correspondientes antes de la fecha límite del 1 de mayo de 2021. Por favor, consultar la página de contactos editoriales (<https://www.interfacejournal.net/contact-us/>) - y utilizar la plantilla apropiada.

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Contribuciones generales

Como siempre, este número también incluirá textos no relacionados con el tema. Nos complace considerar presentaciones sobre cualquier aspecto de la investigación y la práctica de movimientos sociales que se ajuste a la declaración de misión de la revista (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/>).

Las contribuciones para *Interface* deben contribuir a la misión de la revista de constituir una herramienta de aprendizaje para las luchas de los movimientos, mediante el desarrollo de análisis de los procesos y las experiencias específicos del movimiento que puedan traducirse en una forma útil para otros movimientos.

En este contexto, agradecemos las contribuciones de los participantes de los movimientos sociales y académicos desarrollando teorías e investigaciones relevantes para el activismo. Además de los estudios de las experiencias y prácticas contemporáneas, incentivamos el análisis de los movimientos sociales históricos como un medio para aprender del pasado y comprender mejor las luchas contemporáneas. Nuestro objetivo es incluir material que los

movimientos puedan utilizar en diversas formas: en términos de su contenido, su lenguaje, su propósito y su formato. Por lo tanto, buscamos trabajos en diversos formatos, como artículos convencionales (con referato), ensayos bibliográficos, debates facilitados y entrevistas, notas de acción, notas didácticas, documentos y análisis clave, reseñas de libros, etc. Las evaluaciones de referato de las investigaciones realizan militantes y académicos, mientras los otros materiales y textos son editados con particular simpatía. El proceso editorial en general intenta a ayudar a los autores a encontrar formas de expresarse de modo que todos podamos ser escuchados a través de distancias geográficas, sociales y políticas. Aceptamos material en bengalí, bosnio / croata / serbio, checo, danés, holandés, inglés, finlandés, francés, alemán, hindi, italiano, chino mandarín, noruego, polaco, portugués, ruso, eslovaco, español y sueco. Consulte nuestra página de contactos editoriales (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/>) para obtener detalles sobre a quién enviar las presentaciones.

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La fecha límite para las presentaciones iniciales de este número, que se publicará en noviembre-diciembre de 2021, es el 1 de mayo de 2021. Para obtener detalles sobre cómo enviar contribuciones a *Interface*, consulte las “Guidelines for contributors” (Pautas para contribuyentes) en nuestro sitio web o comuníquese con una/o de las/los editores regionales. Todos los manuscritos deben enviarse al editor regional correspondiente, que figura en nuestra página de contactos.

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Protest journey: the practices of constructing activist identity to choose and define the right type of activism

Kyoko Tominaga

Abstract

This paper investigates how participants in global justice movements create their activist identity through protest journeys to convergence spaces. Recently, scholars have shown an increasing interest in prefigurative politics, but their focus is not on the mobility process. A focus on activists' journeys to convergence spaces is relevant because social movements enable them to prefigure processes such as choosing accommodation, transportation, and destination. This study discusses the 'protest journey' that is practised by Japanese activists while focusing on activist identity, which is different from organisational and collective identity. Based on open interviews with activists, this paper discusses two key findings. First, protesters' activist identity in a particular protest journey was influenced by two types of movements. In the tourism process, they built organisational identity through social movement organisations (SMOs) and formed a collective identity that was provided by the global justice movement in advance. Second, participants distinguished between ideal and unfavourable places to visit and what behaviours constitute the right type of activism by a true activist on a protest journey. These findings demonstrate that participants in global justice movements form a collective identity, even in the individualised process of a protest journey.

Keywords: protest journey, convergence spaces, prefiguration, mobility, activist identity

Introduction

Recently, occupy movements and global justice movements, among others, have organised huge mobilisations, both nationally and globally. Routledge (2003) conceptualises such events as convergence spaces. In convergence spaces activists stay in certain areas within a limited space for a certain period of time. Many protesters join and live together in, for example, protest camps to recreate their collective lifestyle, not only turning convergence spaces into arenas in which protesters resist governments, firms, and other opponents, but also engage in practices of prefiguration (Maeckelbergh, 2009).

This paper focuses on the mobility process of participants who travel to convergence spaces like mobilisations organised by occupy movements and global justice movements. To regularly take part in such transnational mobilisations, people need to travel all around the world. However, previous research has not focused on this process of mobility. This paper understands the

process of travelling to international social movement events that involve activities in a convergence space as a 'protest journey'. International social movement events that include convergence spaces are mainly protests linked to international ministerial meetings. Such events are mostly organized by the global justice movement and the alternative globalisation movement, and involve protest camps and media centres. A protest journey can include both international and domestic movements, regardless of their frequency.

Much like demonstrating, occupying streets, and staying in protest camps, mobility is an essential part of the process of international mobilisation. People need to consider money, time, and other resources required to take part in such movements because international mobilisation comes at a cost for protesters. Protesters construct their identity as activists in choosing destinations, accommodations, and side trips.

Previous studies have mainly focused on acts of protests, governance, communication, and social reproduction inside convergence spaces. This study argues that the construction of convergence spaces is not only confined to 'the inside' of demonstrations, protest camps, and counter summit conferences, but also includes the entire process of tourist travel and being a tourist. This paper focuses on the journey of Japanese activists to and from convergence spaces, with a focus on movement identity and activist identity. The protest journey reflects an identity that is different from the SMOs that participants normally belong to and the convergence space in global justice movements they will join. In this process, participants are not involved in a concrete organisation, but rather act as individuals: they are certainly connected to the movement itself during the mobility process, but also act on their own behalf, fostered by the SMOs they belong to and anticipatory socialised by global justice movements they will join.

In this study, 'social movement' is defined as a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and organisations engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities (Diani, 1992: 2). I analyse the protest journeys of social movement participants by using the concept of 'activist identity' (Luke et al, 2018; Ruiz-Junco, 2011; Silver, 1998; Bobel, 2007; Cortese, 2015; Craddock, 2019; Corrigan-Brown, 2012; Taft, 2017; Jasper, 1997; Mihaylov, 2020; Barr and Drury, 2009; Lyytikäinen, 2013). As people, we are always moving, but this movement itself does not necessarily produce an activist identity. The activist identity of protestors becomes most apparent when they head to the sites of protest. In other words, we can say that the essence of activist identity is revealed through the protest journey.

Activists travel long distances to visit convergence spaces and stay in protest camps, occupy houses, or squat places. Protesters construct their identities through their travel process, such as consuming meals, choosing accommodation, and taking side trips to different places. For example, sometimes people travel to the place of protest by LCC (low-cost carrier) airlines because this is more economical. However, climate activists may avoid flying

and rather take busses, train, public mass transportation, or other more environmentally friendly means of transport to arrive at their destination. Regarding food consumption, participants voice their political preferences for certain ingredients and preparation methods. Although activists who are committed to protecting the environment may avoid eating meat, people who fight for the rights of indigenous people may not accept veganism and vegetarianism because many indigenous peoples have traditionally been meat-eaters.

The formation of an activist identity in the process of activist tourism is best understood as a process. First, behaviour in a protest journey is influenced by two types of communities. One is the SMOs that protestors are part of, and the other is the global justice movement they join as 'tourists'. In the tourism process, they build an organisational identity through SMOs and at the same time form a collective identity that is shaped by the global justice movement in advance. Second, participants distinguish between ideal and unfavourable places to visit and what behaviours constitute the right type of activism by a 'true activist' during a protest journey. Additionally, their journey to convergence spaces itself marks the separation from the protestors' daily routine and, in terms of the social context and activists engage in, a step where they determine what they consider to be an ideal social movement.

Drawing on these findings, this paper argues that a protest journey is individual and fluid. Through studying protest journeys, I identified the formation process of an alternative collective identity, based on contemporary, individualised and fluid social movements. In protest journeys, individual protesters choose their course of action based on their preferences. However, the course of individual protest journeys is defined by communication among tourist protesters. In the process of a protest journey, participants embody their identity as an activist, constituting an alternative type of solidarity and collective identity.

Literature review

Convergence spaces in global justice movements

International protest events mostly involve the participation of large crowds. These protesters insist on alter-globalisation and global justice for international institutions or national governments, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and international ministerial conferences such as the G7 Summit and the Conference of Parties (COP). Many studies have noted that these movements focus on multiple issues (e.g. the environment, women, trade, and anti-war efforts). Hence, various actors that engage in diverse social movements from many nations tend to gather at places where mobilisations are organised (Higgins-Desbiolles 2009, Della Porta 2007). The movement under scope in this paper is called the global justice movement, alter-globalisation movement, anti-globalism movement, and so on. In this paper, following Della Porta, I use the term 'global justice movement' (Della Porta 2007).

Routledge (2003) analyses such movements based on grassroots globalisation networks using the convergence space as a conceptual tool. He argues that grassroots globalisation networks forge associational politics that constitute a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements on multi-scalar terrains, including both material and virtual spaces (Routledge, 2003: 334). In this research, I focus on the aspect of material place.

Claeys and Duncan (2019) note the importance of identity politics in convergence spaces and assessed how identity politics play out there. They conclude that diverse actors practise their own identity politics, shaped by gender and age, and produce diversity in convergence spaces as a result of the different places in which these movements reside. However, distinct identities can cause specialisation and fragmentation of the actors involved. Claeys and Duncan show that quotas enable sectoral, geographical, gender- and age-based identity politics to operate successfully as a convergence space (Claeys and Duncan, 2019: 9–10). However, they also argue that there are other identities, such as religion, race/ethnicity, class and caste, sexual orientation and/or gender identity, left to be addressed.

Based on suggestions from Routledge (2003) and Claeys and Duncan (2019), I focus on the relation between identity and prefiguration in convergence spaces. Claeys and Duncan focus only on formal institutions (e.g. constituencies and quotas) in convergence spaces, which reveals the limited inclusion of diverse individuals in convergence space. However, some practises are not institutionalised, such as eating, sleeping and communication with others, but might produce processes of inclusion and exclusion as well.

The findings and limitations of previous studies raises questions about how the preparatory practise of prefiguration by diverse actors in convergence spaces facilitate identity politics. What follows is a literature review about prefiguration and identity, identifying the limitations of previous research. Moreover, I will demonstrate how this research contributes to earlier research on prefiguration and identity by focusing on journeys to convergence spaces.

Prefiguration

Sitrin (2006: 4; 2012: 3) defines prefigurative movements and their politics as movements that seek to create the future world that they desire in their present day-to-day social relationships. Prefiguration reflects the collective action process at a more practical level (Maeckelbergh, 2009, 2011).

Convergence spaces in international protest events such as the summit protests and occupy streets, are accompanied with protest camps (Brown et al., 2017; Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013). Protest camps are regarded as accommodation for those who participate in large-scale protest events. However, these camps not only provide lodging for activists but is also a place-based social movement strategy that involves both the acts of ongoing protests and acts of social reproduction necessary to sustain daily life (Brown et al, 2017; Feigenbaum et al, 2013).

In protest camps, protesters often seek to embody the DIY (Do It Yourself) ethos, autonomy, and distance from capitalist society, aspects that permit actors to live according to their own principles in order to express their movement's identity (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013; McDonald, 2006). Much of previous research has investigated questions concerning the challenge of prefiguration in the daily routine of protest camps: decision-making (Rigon, 2015), food consumption (Graeber, 2009; Juris 2008; Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013; Glass, 2010) and the creation of public spheres with locally available materials (Heinonen, 2019).

Many previous studies on prefiguration have dealt with practices within a particular place. Some research has focused on mobility, which has been regarded as the main barrier to participation in convergence spaces or opportunities for networking and mobilisation. From a Marxist perspective, Teivainen mentioned that there are structural barriers that prevent poor people from participating in networks that may seem open and horizontal to activists who have the required resources (Teivainen, 2016: 26). Other existing research on global justice movements and prefigurative politics discusses the participation barrier to place-based collective action as mobilisation for global justice movements depends on participants' material ability to travel abroad (Crane, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Bédoyan, Aelst and Walgrave, 2004; Doerr, 2009).

In addition, some studies describe a practice called 'summit hopping' (Bédoyan, Aelst and Walgrave, 2004; Daro, 2009, 2013; Russell, Schlembach and Lear 2017). Summit hopping refers to the participation of activists (called summit-hoppers) in international protest events by moving from place to place. Travelling abroad to participate in protests allows protesters to learn the skills of networking, mobilisation, and strategising (Bédoyan, Aelst and Walgrave, 2004, Daro 2009, 2013). Summit-hoppers practically carry their experience from one camp to another with their mobility; that is, summit hopping. (Daro, 2009: 19) However previous research on summit-hopping mainly focused on only the interaction among participants, police and local residents living in areas where global justice movements would take place in convergence spaces.

It is also important to note that prefiguration practices are not only acted out inside convergence spaces, but also in displaced and individualised movement processes. For example, inside protest camps, people often act as if they are in an alternative world, with their ideals as ideological vehicles. Such a practice is one of prefiguration to experiment, share and diffuse the vision for an alternative world. For instance, western travellers have been decreasing their frequency of air travel out of environmental concerns (Gössling, 2019).

Identity and prefiguration

In considering the process of mobility, which has not been analysed by previous studies of prefiguration, I consider Kevin McDonald's argument to be helpful. McDonald (2006) points out the importance of theorising the activities of

travelling activists with the concept of fluidity. He argues that travelling itself creates a collective identity in the age of individualisation and globalisation: McDonald considers that travel underlines the importance of a grammar of experience associated with displacement and voyages (McDonald, 2006: 44). The characteristic of travelling pointed out by McDonald is theoretically connected with the nature of contemporary social movements. Kevin McDonald, basing his ideas from the findings of Arberto Melucci, argued that contemporary social movements are not rooted in certain places, groups and collectives in the globalised era, but rather by fluid individuals (McDonald 2006). In investigating the tourism process, the reality of social movements in the contemporary globalised world can be captured by focusing on the grammar of experiences associated with displacement and voyages (McDonald, 2006: 44).

According to McDonald, a voyage is the process of creating a collective identity in an individualised society. However, the mobility process in a convergence space experienced to take place alone or with a very small number of people in global justice movements. In fact, the authors of previous anthropological studies regarding international social movements have found that, indeed, the process of moving into convergence space occurs either alone or with a small number of people (Maeckelbergh, 2009, 2018; Daro, 2009; Juris, 2008). Then, how do people create a collective identity as participants in the global justice movement?

In this study, the process of transportation towards convergence spaces is assumed to be a process of identity transition for participants. In order to discuss the transition, the categories of collective, organisational and activist identity that have been presented in previous studies are useful (Melucci, 1989; Gamson, 1991; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Jasper, 1997; Dunlap and McCright, 2008; Levitsky, 2007).

Why does this paper only address collective, organisational and activist identity, given the numerous categories of identity that have been identified in former studies? The answer lies in the fact that participants of global justice movements temporarily leave the SMOs in which they usually engage and head towards convergence spaces. Along the way, I consider that their identity will move from organisational identity that is specific to a particular SMO (Gamson 1991) and based on the identity created by the feeling of belonging to a specific organisation (Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Jasper, 1997; Corrigan-Brown, 2012) to collective identity, which I consider to be an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals and concerned with the orientation of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place (Melucci, 1989, 1996).

During the process in which SMO participants are transported to convergence spaces and become participants in global justice movements, individuals embrace an identity that is neither for a particular organisation nor in support of their expected friends in convergence spaces whom they will never meet (See Figure 1)

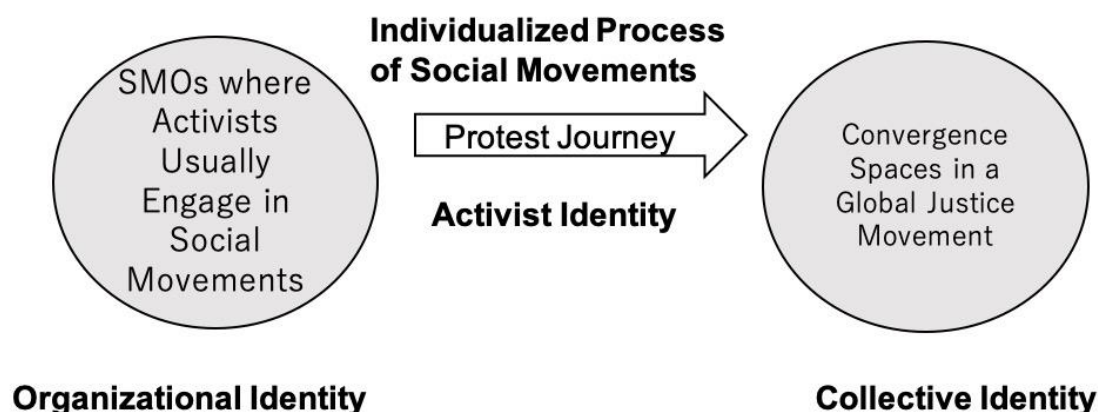


Figure 1. The relationship between movement process and identity

There is a broader layer of movement identity, which may be sustained over time as individuals move from one organisation to another (Gamson, 1991; Jasper, 1995; Dunlap and McCright, 2008). It is participants' self-definition as an activist that predicts their propensity to sustain participation and not permanently disengage from social movements, even if they leave their original group (Corrigal-Brown, 2012, pp. 109–17). The identification as an activist is constructed by the experience gained from previous social movements. (Bobel, 2007, Jasper, 1997; Corrigal-Brown, 2012, Luke et al, 2018, Silver 1998, Ruiz-Junco, 2011, Barr and Drury 2009, Portwood-Stacer, 2013).

Which factors create or enhance activist identity? Previous research has answered this question based on case studies of diverse types of social movements (Barr and Drury, 2009; Bobel, 2007; Portwood-Stacer, 2013; Craddock, 2019; Kennelly, 2014; Cortese, 2015; Taft, 2017; Luke et al, 2018, Ruiz-Junco, 2011, Mihaylov 2020, Lyytikäinen 2013). The findings of these studies can be categorised into two factors: (1) to engage in a 'desirable' or 'right' type of activism and (2) to construct the definition of 'being' an activist.

First, some researchers discuss the idea that activist identity is strongly related to which type of activism participant think is 'right'. What makes it 'the right' type of action depends on the social movement. Bobel emphasised that protesters consider dedication a key value for activist identity: they need to show timeless commitment, selfless sacrifice and unparalleled devotion to be a true activist in menstrual activism. (Bobel, 2007, p.154). Craddock mainly argued that activist identity is highly related to the picture of an 'ideal activist', who is implicitly defined by doing 'enough' of the 'right' type of activity, which means radical and direct action in the anti-austerity movement (Craddock, 2017, 2019). Craddock clarified that going out into the streets, participating in demonstration, and engaging in conflict with police are considered 'right' and 'true' activism, while other activities are looked down on by activists.

It is not only direct action that is considered the 'right' type of activism. Anarchists engage in the 'right' movement on a daily basis and commit to

‘authenticity’ in lifestyle practices (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). For example, Portwood-Stacer finds that anarchists usually do not choose the car for transportation by way of prefiguration. They also take care of their food and clothing habits in their community to commit to the value of anarchist society (Portwood-Stacer, 2013, p.29-30, 69). Veganism, black clothing and tattoos are cultural symbols that each have their own meaning in anarchism and play a role in reflecting their activist identity. Such a connection between lifestyle and what a desirable society looks like for activists, can also be seen in other movements. Christian pacifist activists are sceptical of traditional familism as a way of being true activists (which is why some do not have children), and animal rights activists consider it desirable to not eat meat. (Jacobsson and Lindblom, 2012). While the ‘right’ type of activism and activist identification differs for each social movement, as previous scholarship discussed, actions themselves include a wide range of forms, from collective direct action to everyday lifestyles.

Second, activist identity is strongly related to people self-identifying as ‘activists’ and sometimes being aware of themselves as activists in their storytelling (Bobel, 2007; Taft, 2017; Lyytikäinen, 2013; Cortese, 2015; Ruiz-Junco, 2011; Mihaylov, 2020). Taft analysed the aspects of female Russian activists’ usage of the term ‘becoming’ an activist in their stories. They talk about the moment of ‘becoming’ an activist, but they do not end their own stories with it; rather, they say that activism is a story of continual growth and learning, one in which they continue to ‘become’ an activist (Taft, 2017). This finding is similar to the concept of ‘a perfect standard’, proposed by Bobel. In menstrual activism, participants speak in various ways of the ‘ideal activist’ but these are never achieved. To be ideal activists, they devote timeless commitments and all of their resources to their activism (Bobel, 2007, pp.154-155).

Cortese (2015) and Luke et al. (2018) have also analysed people who define themselves as ‘good’ and others as ‘bad’ in social movements. In this case, defining activist is boundary work with other types of activists/activism. (Cortese, 2015). Such work has a similar function to defining the ‘right’ type of activism, as argued above. Luke et al. (2018) find that people who engaged in anti-flacking activism eschewed ‘activist’ title because it has a stigma like outsider, and/or as providing information that is not assessed to be neutral or objective.

This study considers the protest journey as a prefigurative act and analyses it from the viewpoint of activist identity. The protest journey and the identity that it constructs is different from an organisational identity that might exist within the SMO that activists normally belong to, and the global justice movement that forms the collective identity to which they are about to join. Previous scholarship has argued that activist identity is related to the ‘right type’ of activism and definition (and sometimes awareness) of activists.

This paper contributes to existing research on prefiguration and seeks to expand the concept beyond convergence space and collective action to individualised and fluid action. It is theoretically connected to the nature of contemporary social movements. Kevin McDonald’s argument, based on the work of Melucci,

claimed that contemporary social movements are not based on certain places, groups and collectives in the globalised era, but fluid individuals (McDonald, 2006). By investigating the tourism process, the reality of social movements in the contemporary globalised world can be captured by focusing on the grammar of experience associated with displacement and voyages, as discussed by McDonald (2006, p.44).

Conceptual framework

This study defines the protest journey as the activists' travel from the place they usually reside to the convergence place where the global justice movements' events are held.

How do we define prefiguration in the protest journey? Prefiguration appears in all activities in a protest camp or convergence place, such as eating meals, communication with others, and dividing bedroom space. During the protest journey, participants could think of it as a process of prefiguration in which their choices of transportation, places to stay, and places to take side trips reflect what they consider to be a desirable 'alternative world' (Sitrin, 2006, 2012; Maeckelbergh, 2009, 2011, 2016).

Furthermore, I focus on the activist identity that protest tourists form during the protest journey. Previous research suggests that activist identity is reinforced (1) when one conducts what is considered the 'desired' or 'right' type of activism and (2) when one defines or is made aware that one is 'becoming' or 'being' an activist. This paper examines these two aspects that allow protest tourists to form activist identities in the course of a protest journey.

The formation of activist identity is likely related to the organisational identity of SMOs that activists belong to in daily life. In addition, as pointed out by previous studies, personal biographies also shape the construction of activist identity. This study focuses on biographies of participants and the organisational identity that they have formed through their daily activities in SMOs they committed in order to examine the formation process of activist identity in the protest journey.

Research methodology

The participants of this study were protesters who travelled to and participated in convergence spaces of global justice movements. This research focuses mainly on the activist identity of activist tourists; therefore, it was necessary to work with participants involved with SMOs that engage in a variety of issues. In addition, as activist identity is related to the biography of activists, it was considered relevant to cover a wide range of biographical attributes such as gender and age. Additionally, it is possible that years of experience in social movements may be related to activist identity (e.g. activists' definition of a real activist and 'good' activism). Therefore, participants' years of experience with activism were taken into consideration as well.

Table 1 includes the final destination of each of participant, as this might also shape the collective identity of participants. Global justice movements engage in diverse issues and events. Issues covered include the environment, peace, human rights. During events, a variety of activities is organized, such as workshops, camps, demonstrations, and sometimes symbolic events like human chains (Della Porta ed, 2007).

Table 1. Biographical situation of participants interviewed

Participant	SMOs	Movement Experience (years)	Gender	Age	Final Destination
Manabu	supporting people in poverty	2	male	20s	protest against privatisation of public facilities by Nike
Hideo	student movement	4	male	20s	international anti-poverty campaign
Yumiko	feminism and childcare	3	female	30s	international anti-poverty campaign
Chika	peace and anti-war	4	female	30s	protest event against the ministerial conference
Toshi	dissent for existing labour system	2	male	20s	international conference against globalisation
Shinji	dissent for existing labour system	2	male	20s	protest march against neoliberalism
Chihiro	student movement	4	male	30s	international conference against globalisation
Masako	feminism	2	female	30s	alternative summit for anarchism
Atsushi	supporting people in poverty	3	male	20s	protests against the firing of non-regular employees
Etsuko	protest against neoliberalism and globalisation	1	female	30s	anti-G8 summit protest camp
Kota	protest against neoliberalism and globalisation	1	male	30s	anti-G8 summit protest camp
Taisuke	peace and anti-war	6	male	20s	international anti-base rally and human chain
Makoto	peace and anti-war	2	male	20s	world social forum
Osamu	supporting people in poverty	7	male	20s	international conference for labour union
Kasumi	feminism	4	female	20s	conference for youth and precarious workers

Shin	peace movement	10	male	40s	protest against neoliberalism
Nobuo	labour movement	2	male	30s	alternative summit for anarchist
Yoko	student movement	4	female	20s	international anti-base rally and human chain
Seichi	student movement	2	male	20s	international anti-base rally and human chain
Yasushi	peace movement	2	male	30s	anti-war and peace action
Kenichi	peace movement	2	male	30s	anti-war and peace action
Takuya	labour movement	34	male	50s	international conference for labour union
Jun	dissent for existing labour system	21	male	40s	anti-G8 summit protest
Yoshimi	LGBTQ movement	11	none	30s	anti-G20 summit protest
Takehiro	anti-nuclear	3	male	40s	environmental protection camp

The interview questions covered participants' reasons for participating in protests, selecting the means of transportation and accommodation, choosing their destinations and their motivation for activism. More importantly, I focused on dialogues related to two research questions regarding activist identity. That is, (1) 'What is your idea of a desirable social movement?' and (2) 'How would you define an activist, and do you meet those concepts or standards?' These questions play an important role in analysing activists' identity created through a protest journey.

The findings of this article are based on interviews with 25 participants. Names of all informants are pseudonyms. In addition, I collected and documented data from blogs, magazines, leftist journals and interviews with non-participant activists. Rather than making generalized claims about protests, this paper identifies some of the key perspectives and arguments that were evident among participants. Moreover, I indicate the extent to which they were supported by other research materials.

I interviewed individual protesters using semi-structured interviews that lasted for approximately 90 minutes to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives. In some cases, we had a meal with each other, prepared for a particular demonstration, or shared accommodation. Soon after conducting the interviews, the interviews were transcribed. During the transcription notes were taken. The interviews were coded, using the software of qualitative research and thematic analysis.

Participants of global justice mobilisations remembered their protest journeys extremely well: the transportation they used, the places they stayed, the

locations they made side trips to, and the conversations they had with their colleagues. I conducted interviews with some of them regarding actions they had committed after the protest journey some years later, but they were still able to retain detailed memories of their protest journey and describe their experiences with the many social movements they were involved in after much time had passed.

This study focuses on cultural materials (Polletta and Jasper 2001, 285) that activists use during their protest journey. Polletta and Jasper argue that collective identities are expressed in cultural materials such as names, narratives, symbols, verbal styles, rituals and clothing. This paper seeks to answer the question of how protesters express their activist identity by looking into how activists choose cultural materials in terms of transportation, accommodations and destinations. In so doing, it focuses on participants' gender and type of activism.

Protest journey: who are 'good' activists and tourists?

Best choices and ideal routes reflect the organisational and collective identity

First, this study examined how the 'right types' of activism, as they relate to activist identity, are carried out in the prefiguration process of a protest journey; for instance, choosing transportation means, accommodation, and side-trip destinations. In this section, I describe how protest tourists distinguish between desirable and undesirable destinations in their journey. In the process of selecting destinations, accommodations, means of transportation and other processes, some activists say there are 'desirable' and 'non-desirable' places to visit.

What factors constitute the distinction of such desirability? One is the identity they form through the activities of the social movement organisations they usually belong to, and the other is the anticipatory socialisation (Merton and Lazarsfeld, 1950) of their collective identity, as formed through global justice movements. For example, eating meals sold in large supermarkets, department stores and shopping places is not considered suitable for convergence spaces in global justice movements because such places represent capitalism and neoliberalism.

In addition, their interest in issues like such as the military, environment and women's rights, developed through daily activities in SMOs, is also reflected in their choices during the protest journey. For instance, protesters refuse to take flights and choose transportation means that use land routes if they are interested in environmental issues. Activists who are sensitive to issues of sexual minorities prefer places that have LGBT-friendly facilities such as special baths and lavatory rooms. Thus, activists create a desirable form of protest through protest journeys based on their organisational identity and expected collective identity in global justice movements.

Protest tourist Chika travelled to Tokyo from the northern part of Japan to take part in a large protest against the ministerial conference about global warming. For one week, she stayed in a guesthouse owned by activists and tried to make side trips around Tokyo.

(Interviewer: Where did you visit in Tokyo on your side trip?)

Chika: I went to the parliamentary office to visit a friend who worked in Parliament as a member of Congress. After that, I dropped by Irregular Rhythm Asylum (an infoshop for anarchists), and some other places established by anarchists and autonomists in Tokyo. However, this friend of mine — she is not interested in political issues — tried to take me to an aerial show by Japanese self-defence forces. Of course, I refused.¹

Some people may regard her behaviour of going to places created by anarchists and autonomists while also stopping by the Parliament as strange. Because anarchists challenge the existence of the government, being an anarchist and visiting the parliament are seen as incompatible. Nevertheless, it is a natural behaviour in the context of her organisational identity for the SMOs Chika was part of and the collective identity she was identifying with through participating in the global justice movement. Actually, she was a member of a political party and engaged in the peace movement. Therefore, it was natural for her to visit the Parliament office to meet her friend who is one of the members of Congress. She refused to go to the self-defence aerial show because it went against the beliefs of peace and anti-military that she had developed through SMOs.

Chika became interested in global justice movements, protest camps, and prefigurative politics when she heard the dialogues from anarchists who came to her hometown as part of their info tour several months before the above-mentioned trip. It is not surprising neither that she identified with this collective identity, constructed in the convergence space she was heading to.

In the process of the journey, protest tourists distinguished which behaviours were the ‘right type’ of activism and others that were not. The short talk between Hideo and Yumiko below shows their shared desired ‘tourism practice’. Yumiko, a single mother, was engaged in feminism and the childcare movement, and Hideo, a male protester, had taken part in student activism. Before participating in an international anti-poverty campaign event, they visited a second-hand store owned by youth activists in the metropolitan area and stayed in the extra room of the shop. Hideo and Yumiko extended their stay together and sometimes helped the owner in the business in the store.

(Interviewer: Which places did you visit during your stay?)

Hideo: I visited the second-hand auction market last week [. . .]. It was a pretty

¹ This interview was conducted on 4 April 2010 in Tokyo, Japan.

interesting place. I knocked down the price of some goods. Can you see that stereo and the bags? These are the items that I succeeded in buying in the auction.

Yumiko: But he went to Roppongi Hills (a building that houses luxury boutiques and holds commercial events). He watched a movie there.

Hideo: Umm . . . my friend gave me a complementary ticket.

Yumiko: You said that ‘I felt comfortable in Roppongi Hills. Wonderful atmosphere and pleasant smell [. . .]’.

Hideo: I wanted to know the atmosphere, smell, and comfortable environment formed by capitalism because we had to know our enemy. (with a laugh).²

This dialogue shows that communication with other protesters can affect one’s activism. These two activists believed that commercial facilities, especially luxury department stores and boutiques, were not suitable to visit. Yumiko believed that the activist who had fun in Roppongi Hills was not a good activist, but did not say anything when Hideo said he went to the auction market. These comments suggest that sharing the idea of the right type of activism with others enhance an activist identity. More curiously, collective action and campaigns of the SMOs they are part of, are not strongly associated with capitalism or neoliberalism. In fact, they do not seem to be engaged in prefigurational politics in their daily lives based on the value of anti-capitalism and anti-neoliberalism. In that sense, it could be argued that their interactions and actions reflect a different set of values in addition to their organisational identity.

When Hideo and Yumiko were involved in social movements in their hometown, they organised events during which participants of the G20 protests in Korea and the G8 protests in Japan talked about their experiences. Hideo and Yumiko were fascinated by the stories international protesters shared. Their protest journey as activists against globalisation had already begun at this point. Their activist identity was not related to their organisational identity, but they already started to identify with the collective identity of the anti-globalisation movement at this time, instead of a later moment in the convergence space.

The ways interviewees talk about visiting the parliamentary, an infoshop and aerial shows during the protest journey (Chika) and the luxury boutique mentioned (Hideo and Yumiko) illustrate what makes a destination of a side trip during the protest journey desirable. Chika thought that dropping by the infoshop where many anarchists gather and visiting the Parliament office where her friend activist worked, is the ‘right’ type of destination for her tour. Moreover, doing the tour, for her, proved that she is a ‘true activist’.

Hideo and Yumiko constructed their activist identities as anti-globalisation protesters by talking ironically about going to a luxury boutique. Such talk enabled them to share what the right type of activism looks like and constituted a measurement for judging whether one’s behaviour is correct or not. To behave

² This interview was conducted on 10 September 2016 in Tokyo, Japan.

correctly, they anticipate this socialisation of an activist identity.

As can be seen in Table 1, Chika, Hideo and Yumikos' years of experience in social movements do not span a long period of time, averaging between three and four years. Regardless of their experience, organisational identity and collective identity form what they consider desirable activities.

In addition, participants in global justice movements express their organisational identity and collective identity through their activist identity; not only in terms of their detours, but also in terms of their choice of transportation and how they spend their time on the road (Portwood-Stacer, 2013).

The following is a conversation with an activist tourist who used a ferry to reach the western region of Japan from the east. The conversation took place in a shared house that he was staying in when I had dinner together with some other activist travellers.

Shinji: Usually, I travel to my destination by ferry because it is cheap. On a ferry, we can take our vehicles, such as cars and motorbikes, but we cannot use mobile phone because there is no reception or WIFI on the ferry.

Masako: Wonderful! We do not need to think about daily work. We go to other places to escape from such trivial and disgusting labour and routine.³

Shinji's reasoning for choosing a ferry as his means of transportation is the cost and flexibility to enjoy the disconnection with all telecommunication devices: Shinji finds this mode of travel comfortable as he can forget his daily routine and work due to the non-functioning of mobile phones on the ferry. Shinji usually campaigns against the existing labour system and was about to head to a convergence space to protest against neoliberalism at the moment of this conversation. It makes sense that a person with such an organisational identity would prefer to travel in a way that allows for separation from the daily routine. On the other hand, Masako is not heading for the same convergence space as Shinji, nor does she express strong antipathy to the existing labour system or neoliberalism. However, by sharing part of his journey process, Masako loosely shared his values. From this dialogue, we can assume that the same kind of propagation of information and values that previous studies have pointed out occurs outside the convergence space.

The dialogues between Chika, Hideo, and Yumiko, as well of that between Shinji and Masako show that protest tourists enact the society they desire through prefigurative politics in the protest journey. They construct an activist identity rooted in the organisational identity of SMOs they are already part of and the collective identity that is expected to take shape in the convergence spaces of the global justice movement.

³ This interview was conducted on 27 April 2017 in Hokkaido, Japan.

Being a ‘real activist’: decontextualised movement opportunities and solidarity with others

Related with the activist identity, some activists consider a protest journey as an opportunity to ‘be’ and ‘become’, or ‘grow up’ as an activist. When I asked them if they think of themselves as an activist, nine participants shared their experience of their protest journey. What factors of the protest journey have enhanced their identification as an activist? Takehiro is a male activist who was active in anti-nuclear movement organisations after the earthquake and nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011. In 2013, he conducted a protest journey to the convergence spaces against the international environmental protection camp in northeast Japan.

Before that, Takehiro had participated in anti-nuclear activism and environmental demonstrations and workshops; however, he says the protest journey was an opportunity for him to ‘become’ an activist. He accompanied his musician friend from a foreign country to a protest event.

(Interviewer: How did you have a meal every day?)

Takehiro: We had difficulty because some musicians were vegetarian and vegan. In particular, veggie food is not popular in Japan. We sometimes shoplifted rice balls from supermarkets and convenience stores (small supermarkets open 24 hours). I roughly translated the ingredients written on the pack and told them whether or not the food was suitable for them.

(Interviewer: Did you feel resistance to such illegal acts?)

Takehiro: Of course, I do not steal food in the stores in my everyday life (laughing). But I do not hesitate to steal food during the journey — our act is a kind of punk culture and it is against mass consumer society and capitalism.⁴

Like Takehiro, some protesters engage in food theft and dumpster diving while living in protest camps and summit hopping. Shoplifting is a major means of collecting food (Pootwood-Stacer, 2013). In some protest events, activists feed participants in public events with stolen food (Juris 2008), and several protesters steal from local supermarkets (Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013). This is seen as challenging capitalism, neoliberalism, and the mass consumption society.

Takehiro said that he takes actions to express his support for environmental protection and preventing global warming as much as he could in his daily life, such as using a bicycle instead of a car and consistently turning off the lights in his room to save energy. However, there is a limitation for individuals to live in prefigurative way in daily life because of restrictions related to resources and the institutions that activists are part of, such as eating a cheap hamburger

⁴ This interview was conducted on 3 May 2013 in Hokkaido, Japan.

produced by global fast-food chains. During his protest journey decontextualised from everyday life, Takehiro engaged in the construction of an activist identity by making efforts to support a vegan lifestyle, which is difficult to maintain in Japan, and by engaging in illegal shoplifting.

Tourism presents an opportunity for protest tourists to engage in what they consider to be the 'right' type of activism because it is not part of their everyday life and work. Such trips allow them to perform desired actions that are not available in their immediate surroundings. Therefore, protest tourism might make individuals aware of a stronger activist identity than social movements that they are already engaged in.

Manabu is a Japanese man in his twenties who travelled from the northern region of Japan to the eastern and western areas to join protests against privatisation of public facilities by Nike, a global sportswear brand.

Manabu: We stayed in Kyoto and then went to Osaka (a metropolitan city in western Japan). I met some members of the labour union at an anti-poverty event I attended there. They said they were going to take a car, so I asked them to give me a lift on the way from Osaka to Nagoya (a city located in central Japan). I met many activists who assisted me during my tour.

One activist I met taught me how to hitchhike, so I attempted to hitch a ride, but the place in front of Nagoya station was not suitable for hitchhiking, so I gave it up, spent a night in a park, and took the train. The next day, I hitchhiked to Tokyo, my final destination.⁵

This trip was the first time Manabu realised that he was an activist, even though he had been working to support poor people for a long time. Furthermore, he remembered the trip in detail, even when I interviewed him again ten years after the trip.⁶ This journey, thus, played an important role in the formation of his activist identity.

Sharing a car with someone you meet along the way, hitchhiking and camping outdoors are common events, not only on protest journeys, but also in other types of tourism, such as backpacking and youth tourism. The activist identity Manabu formed through his travels does not seem to be related to the organisational identity he had developed through participation in SMOs, nor does it seem to be related to the collective identity that he subsequently acquired from participating in the global justice movement. However, Manabu may have been able to strengthen his activist identity from other protest tourists by performing his daily activities as a way of prefiguration and learning how to hitchhike and sleep outdoors. For example, he talked about sleeping in the open air as a way to 'reclaim the street', an attempt to liberate the street from the government and return it to the citizens. As a result, Manabu was able to carry

⁵ This interview was conducted on 10 August 2010 in Sapporo, Japan.

⁶ This interview was conducted on 5 May 2019 in Frankfurt, Germany.

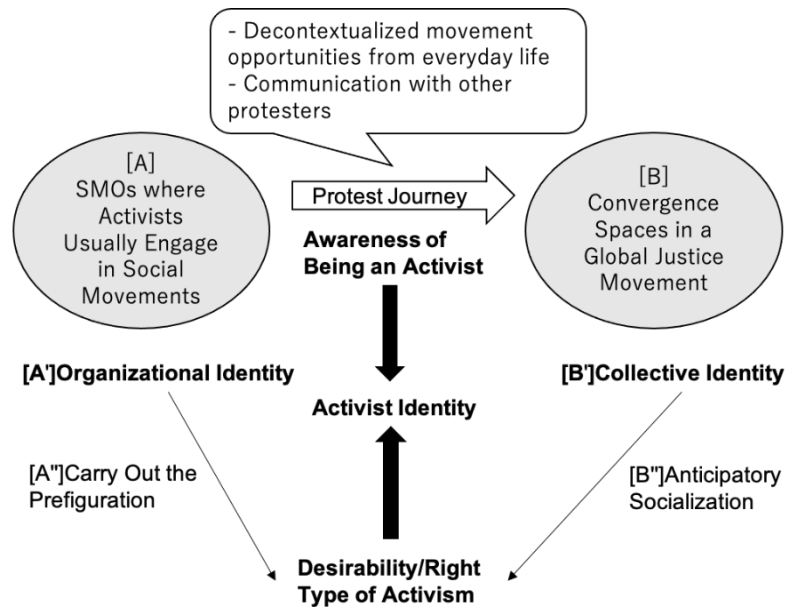
out various tourist activities that matched with what was considered desired tourism practices, as well as with the collective identity of anti-globalisation movements. In order to do this, communication with other protesters was essential.

Discussion

This article discussed how activists create their activist identity through their tourism process in protest journeys. In so doing, it examined the viewpoints of activists about ‘the right type of activism’ and the definition of activists. Participants distinguished good and bad places to visit during a protest journey, as well as certain behaviour that would reflect ideal activism by ‘true activists’. Protesters can practice what they consider to be the right type of activism because protest journeys are disconnected from everyday life and legal or material constraints. In the process of a protest journey, the meaning of behaviour may change, and acts that were considered as ordinary before, may come to be performed as prefigurational practices.

The protest journey is different from the actions that activists usually perform in [A] SMOs and [B] the convergence space in global justice movements, but it is influenced by these two movements. The protest journey provides participants the opportunity to decontextualise movement from everyday movements and communicate with other protesters whom they cannot meet in their daily lives. Through the process of a protest journey, [A’] participants carry out their prefiguration based on political interest fostered in the SMOs they join. In addition, [B’] their practises are anticipatory and socialised from the value a global justice movement has provided. As a result of both practises, participants engage in what they consider the right and desirable type of activism, and the behaviours of people in the protest journey reflect [A’] the organisational identity of the SMOs to which they belong or [B’] the collective identity formed in the convergence space to which they were headed. Finally, they have an awareness of being an activist—or an activist identity—as Craddock (2019) and Bobel (2007) have argued (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 Correlation between activist, organisational and collective identity within a protest journey



Drawing on these findings, this paper proposes a connection between collective identity, individualisation, and fluidisation. As McDonald argued, travelling itself creates a collective identity in the age of individualisation and globalisation because contemporary social movements are not based on certain places, groups and collectives in the globalised era, but rather by fluid individuals (McDonald, 2006; Melucci, 1996). Therefore, this study explored the protest journey as it is both an individualised process and one that we can regard as representing contemporary social movements.

This research has shown that it is possible for activists to construct a collective identity though the individualised process of the protest journey, because they identify in advance with the collective identity that will be further developed in the convergence space in the global justice movement. The concept of anticipatory socialisation (Marton and Lazasfeld, 1950), then, is also at work in contemporary social movements with displacement and voyages. Previous research argued that collective identity is formed in organisations, communities, and convergence spaces that several people, who participate in social movements, engage in. This study makes clear that people can anticipate socialisation of collective identity, even if they are alone.

This study contributes to not only the academic scholarship of social movements and collective action, but also to our knowledge about the practices of activism and social movements. It has showed how activists can foster a collective identity, not only through SMOs and convergence spaces, but also during their tourism process related to their protest journeys as individuals. Even if one lives in an

area where large protest events are rarely held, or if one only goes to demonstrations that take place far away only a few times a year, one can embody a collective identity that is related to that of other participants. This engenders worldwide solidarity, particularly in the contemporary world. In the age of COVID-19, social gathering is an increasingly precious opportunity for us. This study argues that even if a large number of people do not gather together in reality, making a variety of choices in the tourism process promotes anticipatory socialisation and contributes to the formation of a collective identity with others – it is an alternative type of solidarity in the individualisation era.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all of informants for sharing their experience. I also thank M. Maeckelbergh, B. Baumgarten, W. Manzenreiter, H. Sakamoto, E. Riichi, K. Ito, S. S. Sakuma, S. Ouyang, K. Terashita, and Y. Yang for their important comments. Finally, I would like to thank the editor of this article, E. D. Rasch and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions to improve the quality of the paper.

This research was partially supported by Murata Science Foundation, Egashira Hospitality Foundation, Labor Research Center, JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 19K13929, 18K18613, and 15K17195.

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Autonomist political culture in Brazil and the Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project

Márcio Bustamante and Bruno M. Fiuza

Abstract

This article presents preliminary results of the Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project in Brazil and shows how Peoples' Global Action (PGA) contributed to the renewal and development of an autonomist political culture within the Brazilian left. Strong at the beginning of the 20th century, autonomist political culture entered in a crisis in Brazil in the 1930s and almost disappeared, until it began to re-emerge in the late 1970s. Despite still being a small minority within the Brazilian left today, autonomist political culture has been gaining ground in the country in the last decades and gained national visibility in the wave of street protests that swept Brazil in June, 2013. Based on interviews carried out with activists involved with actions inspired by PGA in Brazil, the authors intend to show how PGA contributed to the development of an autonomist political culture in the country.

Keywords: Peoples' Global Action; June 2013; autonomism; MPL; anti-globalization movement; Brazilian left; political culture; oral history.

This article has two objectives. The first one is to present some preliminary results of the Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project in Brazil. The second one is to show how Peoples' Global Action (PGA) contributed to the renewal and further development of a specific political culture within the Brazilian left, which we call an autonomist political culture. This was the most important political culture in the very beginning of the Brazilian left, when the nascent Brazilian labour movement was dominated by anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism in early 20th century (Toledo 2004), but it entered in a serious crisis in the 1930s and almost disappeared between the 1940s and the 1960s, until it began to re-emerge at the end of the 1970s. Despite never regaining the strength it had in the beginning of the 20th century, and still being a small minority within the Brazilian left today, autonomist political culture has been gaining ground in the country in the last decades and finally gained national visibility in the wave of massive street protests that swept Brazil in June, 2013. Based on interviews carried out with activists involved with actions inspired by PGA in Brazil at the beginning of 21st century, we intend to show how PGA contributed to this renewal and strengthening of autonomist political culture in the country.

By autonomist political culture – or simply “autonomism” – we mean a group of representations and practices of political action inscribed in the tradition of the so-called anti-authoritarian/libertarian socialisms. This political culture, like all others, is made up of a series of elements that are basically organized around 1)

a particular philosophical substratum; 2) the construction of a discourse about the past, therefore a memory of its own; and 3) the register of its existence in the present (Berstein 2009). Thus, for the purpose of our argument, “autonomism” here does not refer to a specific historical experience, but to a series of elements that periodically emerge or submerge in the political scene as results of numerous conjunctural determinations. These determinations are not restricted to the configurations of social and economic relations at a given moment – although they are also grounded on these instances. Therefore, we are talking about a long-term political culture which has elements present in different political traditions throughout 19th and 20th centuries but is not restricted to any particular historical experience. It’s possible to identify elements of this autonomist political culture, for example, in classical anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism in Europe and the Americas in late 19th century and early 20th century; in council communism in Europe in the beginning of the 20th century; in the European autonomist movements of the 1970s and 1980s; and in neozapatismo throughout the world in the 1990s and beginning of 21st century.

Based on a qualitative analyzes of seven of the twelve interviews we conducted with activists and former activists who were directly involved with actions inspired by PGA in Brazil in the beginning of the 21st century, we were able to identify a connection between these actions and the renewal and development of an autonomist political culture in Brazil, which remains restricted to a small minority within the Brazilian left. As a shared philosophical substratum and reconstituted past, it’s possible to see in the testimonies we collected the presence of an anarchism renewed by political and intellectual traditions coming from the post-May 68 context – post-structuralism, ecology, indigenism, minorities, etc. – as well as references to heterodox and libertarian Marxisms. These references to older political traditions are renewed and reinterpreted in the context of the restructuring of capitalism from the 1970s onwards, the process of globalization intensified by the new communication technologies, as well as the crisis of the great narratives that make room for the so-called “underground memories” (Pollack 1989, 1992) or “frozen memories”, according to Assmann (2006).

In this sense, such a description is in line with other studies that also verify the contemporary (re)emergence of movements with an autonomist content, such as what Manfredonia (1999) calls “libertarian movements in the broad sense”, or what Tomás Ibáñez (2016) investigates based on the notions of “neoanarchism”, “post-anarchism” and “anarchism outside its own walls”.

In our research, we identify the following elements as central to the constitution of both discourses and practices of what we call an autonomist political culture: horizontalism, prefiguration, anti-capitalism and direct action. There are other, less general, elements, such as anti-hegemonism and anti-progressionism (in the sense of the regime of temporality), as well as a rich imagetic culture which, however, will not be addressed in this article.

The article is structured in five parts and a conclusion. In the first part, we will present the Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project (PGA Oral History), a

brief history of PGA and will describe the methodology used to collect the testimonies in Brazil.

In the second part, we will present and discuss the concept of political culture (Berstein 2003; Cefai 2001; Dutra 2002; Lichterman and Cefai 2006; Motta 2009, 2018; Rémond 1996). We see this concept as an interesting analytical tool to think about the reorganization of the Brazilian left at the end of the civil-military dictatorship that governed Brazil between 1964 and 1985, and the re-emergence of an autonomist political culture which will gain national visibility with the mass street protests in hundreds of Brazilian cities in June 2013, known as ‘the June 2013 Days’, which was the largest and most important cycle of protests in Brazil’s recent history. In June 2013, millions of people took to the streets in Brazil, in demonstrations that took place in hundreds of cities in all regions of the country. The detonator of the cycle of protests were the demonstrations organized in early June 2013 by the Free Fare Movement (MPL in the Portuguese acronym for “Movimento Passe Livre”) to fight against the increase in public transport fares in the city of São Paulo. The demonstrations were similar to those that occurred in a number of other countries at the beginning of the decade of 2010, such as Turkey, Spain, USA and Egypt. This international cycle of protests was marked by its contradictions, focus on the occupation of public spaces and practices of direct action and strong presence of social networks in organizational processes. It is estimated that in Brazil about 12% of the population participated in street protests (Ortellado 2017). In order to historically situate this reorganization of the Brazilian left at the end of the civil-military dictatorship, which opened space for the re-emergence of an autonomist political culture in Brazil, in the third part of the article we will present a panoramic overview of the history of the Brazilian left.

In the fourth part, we will present a brief history of PGA in Brazil, and in the fifth part, we will present some testimonies that support our claim that PGA contributed to the renewal and development of an autonomist political culture in Brazil.

1. The Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project in Brazil

The Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project is an initiative of activists and former activists linked to PGA, and proposes the constitution of a collection of testimonies of activists and former activists from movements around the world who have been in some way involved with PGA (Cox & Wood 2017)¹. The intention is that this collection can contribute to reflection about the struggles of the so-called “anti-globalization movement”, which emerged as an important political, social and cultural force from the mid-1990s onwards, inspired by the neozapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994, and other struggles against

¹ The PGA Oral History Project was presented in a "Research Note" published by Laurence Cox and Lesley Wood in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* in 2017. <http://www.interfacejournal.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Interface-9-1-Cox-and-Wood.pdf>. Last accessed on 4/16/2020.

neoliberal globalization throughout the world. The teams responsible for conducting the Project are composed of individuals belonging to academic and/or activist circles, and the Project is aimed primarily at an activist audience, instead of an academic one². The Project has volunteers working in several countries. The authors of this article are the ones working in Brazil, who carried out interviews between 2018 and 2019.

However, before we devote ourselves to the proposed objectives of this article, it's necessary to present a brief history of PGA.

*

PGA was a worldwide network of social movements founded in 1998 which contributed to the renewal of anti-capitalist discourse and forms of protest through transnational campaigns and mobilizations³. The most visible face of these mobilizations were the Global Days of Action, when simultaneous protests were organized in several cities around the world in support of demonstrations against summit meetings of multilateral institutions responsible for driving the process of neoliberal globalization, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the group of the seven most industrialized countries in the world plus Russia (G8).

The foundation of PGA in 1998 was a direct consequence of the process of building a worldwide network of struggles against neoliberalism that began to be articulated by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) from Mexico. In 1996, the Zapatistas invited their supporters and all those fighting against neoliberalism around the world to meet at the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, held from July 27 to August 3 in five Zapatista communities in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. At the end of the meeting it was proposed the creation of a worldwide network of struggles against neoliberalism, which gained a more concrete shape during the Second Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, held in Spain exactly one year later.

At the end of the Second Intercontinental Encounter, representatives of ten movements launched a call to discuss the creation of a coordination instrument to plan joint actions against the WTO, which would hold its second ministerial conference in May 1998 in Geneva. In response to the call, 300 delegates from 71 countries from all continents met in Geneva between February 23 and 25, 1998, to participate in PGA's founding conference.

² The Project also maintains a website: <http://pgaoralhistory.net>. Last accessed on 4/16/2020.

³ The history of PGA presented here is all based on Fiuza 2017, pp. 15-18. For visual records of PGA, see these two brief documentaries: <https://vimeo.com/173037314> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taJ2bszEi7M&fbclid=IwAR1AAiqwFttYlJ5N13o_ZcFRFSOQcmOvJW6PegkHTl5fvjB54X6nDBgue8Y. The first one produced by the German movement Degrowth about the international history of PGA; the second one produced by volunteers of Indymedia Brazil about the demonstration organized in São Paulo in response to PGA's call for a Global Day of Action on April 20, 2001.

From then on, PGA began to launch calls for simultaneous protest actions in various parts of the world against the institutions that promoted the advance of neoliberal globalization. The biggest and most famous Global Days of Action were June 18, 1999 (J18), when simultaneous actions were taken in 40 countries against the G8 meeting held in Cologne, Germany; November 30, 1999 (N30), when activists shut down the opening conference of the third WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle, United States; September 26, 2000 (S26), when thousands of protesters surrounded the IMF and World Bank meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, accompanied by actions in 110 cities around the world; April 20, 2001 (A20), when activists protested against the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) surrounding the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, Canada, while simultaneous protests were taking place in several countries across the continent; and July 20, 2001 (J20), when 300,000 activists gathered in the largest of all these demonstrations to protest against the G8 summit in Genoa, Italy.

Genoa, however, marked both the peak and the beginning of the decline of the major street demonstrations against neoliberal globalization. The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent witch-hunt launched by the United States government put the most radical groups that opposed neoliberal globalization on the defensive and several of them demobilized.

It's important to note that PGA was not a political organization with its own activists, but rather a network designed to serve as a communication tool to coordinate actions carried out by local social movements in different parts of the world with similar goals (PGA 1997). So, it doesn't make sense to speak of PGA's actions in a given country, but rather of actions carried out by local activists inspired by global calls to action launched by PGA.

Given the very nature of PGA, it's also difficult to analyze its history in the same way as it's done with traditional social movements. PGA certainly has a date of birth (February, 1998), but it doesn't have a date of death. Many accounts coincide in affirming that the network entered a crisis after the September 11, 2001 attacks, but PGA meetings were organized in Europe as late as 2006 (PGA 2006), and a call for a Global Day of Action against the G8 meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany, was still issued in the name of PGA in 2007 (PGA 2007), even though the participation of movements from other parts of the world was scarce or even non-existent. Anyway, it's relatively safe to say that PGA ceased to exist after 2007, since there are no registers of activities of the network after this year.

*

Given the profile of the PGA Oral History Project, concerns regarding technical aspects of research have not taken a central and/or systematic position. Basically, a call was made to collect testimonies from veterans who in some way had a connection with PGA. If interest arose in representing the Project in a country, the volunteer was sent a model script to conduct the interviews as well

as a model of informed consent form to be signed by the interviewees. Both documents could be adapted to local contexts.

We decided on oral history as a starting point for carrying out this project for a number of reasons. First, oral history is a very easy to use and low-cost method. Oral history can open up research fields and possibilities where traditional archival methods are more limited. Finally, oral history fits perfectly with the objectives of this activist research, since the pioneers of this methodology employed it as an instrument that extends beyond the university, precisely because it is not a tool that is only directed at the production of scientific knowledge (Thompson 1998, Portelli 1997, Alberti 1990, Amado and Ferreira 2006).

Throughout 2018 and 2019, the Project in Brazil has carried out a total of twelve interviews, each lasting an average of two hours. The transcriptions are still in progress, and we also intend to translate them before depositing the contribution in the PGA Oral History collection. The interviews were carried out with activists and former activists who acted/act and live in different regions of the country – Northeast, South, Southeast – and also with a person who was in Canada in the period when PGA was more active.

As a mechanism for selecting and building a non-probabilistic sampling of interviewees, partial snowball sampling was adopted as a method to reach the subjects and as a thermometer on what was the correct moment to stop the collection of testimonies. The ‘partial’, in this case, refers to the fact that the authors of the text have a certain insertion in activist circles and, as far as possible, we tried to contemplate representatives of the various matrices that make up the Brazilian autonomist political culture.

Between 2018 and 2019, we contacted activists and former activists from different “fronts”, so to speak, who participated in actions inspired by PGA in Brazil and, based on their suggestions, we carried out further interviews within that subgroup. Our selection criterion was guided by efforts to be inclusive of diversity of gender and race/ethnicity, although in practice we found it difficult not only to find women, but also to find female activists willing to participate in the Project. It is also worth mentioning that, although most of the time the invitation was well received by the activists we contacted, some men also refused to participate or didn’t answer our invitations.

The standard interview script was adapted to the Brazilian context, keeping the core questions, removing those that did not fit the local context, and including others that made more sense in the Brazilian context.

2. Political Culture: History of a Concept

As we wish to investigate the recent history of a certain political field, bearer of a certain imaginary (Baczko 1985; Castoriadis 1995), the concept of political culture is evident as a timely path. This is because, depending on the approach, it can show the imbrications between culture and material conditions of a social

movement or, more broadly, of a political tradition at a given historical moment. Using the concept of political culture while working with oral sources is particularly fruitful (Berstein 2009). The oral source, given its dynamism and simultaneity, demonstrates quite clearly the processes of constitution of political identities, the reasons for the engagements and the shared values, beyond the contradictions and points of tension always present, but better disguised or silenced in traditional sources.

The term 'political culture' appears as a category of analysis in the 1960s, gaining wide repercussion with the publication of the book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Almond and Verba 1964), whose first edition dates from 1963. The authors, American political scientists, wanted to verify the extent to which cultural behavior and habits influenced the political systems of each country. The categorization they made was reductionist, as demonstrated by the strong criticism they received (Motta 2009). The authors established a hierarchical relationship between the different political cultures, so that the liberal democratic arrangement was placed as an ideal parameter for the others, which ended up attesting to an ethnocentric background to the concept of political culture as presented by Almond and Verba.

In the 1970s, with the crisis of the totalizing approaches, we see profound impacts in the field of social sciences. In history, as a reflex, we see the so-called "culturalist turn" (Motta 2009) which, together with the return of political history, opens up space for the recovery of the concept of political culture. But it does this in a completely renewed sense, broadly based on the anthropological debate on the concept of culture (Dutra 2002).

In the important book *Pour une Histoire Politique* (Rémond 1996), whose first edition dates back to 1988, several historians present new proposals for understanding not only political history, but the political field in general. Until then restricted to the dimensions of powers, leaders, institutional spaces, legislative bodies and the forms and regimes of government, the absorption of the notion of political culture allows a revolution in the way of thinking and writing history. If in the first generation of the concept, with Almond and Verba, the typologies of political cultures closed themselves at the borders of the nation-state, now they refer to ideological traditions: monarchist, republican, socialist, liberal, anarchist, plebeian, nationalist, Jacobin, fascist (Dutra 2002, p. 27 apud Berstein 1999, p. 29).

In this article, however, we want to make clear two important dimensions of the concept. First, the role played by political traditions and political history as a heritage that comes from the past and acts on the present, that is, the "weight of memory" (Assmann 2006). Thus, political culture is explained by the set of values, imaginary, discourses, utopias and practices of political action shared by a given group that is taken as a coherent unit (Motta 2009). But it is also necessary to perceive temporal dialectics in its dynamicity, since politics is also always action in the immediate present. So that

[...] political culture refers to operations of alignment of the ways of perceiving, acting and judging, the articulation of the arrangements of coexistence in the representations of the collective, the justification or denunciation of the interventions in the public space, the legitimization or criticism of the procedures and uses of the law, the changes in the arguments that sustain the sense of events, the decisions or actions and the production of common goods and public goods. Political cultures appear inseparable from their pragmatic and strategic uses. (Cefaï 2001, p. 99)⁴

In other words, a good analysis in the realm of political cultures is the one attentive both to the traditions and trends that remain and are reproduced in the memories of those who make politics, as well as to the pragmatic perspectives, to the availability of resources and to the material and social bases over which the subjects stand. It is because they are always subject to this dialectic of temporalities that political cultures are constantly changing. They “are born” and they “die”, depending on their ability to provide answers and meaning to political life.

3. Left-Wing and Autonomism in Brazil

Before analyzing the changes in the Brazilian left based on the concept of political culture, let's first take a panoramic view at the history of the Brazilian left since its beginning, at the end of the 19th century, to better situate these changes chronologically.

Until 1888, Brazil was a monarchy with the bulk of its labor force formed by enslaved Africans or afro-descendants. Slavery was only abolished in Brazil in 1888, and the country only became a republic in the following year, 1889. Since wage labor and republican politics only became a reality in the country in the 1890s, it's very hard to speak of left-wing politics in its modern sense in Brazil before the last decade of the 19th century.

Taking 1889 as its point of departure, the history of the Brazilian left can be divided into three major historical cycles (Aarão Reis Filho 2005): the first one runs through the so-called Brazilian “First Republic”, which starts with the proclamation of the Republic in 1889 and ends with the Revolution of 1930, in which a civil-military movement led by Getúlio Vargas overthrew the civilian president Washington Luís; the second one starts with the Revolution of 1930 and ends after the defeat of the armed struggle against the civil-military dictatorship of 1964-1985, and the foundation of the Worker's Party (PT – “Partido dos Trabalhadores”) in 1980; finally, the third cycle starts with the foundation of PT in 1980 and comes until the present.

⁴ All quotations were translated by the authors of this article from the original language to English unless where stated otherwise.

The first historical cycle of the Brazilian left (1889-1930) was dominated by anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism imported from Europe by the Italian immigrants who began to arrive in Brazil at the end of the 19th century and shaped much of the nascent Brazilian labor movement. These workers of the country's first industries organized revolutionary trade unions in the city of São Paulo. The political tradition generated by these pioneers of the Brazilian labor movement was heavily influenced by elements of what we call an autonomist political culture, with a special focus on workers' autonomy and a belief in the workers' ability to manage their own affairs through autonomous trade unions that were independent of any external political authority (Toledo 2004).

The hegemony of anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists in the Brazilian left, however, started to decline in 1922, when a group of former anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917 embraced communism and founded the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB – “Partido Comunista Brasileiro”) (Gorender 2005). This decline became an almost terminal crisis after the Revolution of 1930, when anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism were virtually exterminated by the repression unleashed by the Getúlio Vargas government against all autonomous workers' organizations, including anarchists, revolutionary syndicalists and communists.

The final decline of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism in the 1930s opened a new historical cycle to the Brazilian left, with both the PCB and a new political tradition created by Getúlio Vargas, called “labourism”, becoming the two new hegemonic forces within the Brazilian left until the civil-military coup of 1964 (Gorender 2005; Aarão Reis Filho 2005). Despite having been initially persecuted in the first years of the Getúlio Vargas governments in the 1930s, the PCB ended up allying with left wing sectors of Vargas' Brazilian Labor Party (PTB – “Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro”) to form a nationalist and developmentalist front which dominated the Brazilian left in the 1950s and early 1960s (Aarão Reis Filho, 2005). This front was based on a highly centralized political culture, dominated by both the PCB, which was a typical Stalinist party (Gorender 2005)⁵, and the PTB, which was dominated by a nationalist-statist ideology (Aarão Reis Filho 2005).

The communist/labour hegemony over the Brazilian left started to fall apart with the civil-military coup of 1964, which overthrew president João Goulart, elected by PTB, and launched a cruel persecution against communists. The 1964 coup marked the beginning of the decline of the PCB (Gorender 2005), and the crisis of the Stalinist political culture introduced by the Communist Party in the Brazilian left.

⁵ It's important to note, however, that Stalinism has never been the only branch within the Marxist-Leninist tradition in Brazil. Small Trotskyist organizations existed in the country since the late 1920s (Marques Neto 1993), and, in the 1960s, Maoism was embraced by the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB, in the Portuguese acronym for “Partido Comunista do Brasil”), a dissident communist party created in 1962 by a group of former members of PCB (Gorender 2005; Sales 2017).

The void left by the decline of PCB opened up space for a renewal of the Brazilian left, which reflected the wider transformations the left was going through all over the world in the aftermath of the revolts that shook the world from May 68 onwards, which affected indiscriminately countries of the so-called “Free World” and of the Soviet Bloc. On the one hand, the State-Market-Trade Unions consortium became increasingly unable to deal with demands which were both new and quite important to the radical left. Meanwhile, in the countries of the actually existing socialism, what Castoriadis (1955) calls the “bureaucratic society” had structured forms of domination and restriction of freedoms imposed by a party elite over the rest of the population that had been creating a situation of growing dissatisfaction.

This New Left born in the 1960s politicized dimensions of social life until then considered ‘non-political’, and this caused decisive transformations in the field of political cultures of the left. Everyday life, subjectivities, bodies, micro-scales of social structures, among other elements, invaded the traditional space of politics. This process of constitution of heterodoxies on the left begins with a wave of dissidences within communist parties all over the world, and over time these dissidences have become structured as movements and organizations of alternative profiles, agendas and political cultures.

In the United States the New Left emerged; in France, Gauche Proletarienne; in Italy, Il Manifesto and Lotta Continua – groups that made a virulent criticism of the communist parties from which they originated. In the same period Brazil saw the birth of a large number of dissident organizations (initially as a product of successive divisions of the Brazilian Communist Party) and independent groups. And in the course of the 1970s, movements of a new kind – those specific and of political minorities, the “movements of difference” – were present in the political scene in Brazil and around the world. (Araújo 2000)

These dissident groups and movements were formed by individuals and tendencies that were historically neglected by the hegemonic left-wing organizations. With the crisis of the PCB in Brazil, many smaller tendencies within the Brazilian left became more active and visible in the struggle against the civil-military dictatorship, many of them taking up armed struggle against the regime.

The Marxist Leninist People's Action [APML – “Ação Popular Marxista Leninista”] had its origin linked to groups of the Catholic left; the Workers' Politics [Polop – “Política Operária”], later designated only as PO, emerged as a group of independent intellectuals with some Trotskyist influence. Both were born in the 1960s. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Proletariat [MEP – “Movimento pela Emancipação do Proletariado”], on the other hand, represented a dissension of the Polop in the early 1970s. Freedom and Struggle [Libelu – “Liberdade e Luta”] was a Trotskyist organization. During the 1970s, these organizations formed, together with the specific and minority movements, an

alternative left-wing field in Brazil, participating in the resistance to the military dictatorship and developing an idea of politics marked by a sense of dissent and heterodoxy. Despite criticizing the more traditional left-wing parties (such as the PCB and the PCdoB), such organizations and movements sought to articulate themselves with more recognized social movements – such as the church-based movements, the student movement, the trade union movement and the neighborhood movements. (Araújo 2000)

The armed struggle against the civil-military dictatorship, from the second half of the 1970s onwards, gives way to an emphasis on the agendas of minorities – particularly the feminist and black agendas – and also to the strengthening of ecological and pacifist agendas. The form of organization becomes a central concern, and not only an instrumental one, given the focus on the prefigurative aspects of the movements. In this context, differences and fragmentation are praised as opposed to the old totalizing paradigms (Araújo 2000).

A decisive step was taken when the new movements, coming from dissidences of organizations rooted in Marxist-Leninist⁶ political culture began to distance themselves from the Marxist-Leninist tradition, starting to incorporate new – as well as some old, but revamped – theoretical references. Positioning themselves contrary to Marxist-Leninist culture, the new social movements flirted with other traditions.

These new leftists began questioning assumptions of the political struggle itself and how it was carried out. The new left-wing groups were not simply seeking some kind of “right to inclusion” (although for a considerable part of it this was also the case). What new leftist groups, such as the Italian and German autonomous movements of the 1970s analyzed by Katsiaficas (1997) were seeking, was to create new spaces of political autonomy not subjected to external political authorities. In other words, in this emerging multiplicity we see the (re)emergence of an anti-hegemonic field, bearer of an anti-politics attitude (Augusto 2014; Day 2005) which questioned political mediation.

In short, criticism has focused on the very definition of both “politics” and on the functioning of power. Based on the contributions of Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari (Araújo 2000), the new movements understood that power does not act in an unidirectional way, but it inhabits all relations and operates in a radial and not only vertical logic. The result was the expansion of social struggles to all spheres of life. It’s not a coincidence that the element of prefiguration appears so strongly in these groups of the new left. In other words, it is not enough to

⁶ In this article we use the term “Marxist-Leninist” to refer to the specific political culture created by the Bolshevik Party based on Lenin’s theories and transformed into the universal model for all communist parties affiliated to the Communist International after 1919. In its more authoritarian version, it gave birth to Stalinism, but it has also generated other political traditions within the Marxist field, such as Trotskyism and Maoism. By no means we intend to reduce the whole Marxist tradition to Marxism-Leninism. Marxism goes well beyond Leninism and encompasses libertarian traditions which are integral parts of what we call autonomist political culture, such as Autonomist Marxism (Cleaver 2000).

define how we will make the revolution, it is now necessary to think what will be done after it, who and how will they take part in this discussion, and even what is revolution, and if this is what is desired.

These global trends of transformation which were affecting the left all over the world materialized in the emergence or reemergence of two different political traditions which marked the third historical cycle of the Brazilian left from the 1980s onwards. On the one hand, the critique of the authoritarian tradition within the left represented by Stalinism gave birth to a more institutional response which took the form of what Aarão Reis Filho (2005) calls a democratic socialist tradition represented by the foundation of PT in 1980, which brought together activists from different social movements such as the new trade unionism of the ABC region⁷, the grassroots ecclesial communities (CEBs – “Comunidades Eclesiais de Base”) and the pastorals of the Catholic Church rooted in liberation theology and the students movement that served as a meeting place for the clandestine left and that came from armed struggle.

From its foundation, in 1980, PT became the axis of a new hegemonic field in the Brazilian left which would call itself “popular-democratic”. This new political field was formed not only by PT itself, but by a plethora of social movements which emerged from the 1970s and institutionalized themselves throughout the 1980s, such as the new ABC trade unionism, which in 1983 gave birth to the Unified Workers’ Central (CUT – “Central Única dos Trabalhadores”); the students movement which rebuilt the Students’ National Union (UNE – “União Nacional dos Estudantes”), made illegal by the 1964 coup; and a new rural workers’ movement which in 1984 gave birth to the Landless Workers Movement (MST “Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra”).

At the same time as these big mass social movements were articulating themselves to form the new hegemonic field of the Brazilian left, another tradition re-emerged: anarchism. Little connected to social struggles since the mid-1940s, anarchist political culture, until then anachronistic, began to find fertile soil in a context of fragmentation, systematic criticism of powers, as well as induced by cultural experimentation and alternative lifestyles that gained space since May 68. In Brazil, anarchism began to re-emerge at the end of the 1970s as the bearer of the autonomist political culture in the country and became a reference to some fringes of the Brazilian left from the 1980s onwards, especially among urban, countercultural youth, such as teenagers who got involved with the punk/anarcho-punk movement, which, if at first was more a form of aesthetical expression and cultural rebellion, in some contexts started to politicize itself.

Particularly in the city of São Paulo, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Anarcho-punk Movement (MAP – “Movimento Anarcopunk”) approached the Social Culture Center (CCS – “Centro de Cultura Social”), which had been

⁷ The ABC region comprises the main industrial cities in the metropolitan area of São Paulo: Santo André, São Bernardo and São Caetano.

rearticulating itself since the political reopening process, after the end of the civil-military dictatorship in 1985. CCS was created in 1933 by anarchist activists and shut down by the Vargas government in 1937. Reopened in 1947, it was closed again by the civic-military dictatorship in 1969. Reopened for the second time in 1985, it became a meeting place for the old anarchists of the 1940s and the adolescent punks from the outskirts of São Paulo (Ribeiro 2018).

MAP and CCS were the best-known groups, but throughout the metropolitan region of São Paulo, the Baixada Santista region⁸ and other surrounding cities, we see an explosion of collectives and micro collectives of similar profiles. In a more dispersed way, this phenomenon is also seen in other urban centers in the South, Northeast and Center-West regions of the country. These collectives have revived the anarchist tradition, whether revamped by anarcho-punk culture or by other themes dear to the new left: ecology, permaculture, veganism/vegetarianism, cycling activism, LGBT issues, occupation of public spaces and struggle for housing, etc.

4. Peoples' Global Action and its Legacy in Brazil

The different aspects of the renewal of the Brazilian left in the post-civil-military dictatorship period are present in the early days of the participation of militants from the country in activities linked to PGA. Representatives of the popular-democratic field had the first contacts with the process that led to the creation of PGA. Representatives of PT, CUT and MST participated in the first Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism held in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1996 (Fiuza 2017). The following year, MST sent a representative to the second Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism, held in Spain, and at the end of that meeting MST was one of the ten movements that became part of the conveners committee of PGA's founding conference (PGA 1997). The following year, MST sent a representative to take part in the protests against the WTO in Geneva on the first Global Day of Action, May 16, 1998, at the same time that the movement organized a march in Brazil that took 50,000 people to the country's capital, Brasília, to demand agrarian reform (PGA, 1998).

Despite this strong initial presence, the participation of the popular-democratic field in the activities of PGA practically disappeared after 1998, according to testimonies and documents to which we had access. PT and CUT only participated in the encounter in Chiapas in 1996. And MST took part only sporadically in the activities of PGA after 1998. MST did not participate, for example, in any action carried out in Brazil in response to the calls for global action launched by PGA in 1999. The only record of any action taken in Brazil during the second Global Day of Action, June 18, 1999 (J18), is a small isolated

⁸ Baixada Santista is the name of the region around the city of Santos, where is located the Port of Santos, the busiest container port of both Brazil and Latin America.

action of graffiti on a Rede Globo⁹ clock in the city of Florianopolis. And in what would become the most famous of all Global Days of Action, the Battle of Seattle, on November 30, 1999 (N30), the only record of action carried out in Brazil is of an artistic intervention and pamphleteering carried out in the city of Santos by two groups linked to the libertarian/anarchist tradition: the Green Alternative Collective (CAVE – “Coletivo Alternativa Verde”) and the Baixada Santista Libertarian Network (RLBS – “Rede Libertária da Baixada Santista”) (Liberato 2006).

Curiously, although Brazil had a strong representative among the movements that founded PGA, the group that would in fact become responsible for carrying out the most important activities related to the network in the country apparently did not get in touch with the initiative through the Brazilian founder. This contact was through the news that began to reach the country throughout 1999 of the great acts carried out in other countries during the Global Days of Action convened by PGA, especially the demonstrations organized by British direct action groups in London at the J18 and the spectacular Battle of Seattle on the N30.

Pablo Ortellado, one of the main organizers of the actions carried out in Brazil in response to the calls for global action launched by PGA, says that it was under the impact of the Battle of Seattle that a group of activists in the city of São Paulo began to meet in May 2000 to reproduce actions like that in Brazil:

It was under the political impact of the effective blockade of the WTO "millennium round" that groups and individuals in São Paulo and other cities around the world began to think about reproducing and generalizing the events of Seattle. This is more or less how the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by Peoples' Global Action was formed in São Paulo in May 2000, five months after Seattle. (Ryioiki and Ortellado 2004, p. 10)¹⁰

According to Ortellado, these groups and individuals who would be the most active organizers of actions linked to PGA in São Paulo were part precisely of the other political field involved in the renewal of the Brazilian left from the 1980s onwards: the anarchist or libertarian field.

⁹ Rede Globo is the biggest television broadcast company in Brazil, which holds a virtual monopoly of media discourse in Brazilian TV.

¹⁰ Ortellado's quotations included in this article were taken from a written account published in book form in 2004 (Ryioiki and Ortellado 2004). The historical reconstitution of the actions carried out in Brazil in response to PGA's global calls to action is essentially based on two written sources: Ortellado's book and the doctoral thesis of another Brazilian activist who played an important role in disseminating information about PGA in the country: Leo Vinícius Liberato (Liberato 2006).

In São Paulo, this movement was born from the convergence of two other movements that emerged or re-emerged in the 1980s: the independent, self-managed students movement and the anarchist movement itself. The anarchist movement, of course, is very old in Brazil and dates back at least to the last two decades of the 19th century. After the great crisis of the 1930s, it seems that the 1980s saw its renaissance, very gradual, as a result of the "democratic" opening, the political legacy of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the consolidation of the political orientation of the punk movement. The independent and self-managed student movement is part of this same scenario, but often has not claimed the anarchist heritage, despite sharing the same principles and values. (...) These two strands of the libertarian social movement have converged, in some degree by chance, attracted by the fascinating events of Seattle. (Ryiki and Ortellado 2004, p. 9)

This coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA that was formed in São Paulo began to work on organizing a local demonstration as part of the Global Day of Action called by PGA to September 26, 2000 (S26), in support of the protests against the IMF and World Bank meeting scheduled to take place on that date in Prague, Czech Republic.

The collective that led the initiative was the Local Action for Global Justice (ALJG – “Ação Local por Justiça Global”). It was a group formed by students from the University of São Paulo (USP), among them Ortellado, which was created that same year to study and raise awareness about the negative effects of neoliberal globalization. The preparatory meetings for S26 were held at the headquarters of Popular Consultation (“Consulta Popular”), a Marxist political organization created in 1997 with the initial aim of being the political branch of MST. These meetings were attended by collectives linked both to the libertarian tradition – such as CCS, CAVE, RLBS and ALJG itself – as well as groups more linked to the popular-democratic field – such as the Popular Consultation and the Unified Black Movement (MNU – “Movimento Negro Unificado”) (Liberato 2006).

S26 was the first Global Day of Action convened by PGA that counted with simultaneous demonstrations in several Brazilian cities. In São Paulo, a thousand people protested in front of the city's Stock Exchange. Besides the group inspired by PGA in São Paulo, activists also organized actions for the Global Day of Action in the following cities: Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Bauru, Campinas and Santa Maria (Ryiki and Ortellado 2004; Liberato 2006).

After S26, the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA in São Paulo began to prepare to organize its next major action: the local demonstration that would take place as part of the mobilizations scheduled for April 20, 2001 (A20) in several countries throughout the Americas to protest against the Summit of the Americas, a meeting of representatives of governments from across the region scheduled to take place on that date in Quebec, Canada, to discuss the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

At that time, activities related to PGA in São Paulo were already fully linked to the libertarian and anarchist field. The preparatory meetings for the A20 in São Paulo were held at CCS, marking a direct connection of the global resistance movement with the anarchist tradition in the city, and among the participants the libertarian field predominated:

Both the venue – CCS headquarters – and the profile of the participants already showed a difference from the preparatory meetings for S26, and a greater homogenization: young libertarians and members of anarchist collectives prevailed widely. Anarcho-punks, straight edges, and members of groups such as CCS, CAVE, MAR, RLBS, Revolutionary Strategy (a Trotskyist group), ALJG, CMI and Comitê Avante Zapatista¹¹. (Liberato 2006, p, 183)

The preparatory meetings for the A20 began in January 2001, the month in which Brazil would enter the map of the international movement of resistance against neoliberal globalization by holding the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre¹². At the forum, members of the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA in São Paulo had the opportunity to get in touch with groups and individuals who participated in the mobilizations called by PGA in other parts of the world, opening the way for exchanges of experiences between Brazilian activists and those from other countries.

The A20 in São Paulo gathered more than two thousand demonstrators on Avenida Paulista, the most important avenue of the city, and ended with a brutal police repression that resulted in 79 prisoners, 10 tortured and more than 100 wounded (Ryioki and Ortellado 2004). The size of the demonstration and the police repression gave visibility to Brazilian "anti-globalization" activists, putting them in the headlines of the country's newspapers. So much visibility that the demonstration organized in São Paulo on 20 July 2001 in support of the protests against the G8 meeting in Genoa, Italy, brought together around five thousand people, including both groups and individuals inspired by PGA, organized in a large autonomous bloc (Ryioki and Ortellado 2004), and militants from other sectors of the Brazilian left.

The advance of PGA-inspired mobilizations in Brazil, however, was suddenly halted by the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New

¹¹ Comitê Avante Zapatista was the São Paulo-based international solidarity committee with the Zapatistas in Mexico.

¹² The World Social Forum was one of the spaces where tensions arose between autonomist groups and the hegemonic organizations of the Brazilian left. The governments of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and of the city of Porto Alegre, both ran by PT at the beginning of the 2000s, were directly involved and provided strong support for the creation of the World Social Forum (Whitaker 2000), but after Lula was elected president, in 2002, some autonomist groups started to openly criticize PT. This tension became explicit in the third edition of the Forum, when an activist from the group Bakers Without Borders threw a pie on the face of PT's then president, José Genoino (Godoy 2003).

York. Following a global trend, the activities of the groups and individuals inspired by PGA began to decline in the country. The last major mobilization in Brazil linked to a call from PGA was the protests against the meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in the city of Fortaleza in March 2002, when five thousand people tried to march towards the meeting and were harshly repressed by the police. Simultaneous protests also took place in São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and other cities of the American continent (Ryioki and Ortellado 2004). Street demonstrations and meetings of activists somehow linked to PGA continued to take place in Brazil until 2004 (Ryioki and Ortellado 2004), but never again had an impact equivalent to that of the A20 in São Paulo. As for the global network, it's hard to say when exactly PGA "died" in Brazil. Based on the testimonies we collected, we would say that activities related to PGA in Brazil ceased to exist after 2004. So, for the purposes of this article, we contend that PGA was a source of inspiration for a portion of the Brazilian left between 2000 and 2004.

PGA's influence over the Brazilian left was largely limited to a small fringe of autonomist collectives, but the whole culture stew created around the PGA-inspired mobilizations produced a lasting legacy in the development of an autonomist political culture in Brazil. As Ortellado says, one of the most important concrete results of the global resistance movement in Brazil was the creation of the local collective linked to the Indymedia network and its most visible product: the website of the Brazilian Independent Media Center (CMI – "Centro de Mídia Independente") (Ryioki and Ortellado 2004). Launched in December 2000, the site became a reference point for a new generation of activists involved in social struggles.

Unlike the collectives linked to the Indymedia network in other parts of the world, in Brazil there were no regional sites, but a single national site, nurtured and managed by volunteers from across different regions of Brazil. This allowed CMI Brazil to function as an instrument for disseminating information about local struggles to other regions of the country. This was the case when, in August 2003, thousands of students took to the streets of Salvador for three weeks to fight against the increase in bus fares in the city and used CMI to publish reports of what became known as the Buzu Uprising ("Revolta do Buzu"). The movement was organized and managed by students from Salvador independently of the official organizations of the student movement, such as UNE (Nascimento 2008).

The reports published on CMI Brazil helped spread the news of the demonstrations in Salvador to the rest of Brazil, and it thus served as an inspiration for students and young people already campaigning for free public transport for students in Florianópolis to organize the Turnstile Revolt ("Revolta da Catraca"), a wave of intense protests in the city in June 2004 that not only blocked the increase in public transport fares but also contributed to the approval of the bill that sanctioned free travel for students in the city.

Taking advantage of this moment and foreseeing the presence of many young activists at the 5th World Social Forum, scheduled to take place in January

2005 in Porto Alegre, the activists of the Florianópolis Free Fare Campaign decided to call a plenary session during the Forum to discuss the creation of a nationwide free fare campaign, which became the Free Fare Movement (MPL – “Movimento Passe Livre”).

The report and analysis of MPL’s founding plenary session made by Leo Vinícius Liberato, who participated in the network to disseminate information about PGA in Brazil since the beginning, and also took part in the Turnstile Revolt in Florianópolis, clearly shows the connections between MPL and the “anti-globalization” movement:

The Plenary Session was organized by the Florianópolis Free Fare Campaign with the support and help of CMI members from Florianópolis and other cities, who articulated the space to hold the Plenary Session. The *Caracol Intergaláctica* was the name of the space, a double mention to the Zapatistas, managed by the more autonomous and libertarian strand of the youth participating in the WSF – those who more than anyone else gave face to the anti-globalization movement years before. (Liberato 2006, p. 227)

From the Porto Alegre plenary session onwards, MPL was nationally organized with local collectives spread throughout the country, and the partnership with CMI helped to spread the struggle against the fare increase and for a free student fare to be implemented throughout Brazil. In 2005, Florianópolis was once again the stage of a major protest against the fare increase, and from then on similar mobilizations began to take place in other cities of the country too.

Liberato draws clear lines of continuity between the group that founded the MPL collective in São Paulo in 2005 and the groups involved in the mobilizations inspired by PGA in the early 2000s:

The victories won in Florianópolis, and especially the form of organization and the autonomous spirit of these struggles, were an important factor for the free fare struggle and for the issue of urban transport to be embraced by many of these young libertarians from São Paulo and other cities, to a greater or lesser extent. For some activists, it occupied the place on their political activity which was once occupied by the anti-globalization movement. (...) The relationship between the MPL – its diffusion and constitution – and the CMI corroborates this perception. Other elements also reinforce it. In 2005 the MPL-São Paulo formed a drum set to animate the demonstrations: the first song that the MPL’s drum set played was a nostalgic beat played at the A20, declared one of its members. It was the beat that Greyg, from Infernal Noise Brigade, had taught during his time in Brazil in early 2001. The formation of the drum set of the MPL-São Paulo had the didactic and material support (instruments) of former members of the extinct Batukação. Direct action workshops, along the lines that US activist Starhawk had organized in early 2001 for Brazilian anti-globalization activists, were also sought out by MPL-São Paulo along with former activists. (Liberato 2006, pp. 233-234)

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The episodes described above attest to PGA's important legacy for the Brazilian autonomist left. The experience of involvement in PGA is something that crosses the memories of all our interviewees in a particularly striking way, both in terms of a political formation dimension itself and from a subjective perspective. PGA constituted communities, important potentialities, and this marked the trajectory of the activists and former activists who participated in the research.

In these narratives and the interviewees' political biographies we can see the diversity that makes up autonomist political culture in Brazil. Their different matrices range from the first dissident groups that began the renewal of left-wing political culture in Brazil in the 1970s to MPL and the June 2013 Days. And finally, we flag the importance of the recent memory of this political culture for guiding the ongoing search for classics of anarchism and heterodox Marxisms, as is reflected in the cited literature and other resources produced by these collectives and movements.

As is typical for working with oral sources, the wealth of information and the possibilities for methodological approaches are manifold. There is a lot to explore from the collected narratives. Our focus in this article is on the native definitions of autonomism and how, despite the variants of understanding, we can identify a convergence in terms of general principles that allows us to speak of a consolidated autonomist political culture.

5. Oral Testimonies of Activists Involved with PGA in Brazil

E.V.¹³ began his political militancy in the final years of the civic-military dictatorship, in the students movement, as a militant of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Proletariat (MEP), a dissident Marxist group which was part of the renewal of left-wing political cultures in the post-armed struggle period. The Marxist militancy, however, lasted little. When he began to study Social Sciences at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP) in the early 1980s, he got in contact with anarchism and participated both in the establishment of a self-managed regime at the Academic Centre of Social Sciences of PUC-SP and in the reopening of CCS, becoming a reference in anarchist circles in São Paulo. Not by chance, he actively participated in the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA in São Paulo and was one of the founders of the Institute of Libertarian Culture and Action (ICAL – "Instituto de Cultura e Ação Libertária"), a self-managed space where the "PGA meetings" were held in São Paulo during the 12 months of ICAL's existence, between August 2001 and August 2002.

E.V. defines PGA as a school for the Brazilian libertarian left of the 21st century:

[PGA] was a great political school. And that's why it deserves to be remembered. (...) It taught many people to think about politics in a non-traditional way. And

¹³ E.V., 61 years old, male. Interview granted on 02/14/2019

that is a huge contribution. It recovers previous struggles, recovers previous experiences, but it has something innovative in the late 1990s, early 2000s. So that's what it brought out of it: it's possible to think of another way of doing politics. It is possible to think of a new way of questioning traditional structures that is born after PGA.

According to E.V., this other way of doing politics brought about by PGA is based on direct action, internationalism and the ideas of horizontality, self-management and autonomous organization.

V.T.¹⁴, in turn, comes from the more traditional spectrum of the left, linked to the peasant movements and grassroots ecclesial communities of the Catholic Church (CEB's) in the state of Ceará, to the CUT groups that were at the genesis of the Workers' Party (PT). He was expelled from the Party in 1988 because the group he belonged to refused to support the candidacy of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva for the upcoming presidential elections of 1989 arguing that Lula was making too much concessions to the Brazilian elite. After he left PT, V.T. began to work directly with grassroots peasants from an "independent" perspective. At this stage he mentions important readings such as Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci and Mariátegui, which contributed to a critique of Stalinist and Trotskyist traditions. In this period, too, he establishes contacts with the MST, but criticizes the organization for its "bureaucratism" and "*dirigismo*"¹⁵ of the movement. V.T. makes clear his growing dissatisfaction with these limits of the traditional left, so that on the occasion of the Zapatista uprising, he became deeply interested in the notion of autonomy, which was indeed already present in his political practice:

People were already tired of being dragged down by this authoritarian, bureaucratic and supremacist left. If they want to throw shadows into the light that we are bringing, which is the struggle of the Zapatistas... no way. Let's break it up here now. And we broke it up. (...) [At the Second American Encounter for Humanity against Neoliberalism] more than a thousand anti-capitalist comrades, with a vision of autonomy [broke up with the hegemonic left] (...) [PGA] was something new, which was not seen before. Finally we have, even if it is like a small rehearsal of what could be further ahead, a really international, globalized, unified struggle. I am sure that the springs that happened in Greece, Occupy Wall Street, in Egypt, in Spain (...) there is a little inspiration of what PGA is. (...) [PGA] was born under a lot of pressure [from the hegemonic left], but the most important thing is that they are people who already put the need to criticize the idea of representativeness, of leadership; to seek autonomy, a horizontality in our daily relationships.

¹⁴ V.T., 52 years old, male. Interview granted on 1/28/2018.

¹⁵ "*Dirigismo*" is an expression in Portuguese that means the tendency of an organization to direct the actions of its militants towards goals defined by the leadership without consulting the rank and file members.

Another important space for the development and dissemination of this new left-wing political culture from the 1980s onwards in Brazil was the punk counterculture. Four of the selected interviewees had their first contact with politics through punk music and culture in general.

A.A.¹⁶ played in a punk band in the 1990's in São Paulo and got in contact with PGA by attending meetings at the CCS together with comrades from the anarcho-punk movement. At the same time, F.C.¹⁷ was playing in a straight edge band in São Paulo and participated in a talk about PGA organized during a “Verdurada”, the main event of the straight edge scene in the city in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A student at the University of São Paulo (USP), F.C. became a militant of ALJG and was one of the main members of Batukação.

A.A. sees PGA as a bridge between the old anarchist tradition and the new forms of struggle which developed within the autonomist political culture in Brazil, such as MPL.

On the one hand, [PGA] reactivated this history and updated this memory of anarchism, for those who were already sympathetic to anarchism; and on the other, brought to several people this possibility of a left-wing militancy that was not linked to this bureaucratic left. (...) What PGA offered to everyone, to those who actually got involved, participated in the demonstrations, was an experience not mediated with power; a direct experience. (...) I think there was an important lesson, which in Brazil will be translated as MPL, which is ‘instead of us looking for global agendas, which concern everyone, we will start with local agendas, which will produce something interesting’. Then, the generation which is, more or less, a second generation of anti-globalization – which, in fact, is a generation younger than me –, (...) they will produce something much cooler than us, I think, which is the MPL, which is June 2013.

Reflecting about this political culture which permeated the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA in São Paulo, F.C. presents his own definition of autonomism:

I tend to work with those movements that are less hierarchical, that fight against inequality, that at the same time they are fighting inequality, they are also to some extent libertarian movements. I like to label them libertarian movements. So I would define autonomism as this current, or this practice, that is formed both in the field of thought and in the field of action, of groups and individuals with a perspective that I situate in this libertarian left, of egalitarian practices, of practices that were not aimed at suppressing freedom in favor of equality, of anti-bureaucratic struggle, of anti-authoritarian struggle, which is formed with various influences. So, within this PGA stew, I would situate [a range of influences including] more formal things coming from Marxism, which sometimes

¹⁶ A.A., 44 years old, male. Interview granted on 6/24/2018.

¹⁷ F.C., 40 years old, male. Interview granted on 5/23/2019.

appeared; things that sometimes appeared here and there, for example Foucault and perhaps more post-modern things. (...) In my view the MPL is the most legitimate son of PGA (...) The beginning of June [2013] certainly [has to do with] PGA.

O.S.¹⁸ and G.F.¹⁹ participated in the punk movement in the ABC region of São Paulo at different times: the first in the 1980s; the second in the 1990s. G.F. got in contact with PGA directly through the punk movement, at a time when he participated in the creation of the collective ABC Activism, a group very active in the coalition of groups and individuals inspired by PGA in São Paulo. About the PGA in its relationship with autonomism, G.F. says:

It was a great renewal of the street protests (...) I see PGA as an inspiration to the MPL (...) I see autonomism as a type of movement that can also be anarchist, but there were Marxist groups (...) aimed at self-management, mutual support, the creation of communities that seek to be self-sustaining and anti-capitalist (...) I would also say that various anarchist tendencies – classical, autonomist, primitivist, specifist – got more strength in Brazil after PGA. This strength was great until 2013, which was the peak of a certain confederative moment of Brazilian anarchism in contact with the international one, especially in the organization of the Anarchist Fair in São Paulo.

O.S. came to know PGA long after he got away from the punk movement. He ended up getting in touch with the activities of the network that involved the discussion of the use of bicycle as a means of transportation in São Paulo. O.S. was one of the founders of “Bicicletada”, a movement that emerged in 2001 that followed the same principles of Critical Mass in cities like New York and San Francisco. In his view, the flow of information disseminated by PGA was crucial for Brazilian cyclists to get in contact with similar initiatives in the Global North:

Without PGA and without this flow of information from North to South, we would never (...) know what was happening in San Francisco (...) in New York. (...) When we were starting the Bicicletada here in São Paulo, [we discover that] there is bicicletada in San Francisco, in New York (...) Bicicletada is Critical Mass. For me it's a synonym, because it has always been a synonym.

And, again, elements such as horizontality, non-bureaucratic organization, direct action, intense use of electronic communication and rejection of the principle of representation emerge as determining elements of political identity:

¹⁸ O.S., 49 years old, male. Interview granted on 1/25/2019.

¹⁹ G.F., 43 years old, male. Interview granted on 1/26/2020.

[The Zapatistas] were building from the bottom up. We started to do this in the cycling circles, the cycling activism, as a good part, of what (...) George Woodcock calls an anarchist with a lower case 'a'. So, you have a lot of people who use a tiny lower case 'a'. (...) Bike mirrored this a lot. The community workshops, the hands on the wheels (...) Autonomism is not "The" anarchism. It is a child of anarchism. It also looks back and says, "Dude, Bakunin got it right here. This criticism he makes of Marxists is genius, but this bomb thing isn't going to work out very well [laughs].

Finally, and following the chronological line of the generations of the heterodox left in Brazil's recent political history, there is L.L.'s experience.²⁰ L.L. is the youngest of those interviewed in the Project, having had a large part of his political education still in school, where he participated in the movement that implemented a self-managed regime in the students' union of his school. This was when he had his first contact with PGA, after Pablo Ortellado – already mentioned earlier – visited the school to inform the students movement about the network. He participated in the II World Social Forum and, after graduating, joins the CMI and is present at the foundation of MPL in 2005. A member of MPL until 2015, L.L. was one of the main figures of the June 2013 Days in São Paulo at the state and municipal levels.

The interesting thing about L.L.'s trajectory is that it gives concrete form to our interviewees' testimonies, as his political biography is inserted in its entirety within a well-defined and active political culture. L.L. is a student of the 'PGA school' in Brazil.

There was a part of the people [in the MPL] that had come from this tradition of Peoples' Global Action. There was a part of the people who had come from CMI, who thought that the CMI's experience of only covering movements (...) was no longer enough. We needed to have a movement that was in line with our own organizational principles. In part, this is why we were so deeply involved in the Free Fare Movement. (...) The aesthetic of the MPL demonstration is the same aesthetic of a PGA demonstration. It is the idea of a demonstration in which people can speak without a sound truck, which is democratic, in which people feel included, in which people can make cultural interventions. (...) Objectively, Batukação gives all the instruments to MPL drums. So, the instruments of the MPL drums are the instruments of the Batukação. We founded the MPL drums with the Batukação instruments and the Batukação beats. (...) We had a desire to break with the [old] left. We wanted to do it differently. MPL was very clear on that. And so was Peoples' Global Action. In that sense, no doubt we were heirs. And the very idea of doing it yourself, of people being able to do everything themselves, it comes from Peoples' Global Action. It comes from the alter-globalization movement's stew of discussions. And MPL drinks a lot from it. (...) Yes, [it was an autonomist culture], without a doubt. There was even an

²⁰ L.L., 34 years old, male. Interview granted on 2/7/2019.

autonomist identity. (...) There were the anarchists, there were some heterodox Marxists, there were people who didn't want to define themselves politically. I think that autonomism was this broad culture stew. (...) I have no doubt [that PGA influenced later mobilizations in Brazil]. The Free Fare Movement, the 2013 movement and those that come after it, such as the high school students' movement, who are the children of PGA.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this article was to evidence the contribution of PGA to the renewal and further development of what we call an autonomist political culture in Brazil's recent history based on the analysis of a sample of oral testimonies collected in the context of the Peoples' Global Action Oral History Project.

One of the basic principles of autonomism is the non-bureaucratization of organizational processes and the internal diversity of political processes. We highlight these two elements because they contribute to hinder the work of the scholar who intends to understand it. The fluidity of political identity, the value of diversity, the heterogeneous class backgrounds, and the digitalization of communications are all aspects that pose challenges for thinking about the nature of politics in the contemporaneity. Autonomism is in search of answers to remain relevant in the world in which we live. As a dynamic political culture, the struggle is against anachronism.

As we have shown here, the recent history of the Brazilian left, guided by the memories of people who have been part of important chapters of these processes, confirm this observation. But, as tends to be the case with political cultures, and autonomism in particular, the dynamism is a determining factor of the autonomist political culture that forces us to revisit our conversations and reflections in order to better understand this political phenomenon and its challenges.

Acknowledgements

The research whose preliminary results are reported in this paper received financial support from the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) via grant 445955/2014-7 as part of a research project coordinated by Professor Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça, from the Department of Political Science of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. This research also received financial support from the Department of Sociology of York University, Canada, thanks to Professor Lesley J. Wood.

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**"E yeo ngo" (Do they eat salt?):
Learning in movement from a 5 year PAR study
of the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum,
a social movement in Ghana**

Jonathan Langdon, Kofi Larweh and Wilna Quarmyne

Abstract

This article describes 7 learning moves and 2 learning polyrhythms emerging from a participatory action research case study that documents learning in, through and to struggles to reclaim and defend communal access to West Africa's largest salt flat – access that is the backbone of a 400-year-old artisanal salt production process, supports the livelihoods of roughly 60,000 people, and is a central component of cultural/spiritual identity in the area. At the heart of this struggle is a Ghanaian social movement, the Ada Songor Advocacy Forum, which, along with its partner community radio station Radio Ada, currently face threats from Ghana's petro-chemical industry as well as small-scale enclosures by local elite.

Over the past 6 years, a participatory action research (PAR) case study has been documenting reflections on over 3 decades of struggle to reclaim and defend communal access to West Africa's largest salt-yielding lagoon – access that is the backbone of an artisanal salt production process that is over 400 years old, enables and supports the livelihoods of roughly 60,000 people, and is a central component of cultural/spiritual identity in the area. This identity connection is so strong that asking if someone speaks Dangme – the Ada language – is literally to ask, "*E yeo ngo?*" "Do they eat salt?"

At the heart of this struggle is a Ghanaian social movement, currently called the *Ada Songor Advocacy Forum* (ASAF).¹ ASAF, and its partner community radio station, *Radio Ada*, currently face new threats from Ghana's petro-chemical industry, spurred on by Ghana's recent oil discovery, as well as small-scale enclosures by local elite, called "atsiakpo." This current context has challenged the movement to reconfigure its approaches. It is in, and more than partially because of, this shifting terrain that a group of researchers and movement members undertook this participatory action research study of ASAF's social movement's learning. This article will provide an overview of the emergent contributions from this research, focusing especially on *movement-as-learning* to encapsulate this story.

Social movement learning, a sub-field of critical adult education, has "enormous...breadth" (English & Mayo, 2012, p. 110), and yet research that

¹ A previous iteration in the 1980s was successful in its efforts at defense.

studies African contexts is underrepresented (Hall & Turray, 2005). In this sense, the study reported on here adds an important sub-Saharan African case study to discussions about the ways in which movements learn. Kapoor (2007) advocates that such studies outside of Euro-America be understood through their own epistemic lens. It is for this reason, and equally to ensure this research was movement-owned, that a participatory action research approach was mutually agreed upon by movement members and researchers. This approach to the study of social movement learning is not unique, but using a mutual design process has helped ensure this research is grounded in movement articulations, and not academic ambitions (c.f. Chourdy & Kapoor, 2010; Langdon & Larweh, 2015). From a methodological perspective, the extensive participatory research framing process has meant that this study has also been an important part of movement-defined learning processes, even as it helps document and disseminate the learning that has emerged. Building on this, the learnings documented are also analyzed through an expanded version of Foley's (1999) notion of learning *in* struggle, that also looks at learning *through* struggle and learning *to* struggle that emerged from previous work by Langdon (2009) on social movement learning in the Ghanaian context. The nuance of this expansion is discussed further below.

Building on the theme of *movement-as-learning*, the paper shares 7 important moves, as well as 2 crosscutting polyrhythms that emerged from a reflective session on August 18th, 2013. Movement as learning is a figurative categorization, invoking the way in which people learn to move, and learn from moving, as well as being a literal categorization, where ASAF's main movement strategy has been learning, within and outside its ranks. The figurative notion of movement and polyrhythms that support this movement emerges from the link between drumming and dancing that is a central part of Ada's annual festival, Asafotufiami, where the victories defending the Songor salt lagoon in the past are celebrated (Amate, 1999). The 7 moves that emerged from ASAF's reflective session are (1) *starting by collectively learning together*; (2) *the emergence of narratives that ground movement strategy in Ada identity*; (3) *undermining central government expropriation through transparent radio and community dialogue*; (4) *side-stepping local authority efforts to silence the movement by linking Songor activism with cultural values*; (5) *unlearning mistakes from the past*; (6) *building and disseminating (locally/nationally/internationally) a collectively written history of struggle*; and, (7) *building present activism and strategy through women salt-winners leadership and analysis*. The 2 supportive polyrhythms interwoven through these moves are (1) *open discussions undermining cooptation and provoking learning again and again*, and (2) *the centrality of a community-owned and deeply trusted radio station fearlessly opening space on-the-ground and on-air for mutual learning to occur*.

The Ada Songor Advocacy Forum (ASAF) brings together Songor community members (salt miners) with Adas committed to seeing the Songor be maintained as a resource that benefits all – not just for Adas, but Ghanaians more generally. This builds on how Adas have historically allowed access to the

lagoon (Manuh, 1994), and presents a striking contrast to top-down, government-dominated, national development approaches (Langdon, 2015). There are three main groups in ASAF: the Songor Salt Cooperative, *Radio Ada*, and what would eventually become the Ada-Songor Saltwinners Women's Association. Individual chiefs, traditional priests, Christian priests, youth from Songor villages, District Assembly (local government) assemblypersons and staff are also part of the movement. Members of the Dangme East Salt Producers Association (DESPA) have also occasionally taken part in movement meetings and activities. Many of those involved in ASAF were also involved in the previous iteration of struggle around the Songor in the 1970s and 80s, in which the Songor Salt Cooperative played a central role in successfully reclaiming the Songor from corporate control (Songor Salt Cooperative, 1989). Though only deciding on its name in 2011, ASAF meetings have been held in the open at *Radio Ada* since 2010, as well as in different Songor communities.

Ghanaian social movement learning as learning *in, through* and *to* struggle

The study of ASAF emerges from almost a decade of research accompanying movement learning in Ghana. Preceding the mutually designed, participatory research in Ada, a much wider study of social movement learning in Ghana had been conducted (Langdon, 2009a). This study focused especially on the movement learning emerging after Ghana's return to democratic dispensation in 1992, though during the course of the study the scope was broadened to also look at the socialist and democracy movements that set the stage for this return to democracy. This adjustment came from a participatory approach to the research, where the scope of the research as well as its conclusions emanated from the deliberations of a participatory research group (PRG) composed of members drawn from several movements across Ghana (the women's movement, the labour movement, the anti-privatization of water movement, the Ada salt movement, the community radio movement, and the socialist and democracy movements).² Kofi Larweh was part of this PRG, and Jonathan Langdon was the lead researcher and ultimate author of the research (Langdon, 2009).

In reviewing social movement learning literature, the 2009 study concluded that Euro-American traditions in the field dominated frames of analysis, risking "colonizing dissent" (Nandy, 1997). This conclusion echoes that of Kapoor (2007), where he contests the "portability" of such theories into contexts such as Ghana. English & Mayo (2012) support this conclusion, emphasizing the importance of theorizing that comes from social movement learning outside the Euro-American tradition. At the same time, Hall and Turray (2005) have noted, in their review of Social Movement Learning (SML) literature, the lack of research on and with African social movements. An exception to this gap is

² Coleman Agyeyomah, Gifty Amefa Dzah, Alhassan Adams, Tanko Ibrahim, Jonathan Langdon & Kofi Larweh.

writing on South African movement learning (e.g. Harley, 2014; Zikode, 2006; Desai & Pithouse, 2003; Bond, 2004;). Walters (2005), writing from this South African context, has also underscored the importance of framing movement theorizing through the lens of context. Mamdani (1996) has emphasized the same point especially when dealing with African phenomena. Finally, Kane (2001), Kapoor (2009) and Choudry and Kapoor (2010) have all argued for rooting movement research in movement articulations. The study reported on here and the wider 2009 study are grounded in this approach to social movement learning research.

The 2009 study articulated a number of important analyses of social movement learning from the Ghanaian perspective. The first of these is a differentiation between on the one hand dialogue-based movements that remain rooted in subaltern struggles and on the other strategic movements that may have policy impacts but largely become disconnected from those the movement purports to speak with and for (Langdon and Larweh 2009a; 2009b). The second conclusion is that organic movements, embedded in people's livelihoods and in their ways of being, are generally dialogue-based and are the strongest movements in contesting neoliberal globalization and its impacts (Langdon, 2010). Elsewhere, Kapoor (2007) and Peet and Watts (2004) have noted similar characteristics of strong, locally rooted movements. It was based on a collective decision to connect with such a dialogue-based, organic movement that members of the PRG, including Jonathan Langdon and Kofi Larweh, deepened discussions already begun with the Ada movement.

The third conclusion of the 2009 study has also framed the ongoing work in Ada. In analyzing the various types of learning that emerged from the 23 interviews of movement activists, the PRG reconfigured Foley's (1999) notion of *learning in struggle* to add two other categories to this general informal category of long-term learning while involved in a movement struggle. These were *learning through struggle*, or the intense learning that emerges from an event/specific conflict, and *learning to struggle*, or the theorizing movements engage in about how best to learn to undertake the struggle (Langdon 2009a; 2009b, 2011). These categories help unpack the 7 moves and 2 polyrhythms shared below. Foley's original category, based partially on his research on learning in the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, also resonates with Von Kotze's (2000) analysis of South African movement learning, where she similarly adds several other categories to his concept. Recently, Anyidoho and Gariba (2015) have applied learning *in, through* and *to* struggle in analyzing Ghanaian urban social movement learning.

Move 1 - Collective learning as the starting point

Flowing out of initial discussions in 2008, a collective research design process was initiated in June 2010. This design process brought together the many different people described above who had been fighting for communal access to the Songor for several years. Of crucial consideration here was the fact that this

design space was quickly transformed into a movement mobilization space. In fact, the first action of this group was self-and-mutual education. Most of those present had very strong and often contrary views on what needed to be done to return the Songor to being a resource that would benefit the people of Ada, especially those in the communities contiguous to the Songor lagoon. People shared their views openly, and also started to admit those things they didn't know. Akpetiyo Lawer, who would eventually emerge as the movement's troubadour, captured this spirit in an early song that ended with the line, "*Nɔne Nɔ Kɔ Lio, Nɔ Kɔ Lɛ*" which means, "*What One Doesn't Know, Another Knows.*" As a result of this openness, both to what was known and what was not known, a self-education plan began to emerge (meeting notes, July 28th, 2010). At the center of this self-education were the two major government plans that had been produced for the Songor: the *Songor Master Plan* (1991) and the *Songor Land Use Plan* (2004). Alongside becoming better informed about these plans, a prolonged discussion began on what a people's plan in the Songor might involve – focusing on clarifying what those present felt they meant by participation. This clarification was done by referencing Gustaffson and Driver's (2005) ladder of participation.

Through this, the group determined that the *Land Use Plan* was the lowest-ranked on the ladder of participation, as it was produced through token discussions with local power brokers alone. This plan also called for the relocation of Songor communities – a potential action upon which they were never consulted. Meanwhile, the earlier *Songor Master Plan* was seen as an example of "cooperative" planning, where local community members were directly involved in discussions of the plan, even if it was being instigated by government. The Master Plan called for a mutually beneficial process of development around the lagoon, where contiguous Songor communities, land-owning clans, and industrial salt producers could benefit from salt production. The consensus was that this plan, if fully implemented, would be the best for the people of Ada. Nonetheless, the self-education discussion revealed room to improve this Master Plan to ensure women and children specifically benefited from the plan, even as ASAF advocated for its full implementation (Meeting notes, August 22nd, 2010).

A crucial set of voices of these early sessions paved the way for much of the learning to come. These voices belonged to women from the Songor communities. They identified that they had been excluded from decision-making not only around the lagoon by central government and local authorities, but also in movement organizing around its defense. They also clearly articulated a central part of their role in transforming the Songor as educating themselves and others about the Songor, government plans and salt in general (meeting notes, August 22nd, 2010). This theorizing of learning-as-action, and sharing knowledge/learning as action have continued to inform every move promulgated by women within the broader movement. The women's critical analysis also shifted the conversation from focusing only on government plans to also focusing on the proliferation of small-scale enclosures sponsored by local elite called "atsiakpo."

All told, the open space created in ASAF meetings at *Radio Ada* and in Songor communities allowed the different forms of learning *in* struggle to be mutually shared. It also created a space for the movement to begin to articulate its theories of learning *in, through* and *to* struggle.

(2) "E yeo ngo" – Ada identity as movement strength

ASAF is an exemplar of the organic movements described above, not only because it emerges from the defense of people's livelihoods in the face of dispossession, but perhaps even more importantly because the movement is wedded to Ada epistemologies and identities. This connection is a main source of the movement's strength. To begin with, salt is central to the core of what it means to be Ada. The statement, "E yeo ngo" illustrates this, with its dual meaning: literal, does this person eat salt? and figurative, does this person speak Dangme (the Ada language)? Thus, to be an Ada is to speak salt.

However the movement has gone deeper than this, building on historical mutual defense pacts. As Larweh has previously noted:

The [Songor] movement is deeply rooted in the culture of the people, why? Because of the way ownership is conceived. Ada is made up of different clans, about 10 or so 12 clans, and one clan is seen as the owner of the water body. And there are four others who are owners of the surrounding lands. You look at the wisdom in this.... So when you say the owner of the water body is there, and the surrounding lands have also got owners, it is a convenient agreement for joint ownership and defense of the resource. (PRG meeting, Feb 23rd, 2008, as quoted in Langdon, 2015, p. 56)

Unifying in the face of threats has been a central message of ASAF, and they have targeted the Asafotufiami festival, mentioned above, in order to drive home the point. The festival celebrates successful wars defending the Songor as a unified nation, and as such has been the focus of ASAF educational campaigns and demonstrations in 2011 and 2012. In 2013, the movement was prevented from marching at the festival, but still put up an educational display.

At the same time, in ASAF meetings held in the open-air studio at Radio Ada, or in community meetings throughout the Songor basin, narratives linking Ada identity and the future of the Songor were consistently present. The strength of this link was reconfirmed in 2016 in focus group discussions held across the Songor where 345 women coming from every Songor community stated emphatically that an open Songor accessible to all of Ghana was a fundamental part of Ada identity (Focus groups, February 28th to March 21st, 2016). Albert Apetorgbor, a leading voice in ASAF, describes how "People from all walks of life come to the Songor Lagoon for salt. Some from as far as Tamale, Ewe land, Kumasi and other places" (Radio Ada, 2002, pg. 3). This is an important contrast to government versions of national resource development, where

mining concessions are given out to large-scale corporations in return for tiny royalties and minimal job creation (Langdon, 2015).

Another example of how the movement has learned to link itself to Ada identity is its ongoing connection to the story of how the Adas came to settle in this coastal area. Legend says Yomo, an old woman and spirit of the lagoon, guided the first Adas to the Songor and gave them a series of rules and responsibilities to guide their use of the lagoon. Manuh (1994, 104) has argued this "demonstrate[d] community management of a natural resource" and noted how the previous 1980s iteration of Songor defense connected with this past to mobilize. In contemporary times, one of ASAF's key voices, Akpetiyo Lawer, has referenced breaches in the spirit and letter of the Yomo's regulations to highlight how salt production in the Songor today has become, "abomination salt" (ASAF meeting, June 7th, 2011). ASAF's long-term learning *in* struggle has rooted itself in the overall defense pack of all Adas, the core link of Adas to salt, the value of openness when it comes to resource access, and to foundational spiritual regulations of managing the resource.

(3) Shedding light on secret plans through open dialogue and airwaves

As will be discussed further in the polyrhythm section below, a key feature of ASAF, built largely on learning from the last defense of the resource in the 1980s, was open dialogue on all aspects of the Songor issue. This feature was further solidified by the *Radio Ada* participatory communication approach. ASAF's openness is in stark contrast to the secret meetings often associated with plans around the lagoon. For instance, Amate (1999) documents how local elite worked with one of the companies who acquired a concession for a part of the lagoon in the 70s, and yet later sued the same company for secret dealings with other elements within Ada. From ASAF's outset it was openly acknowledged that some of those present at movement meetings were reporting what was said to others; consequently, these informers/spies were admonished to truthfully report what had been discussed, rather than they being discouraged from coming. This strategy was prescient, as the unearthing of a central government plan to relocate Songor communities was uncovered in 2011, and the combination of *Radio Ada* reporting this, as well as ASAF visiting 7 major Songor communities to cross-check their views on this possible fate completely undermined the local government story that consultation had been done.

The following year, 2012, it surfaced that many traditional rulers had signed a secret attestation agreeing to "give the people alternative livelihoods," which is wording associated with this type of relocation. ASAF and Radio Ada again took this news to 3 of the potentially affected communities to get their views and put them on record. The unearthing and sharing of secret plans like these has surfaced as a key strategy of the movement – walking ASAF's talk that openness is the key to collectively beneficial plans for the lagoon.

As a result of the involvement of traditional authority figures in these secret plans, as well as being behind-the-scenes promoters of atsiakpo, youth in the movement have described them as chameleons:

The symbol that we selected was a chameleon, and, it was in reference specifically to the chiefs, who were participating in atsiakpo, [...] but at the same time, like I mentioned, they would be saying "oh yes, atsiakpo is very bad, I'm gonna stop it." (Unnamed youth at Radio Ada, June 7, 2011)

As Akpetiyo Lawer described above, the atsiakpo enclosures are an "abomination" as they have turned a communal resource into a unfettered zone of individualized greed (ASAF meeting, June 7th, 2011). The Songor communities have become divided as a result. However, women in the Songor, as well as *Radio Ada*, have remained consistent in identifying the practice of atsiakpo as a major negative development in the lagoon. Many chiefs have also spoken publicly and on the radio about stopping it, and yet these same chiefs are known to be sponsoring some of those who have created the atsiakpo enclosures (ASAF Women's group meeting, July 13th, 2012). In contrast, the consistency of ASAF's actions and analysis of atsiakpo and its negative impacts has created an opening with some of the youth engaged in atsiakpo:

We have heard our mothers, and what they are saying. We understand how atsiakpo is bad for us. We want to stop, but we don't know how, as long as the chiefs keep allowing it. (Unnamed youth in Toflokpo, August 16th, 2013)

By helping expose secret plans and duplicitous actions, ASAF has given Songor community members the tools to do their own analysis and demand changes in how those who govern them behave. Each of these revelations has been another moment of learning *through* struggle.

(4) The sacred Okor forest and the Songor – sidestepping efforts to silence movement

As part of ASAF's community outreach, a meeting occurred in Goi in 2012. It became clear from the outset that powerful forces wanted to disrupt the meeting and try and undermine the open agenda of ASAF/*Radio Ada*. As a number of invited traditional rulers, including Queen Mothers arrived, they received phone calls, and quickly started to leave. Upon inquiry it turned out they had been threatened with removal from their positions by someone claiming to speak for Nene Ada, the paramount chief in the area. Jane Ocansey, one of the leaders of the women's group within ASAF, recalls the moment:

We were there in Goi when a call came and the Queen Mothers were there before a call came. Then the women stood up took their bags and left, and I asked them why when they told me Nene Ada told them they should stay away from us so it seems they are taking their position as queen mothers from Nene Ada and not the people. (Movement Meeting at Radio Ada, March 16th, 2016)

Adapting to the evolving situation, the assembled members of ASAF and *Radio Ada* quickly re-strategized. They sensed an effort to discredit the open approach they had been using, and so decided to air the entire meeting live on *Radio Ada* to show they had nothing to hide. They also ensured they drew links between the issues they were raising about the Songor and not only the secret plans around it but also the degradation of the nearby sacred Okor forest, called *Okorhuem*, which is the very forest where the Yomo spirit is purported to have met the first Adas. This connection was picked up on by the assembled community members and the outpouring of concern about this important Ada symbol was captured on air. For instance, one community member said in the live on-air broadcast:

[W]here our elders settled in the Okorhuem, we've neglected it; people are building in the Okorhuem; it is vanishing. And the Okorhuem is there for the four main clans, so when they enter there they have these certain [...] rites they perform over there, and the duties to perform to maintain the Songor [...] Now none of these things are happening. (Unnamed speaker in Goi broadcast, August 16th, 2012)

This broadcast, and the focus on Okorhuem as well as Songor issues, led to a dramatic shift in the stance of traditional rulers, including those who signed the attestation.

In the aftermath of the Goi broadcast, ASAF & *Radio Ada* were invited to a meeting with the Ada traditional council where apologies were issued for the use of Nene Ada's name to disrupt the meeting. Larweh describes this meeting:

We had to strategize so that they do not turn the meeting into a trial. The women advocates led the group. Rev Sophia Kitcher did the delivery [...] The presentation was received with claps, smiles and a frown [...] The frown came from Nene Okumo of Dangmebiawe. He admitted openly that he was one of those who signed the attestation and has not been happy with attacks on the reputation of Chiefs who signed. He referred to ASAF as the enemy of Ada Chiefs. He was cautioned diplomatically by Nene Pediator who was in the Chair for Nene Ada. One other Chief who signed said he was grateful for the awareness being created thru *Radio Ada*. Different Chiefs spoke about their appreciation of the drama series and the weekly Tuesday evening Coop Salt Programme. (Personal Communication, January 5th, 2013)

This meeting was not only recorded for community members to hear on *Radio Ada*, but a national TV station also recorded it and ran a story on how Ada's were able to work through misunderstanding with their traditional rulers. This conflict, and the strategy of openness that preceeded it, provided a concrete opportunity for learning *through* struggle (an event or conflict) and for an opening to work with the Traditional Council on Songor issues.

(5) Learning from the Past

The collaborative approach to organizing within ASAF is not always easy, and new challenges to it are constantly emerging. However, one of the most significant aspects of learning in ASAF comes from the previous iteration of the Songor struggle in the 1980s. There are two good, linked examples of this to share here. First, as part of the self-education plan, ASAF undertook a series of reflective sessions to unpack how different groups within the movement understood the challenges facing the Songor; these groups were asked to capture their thoughts in the form of an image or story. It was in this context that the youth described the chiefs as "chameleons," as noted above (c.f. Langdon, Larweh & Cameron, 2014). For the older group of activist involved in the 1980s iteration of struggle, they reflected on this past effort and described it as a thumbless hand:

For me, this whole thing is like somebody without thumbs, who is cutting morsels of food, he is hungry, but he wants to cut, you know, banku, you have to cut a morsel, and you need to roll it into a certain shape, before you can [eat it]... you need a thumb... so for me it is a thumbless hand trying to mold a morsel of banku... So, we had, we had everything, but we lacked something, we lacked something to make our intentions and our aspirations complete. And for me, the thumb is important. (Nomo Abayateye, movement meeting at *Radio Ada*, June 6th, 2011)

The 1980s struggle was a culmination of conflicts with the companies that had obtained concessions for the Songor. With the socialist-oriented PNDC military take-over in late 1981, Adas saw an opening and seized one of the companies. According to this older group of activists, instead of managing it well to bolster a case for local control, it was pillaged, and this enabled the company to come back in. Conflicts then became even more heated, and Maggie Kuwornu was killed in a police raid (Ada Salt Cooperative Committee, 1989). Her death enabled the reopening of the lagoon, with access for community members through cooperatives, but again things were not managed well (Manuh, 1994). Manuh further documents how women were largely excluded from leadership in this process. This historical exclusion led some in the current movement to wonder if the missing thumb the older men described wasn't women's leadership – especially given Songor's importance for women's livelihood:

When we had the opportunity to manage the resource, was management composed of women? And, for, for that special ability of women to be added, or, management of the time was so made up of men, that the missing thumb could be alluded to the missing role of women in managing at the time that we took over? (Larweh, movement meeting at *Radio Ada*, June 6th, 2011)

This reflective realization underscores how ASAF emerged not only in response to contemporary challenges being faced by people around the Songor, but also from long-term, ongoing learning *in* struggle associated with the past iteration of conflict around the lagoon.

(6) Building and disseminating a people's history of the Songor struggle

A key focus of much of the PAR activity was decided on in the first year of the research project. This began as a discussion of ensuring that *Who killed Maggie*, the book documenting the death of Maggie Kuwornu, was digitized and made accessible on the web, and then morphed into another idea about sharing the movement's story. Wanting *Who Killed Maggie* (Ada Salt Cooperative Committee, 1989) to be available for download served two important purposes for the older group in ASAF. First, it ensured that this book, which had been targeted for destruction in the 1980s/90s, would be available as a resource and a version of the struggle for posterity; second, it helped to ensure that the story of the Songor lagoon and the Ada people could come to be more widely known globally.

The idea of telling the next chapter in the movement's story that emerged from these discussions is rooted in similar desires. While *Who Killed Maggie* describes the story of the last iteration of struggle, ASAF members asserted that there was a need to capture the story of the current struggle as well. In the case of the new project, five reasons for doing it arose from discussions. First, it would be an update on *Who Killed Maggie*, and therefore a chance to capture all that has been learned since. Second, having this book produced by the movement would ensure it was the people of Songor who told their story and not either a single author with a vested interest or an outsider with no connection to the struggle. This speaks to the third point, that the book should as much as possible be a product of the multiple voices within the movement. Fourth, this book should be available for the Ada community to read (and listen to), as well as getting the story of the struggle and the movement out to those outside Ada, thereby helping set up the boomerang effect (c.f. Blaser, Feit & McRea, 2004): pushing government to listen to Songor communities from local and international pressure points. Finally, fifth, picking on this last point, the book should help the ASAF aim of retrieving and then maintaining the Songor as a resource for all (Book writing committee, 2016).

It was through this discussion that the notion of a people's history of the Songor came to be. A book writing committee was formed as a result, with subcommittees taking on different eras of the struggle. In this way, the book came to be conceived as a stand-alone piece, even while it acknowledged and built on the other books that had been written about the Songor. Each of these subcommittees interviewed people for the book, as well as for broadcasts on *Radio Ada*. The subcommittees then drafted outlines for their sections. Each of the sections also contains transcripts with people's quotes, broken up thematically based on the outline of the section – making it possible for anyone to see who said what, and who was the source of an idea in the book. This echoed the open approach of the movement and the *Radio Ada*. Over 40 people involved in different aspects of the life in and around the Songor were drawn on for the book. Texts of each of these sections were written and then edited by a larger grouping of movement members. This created checks and balances to ensure that the story of some of the failings of the past also emerged. As Wilna Quarmyne put it:

What resonates in this book project is that all movements are human, okay? And inherent in each movement is the capacity for altruism, for human glory, for overcoming the little petty petty divisions. But these are also quickly undermined by human frailty, right? And, it can be the story of how altruism, our sense of community, overcomes these frailties, but we must not paper over them, because then we will forget the lessons from the Songor. (Book Writing Meeting at *Radio Ada*, July 23rd, 2012)

The layered editing process helped to bring this out. Together, this larger group then produced recorded translations into Dangme for broadcast on *Radio Ada*. The recordings were validated at a community vetting, where one community member noted, "I never realized how we all have a stake in the Songor. I thought it was only for the Tekperbiawe, let alone solve the issues; now I see this implicating all of us" (Toflokpo book validation meeting, August 16th, 2013).³ In recognizing how this book has become its own entity, and not only acts as a sequel to *Who Killed Maggie*, it was recently given a title that emanates from the current struggle around the Songor and speaks to ASAF and *Radio Ada*'s ability to uncover secret plans, as well as to emerging leadership of the movement by the women of the Songor. The title of the book is: *Nɔnɛ Nɔ Kɔ Lio, Nɔ Kɔ Lɛ* - "What One Doesn't Know, Another Knows": *The Struggle of the Songor Salt People*. The first line is from a movement song by Akpetiyo Lawer and underscores how people keep secrets, but the movement must find them out and share this knowledge. This book is an example of the movement theorizing how they have learned *to* struggle, even as it documents movement learning *in* and *through* struggle.

³ The Tekperbiawe clan is regarded as having the greatest stake in the Songor, but the 3 other founding clans also have a stake, as does Nene Ada (Amate, 1999).

(7) The emergence of women's leadership in theorizing and in action

Returning to the narratives generated in 2011, described above, women within the movement described the Songor, and themselves as being like dogs, taken for granted and abused. Two years later, in 2013, this same group now described themselves as wolves defending the lagoon:

Our symbol is that we are like a wolf standing in front of the Songor and is scaring away all destroyers of the Songor. So that is our symbol and that is our proverb. So we are standing by Songor like a wolf scaring away all other animals with the aim of destroying the Songor. (Margaret, Movement Meeting at Radio Ada, July 3rd, 2013)

This identity shift from "dog" to "wolf" is symbolically representative of a number of transformations within ASAF. First, over the past years, women's analysis of the central issues in the Songor has emerged as the most rooted one, and has largely driven ASAF's focus on defending communal access to the lagoon in the face of both atsiakpo and the external threat of government expropriation of the lagoon. Second, women have emerged as the most capable of organizing demonstrations at key moments to raise awareness of the issues in the lagoon, also using epistemically rooted popular education processes to educate the wider Ada and Ghanaian public about these issues. For instance, the women created a tapestry that captured the history of struggle, and shared this with at least 2,000 visitors at Ada's annual Asafotufiami Festival. Third, a number of members of the women's leadership have emerged as important voices of the movement. For instance, the songs by Akpetiyo Lawer have become popular features of any Songor discussion. Not only drawing listener's attention to secret plans, her songs also highlight how government will be only too happy to step in and solve the chaos atsiakpo is causing in the lagoon:

Look behind us, there comes Government after us Okor [Ada] People. I repeat, turn and look behind, Dangme People. Government is catching up with us [...] They told our Elders, they are going to take over Songor, to quell conflicts so that we live in peace. (June 7th, 2011)

She went further to warn that this takeover needs to be fought by "informing the people" about the consequences of government coming in. Likewise, Rev. Sophia Kitcher was a crucial member of the delegation from the movement and *Radio Ada* who met with the Traditional Council after the Goi incident mentioned above.

These factors have combined to shift the terrain in the movement, to the point where the shift from dog to wolf has taken root. *Radio Ada* has reinforced this leadership with radio drama programs, where the popular series, Oko Nge Ko

asked the question, “why can’t women be chiefs, considering how poorly men have done in managing the Songor?” (*Radio Ada*, 2012). At the same time, this growing sense of mission has also elevated the role of women within the broader movement, and in Songor communities. For instance, in outdoorizing the Dangme translated broadcasts of the book, mentioned above, the young men of Toflokpo who had been very pro-atsiakpo in years previous described how they had come to see how destructive the process was to their community, and credited the analysis of women in their community for helping them to reach this conclusion (quoted above). The impact of women’s leadership and learning clearly reflects learning *in struggle* – which is a long-term process of learning.

Two supporting polyrhythms

Two other cross-cutting elements of the story of learning in ASAF must also be shared. In keeping with the analogy of drumming and dancing, they are referred to as polyrhythm. The first polyrhythm is the strategy of openness that underwrites the entire ASAF way of operating. The second polyrhythm is the accompanying role of *Radio Ada*.

For the first polyrhythm not only is openness a crucial contrast to the secret agenda processes mentioned above, but it also creates an ongoing reflective space that constantly reevaluates through dialogue what is working and what is not working. Through this process of openness it has been possible to adjust to the many challenges that have come ASAF’s way, from issues within the movement where the Salt Winners Cooperative leadership was not being responsive to community opinion, to the Goi incident, to planning for the Asafotufiami festival intervention, and many others. This openness has led to the conclusion that it is only at ASAF meetings where you can speak honestly about the Songor. At the same time, the strong desire to see the resource benefit the Ada people has led even Nene Ada (the paramount chief) to comment when he attended an ASAF meeting, “Is this all you are up to?” He explained that he had heard negative rumors but now realized they were fabrications. This openness encourages all who come to ASAF meetings, even Nene Ada, to learn and share their knowledge.

The second crucial polyrhythm that cross-cuts the movement continues to be carried out by *Radio Ada* in many different ways, both on-air and also off-air. It hosts the ASAF reflective sessions and broadcast ASAF meetings. It also creates talk-shows, documentaries, and radio dramas, such as *Okɔ Ng Kɔ*, that highlight aspects of the Songor issue – not sporadically but as part of a sustained, ongoing dialogue. In this way the station has both spread the information drawn together by the movement and created a platform for a wider audience to participate in the movement’s openness. *Radio Ada*, and its unwavering work to connect with community needs and to voice the voiceless, has produced deep trust. As such it is able to facilitate discussion and debate around the Songor in a way that very few others have, because its programs and broadcasts are taken at face value – credible reportage of happenings and facilitation of various

perspectives - and not seen as one faction dominating over others. This has enabled it, in the words of a participant at a recent participatory evaluation of the station to continue "to speak truth to power" (meeting in Totope, August 12th, 2015).

Conclusion

These moves and polyrhythms are much like the symbiotic relationship between dancer and drummer seen on display during the Asafotufiami festival in Ada. The various strategies and moves are open evidence of the learning *in* and *through* struggle that one of us has described elsewhere (Langdon, 2009a; 2009b; 2011). And yet, it is the polyrhythmic cadence of the drummers that made this movement possible – perhaps even elicited the movement. These polyrhythms are the basis through which people in ASAF, *Radio Ada* and in the wider Songor and Ada communities have come to decide on how to struggle – a self-defined process of learning *to* struggle – where there are many leaders and many learners. It is therefore the interwoven nature of all of these different forms of social movement learning that are contributing to ASAF's growth and momentum – to moving through learning, and learning through moving.

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Wilna Quarmyne is not privileged to be an indigenous salt-eater. Her link to this article is that together with Alex Quarmyne, a native of Ada, she did have the privilege of initiating *Radio Ada*, the Community Radio Station of the salt-eaters. A life-long apasionata and proponent of Community Radio, she also helped start *Radio DZJO*, a Community Radio Station in Infanta, Quezon, in her natal country, the Philippines. That was when she was a teen-ager; she is now a grandmother. Currently, she is also the founding co-ordinator of the Ghana Community Radio Network.

Le sommet du G7 dans Charlevoix, 2018 : résistances et subalternités locales, de l'évènement à la longue durée¹

Régis Coursin

Abstract

Reposant sur une observation participante, bonifié par 46 entretiens semi-directifs, cet article s'attache à lever le voile sur l'impensé des analyses sommitologiques que représente les résistances locales au G7. En prenant pour terrain le sommet de Charlevoix de 2018, nous tâcherons de cartographier ces résistances, et d'en identifier les formes. Nous verrons qu'elles sont de deux natures : politique, à la fois spontanée quand elles sont individuelles, à la fois planifiées (par des organismes militants urbains) quand elles sont collectives, et infra-politique, première forme spontanée de résistance collective locale. Tout en faisant reposer nos réflexions sur la lecture scottienne de l'infra-politique, nous la dépasserons en l'inscrivant d'abord dans les analyses gramsciennes sur les classes subalternes, et ensuite dans une étude au long cours reliant subalternité conjoncturelle et structurelle. Nous verrons ainsi comment ces résistances s'insèrent dans plusieurs rapports de force (local, provincial et global), et comment, sur le plan militant, les classes marginales des classes subalternes continueront à mobiliser le registre infra-politique tant qu'il n'existera aucune alliance culturelle organique entre elles et son avant-garde.

Mots-clés

G7, sommet, résistances locales, infra-politique, classes subalternes, Scott, Gramsci, Charlevoix

Pour la quatorzième fois depuis le fiasco de Gênes 2001 (Bayne 2005), le sommet du G7 se tient stratégiquement dans un endroit reculé. Un tel choix exerce un impact immédiat sur les mouvements de contestation. Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes : 200 000 manifestants ont été dénombrés en 2001 à Gênes, moins de trois cents l'année suivante à Kananaskis, au Canada (King 2004). Repoussées à Calgary, les manifestations n'ont pu rassembler que 2 500 personnes. Idem en 2018 pour le sommet de Charlevoix : elles ont réuni environ 4 000 personnes à Québec entre le 7 et le 9 juin, et moins de cent à La Malbaie, toutes cantonnées à la zone clôturée « de libre expression ». Cette délocalisation

¹ Je tiens d'abord à remercier les Charlevoisiens.nes, à qui je dédie ce texte, André C. Drainville, Lesley J. Wood, Pascale Dufour, Serge Gauthier, Margo Ganassa, les deux réviseurs.euses anonymes pour leurs commentaires, ainsi que le Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture.

des sommets nous pousse donc à dépasser l'équation convenue événement global / résistances globales (Gills 2000, Hardt and Negri 2004, Amoore 2005), et à nous poser cette question élémentaire : *quid* des résistances locales ?

Ces résistances rentrent dans les impensés des analyses sommitologiques. Des efforts ont été faits par David Waddington et Mike King (2007), mais en se limitant aux élus locaux, représentants des médias, policiers et manifestants, et en omettant de prendre en compte la voix des habitants, leur étude se cantonne aux résistances officielles, conventionnelles, publiques, et ouvertes. En interrogeant les habitants de Sapporo, et non de Toyako, Hidehiro Yamamoto s'éloigne quant à lui bien trop de l'épicentre de l'évènement pour apporter une réponse précise à notre question (Yamamoto 2010).

Sur le plan empirique, cet article vise à cartographier les résistances au G7 qui ont eu lieu dans Charlevoix, et à identifier ses formes. En deuxième lieu, il veut comprendre ce qu'elles nous disent sur les rapports de force globaux (G7/Charlevoisiens), provinciaux (Charlevoisiens/tissu militant québécois), et locaux (au sein de la population charlevoisienne).

Sur le plan méthodologique, précisons que cet article repose sur 18 entretiens diachroniques² et 10 entretiens uniques³ semi-directifs (46 entretiens au total), ainsi que sur une observation participante à l'origine de la récolte de nombreux témoignages *in vivo*, dont se démarquent 11 rencontres et discussions prolongées sur le sujet. J'ai obtenu la plupart de mes entretiens selon la méthode du « snowball sampling » (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, Noy 2008), permise par ma situation dans Charlevoix, habitant la région depuis six ans.

Sur le plan théorique, cet article veut dissiper la part d'ombre des résistances à l'ordonnancement global en s'inscrivant à la suite des études qui se sont attelées à relier le champ du monde ordinaire à celui des structures et des processus internationaux (Bleiker 2000, Guillaume 2011, Davies and Niemann 2015, Wilcox 2015) sous le prisme de l'« infra-politique » (Scott 1985, 1990, 2005). Il veut également proposer de nouvelles pistes de réflexion sur celui-ci, et sur le couple conceptuel qu'il forme avec les « classes subalternes ».

Je tâcherai de faire état d'abord des pressions exercées par le G7 sur la population charlevoisienne, puis des résistances politiques et des réactions civiles que j'ai pues répertorier. J'expliquerai ensuite en quoi ces dernières relèvent de l'infra-politique, et comment la « subalternité conjoncturelle » des Charlevoisiens au contact du G7 se superposent à leur « subalternité structurelle » (ce que j'appelle les temporalités de la subalternité). J'explicitai enfin la dualité des rapports structurels et conjoncturels entre classes subalternes et classes dirigeantes locales dans Charlevoix.

² Un entretien diachronique est un entretien en deux temps, *ex ante* et *ex post*. Il apporte une vision globale et processuelle de l'évènement, et restitue la temporalité (dynamique) vécue par les Charlevoisiens. Les entretiens *ex post* ont été réalisés entre le 16 avril et le 29 mai, les entretiens *ex ante* entre le 19 juin et le 7 juillet.

³ Les entretiens uniques se sont déroulés entre le 2 mai et le 25 juillet. Le nom des personnes interviewés a été modifié pour garantir leur anonymat.

Charlevoix à l'heure du sommet : pouvoir et pressions

Pour peindre un rapide tableau de Charlevoix à l'heure du G7, rappelons la traditionnelle division concentrique et chromatique (King 2004, Figure 1). La zone « rouge », zone de sécurité maximale, entoure le lieu de réunion des dignitaires. Pour y pénétrer, toute personne doit disposer d'une accréditation et se plier à des fouilles successives. La zone verte est une « zone de circulation restreinte ». Impossible de franchir les points de contrôle sans accréditation et interrogations sommaires. Quant à la zone blanche, elle correspond à la « zone résidentielle » entourant la zone verte. Aucune accréditation est nécessaire, bien que la carte de résident délivrée par le bureau d'accréditation facilite la circulation aux abords des points de contrôle.



Figure 1. Le zonage officiel du G7 de Charlevoix

Soulignons aussi la présence policière massive, évaluée *a minima* à 8 000 policiers fédéraux et provinciaux (1 policier pour 5 habitants, sans compter les militaires). Il faut ajouter à cela les nombreuses entraves au respect de la vie privée, à la liberté de circulation, d'expression, et de réunion, que j'ai moi-même pu constater, pour conclure que la rencontre au sommet des représentants de ces sept démocraties libérales est conditionnée à la suspension des droits fondamentaux des habitants-hôtes.



Figure 2. Pamphlet laissé par le GIS aux habitants de la zone verte précisant les démarches à suivre pour l'accréditation

Il faut également mentionner les pressions psychologiques multiformes, qu'elles soient professionnelles, communautaires, ou familiales. Les témoignages que j'ai recueillis sont si nombreux qu'il serait vain d'en tirer une liste exhaustive. Citons, à titre d'exemple, les abus dont m'a fait part Mathieu, habitant de la zone verte, qui s'est fait demander par des agents de la Sûreté du Québec (SQ) à plusieurs reprises, et en toute illégalité, sa carte d'identité, ainsi que les motifs de son passage (Mathieu 20/06) ; une employée du Casino, située à quelques dizaines de mètres de l'entrée du Manoir, m'a avoué s'être autocensurée pour éviter des sanctions de la part de sa direction (Julie 26/06) ; et l'intimidation subie par une employée du Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel (CALACS) de la part de deux agents de la Gendarmerie Royale du Canada (GRC) qui l'ont interrogée, sur son lieu de travail, sur les motifs de sa présence à une réunion du Regroupement d'éducation populaire en action communautaire des régions de Québec et Chaudière-Appalaches (REPAC), organisme moteur de la résistance publique contre le G7 (Sylvie 26/05).

Soulignons également l'utilisation pléthorique du lexique de l'intrusion et de la dépossession pour restituer le sentiment des Charlevoisiens : « dérangement », « inconfort », « mal à l'aise », « pas chez nous », « essoufflement »,

« intimidation », « occupation », « oppression », « envahissement », sentiment d'être « réquisitionné », « en otage », « prisonniers », « assiégés »...

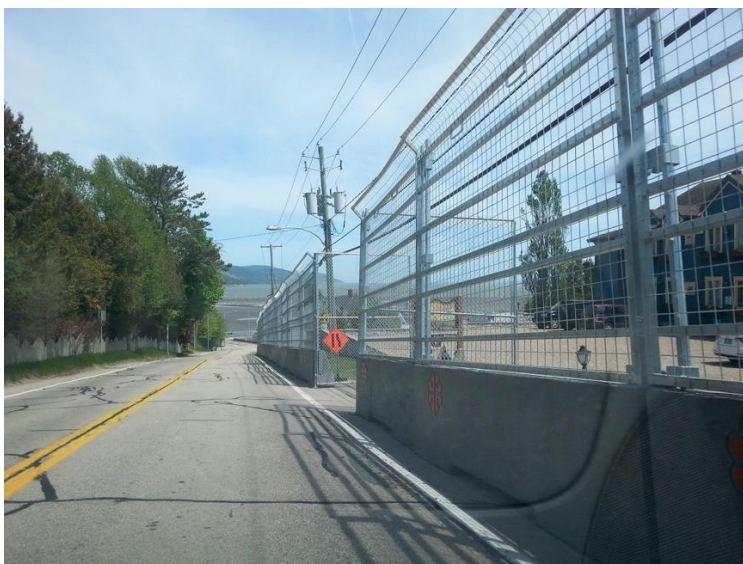


Figure 3. Limite Est de la zone verte

Parler de « présence du pouvoir » serait insuffisant pour restituer la pression exercée par l'organisation du G7 sur la vie des Charlevoisiens. Je reprendrai l'image utilisée par Antoine pour qualifier cette présence et ce pouvoir d'« écrasant » : « Nous vivons comme un deux jours qui est sorti du temps. C'est comme... le monde qui est arrivé ici : 'BOUM'. [...] Parce que nous, on est tellement habitué à ce calme-là [...] et à un moment donné, t'arrives, t'entends des hélicoptères, des avions, tu vois de la police, tu te dis : 'ben voyons donc, c'est quoi cette mascarade, cette parade !'. Tu vois ça, c'est comme, étrange, tu sais. Tu vois que c'est disproportionné par rapport à nous, ça n'a aucun sens [...] c'est un décalage... c'est une autre réalité... c'est un autre monde... c'est ailleurs. Et ça arrive chez nous. C'est comme un géant qui serait arrivé. Il met un pied sur Charlevoix tout à coup » (Antoine 19/07).

Un inventaire des résistances charlevoisiennes au G7

J'ai dressé un rapide tableau de l'impact exercé par le sommet du G7 sur la vie des Charlevoisiens. Je vais maintenant me focaliser sur les réactions locales qu'il a générées. Celles-ci peuvent être rangées en deux grandes catégories : les résistances politiques et les réactions civiles.

Résistances politiques

Les résistances politiques sont de deux ordres : citoyennes ou militantes. Les premières sont de deux natures : individuelles ou collectives. Les résistances citoyennes individuelles renvoient à toutes les expressions publiques éparses, fragmentées, et le plus souvent spontanées, du désaccord des Charlevoisiens et Charlevoisiennes à l'encontre du G7. Elles investissent le domaine public par à-coups. Elles se découvrent à travers Mélanie et son amie, qui saisissent l'occasion de la venue de Justin Trudeau au barbecue communautaire du 23 mai pour distribuer des tracts promouvant « une justice sociale et écologique » (Mélanie 20/06). Elles ont par la suite interpellé le Premier Ministre sur le coût excessif de l'évènement, au moment où de nombreux Charlevoisiens étaient privés d'assurance-emploi. Elles se découvrent lorsque Guillaume, habitant de La Malbaie et enseignant au secondaire, décide de manifester dans la zone de libre expression le samedi 9 juin, seul, avec sa pancarte. Elles se manifestent également sur les réseaux sociaux via Julie, qui relaie des *posts* sur Facebook, tournant Trump et le G7 en ridicule, ou via Raphaëlle, qui publie sur sa page personnelle une photo de la marche tenue le dimanche 3 juin.

Il n'est pas inutile de mentionner également certaines résistances non advenues, car elles nous en disent beaucoup sur leur vulnérabilité. Pensons à Dylan, et à son groupe de musique du Centre d'études collégial de Charlevoix, qui saisirent l'opportunité du « CEGEP en spectacle » pour chanter une chanson anti-G7. Le Manoir Richelieu, hôte de la soirée et du G7, y mit son veto (Témoignage *in vivo* 30/11).

La seconde forme d'action citoyenne est collective, organisée et momentanée. Mais par les liens nouvellement établis, elle ouvre une possibilité de contacts prolongés et continus. Elle repose sur un soubassement militant le plus souvent officieux, discret et faiblement structuré, qu'il soit d'envergure locale, provinciale ou nationale. C'est le cas du groupe caché sur Facebook réunissant une vingtaine de Charlevoisiens opposés au G7, « le G7 chez nous », aussitôt fermé la fin du G7 (Sarah 28/06).

En tant que citoyen et habitant de Charlevoix, j'ai invité Francis Dupuis-Déri, spécialiste des mouvements sociaux, à donner une conférence d'information sur le G7 à Baie-Saint-Paul. Celle-ci s'est tenue le 12 février 2018 à la Bibliothèque René-Richard. Une trentaine de personnes assiste à la présentation. Précisons qu'il est intervenu dans l'après-midi au Centre d'études Collégial de La Malbaie dans le cadre du cours sur l'altermondialisme donné par Jessica Crossan. Ses interventions ont apporté un éclairage sur le rôle du G7 dans la constitution de l'ordre international néo-libéral, et sur la mise en contexte historique des résistances, des contre-sommets à l'altermondialisme. Y était mis à disposition le journal, des tracts, ainsi que des macarons anti-G7 du Réseau de Résistance Anti-G7 (RRAG7), une initiative de la Convergence des luttes anti-capitalistes, basée à Montréal.

Dernier exemple : l'initiative du Conseil des Canadiens, basé à Toronto. Grâce à des intermédiaires du monde associatif local, qui les ont aidés à titre personnel,

il est parvenu à déployer le vendredi 8 juin, sur le terrain d'un agriculteur de Saint-Agnès, un logo anti-G7 de 50 mètres de large. L'action était symbolique, le but étant de prendre une photographie aérienne, et de la diffuser dans les médias.



Figure 4. Photo prise par le Conseil des Canadiens, publiée dans le journal local, « Le Charlevoisien »



Figure 5. Première de couverture du journal du RRAG7, avec le Manoir Richelieu en arrière-plan

La principale action collective militante est la manifestation du 3 juin 2018, organisée par le REPAC. Ayant contacté initialement l'association étudiante du CECC de Charlevoix et la Maison des jeunes, il s'est finalement appuyé sur le Centre-Femmes aux Plurielles.

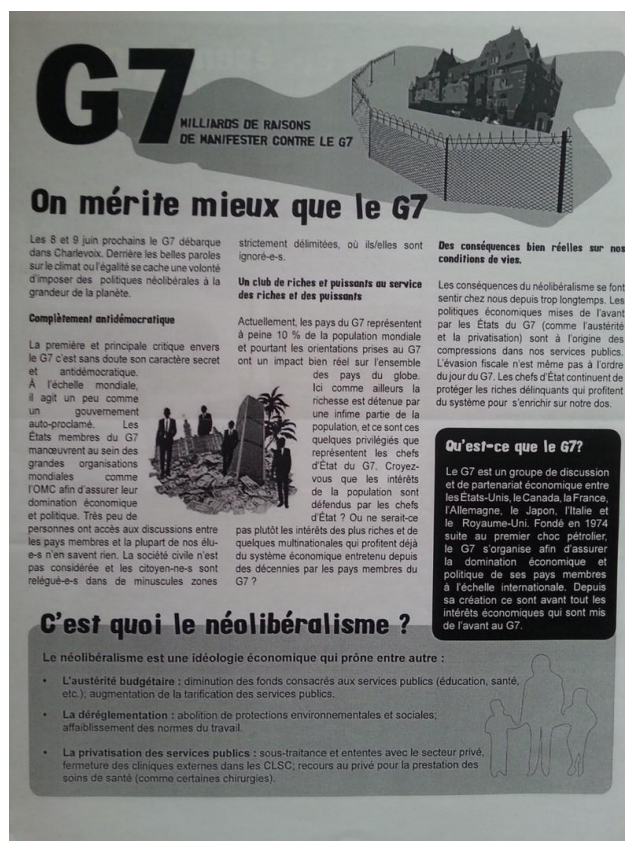


Figure 6. Tract distribué par le REPAC lors de la réunion du 15 mai 2018, à l'Auberge de jeunesse de La Malbaie

La deuxième étape fut la tenue d'une réunion le 15 mai à l'Auberge de jeunesse de La Malbaie. Elle a réuni une quarantaine de personnes, avec une majorité de femmes. La 1^{ère} partie fut essentiellement informative et descriptive, l'objectif étant de « mieux comprendre le G7 », de « s'organiser pour la mobilisation à venir » et d'« amener un contre-discours » (Témoignages *in vivo* 15/05). Le lexique était anti-capitaliste, anti-raciste, écologique et égalitaire. Le tract du RRAG7 fut distribué au début de la rencontre, ainsi que des badges anti-G7. La deuxième partie annonçait les mobilisations à venir à Québec, et voulait prendre le pouls de la population sur son intérêt à mener une action dans Charlevoix. L'idée d'une « chaîne humaine » fut avancée « pour ne pas allumer la mèche ».

La manifestation a été fixée au dimanche 3 juin, le dernier jour avant que la région soit placée au niveau maximal de sécurité. Quarante-huit personnes ont défilé du quai Casgrain à la zone de libre expression, dont environ $\frac{3}{4}$ de Charlevoisiens, contre $\frac{1}{4}$ de membres du REPAC, venant de la grande région de Québec pour l'occasion. Pour Sylvie, Charlevoisienne, l'important était d'être là, et d'aller dans la rue pour « occuper la place ».



Figure 7. Le cortège de manifestants du 3 juin 2018, longeant la route du Fleuve

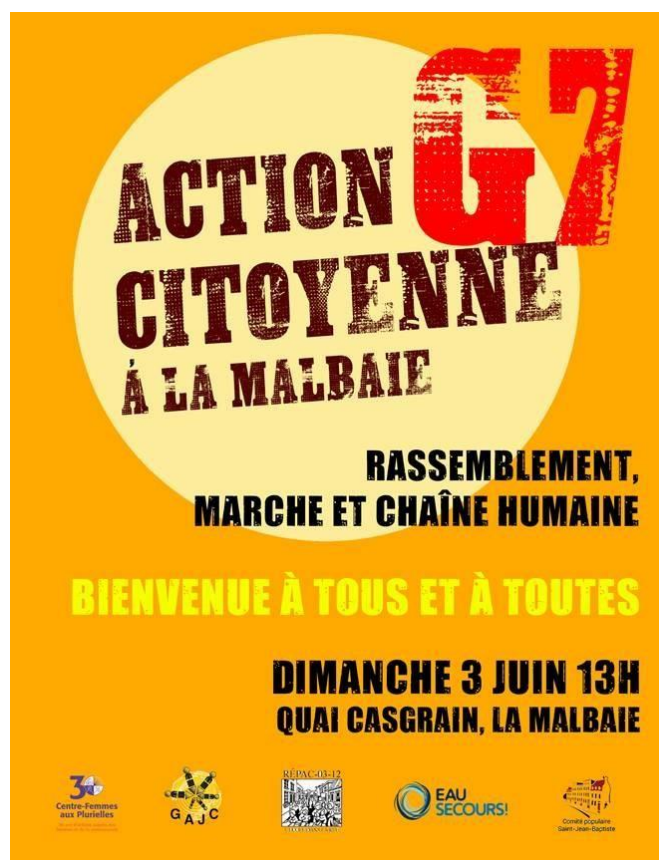


Figure 8. Affiche du REPAC annonçant la manifestation du 3 juin 2018

Réactions civiles

Je présenterai le répertoire de réactions des Charlevoisiens selon un mode de sérialisation mixte, articulant leur fréquence rapportée à chaque interview avant et après le sommet (Figure 9) avec le *degré de visibilité au pouvoir*, axé autour de la gradation latent/manifeste. La fréquence observée exprime une représentativité au-delà de notre échantillon, mais il est possible d'obtenir une classification plus pertinente en l'associant au critère de visibilité dans laquelle les modalités de réactions traduisent avant tout une modalité de *rapport* au « pouvoir dominant » (Gramsci 1978, Sharp et al. 2000). Précisons également que le décompte se fait par personne ayant rapportée les modalités de résistance, et non par modalités de résistance rapportées. Je ne prends donc pas en compte les doublons (2 mentions pour 1 personne interviewée = 1 comptabilisation), contrairement au calcul de la fréquence des résistances observées lors de chaque entretien. J'apporterai d'abord pour chacune de ces modalités une définition générique, que j'illustrerai par la suite à l'aide d'exemples.

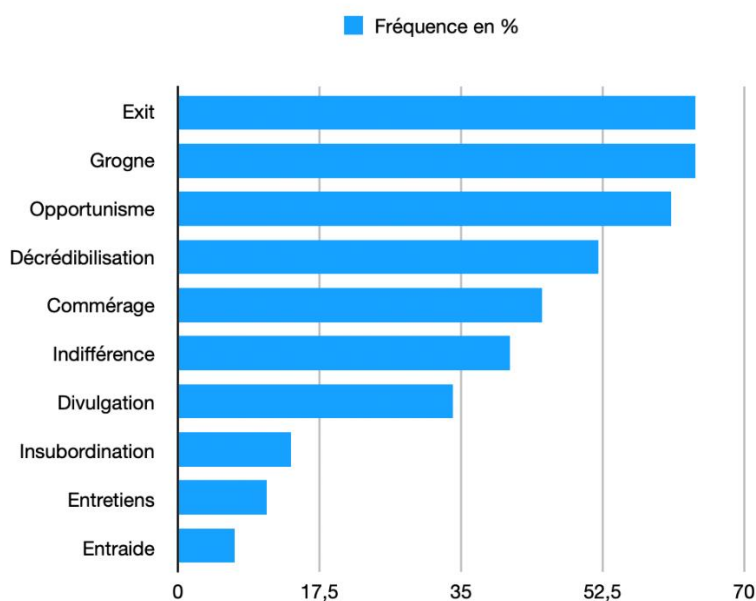


Figure 9

J'ai essayé de respecter la proportionnalité de l'intensité de la présence du pouvoir dans la répartition géographique des personnes interviewées : de La Malbaie aux marges de Charlevoix (Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, 69 kms), en passant par Clermont (7 kms), Sainte-Agnès (14 kms), Notre-Dame-des-Monts (20 kms), Les Éboulements (30 kms), Saint-Siméon (33 kms), Baie-Saint-Paul (46 kms), formant une zone de force concentrique (Figure 10)

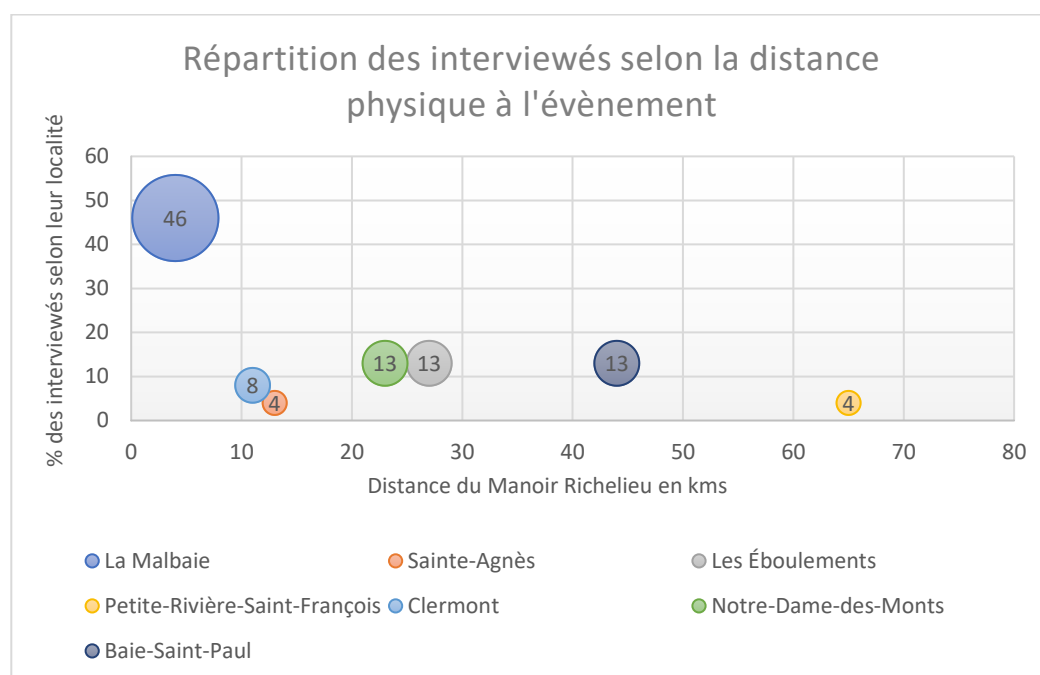


Figure 10

L'exit (Hirschman 2013) exprime un refus du contact avec l'ordre. Il traduit le pouvoir de ne pas subir le pouvoir dominant. Il est en cela une tactique développée en réaction à l'omniprésence du pouvoir et de la sécurisation des lieux.

Il y a ceux qui refusent d'aller aux rencontres de Justin Trudeau, ceux qui partent de la région, parce qu' « ils ne voulaient pas vivre ça », et ceux qui comptent la quitter, mais qui n'ont pas pu le faire pour des raisons financières, professionnelles ou familiales. Il y a ceux qui désertent les rues, ceux qui restent chez eux « confinés », ceux qui se rabattent sur les routes secondaires pour éviter le trafic ou les points de contrôles, et ceux qui préfèrent ne pas manifester, plutôt que de le faire dans la zone de libre expression. Nombreux sont encore les Charlevoisiens qui ont refusé de travailler malgré les opportunités et les avantages financiers. Des entrepreneurs indépendants qui devaient se soumettre au processus d'accréditation ou de dédommagement se sont désistés par économie de temps, d'énergie, ou simplement par méfiance.

Deuxième modalité infra-politique, la grogne renvoie à une atmosphère de mécontentement collectif sourd et généralisé. Elle prend le contre-pied de l'assentiment apparemment général de la population. Nombreux sont les Charlevoisiens qui se plaignent des bouleversements et contraintes sur leur quotidien : présence policière, clôture, accréditation, surveillance électronique, accélération de la cadence ou augmentation du temps de travail, difficulté de circulation, etc.

Elle peut être passive et latente. Elle dirige son humeur contre le choix de l'emplacement ou celui de se rencontrer en personnes, dénonçant le coût

excessif de l'évènement, premier motif de la grogne. Elle cible le peu de retombées économiques factuelles, comme ces commerçants de la région qui se plaignent de la distribution massive de boîtes à lunch venant du château Frontenac (ville de Québec), et pointe du doigt le caractère répressif de l'évènement. Elle dénonce enfin tous les impacts négatifs sur leur vie quotidienne, prenant pour cible la présence policière, la construction de la clôture, la fermeture des écoles ou des garderies, et tous les aménagements de l'espace induits par la tenue du sommet. La grogne peut aussi être active et affichée, s'exprimant épisodiquement. Elle peut passer par la manifestation publique de son désaccord, comme ceux qui ont décidé de s'afficher avec le badge « anti-G7 », par la dénonciation de l'image véhiculée par les journalistes, par le mécontentement exprimé aux policiers ou aux employés du bureau d'accréditation.

Troisième modalité infra-politique des Charlevoisiens : l'opportunisme. L'objectif est de tirer le meilleur parti de l'évènement afin qu'il soit le plus bénéfique possible. Il contribue ainsi à tourner l'en soi (un évènement de politique internationale) en un pour soi (une aubaine). Les deux arguments mobilisés par l'organisation pour légitimer la tenue du G7 dans la région, soit les retombées économiques et symboliques, relayé et accepté par la majorité des Charlevoisiens, se retrouvent manipulés pour leur propre compte. Le complaisant se révèle donc bien plus tactique et instrumental qu'il n'y paraît.

Dominique y fait référence lorsqu'elle évoque le coût de l'évènement : « C'est sûr que 500 millions c'est cher [...]. Mais mieux vaut que ce soit nous autres qui ramassent les sous ! » (Dominique 18/04). Cette « manne » offre une occasion de faire une entrée d'argent substantielle pour les hôteliers, les entrepreneurs, certains employés, et même les policiers locaux. Au niveau symbolique, le G7 permet de « mettre Charlevoix sur la *map* » en offrant une publicité gratuite à la région. Le G7 est aussi vu comme une opportunité de revalorisation ou de transmission de nouvelles compétences pour les autorités ou les représentants locaux via les « sessions de pratiques » en matière de sécurisation, et l'établissement de « liens de communication » avec le palier provincial et fédéral (Préfet de la MRC-Est, 02/05). Opportunité également pour les travailleurs indépendants qui ont fait affaire avec l'organisation du G7, et qui leur a permis d'acquérir un savoir-faire en négociation.

L'opportunisme se manifeste également via des comportements de passagers clandestins, que l'on retrouve dans le processus de réaffectations des travailleurs, capables d'en faire moins par rapport à ce « qu'[ils] avaient à faire » (Julie 27/06), dans celui de compensation financière pour les commerçants, ou encore celui de négociation engagé par certains employés, qui, comme Julie, sont parvenus à obtenir des congés payés.

L'opportunisme se manifeste publiquement lorsque les Charlevoisiens se félicitent de l'amélioration des infrastructures locales, qu'il s'agisse du réseau cellulaire, internet ou routier. Au niveau communautaire, les denrées non utilisées par les cuisines du Manoir Richelieu ont été offertes au Service alimentaire et d'Aide budgétaire de Charlevoix-Est. Sur le plan privé, il permet à

un maraîcher de Saint-Agnès de tirer parti de l'action symbolique menée par le Conseil des Canadiens sur son terrain pour se voir offrir des toiles d'agriculture.

Quatrième résistance infra-politique : la décrédibilisation. Elle renvoie au pouvoir de dévaluer le pouvoir dominant. Il prend ainsi le contre-pied de la hauteur imposée par l'évènement. Elle se manifeste notamment par la feinte complaisance, alliant conformité apparente au pouvoir (respect des règles, discipline, ordre, qui parfois tend à l'obséquiosité) avec sa dévaluation de flanc.

Elle passe par la défiance et l'incrédulité des Charlevoisiens vis-à-vis de l'efficacité du G7 à s'attaquer efficacement aux points fixés à l'ordre du jour en seulement 48 heures. La défiance tourne en moquerie, palpable dans les propos de Sarah au sujet des séances d'information du GIS, faites pour convaincre la population avec « les beaux mots », mais qui s'avèrent en fait « n'importe quoi » (Sarah 15/05). La moquerie se couple avec la dérision quand elle vise à plaisanter, persifler ou ridiculiser le G7, directement ou indirectement, via les policiers, les dignitaires, les journalistes, les aménagements logistiques. En privé, nombreux sont les commentaires qui tournent en ridicule la rencontre au sommet, la qualifiant de « sortie de chalet » (Témoignage *in vivo* 04/02) ou d'« évènement mondain de *jet setters* » (Mathieu 29/05). La moquerie s'attaque à la disproportion des mesures de sécurisation, contrastant avec leur quotidien, tranquille et sans vague. À ce sujet, Emmanuelle considère, comme bien d'autres, la zone de libre expression comme un « enclos pour les bêtes » (Emmanuelle 14/05). Antoine, relatant son expérience de service au repas des conjoints, a fait part de l'absurdité du protocole aux organisateurs à travers ses nombreuses boutades, parce qu'il « trouvai[t] ça tellement ridicule » (Antoine 19/07). Citons également l'exemple d'un habitant de la zone verte qui, avant d'arriver chez lui, devait se soumettre au processus de vérification : le policier « ne savait pas où était la côte Bellevue alors qu'il me contrôlait dans la côte Bellevue ! [...] Mais c'est parce qu'il vient d'Ottawa ou je ne sais pas où. [...] Hey, 'ça', ça a fait l'école de police de Nicolet, c'te monsieur là. Il ne sait pas dans quelle rue il patrouille ! » (Mathieu 20/06).

En public, la dérision et l'humour sont utilisés comme pratiques de retournement et/ou d'inversion déguisée des rapports de force. C'est dans ce cadre qu'une Malbéenne saisit l'occasion d'un voxpop tenu par le *Journal de Québec* pour « faire des blagues » sur l'évènement : « Les autres étaient tous là ; 'on a peur, on a peur', et elle, elle dit ; 'je l'aime assez Donald Trump, il ressemble à mon mari qui vient de mourir, mais mon mari avait pas mal moins d'argent' [rires] » (Benjamin 14/05). C'est le cas également de Richard, qui interpelle un policier de la GRC attablé à côté de lui : « je lui dis : 'scusez, monsieur, j'espère que vous ne mangez pas ça à tous les jours !'. C'était de la poutine, j'ai dit : 'à la fin de la semaine, vos vestes anti-balles, elles ne vous feront plus !' [rires] » (Richard 05/07).

Cinquième modalité, le commérage est le pouvoir de transformer les manifestations du pouvoir dominant en une source de distraction. Il rentre dans la spectacularisation du G7 par les Charlevoisiens. Le sommet n'est plus

une rencontre politique d'envergure internationale, ni un événement hautement sécurisé, mais un objet de divertissement. Cette réappropriation quasi carnavalesque prend ainsi le contre-pied de l'image solennelle du G7.

La curiosité est un élément essentiel du commérage. L'important est d'être là pour vivre une expérience hors du commun. Elle fait référence à ceux qui sont restés dans la région pour saisir l'occasion, qui ont flâné dans les rues de La Malbaie le 8 et le 9 juin, qui sont allés aux séances d'informations du GIS, au barbecue communautaire, ou encore jeter un coup œil à la zone de libre expression, aux barrières et autres points de contrôle disséminés un peu partout dans la région. Il exprime une sorte de présentéisme, d'assiduité excessive dans l'occupation de l'espace. L'intention n'est pas de s'informer, ni d'observer, mais de vivre la place et de sentir la fébrilité qui y règne à l'heure du G7. Le commentaire de Julie sur la visite de Justin Trudeau le 23 mai à La Malbaie en est un bon exemple :

Le fait qu'il y a eu beaucoup de monde qui sont allés voir Justin Trudeau, ce n'est pas par désir de le rencontrer, pis de se faire remercier de notre accueil, c'est juste pour aller sentir, pour aller voir, juste pour aller voir, qui est allé là, combien il y avait de monde, qu'est-ce qu'il a dit, à qui il a serré la main, qui a pris un *selfie* avec lui, tout le monde se connaît ici. C'est du « momérage »... des « voireux », ceux qui sont venus voir (Julie 26/05).

Le commérage tourne l'évènement politique et sécuritaire en un évènement spectaculaire et populaire, fait par et pour les habitants. Les cartes d'accréditations ou de résidents deviennent des souvenirs, « comme ceux qui ont gardé leur passeport d'expo 67 » (Édouard 04/05), tout comme les convois diplomatiques font penser à la « parade de la Saint-Jean » (Marie 19/06).

L'indifférence (Eliasoph 1998), sixième modalité infra-politique, qualifie le comportement de ceux qui n'accordent pas au G7 l'importance qu'il lui est dû. Il n'est pas une dévaluation, mais un démenti du caractère éminent de l'évènement. Elle est un déni performatif de pouvoir, qui perd instantanément de son autorité par cet acte de non-reconnaissance.

Elle se manifeste par des comportements qui expriment une distance à l'évènement, et montrent un effort pour maintenir le cours ordinaire de leur vie. Elle fait référence aux Charlevoisiens « désintéressés » ou qui « ne se sentent pas concernés » par le G7 (Raphaëlle 14/05), à ceux qui ne font « aucune différence » entre le cours événementiel ou ordinaire, comme cet habitant qui travaille dans la zone verte, déterminé à apporter son chien avec lui comme de coutume : « ils étaient surpris de voir mon chien [en parlant du policier à la zone verte] ; je m'en vais travailler à la boutique avec mon chien, genre : 'lui, il vient travailler avec vous ?' [...]. 'Oui, je travaille là-bas et oui, j'emmène mon chien avec moi.' » (Vincent 03/07).

Le contrôle apparemment total et hermétique de l'espace physique et symbolique des Charlevoisiens est émoussé par la divulgation, septième

modalité infra-politique. Elle passe par la révélation et la diffusion de trois types d'informations : informations tactiques d'abord afin d'éviter toute sanction potentielle pour les locaux impliqués dans l'évènement, notamment sur le plan professionnel. Je pense à la note affichée sur le babillard du Casino, remarquée par une employée, rapportée et diffusée dans la salle de pause. Informations de relations publiques ensuite, qui viennent ainsi contraster avec l'image d'un G7 sans anicroche. Elles ternissent la réputation d'un sommet bien ordonné et harmonieux, quand elles ne flirtent pas avec la diffamation. Je pense notamment à ces femmes de chambre qui choisissent de médiatiser leur revendication à l'approche du G7, dénonçant le manque de travail, loin donc des promesses initiales (Desgagnés 2018). Il y a enfin ceux qui révèlent des informations stratégiques de sécurité nationale. Cette publicisation se rapporte notamment aux travaux et aménagements entrepris dans la zone rouge, aux lieux d'hébergement et de restauration supposés des dirigeants, aux différents protocoles de sécurité, aux écoutes numériques, etc. Impossible de comprendre la nature d'une telle divulgation sans prendre en compte l'espace social charlevoisien, tissé serré autour d'une culture orale : « ma voisine de chœur, elle, elle travaille au G7, et elle me disait : 'toute l'information qui arrive d'ailleurs passe par moi'. [...] Alors moi, je lui posais des questions des fois ! Comme : 'c'est tu vrai que... ?' » (Mélanie 20/06).

Les comportements, habitudes et réflexes communautaires fournissent la base de la huitième modalité de résistance des Charlevoisiens au G7 : l'entraide. Il agit ici comme un amortisseur social aux bouleversements de leur quotidien provoqués par la tenue du sommet. Il renvoie à la transmission d'informations sur le processus d'accréditation, sur l'état de la circulation et les raccourcis à prendre en cas de trafic ou de blocage, à l'assistance sociale de proximité lorsque certaines personnes proposent spontanément leur aide aux voisins, âgés pour la plupart, restés cloîtrés chez eux par peur, ou encore lorsque certains membres de la famille prennent le relais des parents, surchargés de travail pour l'occasion, afin de s'occuper des enfants.

Ces comportements d'entraide peuvent aussi prendre une tournure plus active et militante. C'est le cas de Lucile, habitante de La Malbaie, qui loge durant quelques jours le moine bouddhiste japonais Toyoshige Sekigushi, parti de Montréal à pied pour effectuer sa marche pour la paix. Elle a pris cette décision après l'avoir croisé par hasard sur le bas-côté de la route 138. Et elle ne fut pas la seule à exprimer une telle solidarité : « Un jour il est arrivé ici, son sac était tellement plein ! Il avait des pommes, des bananes, de l'eau, les gens arrêtaient sur le bord de la route pour lui donner de la nourriture. Il est arrivé à moment donner avec un hamburger végétal ! ». Cela lui permettait même d'apaiser la tension mentale produite par l'évènement, s'apparentant ainsi à un « exit mental ». Le fait de l'héberger, de le nourrir, de le conduire à son point de chute et de venir le chercher à la fin de la journée « a sauvé ma santé mentale du G7. [...] [C]'était comme notre manière de manifester, parce que dans le fond, j'étais le support logistique de ce moine-là. [...]. Ce n'était pas nous autres qui étions impliquées, mais on a comme fait le support dans l'ombre ». On peut d'ailleurs souligner la proximité médiate de cette manifestation infra-politique avec le

pouvoir, et de sa montée en visibilité, puisque soutenir une résistance ouverte, même pacifique, avait ses conséquences : « Quand je suis allé le chercher à l'entrée de Notre-Dame-des-Monts, je me suis fait suivre » par la police (Lucile 19/06).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION	1.0 L'INTRODUCTION
<p>1.1 General Overview</p> <p>Ex SENTINELLE II has been developed as a functional exercise in the context of the 2018 G7 Summit to allow the practice and observation of relevant inter-agency plans, operational procedures, command and control and intelligence processes as well as pan-government information management.</p> <p>The exercise start state was developed from a Fictional Summit Programme.</p> <p>Organisations participating in the exercise are encouraged to the extent possible - to work from their own operations centres/offices/locations where they will operate from during the actual Summit June 2018.</p> <p>While the exercise itself takes place in April and that the actual Summit will take place in June 2018, fictional June-like weather for the region will be generated and promulgated for Exercise SENTINELLE II.</p> <p>A list of key exercise control and coordination related participants is at Annex A. A list of abbreviations, acronyms and titles related to the G7 is included as Annex B. It is given in alphabetical order in French.</p> <p>1.2 Notes on Security</p> <p>Ex SENTINELLE II was developed in an UNCLASSIFIED environment, its supporting documents and products are UNCLASSIFIED and Exercise Control (EXCON) will exchange information on UNCLASSIFIED</p>	<p>1.1 Survol général</p> <p>L'exercice SENTINELLE II a été conçu dans le cadre du sommet G7 2018 pour être un exercice fonctionnel permettant de pratiquer et de faire des observations sur les plans et procédures opérationnels inter-agences, de même que les processus de commandement et de contrôle, ainsi que le renseignement et la gestion d'information pangouvernementale.</p> <p>L'état de départ a été développé et émis dans le cadre d'un programme fictif.</p> <p>Les organisations qui participent à l'exercice sont encouragées, dans la limite du possible, à travailler à partir de leur propre centre d'opérations/bureaux/endroits tout comme elles le feront en juin 2018, pendant le Sommet.</p> <p>Puisque l'exercice se tiendra en avril et que le Sommet est en juin 2018, une météo fictive, propice à celle d'un mois de juin, sera promulguée et jouée pour la région lors de l'exercice SENTINELLE II.</p> <p>Une liste des principaux participants au contrôle et à la coordination de l'exercice se trouve à l'annexe A. Vous trouverez une liste des abréviations, acronymes et titres relatifs au G7, en français et en ordre alphabétique, à l'annexe B</p> <p>1.2 Notes sur la sécurité</p> <p>L'exercice SENTINELLE II a été conçu dans un environnement NON-CLASSIFIÉ, les documents et le matériel didactique sont NON-CLASSIFIÉS. Les contrôleurs de l'exercice (CONEX) dissémineront de l'information via</p>
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Figure 11. Instructions pour l'exercice Sentinelle II.

La neuvième modalité de résistance infra-politique s'est exprimée à mes dépens. Les entretiens ont été pour les Charlevoisiens interrogés une prise de parole indirecte et médiante, prenant le contre-pied de l'évènement qui s'est imposé à eux comme un fait accompli. Ils sont une occasion de prendre une parole qui leur a été refusée, et de montrer l'envers du décor.

L'entretien s'inscrit dans un éventail de résistances qui va du partage – « je suis content qu'il y ait quelqu'un qui voulait m'interviewer par rapport à ça, je ne savais pas que ça pouvait m'arriver, je pense que quand tu vis des affaires, c'est le fun d'en parler » (Vincent 03/07) – à la conscientisation : en réaction à la rumeur de surveillance numérique, Sylvie m'a avoué qu'elle trouvait « ça gros. Je trouve ça un petit peu épeurant. Pas que... je n'ai pas grand-chose à me reprocher. Mais juste le fait qu'on soit ensemble, tsé, je suis impliquée là ! » (Sylvie 26/05). Je me suis également rendu compte que j'étais un relais de leur

mécontentement et de la circulation de l'information entre Charlevoisiens, que ce soit à l'intérieur ou au-delà des limites de la communauté, et de publicisation d'informations sensibles (Figure 11).

Dernière modalité, l'insubordination est pour les Charlevoisiens un moyen d'exprimer ouvertement leur désaccord avec le ré-ordonnement de leur quotidien. Au niveau professionnel, cela peut prendre la forme de la désobéissance, à la manière des employés du Casino ou du Manoir qui refusaient d'effectuer les tâches attribuées, du concierge de l'Hôtel de Ville qui a jeté la boîte de sondage déposée sur le comptoir d'accueil par le GIS, de ce fromager charlevoisien qui envoya paître un inspecteur venu vérifier la qualité de ses produits pour les utiliser lors des réceptions du G7. Sur le plan civil, l'insubordination renvoie à la non-coopération lors de contrôles routiers, au ras le bol, voire à l'hostilité, exprimé par les habitants à l'encontre du GIS à cause d'une présence jugée trop envahissante, ou au non-respect des consignes lors de la manifestation du 3 juin (utilisation de la route).

Réactions civiles ou résistances infra-politiques ?

Les réactions civiles des Charlevoisiens et Charlevoisiennes doivent être considérées comme des résistances infra-politiques, et non comme de simples adaptations à la perturbation de leur vie quotidienne par le G7. Je tâcherai d'appuyer cette thèse sur une démonstration par la preuve, d'abord théorique, puis empirique.

À suivre Michel Foucault, dès qu'il y a rapport de pouvoir, et plus encore intensification de ce rapport dans un espace subordonné, il y a résistance (Foucault 1976 : 126, Haynes et Prakash 1992). Ce pouvoir est dominant dans la mesure où il renvoie à des « processus continus et ininterrompus qui soumettent nos corps, gouvernent nos gestes, dictent nos comportements » (Foucault 1980 : 97). Une cinquantaine d'années avant lui, Antonio Gramsci posait le même constat en refusant de penser les classes subalternes selon un « fatalisme passif et assuré » (Gramsci 1983 : 374) : mêmes dominées, elles manifestent toujours une résistance active.

Foucault franchit un palier supplémentaire en relevant leur multi-dimensionnalité. Selon lui, il n'existe pas « un lieu du Grand Refus », mais « des résistances qui sont des cas d'espèces : possibles, nécessaires, improbables, spontanées, sauvages, solitaires, concertées, rampantes, violentes, irréconciliables, promptes à la transaction, intéressées, ou sacrificielles » (Foucault 1976 : 126-127). Les réactions civiles des Charlevoisiens rentrent pour moi dans ces cas d'espèces.

Les premières impressions n'abondent pourtant pas dans ce sens, puisque le contact du G7 avec la population charlevoisienne ne montre *a priori* aucun rapport de classe, et que nous mettons au jour des réactions conjoncturelles et exceptionnelles, et non structurelles et ordinaires, comme la fait James C. Scott, père de l'infra-politique.

Scott a développé ce concept en étudiant l'impact du développement du capitalisme d'État sur les paysans mélanésien. Après une observation minutieuse de leurs pratiques quotidiennes, il s'est rendu compte que la perte de leur moyen de production allait de pair avec l'éclosion de nouvelles formes de résistance de classe. Sont inclus dans cette appellation « tous les actes des membres d'une classe subordonnée qui ont l'intention d'atténuer ou de refuser des revendications (par exemple, loyers, taxes, prestige) faites sur cette classe par une classe supérieure ou d'avancer ses propres revendications (par exemple, travail, terre, charité, respect) vis-à-vis de ces classes supérieures » (Scott 1985 : 290). L'infra-politique est selon lui le propre des classes subalternes. Il faut donc revenir à Gramsci, pionnier en la matière, auquel Scott s'inspire directement, pour comprendre ce qu'elles sont. Deux caractéristiques essentielles sont à retenir : l'omniprésence et l'arbitraire du pouvoir, et la non-politisation apparente de ces classes.

À regarder de prime abord la situation des Charlevoisiens, pendant et à l'approche du G7, les ressemblances avec celle des paysans mélanésien sont frappantes. Tout en gardant en tête le lexique de la dépossession, et la réalité du G7 en tant que pouvoir « écrasant », citons Emmanuelle, pour qui les dignitaires « décident de venir ici, mais il ne nous demande pas notre avis » (Emmanuelle 14/05). La deuxième caractéristique se décèle dans les mots de Dominique, Charlevoisienne « de souche », qui pense personnellement que les habitants de La Malbaie ne voient pas le G7 « politiquement », mais plutôt « comme de la visite » (Dominique, 18/04). Cet avis semble être confirmé par nos entretiens : si plus de 70% des Charlevoisiens interviewés sont conscients de sa nature politique, une proportion identique le considère avant tout comme un événement économique et symbolique.

À ces deux soubassements de l'infra-politique subalterne, s'ajoute trois piliers. Dans le Cahier 25, Gramsci soutient que l'« histoire des groupes sociaux subalternes est nécessairement fragmentée et épisodique », mais qu'il « est hors de doute que, dans l'activité historique de ces groupes, il y a une tendance à l'unification, fût-ce à des niveaux provisoires » (Gramsci 1991 : 311 et 309). L'intérêt est d'observer cette unification s'opérer simultanément et spontanément, en dehors de tout effort de coordination et d'organisation. Elle est ainsi le fruit des circonstances. L'unité de ces classes dans la résistance est à l'image de leur contiguïté au pouvoir, autant chronique qu'événementielle.

Les Charlevoisiens montrent toutes les caractéristiques de la fragmentation. La géologie de la région (Charlevoix est un astroblème) a produit une société isolée et « un peu insulaire » (Édouard 04/05). Socialement, ses habitants la qualifient de « clanique », composée de familles aux liens « tissés serrés » (Sylvie 26/05), fonctionnant comme des « petites cliques » (Laure 15/05), des mondes fermés qui n'intègrent que partiellement les non-natifs, qu'ils soient « rapportés de paroisse » (vivant dans une localité de Charlevoix autre que celle dans laquelle ils sont nés), ou « étranges » (nés à l'extérieur de la région) (Emmanuelle, 14/05).

Les résistances des Charlevoisiens sont pour l'essentiel non-coordonnées, mais simultanées. Elles montrent une tendance à l'unification, s'opposant en bloc à la présence écrasante du pouvoir, même si elles s'expriment de manière fragmentée et non-organisée. A titre évocateur, citons la non-concertation des organismes communautaires de la région dans leur mobilisation contre le G7, et la participation parallèle et spontanée de certains de leur membre aux actions menées par le Centre-Femmes aux plurielles. Mais, derrière leur morcellement apparent, toutes ces résistances sont en fait des novas interreliées. L'exit se couple avec l'opportunisme, l'indifférence avec le commérage, le commérage avec la décrédibilisation et la grogne, la grogne avec l'insubordination et l'exit, l'exit et l'opportunisme avec l'entraide...

Ceci nous amène à notre deuxième caractéristique. Ces nouvelles résistances sont éminemment réactives, passives, ou « défensives » comme les qualifie Gramsci, parce que les « groupes subalternes subissent toujours l'initiative des groupes dominants même quand ils se rebellent et se soulèvent » (Gramsci 1991 : 311). Elles se manifestent chez une population subalterne, dominée culturellement surtout, mais aussi économiquement et politiquement. Elles sont une réponse au rapport asymétrique de pouvoir, une alternative à la résistance ouverte et affichée qui, en plus d'exposer ses détracteurs à la répression, n'aurait qu'une efficacité limitée. Dire que les résistances infra-politiques sont des réactions est pour Scott un pléonasme, car la riposte des subalternes est toujours défensive. C'est le cas des Charlevoisiens, et de leurs répliques à l'intrusion du G7 dans leur espace.

Derrière l'apparent consentement, résignation ou déférence de ces groupes, il est possible d'identifier des formes de résistances beaucoup plus subtiles, ordinaires et continues. Citant Ruggero Bonghi, Gramsci nous en donne un exemple dans son deuxième cahier sous la forme d'une anecdote : « Un gondolier vénitien faisait de grandes révérences à un patricien et de petits saluts aux églises. Un patricien lui demanda pourquoi il agissait ainsi, et le gondolier répondre : 'Parce qu'on ne se moque pas des saints' » (Gramsci 1996 : 153). C'est ce que Scott appelle la « petite tradition », qui se situe en deçà des résistances publiques et collectives, rares ou inaccoutumées pour les groupes subalternes. En se penchant sur les petites résistances (boycotts, grèves déguisées, vols, désertions, sabotages, incendies, etc.), Scott s'est rendu compte qu'elles contribuaient, à leur manière et à leur mesure, à altérer le rapport de force. Pour lui, elles correspondent à des « formes de résistances qui reflètent les conditions et les contraintes qui les produisent » (Scott 2005 : 393). Toutes les réactions civiles des Charlevoisiens possèdent ce caractère feutré, sourd et latent des résistances infra-politiques. Ce point pose la question de la conscience. Marx est à ce sujet catégorique : il ne peut y avoir de classe, et de lutte de classes, sans conscience de classe. Gramsci prend son contrepied en montrant comment les subalternes forment une classe à travers leurs résistances spontanées (Gramsci 1996 : 295).

Les temporalités de la subalternité

A suivre les thèses de Foucault, Gramsci et Scott, les réactions civiles apparemment apolitiques et épiphénoménales des Charlevoisiens au G7 rentrent dans le registre des résistances infra-politiques. Mais pour nous en convaincre, encore faut-il montrer comment ils sont, de fait, des subalternes.

Il me paraît important de distinguer deux paliers de subalternité, que ni Gramsci, ni Scott n'ont relevées. Dépendamment de la focale temporelle adoptée, se révèle deux formes de subalternité, conjoncturelle et structurelle. Pour ce qui est de la première, je rappelle la présence « écrasante » du G7. Tous les Charlevoisiens, et une partie des Québécois qui subissent physiquement (et symboliquement) cette présence de la classe dirigeante mondiale (du Saguenay (base militaire de Bagotville) à la ville de Québec (centre des médias) en passant par le Kamouraska (base militaire américaine), avec Charlevoix comme épigénèse), intègrent de fait, instantanément, indépendamment de leur rapport usuel au pouvoir, et proportionnellement à l'intensité de la pression exercée par le G7, les rangs des classes subalternes.

Je partage ainsi entièrement les réflexions de André Drainville, qui soutient à la suite de Gramsci et de Foucault (1976 : 135), que « l'économie mondiale est partout où les forces sociales rencontrent l'ordonnement du monde » (Drainville 2012 : 13). Il souligne en cela l'aspect situationnel de la subalternité, non seulement comme expérience vécue (Polletta 1999), mais aussi comme pratique spatiale répondant au développement du capitalisme mondial (Juris et Khasnabish 2013). La subalternité passe par les réductions que subissent et reproduisent les groupes sociaux absorbés dans le champ stratégique des relations de pouvoir.

Ces réductions se manifestent chez les Charlevoisiens à travers l'assentiment qu'ils témoignent envers la tenue du G7. 72% des personnes interrogées étaient persuadées que le sommet allait générer des retombées économiques et symboliques dans la région. Pour y avoir vécu, et pour l'avoir parcouru d'Ouest en Est, je peux vous dire que cette vision fait presque l'unanimité. Mais comment expliquer une telle adhésion ?

A y regarder de plus près, cet argument est un des éléments de l'arsenal rhétorique utilisé par les autorités fédérales, relayé par la presse, pour légitimer le G7. De manière collatérale, il donne aux Charlevoisiens une image clé-en-main des idées et conduites collectives à adopter. Après avoir réalisé une rapide analyse de discours des médias locaux et provinciaux les plus populaires de la région, qu'ils soient radiophoniques (CIHO, CHOI-Radio X), télévisuels (TVCO, LCN) ou papiers (*Le Charlevoisien*, *Le Journal de Québec*), depuis le 1^{er} mars 2018, j'ai retenu trois arguments qui font autorité : la population charlevoisienne est « accueillante » (nous verrons plus loin comment il s'appuie sur leur subalternité structurelle au tourisme), « incluse » dans l'événement, « craintive » d'un éventuel « grabuge », mais rassurée par la présence policière massive, présentée comme un mal nécessaire.

Ces éléments de discours participent à la production du consentement. À écouter Paul Ricœur, « là où il y a du pouvoir, il y a une revendication de légitimité. Et là où il y a revendication de légitimité, il y a recours à la rhétorique du discours public dans un but de persuasion » (Ricœur 1984 : 57). Dans le cadre du G7, le discours officiel a autant contribué à l'adhésion a priori des Charlevoisiens qu'il a influencé leurs actions durant le sommet : « N'importe quel Charlevoisien ne s'embarre pas les pieds là-dedans, s'exclame Dominique. Il n'y'avait pas un chat dans les rues, ça n'avait pas de bon sang ! C'était... une ville fantôme à La Malbaie ! Ça ne se peut pas ! Je pense qu'ils ont fait peur au monde, c'est incroyable. [...] Je pense que les journalistes en ont mis pas mal et le monde est resté chez eux. » (Dominique 20/06).

Le constat d'une subalternité conjoncturelle nous oblige à proposer de nouveaux jalons théoriques pour comprendre les « classes subalternes ». À travers la classe paysanne mélanésienne de « Sedaka », l'intention de Scott était moins de parler d'une classe vivant dans la périphérie de l'économie-monde, victime de la dépossession de ses moyens de production, que de l'ensemble de la classe populaire opprimée par les nouvelles contraintes du pouvoir, sans cesse renouvelées. D'où ses références nombreuses à Michel Foucault, E.P. Thompson, George Rudé, Éric Hobsbawm plutôt qu'à Karl Marx, à la classe ouvrière (Richard C. Cobb) et paysanne française (via Balzac, Zola, Bloch) ou africaine (via Jean DuVignaud, Goran Hyden), aux esclaves afro-américains (via Armstead L. Robinson), aux pays d'Europe de l'Est sous domination soviétique (via Vaclav Havel, Witwold Gombrowicz), en passant par les désertions des soldats de l'armée mexicaine en 1914, russe en 1917, chinoise en 1948...

Scott s'inscrit dans la tradition gramscienne qui fait de la domination subie le plus grand dénominateur commun des subalternes, tout en prenant en compte les différentes figures du dominé, les différentes formes de domination, et les nombreuses manières de s'y déprendre. L'accent est posé sur les luttes contre l'*appropriation* du travail, de la production, de la propriété, de la richesse, de l'espace, quand ce n'est pas tout simplement les besoins matériels essentiels à la survie qui sont en jeu (Scott 1985 : 291-6). Scott, tout comme Gramsci, ne pense pas en termes de lutte des classes, mais de lutte des opprimés.

Tout comme les résistances des paysans de « Sedaka » seraient incompréhensibles sans la prise en compte des bouleversements induits par la Révolution verte et son application dans les rizières, champs de frictions et de frottements entre groupes dominé et dominant, les résistances des Charlevoisiens au G7 ne seraient comprises qu'à moitié si l'on ne restitue pas leur subalternité dans la longue durée (Braudel 1958).

Constituée en seigneurie en 1627, la région de La Malbaie est négligée par ses propriétaires, du fait de son éloignement de Québec et de son inaccessibilité. Finalement intégrée au Domaine d'Occident du Roi de France en 1724, elle est dévolue à l'approvisionnement des postes de traite de la région en aliments de toute sorte (Dubé 1986 : 17-23). Il faut attendre la conquête anglaise en 1763, et

la concession de la seigneurie par la couronne britannique à deux officiers Highlanders, John Nairne et Malcom Fraser, pour que la région s'engage dans la voie du développement (Blanchard 1935). Le second entreprend la construction d'une route pour relier la région à la ville de Québec. Elle ne sera achevée qu'au début du XIX^e siècle, en même temps que la voie ferroviaire, sous l'impulsion du nouvel homme fort de la région, Sir Rodolphe Forget, riche financier de Montréal, et député de Charlevoix à la chambre des Communes.

Au début du XX^e siècle, l'économie de la région, traditionnellement rurale, mélangeant agriculture d'auto-subsistance et commerce local, s'industrialise autour de la foresterie. Une usine de pâte et papier s'installe à Clermont, mais le déclin continue de la demande depuis 1999, accentué par la contraction de la crise de 2008, rend l'avenir de l'usine incertain, qui multiplie les arrêts de production depuis 2012.

La subalternité économique structurelle de Charlevoix s'est accentuée depuis un siècle et demi, via sa dépendance au tourisme. Son histoire avec la villégiature remonte à la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, mais elle prend une nouvelle tournure en 1899, lorsque les navires de croisières luxueux, connus encore aujourd'hui par les Malbécens sous le nom de « bateaux blancs », s'arrêtent au quai de Pointe-au-Pic. Les voyageurs y débarquent pour quelques jours, et logent dans le Manoir que la *Richelieu & Ontario Navigation Company* vient de construire. Il accueille de nombreux hôtes de renoms, dont le président William H. Taft, Charlie Chaplin, le duc de Kent, le roi de Siam, etc.

Les « bateaux blancs » exercent une telle force d'attraction que les environs de La Malbaie deviennent un lieu de villégiature prisé par les riches estivants du Nord-Est américain. C'est ce que Philippe Dubé appelle la tradition du « pays visité » (Dubé 1986 : 1). Cet afflux de visiteurs fait vivre les Charlevoisiens, qui louent leur service pour l'occasion. Pour comprendre l'ampleur de la présence de ces saisonniers, James Macpherson Lemoine disait d'eux en 1872 qu'ils « paraissent presque prendre possession de La Malbaie » (Macpherson Lemoine 1872 : 358). L'historien Charlevoisien Serge Gauthier donne une autre dimension à cette métaphore en parlant de « la culture de l'autre » (2002), en faisant référence à la fascination exercée par les riches estivants anglophones sur les Charlevoisiens, fascination qui se transforme en respect, quand ce n'est pas en déférence.

Actuellement, l'hébergement, la restauration et le commerce de détail représentent à eux seuls 52% des emplois de la région (Direction de la planification, du partenariat et de l'information sur le marché du travail d'Emploi-Québec 2010 : 26). Cette « culture du travail saisonnier » trouve une expression paroxystique dans les projets de grande envergure comme celui du Manoir Richelieu, du Massif de Charlevoix, et nouvellement du Club Med, ce que Serge Gauthier appelle l'« économie du veau d'or » (Gauthier 2016).

Dernière remarque à propos de la subalternité économique de la région : le « trou noir ». C'est le nom donné par les Charlevoisiens à la période d'absence de revenus entre la fin des prestations de l'assurance-emploi et la reprise du

travail. Le nombre de semaines à l'assurance-emploi est calculé selon le nombre d'heures travaillées et le taux de chômage de sa région. Charlevoix est rattachée au secteur 19, avec Capitale-Nationale (grande région de la ville de Québec). L'impact de cet amalgame est énorme pour les Charlevoisiens. Pour se faire une idée rapide, le taux de chômage de la Capitale-Nationale est de 4,6%, alors que celui de Charlevoix est de 11,2%. En 2017, environ 2 000 Charlevoisiens ont été directement touchés par le trou noir (Tremblay 2017), qui peut parfois durer jusqu'à 15 semaines (Figure 12).

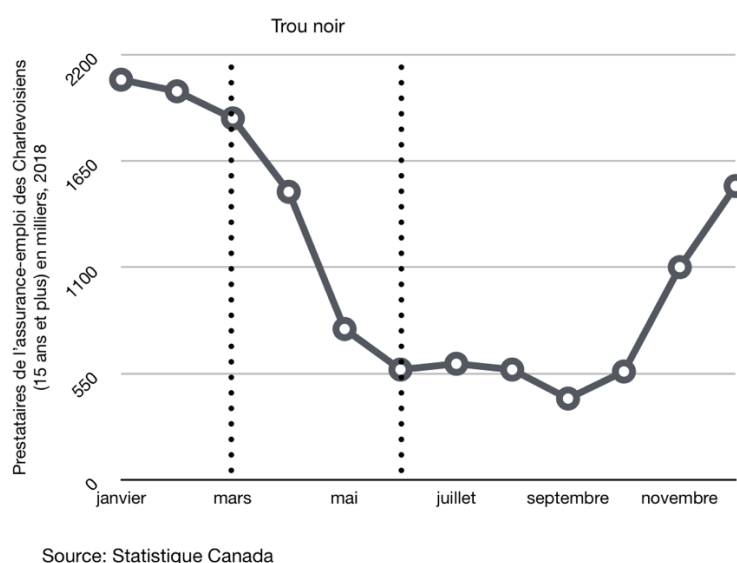


Figure 12. Illustration graphique du trou noir de l'assurance-emploi dans Charlevoix

Pour ce qui est de la subalternité politique structurelle de la région, mentionnons simplement le référendum de 1995 sur l'accession du Québec à la souveraineté (le « Oui » obtenant 56,6%, contre 49,4% au Québec), l'assimilation du comté de Charlevoix au niveau provincial, lors de la réforme de la carte électorale en 2012, avec la région Est de la ville de Québec (Côte-de-Beaupré et Île d'Orléans), et au niveau fédéral dans la circonscription de la Capitale-Nationale, qui dilue les voix des Charlevoisiens dans celle de la ville de Québec (Figure 13).

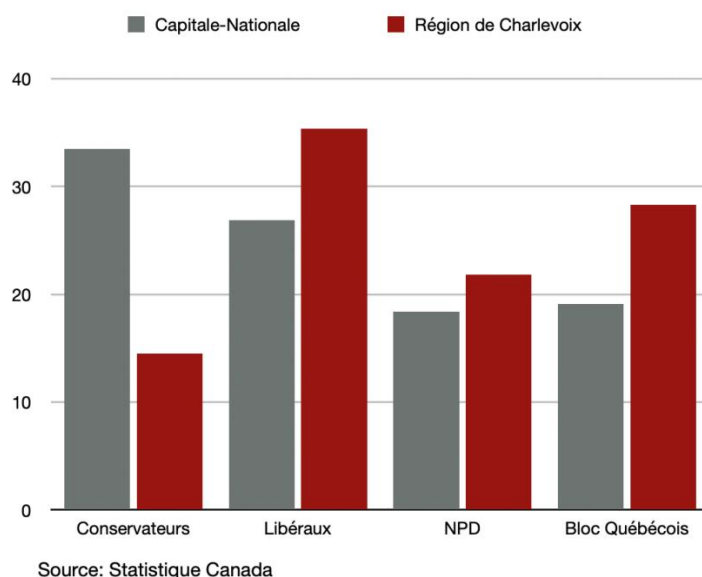


Figure 13. Résultats des élections fédérales de 2015 dans la circonscription de Capitale-Nationale et dans la région de Charlevoix

Classes dirigeantes, classes subalternes

A partir de l'exemple charlevoisien, j'aimerais maintenant mettre en lumière la dualité du rapport dialectique entre classes subalternes et classes dirigeantes. Est dirigeante pour Gramsci la classe rendue maître de l'appareil d'État, unie à travers lui, et assurée de son hégémonie tant et aussi longtemps qu'elle parvient à lier organiquement « société politique » et « société civile » (Gramsci 1991 : 325). Elle domine les classes subalternes de l'extérieur.

Mais Gramsci nous propose dans son troisième cahier une piste de lecture prometteuse. Il y fait mention d'une « classe évoluée » en charge de la « direction consciente » des classes subalternes contre la classe dirigeante (Gramsci 1996 : 295). A la différence des premières, celle-ci fait partie intégrante des classes subalternes. Ce n'est qu'à cette condition qu'elle peut être organiquement son fer de lance.

En relevant cette nuance, Gramsci révèle l'existence de deux classes dirigeantes, et donc de deux types de rapports entre classe dirigeante et classes subalternes : un rapport extérieur d'aliénation, et un rapport interne de subjectivation. Si, pour Gramsci, le second est porteur d'un élan révolutionnaire dans la formation d'une conscience historique et politique de soi (Liguori 2016 : 425), il est également vecteur de subalternité dans le cas où la culture de l'avant-garde subalterne est extérieure à celle des classes marginales. Ces dernières seraient dans ce cas doublement subalternes, d'abord vis-à-vis de la classe dirigeant la société politique, ensuite vis-à-vis de la classe dirigeant la société civile. Seule la forme du pouvoir hégémonique change, conservatrice pour l'une, subversive pour l'autre.

Nous avons montré plus haut comment la subalternité des Charlevoisiens s'inscrit dans la longue durée. Si les thèses de Gramsci et de Scott sont exactes, nous devrions alors identifier chez les Charlevoisiens les traces structurelles d'une « petite tradition ».

Avant de faire la lumière sur son éventuelle présence, il est important de relever les deux figures convenues de la classe dirigeante locale, dépendamment de la nature de son pouvoir, économique pour l'une, politique pour l'autre. Ces figures sont celle du *villégiateur* et du *seigneur*. La vision et les comportements des Charlevoisiens envers ces deux types de classe dirigeante sont radicalement différents, tout comme leur infra-politique. Ils considèrent le premier comme celui « qui donne », et le second comme celui « qui prend ». Ils entretiennent un rapport conjoncturel d'opportunisme avec le premier, générateur d'un revenu d'appoint, et un rapport structurel de défiance, voire de mépris, envers le second, qui ponctionne revenus et ressources (entrevue avec Serge Gauthier, vendredi 25/10/2019).

Les principales modalités infra-politiques structurelles des Charlevoisiens vis-à-vis du pouvoir économique sont l'opportunisme et la décrédibilisation. Pour illustrer la première, pensons aux Charlevoisiens qui ont démonté les cloisons des maisons de villégiateurs pour les utiliser comme bois de chauffage durant l'hiver, ou ceux qui ont profité de la fermeture imminente de l'usine de pâte-et-papier Donohue pour voler outils, tapis, et panneaux (entrevue avec Serge Gauthier, 25/10/2019). La seconde trouve une illustration à travers William H. Taft, ancien président américain et nouveau juge à la Cour suprême, que les Malbéens gratifiaient ironiquement du quolibet de « Petit Juge », en référence à son imposant tour de taille (Dubé 1986 : 127).

En ce qui concerne celles visant le pouvoir politique, mentionnons l'exit fiscal, à travers leur refus caractérisé de payer la rente seigneuriale. De nos jours, une telle soustraction au pouvoir juridico-administratif passe par l'importance de l'économie souterraine. Il n'est pas rare que les services se paient toujours entre Charlevoisiens « en billets du dominion ». Citons encore l'opportunisme, à travers le braconnage, ou les déclarations mensongères en vue de toucher les allocations familiales, et l'insubordination, comme ce fut le cas en 1797, lorsque Joseph Villeneuve lance vertement à son seigneur Thomas Nairne : « Va-t'en à ton pays de Londres » (cité dans Lalancette 2011 : 10). Je peux également évoquer l'épisode de la conscription de 1813. Comme le G7, ce fut pour les Charlevoisiens un événement de haute pression, générant en aval son lot de résistances infra-politiques. Parmi elles, on y retrouve la grogne, le commérage (murmures, rumeurs), la décrédibilisation (moquerie, insultes) et l'insubordination (intimidation) envers les capitaines de milice, la divulgation (dénonciations privées et publiques), et l'exit militaire, via les nombreux exemptés, réfractaires et déserteurs, le tout atteignant son paroxysme avec la révolte anticonscription de mars-avril 1813 à La Malbaie et aux Éboulements (Lalancette 2014 et 2019).

Ces quelques exemples nous permettent d'abord de situer les résistances infra-politiques observées lors du G7 dans le temps long. Grâce à ce recul historique,

il est possible de les considérer comme un moment de leur « petite tradition », et de relever à travers elles les occurrences dans les modalités utilisées. Je pense que l'usage récurrent de l'opportunisme nous en dit beaucoup sur la pauvreté structurelle, vécue et conscientisée par les Charlevoisiens, prêts à saisir l'argent quand il vient (tourisme), ou tâchant d'éviter les multiples occasions de le perdre (taxes).

On ne comprendrait que partiellement les résistances et la subalternité conjoncturelles au G7 si nous évacuions les résistances et la subalternité structurelles des Charlevoisiens. Ces dernières nous permettent de comprendre pourquoi ils considèrent le G7 comme de la « visite » et comme « manne », et les sept dirigeants comme des villégiateurs de prestige. Ce n'est qu'après avoir vécu le sommet, après avoir subi la présence policière massive, et après plusieurs mois de recul que l'idéologie produite à cette occasion perd de son autorité. Un an et demi après les interviews, le regard de Dominique sur le G7 tranche avec sa première impression : « Après nos heures de gloire, on nous oublie très vite, et les promesses qui ne viennent pas... » (Dominique 20/10/2019).

Je tiens maintenant à montrer, à travers l'exemple charlevoisien, et la distinction subjective qui fait autorité dans la région entre Charlevoisiens « pures laine » et « étranges », comment les classes dirigeantes subalternes, à l'inverse de l'interprétation gramscienne, entretiennent un rapport de pouvoir avec les classes marginales sous couvert de leur travail de conscientisation.

La première distinction fait référence à l'image dépréciative produite et reproduite par les Charlevoisiens de souche envers les Charlevoisiens d'adoption, qui se voient eux-mêmes, dans ce jeu de miroir, comme des « immigrés » (Dominique 18/04). Cette distinction nous en dit beaucoup sur la composition de la population charlevoisienne, bien loin de l'homogénéité du village de « Sedaka » (Scott 1985 : 86-110), et sur l'existence d'une infra-politique axiologique qui rééquilibre, à l'interne et dans le quotidien, les rapports de pouvoir structurés autour de la culture, et non selon la place occupée dans le mode de production.

Nous retrouvons chez les Charlevoisiens « pures laine » les valeurs culturelles de la classe laborieuse, organisés autour de la famille et de la localité (terroir, paroisse, ou quartier), valorisant le travail manuel et productif, l'adversité, le respect, l'entraide, l'honnêteté, l'amitié, l'accueil : « Chez nous, on est resté plus vers la terre, vers la visite [...] J'ai une grand-mère qui ... [...] il y avait plein de monde, pis elle mettait le chaudron sur la table. [...] C'était convivial [...]. Plus communautaire. S'il y en avait pour six, y'en avait pour dix. Pis, quand il n'y avait pas beaucoup de monde, elle appelait le monde pour qu'ils viennent manger » (Dominique 18/04).

J'ai relevé dans plus de la moitié des entretiens six occurrences spontanées qui illustrent bien cette distance culturelle (Figure 14). Celles-ci font référence aux valeurs humaines et communautaires mentionnées plus haut, à la conscience de

la pauvreté dans la région, au chômage endémique, à la prépondérance de l'économie touristique, à la division culturelle entre Charlevoix-Est et Charlevoix-Ouest, et à l'importance attribuée à la qualité de vie, valeur plus individualiste.

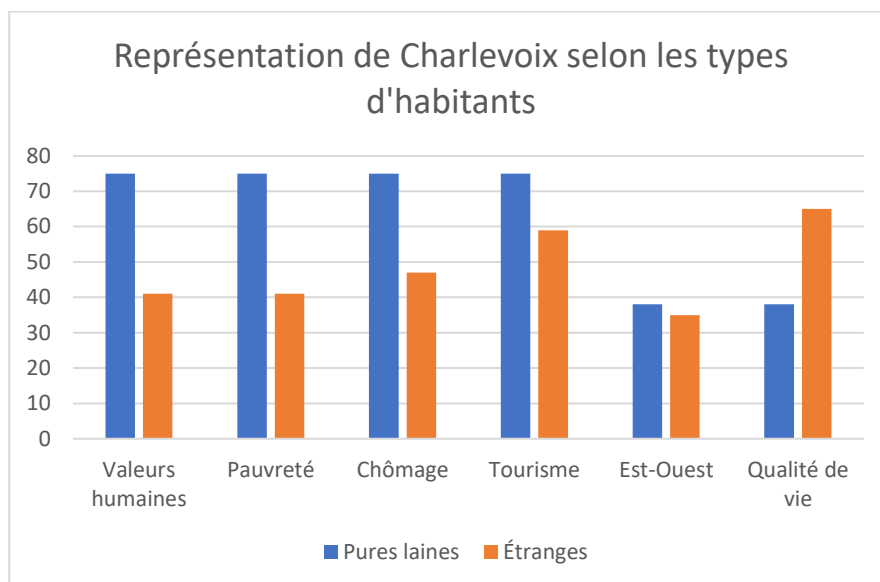


Figure 14

Les différences apparaissent nettement sur ce graphique, et le sont encore plus lorsqu'on introduit une distinction supplémentaire entre « étrangères de longue date » (habitant la région depuis plus de 20 ans) et « étrangères » (moins de 20 ans). Elle nous permet d'évaluer leur degré d'intégration au terroir charlevoisien (et donc à sa culture), tant objectivement (acquisition de la culture locale) que subjectivement (quasi-assimilation par les « pures laine ») (Figure 15).

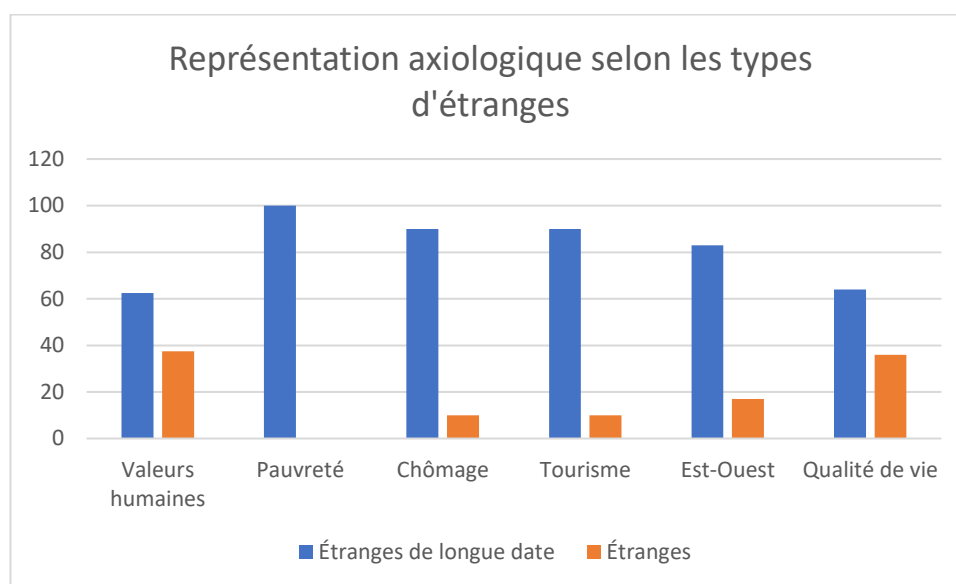


Figure 15

Tâchons maintenant d'articuler la distinction entre Charlevoisiens « pures laine » et « étranges », et celle des Charlevoisiens politisés et non-politisés pour comprendre la nature de la classe dirigeante subalterne conjoncturelle au G7, et son rapport avec les classes marginales charlevoisiennes.

Des 72% des Charlevoisiens qui appréhendent le G7 comme événement essentiellement apolitique, 88% sont des « pures laine » (ceux qui ont déclaré le contraire étaient directement impliqués dans l'organisation de la manifestation du 3 juin), et 63% des « étranges » (dont 90% d'« étranges de longue date »). Il semble que le rapport des Charlevoisiens à leur terroir influe sur leur regard porté sur le G7, et leur conscience de la nature politique de l'évènement. On peut conclure que les classes marginales subalternes du G7 sont constituées en majorité de Charlevoisiens de souche, non-politisés.

Qu'en est-il de l'organisation de la résistance locale au G7 ? Les principaux moteurs de la résistance politique se recrutent dans le tissu militant québécois urbain, surtout à travers le REPAC, « Eau Secours » et le « Comité populaire Saint-Baptiste », tous basés à Québec, principaux organisateurs de la manifestation du 3 juin à La Malbaie ; à travers l'intervention de Francis Dupuis-Déri à Baie-Saint-Paul le 12 février, et moi-même, jeune « étrange », et instigateur de cette rencontre. Ceci nous montre la capacité de déploiement et de délocalisation du tissu militant urbain, son rôle moteur dans cette organisation périphérique de la résistance au sommet (Wood, Staggenborg, Stalker et Kutz-Flamenbaum 2017), même si l'impact et l'ampleur de cette résistance demeure bien moindre qu'en ville.

Soulignons également la subalternité des Charlevoisiens à travers le Centre-Femmes, qui, selon une de ses représentantes, était « prêt à s'impliquer » contre le G7, à condition que ce « ne soit pas nous qui *lead* ». La décision du REPAC

d'organiser une action collective était suspendue à l'aval de leurs deux représentantes, présentes lors de l'assemblée générale du 23 février, décision qui n'allait pas sans « pression » pour l'une d'entre elles (Raphaëlle 14/05).

Conclusion

Il existe bel et bien des résistances locales au G7 de Charlevoix, des résistances politiques et infra-politiques, des résistances planifiées, publiques, dirigées par des communautés militantes extérieures à la région, s'appuyant sur des organismes ou des particuliers locaux, et des résistances non-coordonnées, mais simultanées, feutrées, anonymes, réactionnelles et conjoncturelles, propre à la communauté charlevoisienne, à son terroir, à sa culture, et à son histoire.

J'ai voulu montrer par des arguments théoriques et empiriques que ce serait se tromper que de considérer les résistances infra-politiques des Charlevoisiens au G7 comme de simples réactions civiles. Lorsqu'il y a subalternité, il y a infra-politique, expression liminale d'un rapport ambivalent au pouvoir, fait de résistance et de consentement.

Sur le plan méthodologique, cette étude aurait gagné en profondeur et en solidité si j'avais procédé à une analyse diachronique et péri-événementielle. Elle m'aurait permis de situer les résistances des Charlevoisiens au G7 dans le moyen terme, à la lumière d'une recherche *ex ante* et *ex post*. L'apport de cette démarche est évident, tout comme les limites de sa faisabilité. Habitant la région depuis six ans, j'ai été en mesure d'observer de près les pratiques des Charlevoisiens, mais suis toujours resté un « étrange » aux yeux des « pures laine », avec ses idées et ses valeurs, ses attitudes et ses conduites, sa sociabilité et son réseau relationnel, vivant dans un monde accessible au leur qu'en de rares occasions.

La tenue du sommet du G7 révèle également les deux niveaux de la dialectique entre classes subalternes et classes dirigeantes, globales et locales. Les résistances infra-politiques observées sont une « trace d'initiative autonome » (Gramsci 1991 : 309) des Charlevoisiens subalternisés par la classe dirigeante mondiale, alors que les résistances politiques sont la preuve de leur hétéronomie sur le plan local et provincial, de la fragmentation et du caractère apolitique de leur tissu communautaire, de leur dépendance vis-à-vis d'une « classe évoluée », qu'elle soit charlevoisienne, en majorité composée d'« étranges », et urbaine, à l'origine des actions collectives civiles et politiques dans la région. Deux formes de résistances pour deux formes de subalternités : une subalternité globale de l'ensemble de la population charlevoisienne, et une subalternité locale des charlevoisiens « pures laine ».

Sur le plan théorique, cette étude contribue à actualiser la définition des classes subalternes esquissée par Gramsci. Je parle d'« esquisse », parce qu'elle apporte aux premiers abords plus des pistes de réflexion qu'une grille de lecture opératoire claire et précise. Guido Liguori les résume au nombre de quatre.

Gramsci utilise le terme « subalterne » pour faire référence aux positions sociales les plus marginales dans la société (esclaves, serfs, prolétaires), aux classes à même de contester l'hégémonie de la classe dominante (prolétariat industriel avancé), à des « sujets singuliers » plutôt qu'à des classes ou des groupes sociaux, et enfin à un rapport culturel, voire psychologique, de pouvoir, sur ses classes ou ses sujets (Liguori 2016 : 428). Vu sous l'angle charlevoisien, la multidimensionalité de cette définition prend tout son sens, chacun de ces éléments renvoyant à un aspect particulier de la dialectique entre « classes subalternes » et « classes dirigeantes ». Le premier fait référence aux Charlevoisiens « pures laine », le second aux Charlevoisiens « étranges » politisés et aux mouvements urbains anti-G7, le troisième au caractère fragmenté, parcellaire et spontané des résistances infra-politiques des Charlevoisiens, et le dernier au pouvoir hégémonique des classes dirigeantes locales, provinciales, fédérales et mondiales.

Cette étude permet ensuite de relever l'existence d'une subalternité conjoncturelle, qui renforce la subalternité structurelle des classes marginales que forment les Charlevoisiens « pures laine ». L'articulation du long et du court terme nous permet en deuxième lieu de comprendre comment l'adhésion spontanée des Charlevoisiens aux arguments économiques et symboliques dominants est liée à l'économie et la culture touristique, et relève de leur subalternité structurelle. Une telle articulation nous permet de remarquer en dernier lieu comment les modalités infra-politiques les plus fréquentes lors du G7 (exit, opportunisme, décrédibilisation) sont aussi historiquement les plus récurrentes. Cette « petite tradition » se manifeste autant dans le quotidien que durant les épisodes exceptionnels de haute pression, identifiable dès la fin du XVIII^e siècle.

Le cas charlevoisien nous oblige troisièmement à nuancer la thèse gramscienne d'une alliance organique presque mécanique entre « classe évoluée » et franges marginales des classes subalternes. Il abonde dans le sens contraire en montrant comment le décalage conjoncturel entre « direction consciente » des premières et « spontanéité » des secondes dérive d'un décalage structurel. Cet isolement s'explique par la compartimentation culturelle intestine des classes subalternes charlevoisiennes entre classe dirigeante et classes marginales, qui s'exprime de manière vernaculaire par la distinction entre Charlevoisiens « pures laine » et « étranges ». En d'autres termes, les Charlevoisiens de souche ne disposent pas de leur propre élite politique.

En cela, l'avant-garde politique charlevoisienne qui fait surface au contact du G7, parce qu'elle n'est pas son avant-garde culturelle, ne peut former une alliance organique avec sa base. Sans symbiose, pas de « politique de masse », juste de simples « aventure[s] de groupes » vivant dans le même espace, tout en ayant le sentiment et la conscience de ne pas faire partie entièrement du même monde, deux solitudes qui luttent ensemble séparément contre un ennemi commun dans l'incompréhension, si ce n'est l'indifférence de l'autre. Les classes marginales charlevoisiennes représentées par cette classe dirigeante sont aussi dominées par elles qu'étrangères à elles. Il est possible de relancer la question

en se demandant qu'en aurait-il été si les « étranges de longue date » auraient pris une place plus importante dans la « direction consciente » de l'action politique anti-G7. Faut-il y voir la clé dans la formation d'une « autonomie intégrale » et d'un « bloc hégémonique » charlevoisien ?

Dernière remarque, et nouvelle piste de réflexion, je propose de considérer les résistances infra-politiques à la lumière de ce que Gramsci qualifie dans le cahier 27 de « droit populaire », soit « une masse d'opinions 'juridiques' populaires qui prennent la forme du 'droit naturel' » (Gramsci 1991 : 341-342). Lorsque le pouvoir en vient à excéder ce droit, le peuple se donne celui de réagir selon la proportion de l'outrage. Le vécu prend alors la mesure de l'excès du normatif tel qu'acté dans la loi, de l'exception du droit institué (remise en cause des libertés fondamentales) et coutumier (de son droit acquis sur l'espace). Dans le cas charlevoisien, ce dernier s'exprime à travers la mobilisation du lexique de l'occupation et de la dépossession, mis en exergue par les mots de Jacqueline, Charlevoisienne d'adoption, en parlant du zonage et de la clôture de 1,4 km de long : « Ils n'aiment pas ça. C'est sur leur territoire. [...] Ça brime des droits qu'ils ont » (Jacqueline 04/05).

On retrouve cette référence à l'usage deux siècles plus tôt, lorsque des Charlevoisiens se sont ouvertement opposés à la conscription de 1813. Les frères Alexis et Henri Brassard, habitants de La Malbaie et chefs de la rébellion, soutenaient qu'« il n'y a que Dieu qui est leur Roi. [...] Que les commandements c'était sans droit et aucune justice, qu'ils appartenaient encore aux Français ni ayant pas encore 50 ans que les Anglais étaient au Canada et qu'il ne faut pas obéir à ces ordres anglais, qu'ils avaient pas de force » (cité dans Lalancette 2014 : 14). L'usage renvoie au terroir charlevoisien, à une culture commune, à des leaders qui se détachent, s'en revendiquent, et se recrutent parmi les classes marginales. L'usage nous en dit plus encore sur la nature infra-politique de leur engagement. Leur but n'est pas de défier l'hégémonie de la classe dirigeante, mais de montrer la primauté de leur souveraineté coutumière sur la souveraineté de l'État, de leur morale sur les lois établies.

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"It's not just an occupation, it's our home!" The politics of everyday life in a long-term occupation in Cape Town and their effects on movement development

Björn Herold and Margaux DeBarros

Abstract

This empirically focused article takes a closer look at the specifically challenging role of internal dynamics and micro-politics in a squatter movement that have been conspicuously absent from the eye of scholars even in social movement literature. We ask 'what happens to a movement itself when a tactic of collective action becomes its mode of existence and its very base?' Through an in-depth anthropological analysis of the occupation-based "Reclaim The City" social movement in Cape Town we explore what effects the evolving everyday life and its accompanying challenges have on social movement development, movement participation and its political impact. We argue that besides potentially generating thick ties of solidarity and cohesion, constant, intense and inescapable proximity may also bear the risk of individual withdrawal that triggers, requires, and explains fundamental shifts in movement activity and its organization. As a consequence, movement organizers have to divert attention increasingly inwards with the effect of a decrease in external movement activity and eventually its political impact.

Keywords: social movements, Cape Town, everyday practices, routines, micro-politics, squatter movement, resistance, gentrification, spatial apartheid, social housing

Introduction

This empirically focused article takes a closer look specifically at the challenging role of internal dynamics and micro-politics resulting from intense everyday life in a squatter movement that has been conspicuously absent from the eye of scholars in social movement literature – with a few exceptions such as Caciagli 2019, Huron 2015, Noterman 2015 and in a certain way also Bayat (2000). Through a micro-level analysis of the occupation-based social movement Reclaim The City in Cape Town, we argue that besides potentially generating thick ties of solidarity and cohesion, the constant, intense and inescapable proximity of an occupation also bears the risk of individual withdrawal that triggers, requires, and explains fundamental shifts in movement activity. We thus aim to contribute to the literature, growing only recently, that emphasizes the importance of an inside view on social movements in order to understand

their functioning, impact and efficacy (Caciagli 2019, Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield 2011, Yates 2015, de Moor 2016, Bouillon 2009, Blee 2012, Huron 2015, Noterman 2016, Bresnihan and Byrne 2015). We further push this perspective by following the very challenges of everyday life in an occupation to unravel their consequences for movement building and participation. We argue that exactly those recurring and constant frustrations in everyday life, as small as they are, often add up to people's low level of participation and increasingly pejorative perception of the movement. This perspective stands in contrast to other micro-level analyses that mostly focus on the potentialities and positive effects on e.g. group solidarity, a common project and political influence against gentrification.

Our case study of one out of two main occupations of the social movement Reclaim The City is informative in this respect, as the occupation went through an extreme process of transformation and also reinterpretation. What started as a short-term form of protest and a classical tactic of direct action to reach public visibility in the struggle against the sale of public land, privatisation and gentrification as well as the deconstruction of 'spatial apartheid', transformed into a long-term occupation and now serves as a home for over 900 people who suffered from these very grounds of protest.

As such, one could quickly interpret it with recourse to Pruijt's (2013) typology as a "deprivation-based squatting" since the movement is mainly composed of evicted or homeless poor and working-class people also supported by middle class activists. However, it also exhibits some features of other categories of Pruijt's typology such as "alternative housing project" or "political squatting" which, to a certain extent, question this strict categorization. As other researchers also demonstrated (e.g. Martinez 2018, Piazza 2012, Caciagli 2019, Holm and Kuhn 2010), Pruijt's categorization is useful to show the diversity of squatting activity, but it does not take processes of political and social evolution of such movements sufficiently into account. As Caciagli (2019) argued, most squats are actually forged by political action and are not static entities. Additionally, as Fillieule (2010) noticed, the sociology of collective action focused more on the movement's emergence or visible moments of protests (Yates 2015) than on their trajectories, which counts for the literature on squats as well.

The evolution of a squat and its internal dynamics is important to take into consideration when analysing a movement as it would be naive to think that dynamics such as an intense increase of the number of occupiers, the opening of new spaces, the establishment of rules and duties would not have any influence on movement activities and its functioning. In other words, everyday life and the resulting internal dynamics, their challenges and the evolution of a movement are responsible for its constant redefinition. Another typology from Péchu (2010) suggests that squatting is either a "classist" form of collective protest for the right of housing or a "counter-cultural project" that uses the squat as an end in itself. Apart from 'counterculture' being a concept that rather

stems from European scholarship and contexts and that is not directly applicable to extra-European contexts, we will demonstrate that both logics overlap in our case study. This often creates tensions about the definitions of the movement's goals and activities.

Bouillon (2009) analysed the daily life of squatting using an anthropological perspective. While Péchu's work mainly focuses on the ideological discourse and meso-level of squatting organisations, Bouillon studies the routines and competences developed by the occupiers in a precarious space. The dialogue between the political organisation (meso-level) and the daily life of occupiers (micro-level) is often eluded, giving the impression that there is no interaction between the two (Fillieule 2011). As Siméant and Sawicky observe, "activist organizations, as organizations, and regardless of their degree of institutionalization, work on individuals and are worked by individuals" (2009, 115) and therefore studies would do well to connect both levels in their analyses. Becker (1963) also demonstrated through an interactionist perspective that attitudes, behaviours, and social activities are only understandable if one takes into account the influence of institutions on individuals. The micro-level approach is therefore inseparable from the organizational and social context in which individuals evolve. Additionally, if the micro-level is studied, scholars, in our view, do not pay enough attention to the resulting challenges and rather glide over them to emphasize the potential for creating solidarity and cohesion (Yates 2015; Caciagli 2019; Maeckelbergh 2012; Bouillon et al. 2012; Steyn 2016). Statements like the following one from Yates (2015, 238-239) are frequent in the literature on squatters, which we want to balance by emphasizing the challenges and constraints of proximity:

everyday practices can develop and establish relationships of cooperation, learning and a culture of experimentation with political ideas about everyday life in their own right. These processes allow different types of social groupings to coalesce and derive group solidarity, share skills and understandings, and they help explain recruitment and rapid mobilization beyond activist cadres.

Part of our focus in this paper is contributing to social movement theory and even more specifically to gain new insights into squatter movements. However, our case study also serves as an example for a movement against gentrification and adds to the massive literature in this vein (Slater 2009; Lees 2012; Lees et al. 2016; Lees and Philipps 2018; Atkinson and Bridge 2008; Hamnett 1991; Smith 1992). While literature on gentrification, and even more so on anti-gentrification movements, has been prolific internationally, analyses of Cape Town are comparatively rare (e.g. Garside 1993; Visser and Kotze 2008, Lemanski 2014) compared to the emergence of the phenomenon itself in several South African cities as early as the 1990s. If researchers have documented the cooperation of public and private sectors and the tools they strategically use to

foster gentrification, the answers and resistances of the inhabitants affected by the phenomenon have been little explored.

We understand resistances as “practices of individuals and groups who attempt to stay put in the face of exclusionary, neoliberalizing forces. In this respect we can say that resistance to gentrification ‘seeks to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation’” (Annunziata and Rivas-Alonso 2018, 395). Herein lies the implication of resistance as practices in motion, of creation, of dynamics, of finding new ways in gaining new grounds in a struggle against a hegemon. However, in the course of this paper, we develop the notion of ‘stagnant resistance’. On the one hand, stagnancy in our case describes both an external loss of momentum expressed in a partial acceptance of resistance by the government and the public, fewer public actions as well as an internal dynamic towards the movement as an end in itself and the limitation of political ambitions. On the other hand, stagnancy also means creating spaces for developing everyday routines that many people never had that produce emotional attachment to the occupation and which in a way anchor the movement, giving it additional political weight as well as importance for securing individual livelihoods. Thus, stagnancy in resistance is not a devaluation but rather a status description that contains both opportunities and limitations.

With our case study we also want to add an example from the ‘Global South’ to the discussion of movements for the ‘right to stay put’, which is highly dominated by cases from Europe and the US. On the one hand, Reclaim The City (RTC) does exhibit many parallels to movements such as Coordinamento Cittadino di Lotta per la Casa (Caciagli 2019, Annunziata and Lees 2016), the Instandbesetzungen in Berlin (Holm and Kuhn 2011; Ozozomox 2014), the numerous squatting movements in England (e.g. Dee 2014; Grohmann 2020), and especially La Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) movement in Barcelona (Annunziata and Lees 2016). On the other hand, we will show how locally specific urban policies, historicities and localities shaped the evolution and the specific composition of RTC. In this regard, the main dimension that differentiates RTC from squatter movements in the global North is that its “master frame” (Snow and Benford 1992) is less to build a comprehensive alternative to capitalism (Cattaneo and Martínez 2014) but to “undo the legacy of spatial apartheid”.

Reexploring spatial proximity and everyday resistance

The ‘everyday’ is inherently political as it is the expression of structural economic inequality. In this paper we focus on the potential of everyday lives to create challenges for movement building and the overall political impact. This is even more important in a movement which draws its political weight precisely *not* from spectacular forms of protest but from creating spaces of mundanity.

The concept of the 'everyday' (in this paper we use the words 'daily' and 'mundane' as synonyms) is fundamental for our argument and we understand it generally as the collection of routinized practices and experiences on which people's lives are based. In the case of occupations, everyday lives must be negotiated not only in between occupiers but also between the political intentions of the movement and the occupiers. These inner-occupational politics clearly contain the idea and the aim of transforming everyday lives into vehicles for fostering movement participation. However, we observed that everyday lives often escape from these movement purposes, which has consequences for the development of a political movement. Following Nolas et al., a focus on "everyday practices and experiences is necessary in order to understand the spaces between intentions and actualities, so often obscured by the stories that movements tell themselves over time" (Nolas et al., 254).

Researchers who have looked at everyday resistance also explored the role of space in social movements (Ripoll 2010; Hmed 2008). Space is not only a support for mobilization, it is also commonly regarded as a strategy and a motor of solidarity. Indeed, the proximity between activists sharing similar social trajectories, grievances and interests would promote cohesion and solidarity and thus be at the basis of new political possibilities (Routledge 2017). Squatting is not only a symbol of resistance for external observers but also has a key role in forging the resistance of its occupants, particularly through education, knowledge and politicisation (Caciagli 2019).

Daily practices of resistance have been highlighted by some researchers (Frère and Jacqmain 2013) but most of the literature focuses on post-materialist movements (Melucci 1996; Yates 2015) such as feminism and ecologism. Yates (2015) identified the daily and practical forms of resistance and solidarity in social centres; however, these counter cultural spaces are composed of inhabitants that have been previously politically socialized, which facilitates an internal understanding of the performance of political ideas and discourse. Indeed, just because people live in a highly political space does not mean that their everyday practices are necessarily perceived as political as well, especially when the reason for moving into the occupation is in our case nearly always driven by an extreme need for shelter and basic services.

Unlike the squatters studied by Yates (2015), Prujit (2013) or Caciagli (2019), most of our interlocutors have not been previously politicized nor does the majority regard their actions as a deliberately political practice of resistance. As other researchers have shown through an interactionist perspective (Eliasoph 2010, Salman 1997; Eliasoph et Lichterman 2003), the association of people sharing a common interest is not necessarily synonymous with politicization and engagement, even for groups with a political dimension. Social movements are deeply heterogeneous; people are not equally disposed and willing to transform their presence into a political act of resistance, even if once they join the occupation they are all considered by the movement as activists belonging to the group. Moreover, engagement dynamics can be curbed by the extreme daily

proximity among squatters and their mundane concerns, as we will see further below.

Throughout the course of this paper, we will try to shed a new light on proximity and daily routine, opposed to frequent idealizations in sociology, as elements that can possibly weaken activists' interactions and more generally the whole social movement. After having positioned our contribution within existing literature, in the next section we briefly describe the evolvement of Reclaim The City in the post-apartheid context of Cape Town to better understand the claims of the movement as well as the specific composition of occupiers as the social movement's base.

In the main analytical and empirical section we then, firstly, take a look at how the occupation has been corroborated and what opportunities it possesses for the struggle for inner-city social housing. In a second part, we take a more nuanced look at the role of permanent proximity and daily resistance in the development of a localized social movement. We identify some of the emerging internal dynamics and evolving challenges and analyse how they shape the movements character, its repertoire of action and its overall impact. This paper aims both at social movement scholars (with a focus on occupation-based movements) to advance knowledge about the meaning and consequences of micro-level dynamics in an occupation and at activists who may benefit from these observations and thoughts in order to reflect on their own movements and underlying challenges.

Research methods and issues of reflexivity

We rest our observations and findings on data gathered between September 2018 and October 2019. During this time, we had two phases in which we stayed together in the field, conducted interviews with three persons in leadership positions together and were part of both numerous informal conversations as well as formal meetings and actions. Having participated in identical situations provided the opportunity to reflect collectively on those situations. Additionally, regular conversations about our interpretations and perspectives with members of Reclaim The City, Ndifuna Ukwazi (the founding NGO) and other researchers being present during that time helped tremendously to develop multiple perspectives on and a deeper understanding of the movement as well as becoming increasingly self-reflexive and critical about the own perspective on the movement. We also draw on a total of 33 interviews, which we conducted independently from each other, and on long-term participant observation, which offered the most important insights for witnessing everyday practices and challenges in the occupation.

As such, our methodological approach implies core characteristics of what Scheper-Hughes (1995) and Jeffrey Juris called "militant ethnography" (2007, 164) to the extent that we try to use ethnography also as a way to "contribute to movement goals while using [our] embedded ethnographic position to generate

knowledge of movement practices and dynamics.”¹ At the same time we also want to contribute to social movement research by generating “theoretical insights about (...) experiences, emotions, and internal political struggles and debates” (ibid.)

Our different gender influenced the research we conducted in that we had access to different people and occasions (e.g. only Margaux was invited to a baby shower). Material issues also played a role (e.g. Björn had a car, which was a hotspot for informal conversations) and our personal social characteristics and dispositions. However, we shared similar ways of engaging in participant observation. In house meetings we preferred a rather observing behavior and rarely commented actively on issues being raised. We did not feel legitimated to comment on experiences and opinions that people shared, as we have never lived under circumstances anywhere near those of the occupiers. In smaller meetings of working groups that we were active in, however, we contributed much more as other participants encouraged us to do so. In public actions, we participated actively with singing, chanting slogans and blocking spaces, as well as waking up public figures during *escraches*². As other researchers experienced in fieldwork (Broqua 2009, Opillard 2018) our public involvement and the use of the body during demonstrations were also moments to prove ourselves and to increase acceptance within the group.

Engaging in research in post-colonial regions and precarious environments as white, European, financially and otherwise fully equipped persons not only creates a diverse range of feelings of wrongdoings, shame and “social guilt” (Memmi and Arduim 1999) throughout the research but also expresses and solidifies existing hegemonies of power, especially over the creation of knowledge. In South Africa, where the relationship between activist organizations and scholars has traditionally been both very entangled but also contested, accusations of using the poor to step up the academic ladder and for personal achievements were also mentioned frequently in our research. Especially in one-to-one interview situations, this often leads to lasting feelings of unease, when people opened the doors to their most private spaces, gave us their precious time, let us capture their words that in the end serve as building blocks of our writings and we had nothing comparable to give back. This tension, that constantly accompanies such research, cannot be resolved during a research project because it is a systemic product of historical, economic and political processes.

We tried to deal with these systemic imbalances of power and privilege, of which we and the research situation are a product, by taking seriously our

¹ <http://www.jeffreyjuris.com/research/militant-ethnography-political-engagement-and-social-movements-research>

² A direct form of demonstration, originally from Argentina, in which protesters go to officials' houses in order to publicly denounce their actions.

interlocutors' agency. Indeed, contrary to a paternalistic view, on an individual level we regard the people we work with not as victims but as people with agency, (political) attitudes, and self-determination who are capable of making decisions not only regarding their own lives but also with regard to participating and engaging with us. Our social trajectories, that produced certain dispositions and privileged statuses, heavily influence the data we collect and the way we interpret it. Unpacking that also involves a deconstruction of one's own position during research, which is crucial to understand the perspectives that open up by the analysis of the data. This is why we regard our analysis as a product of a momentary perspective based on interactions and impressions that we encountered due to a multitude of factors and privileges. There were many other corners that were left untapped, many people we did not speak to, many thoughts we did not think. As such, we welcome more diverse perspectives on RTC (both academic and non-academic) to eventually – collectively – paint a picture of this polymorphous construct.

Contesting spatial apartheid – the becoming of *Reclaim The City*

Context

The evolution of RTC must be embedded in the specific historical and social context of Cape Town, a city that is one of the most unequal in the world. This inequality does not only express itself through extreme income differences but is deeply ingrained in the city's spatial layout. Based on the legacy of the apartheid era and the institutionalization of the Group Areas Acts from 1950 until 1991, space was divided racially such that non-Whites were forcibly removed and relocated to townships³ far from urban centres where, however, most economic activity was taking place. Despite the democratisation process since 1994 and the important extension of housing and infrastructural services in townships in order to integrate them to the post-apartheid city (Levenson, 2016), the spatial patterns developed during apartheid still exist today, discriminating against people in multiple ways. In the 2000s the local government implemented "aggressive cost-recovery policies" (Oldfield and Stokke 2006), increasing the financial difficulties of poor families often affected by unemployment, to pay basic services or rent. Moreover, to build massive and low-cost social housing, private real estate companies mainly focused on plots of public land localized at the outskirts, intensifying urban sprawl and perpetuating apartheid spatial structures. Until today, inner-city developments of e.g. affordable, social or inclusionary housing in order to reduce these spatial apartheid patterns are still absent and yet to come.

³ Suburbs built at the outskirts of South African cities to house the excluded Black, Coloured, and Indian population before and during apartheid.

Additional to these reproduced relicts of apartheid spatial planning, intense dynamics of gentrification are in process especially in the neighbourhoods of Woodstock and Salt River, two of the few "mixed neighbourhoods" (Garside 1993; Visser and Kotze 2008) during apartheid. Both neighbourhoods are mainly composed of Coloured and white working-class people of whom many worked in textile and other factories located nearby. From the 90s, the textile crisis and the development of the creative industry attracted a white middle class but excluded the Coloured and white working class, increasing unemployment and social instability (see Visser and Kotze 2008 for a detailed account of population 'replacement'). For them, the rise of rent, due to the lack of rent control policies, is often followed by eviction processes, which displace many long-established and rooted families (Levenson 2017).

In response to the increase in homelessness due to evictions, public authorities decided to relocate evictees to Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs). These camps built by the City of Cape Town were initially constructed to respond to special circumstances such as natural disasters or land invasions. The most prominent TRAs are Blikkiesdorp (tin-can-town in Afrikaans) and Wolverievier, both considered as "informal settlements" quickly built in 2005 and 2007 respectively and located more than 30 kilometres away from the inner-city.⁴ Highly criticized and compared to "concentration camps" (Smith 2010) or a "human dumping ground" (Huisman 2013) by journalists and NGOs, TRAs isolate people from public services and jobs, which are both mostly situated in the inner-city. Nonetheless, because of the lack of alternatives proposed by public authorities, the TRAs have become permanent. Implemented as a temporary solution before the World Cup until 2017 and despite being overcrowded already, they remain the main alternative proposed by the City when facing evictions and natural disasters until today. People from Woodstock and Salt River refusing to go to the TRAs found unstable and temporary alternatives, living in backyard shacks or sharing rooms. As such, TRAs are a main focal point and serve as a symbol of displacement against which leaders often develop their narratives in official speeches, which were frequently mentioned in informal conversations and which are used in protests to express the government's perceived misuse of public land in the inner city. The overcrowded TRAs express the city's failure in its constitutional duty to provide decent housing to all citizens and thus a highly important frame in the struggle of RTC

Campaigning for Change – The early Days of *Reclaim The City*

Within this context of intense spatial inequality and the perceived lack of political will to actively undo the legacy of spatial apartheid, RTC evolved and

⁴ In 2016, "Our Future Cities" reported that over 20.000 people have been living only in Blikkiesdorp (<http://ourfuturecities.co/2016/06/3000-blikkiesdorp-residents-to-be-relocated/>)

developed into the currently strongest contender of urban Capetonian housing politics. RTC was created as a campaign in February 2016 by the NGO and law-clinic Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU)⁵. NU, a financially well-equipped NGO that is funded among others by the Bertha foundation, consists of four lawyers, two researchers, five so-called organizers who organize and conduct actions, a videographer who creates media content and cares about the internet and social media appearances, as well as two popular education facilitators who provide knowledge and ideas in form of workshops in the occupations. All these staff members can be called 'professional activists' fully employed by NU, most of them graduates and all belonging at least to the middle class. Between 2015 and 2016 NU was strategically shifting its focus from the provision of basic services in the townships to housing in the inner city, which Josh⁶, 38 years old, the former Co-director of NU, justified as follows:

we realized [that] if we put all our energy into the periphery, we will never transform the power that replicates the inequality in our city. [...] So we made a conscious decision that instead of focusing on the periphery we will change our attention to the center and that we would try to antagonize and disrupt their land that has much more value as a tool to shift the system a little bit. Just tinker a little bit as a whole. [...] At that stage there weren't any social movements there. We had decided to focus on inner city areas as a kind of antidote to working in Khayelitsha.

The final catalyst that made NU shift focus completely was the report of the controversial and secret sale of the Tafelberg School to a private developer in February 2016, which initiated the launch of the campaign to Reclaim The City. The Tafelberg site gained its momentum as one of the last pieces in the inner-city neighbourhood of Sea Point on which inclusionary housing was feasible. The Tafelberg case was, as Josh said, "Ground Zero" in the fight for more social housing in the inner-city.

In this first phase 'Reclaim The City' as an official label for a fixed movement was not yet in place. However meetings and protests in collaboration with a local group of workers and carers called the Rainbow Housing group were held on the promenade in Sea Point, which were attended by around 100 people under the label #stopTheSale and through which Reclaim The City became a battle cry around topics of land and spatial justice. NU, in its function as a law clinic, launched an interdict to stop the Tafelberg Sale, which after 4 years came

⁵ We are aware that the link between NGO and social movement could be central for a meso analysis of movements (Roy 2014; Ley 2014). However, a detailed discussion of the relationship between both is beyond the scope of this paper and would need to be discussed in another paper.

⁶ All the names have been changed by the authors.

to a successful end with the court decision at 31st of August 2020 that the sale was illegal.

At the same time, in April 2016, evictions happening in Bromwell Street (Woodstock) also attracted the attention of NU. Here, a whole row of buildings just behind the old Biscuit Mill – an old mill factory renovated into a luxury market that became a ‘symbol of gentrification of Woodstock’ – was bought by a real estate company called ‘the Woodstock Hub’ and tenants received an eviction order. In August 2016, people from the Seapoint meetings and Bromwell Street evictees together with NU ‘invaded’ the weekly Neighbourgoods Market in the old Biscuit Mill and protested against those evictions. Both cases serve as strategic cases for NU as they both symbolize the two main urban issues RTC is contesting: (1) stopping the sale of public land and instead using it to develop a form of inclusionary housing on it as well as (2) stopping displacements of long-term residents due to gentrification dynamics and the lack of policy regulations.

During the campaigning around these two core cases, the repertoire of action was already diverse: Public meetings in public spaces, social media content, pamphleteering, occupations of public space, flashmobs, banner droppings, recreational gatherings, public art activations, mass marches, petitions, pickets, civic education as well as more legal forms of action such as court submissions and objections. Interviews with NU staff revealed that these early days were intense and highly creative phases where NU invested a lot of human resources (organizers, facilitators) as well as financial resources into these actions, which created strong publicity and visibility. It was especially the middle-class and students that could be mobilized by these forms of action, as Jared described in an interview, and that a kind of exciting pioneering spirit prevailed during these times.

Becoming an occupation-based social movement

The news about the completion of the sale of Tafelberg by former mayor Helen Zille (Democratic Alliance) and thus the defeat of RTC’s campaigning caused RTC to use another form of protest which had a profound effect on RTC’s further development: In March 2017, it occupied two governmentally owned inner-city buildings - the former Helen Bowden Nurses’ Home at the Waterfront in Green Point (near Seapoint) and the former hospital of Woodstock (near Bromwell Street).

Placed in the respective neighbourhoods of the two major battlegrounds of RTC, the occupations not only stand symbolically for the two thematic focus areas of the movement (sale of public land and gentrification) but also compile neighbourhood-specific groups of persons: whereas the Green Point occupation is dominated by Black domestic workers from the townships and their families, the vast majority of the Woodstock occupation consists of Coloured people from Woodstock and Salt River itself who have been evicted from their homes as well

as of homeless people. Furthermore, the Green Point occupation counts around 800 people and suffers from an absence of basic services such as water, electricity and a functioning sewage system, which creates a highly precarious living situation for occupants. In Woodstock, around 950 people are living in a comparatively "comfortable" situation as both electricity and water is available and for free. As a symbolical act of appropriation, both occupations were renamed after prominent figures of the social struggle against apartheid in South Africa: the Green Point occupation into Ahmed Kathrada House (AKH) and the Woodstock Occupation into Cissie Gool House (CGH). This paper focuses on CGH in Woodstock, as data has been mainly gathered there and consequently concentrates on the evolution of this specific occupation.

Talking to the first occupiers, who mainly consisted of middle-class NU staff and some students and friends, the stories of taking over the two buildings are always told with an excited sparkle in their eyes. Taking over these buildings, that were guarded by a private security firm, was only possible by using a mixture of careful planning, creativity in getting access, deep knowledge of the law concerning occupations, and patience. Crucially, the occupations were explicitly planned as a short-term political protest against urban land politics:

We wanted to provoke the state. We wanted to show them that we weren't going to just take their bullshit lying down. Our intention was just to take it for a week or two. And the people that went there were activist-types and younger people and very poor people. It was a mixture of those. And yeah, the state didn't really know what to do, this was a new phenomenon in Cape Town, they were too slow. They thought that we would fizzle out. They thought that oh, a bunch of activists, they've made their point. They didn't expect that we would hold them and then expand them.

In this quote, Josh points to different important dimensions of this innovative form of action: First, relating to the above mentioned strategic shift from the periphery to the inner-city, large scale occupations of houses in the inner-city was a completely new form of action. Moreover, as Visser and Kotze (2008) highlight, after apartheid, most of the research institutions, funding agencies and NGOs (as Ndifuna Ukwazi) used their resources to investigate the needs of the urban poor living in townships located at the outskirts of the city. As a consequence, the inner city has become invisible and under-investigated by social science scholarships. Whereas there have been numerous occupations in the townships (Thorn and Oldfield 2011) to fight spatial injustice and point to a lack of service delivery (e.g. the Marikana occupation in Philippi, the Symphony Way Pavement Dwellers, the several occupations and protests by the anti-Eviction Campaign, Zille Raine Heights) the inner city was spared from this.

Second, the people who moved in after the first politically motivated, middle-class, and experienced activists had a completely different background. Dumele,

one of those first occupiers, described in an informal conversation how they tried to recruit people who were willing to move into CGH to keep the occupation going. Paraphrasing him, they literally went to taxi ranks, and walked up the roads in Woodstock to reach out to people. This second group of occupiers then consisted mainly of homeless people from Woodstock who held the occupation for another month. And from there on, people in need of housing moved in - many single mothers, elderly people and families. Most people came from Woodstock or Salt River neighbourhoods and experienced one or more evictions and refused to be moved to temporary relocation camps. Most people did not have a full-time employment and worked in temporary or part-time jobs with an extremely low salary. Only a very few people had a permanent job with a stable income. These characteristics have not changed since the beginnings of the occupation.

In nearly all the interviews, occupiers insisted on the attachment to the neighbourhood that unites them. The majority of occupiers are Coloured and most have relatives who were evicted from the contiguous District Six during the mass displacements in the 1960s. We tell all of this to emphasize two things: first, the population of occupiers is deeply rooted in Woodstock in diverse ways; and second, that except for some people currently in leadership positions, they did not and still do not occupy out of a political or ideological reason but out of need for shelter. We know of no person living in CGH that has an apartment outside that would be available to live in and only in one case of our sample was another option than CGH available. In all other cases people were either homeless or were evicted with no viable alternative to CGH. Precise demographic data on occupiers is not available as neither NU nor RTC are collecting such information regularly, and publishing this information is problematic given the political role RTC plays.

The third point that Josh exhibits in his statement is that the occupations were planned as short-term, politically motivated actions and not as long-term homes for affected people. However, due to the passivity of the government and by strategically deploying legal means, NU occupiers established the right of access against the securities (employed by the government) and filled up the buildings with people. As a result, the houses transformed into multi-purpose centres of action and especially into homes for hundreds of people. Occupying those buildings, thus, was the beginning of a profound transformation of RTC from a campaign to a social movement:

So the occupation has really changed RTC and now I would say actually RTC has become an occupation-movement. Primarily...and a political movement. The occupations give it its grounds, gives it its strength, gives it its reason for being. It's the ability to organize, it's the place to organize, but also allows it to be a political movement that is bigger than just two buildings (Josh)

Kathie, a 42 year old single mother, is one of the chapter leaders of CGH. She moved into the occupation with her father and her son in January 2018 after being evicted from her house in Woodstock, which was her third eviction in a row. She supports Josh's view when she says that "starting the occupation meant building a movement, because you are building a community and with it aims. We are able to push past all the forces." This immediately required a restructuring and realignment of RTC's actions, as organizing the life of the occupation and politicizing the occupiers became the core tasks of RTC. This entailed e.g. establishing a regular meeting structure, a leadership structure, house rules and political education processes. These statements clearly align to the critiques of Pruijt's (2013) strict typology and categorization of squatter movements and express that at least the occupation of RTC is a lively mixture of several forms of squatting. This claim will be supported by ethnographic data in the following chapters. Having a solid base of people that is permanently present at a specific place was an abrupt turn that transformed RTC not only into a social movement but especially into an occupation-based social movement. By concentrating on these new, more inward-pointing practices and forms of actions, RTC's political meaning changed and both new opportunities but also challenges evolved, which we analyse in more detail in the next section.

One last comment is to be made at this point: The (re)development of the occupation did not happen from within itself but was inspired by a diversity of influences. One of the main leaders of CGH, for instance, was a professional unionist, active in the apartheid and post-apartheid struggles which influences his political and Marxist framings of RTC's struggle in his numerous speeches during meetings. The weekly and public so-called 'Advice Assembly', a space of mutual learning and information exchange between lawyers from NU, occupiers, former evictees and people currently facing evictions, has been a central forum for RTC's development since the very beginning. This specific form of "self-help" as Jared called it in the interview, was inspired by a trip to Barcelona where he and a small group of activists visited the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) movement. Additionally, the involvement of Zach Achmat, one of the most prominent activists in Cape Town and figurehead of the Treatment Action Campaign, also provided important knowledge that was used to build up RTC. As such, networks of knowledge transfers are crucial and worth investigating in more detail.

Microdynamics and –politics and their consequences for an occupation-based social movement

(Creating) a social movement based on a couple of hundred people living together in a highly decrepit building, most of them in a precarious economic and social position who mostly do not regard their life in the occupation as an act of political resistance but a means to survive, provides the opportunity of initiating social and political change but also brings serious challenges. As

mentioned in the introduction, we are recognizing a bias in literature on squatter movements which tends to either fade everyday challenges or regard them as rather secondary, emphasizing the evolving organizational structures to overcome them (e.g. Caciagli 2019). Our argument, which we support with thick ethnographic data in this article, is, however, that those very challenges in everyday life need to be taken seriously because we found them to be highly responsible for fundamental shifts in movement activity and its political impact, especially with regard to occupation-based movements.

In other words, we want to highlight the other side of the scholarly interest in mechanisms for creating solidarity, cooperation, cohesion and identification, namely the threats to those cornerstones of social movement building that lie in the micro-politics and everyday behaviours among participants. We are aware of the rather pessimistic undertone of this perspective; however, we regard it as vital both for activists as well as for social movement scholars to better understand the (challenging) role of everyday issues. As such, focusing on challenges should be rather understood as constructive critique in order to reflect on these issues in one's own respective social movement. In order to balance this view, the next section focuses on the many opportunities that arose throughout the development of RTC which have been used to create political pressure and to initiate social change in many ways thereby supporting people in greatest need. In the second part we shift the perspective and focus on everyday life and the challenges it entails for movement building.

Opportunities

As we briefly pointed out before, the occupation as a new form of action in central Cape Town questions the centre-periphery model built through decades of apartheid and gives visibility to the existence of social exclusion in the inner city, as Josh explains:

This is an occupation. (...) what we are doing here is we are reclaiming. (...) we are occupying, as a political act of resistance. (...) Occupation is new, being able to deploy people from a location. That's like a little colony... If you think about it as the centre and we were on the outside, and now we have a colony in the middle, where we are able to deploy our ground forces.

Broadly speaking, materially reclaiming land, especially in a long-term manner, directly implements RTC's main demand, namely to prevent public land to be sold and developed and to reclaim this space for local, poor people. As such, it is a direct action against what Rodgers and O'Neill (2012) called "infrastructural violence" which in Cape Town prevails in form of intentionally excluding poor people from housing and basic services in the inner city. Occupying can be regarded as a form of reappropriation of the inner city. The presence of 950

people sharing the same space creates a strong political pressure as evicting those people, who then would be mostly homeless, would entail high political costs. Moreover, the presence of these 950 mainly working-class people in a gentrifying, middle-class neighbourhood is an affront to the municipality and real estate companies investing there. The space of the occupation, by allowing poor and working-class people of Woodstock to remain on their familiar territory, is a brake on gentrification.

More than being just a political act of resistance, the occupation as the movement's base is an important spatial resource. Indeed, it not only provides people with a roof over their head, it also enables them to stay in their familiar neighbourhood with all the infrastructural advantages as being close to e.g. governmental services, job opportunities, social networks, schools and leisure activities which otherwise would all be cut. Most of the interviewees feel a strong attachment to the neighbourhood and want to stay there. The occupation brings together people with similar social backgrounds: the majority consider themselves as Coloured and suffered from similar traumatic experiences of exclusion. As such, it fits with Melucci's widely accepted view that the spatial and social proximity of individuals who share similar social attributes and experiences may foster their cohesion and thus facilitates collective action (Melucci 1995). The space of the occupation is also an important organizational resource since it allows the joining and identification of all activists previously dispersed in the neighbourhood. Moreover, it is mainly the occupation that makes the recruitment of new activists possible as it serves as a central place of holding meetings and gatherings of RTC while some people in precarious conditions only come to find a roof over their heads and then become members⁷. Indeed, once they join the occupation, the inhabitants are obliged to participate in all the activities organized by the movement. "Participation" appears in the set of rules that they signed when they moved in and their non-compliance can lead to a disciplinary action. Neighbourhood ties therefore exert informal social pressure providing an incentive for participation.

The occupation thus reinforces first and foremost the numerical weight of the organization. Furthermore, moving to and staying in the occupation with one's whole family in highly precarious circumstances without any other alternative is a deep physical and psychological experience, which is inherently different from occupying as a temporary form of protest as e.g. students or activists do when they occupy universities or squares (e.g. Rheingans and Hollands 2012). People

⁷ The differentiation between members, activists, and occupiers is a bit tricky and fluid. Whereas formal membership exists (not for kids, although there is no age limit for becoming a member) that can and should be obtained by taking part in an induction course and paying 50Rand membership fee. Nonetheless, not every occupier did this and thus not every occupier is formally a member. In external actions or public presentations, however, all occupiers are referred to as "RTC members" or "activists".

can not go home after protesting as they do in marches and other protests. Hence, occupying here is a full-featured life decision without a real alternative.

Indeed, the development of a range of internal activities in the occupation opened up opportunities to politicize people in diverse ways. House meetings for example not only inform occupiers about the activities of the movement but especially serve to collectively cope with internal challenges such as e.g. cleaning, building and renovating and solving personal conflicts. Workshops about different topics (e.g. raising of children, domestic violence, psychological issues, conflict training, gardening, yoga) offer the opportunity to reach and empower occupiers, which would not be as easy when people lived scattered across the Cape Town metropolitan area. Different fixed groups in the house rely upon and thus consolidate a sense of responsibility for the collective such as e.g. the safety and security task team, the youth team, the youth group, the women's and men's group and the house leader group.

And finally, the weekly so-called 'Advice Assembly' (AA) not only serves the internal political and legal education, but also the access to the movement by outsiders and affected people in need of support: as the central meeting of RTC, the AA is an open meeting in which a lawyer of NU is present and people currently being evicted can join to gain both information about the process and possible ways of intervention, as well as emotional support. The meeting is held with the idea of self-help and mutual assistance from people who have experienced similar things and as such also supports occupiers through an increase in self-confidence when being able to provide helpful knowledge. This also reflects Levitzky's (2006) analysis of the diverse roles that legal advocacy can take in activist organizations: "sources of legal expertise or organizational assistance, vehicles for public education, tools for mobilization and fostering a sense of pride and self-confidence" (Levitzky 2006: 152). The frequent meetings within the occupation are also aimed at an increase in identification with the movement and at creating a sense of belonging: Having fixed meetings routines, singing, learning struggle songs, and creating moments of socialisation between occupiers thus serves as important nodes of the movement (Haug 2013).

As a collective project, a kind of "laboratory for urban resistance and node of counter-hegemonic struggles" (Abellán et al. 2012, 321) as well as a space of experimenting with alternative future imaginaries the occupation also maintains, or rather reclaims, an equal urban citizenship status for individuals. When Henri Lefebvre proposed the right to the city, he did not only mean a spatial right. As Harvey (2012) makes clear: "To claim the right to the city (...) is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade and to do so in a fundamental and radical way" (Harvey 2012: 5). Hence, the transformation from a protest to the provision of a "home" makes clear that what has been reclaimed is not only space but especially an equal urban citizenship status entailing the possibility and duty of being an active participant in shaping society. Miraftab and Wills (2005) make it clear when they say that "this new drama of citizenship is

performed not only in the high courts of justice and ministerial corridors of government institutions but also in the streets of the city, the squatter camps of hope and despair, and the everyday life spaces of those excluded from the state's citizenship project" (Miraftab and Wills 2005: 201). Leaders reject formal exclusionary citizenship, reclaiming - and above all practicing - another citizenship based on daily engagement and participation, closed to Holston's (2009) conception of 'insurgent citizenship' (see also Holston and Appadurai 1996). As such, the occupation in a way compensates for the state's perceived failure to provide adequate housing and infrastructure for everyone, which specifically in South Africa expresses the failure of the promise of democracy after 1994.

When Josh says "what's gonna make CGH dignified housing is the organizing around that housing" he summarizes the evolution of RTC during the last three years of occupation in which most of the movement's energy was directed into organizing a functioning occupation so that it serves as a home for people. Creating an environment that gives people the opportunity for an everyday life supports James Holston's view that

It is not in the civic square that the urban poor articulate this demand with greatest force and originality. It is rather in the realm of everyday and domestic life taking shape in the remote urban peripheries around the construction of residence. It is an insurgence that begins with the struggle for the right to have a daily life in the city worthy of a citizen's dignity. (Holston 2009: 246).

Challenges of sustaining an occupation-based social movement

It is exactly this everyday level, the level of domestic life to which we turn our focus now. It is clear that the settlement of over 950 people to a highly valuable piece of land in the inner-city creates political pressure in itself, as this process is nearly impossible for the government to undo without great political costs. Additionally, the fact that most of the occupants would be homeless or living in even worse situations in some township far away from their original neighbourhood if CGH did not exist can also be regarded as a huge success of RTC. However, we experienced serious moments of despair, frustration, annoyance and depression among occupiers (both leaders and other inhabitants) that cast a shadow over those rather political successes and the future of the movement. The following section aims at unravelling the grounds and implications of those everyday issues. We use quotes of interviews as basic data in the text, but we gained most of the underlying knowledge by experiencing and taking part in numerous informal conversations, fights, discussions, 'moments-of-wait' and other mundane situations.

Conflictive proximity

In general, many challenges are consequences of the sheer proximity and interferences of people's living spaces due to the architectural constraints of the building and the high number of people. The precariousness of the architecture further adds stress to the interference of lives in the occupation although renovations, rebuilding, and conversions are constantly undertaken: toilets are broken, pipes are leaking, electricity cables destroyed, the roof is porous, windows broken.

One of the most gruelling consequences of permanent proximity is a constant and high level of noise. The walls are thin and the improvised partitions small, so occupants have to get used to the voices of their neighbours, the flapping doors and the tumult of the children. If at the beginning of the interviews most interlocutors expressed praise for the space they occupy, after a few minutes of building trust with us they quickly talk about the problems related to life in this space, as e.g. Ron, a 50 years old unemployed inhabitant:

I think everybody living in the house now, you got to adapt or die! We've got children running around making a noise. If I wasn't a parent, I probably would take offense to it. Because I'm a parent, I understand these things. You know people knocking on your door at one o'clock the morning or two o'clock the morning: "Have you got a tea bag for me?", ok right! "come in look the electricity is broken". You know, then I got to sleep, at maybe two o'clock in the morning until four o'clock the morning, I must wake up for work, it's just two hours sleep!

Yet it is not only the noise of children that is a constant companion of life in the occupation but the constant noise, smell, and dirt resulting from the concurrency of different lifestyles, habits, routines, and jobs of people. Walking through a hallway of CGH on a random afternoon, one experiences a guy working on his furniture, a person washing clothes, a couple cooking wonderful-smelling Biryani⁸ next door to a teenager producing gqom-songs⁹ at full volume to sell to the taxis down the road, a group of people doing a braai and enjoying some drinks, a sick person trying to get some rest and, in the room next door, a couple fighting and kids crying. In between, the smell of cigarettes crawls through door slots and sounds of a group dispute echoes along the corridor. Whereas this condensed snapshot can also be seen as symbolizing a rather romantic diversity of a housing project, its constancy and dimensions are mentioned as highly frustrating, demoralizing and tiring. As in every collective living together, the oscillation between personal freedom and the maximum of impositions to the collective is a constant and conflictive process of negotiation.

⁸ Popular Indian rice dish.

⁹ Gqom is a popular South African electronic dance music style.

In interviews, complaints about missing respect and lack of adaptation of one's own behaviour were frequent as Rita, one female occupier in her 60s, who is unemployed earning little money by performing different informal jobs, is expressing:

People, they drink, and smoke and ... they enjoy life. You must enjoy life, but there is many ways to enjoy it. But in this place, eish...you stay for free here, but they take life for granted, the room, the people. And most of the leaders here try their utmost best. Most of them (...). But everyday I say to myself 'Im not here to watch people what they do.' (...) They mess up the place and now you must come and clean and...See, I dont want to live in a mess. If I see something I just do it and when I finish I go.

The proximity and immediateness are also stressful because everybody hears and witnesses the most intimate things of the neighbours, which is especially problematic when it comes to misuse of substances, as the interview above already implies, and different forms of domestic violence. In informal conversations, people talked about those situations with us, however, often reacted with a withdrawal from their neighbour's businesses. Imad, an occupier in his 70s, unemployed, made this clear with regard to his attempt at admonishing some kids who were smoking inside the hallway, which is forbidden:

I never walk around there. I was walking twice there and I see the kids smoking and I tell one kid 'Hey, what are you doing there?' So he tell me 'Who is you to ask me?' (...) They haven't got respect anymore. (...)

As such, permanent co-presence and the consequential lack of intimacy are conflictive and lead to high levels of frustration and withdrawal of a common life. Especially misbehaviour with regard to a perceived improper use of alcohol and drugs, changing intimate relationships, aggressive behaviour towards other people or the gossip about conspicuous relations/connections to people outside the occupation are common causes of disputes or at least social distancing and stigmatization among occupants. A set of rules and a code of conduct have been created to regulate such behaviours in the occupation and to generally reduce stigmatisation based on gender, class or race. They also aim to regulate the distribution of tasks and participation within the occupation and to sanction non-compliance. People generally respect the rules to avoid being sanctioned by the organisation and to maintain good relations with their neighbours, but they also bend and break them as they are regarded as too strict: Some people, for instance, bypass the duty of attending the meetings by delegating the signing of the attendance register to a peer.

Social control, material conditions and constant proximity encourage some people to spend as little time as possible inside the occupation. As Marta, a woman (CGH) in her 50s, said: "I just try to keep myself busy and try to spend as much time as possible outside the occupation. Go early and come home late. I can't handle this anymore. Nonetheless, it can, I'm so tired." Conflicts of proximity are common in neighbourhoods and even more in overcrowded spaces as slums or squats and as such are also part of CGH. Nevertheless, these everyday conflicts and inconveniences cannot be dodged since they can degrade relations between inhabitants and prevent or deter them from participating in the group, as Rita's statement also demonstrates. Ghassan Hage (2015) and his study in Palestine puts this in a nutshell when he says that people need spaces of resilience, of rest and of trust in order to engage in their activism. In CGH, those spaces are very rare.

Personal Relationships

Another source of frustration, mistrust and withdrawal from engaging in the movement is the (assumed) existence of groupings and networks within the occupation, perceived by many occupiers as giving certain people advantages. What makes these networks and groupings conflictual is its conflation with relations of power. One example, and frequent trigger for conflict, is e.g. the allocation of rooms. Allegations are widespread that some leaders reserved the best rooms for themselves and their acquaintances, although they are expected to behave in an exemplary and selfless manner. During the time of our research, we also witnessed instances in which after long periods of refusal, the allocation of a new room suddenly happened during a time when the relationship to specific leaders improved. Without judging the factual correctness of these rumours, stories, and allegations, the main point is: Those stories exist and circulate and have an important influence on the engagement in the movement as feelings of disadvantage and nepotism quickly lead to demotivation. Occupiers know and observe exactly who lives where, who is allowed to move and how people communicate their wishes to whom. Having spent a lot of time with occupiers and also being part of their daily lives, we experienced rumours about clientelism within networks of occupiers as a constant topic of conversation which often lead to mistrust and envy among inhabitants.

Additionally, the rootedness of CGH in the neighbourhood of Woodstock and the common origin of most occupiers on the one hand entails many advantages, especially an identity as original residents of Woodstock who have the right to stay put in "their" neighbourhood and the sharing of a collective loss and threat. However, on the other hand those old stories, old disputes between families, and the mutual knowledge of personal trajectories are carried into CGH and serve as basis for in- and exclusion. The conflicts between groups of inhabitants imported to the occupation are then sometimes exacerbated by the constant proximity inside the occupation and the frequent rumours among occupiers.

Whether it is former activities in illegalized parts of society, actions of some of your relatives to a family member of another family or other conspicuous behaviours in the neighbourhood, this deep social knowledge is integral part of people's interaction with each other. Thus, an important point both for occupation-based movements as well as for movement scholars is, that a movement and an occupation is never a blank sheet – it is made up of people with (common) histories that are crucial for the internal politics and dynamics of a movement.

Simon, a 54 year old harbour worker and house leader points to yet another cause of mistrust within the occupation:

You have got all these tenants in here, who doesn't know that maybe one of these tenants have been put here by the council. Go stay there, go get us information, it happens like that. That's why council gets to know what is happening here (...) Certain people here is not right. I am not going to mention names. There is a lot of people that stays here that doesn't... Yes! I promise you! They can hear me the way I am talking here. I am telling you. There is some people that is inside this building that is not good. Serious.

This fear of spying and also takeover of the occupation is both rooted in the history of RTC, in which the occupations have already been attacked by groups in order to take them over, as well as in the specific history of South Africa (Huchzermeyer 2011; Ramutsindela, 2002). We perceived this underlying scepticism among occupiers in many interviews and conversations in which interlocutors often emphasized that they would not engage much in talking with other occupiers, especially not the ones they don't know. Tarek, a man in his 60s and responsible for the community garden in CGH, for example, said:

That's why I said I never speak....If one see me I only look to him and I walk. I not even say what and how are you...but if you say 'how is it' then I say 'No its alright my friend. How are you?'. That's it. You want to talk about that one and that one, worse and good ... not for me, sorry man. I don't engage in stories here.

Yet another example of the difficult character of personal relationships in CGH is mutual help among occupiers. Without neglecting the fact that there are many moments of mutual support, we also experienced despair with regard to the need for assistance. Anita, for example, a single mum in her 50s, unemployed but caring for children in the occupation, who moved from one section to another, was desperately looking for someone who could help her with fixing a door, repairing a window and painting her room because she couldn't do it. In numerous conversations, she expressed her frustration over the fact that "everybody is charging money for everything. Nothing is for free in here. And

actually we should support each other." In fact, Anita had to pay 200 Rand for her door and another 200 Rand for getting her room painted. Her case is not the only one in this regard. On the one hand, these kind of economic transaction processes are comprehensible, especially in contexts of poverty and lack of resources, where everybody tries to earn a little bit of money. On the other hand, in a community in which solidarity is supposed to be a cornerstone, interlocutors often expected more altruism and mutual support. Caciagli (2019) mentioned similar negotiation processes in the *Coordinamento* squat in Roma when she says that

mutuality and collaboration are not cultivated in the absence of selfish attitudes or conflicts. They come from the attempt to re-organise individualistic feelings of tension and competition to liberate the housing conditions of each family (Caciagli 2019: 738)

These tensions of earning a living and expectations of assistance and allegations of selfish behaviour further add to a constant (re)negotiation of relationships and a degree of uncertainty with regard mutual reliability.

Different levels of engagement

Another factor of conflict are the different degrees and different expectations of participation in the social movement among inhabitants. A lot of active occupiers – those who regularly participate in meetings and actions and are involved in the different internal and external groups of the movement – often complain about the lack of commitment and participation of their peers, repeating that "it is always the same people who mobilise". Fillieule (2005) supports this when he says that imbalances of engagement among activists in many cases indeed discourage the most active ones which can lead to burn outs. In fact, several activists decided to slow down their engagement as e.g. Marc a 52 year old single, unemployed occupier and one of the most active ones in the movement:

They shouldn't even be living here. They don't take part in the movement and it's wrong. We give our all, you know. And they just sit at home. They don't even go to the induction course. When you call them, they don't come and they try to hide. (...) If you can not fight and stand, how can you benefit from somebody else's fighting all the time? And you want to say tomorrow, "ah I want to move there in that house", but who was fighting? It wasn't you! It's me who fought for that house there. But this people, they don't understand.

For Marc, the imbalance of commitment is a source of frustration. He believes that occupiers must earn and deserve their place in the occupation through their activism. His speaking is also a way to distinguish himself from the other occupiers, valuing his own activism, and corresponding to the image of the good

and altruistic activist. Indeed, people inside the occupation are not committed in the same way and intensity. And if so, they often give priority to their close environment, privileging the private issues rather than public ones. When leaders express their demands for an intense participation also in external political activities, many justify their low engagement in that sphere with coping with everyday life challenges such as earning money and caring for the family as well as with their tasks they may have exercised on their floor. Indeed, coping with precarious economic situations, earning a living and at the same time fulfilling demands of commitment is often a serious challenge.

However, even attendance in the weekly meetings is a constant topic of conflict as in the time of our research mostly only around 70-100 people (maximum) out of the 950 occupiers participated regularly in those meetings. Not only the standard delay of around 30 minutes frustrated some people but also the general feeling of repetition and stagnation. As Rick, a 41 year old unemployed man who earns some money as a security guard in the evenings, commented when we asked him if he would come to the meeting later:

Naaa, man. It's always the same anyway. I don't have time for that. Those people talk and talk and nothing gets done. (...) You can't only be an activist, you need to eat too. And who will pay you for this? Nobody. They should pay us for doing this.

Activism is perceived by less committed people as a time-consuming activity with no impact on their daily lives, whereas activities carried out in the occupation or private sphere have immediate and visible effects on their quality of life. Indeed, a lot of people are focused on improving their living conditions and do not firmly believe that their participation would change anything in the power relation with the City. In the interviews we discovered that for most people the real "struggle" is not understood as a struggle for housing but as a daily struggle to survive. Some of them have been evicted several times from their houses and for the first time, after traumatic experiences of privation, homelessness or eviction, the occupation gives them the opportunity to dedicate themselves to a private space as Bouillon (2009) also noticed in other occupations. Especially for single mothers, who are numerous both in the occupation as well as in South African society in general, practical features as domestic tasks and insecure employment are seen as incompatible with political activity.

Despite low levels of participation in collective and organizational meetings and actions, occupiers pay attention to preserving the rituals of good understanding (Goffman 1982) between neighbours living in the same shared space. The numerous parties, birthdays, anniversaries, baby showers, weddings and religious ceremonies celebrated within the occupation are perceived as opportunities to participate in the movement while enjoying the conviviality

that these moments guarantee. Yet, these festive practices, even if they contribute to building up collective identity (Melucci 1988; Poletta and Jasper 2001), do not carry any political claim. Some of the extra activities posted on the Whatsapp RTC mobilization group, for instance, reveal the conflicts of leaders around the definition of politics within the hospital grounds. While Erina, a 45 year old chapter leader who works as a domestic worker, gets upset about wedding photos and other sharing moments and points out that "the group is primarily a political coordination group and not a sentimental outpouring", Kathie, a 41 year old single mum and chapter leader replies that "building community is a political practice". It is a general observation, throughout our research that there exists a gap between living in an occupation that once was primarily a form of political protest and the actual political demands of the movement. Especially older and less committed people often had difficulties to express what RTC actually is and what it is fighting for. It was also remarkable that people often answered as if they were not part of RTC, like for example Tarek, the gardener of CGH cited already above:

No he [RTC] fights for us and I will stand with him, even like, the soldiers can come and say anything to me. I will tell him fuck you. RTC did fight too much for us. And he fight against all things like that, law and all that.

Also answers like "They fight for houses for us" were frequently mentioned in conversations. This points to the importance of the provision of a (temporary) home to people that RTC is standing for because nearly all people also mentioned how "thankful" they are for RTC supporting them with a place to stay and how "dignified" they feel. As such, a low engagement in the more political activities of RTC could be explained by the relative unconnectedness of the private and the political sphere of the movement. Despite several workshops (mostly done or organized by NU staff), speeches and actions that try to expose this connection, most of the people do not link their experience of deprivation with structural issues. In this regard, Rita's answer to the question if she would still be part of RTC when not living in CGH anymore and participating in its actions, sums this observation up and exposes the importance of the occupations as the social movement's base:

Honestly, no. I just thank god that they give me a place to sleep. Because this is not life. I want to be in my own place. I don't care if it's in Khayelitsha, Philippi or wherever. I'm so tired."

A stagnant resistance?

Already you can see what was fresh and new ways of organizing in the movement, have become normalized. Like "Oh we meet on a Thursday, oh we do it like this" and as soon as that starts to happen it adds strength because people have like cultures that we develop, but become stagnant. We take less risks because we want to maintain the routines because routines are comforting. And that can come to a point where we become irrelevant. (Josh)

With this statement, Josh indeed points into the direction of this paper's argument: that routinisation in a movement can lead to stagnation and, as he says, political irrelevance. However, whereas he refers to the routines of the movement itself (e.g. meetings, actions) we highlighted the dynamics on the micro-level of occupiers themselves and the consequences of their everyday challenges for the evolvement of the movement. Apart from the movement routines, that may become boring, tiring or sometimes even annoying for people, we discovered that the specific and precarious living situation creates other far more gruelling routines and feelings: routines of frustration that e.g. other occupiers still do not abide by the house rules, routines of demoralization because e.g. rooms are allocated in a perceived nepotistic manner, routines of mistrust because of rumours, several experiences of theft or simply because people know each other's trajectories in the neighbourhood.

Having participated in movement activities for over a year, we observed that the existence of those underlying feelings and the resulting practical consequences among occupiers have both a direct influence on movement activity, in that participating in external and internal actions decreased but also indirectly, in that the overall attention became increasingly directed inwards in stabilizing and organizing the occupation itself, which reduced the number of external political actions. Some leaders and occupiers reacted to these internal challenges by framing their solving as part of the struggle to create an alternative living space with a new solidarity in order to show that "a new way is possible and [that] we're going to show what dignified public housing can look like for thousands of families like ours - on the very best land." (Facebook post by RTC on 7th of June).

However, we support Bayat's criticism (2000) that the literature sometimes tends to overestimate the political dimension of everyday practices. Although the very act of organized occupying of valuable inner-city space is intensely political, many everyday practices within CGH do not necessarily share this political dimension. In fact, the consequences following from everyday challenges and focusing on organisational issues can deflect the political scope of the movement and unintentionally "contribute to the stability and legitimacy of the power in place" (Bayat 2000: 545) and not necessarily question domination anymore by getting caught in the organization of the occupation as

an end in itself: "By doing so, the actors may hardly win any space from the state" (Bayat 2000: 545) The risk is that the movement loses its power of opposition and becomes a mere palliative for state failures and responsibilities in a context of neo-liberalization. As Bayat also points out, stressing the multiple capacities of the poor to resist and organize themselves to collectively improve their living conditions, why then should state action be necessary? In RTC's case, the reduction of collective action and protest to internal organization of the occupation and the arrangement and negotiations with the city could be interpreted as a form of political stalemate, as it is the case in many post-apartheid movements that decided to adopt a collaborative attitude with the state (Ballard et al. 2005).

As other housing movements analysed by Duclos and Nicourd (2005), RTC has to find a way to resolve the tension between organisational/internal issues and the conquest of political rights through mobilisation. Activists have to constantly navigate between two logics that seem contradictory but are deeply dependent: on the one hand they have to assist, help and organize people suffering exclusion (assistance and organizational logic) and on the other hand they have to build a collective cause and fight to defend their rights (struggle logic). The occupation is at the moment tolerated and even if it is often criminalized by city officials it appears comfortable for the state. On the one hand, RTC accommodates 950 persons of the lowest end of the economic stratum in the middle of Woodstock and organizes as well as enables a daily life for them. On the other hand, it is taking over the responsibility of a core governmental task. In a way, the state benefits from RTC as it provides a solution for its policy failure, gives the opportunity to not perform its duty of assisting evictees and weakens the political pressure of showing its accountability. The acceptance of three years of occupation reveals the lack of state initiative to find political solutions for the urgent housing problem in Cape Town.

Conclusion

Although having collected a wide range of data that also shows how living in a political space shapes and politicizes everyday practices in manifold ways, in this paper we deliberately selected data that focus on the challenges of everyday life in an occupation-based movement which are highly significant for the development of a movement and underresearched in social movement literature, but yet responsible for a fundamental shift and transformation of a movement. This does not mean that we fetishize everyday life, however it does mean that it pays tribute to our finding that everyday life, in our case, can be regarded as the main mode of the social movement. As such we want to balance the often romanticizing view of everyday life in a social movement by taking on a rather nuanced perspective.

Staggenborg and Taylor (2005) are correct when employing Oliver's (1989) broader conceptualization of collective action than that of the contentious politics approach by scholars such as Tilly, Tarrow and McAdam and taking a closer look at the "impact of collective action campaigns on a wide variety of actors and on subsequent campaigns" (Staggenborg and Taylor 2005, 39). Whereby studying impacts of collective action on everyday lives is part of this agenda, concentrating only on emerging forms of solidarities, identities and new networks as Melucci advocated in his idea of New Social Movements (1988), may overlook the more challenging dynamics that emerge through social movement activity. In this article, we aimed at filling this gap and go deep into the challenges of everyday life in one occupation of the social movement RTC.

We, firstly, showed that the shift to an occupation-based movement changed the direction of actions to the inside of the occupation: organizing co-living, educating occupants, solving internal conflicts, developing future alternatives of existence, rebuilding a common space, transforming values of individuals are all new aims of the social movement that formerly were focused on opposing city politics with a rather 'traditional' repertoire of action. As such, one main finding of our research is that the transformation of the repertoire of action also entails a subtle and sometimes unnoticed shift of goals due to routinization and the everyday life of an occupation. In other words, the social movement has in a way diverted from its original claims. Regaining political impact is, thus, currently one main challenge of RTC.

Secondly, we closer analysed the internal dynamics that lead to such a diversion of the movement and realized that close proximity is not only supporting mutual solidarity but is a highly double-edged sword. The benefits are many: providing a roof over otherwise homeless people's heads in their familiar neighbourhoods, blocking high-value space in the inner-city, having a large group of potentially mobilizable people to support and carry out political action, creating structures of political and popular education and empowerment through a diversity of workshops, confronting people with different value systems, constructing and demonstrating a blueprint of social housing to the city are only some opportunities that open up through such an occupation.

However, 'living an everyday life in protest' also poses serious challenges to the functioning of the movement: Spatial precariousness and its consequences such as high levels of noise, the neglect of caring for common spaces, quick spreading of gossip and rumours, social observation and reprimands as well as being intensely exposed to people with different behaviours from oneself leads to exhaustion, demoralization, attrition and annoyance of occupants. In our case, those affects often lead to a dissociation from the movement despite numerous internal activities to solve those problems and tie people to the movement and frame the overcoming of those challenges as part of the struggle. Withdrawal to the private sphere or escape to public spaces and networks of friends in the neighbourhood are common reactions of many occupiers. As such, proximity and the special composition of inhabitants have an ambivalent value for

creating a social movement and especially its limiting characteristics are not investigated enough in social movement research. Not only does it mostly focus on everyday practices in times of 'latency' or quiescence - which means low visible or public activity - (e.g. Polletta 1999; Glass 2010), it also does not take the gruelling characteristics of everyday life into account.

Our case shows that an occupation is not a blank sheet but built by and with subjectivities with their own trajectories, routines, particularities, personalities, values and objectives that are part of and sometimes a big challenge for a movement. As such, apart from consolidating the movement, the occupations also paralyzed it in a literal sense, as the political impact and the external political work is currently in a way stuck due to solving internal challenges. This political tranquillity and the fact that the occupation accommodates 950 otherwise homeless people for which the city would have been responsible creates a situation of political stalemate from which RTC is currently trying to revitalize itself.

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Autonomous struggles, political parties, recognition politics and state (re)production in Oaxaca, Mexico¹

Ryan A. Knight

Abstract

This essay engages in a discussion around political parties, recognition politics and autonomous movements in contemporary Mexico. Exploring the distinctions between forms of community self-organization in Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, and the organizational forms of political parties, recognition politics and the state, this essay seeks to explore how political parties and recognition politics serve as techniques that produce and reproduce the logic and practices of the state against community struggles for autonomy.

Keywords: Autonomy; political parties; recognition politics; state control; Oaxaca; Mexico

The turn of the 21st century was brought in by a significant restructuring of power within Mexican society and the organization of the Mexican state. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had held individual control over Mexican politics since 1929, was slowly losing its dominance, as competing political parties emerged in the electoral arena in the 1980's and 1990's. In the 2000 presidential elections, the PRI would lose to the National Action Party (PAN), marking the end of an era of PRI's single party rule in post-revolutionary Mexico.

At the same time, Mexico was being inundated by neoliberal policies, which had begun some decades before, causing extensive change to the relationship between the market, state and society in Mexico. The ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which officially went into effect on January 1, 1994, solidified the ideological dominance of neoliberalism in Mexico and throughout North America. The demands of neoliberalism led to widespread changes in Mexico but specifically in the Mexican countryside, where Indigenous and campesino communities were threatened by new forces of capital accumulation. Violence was the language of the market and state, as communities faced territorial dispossession, a shifting security apparatus characterized by widespread militarization, and direct threats to their forms of sustenance and community reproduction (Composto and Lorena Navarro 2014).

¹ Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the Postdoctoral Scholarship program at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, along with the Department of Political and Social Sciences, for the support which made this article possible.

To add further complexity to the restructuring of power in Mexico, the end of the 20th century was marked by a significant shift in the relationship between the Mexican state and its Indigenous populations. The neoliberalization of the country was met with stiff resistance, as Indigenous communities organized for territorial control, and respect for their self-determination and autonomy (Composto and Lorena Navarro 2014). This resistance was nowhere clearer than in the southern state of Chiapas, where Indigenous Mayans launched a rebellion on January 1, 1994, the same day in which NAFTA went into effect. The Indigenous Zapatista uprising was a direct confrontation with the neoliberal policies taking hold in the country, and would have lasting effects on the relationship between the Mexican state and Indigenous communities (Marcos 2002).

At the same time, the Mexican state was making significant institutional changes to its relationship with Indigenous communities. Moving away from the indigenist politics which characterized much of the 20th century, where assimilation of Indigenous populations into a unified national identity was the focus, the Mexican state, along with various countries throughout Latin America, began to adopt a politics of recognition and multiculturalism in relation to Indigenous communities. The southern mostly Indigenous state of Oaxaca was at the forefront of these politics of recognition, making changes to the state constitution along with state's Code of Political Institutions and Electoral Procedures, legally recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples to elect their communal authorities according to their traditional practices (Anaya Muñoz 2004; Eisenstadt 2007; Recondo 2007; Hernández-Díaz 2010).

Thus, the end of the 20th century was marked by the diversification of political parties, and the diminishing dominance of the single party PRI rule—a transformation seen by liberals as the strengthening of the democratic regime in Mexico, and evidence of a consolidating representative democracy (Loaeza 2018; Falomir, Fernández de Lara Gaitán and Lucca 2019). At the same time, in the southern state of Oaxaca, a politics of recognition was being introduced, legally recognizing Indigenous municipalities to elect their municipal authorities without the intervention of political parties. A seemingly contradictory series of forces was put into play, the neoliberalization of the country which greatly threatened Indigenous peoples and the control of their land, the multiplication of political parties as managers of the Mexican state, and the implementation of recognition politics, which at least on the surface, seemed to signify greater respect for Indigenous autonomy and Indigenous self-organization.

In this paper, I want to work from within this complex interplay of forces, developing a critique of political party and recognition politics, and a more general critique of the state itself, in defense of an autonomous politics. I situate this discussion in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, where there are ongoing conflicts between community forms of self-organization and state power. An investigation into political party and recognition politics in contemporary Oaxaca will help contribute to our understanding of the ongoing

processes of state (re)production in Mexico, and deepen our thinking around the complexities of Indigenous struggles for autonomy in the 21st century.

In contrast to the acceptance and celebration of political parties in representative democracies, as fundamental institutions in bringing the organized demands of the people to the state apparatus, I argue that in the context of Oaxaca, political parties do not facilitate democracy, but rather interfere, disrupt and repress movements of self-organization and autonomy. That is, flipping the common understanding on its head, political parties do not serve the interests of the people in the political terrain of the state, but rather serve the interests of the state in the political terrain of the community. Political parties, while not always directly organized by state actors, introduce and compel a certain way of relating to one another, a certain logic of social organization, a certain ideological current, or to put it generally, a certain politics, that (re)produces the state form.

In addition to the critique of political parties, I suggest that the politics of recognition, which have been introduced in Oaxaca to counter the influence of political parties, might serve the same function, as another technique of the state to capture and manage communities that resist state control and state power. In this way, the seemingly liberatory politics of recognition, might just be reorganizing state power, restructuring state sovereignty, and ultimately reproducing the state form.

Political parties in theory

The defense of political parties is inherent to many currents of political thought and practice, a few of which I want to focus on in this section. In doing so, I want to scrutinize the theoretical insights which inform common arguments in favor of political parties—arguments which carry weight in contemporary Mexico—in order to show even the most idealized conceptions of political parties, ultimately reinforce state power and the state form against Indigenous autonomy and self-determination.

Firstly, representative democracy, by far the dominant political paradigm in the world today, has overwhelmingly accepted political parties as fundamental to democratic governance. While early democratic theorists might have critiqued political parties—we can think of John Locke's individualism, Jean Jacques Rousseau's critique of representative democracy, or the critique of factions in the Federalist Papers—with the introduction of universal suffrage and the emergence of mass democracies exercised across vast nation-states, political parties have come to be seen as crucial institutions for democratic representation. American political scientist, E. E. Schattschneider, went so far as to write in 1942, "...that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties" (Schattschneider 1942, 1).

If political parties are fundamental to modern representative democracy, what exactly is their function? The question of geographical scale is important. For

theorists of representative democracy, political parties become necessary institutions in linking the interests and demands of the citizenry to the political system. Democratic theorist Robert A. Dahl argues, “...unlike a small city or town, the large scale of democracy in a country makes political associations both necessary and desirable” (Dahl 2005, 196). For Dahl, political associations—to which he includes political parties—are vital for effective citizen participation in large scale democracies. As Dalton, Farrell and McAllister explain, during the early processes of democratization in Europe and North America, “...political parties emerged as the primary linkage mechanism for facilitating the representative process” (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011, 5). Thus, according to this logic, political parties are a vital avenue by which the needs and demands of the citizenry can be represented at the level of the state.

Political parties serve other roles related to citizen organization and representation in large scale democracies. For some, political parties serve as an organizational apparatus, bringing together citizens in a cohesive and effective political force. For others, political parties serve a fundamental role in encouraging and instigating political participation, or helping educate and train citizens to the nuances and complexities of participation in the political system. Generally speaking, in the representative democratic tradition, political parties are often seen as necessary institutions to help improve democratic participation, competition and debate, and facilitate those characteristics in free and fair elections (Dalton, Farrell and McAllister 2011; Kölln 2015; Dahl 2005).

The question of democratic competition and debate is important. A diversity of opinion and robust debate between political positions is seen as fundamental to a thriving representative democracy. Political parties are seen as institutions that organize electoral competition and political debate (Dahl 2005). A state where there exists only one political party, is often seen as an authoritarian state, as the lack of political parties exemplifies the lack of political debate and the lack of a diversity of opinion. This is particularly the case in countries of the global south, where “...political scientists measure the march toward democracy...in terms of those countries’ capacity to develop strong party organizations that are the foundation for free, democratic elections” (White 2006, 7-8). Thus, in modern representative democracies, the existence of a plurality of political parties is taken as characteristic of a healthy democracy.

In Mexico, the relatively recent diversification of political parties, and the waning dominance of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), has been taken as evidence of democratic consolidation in the country. For many political analysts, 2018 marked a successful democratic election in Mexico, with the triumph of MORENA as a left of center alternative to the PRI and PAN, and the introduction of a third party into presidential power:

...one of the unquestionable results of these elections has been the strengthening of Mexican democracy in its totality, since the elections have produced an ideological and partisan rotation, opening up a new frontier to politics in Mexico

and...the transition to an entirely polyarchic system (Falomir, Fernández de Lara Gaitán and Lucca 2019, 288)².

For theorists of representative democracy, a diversity of political parties is essential for healthy competition and debate. A multi-party system embodies the ethos of democracy. The single party dominance of national politics, like was the case of the PRI for 71 years, represents a form of authoritarian control which lacks democratic participation, representation and competition.

Unlike ideologues of representative democracy, who take the party as fundamental to citizen representation and healthy electoral competition, certain currents of Marxist thought also see the political party as a fundamental organization, but in its capacity to organize the working masses for political revolution. Unlike democratic theory, the idea is not that a diversity of parties represents a diversity of interests in the political system, but that a specific type of party, organized and disciplined, is capable of bringing together the working masses, in order to take state power and do away with capitalism.

What is the revolutionary party for V.I. Lenin, and what does it do? Lenin held a certain skepticism toward the consciousness of the working masses and their capability to direct their own revolutionary movement. Lenin thought that because of the pervasiveness of bourgeois ideology, while the spontaneous uprising of the working masses was fundamental to the revolutionary struggle, it was only a disciplined and organized working class that could carry out the communist revolution. That disciplined and working class, must of course be educated with the theoretical foundations of scientific socialism.

Theory thus played a fundamental role in Lenin's thinking on revolution. In order to overcome the prevalence of bourgeois ideology amongst the working class, a well-developed theory of class struggle was necessary. Lenin writes, "Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement" (Lenin 1969, 25). For Lenin, revolutionary theory was essential in giving shape to the newly forming revolutionary party, and directing it away from other currents of revolutionary thought that might lead the working classes in the wrong direction. Furthermore, Lenin thought theoretical reflection to be fundamental, in critically analyzing the experiences of working-class movements in other countries. The revolutionary movement was an international movement, and for Lenin, theoretical analysis of other experiences was pivotal. Drawing from Engels, Lenin saw the theoretical struggle to be on par with the political and economic struggle of social-democracy.

For Lenin, to properly develop the revolutionary struggle amongst the workers, there was the necessity for disciplined, experienced revolutionaries who can lead workers in practice and theory, toward a united front. For Lenin, the leaders of the revolutionary party, the vanguard, are a group of "professional revolutionaries" led by advanced revolutionary theory. He writes, "A party is the

² All translated citations done by the author.

vanguard of a class, and its duty is to lead the masses, not to reflect the average state of mind of the masses” (Lenin 1975, 42). The role of trained revolutionaries is to develop a political party apparatus which helps in organizing and disciplining the workers toward the revolutionary struggle. The vanguard party, the advanced revolutionaries, were the fundamental force in educating and directing the working masses in the correct path toward revolution.

While V.I. Lenin’s idea of the revolutionary party has played an overwhelmingly adverse role in historical struggles for self-determination and liberation, his theoretical formulations continue to influence those on the so-called left, both in Mexico and across the globe, who argue for the necessity of progressive political parties in organizing for social change. Argentinean-Mexican Marxist philosopher, Enrique Dussel, is one such contemporary political theorist influenced by Lenin, who posits the political party as a fundamental institution to a transformative politics. To understand Dussel’s approach to political parties, it is first fundamental to understand his thinking on power and the political.

For Dussel, the base of political power is grounded in the living human being, in their instinctual desire for survival, their will-to-live. The will-to-live is fulfilled through the production of their necessities for survival, of the satisfaction of their material needs. Being collective beings by nature, the satisfaction of material needs is a collective will, carried out within human communities. For Dussel, to produce and make use of the material necessities of life is the foundation of power. This power is collective, grounded in human communities, bringing us to politics. The joining together of objectives and purposes, the common will to achieve collective ends, produces a higher degree of political power amongst the human community.

This leads us to a fundamental distinction in Dussel’s thought on power and politics, which has immediate effects on his interpretation of political parties. Dussel makes a distinction between power as *potentia*, the potential of power, and power as *potestas*, delegated, institutionalized political power. For Dussel, power as *potentia*, the original power of the political community, must be enacted through its institution in order to become real. Otherwise, the power of the political community in its original state, as *potentia*, remains solely potential. Dussel writes,

There is a scission between *potentia* and *potestas*, in other words, between the power of the political community as central, original, and fundamental (the hidden ontological level) and the heterogenous differentiation of functions through institutions that allow power to become real, empirical, and feasible, which allow it to appear (as a phenomenon) in the political field (Dussel 2008, 20).

For Dussel, power as potential always belongs to the people, but only through institutionalization can that power become real. The institution of the people's original power, for Dussel, is the state. Thus, power must be institutionalized in the institutions of the state, in order to be practiced, or in order to be exercised.

Dussel lays out two more manifestations of political power, power as obedience and power as domination. Assuming the necessity of the delegation of power—the delegation of power as essential for the exercise of power—Dussel argues that the idea of political power is for delegates to obey the general will of the people, the original political power for Dussel. Drawing from Zapatista practice, yet manipulating it to his own ends, Dussel speaks of “command by obeying.” For Dussel, this is the true vocation of politics.

On the other hand, Dussel speaks of the fetishization of power, power as domination, which has become the predominant manifestation of political power practiced in contemporary politics. Dussel writes, “Once power has become fetishized, the action of the representative, of the governor...must inevitably be a coercive action and thus cannot fulfill the delegated exercise of the power of the community” (Dussel 2008, 32). For Dussel, the fetishization of *potestas*, that is, institutionalized power, directly saps power from *potentia*, that is the foundational political power of the community. When power becomes a self-referential act, when power becomes fetishized, it diminishes the political power of the people. There, in between these two different forms of power, *potentia* and *potestas*, Dussel argues for a state structure that maintains the representation of *potentia*, through delegation, as *potestas*.

This brings us to the heart of this discussion. What role does the political party play? For Dussel, much of contemporary party politics in Mexico take the form of electoral machines, animated by the fetishization of power, focused solely on elections and the reproduction of their institutionalized political power. The connection with the power of the people, with the *potentia*, has disappeared. In contrast, Dussel argues, “A modern party is not an electoral mechanism but rather a body of public servants with a thoughtful, studied, well-crafted ideology carried out always through public political actions” (Dussel 2008, 35). The party should be a school of politics, Dussel often says, which helps produce a unified ideology and a unified political program. That political party ideology must then be institutionalized in order to become power, in order to come into being.

In looking at the defense of political parties from both Lenin and Dussel, their shared assumptions are evident. Both thinkers stress the necessity of the political party to organize what they see as the otherwise disorganized and politically ineffective masses, to solidify a cohesive political ideology, and to mobilize that political ideology through the institutional mechanisms of the state. Alternative forms of community and social organization, along with the different spaces of political and social struggle outside the state, are ignored or critiqued in favor of the unified, disciplined, hierarchical and institutionalized politics of the political party. With this, the revolutionary or progressive party plays the same role as the party of representative democracy, in reinforcing state logic and the state form.

Political parties and *usos y costumbres* in Oaxaca

The emergence of political parties in Mexico can be traced to the formation of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR) in 1929. As part of the post-revolutionary project of state formation and consolidation, the PNR was organized to unite the various local and regional powers in the country, to produce a government based in institutions and laws, and not in local strong men or caudillos. As Roy González Padilla tells us,

It is not by chance that this project for a country had as one of its principal axes of support the formation of a national political party that would bring together under its ideology and discipline the main political forces on which the revolutionary regime was based... (González Padilla 2014, 67).

Nor was it by chance that the National Revolutionary Party was formed by then president Plutarco Elías Calles, along with other well-established political, military and economic leaders in the country. The first significant political party in Mexico was thus a project derivate of state power, part of the quest to construct a post-revolutionary government institutional apparatus, as a means to stabilize and consolidate the post-revolutionary state.

In 1938, the PNR changed its name to the Party of the Mexican Revolution (PRM), only to change its name again shortly afterwards to the now well-known, Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 1946. The PRI would become the dominant force in Mexican politics, the head of a single party state, that managed the Mexican state apparatus until losing the presidential election in the year 2000. PRI's control of state power throughout the middle of the 20th century was not only at the level of the presidency, but reached throughout regional and local governments, such as the case of the state of Oaxaca, where I want to focus on.

Throughout much of the 20th century, in the southern state of Oaxaca, the Institutional Revolutionary Party was synonymous with the state, holding monolithic power in state and municipal government (Recondo 2007). In rural, mostly Indigenous municipalities, the PRI relied on a clientelist structure in which to maintain political control. The state used local political bosses, or caciques, to uphold their interests in even the most remote of rural municipalities. These local political bosses acted as intermediaries between local communities and municipalities, and the centralizing power of the post-revolutionary state. Political scientist David Recondo tells us that the PRI relied on a structure of indirect rule in many Indigenous and campesino communities in the state of Oaxaca, which guaranteed the reproduction of its dominance. He writes,

In reality, the post-revolutionary regime reproduced a kind of indirect rule according to the term used in the study of contemporary colonial regimes. A form

of domination in which the central power establishes indirect control over local societies through authorities from those same societies. This guarantees the reproduction of the mode of domination but preserves at the same time a certain margin of political autonomy at the local level. As such, the PRI-State, far from destroying the traditional local form of community organization, incorporates it, by noticeably modifying it and making it one of the fundamental units of the reproduction of the system of domination (Recondo 2007, 22).

Through the use of caciques, the managers of the centralizing state were able to maintain a certain level of political influence and dominance, both locally and across the state of Oaxaca. Local community institutions were infiltrated and incorporated to serve the larger project of state production and reproduction.

During this period, the relationship between Indigenous and campesino municipalities was a highly clientelist one, which according to Recondo, left some space for Indigenous communities to continue organizing themselves according to their traditional forms of structuring and reproducing community life. It was common that the PRI state respected local elections. However, once municipal authorities were chosen, the municipal authorities would then have to register with the official party, which in Oaxaca, was the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In this way, PRI was able to maintain local political influence, as well as control at the state level, in exchange for a degree of autonomy which was granted to Indigenous communities and municipalities.

A combination of forces toward the end of the 20th century led to the transformation of state power in Mexico and in Oaxaca. The emergence of competing political parties, the rise of civil society organizations and new social movements, and the strengthening of Indigenous resistance seeking self-determination and autonomy, changed the political landscape in Mexico, along with the techniques of governing of the Mexican state. Fundamental to the transformation of state power was the adoption of a politics of recognition and multiculturalism in relation to Indigenous communities, in contrast to the assimilationist politics that had characterized much of the 20th century (Anaya Muñoz 2004; Eisenstadt 2007; Hernández-Díaz 2010).

A series of movements from below in the second half of the 1980's and early 1990's served as a fundamental force producing the constitutional and institutional reforms that ushered in the politics of Indigenous recognition in Mexico. Extensive organization around the centennial anniversary of the Spanish conquest of the Americas emboldened Indigenous organizations and communities in movements of resistance, upending their subdued status in Mexican society. The Zapatista uprising in Chiapas on January 1, 1994, forced the Mexican federal and state governments to engage more seriously in conversation and action around their relationship to Indigenous peoples. This uprising sent shock waves of fear across the state governments of particularly the southern mostly-indigenous states, including of course, Oaxaca. Thinking the Indigenous uprising in Chiapas might take root into an already well-organized Indigenous population, the state government of Oaxaca began to take

steps that year to heed the growing fear and potential for rebellion (Anaya Muñoz 2004).

On March 21, 1994, the governor of Oaxaca proposed a new agreement with the Indigenous communities of the state in order to develop a new relationship between them and the state government (Recondo 2007). This new accord was presented symbolically, in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca, on the birthday of Benito Juárez, the Indigenous ex-president nationally known for his projects of modernization and Indigenous assimilation.

On May 13, 1995, article 25 of the state constitution was reformed, in which, in the last paragraph, the following text was included, “The law will protect the traditional and democratic practices of Indigenous communities, those which until now have been utilized for the election of their local governments” (Decreto núm. 278, 1995). Following this constitutional reform, and to fulfill its demands, the State Code of Political Institutions and Electoral Procedures was modified with the addition of a chapter four that dealt directly with Indigenous communities and their electoral *usos y costumbres*, or their historically grounded ways of electing community authorities. This modification legally recognized Indigenous municipalities previously organizing under *usos y costumbres*, permitting the designation of municipal authorities via community assemblies without the direct intervention of political parties.

Following elections in 1995, the first elections held with the new state constitutional reforms, another series of reforms were enacted to clarify legal ambiguity from the prior reforms. In March of 1997, legislators reformed articles 25, 29, and 98 of the Oaxacan state constitution with the intention of: “...making more clear, explicit and operable the electoral rights of the Indigenous peoples of Oaxaca” (Gobierno del estado de Oaxaca 1998). Then at the end of September, an adjustment was made to chapter four of the Oaxaca Code of Political Institutions and Electoral Procedures, “...to give better functionality and clarity to the order of the electoral process by *usos y costumbres*” (Gobierno del estado de Oaxaca 1998).

These series of reforms in 1997 made a few specific legal changes that are worth mentioning. Firstly, municipalities organized around *usos y costumbres* were defined in a more detailed manner, clarifying the ambiguity in what constitutes such a municipality in the original legislation. The legal term used to describe such communities was changed from *usos y costumbres* to *normas de derecho consuetudinario*, or customary laws. The reforms centered the community assembly as the principal authority of decision-making in such municipalities. Furthermore, an institutional process was defined for municipalities that hadn’t registered their elections as *usos y costumbres* in 1995, but that might want to register as such in the future. In addition, the entire electoral process, whether by *usos y costumbres* or by the political party model, was captured in a system of regulation and oversight, to be reported and officialized by the State Electoral Institute.

Perhaps the most important change in the reforms of 1997, and most relevant to this discussion was the one regarding political parties. With the new reform, political parties were not allowed to register authorities elected according to the model of *usos y costumbres*. Remember, prior to these series of reforms, the PRI dominated politics in Oaxaca by registering authorities elected within community elections within their party. Thus, fulfilling the clientelist relationship with Indigenous and campesino municipalities, maintaining electoral control over the state, while not fully dominating local structures of the election of authorities. Through these changes, two distinct electoral pathways were instituted in the municipalities of Oaxaca—that of political parties and that of *usos y costumbres* (Anaya Muñoz 2004; Eisenstadt 2007; Recondo 2007; Hernández-Díaz 2010).

While the constitutional and electoral changes in Oaxaca were the result of expansive Indigenous resistance, the constitutional reforms were at the same time led by the desire of political elites of the PRI party in Oaxaca to maintain their domineering position in the state's politics (Anaya-Muñoz 2004; Recondo 2007). As a result of national political reforms, beginning specifically in 1978, opposition parties began to have more influence in municipal politics, threatening the stranglehold maintained by PRI for so many years. At the same time, independent Indigenous organizations began to take more interest in municipal elections, and began to organize against PRI's dominance.

The threat of participation from other parties in the political process in Oaxaca in the 1990's was one force that led to the change in the constitution initiated by PRI. By legally recognizing the election by *usos y costumbres*, yet continuing with the classical clientelist relationship, registering municipal authorities in their ranks in the aftermath of the municipal elections, PRI would be able to maintain its dominance in the political scene in Oaxaca, in the face of the threat from other emerging and consolidating political parties (Anaya-Muñoz 2004; Recondo 2007). However, as David Recondo argues, based upon empirical research of election results, the PRI lost its stranglehold on political power in Oaxaca following the constitutional reform allowing the election of municipal authorities according to *usos y costumbres* (Recondo 2007). The multiplication of parties, seeking to fulfill their interests within Indigenous and campesino municipalities in Oaxaca, became the new norm.

The legal recognition of municipal elections according to *usos y costumbres* was nonetheless significant. *Usos y costumbres* was the legal concept inscribed in the original legislation recognizing local elections based in community assemblies and service to community rather than the political party model of campaigns, ballot boxes and private voting. The legislation allowed municipalities to register themselves as organized according to their *usos y costumbres*, and thus to carry out their municipal elections without the presence of political parties. For many in the movement for Indigenous rights, the recognition of electoral *usos y costumbres* meant a step forward in visibilizing and recognizing Indigenous forms of community organization in Oaxaca.

What was articulated and recognized in the law as *usos y costumbres*—the right of Indigenous communities in Oaxaca to elect their authorities in community assemblies without the influence of political parties—meant the legal recognition of one aspect of a more integral form of communal life organized and practiced in Indigenous communities in Oaxaca and throughout Mesoamerica (Maldonado 2020). In the 1970's Mixe scholar, Floriberto Díaz Gómez, and Zapotec scholar, Jaime Martínez Luna, began to conceptualize this mode of communal life with the term *comunalidad*, or communality (Rendón Monzón 2003). By *comunalidad*, they refer to an ensemble of self-organized practices and relations, a certain collective logic, through which community life is organized and reproduced.

Comunalidad is a mode of community organization derived from the collectivity, and directed toward collective well-being. It is often articulated around four axes: communal territory, communal work, communal power and communal festivities. Communal territory is territory organized and used in a collective manner; communal work is non-renumerated work in the spirit of mutual aid, known in Oaxaca as *tequio* or *faena*; the communal administration of power is embodied in the community assembly and the system of political, religious and civil positions which organize authority as service to the community; and the communal festivities are religious and local festivities that embody the spirit of reciprocity, strengthening the collective identity of the community (Rendón Monzón 2003; Martínez Luna 2013; Maldonado 2015; Martínez Luna 2016).

The recognition of electoral *usos y costumbres* thus legally acknowledged one aspect of this larger set of relations, practices, and logics that organize and animate community life in Oaxaca. It was implemented in response to the growing movement of Indigenous communities organizing for territorial defense and self-organization against state control and capital accumulation often represented by the political party. It was thus institutionalized as an alternative to the model of the political party, in defense of the cultural particularities of Indigenous communities.

Political parties, recognition politics and state (re)production

The simultaneous multiplication of political parties in Mexico and Oaxaca, alongside the implementation of recognition politics which diminish the influence of political parties in Indigenous municipalities, has set up a complex and seemingly contradictory political scenario in Oaxaca. On one hand, there is a diversity of political parties, which in theory, represents the strengthening of political democracy. On the other, there is the politics of recognition, which institutionalizes Indigenous municipal elections without political parties, and in theory, represents a nod to Indigenous self-determination.

Here, I want to break down that seeming contradiction arguing that political parties and recognition politics both work against the self-determination of Indigenous communities, by reproducing the state as the form, method and

arena of politics and political power. I want to argue that it is not communities that are empowered by political party or recognition politics, but rather the state itself.

The consolidation of political party competition in Mexico, with the rise of oppositional parties which challenged the single party state of the PRI throughout much of the 20th century, brought interesting changes to Oaxaca. Instead of one political party ruling Oaxaca through a clientelist relationship, there now exists multiple political parties competing for political power and political influence in the different municipalities and communities. The clientelist practices orchestrated originally by the PRI, are now common amongst all political parties active in Oaxaca (Audelo Cruz 2007).

A common critique of political parties made by communities and municipalities who are committed to self-organization outside the political party model is the role political parties play in dividing communities (Camacho 2015a; Lucha comunitaria y represión política 2016). Political parties might choose a local leader, or a local person of influence, and fund that person's political campaign within the community. That local political leader, funded by the party, will often seek to diminish the power of the community assembly, or at least manipulate the community assembly to serve the interests of the party. Similarly, a local leader might seek out support from a political party to achieve the same ends, diminish the collective power of the community assembly and serve individual and party interests against the interests of the community as a whole. Funding of one political faction in a community or municipality, which serves the interest of the party foreign to the community, inevitably produces all sorts of conflict in the community between different peoples and different groups, which in looking at the history of Oaxaca, has continually led to violent municipal conflict (Camacho 2015b; Camacho 2018; CODEDI 2020).

In many ways, just like the caciques which represented state interests in local communities throughout the 20th century of PRI domination, political parties now work hand in hand with, or have taken the role of, the cacique, representing the interests of the state at the community and municipal level. Political parties often serve as intermediaries between the state and community leaders, with the role of either outright repressing community movements, or coopting extra-parliamentary political action, into the channels approved by the state and its bureaucracies. Political parties will often seek to buy off local leaders, to incorporate them into their larger political project, or they might fund alternative local leaders, who violently repress other leaders or movements within the community that threaten the interests of the party (Maldonado 2002; Gasparello and Quintana Guerrero 2009; Navarro F. 2014; Camacho 2015b; Camacho 2018).

In the context of Oaxaca, political parties are an integral part of a larger ensemble of institutions and bureaucracies that serve as tools in the arts of governing of the Mexican state. While many of these political party practices might seem distinct—the use of caciques and local strongmen to divide communities, the clientelist use of social programs, money and material goods

to produce political party cohesion and support, the violent intervention against community assemblies and community decisions which counter the power of political party influence—all reinforce a certain ethic, and a certain idea of the political, that I am arguing is characteristic of the state.

Theoretical interventions into the necessity and value of political parties, while diverging from the tactics of political parties in practice, equally uphold and reinforce forms of social organization and forms of political practice characteristic of the state. In representative democracy, at least in theory, the role of the political party is to bring the interests of the citizens into the political apparatus. Parties, led by specific candidates, compete for roles of authority in the institutions of the state. From there, the idea is that the representative of the party—the representative of the people that make up the party—will fulfill the will of the people within the apparatus of the state. Thus, the power of the political party is only articulated through the mechanisms of the state.

V.I. Lenin, for his part, saw a direct link between the revolutionary party and the taking of state power. The party was not just meant to organize and direct the working masses, but most importantly, the revolutionary party was to serve as the leader of the organized masses in the taking over of state power, fulfilling the proletarian conquest of political power originally theorized by Marx and Engels. V.I. Lenin puts it bluntly,

I continue to maintain that any political party generally, and the party of the advanced class in particular, would forfeit its right to exist, would be unworthy of being regarded as a party, would be a wretched cipher in all respects, were it to refuse to assume power when it has the opportunity to do so (Lenin 1975, 18)

For Lenin, the principal goal of the revolutionary party is to take state power; what Lenin called the dictatorship of the proletariat. The revolutionary party, which is made up of the rank and file workers, along with their highly disciplined and trained revolutionary leaders, led by advanced revolutionary theory, should seek to take state power in order to overthrow the capitalist system and fight off any reactionary counterattacks that might otherwise come from those wielding state power.

Marxist theorist Enrique Dussel also sees a direct relationship between the political party and the state apparatus. For Dussel, the political party should serve as a school of politics where people meet, discuss and develop political consciousness and solidify political ideology. The political party should be the space where citizens cultivate the tools to act in the political terrain, where they learn the organizational forms and practices to be represented at the level of the state (Dussel 2014).

For Dussel, the party thus serves as the organizational structure connecting the people to the political apparatus, by educating and organizing the citizenry to exercise their political power. As we discussed above, Dussel argues that for power to be exercised, it must move from its original state, as *potentia*, to

institutionalization, *potestas*. What is that institution for Dussel? The institution is the state, organized around specific political postulates which orient the actions of said state.

The constitutional changes enacted throughout the 1990's to legally recognize Indigenous *usos y costumbres* in Oaxaca, while formulated as a check on political party influence in Indigenous communities in favor of Indigenous self-determination, have in many ways only reinforced state control over Indigenous communities and Indigenous territories. As I mentioned above, the most significant changes in legislation related to Indigenous *usos y costumbres* in Oaxaca were implemented following the Indigenous Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, along with the waning power of the PRI party in municipal elections in Oaxaca (Anaya Muñoz 2004; Eisenstadt 2007; Recondo 2007; Hernández-Díaz 2010). The constitutional changes in Oaxaca were not necessarily seeking to enhance Indigenous self-determination but rather serve as a political maneuver to address the growing ungovernability of the state, and the potential of widespread Indigenous rebellion. Thus, the politics of recognition implemented in Oaxaca were pivotal to stabilizing the state and its power during a period of political instability.

Indigenous scholars in Turtle Island have advanced a critical approach to the politics of multiculturalism and recognition within the context of Canada which is useful to this discussion (Simpson 2017; Coulthard 2014; Corntassel 2012). Dene scholar Glen Coulthard has shown the way in which the Canadian government has turned from the politics of exclusion and/or assimilation towards Indigenous communities, to institutional practices which favor recognition and accommodation of Indigenous diversity and Indigenous rights. Coulthard argues that this shift in state strategy has been instituted with the same colonial ends in mind:

...instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend (Coulthard, 2014: 3).

For Coulthard, the liberal politics of recognition only guarantees to reinforce the colonial relationship between Indigenous communities and the nation-state, by reproducing state power and undermining the territorial control and self-determination of Indigenous communities.

A similar outcome can be seen in the context of Oaxaca. The demand for state recognition of Indigenous rights has in many respects only directed social struggle, like political parties, back to the institutions of the state. State authority is taken as the ultimate authority. The institutions of the state are seen as where the struggle for recognition must take place. The state, including its

forms of relation and organization, are reproduced, while the contradictions between state power and community self-organization remain in place.

The role played by the state in municipal elections is just one example. The State Electoral Institute in Oaxaca is tasked with overseeing the entirety of the electoral process carried out under the *usos y costumbres* model. This includes authorizing election dates, sometimes having a physical presence at municipal elections to verify their processes and procedures, verifying elections results, and other tasks of oversight and management. The State Electoral Institute thus structures the rules and regulations of community elections organized by *usos y costumbres*, as well as maintains the official authority to verify the procedures and results. This has only meant a more controlled and institutionalized process in general (Ramírez Barrios 2013; IEEPCO 2016).

In addition, the managerial power of the state inherent to recognition politics in Oaxaca, has sought to organize certain institutional processes which require certain forms of action, certain relations and certain subjects necessary to fulfill what the state requires for elections by *usos y costumbres*. This has meant that local figures, including caciques or individuals affiliated with political parties, have in some instances mobilized the rules and regulations instituted by the legislation to their own ends against those of the community (Recondo 2007). Furthermore, the self-determined organizational forms of Indigenous peoples are circumscribed and shaped by the institutional framework, organizing behavior that is compatible with continued state rule.

To fully understand state influence on, and management of, elections by *usos y costumbres* in Oaxaca, we also have to take into consideration federal and state funds managed by municipal governments, the relationship between municipal seats and municipal agencies—agencies having less representation in electoral processes because of the structure of the municipal elections—and the way social programs are leveraged through local elections (Recondo 2007; Hernández-Díaz and Juan Martínez 2007; Hernández-Díaz 2013). We also have to explore the organization of the municipality itself, as an inheritance of Spanish colonial government, and an ongoing technology of state control.

In summary, while political parties have diversified, and the state has adopted a politics of recognition of Indigenous *usos y costumbres*, territorial control and the self-determination of Indigenous communities in Oaxaca remains under threat. Political parties and recognition politics might just be two different techniques of the Mexican state, to repress or suppress Indigenous self-determination. Meanwhile, theorists of representative democracy as well as party communists, continue to develop ideas of the party, which serve nothing more than to reproduce the state and the state form against the self-organized forms of Indigenous communities.

Autonomous struggles beyond the state

In the last thirty years, led most prominently by the Zapatista struggle in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, Indigenous communities in various parts of the country have taken up autonomy as foundational to their politics. While originally demanding that the Mexican state recognize Indigenous autonomy through the San Andres Accords, when the government failed to fulfill these accords, the Zapatistas took a different route of political struggle, focusing more on organizing and building autonomy in practice.

In this final section, I want to follow the shift made by the Zapatistas, moving from a politics organized around or within the state, to a politics of self-organization beyond the state. While I call these alternative forms of social and political organization autonomous politics, I understand the dangers in doing so. In Mexico, the demand for state recognition of Indigenous autonomy has become integral to the demands of many Indigenous struggles (Hernández-Díaz 2010). In that way, autonomy has been captured in the politics of recognition, articulated as a demand to the state, rather than a practice of liberation. Nonetheless, here I want to conceive of autonomous politics as a practice of self-organization beyond the state.

Thinking autonomous politics requires that we recognize alternative forms of organization and resistance, ones different from political parties and the state. Drawing from the widespread uprisings that shook Bolivia in the first five years of the 21st century, Uruguayan writer, Raul Zibechi, offers us a critique of the popular conception of what constitutes political organization and political resistance. He writes,

The problem is that we are unwilling to consider that in everyday life the relationships between neighbors, between friends, between comrades, or between family, are as important as those of the union, the party, or even the state itself. In the dominant imagination, organization is understood to mean the institutionalized and also, therefore, hierarchical—visible and clearly identifiable (Zibechi 2010, 13-14).

Mobilizing Zibechi's point to complement our analysis here, there is an overwhelming consensus among political party scholars that politics signifies a certain form of organization, and that politics takes place in certain institutional spaces. Alternative forms of organization—like practices of mutual aid and solidarity fundamental to the reproduction of life—are ignored by party Marxists or repressed by the contemporary practices of political parties and the state.

Attention to the self-organized reproduction of community life, helps us deepen our understanding of autonomous politics. Forms of community and popular organization, grounded in the defense of territories, the production of use value instead of exchange value, and the ethics of solidarity and mutual aid, continue to exist, and can be found specifically in Indigenous and campesino

communities throughout much of Latin America. These forms of organization are fundamental to thinking of alternative political and social possibilities—to thinking of a politics of autonomy—beyond the state, capitalist and political party forms. Raquel Gutiérrez et al. write,

...throughout Latin America, from rural communities to mega cities, it is also possible to trace a multiplicity of almost imperceptible experiences of popular self-organization and production of the commons, during which daily life reproduces itself according to logics of collaboration and social self-regulation... (Gutiérrez, et al. 2016, 401).

For Raquel Gutiérrez and others, the self-organized practices of community and social reproduction—of the reproduction of the commons—embody the possibilities for social transformation. These forms of community organization, necessary for community and social reproduction, are antithetical to the logics of capitalism and the state, and are antithetical to the politics of political parties.

We can return to our discussion of *comunalidad* to further strengthen our understanding of alternative forms of organization and social reproduction integral to autonomous politics. Benjamin Maldonado makes clear the connection between *comunalidad* and autonomy as such:

It is precisely *comunalidad* that is part of the necessary conditions for autonomy: reciprocity based on the principle of mutual aid, power in the hands of the collective constituted in the assembly, the will to freely serve the community for years in different positions despite being onerous, the defense of a territory which is historically and culturally one's own, are elements sufficient for an autonomous system in favorable conditions, and these conditions are those confiscated by the state...(Maldonado 2003, 20-21)

For Maldonado, the self-organization and self-reproduction of community life, embedded in the traditional forms of organization of Indigenous communities in Oaxaca—what he calls *comunalidad*—is necessary for the development of autonomy. Having the capacity to organize and reproduce social life without the interference of the state or capitalism, is a fundamental practice which gives life to the politics of autonomy. It is exactly these forms of organization and social reproduction which the state, through political parties, seeks to control or destroy.

Various Indigenous scholars and activists in Turtle Island have turned to a politics of Indigenous resurgence to counter the legacy of colonialism against Indigenous communities, and to counter the liberal politics of recognition which they argue continues that legacy (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2017; Corntassel 2012). Indigenous resurgence is the turn away from the institutions of colonialism and the politics of recognition, to recover and regenerate the

traditional cultural practices and forms of political and social organization of Indigenous communities. In this way, rather than looking for recognition from without, it is a politics of cultural/political resurgence from within.

In contrast to the politics of political parties or recognition politics, which navigate the bureaucratic or institutional apparatus of the state to achieve their political goals, Indigenous resurgence is a practice, enacted outside the spheres conventionally designated “the political.” Dene scholar Glen Coulthard writes,

By contrast, the resurgent approach to recognition advocated here explicitly eschews the instrumental rationality central to the liberal politics of recognition and instead demands that we enact or practice our political commitments to Indigenous national and women’s liberation in the cultural form and content of our struggle itself. Indigenous resurgence is at its core a prefigurative politics—the methods of decolonization prefigure its aims (Coulthard 2014, 159)

Rather than seeking mediation from the state to fulfill their political goals, Indigenous resurgence prefigures the cultural and political practices sought in the struggle. Unlike political party and recognition politics, resurgence is an embodied practice, carried out in the practices of the everyday (Corntassel 2012).

Other political theorists and organizers have developed the theoretical and practical connection between Indigenous autonomous struggles in Oaxaca, and the politics and practices of anarchism. In Oaxaca, this connection is often referenced in the history of the Flores Magón brothers, who made subtle but significant contributions in linking the anarchist principles of mutual aid, self-organization and autonomy, to the forms of community self-organization practiced by Indigenous communities in Mexico. Benjamín Maldonado articulates this connection well:

From Oaxaca, anarchism has a perspective that is necessary to consider because it is a vision based in a historical practice of communal life in Mesoamerican communities, linked to international anarchist approaches...” (Maldonado 2020, 19)

For Maldonado, there is an organic affiliation between the politics of anarchism and the politics of *comunalidad* in Indigenous communities in Oaxaca. Self-organization and mutual aid animate both conceptions of social organization, in contrast to the politics of hierarchy and domination characteristic of the state.

Insights from anarchist politics are useful in the context of contemporary Oaxaca, in helping us further conceptualize autonomous politics. With a stiff rejection of political parties and the state, anarchists often seek to embody alternative conceptions of political power, organized in practices of solidarity and mutual aid. Like the politics of resurgence, anarchist politics are often

grounded an ethic of direct action and prefiguration, organizing the social relations sought in the struggle, in the immediate here and now (Graeber 2009, Milstein 2010). In this way, anarchist politics complement the politics of resurgence, *comunalidad*, and autonomy, against the politics of recognition, political parties, and the state in general.

The recent work by Mixe linguist and political thinker, Yásnaya Aguilar Gil, has perhaps best articulated an autonomous politics in Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, outside of the organizational forms and logics of political parties, recognition politics and the state form. Flipping the maxim of the National Indigenous Congress, “Never more a Mexico without us” on its head, Aguilar Gil writes of a “*Nosotrxs sin Estado*” or an “us without the state.” She writes,

We need to imagine other possible forms of political and social organization, a post-nation-state world, a world that is not divided into countries. Us without Mexico means us without the state, without the Mexican state, but without creating other states. Unlike the integrationist model, the us without Mexico doesn’t seek to integrate Indigenous peoples and Indigenous individuals into the mechanisms of the state but to confront them and dispense with them as much as possible (Aguilar Gil 2020, 45).

Following Aguilar Gil, the autonomous politics I seek to articulate here is a politics without the state. It is a politics that does not seek representation within the state apparatus nor recognition from the state. It is not a politics that seeks multiculturalism or a pluri-national state, but rather forms of community and regional organization where the state doesn’t exist. That is the embodiment of practices of *comunalidad*, Indigenous resurgence, anarchism, etc. beyond the constant trappings of the party, the politics of recognition and the state form.

Conclusion

The wave of political and social transformation that brought in the turn of the 21st century in Mexico, has changed things considerably, only to keep much the same. The fortification of a multi-party system in Oaxaca, alongside the politics of recognition brought by state constitutional reforms throughout the 1990s, has not meant liberation for Indigenous communities, nor respect for their self-determined ways of living. These changes have embodied a transformation of state power and forms of state governing, from the single party clientelist rule of the PRI, to a complex interplay of recognition and party politics.

We do not have to look any further than the contemporary MORENA regime, led by the president Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The ex-PRI member who founded the MORENA party, and won the 2018 presidential elections by a landslide on an anti-PRI platform, has continued the conventional pursuit of capital accumulation and state (re)production characteristic of previous administrations regardless of their party affiliation. In Oaxaca, a state still led

officially by the PRI party, a new group of MORENA politicians has joined congress, many of whom have been recruited from the ranks of the PRI. Thus, they have changed their political banner, to represent a politics that remains much the same.

The argument put forth in this essay has been that political parties, whatever their discourse or politics, represent interests that favor the concentration of state power and state control. Contrary to those who defend the political party as a democratic and/or revolutionary force—a sentiment still widely held amongst many of the so-called left in Mexico and across the world—I have tried to show how political parties are inherently in opposition to the autonomous self-organization of the people, and are thus an obstacle not an avenue to liberation.

As I have argued, the means and ends of a political party are directly linked to the means and ends of the political state. Like democratic and Marxist political theorists who argue in favor of the political party, the organizational forms inherent to the political party render imperceptible, unimportant, or ineffective other forms of organization that do not reproduce the particular relationships and organizational structures characteristic of the party. I have pushed that argument further to contend that the relationships and organizational structures characteristic of the party, are the relationships and organizational structures of the state and its bureaucracies. Thus, the party, and its defenders, produce and reproduce the ideology of the state, an ideology that is embodied in practice and organizational forms.

In a similar way, the politics of recognition in Oaxaca has continued the subordinate relationship between the Mexican state and Indigenous communities. The demand for Indigenous rights and the recognition of Indigenous *usos y costumbres*, has strengthened the paternalistic relationship between the state and Indigenous communities. The fundamental issues of territorial control and self-determination remain unchanged. The politics of recognition have more than anything channeled the organizational energy of many communities into strengthening state sovereignty and the state form.

With all this, I have offered some thoughts on an autonomous politics beyond the state. While it has become common in Mexico that communities and movements articulate autonomy as a demand to the state—that is, calling for the state to legally recognize Indigenous autonomy—I have tried to show how that approach inherently works against Indigenous autonomy, by strengthening state administrative power and state control over community organization. It is my contention that the potential of autonomous struggle lies in strengthening the forms of community organization and political resistance animated by solidarity, mutual aid and self-organization. That is, autonomous politics understood as something already being practiced—being constructed and reconstructed, constantly evolving, constantly under threat, constantly resisting—in many Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, and in many communities throughout the world.

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The project of democracy and the 15M movement in Spain

Mark Purcell

Abstract

This paper stages an encounter between an autonomist idea of democracy and the 2011 movement in Spain. While I hope the paper contributes to our understanding of the Spanish case, my main goal is to improve and extend this way of conceiving and practicing democracy by learning lessons the events in Spain have to teach us. What we can learn from Spain, the paper argues, is at least three lessons: 1) in any project for democracy there will always be multiple desires present, 2) people will need to practice democracy in order to grow stronger, and 3) the “we” of democracy cannot be taken for granted but must be actively negotiated.

Keywords: democracy, Spain, 15M movement

Introduction

This paper brings together two projects: a particularly autonomist conception of democracy as a radical political idea, and the various movements in Spain that were sparked by the demonstrations of May 15, 2011 and the encampments that followed. Throughout the paper I will call the former “democracy” and the latter “15M.” My intent is to bring democracy and the 15M into and encounter and a rich dialogue with each other that will challenge both participants and help them to grow stronger.

I will talk more about the paper’s particular idea of democracy below, but for now let me say that it is not at all the same as the prevailing idea of the term. That prevailing idea assumes that democracy is the same thing as the liberal-democratic State, with its elections, representatives, and sovereign power – a democracy in which people are given some say in who rules them. In contrast, democracy as it is conceived here is when people do not have rulers. Democracy is when people manage their affairs for themselves.¹ This way of conceiving democracy is very old, with roots in the Greek tradition before Plato. But I take my inspiration primarily from a strain of political theory that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, in the wake of the apparent failures of State socialism. As thinkers on the political left struggled with how to move forward after Stalin, they developed new ideas, or remobilized old ones, always in

¹ This idea of democracy is often modified as “direct democracy” or “radical democracy,” but I argue that the word democracy *already* means people managing their affairs directly for themselves. We feel compelled to attach such redundant modifiers because we have been trained to think that democracy is the same thing as liberal-democratic government. It’s not.

conversation with political practice. The Hungarian Revolution of 1953, for example, led to a revived theoretical interest in autonomous workers' councils as a political form. In the other direction, a spate of autonomist theorizing in the mid-1960s in France influenced the events in Paris in 1968.

So this paper, by bringing the idea of democracy into a dialogue with the empirical case of the 15M, is continuing a dialogue between radical theory and practice that has been ongoing for some time. Of course, readers of *Interface* will likely be in favor of such a dialogue. But still, let me give my reasons why I think this dialogue is worth continuing. I am a political theorist whose work is devoted to rethinking the idea of democracy, and in fact I do so primarily by engaging in a close reading of the *theoretical* sources. I have found there is great value in gathering together a collection of ideas of democracy, across the centuries, that resonate with each other to produce a coherent new idea.

Nevertheless, I don't think an examination of those sources alone is sufficient. Empirical investigation of democratic *practice* offers something additional that is essential. First, concrete efforts to create democracy, like the 15M, always produce something that is new in the successes they achieve and the challenges they encounter. We should document and learn from both so that we will continue to build a store of collective knowledge about the practice of democracy that can be a resource for, and an inspiration to, future theorization. Second – and this reason is perhaps less well-worn – when we look actively for democracy in actual practice and bring that practice into engagement with theory, we find that democracy is much more common than we tend to assume. Democracy – real democracy – is not so rare, fantastical, utopian, or impractical as we might think. It is, on the contrary, an active and ongoing project that is being practiced by people all over the world, every day. And we can move beyond the question of whether or not democracy is possible or practical (it clearly is), and we can focus instead on how we can improve our practice.

To investigate that last question, the paper begins by giving presenting a theory of democracy as I understand it. It then presents an account of the 15M that is as detailed as possible in the space a journal article allows. This account provides something of the history of the 15M, the many other movements it was inspired by, the political context in which it emerged, the tactics it employed, and the successes and failures it experienced. The main element of this account, however, is a detailed exploration of the multiple political desires that the movement expressed. Lastly, the paper concludes by reflecting on the lessons democrats can learn from the 15M, which are 1) a desire for democracy is commonly accompanied by a desire to be ruled, and this internal struggle must be attended to 2) democracy is a project that must be *practiced* over the long term so that we may improve, and 3) the “we” of democracy is not an easy question, but a hard one, one that requires our most careful attention.

A theory of democracy

The concept of democracy presented here draws inspiration from a minor

current in political philosophy that advocates for what might be called autonomist (and maybe also anarchist, libertarian, or communist) political desires. This current has very long roots, but it has become more vibrant in the present era since about the mid-1950s, when the failures of State socialism became increasingly apparent. This current is large enough to make it difficult to mention all its elements, so let me highlight some particularly important sources.² The work of Cornelius Castoriadis (1991, 1997, esp. Chapters 1-3, 8, 11), particularly his idea of autonomy and his insistence on workers' organizations that are controlled by workers themselves rather than by hierarchical Unions or Parties, is an early touchstone. Castoriadis was a radical political theorist, but he was also a noted Sovietologist, and he perceived and exposed the disaster of Soviet State socialism earlier than most (e.g. 1997, Chapter 7). Also important is the work of Henri Lefebvre (2009, Chapters 4-6) and Raul Vaneigem (1974), both of whom sought to extend the concept of *autogestion*, or workers' self-management, beyond the workplace into all sectors of society.³ Following on in that same spirit is the joint work of Deleuze and Guattari in the 1970s (1977, 1987). Their radically anti-State political vision sought to free what they called "desiring-production" from the various apparatuses that capture and contain its energy. A bit later still, Jacques Ranciere (e.g. 1999 and 2007) explicitly theorized an idea of "democracy" that imagines it to be not a system of rule, but a popular force thrown up from below that never stops disrupting the system of rule. And these French voices resonate strongly with many in Italy, where, in the 1960s and 70s, a theory and practice of "workers' autonomy" (e.g. *Autonomia Operaia*) insisted workers be able to directly control their own lives. During the course of those decades, the idea of *autonomia* was extended beyond workers and the factory, to contexts such as housing and services in urban neighborhoods (Lotta Continua 1973). Though the movement in Italy was crushed in the late 1970s, this autonomist line of thought continued to be developed in the work of theorists like Antonio Negri (1999), Paolo Virno (1996), and Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2015). And of course, today, Negri's joint work with Michael Hardt is probably the best known manifestation of this tradition (e.g. Hardt and Negri 2004). Not all these authors use the term "democracy" to describe what they are calling for, although most do. And so that is the name I will use in drawing these various political desires together into what I hope is a coherent concept of democracy.

So, as I understand it here, democracy means that people manage their affairs themselves. They do not surrender their power to an entity other than themselves. They keep their power, and use it to govern their own lives. In order to do so, they must choose to become active. They must *take up* their own power and begin using it. They must engage in the practice, every day, of managing their affairs themselves. Through that practice they will develop as

2 Additional sources not mentioned include Clastres 1989, Abensour 2011, Illuminati 1996.

3 Of course Guy Debord's work is in this same tradition, it is just less explicitly interested in self-management.

democrats: they will come to know their own power better, and they will become better at using it wisely.

The corollary of that first principle, that people manage their affairs for themselves, is that in democracy people do not let something that is *other than* them manage their affairs *for* them. In democracy, people must not only become active, they must also *refuse* the alienation of their power to an entity that is other than them. The most famous such entity is the “artificial person” that Hobbes invented in 1651,⁴ a feigned, imagined being that is created to receive the power that actual persons surrender to it. Its explicit purpose is to use that power to control them. The most well-known of such entities is of course the modern State, which Hobbes’ work did so much to found. But equally artificial in their personhood are entities like the Party, the Union, or “the leadership” of any organization.⁵

A common concern expressed about this way of thinking about democracy is to call it utopian, or at least not very pragmatic. This democracy *sounds* nice, the critique goes, but it’s an impossible dream that we will never achieve, so we should work on something more practical instead. The answer to this critique is that democracy is entirely practical. It is something that can be practiced today, something that is *already* being practiced today. We should not mistake democracy for utopia. Democracy should not be seen as an ideal community at the end of history, one we expect to arrive at some time in the future. Nor is democracy a return to the state of nature, in Hobbes’ terms, a falling back into the community we had *before* we surrendered our power to the artificial person (see 1985, Chapters 13-17). Democracy is not properly any sort of community at all. Democracy is, instead, a *project*.⁶ It is a project that we take up, commit ourselves to, and try our best to carry forward into the future. Democracy is a perpetual project to retain, rather than surrender, our power, and to strengthen our ability to manage our affairs for ourselves. To be sure, that project always involves an effort to construct a democratic community. But that community is properly a *result* of the democratic project, not the substance of democracy itself.

I find it quite useful to follow Deleuze and Guattari’s lead and think of this democratic project in terms of desire.⁷ Democracy is a project to augment our

4 See his *Leviathan*, Chapter 16.

5 This list would also include the well-worn fiction called “the People.” Democracy does not mean, *pace* Locke and Rousseau, that people form themselves up into an abstraction called “the People.” That abstraction is no less fictional, imagined, or alienating than the State. Democracy insists, instead, that people remain themselves.

6 This way of thinking is strongly indebted to Lefebvre’s (2009, 61) conception of democracy: “Many democrats imagine that democracy is a type of stable condition toward which we...must tend. No...Democracy is nothing other than the struggle for democracy.”

7 Of course I take my main inspiration here from Deleuze & Guattari, most especially *Anti-Oedipus*. However, this concept is quite lively in Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* (1991) as well, where it animates the struggle of inhabitants/users against the abstract space of the State and capitalism, and for their own, differential space.

desire to manage our affairs for ourselves, and to atrophy, or leave aside, our desire to have our affairs managed for us. That might seem a simple matter: who would *not* want to retain their own power?⁸ Who would choose to be ruled by something other than themselves? We would. We do. Both of these desires are entirely native to us. We desire *both* to manage our affairs for ourselves *and* to have our affairs managed for us. Both desires are part of our inheritance as humans, part of our “species-being,” as Marx (1994) would put it. When our project of democracy is going well, when we are practicing diligently, our native desire for democracy will grow stronger, and our native desire to be governed will wither. It isn’t so much that we repress or sublimate the latter. It should wither. If we are doing democracy well, if we are actively managing our affairs in our daily practice, our desire to be ruled will fall into disuse, and it will become weak. Even if it does, however, we still must remain attentive. Our desire to be ruled can never be annihilated. It will always be there, striving to grow stronger. The project of democracy requires that we remain intentional and vigilant, continually nurturing our desire for democracy and leaving aside our desire to be ruled.

Of course any project for democracy does not take place in a vacuum. In our particular epoch, our way of life is dominated by the sovereign State and the capitalist Corporation. Our desire to have our affairs managed for us is strong. It has been developed over years of practice. It has been regularized to the point of being an unconscious assumption. We *have* to have a State! Workers *have* to have a Union to gain any power! The economy will collapse without healthy Corporations! Our desire to manage our affairs for ourselves is much weaker, much less attended to, much less practiced. But that does not mean it is not there. It is always at work, even if it is relatively less strong right now. And so in the present era, we need to be especially attentive to our democratic desires, to realize they are there, to learn about them, and to help them grow stronger. That is why I have taken up a project of scholarship that searches actively for this desire, that pays careful attention to it whenever I find it. The idea of this project is to build a little file, a scrapbook of clippings. I think in this era we very much need to record the existence of a desire for democracy, and to declare out loud that it exists, that it is at work. The more we look for democracy in this way, the larger our little file will grow, and the more we will understand that democracy is actually pretty common, that it is being practiced all over the world, that maybe it isn’t as rare as we often think it is.

Methodological note

And so this paper sits in the context of that project of seeking out and recording a desire for democracy. I want to seek out and bear witness to the story of democratic desires as they exist in empirical practice. I acknowledge that agenda, and I embrace it. At the same time, that agenda can lead to problems.

8 “For there are very few so foolish,” says Hobbes, “that had not rather govern themselves, than be governed by others” (1985, Chapter 15).

It can tempt me to mischaracterize the 15M, to overemphasize its democratic desires and ignore its undemocratic ones. Such a mis-characterization would do a disservice to the movement and its history, to be sure.⁹ But it would also do a disservice to my project. I want to record democratic desire, but in doing so I want to understand it as it actually exists in a rich context of actual practice. In almost every case, and certainly in the case of the 15M, democratic desire exists in a context in which a desire to be ruled is also at work. The project of democracy will always have to reckon with such other, often conflicting desires. And so in each case we need to understand not just an abstracted and disembodied desire for democracy, but the whole landscape of political desire in which a given movement operated, in as much detail as possible, so that we can learn the lessons it has to teach us.

So I approach the 15M looking for a desire for democracy, but with the methodological commitment to also see and report fully the other, often non-democratic, desires that were present as well. I will do my best to tell a rich story that is worthy of the complex reality of the 15M experience. And I will also do what I can, always, to advance the project of democracy. I also want to acknowledge some real methodological limits of this account. It is an empirical study done from afar by someone who does not speak Spanish or read it fluently. I was not present in Spain in 2011, and so I do not have my own observational data. I can only use observations reported by people who were there (e.g. Fernandez-Savater 2011b, and numerous other online reports from participants). In addition, there are numerous archives of primary documents generated during the 15M (e.g. 15mpedia.org), much of which is available in English. And of course I have examined intensively the secondary scholarship in English-language academic sources (e.g. Flesher Fominaya, 2015b). The latter makes up the core of my data sources, and of course these use a range of sources themselves, including observation, interviews, and archival documents. Throughout the empirical section, for almost all factual claims I have meticulously referenced the sources from which they came so the reader will be able to corroborate them. I will make my account of the 15M as rich, full, and true as I can, given these shortcomings. But, to be clear, I do not intend this paper's main contribution that it advances our empirical understanding of the 15M. Others have done excellent work on this question using primary research. My goal is not to correct or improve that work. Instead, this paper's contribution is to enhance, extend, and deepen our conception of autonomist democracy by bringing into a sustained engagement with a detailed empirical account of the 15M. I do hope, also, that the paper will also shed some small amount of new light on the 15M. Maybe I can see it with different eyes and produce something useful for those who know the case much better than I. I will of course let them be the judge of that.

9 For a thoughtful analysis of similar methodological issues, see Prentoulis and Thomassen (2013a, 169-70).

Democratic desires in the context of the 15M

A very brief history

The 15M movement announced itself to the world on May 15, 2011 in the form of a one-day march, protest, and demonstration in cities all over Spain. It was organized, mostly online, by a large number of groups, the most well-known of which were *iDemocracia Real Ya!* (Real Democracy Now!) and *Juventud Sin Futuro* (Youth Without a Future) (Antentas 2015; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 171; Durgan and Sans 2012, 97-8; Martinez-Arboleda 2015). The purpose of the demonstrations was to express the indignation felt by ordinary Spaniards at how their political leaders were handling the fallout of the global financial crisis that began in 2008. The participants gathered in the main squares of several Spanish cities, particularly in *Puerta del Sol* in Madrid and in *Plaça de Catalunya* in Barcelona. In *Puerta del Sol* the protesters continued in the square for a time, and eventually a small number of protesters spontaneously decided to occupy the square, as protesters had in Egypt, and to camp in *Sol* overnight. A day later the police demanded the campers clear the square, and they took violent measures to force them to do so (Durgan and Sans 2012, 98; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 9; Jimenez and Estalella 2011, 20; Sevilla-Buitrago 2015). In the days and weeks that followed, the number of campers in Madrid and in other cities grew quickly. They were inspired by the idea of occupation, and they were outraged by the violence of the police. Thus emerged the *acampadas*, or encampments, a major component of the 15M that I will say more about shortly (Nunes 2012).

The participants in the 15M came to be known as “*indignados*,” those who are indignant, or outraged.¹⁰ The motivations for the 15M were certainly complex, but some broad trends can be identified. They were outraged at the high rates of unemployment and precarious work in Spain, especially among the young (Antentas 2015, 147; Martinez and Bernardos, 2015; Taibo 2012, 156; Durgan and Sans 2012). They were concerned about the growing lack of affordable shelter in all Spanish cities, particularly in Madrid and Barcelona, and the increasingly common occurrence of mortgage defaults, foreclosures, and evictions (Flesher Fominaya 2015a). On top of these important economic concerns, they were also angry at the Spanish political elite and its two major political Parties, the right-wing *Partido Popular* (PP) and the center-left *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE). Both were thought to be unconcerned with the needs of Spanish citizens and far too concerned with the needs of financial elites (*iDemocracia Real YA!* 2011; Castellanos, Henar, and Gonzalez 2011, Charnock, Purcell, and Ribera-Fumaz 2011) both local Spanish banks and international financial powers.¹¹ There was a very strong sense among *indignados* that these financial elites had caused the crisis but that Spanish politicians were not going

10 For an exploration of this core emotion of indignation, see Antentas 2015, 141.

11 This vague term had a very concrete and consistent meaning throughout the 15M: it meant the “Troika” of the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

hold them accountable. Moreover, the PP and the PSOE were eagerly passing neoliberal austerity policies (privatization of public assets, deregulation of business, bailouts for banks) under the direction of the financial elites, while they were also cutting public services (housing, health, education) and salaries for public employees (Martínez and Bernardos 2015, 158). In the context of this outrage at the political class, the *indignados* were subjected to police violence in the public square on May 15 and in the days after. It increased their indignation.

But the *indignados* were not only outraged. They also expressed a positive vision for the future.¹² Perhaps the most prominent element of this vision was a desire for what was often called “real democracy.” The core of the idea was that democracy as it was currently conceived of in Spain, which is to say a liberal-democratic State apparatus controlled in turns by the PP and the PSOE, is not *real* democracy. For some *indignados*, “real democracy” meant something very close to democracy as I understand it, a direct democracy beyond the State, in which people manage their affairs for themselves. For others, the term meant something less radical, something like a greatly reformed State apparatus with much more robust practices of public participation and accountability. In addition to this core desire for “real democracy,” participants in the 15M articulated other positive desires. Material goods like affordable housing and secure employment with good pay, pensions, and health benefits were paramount. They also called for robust public services like education, health care, water, libraries, and so on. Participants also desired better protection of their freedoms, including speech, assembly, and digital information.

While the movement was named for the remarkable flare-up of demonstrations that took place on May 15, 2011, the 15M as a whole encompassed a wide range of actions. As we saw, the demonstrations on May 15 gave way to the *acampadas*. These lasted for about a month in Madrid and Barcelona, and smaller *acampadas* were staged in many Spanish cities for shorter periods (Gelderloos 2011). It was in the *acampadas* that many of the ideas and practices of the 15M were forged. Participants occupied central squares in cities all over Spain. They typically managed the *acampadas* using the general assembly technique (*asamblea* in Spanish), in which decisions were made by participants using consensus procedures. In most places there were also “committees,” which were essentially sub-assemblies that worked on specific issues (Lopez and Garcia 2014). Some committees were logistical bodies that worked to organize the needs of the *acampada*: food, medical, communications, etc. Others were political committees that discussed what was wrong with the country and how it could be improved (Castellanos, Henar, and Gonzalez 2011, 111). Most *asambleas* and committees decided to organize themselves largely horizontally, with minimal hierarchical structure or centralized leadership (Dhaliwal, 2012).

12 “I am outraged,” says the Manifesto of iDemocracia Real YA!, but its next sentence is, “I think I can change it.” iDemocracia Real YA! “Manifesto (English).

In June, the participants in the *acampadas* decided, by consensus, to dismantle them. But they did so with the intention of streaming the political energy of the *acampadas* into other actions (Martinez and San Juan 2014, 12). This change in direction was successful for the most part, and the *acampadas* gave way to many follow-on initiatives that have influenced Spanish politics all the way through to today. The first of these was the neighborhood assemblies. These are groups of neighbors, organized with a great degree of horizontality, that manage a range of neighborhood affairs. These assemblies had a long history before the 15M (Castells 1983), but they were reinvigorated by the new energy of the movement (see Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 162, 167; Durgan and Sans 2012, 100; Dhaliwal 2012).

In addition to the neighborhood assemblies, *indignados* staged a series of shorter occupations in 2011 in central squares in cities all over Spain. They also carried out a series of “Indignant People’s Marches” through the Spanish countryside (and even one to Brussels (Take the Square 2011)) whose aim was to spread the 15M movement beyond the cities and to collect concerns and proposals from rural and small-town inhabitants as well.¹³ They also conducted social forums to discuss the crisis and the future of the movement. In the years following 2011 *indignados* also created all sorts of “platforms,” which are political proposals that serve as a organizing point for action. The most well-known of these is the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* or PAH (Platform of those Affected by Mortgages), which continues today and struggles for an end to evictions and for an adequate supply of affordable housing.¹⁴ PAH also fed into a revitalized movement for municipalism in Spain, an initiative that pursues many of the 15M’s desires by electing sympathetic candidates to citywide and regional offices. The former leader of PAH, Ada Colau, was elected the mayor of Barcelona in 2015 on a municipalist platform called *Barcelona en Comú* (Flesher Fominaya 2015a; Martinez-Arboleda 2015). Yet another 15M follow-on has been the so-called *mareas* or tides. These have been largely spontaneous movements by workers and others in particular sectors (health, public administration, education), to defend their jobs and improve their pay and working conditions (Antentas 2015, 151; Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 168). Often these take the form of protests against cuts in government spending, since many participants are public-sector employees. Tides have also emerged to pursue more general goals, like the defense of the environment or the protection of social services. One last follow-on effect of the 15M is the 2014 creation of a new political Party, *Podemos*, which grew quickly and has achieved considerable electoral success (Flesher Fominaya 2014; Martinez-Arboleda 2015). Many of *Podemos*’ creators saw it as a way to turn the energy of the 15M into an effort to gain institutional State power, which could then be used to make significant changes to policy.

¹³ On which see the article on the 15Mpedia, available at https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Marcha_Popular_Indignada#Propuestas.

¹⁴ PAH was active and strong before 2011, but like so many other efforts it grew and was invigorated by the 15M.

Historical antecedents

The eruption of indignation and mobilization that the 15M produced was extraordinary, to be sure, but it did not come out of the blue. It was inspired and influenced by many other movements that had come before, both in Spain and around the world.¹⁵ Perhaps the most venerable influence was the so-called Spanish Revolution, the experiments in popular self-governance and self-management carried out by Spaniards between 1936 and 1939 during the Spanish Civil War (Bolloten 1984; Dolgoff 1974; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 11). Of course those experiments, despite their many successes, ultimately gave way to the fascist victory, which resulted in almost 40 years of authoritarian government in Spain. When the Franco regime finally ended in 1975, a “transition” was achieved that moved Spain away from fascism and into liberal democracy. There is a pervasive sense in Spanish politics that the transition was the result of a “consensus,” and this consensus must be preserved so that the country does not revert to fascism. As a result, after the transition there was a strong taboo in Spain against questioning the prevailing liberal-democratic regime (Antentas 2015, 142-3; Cameron 2014). And so, in the period between the transition and 2011, activists tended to be quite circumspect in the way they expressed dissent. In this context, the 15M’s willingness to radically call into question the liberal-democratic regime as a whole was thus quite unusual and extremely bold (Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 160; Fernandez-Savater 2011b).¹⁶

The 15M was also strongly influenced by the longstanding practice of *asambleas barriales*, or neighborhood assemblies, in cities throughout Spain.¹⁷ These enjoyed a new energy as a result of the 15M, as I just mentioned, but they were also one of the main inspirations for the movement’s *asamblea* technique, its horizontal organization, and its emphasis on urban inhabitants discussing, deliberating, and making decisions for themselves.

The 15M’s central concern for the issue of affordable housing was a continuation of existing struggles like the PAH and *V de Vivienda*, which pressured the State to guarantee the existing legal right to affordable housing (Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 155; Durgan and Sans 2012, 97; Flesher Fominaya 2015a, 468). Also important in this respect were more radical efforts like *Okupa*, which uses direct action to establish autonomous squats and community centers (Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 174).¹⁸ *Okupa* activists were very influential in the May 15 decision to stay in the square and establish the *acampadas* (Martinez and

15 Cristina Flesher Fominaya’s work makes this argument insistently and convincingly.

16 This dynamic also made life difficult for the PAH in their use of the *escrache* technique, on which see Cristina Flesher Fominaya 2015, 476ff.

17 You can see just one small example at <http://valencia.democraciarealya.es/post/5897848950/asambleas-en-los-barrios>. See also Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013, 11.

18 See also the article on the 15Mpedia, available at https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Movimiento_okupa.

Bernardos 2015, 164; Martinez and San Juan 2014, 17; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 11), and for them this act of camping, of occupying public space in order to inhabit it, was very much a statement about the crisis of affordable housing in Spain (Maeckelbergh 2012).

Also important as a precursor to the 15M were a range of popular struggles prior to 2011 to defend public services – education, health, water, transportation, and so on – from neoliberal policies that would privatize them or eliminate them altogether. One key example of these efforts were the many mobilizations against the so-called “Bologna Plan” to privatize higher education, and veterans of this struggle later became key participants in the *acampadas* (Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 155).

There were also several new initiatives that arose at about the same time as the 15M and in a sense constituted its body. *Juventud Sin Futuro*, for example, was created in February of 2011 to articulate the frustrations of Spain’s “youth without a future.” *¡Democracia Real Ya!* was part of this spate of new initiatives as well. Another important element here were a diverse network of “hacktivists,” who were engaged in a struggle to ensure that people could access, manage, and control the increasingly important common resource of digital information (Martinez and San Juan 2014, 14; Jimenez and Estalella 2011, 20).¹⁹ Yet another contemporaneous effort was *No Les Votes*, which encouraged Spaniards to break the two-party control of government by abstaining from the electoral system.

The influences on the 15M certainly extended beyond Spain as well. In many respects, the 15M is a continuation of a decades-long struggle against neoliberal globalization. A core element of this struggle emerged in 1994, when the Zapatista uprising of indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico coupled a militant anti-neoliberalism with a relatively horizontal and decentralized leadership structure that worked to achieve greater *autonomía* (autonomy) for rural villages in Mexico. In addition to their domestic mobilization, the Zapatistas organized a series of yearly *encuentros* (encounters) that drew together hundreds of like-minded struggles all over the world. The first *encuentro* was in Chiapas in 1996, but the second, in 1997, was in Spain. In 1998, People’s Global Action (PGA) was formed in Geneva as a follow-on effort inspired by the *encuentros*. Spanish activists who had participated in PGA and the wider Global Justice Movement (GJM), of which PGA was a part, went on to play a key role in the 15M (Maeckelbergh 2012; Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 148). The emergence of PGA in 1998 was of course followed by the spectacular World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999, and those gave rise to almost a decade of anti-neoliberal GJM activism. The GJM, heir to the Zapatista spirit, tended to favor horizontal organization, valued consensus decision-making, and had a strong autonomist/anarchist influence that carried over quite clearly into

¹⁹ It should have been no surprise that when the *acampadas* were established, one of the first tents the participants set up was the media center that began live-streaming the events in the square.

the 15M (Flesher Fominaya 2015b; Graeber 2004).

Perhaps the strongest manifestation of this bloom of anti-neoliberal activism was in Argentina in 2001. There, an acute economic crisis led to a markedly decentralized and leaderless resistance movement whose rallying cry was *que se vayan todos!* (“get rid of them all!”),²⁰ a call for a wholesale reset of the current governing structure. The *indignados* were to adopt this cry verbatim. The Argentinians also used *asambleas barriales* to organize themselves horizontally, and they shared with the Zapatistas this strong taste for *autonomía* and self-management (Sitrin 2006; Adamovsky 2003).

Of course these simmering tensions and sporadic outbursts of resistance came to a head in the 2007-8 financial crisis, when the global economy crashed. What followed in Iceland was particularly important, because in that country a swift and potent protest movement forced the conservative government to step down, the banks that caused the crisis were held accountable, and the Icelandic constitution was rewritten in a participatory process (Martinez and San Juan 2014, 14; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 11). Iceland demonstrated to everyone else that protest movements could have profound effects, and the waves of mobilization against the crisis increased. In October of 2010, Stephane Hessel published *Indignez-vous!* in France, and it gained an audience in many other languages. In December of 2010 in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation began the rolling events of the Arab Spring, which were to be a central inspiration to the 15M (Antentas 2015, 137; Durgan and Sans 2012, 97; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 13; Puig 2011). In January of 2011, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen rose in protest against their authoritarian governments, demanding a more democratic form of life. In February, Bahrain and Libya followed suit, and in Egypt President Hosni Mubarak resigned. On March 2, the UK was roiled by more general demonstrations “against the cuts,” which decried the persistent neoliberal attempt to eliminate social spending of all kinds. That same month in Portugal the *geracao a rasca* (precarious generation) erupted in protest against persistently low wages, temporary jobs, and a vanishing social safety net (Antentas 2015, 140). When the 15M was born on May 15, therefore, it was part of a long line of mobilization, protest, and outrage at the crisis, at neoliberalization, at austerity, at economic precarity, and at objectionable government. The Greeks continued that line later in May, and then in September, quite belatedly, Occupy Wall Street added an American voice to the outcry.

The movement had “two souls”

So the 15M was heir to a very large number of popular actions that stretch far back into the twentieth century and all over the world. And so we should not be surprised that desires expressed by participants in the 15M were rich and

20 A more literal translation expresses the phrase’s subjunctive hope: “would that they all go!”

complex. Amador Fernández-Savater (2011a) reports walking around in the early days of Sol and seeing “three posters in a row: ‘Self-management,’ ‘Reform the electoral laws,’ [and] ‘We don’t want corrupt politicians, we want efficient managers’.” We want to manage ourselves, in other words, *and* we want to be managed by others. “What is the nature of this movement?” Savater asks. “Is it a revolutionary movement that proposes generalized self-management? Or is it a liberal movement that asks for political representation that is more representative of people?”²¹ Carlos Taibo (2012) argues that the movement had “two souls.” Taking up the idea of the movement's multiplicity, I characterize the 15M as presenting a number of different contrasts. That is, across a number of different issues, the movement expressed multiple and very often conflicting desires. It wanted an old-left model of politics and it also wanted a new-left one. It wanted to embrace the Party and State and it also wanted to live without them. It wanted to reform capitalism through the welfare State and it also wanted to overthrow capitalism altogether. It wanted a centralized, hierarchical leadership and it also wanted a horizontal, decentralized, leaderless movement (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 167). It wanted to have unity and cohesion and it also wanted to be pluralist and incorporate differences. In the following pages, I will discuss each of these sets of contrasting desires in turn.

Institutional left and autonomous left

Cristina Flesher Fominaya agrees that the movement embraced two very different political sensibilities: one associated with what she calls the “institutional left” and one that favored *autonomía* instead (Flesher Fominaya 2015b). The former is rooted in a traditional left imagination, which is to say an orthodox Marxist imagination. It says that capitalism, with its exploitative class relations, is overwhelmingly the most important problem facing society, and so “only the working class” can make meaningful social change.²² It must organize itself into Unions and Parties that advocate for class interests. The workers’ movement must be unified around the agenda of promoting workers’ interests over and above the interests of capitalists. For this agenda to advance, Unions and Parties must be hierarchically organized and disciplined, with a centralized leadership that can act quickly and decisively.

For as long as this orthodox, institutional left idea has existed, it has been shadowed by a heterodox desire for something different, for an open, autonomous, horizontally organized movement. This other desire agrees that capitalism is a problem, but it does not insist that capitalism is necessarily more important than, for example, patriarchy, or racism, or heteronormativity. Class is a critical political category, but so are gender, race, sexuality, and more. A

21 “¿Cuál es la naturaleza de este movimiento? ¿Se trata de un movimiento revolucionario que propone la autogestión generalizada? ¿Se trata de un movimiento liberal que pide una representación política del pueblo más representativa?”

22 A good example of this way of thinking in the literature on the 15M is Durgan and Sans 2012.

political movement need not be unified around one political imperative. Indeed, it is stronger when it is pluralist and inclusive of diverse political agendas and diverse subject positions. Moreover, a movement's organization should not be hierarchical, centralized, and top-down, but horizontal, decentralized, and bottom-up.²³

The struggle between these different ways of being politically “left” has been present since dawn of capitalism, but the orthodox, institutional approach has for the most part been dominant. In the 20th century, that dominance has been profoundly shaken by the patent failure of State socialism to be anything other than a dictatorship. It was undermined further by movements in the 1960s that struggled to broaden left politics beyond capitalism and the working class. One of the key arguments of these new-left movements in the 1960s was that politics is not confined to working class struggles on the factory floor, that it also takes place in the home, in the neighborhood, in the city, in the ecosystem, and in the colonial territories. The 15M is of course heir to this opening out from the factory, and this inheritance can be seen in its focus on the affordable housing needs of residents in urban neighborhoods in addition to its focus on the more traditional questions like jobs, wages, and benefits. This heterodox attention to the neighborhood and the city, for example, was acute enough that in the *acampadas* that some even argued that they were paying too *much* attention to the neighborhood, and they needed to take the struggle beyond the neighborhood to include the workplace (Antentas 2015, 151). Along similar lines, there was a strong desire in the 15M to exclude Unions and Parties from the demonstrations, assemblies, and *acampadas* (Acampadasol 2011; Durgan and Sans 2012, 93; Maeckelbergh 2012, 224; Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 144; Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 162; Martinez and San Juan 2014, 14; Jimenez and Estalella 2011). Union members were welcome to participate, this line of thinking went, but not as representatives of their organization. They were encouraged, instead, to represent only themselves.

However, while this autonomous-left desire sometimes seemed ascendant, even predominant, in the 15M, that should not cause us to think that the institutional left was absent. A desire that is central to the institutional left, to create hierarchical organizations and institutions with strong leaders that can act quickly and get concrete results, was very much present in the 15M. It asserted itself repeatedly. At no point was a desire for *autonomía* and self-management total. It is probably fair to say that *autonomía* achieved the level of common sense in the 15M, but it only did so by being constantly reasserted and argued for, over and above expressions of desire, always present, for the institutional left (see especially Flesher Fominaya 2015b).

23 A nice review of this way of thinking is in Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 3-4.

The State and the alienation of power

The 15M was also composed of multiple and contrasting desires with respect to the question at the heart of my conception of democracy: the alienation of power. Participants clearly wanted to retain their power and use it to manage their affairs themselves. But they also wanted to allow their power to be alienated, to surrender it to something other than themselves. The former desire desires democracy as I conceive it, and the latter desire is a desire to be ruled, which typically manifests itself as a desire for the State and the Party.

A desire to retain power

Democratic desire in the 15M rejected both the State and the Party because they necessarily alienate power from people and vest it in an artificial person. The claim made in this sense was not that *this particular* manifestation of the State (or government) had failed to represent people adequately. It claimed that *all* States, all Parties, all Governments, and all Unions are institutions, artificial entities, that have been created to be other than and separate from actual people. These institutions take the place of people and make decisions in their stead. People, this way of thinking holds, should not allow the artificial person to take their place. People should take their *own* place and make decisions themselves. In the same way, for this line of thinking, all forms of representation alienate power from people. A representative *re-presents* people, but those people should, instead, *present* themselves and govern themselves directly (Antentas 2015, 146; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013b, 2; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 173). Even in a liberal democracy like Spain, where people have some say in choosing their representatives, the fundamental alienation that representation institutes is present (Lopez and Garcia 2014; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013, 6).²⁴ In this way of thinking, the cry of *que se vayan todos* did not mean “we want both of the current corrupt parties, the PP and the PSOE, to leave power.” It meant, “we want to clear the ground of all Parties” and govern ourselves (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 176; Durgan and Sans 2012, 102; Martinez-Arboleda 2015; Dhaliwal 2012, 259).²⁵ From the perspective of this desire, the rise of the new Party, *Podemos*, in the wake of the 15M was precisely the wrong move. This desire did not want to surrender its power to a new, improved Party and let it govern them.²⁶ Those who desired democracy wanted, instead, to become active and to manage their affairs

24 See also https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Democracia_directa and <http://www.d-3.info/democraciadirecta/>.

25 In this context, the other main cry, “*no nos representan*,” which means “they do not represent us,” could be taken to imply something like, “they do not represent us because they can’t. The entire operation of representation is impossible.”

26 “I wonder,” worried one critic on Twitter, “how long it will take for people to stop doing things for themselves and start expecting [Podemos leader] Pablo Iglesias to do it for them,” see Flesher Fominaya 2014, 6 and Taibo 2012, 157.

themselves.

Certainly the most important manifestations of this desire were the *asambleas* and the committees in the *acampadas* (Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 177). Here people presented themselves, their actual bodies, in order to discuss issues and, using consensus methods, deliberate toward a decision. For the most part, the assemblies were less interested in making demands on the powers that be, and more interested in examining their own political desire. Their goal was less to solve the problems the politicians had failed to solve than to develop their own ability to directly manage their affairs themselves.²⁷ This element of the 15M drew inspiration from the practices of the anarchist collectives that democratically managed whole regions of Spain in the 1930s, but it also drew heavily from the consensus-based *encuentros* of the Zapatistas, the *asambleas* in Argentina in 2001, and the horizontal practices of the Global Justice Movement (Maeckelbergh 2012). And after 2011 this desire led to a wave of autonomous initiatives (self-managed organizations, co-operatives, squats, solidarity networks, etc.) that were launched in the 15M's wake (Martinez and San Juan 2014, 31).

A desire to surrender power

At the same time, a desire to surrender power was also very much present in the 15M. This desire was most evident in calls to *rein vigorate* the State. These calls agreed that the *current* State was irredeemably corrupt. It was seen as an *Estado del Malestar* or Malfare State (Antentas 2015, 140)²⁸ whose purpose was to satisfy Spanish and international financial interests by cutting public spending and expanding austerity policies.²⁹ But this desire did not reject *all* States. Instead, it wanted to re-establish a strong welfare State, with its generous public spending, active regulation of the economy, and robust protection for workers. This desire felt such a State as the most promising way forward for Spain (Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 154; Martinez and San Juan 2014, 3, 16, 23; Dhaliwal 2012). A renewed welfare State was seen as something that could work *for* the people by ending the cuts, regulating (or even nationalizing!) the banks, reforming the tax code, addressing unemployment, and expanding the provision of affordable housing.³⁰ Here the phrase *que se vayan todos* did

27 Sevilla-Buitrago (2015) even calls this practice "generalized self-management," which is the identical term used in France in the 1960s and 1970s, as we saw. At least in the literature surrounding 15M, there is therefore this direct intellectual connection to the heterodox tradition of the new left.

28 See also https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Estado_del_Malestar.

29 This desire also defined the principle Spanish Unions in the same way. They were seen as in league with the government and the financial interests, helping to advance austerity. And they were themselves hierarchical, ossified, disconnected from workers. In most cases they had tiny memberships, since the Spanish workforce had been massively de-unionized in the era of post-Fordism. See Antentas 2015, 139, 149; Martinez and San Juan 2014, 16; Durgan and Sans 2012; Gelderloos 2012.

30 For example, the 16 proposals made by the May 20, 2011 assembly in Madrid are mostly

not mean we want to get rid of State power *per se*. It meant that *these two Parties* must go away so that *new Parties*, Parties that truly represent the people, can come to power, end austerity, solve the crisis, and save the country (Antentas 2015, 146; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 175). Similarly, here “*no nos representan*” implies “*these two parties* don't represent us effectively (but others certainly could).”

It is in the context of this desire that the 15M can be seen as a follow on from the various protests “against the cuts” in Britain to resist the privatization of public services and reinvigorate the welfare State. The most spectacular example of this in the 15M was when protesters in Barcelona encircled the parliament building to prevent legislators from casting their votes for a bill that would drastically reduce public spending (Durgan and Sans 2012, 100; Martinez and San Juan 2014, 11). Similarly, according to this desire the calls by *No Les Votes* to abstain from voting can be interpreted as a way to starve specifically the PP and the PSOE of votes so that *other Parties* might emerge. Indeed, it was common to hear 15M participants calling for thoroughgoing reforms to Spain's electoral system in order to break the domination of the PP and the PSOE and allow for other Parties to participate in governing. Of course from the perspective of this desire, the emergence of *Podemos* is precisely the *right* move: a surrender of our power to a new, improved Party, a truly *popular Party* (Flesher Fominaya 2014).³¹

So, while its new-left champions like to present the 15M as a fully autonomous, leaderless movement that entirely rejected the State (e.g. Arditi 2012; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013b; Oikonomakis and Roos 2013; Dhaliwal 2012), it clearly manifested both a desire for democracy and a desire to be ruled. It is hard to say for sure which of these desires was more prevalent. It is reasonable to propose, in fact, that a desire to be ruled was the majority desire. Most participants probably thought the 15M was about reinvigorating the welfare State in response to neoliberal austerity (Flesher Fominaya 2014).³² But still, it is also clear that a desire for democracy was very much present, and it was strikingly strong. Many participants felt a desire to manage their affairs themselves, and they explored and reinforced this resonance by spending many hours *practicing* democracy. In that practice, democracy grew stronger. A

proposals to reform the State, not ignore it (Asamblea Sol 2011; Durgan and Sans 2012, 102).

31 There were many far-left Parties in Spain at the time, but they were, as a whole, a disorganized and fractious mess (Martinez-Arboleda 2015). None offered the kind of popular hope, and willingness to embrace a center-left agenda like the Welfare State, that *Podemos* did. It should be noted, however, that *Podemos* quickly transformed from a participatory, decentralized popular Party into a relatively centralized and closed organization, at least according to Martinez-Arboleda, 2015.

32 See also the proposals in the *iDemocracia Real YA!* Platform, most of which run toward a reformed, more welfare-friendly State (https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Plataforma_Democracia_Real_Ya); and see the *demanda de mínimos* (“minimum demands”) of the Barcelona *acampada*, which again focus on making the Welfare State more robust (https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Acampada_Barcelona#Demanda_de_m.C3.ADnimos).

desire for democracy did not magically emerge, all at once, as a universal desire among 15M participants. For it to flourish, it had to be asserted, consciously and actively, over and above a desire to be ruled.

Anti-capitalism and anti-austerity

The 15M also presented contrasting desires with respect to capitalism as an economic system. Here the question is quite similar to the question with respect to the State. One desire wanted the end of the capitalist system; the other desire wanted to maintain capitalism, and only objected to *this* form of it, in which financial interests were inordinately powerful, and governments offered the population nothing more than a steady diet of austerity.

The first desire was almost certainly in the minority. It was especially strong among former GJM and current *Okupa* activists. It was uncompromisingly anti-capitalist and offered a critique of private property, wage exploitation, and so on (Maeckelbergh 2012, 208). The financial crisis of 2007-8 was seen as merely a particularly strong example of capitalism's normal pattern of destructive crises. This desire saw the precaritarization of jobs as the predictable result of capitalism's insistent drive to reduce the cost of labor. And the affordable housing crisis in Spain was seen as merely a normal cycle in a capitalist system in which urban space is privately owned and exploited for profit. One frequently seen sign put this idea well, "*no es una crisis, es el sistema*" ("it's not a crisis, it's the system"). The crisis, and all its terrible fallout, were not an inexplicable aberration, an accident caused by bad behavior by a few deviant bankers. It was, instead, characteristic of the *normal* operation of the capitalist economic system (Segovia 2012). The only solution, this desire held, was a systemic shift *away* from capitalism. This anti-capitalist position is already unusual in advanced capitalist societies, but it was even more marginalized in Spain because the few anti-capitalist parties that existed on the far left (e.g. *Izquierda Anticapitalista*) were generally fractious and roundly unsuccessful in Spanish elections (Martinez and San Juan 2014, 30; Durgan and Sans 2012, 94). If you adopt a hard-line anti-capitalist position, the lesson seemed to be, you will be irrelevant in Spanish politics.

Another desire in the 15M accepted capitalism, or assumed its existence, but forcefully rejected *this* form of capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, in which financial interests were given free reign to destroy the economy without facing any consequences (Taibo 2012, 157; Flesher Fominaya 2015a, 481). In this capitalism, welfare spending is slashed in order to service the national debt owed to international banks and European financial agencies (Cameron 2014, 1). A desire to reject this capitalism hooks neatly into a desire for the welfare State we saw above. Expanding the welfare State effectively undermines this capitalism, and promises, implicitly, to reclaim another, lost form of capitalism, in which productivity and profits are robust, the State spends freely on social programs and actively regulates the economy, Unions are strong, and wages are high.

I think it should be clear – but perhaps it bears mentioning – that only an anti-capitalist desire is consistent with a desire for democracy. People cannot retain their power and manage their affairs for themselves in a capitalist system. A capitalist Corporation is just as fully an artificial person as the State is. It is an artificial “body” that owns the means of production and therefore controls decisions about economic production. In democracy, of course, people directly manage economic production themselves.³³ As Marx (1994) argued so convincingly, capitalism alienates workers in multiple ways: from their labor, from the product of their labor, from the means of production, and from each other. Each of these alienations does violence to the core of the project of democracy: people endeavoring to retain their power and use it to manage their own affairs.

The body without organs and the body of the sovereign

There were also multiple desires within the 15M with respect to how the movement should be organized. These desires are a bit more difficult to articulate, so I will give each a technical name and then try to explain their contents in more detail. The first is a desire for what Deleuze and Guattari would call a “body without organs” (BwO) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, e.g. 149-166). In this mode of organization, whatever organization there is *emerges* when and where it is needed. In a BwO, organization is not established *a priori* and then codified in fixed institutions. If organizations emerge and choose to coordinate with each other, they do so in a decentralized network in which no node is more important than the others. In a BwO there is no relation of sovereignty: one part of the body never has institutionalized authority over other parts of the body.³⁴ Relations between people, and groups of people, are horizontal relations of equal power, they are not hierarchical relations of control. If leaders exist, they do not become leaders by holding an office in a sovereign institution. They emerge as leaders by being active and encouraging peers to join in their initiative (Nunes 2012). They become – always temporarily – a more important hub in the network of action. The BwO is of course an ideal type, and in real practice organizations are best understood as relatively more (or less) consistent with its form.

It is possible that such a body might have difficulty rousing itself and acting effectively, and that is the main motivation for a contrasting desire, what we might call a desire for the “body of the sovereign.”³⁵ This mode of organization creates enduring institutions that organize the body into persistent structures.

33 This is the precise meaning of the French term *autogestion* – self-management (of a factory) – which was popular on the European left in the 1960s, for which see Lefebvre 2009 and Vaneigem 1974.

34 Not even the whole can be sovereign over the parts. This part-whole relation is a particular interest of Deleuze & Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1977).

35 This phrasing is also strange: I refer the curious to the passage on Hobbes' artificial person, above, or, better, to the frontispiece of *Leviathan*.

We might, therefore, also call it a body *with* organs. These institutions are arranged in a hierarchical structure such that it is always clear where sovereign authority rests. Leadership is conferred by holding a formal “office” in that structure. This mode of organization is at pains to make unequivocally clear who has the authority to decide, to speak, and to act on behalf of the body. As a result of this clarity, the body of the sovereign is thought to be able act decisively and effectively (see Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 167-8). As with the BwO, the body of the sovereign is an ideal type. Although the modern State is its archetype, even it can really only approximate its form.

These two desires were both very much present in the 15M, and they can be seen operating in myriad ways across its various activities (Sevilla-Buitrago 2015, 99). One particularly instructive case, I think, was the struggle in the *acampadas* over what authority the general assembly should have. In a given encampment, there were many “committees” that concerned themselves with various specific issues, like policy, communications, or the provision of food. Each committee met and deliberated on their own, in their own assembly. But *acampadas* also had a “general assembly” that brought together all the participants in the camp. Some wanted this general assembly to be in *horizontal* relation with the other assemblies, such that it functioned merely as a forum where each committee would come to share information about their activities (Gelderloos 2011). Others wanted the relation between the general assembly and the other assemblies to be *hierarchical*: because the general assembly was an assembly of *all* participants, they wanted it to be sovereign over the more particular assemblies. They felt it should have the power to ratify or reject the proposals formulated by the smaller assemblies (Maeckelbergh 2012; Prentoulis and Thomassen 2013a, 178). Clearly the former, more horizontal approach would give each committee more freedom to take action, but it risked allowing the *acampada* to dissolve into a incoherent scatter of unrelated efforts. The latter, more hierarchical approach would limit the freedom of each committee, but many thought it would make the *acampada* more unified and therefore better able to act decisively and to articulate a clear message from the 15M to the outside world.

As the movement progressed, it became known for its leaderless, horizontal, and decentralized structure. That image is not wrong. It is true that there was a very strong desire in the 15M for the BwO, so strong that it at times appeared to pervade the movement and become common sense. Its organization more nearly approximated the BwO than the body of the sovereign. But it is important to remember that, as with a desire for democracy, the horizontality that existed was always the product of struggle. Horizontality and decentralization always had to be argued for and actively chosen by the group. To prevail in a given instance, a desire for the BwO always had to be stronger than an ever-present desire for the body of the sovereign and for the effectiveness that sovereign is thought to offer (Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 151; Dhaliwal 2012, 262).

So we should be attentive to that ever-present struggle. But with respect to

organization we should also make sure to notice how effective the organization of the *acampadas* was. Even though these settlements were organized mostly horizontally, nevertheless people effectively managed nurseries, food distribution systems, infirmaries, vegetable gardens, sanitation regimes, and complex information infrastructures (Jimenez and Estalella 2011, 23; Maeckelbergh 2012, 213; Martinez and Bernardos 2015, 165; Sevilla-Buitrago 2015, 97; Gelderloos 2011; de la Lata 2016). Throughout the course of these achievements, participants in the 15M had the opportunity to practice horizontal self-management and to develop their skills. And their evident success on this score should teach us that we are wrong if we assume that self-organization cannot be efficient. We are wrong if we think that the body needs a sovereign to act effectively. In many different areas of life, for an extended period of time, the bodies in each *acampada* organized themselves effectively on their own, mostly horizontally, without a sovereign. We should remember and emphasize that fact.

At the same time, even if they were markedly effective in organizing themselves, the *acampadas* were not at all perfect. For example, in many *acampadas* and assemblies patriarchal attitudes existed that made participation difficult for women. At times, men used sexist language, or dominated discussion, or were sexually aggressive, or belittled feminist analyses of the crisis (e.g. Castellanos, Henar, and Gonzalez 2011, 111; Ezquerro 2011). These failings are important to consider particularly in the context of the question of the organization of the body. Because the assemblies tended to not be governed by formal institutions whose leaders could impose binding rules of conduct, women could not appeal to a sovereign authority to address the problem (Gonick 2016, 222). For example, in the early days of the Madrid *acampada*, the committee for feminisms announced that its members were no longer going to sleep in the camp because of the sexual, sexist, and homophobic aggression they were experiencing (Ezquerro 2011, 9). In the absence of a sovereign who could prohibit and police such aggression, participants could only create their *own* collective response to the problem in an effort to enable women to feel safe in the camp. In this case they were unable to do so. Such self-produced solutions are not easy to achieve, but that is what is required in the absence of a sovereign. Just as we must acknowledge the organizational successes of the *acampadas*, we must also acknowledge the Madrid *acampada's* failure in this case. We are far more capable of creating a BwO than we think we are, but that should not tempt us to think that it will be easy, or that our practice will be perfect.

More generally, of course, this question of organization is central to all projects for democracy. When people undertake to leave aside the sovereign and live without pre-established, top-down controls, underlying prejudices, inequalities, and forms of oppression will almost always rise to the surface. In democracy, people must address these challenges *themselves*. But those “people” are not all the same, and they are not equal. They will nearly always encounter each other from pre-existing positions of unequal power and privilege. There is no sovereign who will declare, and enforce, equality. The democratic response to

this problem is not to return to a sovereign. Rather people must find ways to work out problems themselves. In other cases during the 15M, women (and men) did have some success with this challenge. They proposed and agreed to some norms (against sexist behavior, for a more even distribution of the opportunity to speak) that helped improve the situation, to an extent, in the camps (Lopez and Garcia 2014, 22; Antentas 2015, 152). They established and managed specific working groups, like *Feministes Indignades* in Barcelona, to discuss and articulate the feminist perspective within the 15M, and to open a space where women, lesbians, and transgender people were able to participate more fully (Ezquerro 2011). To be sure, these interventions required women to be extremely active and courageous in articulating the problem and insisting on mitigations, and it depended on men to really listen, to perceive their obligation to actively address the problem, and to commit to changing their behavior and their thinking. By no means were the outcomes achieved entirely satisfactory. Sandra Ezquerro is clear that the movement did not achieve the level of “genuinely feminist indignation” that it needed to (Ezquerro 2011). But still, we should be attentive to, and learn from, this decision by participants to make a serious, and haltingly successful, attempt to address important problems of patriarchy without relying on a sovereign authority.

Pluralism and unity

In addition to those different desires with respect to the organization of the movement, the 15M also exhibited different desires with respect to its participants and its political content. Some wanted that content to be open and plural. They argued it should include all who wanted to participate, to welcome many different subject positions (class, gender, race, sexuality, and more), and to allow different perspectives on the politics and the agenda of the movement (anti-capitalist, anti-PP-PSOE, feminist, pro-welfare-State, etc.). The *acampadas*, in particular, tended to be remarkably open to whomever wanted to participate, to get information, or to just to watch (Maeckelbergh 2012, 215). This desire for openness resonates strongly with the *autonomía* or “new-left” desire we saw earlier. At the same time, another desire, one more closely associated with the institutional or old left, insisted that the movement needed to be less open, that it needed to unify around a shared analysis of the problem (usually neoliberal capitalism), a shared subject position as members of the movement (the working class, or a modified version of that, such as “the precariat”), and a shared political agenda to pursue (see Lopez and Garcia 2014, 7).

A desire for a more open movement has long been part of the struggle of the “new left” to move beyond the restrictive imagination of the orthodox workers’ movement. In the 15M, this desire manifested itself in a concern for certain subject groups. There was an argument that young people and students as a group were particularly disadvantaged by the crisis. There was a concern for those who could not afford housing and for those who had been evicted. There was, as we saw, a feminist analysis of how the crisis impacted women

(Castellanos, Henar, and Gonzalez 2011, 112). There was a focus on neighborhood residents as users of space and public services. And there was attention to how the crisis was disproportionately harming recent immigrants to Spain.

In addition to making central these subject positions beyond the working class, some also argued more generally that pluralism was a good in itself. They felt that disagreement and even conflict inside the movement was good for its health (Maeckelbergh 2012). Including more perspectives, ensuring those perspectives were heard, and insisting that different ideas engage each other in serious argument, they said, would make the movement more vibrant, more intellectually and politically sharp, and more successful in the long run (Maeckelbergh 2012, 222-227). Such openness and pluralism means, logically, that the political agenda of the movement must be indeterminate. Its agenda cannot be established *a priori*. It must be worked out in the course of the struggle by participants themselves. To a great extent that is what happened in the 15M, this desire for openness required participants to engage each other in serious and difficult deliberation about what the 15M was, what it desired, and in what directions it should move.

But this desire for pluralism was accompanied by its contrary, a desire for unity. This desire worried that openness and pluralism would lead to disagreement and would render the movement confused and disorganized. It wanted the movement to have greater unanimity so that it could present itself to the Spanish population, and the Spanish government, with one voice that articulated a clear message. Without this unanimity, this desire worried, the 15M would appear to be merely a cacophony of different voices that knew it was upset but did not really know how it wanted to change Spain, and as a result it would have little impact on the country. This more general desire for unity was often manifested, as I suggest above, as an orthodox Marxist insistence on class and capitalism as the core idea of the movement (Lopez and Garcia 2014, 15).

The tension between these two desires can be seen, again, in the struggle of feminists to have their analysis be taken seriously (Ezquerria 2011). In the economic committee of the Madrid *acampada*, those who desired unity wanted to downplay the feminist claim that patriarchy was a core problem in Spain. The most oblivious participants simply denied that patriarchy was an important issue.³⁶ Others insisted that patriarchy, while real and important, must be seen as secondary to the *main* problem, the unifying problem, which was capitalist class oppression. On at least two occasions, initiatives to have the 15M claim that the revolution was “a feminist revolution or no revolution at all” were met with jeers, the physical removal of the message from the camp, the assertion that “the revolution is not a gender issue” (Lopez and Garcia 2014, 20-1; Castellanos, Henar, and Gonzalez 2011, 112). A desire for unity thus worked actively to prevent the emergence of Ezquerria’s (2011) “genuinely feminist

36 In Santiago de Compostela, for example, men dismissed feminist arguments about the gendered effects of the crisis as a “minor issue” (Ezquerria 2011).

indignation” in the 15M.

This question of the tension between an open pluralism and a closed unanimity was cross-cut by another desire, one felt particularly by the veterans of the Global Justice Movement, who were tired of being on the radical margins of Spanish politics and who wanted the 15M to include and activate a very broad swath of Spaniards (Flesher Fominaya 2015b, 144, 150). This element very much wanted the movement to be open and inclusive, but not so much because they wanted an inclusive new left, or because they believed that pluralism is healthy for the movement, but because they wanted the 15M to resonate as many Spaniards as possible (Lopez and Garcia 2014, 17). We can see this hope in the way *iDemocracia Real Ya!* claimed, in their calls to action, to be just like everyone else in Spain: not radical, not marginal, but entirely in line with Spanish popular opinion. Their manifesto (2011), for example, says:

We are ordinary people. We are like you...Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice (see also Flesher Fominaya 2014).

This group often used the term “apolitical” to define the 15M. They did not mean they were apathetic or disengaged from politics (Prentoulis and Lasse Thomassen 2013a, 173; Taibo 2012, 157, Durgan and Sans 2012, 101). They meant they did not want to be connected to, and limited by, narrow political positions, such as “supporters of the PSOE,” or “anti-capitalist,” or even just “pro-Union” (Durgan and Sans 2012, 111; Gelderloos 2011). They were against the crisis, to be sure, and committed to the idea that the existing political parties were unable to effectively represent the people, but beyond that they strove have the 15M remain open to whomever shared these very broad (and widespread) core feelings. At times this desire for openness, paradoxically, worked to marginalize some voices within the movement. In the case we just saw above, among those who claimed “the revolution is not a gender issue,” some were orthodox Marxists, but others were these “apolitical” activists who did not want to raise a controversial banner like feminism because they considered it was a hot-button, “political” position that would make the 15M look radical and push people away from the cause (Ezquerria 2011). Despite these negative impacts, this “apolitical” approach also showed its mettle in the sense that the 15M did in fact attract huge numbers of people in many cities across Spain. It was consistently supported by a large majority of the Spanish population, over many years (Antentas 2015, 155, Puig 2011).³⁷ Compared to the previous decade, where GJM activists were quite marginal to the mainstream, the 15M was very

37 Antentas cites *El Pais*, May 19, 2013. This popular support existed also in the United States for Occupy Wall Street. See Brown 2011.

much at the heart of the Spanish political imagination.

Participants' desire for openness and pluralism, in other words, was complex. Clearly, a democratic project does not desire to enforce unity *a priori* or from above. The old-left desire to close the community and impose a Marxist discipline is clearly not a democratic desire. The new-left attitude of openness toward pluralism is consistent with democracy's commitment to self-management by *all* people. But at the same time, openness and pluralism cannot be an unthinking article of faith. In a movement for democracy, there will always be a tension, constantly evolving, between pluralism and unity, and between openness and closure. Openness and pluralism must be proposed and defended by people themselves, and the limits to openness and pluralism must be decided and acted on by people as well.

Conclusion: Learning from the 15M

First lesson: There are multiple desires

The 15M was an extraordinary and sustained manifestation of a desire for democracy. Participants wanted to manage their affairs for themselves. They even used the word “democracy” explicitly to define what they were seeking. There is no question that the 15M understood, and said clearly, that democracy is not the same thing as the liberal-democratic State. This fact is of the greatest importance, and worth emphasizing. They expressed their desire for democracy and started practicing it in a serious way. Nevertheless, the movement *also* expressed, quite clearly, a desire to be ruled. Participants desired the State, the Party, and a strong leadership to manage their affairs for them. This desire also used the word “democracy,” but used it to mean merely a reformed liberal-democratic State that was relatively more participatory and more inclined to pursue welfare policies.

So the 15M was not purely a movement for democracy as I understand it, and we democrats should not be seduced into narrating it that way. However, at the same time we should not despair at that fact. We should, instead, learn from it. The lesson we should learn is this: in any movement like the 15M, we should expect both desires to be present. Even in a case where it seems the world is awash in a bloom of democratic desire, there will also be a desire to be ruled. If we want democracy, we should be alert to the persistence of this other desire within us. It will always be present, churning away. We will always need to ward off its return, to remain awake, and to be insistent in our desire for democracy. And should not forget that this dynamic can work the other way too: in cases where a desire for democracy seems absent, it is almost certainly there. In these cases, we should not throw up our hands in defeat. We should assume that democracy has fled. We should continue to seek out a desire for democracy. It will be more faint, harder to recognize, but it will be there. Even when it is fledgling, we can always tend it, and help it to grow.

Second lesson: We need to practice

Although democracy was widely practiced during the 15M, we should be clear-eyed in saying that the practice was not perfect. Assemblies and committees were often slow, inefficient, and at times unable to reach decisions. Even if the movement produced much hope and exhilaration, over time many participants grew fatigued and disillusioned. Some dropped out (Maeckelbergh 2012, 228; Gelderloos 2011). And, as with the case of sexism in the committees, at times they failed to treat each other well. Moreover, as we have seen, participants wanted not only democracy, but they wanted to be ruled also. And these failures of practice were likely intensified by the fact that the 15M was so large and drew so many people that were politically inexperienced (Puig 2011).

The lesson of such failings is *not* that democracy is too much to ask of us, that it is too much for us to handle. When democracy is practiced imperfectly, it does not prove that people are incapable of democracy. This argument is often expressed in the wake of such an upwelling, and we should reject it vigorously. It is equally wrong to assume the opposite, that we are naturally suited to democracy, and that we will practice it perfectly from the start. People are neither innately suited to democracy nor innately unsuited to it. Democracy is neither an impossible dream they can never realize, nor an ancient inheritance in which they will thrive if only they are allowed to claim it. Instead, democracy is a *project*. It is a project people can choose to take up, commit themselves to, and practice. At the beginning of this project, we should expect people to be inexperienced. But as they practice democracy, they will get better at it. Most participants in the 15M had not practiced democracy much. Few of us have. Most of us are used to being ruled by an artificial person, and we are not experienced at managing our affairs ourselves. We need to practice. Any failings in the democratic practice of the *indignados* point to the need for *more* democracy, not less. For all of us. More practice, more experience, more learning, so we can grow stronger, refine our skills, and get better.

Even if we must be clear-eyed, we should also not overstate the shortcomings of the 15M. The *indignados* realized great successes in democracy as well. They occupied central squares in cities all over Spain, for as long as a month, and managed life in them pretty efficiently. They provided services like food, information, medical care, child care, and so on using a markedly horizontal organizational structure that was mostly without leaders. They called into question the dominant assumption that the liberal-democratic State is the same thing as democracy. They rejected the claim of the political class that continued austerity policies were the only viable choice. And they brought to life the possibility of a different kind of movement, one that did not orient itself toward the governing authority and demand that it govern differently, but oriented itself toward itself and opened up the possibility of democracy, *real* democracy.

Third lesson: Who are “we”?

Last, and not at all least, the 15M teaches us that when we take up the project of democracy and we begin to manage our affairs for ourselves, we will realize quickly that this “we” is a complicated thing. When people refuse the State and begin managing their affairs for themselves, they are not dropped down into a state of nature where they are immediately equal and indistinguishable persons. Instead, they continue to be marked by the inequality, bias, and privilege they carried in State society. In a State society, that inequality is managed by the artificial person, and the question of how people will live together is set out in a constitution and enforced by an authority. But in democracy people must decide for themselves what to do about difference and inequality. In the 15M, as we have seen, people had to decide what to do about gender inequality and intimidation within the group. Part of their democratic practice involved developing rules to govern that behavior and procedures to enforce those rules.

This question is not at all easy. Vulnerable groups often find it incredibly useful to have a State authority to protect them from harm.³⁸ In democracy, such protection must be put in place by people themselves. In the 15M, women did not appeal to an artificial person to police the behavior of men. They set about doing themselves, in alliance with men, by setting up a series of rules to restrict behavior. I cannot say for sure whether what they achieved is better or worse than what a State-like authority inside the movement would have achieved, had it existed. Certainly what they achieved did not solve the problem fully. But still, they did achieve certain protections, certain limitations on unacceptable behavior by men. They did open up new spaces for discussion and debate in response to a felt need for them. I think we should not ignore this achievement, and we should not dismiss the potential it offers us.

This lack of a State authority to protect the vulnerable is something democracy must be honest about and take responsibility for. At the same time, I think we should see this lack not only as a weakness, but also one of the potential *strengths* of democracy. The lack of an authority forces people to *encounter each other*, rather than turning to face the artificial person. In democracy, people must face each other’s bodies and interact meaningfully to make important decisions and solve real problems. When they encounter and engage each other in this serious way – when they really *practice* democracy – they have the potential to confront and address inequality, bias, and privilege in a way that is unlikely in a State society. To put the matter in Judith Butler’s terms, while democracy can expose the vulnerable to harm from those who are more powerful, it can also open up the powerful to “interpellation” by the vulnerable (2004, esp. Chapter 2; 2015, esp. Chapter 3). In democracy, people stand face to face, body to body. Their interactions are no longer mediated, and policed, by the artificial person. Those in positions of privilege are no longer

³⁸ Of course not only does the State often fail in this task of protection, but also it is often itself the perpetrator of the harm.

insulated from direct contact with the vulnerable. The vulnerable can thus make claims and raise objections, they can interpellate the powerful. In the 15M, for example, women raised objections about gender inequality and masculine aggression by men. They did not file a claim with the State authority. They directly interpellated men. Men could not avoid hearing the objection being raised. And, just as Butler suggests, they could not avoid making a decision about how to respond. Even if there was no authority to force them to respond in a particular way, in the way we might hope, they still had to make a choice about how to respond. We should not miss what was gained here, which was this unmediated encounter of bodies, which I think offers us an incredibly heightened potential for direct and substantive discussions about how to redress gender oppression.

Coda: We, Whose Task is Wakefulness Itself

When the *indignados* set out on their march to Brussels, they carried a banner at the front that read, *vamos despacio porque vamos lejos*, we are going slow because we are going far. I think this is the right way to think about democracy. Democracy is a very long-term project, carried out over years, even decades, and its aim is to develop our desire, and our ability, to manage our affairs for ourselves. Our goal in taking up democracy isn't, primarily, to achieve certain outcomes in the short term, like better jobs, affordable housing, an end to austerity policies, and a revitalized Welfare State. If those goals are our overriding purpose, then we will be more successful taking up a State project, and giving in to our desire to be ruled.³⁹

What a desire for democracy impels us to do, instead, is to practice democracy. It urges us to become active, to encounter other people, and to engage with them in the project of self-management. It pushes us to begin assembling a new form of life, a life in which people no longer passively accept Hobbes' deadening bargain, but instead take up their own power and begin discovering what they can do. The project of democracy doesn't really bear fruit in a few election cycles. It shows its mettle in the very long term, as we engage in daily practice to develop our desire for democracy and increasingly leave aside our desire to be ruled. Perhaps one day, long in the future, when our project for democracy has come very far, we may look up from our practice and realize that our desire to be ruled is now so faint, and our desire for democracy so strong, that we can never imagine going back to our old life. Perhaps at that point we will see what the Popular Assembly of Algete was trying to say when it tweeted: *dormíamos, despertamos, y ahora tenemos insomnio crónico*, we were sleeping, we woke up, and now we have chronic insomnia (Sanchez 2012).

39 "Medicare for All" and the "Green New Deal" are the most prominent examples in the United States today.

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Linking “local” to “global”: framing Environmental Justice movements through progressive contextualization

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Abstract

Many successful Environmental Justice (EJ) movements have explicitly connected local problems to wider power structures and institutions in order to challenge the latter. To leverage wider advocacy networks, some movements have appealed to both local needs and international sentiments, thereby building momentum by creating and broadening alliances. In this scoping review, I bring together observations from the field of Ecological Economics, Political Ecology, and Social Movements to describe and prescribe this process. I borrow “Progressive Contextualization” (PC) as an analytical method to repackage these observations under a guiding framework. The PC frame comprises four steps: i.e. (1) Identifying different actors and their intersectional experiences; (2) Learning the history; (3) Making connections to national and global institutions; and (4) Empowering different ways of knowing. Using evidence from around the world, with focus on two social movements i.e. the Narmada Bacho Andolan (NBA) in India and the Rubber Tappers’ movement in Brazil, I demonstrate how the four steps could be useful not only in terms of operationalizing environmental justice, but also in helping movements iteratively self-reflect and criticize to better address the issues at hand, both ethically and practically.

Keywords: social movements, environmental justice, progressive contextualization, framing alignment, ecological economics, political ecology, Rubber Tappers, Narmada Bacho Andolan

Introduction: moving beyond local

It is common to hear criticism that development programs are top-down, and not addressing local needs and realities (Li 2007). Some have suggested that such development practices reflect increasing control of people’s lives by states (Ferguson 1990; Paudel 2012), or a form of neo-colonization (Escobar 1995). In fact, nearly all analysts think that development projects have failed to fulfil what they promised (Edelman and Haugerud 2004). There are two kinds of responses to the problem of development. The Reformist Approach argues that we need to do development ‘better’ (e.g. Crewe and Harrison 1998) and as a result, many new development concepts such as ‘participation,’ ‘partnership,’ ‘sustainability,’ ‘good governance’ have been introduced into development discourse. However, there are criticisms that these concepts have been co-opted and thus, simply serve to distract from the problematic nature of development

practices and ignore power structures (e.g. Mischener 1998; Cooke and Kothari 2001). As a more radical alternative, the post-developmentalists (e.g. Escobar 1995; Rahnema 1997; Sachs 1992; Esteva and Prakash 1998) have called for the outright rejection of development writ large. The Post-developmentalists challenge the common ‘market-based’ view that underdevelopment reflects deficiency in standard of living and instead, regard it as a state of consciousness (Illich 1997; Peet and Hartwick 2015). By disentangling notions of development from market logics, Post-developmentalists see the potential for working with this consciousness to rebuild life at the margin (Esteva 1992).

Both Reformists and Post-developmentalists well-recognize the ‘local’ is an important level of analysis and action when it comes to working toward and implementing solutions to conflict. However, they have not quite explicitly connected the ‘local’ to ‘global’. The reformists seem to take existing global and national institutions for granted, while the post-developmentalists, by proposing that the solutions can be found among the marginalized, seem to neglect the need for the marginalized to engage with wider institutions they are embedded in. Yet, development is not a simple antagonism between local and global, and the subjects of development are shaped by, and actively reshape development ideals, programs, and projects (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003). The simplistic dichotomy of ‘local’ versus ‘global’, or “domination” versus “resistance” can potentially obscure the understanding of their dynamic interconnections essential for effecting changes.

On the contrary, many successful change-making activisms seem to be more willing to explicitly make such connections. This is especially true in situations where certain ‘local’ people (and their rights) are not recognized by state apparatuses, and the states themselves are somehow economically dependent on global institutions, such as the World Bank. For instance, the *Narmada Bacho Andolan* (NBA) in India and the Rubber Tappers’ (RT) movement in Brazil had been able to reach out to their global allies and through foreign governments, pressured multilateral institutions i.e. the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank respectively to change their funding policies towards development projects back in India and Brazil. The strategy above has been named the ‘boomerang’ effect (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Environmental Defense Fund, for instance, is the international organization that lent its support to both the NBA in India and the RT movement in Brazil (Keck 1995; Dwivedi 1997). Indeed, while living movements around the world are responding to locally based ecological conflicts, they have formed global networks against the threats of similar actors (multi-corporations, funding by multilateral institutions) and development activities (resource extraction, waste disposal, infrastructure building, etc.) (Martinez-Alier 2016).

In order to make such local-global connections, movements need to tell stories that allow potential allies to connect with the circumstances and identities of the victims and villains in a situation. This process is dynamic, iterative, and sometimes incorporates external discourses or creates hybrid ones that appeal to a wider audience. In the social movement literature, this is considered an

important mobilization strategy named ‘framing alignment’, i.e. to link individual interests, values and beliefs with a movement’s activities, goals, and ideology (Snow *et al.* 1986). ‘Local’ issues could gain more significance if they are framed in terms where ‘local’ interests jibe with internationally resonant issues and broader NGO goals (Bob 2002). While international support can increase the magnitude of impact of local efforts, at the same time, local movements involved in direct action, and frontline activism also lend credibility and legitimacy to their transnational counterparts.

However, environmental issues are complex and entangled on the ground, often involving multiple perspectives and voices. Activists or movement organizers can face immense pressure to ‘simplify’ otherwise knotty issues, to highlight but a few (or in some cases, this becomes a single-issue) that are of particular interest to potential allies. This paper directly addresses this challenging task. Specifically, I propose ‘Progressive Contextualization’ as a method to help situate a local issue in a progressively larger context, thereby enabling researchers to make connections across different scales and levels, without losing sights to the intersectional needs of affected parties.

Operationalizing Environmental Justice (EJ) through Progressive Contextualization (PC)

While a lot has been written about environmental activism, few have analyzed the techniques and strategies for operationalizing Environmental Justice (EJ). The reason for this absence has to do with the ways that technocratic, ‘how-to’ approaches to social movements, is often met with skepticism, particularly in terms of complex and context-dependent circumstances in which such efforts often occur. Nonetheless, I hold the position that some practical lessons could and should be drawn from the vast literature not only of social movements but other environment-related research. Thus, this article has taken the form of scoping review to take advantage of my existing grasp on research in the fields of ecological economics, political ecology, and EJ movements. In other words, rather than a mere methodological piece, this is a descriptive piece attempting to synthesize observations from both academic research and activism. However, it also intends to prescribe—to draw lessons for future application. I consider it part of a bigger effort to bridge research and activism.

By reviewing research in the field of Political Ecology and Ecological Economics, I was able to extract some understandings of human-environmental interactions, particularly the various ways environmental conflicts and injustice can be manifested. Among the predominant observations are (1) different social actors interact with and experience environmental changes differently, (2) historical marginalization of particular groups of people often limits their access to resources and power in affecting decision-making, and (3) unequal power between different knowledge systems. In addition, a review of major EJ movements around the world demonstrates to me how they have encountered and attempted to address those very same issues, using changing frames and

strategies which are increasingly targeting transnational audiences. I see how both literature can be more explicitly bridged—understanding how environmental injustice is manifested is helpful for social movements to come up with different framing strategies for mobilizing support and resources, while staying true to the multiple and diverse concerns and circumstances of those affected by their causes. The complementarity between these two literature seems especially pronounced as the lessons regarding environmental injustice are aligning with those calling for critical approaches to social movements, such as the use of intersectional analysis and decolonial analysis (see Chun, Lipsitz and Shin 2013; Lopez and García 2014; Watkins Liu 2018; Chiumbu 2016; Jaramillo and Carreon 2014).

“Progressive Contextualization” (PC) is an analytical method I borrow to help me further repackage these observations/lessons under a single guiding framework. Encompassing all observations mentioned, PC is potentially more comprehensive than other more fragmented approaches to analyzing social movements. Originally a method proposed in the field of Human Ecology, PC is an analytic process focusing on “significant human activities or people-environment interactions and then explaining these interactions by placing them within progressively wider or denser contexts.” (Vayda 1983, 265). By establishing causal connections to earlier events, PC constructs causal chains backward in time and outward in space from effects, to causes. As it does not follow any pre-existing model, PC is especially appropriate for analyzing an actual (and potentially messy) situation and allows for the incorporation of all relevant bio-physical and social information (Walters and Vayda 1999).

PC has several features (Vayda 1983). First, it does not presume existing units of analysis. The starting points are not particular villages or tribes, but interactions around a certain event/activity. Vayda, for instance, offers a case study of a logging dispute in East Kalimantan, in which multiple groups are identified (Bugis migrants, urbanites and rural people) as contributing to deforestation. Without making prior assumptions on one ‘problematic’ group or another, the study demonstrates how PC offers a more complex understanding of the empirical context, by bringing into focus a range of actors and institutions who are at times, unexpectedly involved in the situation. Such an approach allows a rich analysis that challenges oversimplified moral stories about who is ‘good’ and who is ‘bad’ in the situation. Second, PC’s methods are not guided by particular disciplines or programs, but through assessment of the utility and efficiency in answering questions of interest from a variety of disciplinary vantage points. Thus, the method is analytically flexible, and can incorporate qualitative and quantitative data, as well as different knowledge systems and ways of understanding. Third, one can pick and choose elements to focus on, for practical communication with different allies or decision-makers. For instance, an Indigenous rights activist might be drawn in by concerns about the historical oppression of Indigenous peoples and ontologies, but a land-use planner is more likely attracted to the issue with an interest on the current parties of conflicts and how to resolve them.

I outline four guiding steps under the framework of PC, i.e. (1) Identifying different actors and their intersectional Experiences; (2) Learning the history; (3) Making connections to national and global Institutions; and (4) Empowering different ways of knowing. Starting with the local level, PC draws attention to the different actors and their diverse experiences involved in an event. It can then help to trace the historical context to place contemporary circumstances and events into perspective. This may include uncovering the historical disadvantages suffered by groups of people and importantly, may reveal the ideological techniques used by those in positions of power to maintain those power imbalances. PC is further able to make connections between local events and conditions, and the activities/policies of institutions at the national, regional, and global level. Finally, in the process of further deconstructing these larger-scale institutions to reveal how they were often justified with certain ways of knowing while dismissing others, PC can help target and empower alternative ways of knowing in the quest towards achieving EJ.

Using evidence from around the world, my paper will demonstrate how a PC framework can support movements in providing multi-faceted understandings, which can then contribute to expanding movement network or realigning interests with groups that matter. In addition to showing how real-life movements (could) have benefited from one or more of the four guiding steps, I will demonstrate how movements, when only addressing one step in negligence of others, can miss some opportunities or face additional challenges. In this way, PC can be utilized as an inclusive toolkit not only for planning and operationalizing EJ via emerging movements, but also for reexamining shortcomings and strategies of ongoing movements.

PC has been fruitfully employed in rural development and environmental education research contexts (Guevara 2002; Vondal 2008). While focusing on applying the PC framework on specific cases or research can help me to illustrate its process and relevance more clearly, it would be redundant to some of the existing literature. A scoping review, on the other hand, allows me to draw diverse cases around the world to show how elements of the PC framework can support movements across different contexts over longer time periods. All steps under PC might not be evidently usable for a particular movement at once, but they could be very useful in guiding movements over changing circumstances in the long term. Presenting the framework both as a description of existing movements and prescription for future or ongoing ones also allows me to better situate the framework itself as an ongoing product of knowledge integration owing to the existing research and movements. This means that the framework can benefit from further refinement and extension as knowledge and experiences in the field continue to grow in the future.

In the process of PC, different forms of justice can be conceptualized at different levels (Harvey 1996; Walker 2009). Take as an example the proposition of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) in the Narmada river flowing through the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in India. The project could result in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and widespread

environmental damage (Narula 2008; Ekins 1992; Dwivedi 1997, 1998). Initially, Arch-Vahini, a Gujarat-based NGO, from the earlier phase was focusing on acquiring land compensation for many displaced tribal or *Adivasi* groups. Hence, it was more of a land rights and compensation issue at the local level. However, as more actors including environmental activists, and academic, scientific, and cultural professionals were involved in the movement, it became a movement opposing the dam construction entirely due to the uncertain risk and widespread socio-environmental impact it posed. It was primarily this later framing merging social and environmental justice that the *Narmada Bacho Andolan* (NBA), or the “Save Narmada Movement,” had used to reach international audiences. The leader Medha Patkar testified in front of the US Congress on the effects of the dam in 1989 (Narula 2008; Dwivedi 1997, 1998). Due to mounting international pressure, the World Bank as one of the funders was forced to form an Independent Review Mission for the project and eventually withdrew its support (Narula 2008; Dwivedi 1997, 1998).

Another example is the Rubber Tappers’ (RT) movement in Brazil. It started in the form of workers’ union in the 1970s, resisting ranchers from Southern Brazil who began to purchase massive land areas and forcibly evict rubber tappers from their forest land in Acre, Brazil. Hence, the movement was initially organized around class movements. Its central concerns were land and livelihood issues, and the movement had the closest relations with labor movements at the time (Keck 1995). In 1985, the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) was established by Chico Mendes and other key union leaders, and the First National Rubber Tappers Congress was organized. The congress produced a proposal for extractive forest reserves as a more sustainable solution to secure rubber tappers’ livelihoods (Schwartzman 1991). At this point, the movement started to enjoy progressively broader framing that resonated with both social justice activists and environmentalists. After various books and television documentaries began reporting on the movement as a metaphor for saving the Brazilian rainforest, it was effectively reframed as a part of the global environmental struggle. This has brought access to new allies and new institutional platforms for activism (Keck 1995). Chico Mendes was brought to the United States to present the proposal to the US Congress, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, which were involved in funding a road project in the region (Keck 1995; Schwartzman 1991). Accordingly, the Rubber Tappers were able to successfully establish their extractive reserves with the support of the US Congress, the World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank (Keck 1995; Schwartzman 1991).

The rest of my paper will focus on demonstrating how the PC framework is applicable to these two existing, well-known movements i.e. the *Narmada Bacho Andolan* (NBA) in India and the Rubber Tappers’ movements. These two movements were selected as they had been quite comprehensively understood and studied throughout the last few decades from diverse perspectives, both as a movement as well as an EJ issue, with the earliest publications around late 1980s to the most recent ones after 2015. For instance, a 2017 publication on the NBA (Passantino 2017) utilizes an intersectional approach to understand

people affected by the dam project and their roles in the movement, while Schwartzman (2018) recently analyzed how the Rubber Tappers movement helps to reimagine conservation by incorporating different ways of knowing. I will demonstrate how these accumulated understandings over the decades are encompassed by the PC framework. The long-standing research interest in these two movements also suggest their significance in contemporary EJ discussion, and therefore their worthiness for engagement.

1. Identifying different actors and intersectional experiences

As stated above, Progressive Contextualization uses an activity/interaction as a starting point, to uncover how various events, experiences and impacts are involved in an environmental change. For instance, while the NBA has been sometimes known as a movement by indigenous people/*Adivasi*, who constitute the majority being displaced and dispossessed by the dam construction, the supporters of the movement are much more diverse and less unitary than what was being presented. Throughout the years, researchers have revealed how different actors suffer differently as a result of the project. For instance, Hemadri *et al.* (1999) discussed the disproportionate impact of the project on landless laborers, sharecroppers, tenants, and even ‘encroachers’ whose cultivation practices and rights to land had not been legally recognized by the authorities. These groups of people are usually not considered eligible for compensation, though ironically, they are the most vulnerable groups in need of support. They will also be hampered the most by the loss of community assets such as common grazing grounds and forests. Kapur (1993) highlighted how women affected will not only lose farmland, but also access to water and forest resources. In addition, they are seldom entitled to compensation in a male-centric system and can face more likelihood of social isolation when displaced from familiar surroundings.

Similar observation has been widely reported in academic research. For instance, a study published in the journal *Ecological Economics* illustrates how women in Cameroon are affected disproportionately by deforestation due to gendered division of labor (Veuthey and Gerber 2010). Women usually do not have access and control to technology and land and are therefore limited to using basic tools such as wicker, bark or now, plastic baskets for livelihood, usually by collecting non-timber forest products. On the contrary, men with access to machines and market economy are more in favor of profiting from cutting down trees as timber. As a result, women value living trees much more as their source of livelihood and have been mobilizing against commercial logging operations. Likewise, a study on mining in the Indian forests also shows a disproportionate impact on women (Bose 2004). Women do not have the same opportunities afforded to some of the local men who may benefit economically from getting work associated directly or indirectly with the mining project. For women, destruction of the forest means losing access to medicinal plants and additional income from forest products. As forests are important mobility spaces for women, not only for daily labor but also companionship of

other women (Gururani 2002), deforestation also means the deprivation of those spaces and thus increased confinement to domestic spheres.

Another example is offered by Gerber *et al.* (2009), focusing on a commercial tree plantation in Cameroon. The authors identify different impacts on community members: some are directly affected in terms of land access, while others are affected by the scarcity of game and loss of medicinal plants. As it was determined, most of the community members were impacted indirectly in terms of water pollution produced as a result of industrial plantation practices in which latex and ammoniac residues cause abortions, skin burns and eye injuries. As environmental impacts are multiple, monetary reparation is only one of the reparative demands of the locals—they are additionally concerned with the environmental conditions of the work they do near the plantation, as well as their human and customary rights, and infrastructure needs (such as schools, health centers, electricity, roads).

Ecological economists have framed these understandings as the different ecosystem services provided (or lost) in an environmental change, such as provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services. These ecosystem services may include access to the provision of game animals for hunting, medicinal plants, and drinking water. These services are interconnected and sometimes, incommensurable (Satz *et.al.*, 2013). For example, the practice of hunting for food is interconnected with established ritual practices and identities. Hence game animals are not only a provisioning service, but also a cultural one. And where potable water is understood as essential for survival, it outweighs the importance of other considerations. Living in a forest also provides certain identities and attachments that shapes one’s world view, which cannot be substituted or replaced amenable to tradeoffs (Brosius, 2010; Chan, Satterfield and Goldstein, 2012). Thus, the loss of different services requires different compensation strategies, and where compensation is not possible, harms must be mitigated, instead. There are also group-oriented values--what is just or beneficial to the communities as a whole (such as the building of community infrastructure), instead of what is benefiting the individual (such as monetary reparation), especially in communities with tight cohesion (Chan, Satterfield and Goldstein, 2012).

The bottom line is people are affected differently by environmental changes due to their social positions and intersectional experiences. These differences are not always evident and therefore warrant research and analytical processes. The (in)ability to address these differences can affect the courses and impacts of movements. For instance, more recent research on the NBA demonstrates that there is much division among the *Adivasi* about whether to accept resettlement and rehabilitation provisions or to continue to oppose the dam, with their stances being shaped by their relationships with state functionaries and their power position in the village hierarchy. Some of them will be offered promising resettlement terms while others will never have the opportunity. This has resulted in some *Adivasi* leaving their villagers, some staying, and some returning due to unsatisfactory conditions in the new sites. Some *Adivasi*

communities over the years have gradually distanced themselves from the NBA (Gandhi 2003) which oppose the dam construction in its entirety. Similarly, Whitehead (2007) assessed that a representation of *Adivasi* through a discourse of ecological romanticism that did not reflect realities had partially caused the movement to lose support.

The Rubber Tappers’ (RT) movement in Brazil, on the other hand, has faced criticism by feminist political ecologists about their negligence of the roles of women. Today, whenever the RT movement is mentioned, most would imagine the solitary man, Chico Mendes, saving the Brazilian rainforest. Discussions on the roles of women had been limited to those in *empates*, i.e. the strategy used by the RT to block laborers hired to clear the forests and attempting to persuade them to abort their work (Keck 1995; Schwartzman 1991). The movement had deliberately placed women and children up front in *empates* to deflect violence. Other stories about women however have often been sidelined out of the feminist circles. Feminist political ecologists have attempted to report the story of Women Rubber Tapper’s Union, the woman congressional representative rising from it, and the gendered experiences on the extractive reserves established as a result of the movement (Campbell 1996). However, earlier discussions within and about the movement have not only failed to incorporate gender justice but have impacts on the long-term management of extractive reserves. As later scholars reported, when there is a lack of community organizing and women involvement outside of protected areas, communities face bigger threats of land use change and forest conversion (Shanley, Da Silva and Macdonald 2011). Women’s plant resource knowledge has also been found to be valuable in supporting the sustainability of extractive reserves (Kainer and Duryea 1992).

These different understandings have not only pointed to the importance of recognizing intersectional experiences, but also provided political potential for linking rights of certain groups with environmental struggle. For instance, activists and scholars have highlighted the role of women in protecting forests in both the NBA and the famous Chipko movement preceding it (Jain 1984; Passantino 2017), which has come to resonate with multiple audiences of environmentalists, feminists and ecofeminists, i.e. those who see a connection between exploitation of nature and oppression of women (Warren 1987, 1990). Regardless as to which narrative frame is chosen as a movement strategy, movement organizers should strive to serve the needs of all and not essentialize people’s experiences, needs and identities. In any case, an actor-oriented approach that provides an equitable platform for negotiations is helpful to guide the process. Ultimately, the primary purpose of seeking broader support is to serve local needs, equitably. And certainly, garnering the greatest local buy-in, means offering the movement the broadest base of legitimacy.

2. Learning the history

Progressive Contextualization also involves tracing an event back in time, sometimes exposing false ideological roots and narratives. For instance, it has been a persistent view that in West Africa, it is the local people that are causing deforestation. However, by simply looking at past satellite images, early archival records, and oral histories, researchers have traced an ecological change that has moved from savannah to forest, not the other way around. Such findings thus debunk the claim, and therefore the blame, for environmental harms placed on local populations (Fairhead and Leach 1995). Another example of a persistent but dubious narrative is that poverty causes environmental degradation. Major development actors such as the World Bank (1992) have expressed such a view, though several studies have clearly demonstrated the contrary. For instance, a study conducted in Southern Mali concluded that soil degradation is clearly linked to export-driven cotton production by relatively wealthy smallholder farmers (Moseley 2004). Another study in the Brazilian Amazon shows that deforestation is largely driven by capital-intensive production (Hecht and Cockburn 1989), which get blamed on the poor who have little choice but to continue exploiting their already degraded resource base and are suffering the most from environmental degradation (Duraiappah 1998).

These false ideas also sometimes stem from or serve to perpetuate racism and casteism¹. In South Africa, researchers examined the history of the country to understand why the community they are working with were living on degraded lands (Stull et al. 2016). The analysis uncovered how Apartheid policies accomplished rural marginalization of Black farmers in South Africa by pushing them onto degraded land which also became overpopulated. The authors of the study coined the term “environmental apartheid”, to describe how the Apartheid policies of twenty years prior continue to have impacts on the quality of land available to farmers, their agricultural productivity, and their access to markets and healthcare. Such forceful displacement of people onto marginal lands has been well documented across Africa (Adams 2009). Yet, many contemporary environmental movements overlook these histories. Most focus on wildlife conservation or correcting so-called “environmental profligacy of African farmers” (Beinart 2003, 355), manifested by soil erosion, tree removal, and overgrazing, without contextualizing these problems within the history of oppression.

In a different region in the world in South Asia, caste is an important, though also often overlooked factor when discussing environmental issues. Some environmental discourses in modern India deem ecological degradation as “a result of a western, colonial imposition over a rooted, indigenous culture”

¹ A form of historical social stratification in South Asia characterized by endogamy, occupations, and ritual status. The Hindu Varna system divides society into four castes in hierarchical order (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishya and Shudras). Lower castes are generally considered more ‘polluted’ than higher castes, and excluded from participation in certain rituals, events, and spaces. Though caste-based violence and discrimination has been outlawed in contemporary India, practices persist unevenly in the region.

(Sharma 2012, 47). They imagine the past as a time when enlightened communities living in harmony with nature. However, Gail Omvedt (1987) criticized that such ecological traditions perpetuate caste hierarchy and untouchability, without addressing how Dalits (considered the 'outcaste' and 'untouchable' in the Hindu caste system) have been historically excluded from access to natural resources such as water and land. Mukul Sharma (2012) went further to demonstrate that environmentalism in India is lacking the Dalits' perspectives at best and defending the caste system at worst.

In the NBA case, the issue of dam displacement has been partially linked to the historical marginalization of indigenous/*Adivasi* people since the colonial period. A major problem in resettlement is the lack of proper record of their rights relating to land, water use and occupations. Many *Adivasi* groups, who have been cultivating land for generations, are considered encroachers by the authorities. As a result, tribal families displaced by the construction of earlier dams such as Tawa, Pong, Hirakud etc. have never gotten their compensation as their land was considered "illegal" and belonging to the state (Hemadri et al. 1999) This dynamic continued under the Sardar Sarovar project. For instance, Gandhi (2003) reported that during the reforestation activities by the government as part of the rehabilitation efforts, *Adivasi* have to pay bribes to forest officials to prevent them planting trees on productive farming and grazing land, or facilitate such activities after official tree planting had occurred. Without addressing the existing historical power relations, rehabilitation efforts including those advocated by environmentalists can simply worsen the plights of the already marginalized.

Similarly, for the RT movement, the RT have been repressed since the 19th centuries. In the 1870s, the RT migrated massively from Northeast to Acre and Amazonia and by 1920, formed a distinct population with their own beliefs and customs. They have been historically exploited by rubber barons through the *aviamento* system--a form of patron-client relationship in which the RT are not allowed to conduct subsistence activities and must obtain their daily necessities provided using credit at inflated prices. Only when the rubber barons abandoned the estates due to the collapse of the rubber boom in the 1920s that they began adopting subsistence activities. They continued to tap rubber albeit at a much-reduced scale. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, the military regime sold large pieces of land to national and foreign companies. New roads brought in huge resettlement schemes and cattle ranchers who displace the RT, who faced increased levels of poverty and violence (Stone 2003). It was after some years of collective resistance in the form of labor unions that they succeeded in establishing extractive reserves to protect their lands and livelihoods. For the RT, the shared history of oppression, peasantry and union activism had been instrumental in shaping their collective identities and resistances. In addition, generations of living in the forest had fostered their unique sense of belonging to the forest that foster their alliances with indigenous people and international environmentalism to conserve the Brazilian rainforest. History also reveals centuries of violence by global capitalism with states in complicity, as well as gender justice issues, as some RT have snatched indigenous women to be their

wives once they were liberated from the *aviamento* system and the RT largely remain a patriarchal community.

More recently reported movements such as the Hmong Millenarian Movement in Vietnam Highlands have also capitalized primarily from their historical marginalization as an ethnic group in Mainland Southeast Asia, both by the state authorities and sometimes by environmentalists who falsely characterize them as “forest destroyer” for their farming practices (Delang 2002; Forsyth and Walker 2008). Creation myth and revitalization theories were found to be important in mobilizing and recruiting movement participants. Some of the discourses circulating include the imminent end of hardship followed by prosperity of the Hmong people. The movement, however, does not seek to overthrow the states, but to be recognized and incorporated into the state system, i.e. the existing institutions. Many movements adopt such tactics, as I will elaborate in the next section. For now, it suffices to say that the experience of generations of marginalization has been powerful in mobilizing overseas diasporas, human rights agencies, and international religious networks (Rumsby 2018).

Given the above, learning and understanding history is not only helpful in terms of avoiding the negligence (or perpetuation) of systematic and historical injustice, but also in building collective identities based on the shared history of oppression. Mainstream environmentalism and conservation projects which ignore class and race history have been criticized, especially in political ecology, for perpetuating environmental injustice and dispossession of the powerless. Knowing the history can help activists form different narratives, which regard otherwise “illegal” practices in different lights. Encroachment, illegal harvesting, etc. could be legitimate protests, even while in some cases these practices have been taken up as indicative of ‘ignorance’ in need of ‘correction’. Movement planners can actively lend support to these efforts and acts of defiance by historically oppressed groups and connect them with a wider social justice agenda, such as by forming alliance with past or ongoing identity politics and minorities rights movements. For instance, the earlier US anti-environmental racism movement built on the momentum of the civil rights movement (McGurty, 1997). Contemporary slum-based collective actions in India have also drawn on identity-based movements, such as *Dalits*² rights which are supposedly guaranteed constitutionally (Kamath and Vijayabaskar, 2014). Beyond the mere purpose of strengthening their cases to alleviate ongoing environmental plights, movement planners can use historical evidence on the systematic exclusion of groups of people from environmental benefits, to assert

² The name given to the those who fall out of the four-fold varna system in Hinduism and ostracised as outcastes (untouchables). Historically, the outcastes or *Dalits* have faced caste-based discrimination and violence and forced to carry out ‘polluting’ tasks to serve the upper castes. After independence, India introduced legislations and affirmative actions to promote better conditions for *Dalits*, secure their basic rights, and ban the practices of ‘untouchability’. However, caste practices persist unevenly in the region and cases of caste-based violence are commonly reported.

their rights to resources and well-being, as well as to motivate for compensation measures.

3. Making connections to national and global institutions

Progressive Contextualization involves tracing the causes of actions outward in space and in terms of various levels of political and social organization. Many instances of injustice are made possible by national or global institutions in the first place, such as at the state level where laws may have been installed that recognize the property rights of corporations over the customary rights of locals. As a means of generating tax revenues that fuel governmental operations to sustain legitimacy, it is in the state’s interest to promote ‘regulated’ productivity of the population (Andreucci and Kallis 2017). Governments are often complicit with industry in reproducing self-interested social norms, which shape desire as well as habits and aspirations. Ideology, in this sense, becomes the hegemony internalized by populations without coercion (Li 2007). Resource-rich, peripheral states typically promote export-oriented extractive industries and simultaneously create conducive law, regulations, and property regimes to facilitate them. These regulatory frameworks are often employed to legitimize the displacement of people from their land, or destruction of their environment by corporations in the name of development. EJ activists have used the term ‘land-grabbing’ to describe a phenomenon they claim to be global (Martinez-Alier, 2016). The practice of land-grabbing has been responded to by many protests, including the NBA on behalf of the millions of Indian people displaced by the mega dam project, and the Brazilian RTs who were displaced from their forests by aggressive ranchers, etc.

The issue of displacement by development and resource extraction is further embedded in the international trade system. As global terms of trade favor core countries (Jorgenson and Rice 2007), periphery countries are required to produce and export more than what they import, resulting in a net outflow of material and energy (Hornborg 1998). Several empirical studies show the persistence of this kind of unequal ecological exchange (Oulu 2015; Samaniego et. al. 2017). To capture the problem, EJ activists use ‘ecological debt’ – a concept which was widely used during the alternative conferences established as a response to the meetings of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) held in Prague in 2000 (Martinez-Alier 2016). To great effect, some Southern governments have also used the term ‘climate debt’ in international climate change negotiations (Bond 2010). Local activists can potentially leverage on similar language to build alliances or networks across the globe. For instance, there is now a global coalition on climate justice, which jointly released the Bali Principles of Climate Justice that “seek to broaden the constituency providing leadership on climate change...by linking local community issues to climate change.” (ICJN 2012).

The system of unequal exchange has been maintained and facilitated through global institutions such as the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization

(WTO). The former devises loans for infrastructural development projects in developing countries to facilitate extractive industries, while the latter undermines trade barriers in order to allow resources to flow unhindered, through a variety of multilateral agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). However, the presence of global institutions also means that there are multiple levels of law operating from international to local, providing opportunities for social movements to use legal institutions at one level against another. This is especially so following the growing international legal norms in areas such as human rights, environment, and sustainable development, which can be leveraged to contest domestic decisions (Rajagopal 2005).

The NBA and its allies, for instance, have engaged with normative and institutional framework at multiple levels. At the earlier phase when the World Bank was involved as a funder of the project, Survival International charged that the Indian government had violated rights of tribal groups under ILO Convention 107, which led to a warning from ILO to the World Bank and the Indian government. As a multilateral institution, the World Bank became an arena for contention especially for NBA's foreign allies at the international level. A Narmada International Action Committee comprising NGOs from India, the US, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Japan pressured against investment by their respective governments in the project via the World Bank on the ground of its social and environmental impacts. The World Bank was forced to establish an Independent Review Mission and found the evidence of the project to be flawed, eventually cancelling the funding agreement. The NBA then participated in the first international conference against big dams at Curitiba, Brazil and a meeting in Gland, Switzerland that led to the formation of the World Commission on Dams in 1998, provoking a global public policy discourse on development. One of the leaders of the NBA, Medha Patkar herself was among the commission members (Rajagopal 2005).

At the domestic level, the engagement by the NBA with legal institutions had resulted in a better resettlement and rehabilitation policy from Gujarat in 1988. The latter engagement with legal courts by the NBA were mostly out of desperation when submergence and displacement took place. They brought cases against forced eviction, deforestation and police brutality to local courts and the Bombay High Court. However, orders to halt construction from these lower judiciaries were ignored by state governments and dam developers. The NBA eventually resorted to the Indian Supreme Court, which then issued a stay order in May 1995. Though the Indian Supreme Court ultimately judged in favor of resuming dam construction, such engagement with broader institutions has not been useless. In fact, it has effectively mobilized local peoples, drawn national and international support, and significantly shaped norms relating to sustainable development and human rights in the country (Rajagopal 2005). In addition, by targeting wider institutions underlying economic globalization, NBA connected with others sharing oppositional politics to the same entities. It established the National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (NAPM), bringing

together grassroots movements and trade unions all over India to a common struggle against multinational companies (Rajagopal 2005).

In Brazil, the historical plights of the RT were evidently tied to global trade with periods of rubber booms and recessions, and then national policies that favored large-scale ranching that displace the forests. The RT's efforts for resisting deforestation and protecting their livelihood were initially fragmented and ineffective. However, they later strategically involved themselves in the institutional processes towards establishing extractive reserves (Brown and Rosendo 2000) by forming new alliances in the process (Keck 1995; Schwartzman 2018). The most important alliance made, as noted by multiple scholars (Keck 1995; Schwartzman 1991, 2018; Rosendo and Brown 1998), is that with international environmentalism, which elevated their issues to international platforms for engagement with actors such as the US Congress, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. Domestically, the organization of RT into local associations and eventually the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) was a response to legal requirements by the government for establishing extractive reserves. The rules stated that “only representative organizations of the local inhabitants of a given forest area can formally request that area to be declared an extractive reserve” (Brown and Rosendo 2000, 210), and to receive the land-use title from the government. In addition, the RT built new alliances with indigenous groups, forming the Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest (Schwartzman 2018). The RT also participated in the NGO Forum of Rondoônia, which was created following the commitment of the World Bank and the state government to involve civil society in negotiating the Rondoônia Natural Resources Management Project (PLANAFLORO) (Brown and Rosenda 2000). This platform has enabled them to channel their voices directly to the World Bank, which urged the Brazilian government to fulfil their terms of contract and immediately establish extractive reserves.

Both the examples of the NBA and RT movement show that movements do not only build alliances to jointly oppose institutions, but they leverage existing institutions and engage with them to claim spaces for themselves, thereby contributing to reshaping those institutions in the process. Resistance can therefore be redefined as negotiation. With the rising importance of law, it is possible for the subaltern or their allies to appropriate the language of law and rights to assert their demand (Chandra 2015). These processes of negotiation often involve changing frames by movements to incorporate languages recognized by their allies and the institutions they were engaging with. For both the NBA and RT, human rights and environmentalism are the two important frames used to challenge an otherwise hegemonic development discourse. The presence of public intellectuals, such as Medha Patkar and Arundhati Roy for the NBA, and academics supporting the RT movement, had been instrumental in supporting their respective framing processes. For instance, Arundhati Roy argued that to effectively protest big-dam construction or other development projects, the focus on *Adivasi* rights alone is insufficient (Bose 2004, 155). Instead, the NBA leveraged the already widely appealing though originally elitist Gandhian ideology of Sarvodaya, which calls for ascetic, egalitarian living, and

against ‘excessive greed and wealth accumulation’. (Dwivedi 1997). There have been monsoon camps where movement participants declared *jal samarpan*, i.e. self-drowning in the rising water of the Narmada. Such strategies directly challenged the legitimacy of the state as one of its obligation is to protect its citizens (Routledge 2003)

An example of more recent activism that actively engages with global institutions is seed activism. In 2003, *La Via Campesina* launched an international seed campaign, with the primary aim to fight for farmers’ rights to reproduce their own seeds. The campaign reached out to the UNESCO and FAO to declare farmers-selected varieties as the cultural heritage of humanity; and to the WTO to exempt agricultural products especially seeds, from their legislation and trade agreements; as well as resisting the introduction of intellectual property (IP) rights and patents on seeds in national legislations (Peschard 2010). These engagements with multilateral organizations and international law seek institutionalized protection of seed sovereignty and have galvanized a range of actors, from food rights activists, plant breeders, consumers, to students, academics, and NGOs (Peschard and Randeria 2020). The campaign also witnessed evolving frames as it grew and gained attention. While initially named “Seeds: the common heritage of humanity”, *La Via Campesina* remodified the campaign to be “Seeds, peoples’ heritage at the service of humanity”, in order to avoid appropriation of open-seed resources by corporations such as Monsanto, and made explicit that seeds belong to the communities that cultivate them, not everyone and certainly not the states.

4. Empowering different ways of knowing

The dominant national and international institutions are embedded in a very specific way of knowing--usually one that treats nature ‘rationally’ as a separate entity from which human beings draw life-sustaining services and resources. Some grassroots actors, in the process of Progressive Contextualizing, might quickly note that their communities hold very different understandings and relationships to their environment, than those endorsed by wider institutions. The dominant worldview holds the ‘universal’ and scientific experts higher than ‘specificity’ and local knowledge holders, thereby delegitimizing different ontologies and cosmologies. For instance, a case study on the Colombian Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil finds that different interest groups use different valuation languages (Marin-Burgos *et al.* 2015). When discussing impacts of expanding palm oil cultivation, industrial cultivators consistently present quantitative and statistical data to emphasize their positive impacts on rural development and employment, while local people recount their own experiences using narrative and stories. For example, they tell of the death of fish and livestock after pesticides are spread aurally over the oil palm plantations. Technical experts dismiss such stories as isolated and lacking robust, empirical evidence. Such a view aligns industrial interests with modern states and international institutions through a common and standardized language. As a result, their claims and perspectives appear more authoritative

and objective compared to those by rural people. Beyond the concrete details of the injustice being perpetrated, prejudicial views that only see legitimate authority as articulated through discourses of empiricism, quantitative data (and masculinity), cannot ascertain the credibility of experience articulated as a story (Fricker 2007).

Bernstein defines legitimacy as the shared acceptance of rules by affected groups based on norms they collectively recognize and endorse (Bernstein 2005). However, there has been little research on how local actors grant legitimacy to development programs (Marin-Burgos et al. 2015). In countries where education is not widespread and poverty is prevalent, states hold paternalistic attitudes and often dismiss the poor and other minorities as “backward”, and in need of “help” from the state and development projects (e.g. Li 2007). For instance, swidden agriculturalists in Southeast Asia are often classified as minorities and from a social-evolutionary perspective, viewed to be “primitive” (Cramb et al. 2009; Sturgeon 2005; Fox *et al.* 2009). As for instance, in Southwest China and Indonesia, swidden agriculturalists have been labelled in policy documents and law as “lower quality people” and “isolated backward populations” (Li 1999). Environmental injustice is often borne by such powerless groups, as they are considered incapable of effective opposition (Bell 2014; Kinyalocots 2000). Groups who resist are often labelled ‘anti-development’, ‘enemies of the people’, and ‘backward,’ especially if these groups comprise indigenous people whose lives are not familiar to the mainstream populations (Andreucci and Kallis 2017). Marginalized groups also face problems in accessing information. Some information is deliberately concealed by states and/or corporations. An example is the struggle to ban asbestos in the UK, during which the asbestos companies produced skewed epidemiological reports claiming that asbestos-related diseases were rare, and proper controls were already adequately in place, even when the number of cumulative asbestos-induced deaths in the country continued to rise (McCulloch and Tweedale 2008). Incomplete information and the purposeful dissemination of misinformation affects the range of available options people conceive of as possible, while it also limits their ability to assess the possible outcomes, benefits and potential harms associated with those options.

Nonetheless, the hegemony of western, scientific way of knowing does not go unchallenged. There have been fields of study critical of western science and knowledge, such as Science and Technology Studies (STS). The underlying argument from within this field of study, is that scientific knowledge, like any other system of knowledge, is produced in specific locals and cultural contexts, is always highly contested, and inherently political. Postcolonial STS further emphasizes the violent impacts of western-scientific practices on both people and the environment in the global South and strives to take multiple ways of knowing seriously (Goldman and Turner 2012). For instance, Mara Goldman (in press), during her conservation work in Tanzania, explicitly recognizes and incorporates *enkiguena*, a Maasai method of meeting and decision-making. Indigenous researchers now articulate new research agendas and indigenous methodologies, using techniques and methods drawn from their own traditions.

These include defining the research agenda and theory from an indigenous perspective, deliberating possible negative outcomes of research to indigenous peoples, sharing, and protecting knowledge, and communicating research results back to the people, etc. (Porsanger 2004). The entry of indigenous methodologies into academic discourse has brought some success at the level of research policy. For example, national research funding agencies in Canada are now recognizing the importance of involving indigenous communities in describing, defining, and developing research questions, as well as moving research results into transformative practice (Evans *et al.* 2009).

In addition, EJ movements have demonstrated how by contesting major institutions and ways of knowing, they are claiming spaces to gain information and validate alternative forms of knowledge. The NBA for instance, amidst the hegemonic discourse that worships large-scale infrastructure development and technology, brought to attention the political, ecology and cultural erasure of the indigenous people and other affected populations, human and non-human, in these mainstream discourses (Routledge 2003). The NBA used testimonials detailing harm caused by dam projects to mobilize participation and in big demonstrations and rallies, thereby highlighting the experience of those suffering. In addition, the NBA have been involved in creating new services in rural areas in the form of micro-hydel projects and schools that teach indigenous knowledge and languages. The first micro-hydel project was developed by two activist-engineers based in Kerala who learnt the techniques from a London-based group, the Intermediate Technology Development Group. Such efforts demonstrate alternative ways of development as a result not only of grassroots actions, but of knowledge convergence from multiple actors, international and local, who share similar visions of development (Gandhi 2001, cited by Routledge 2003).

For the RT, generations of living in the forest had established their sense of belonging and their desire to live lives not dependent on cash for more than a small part of one's sustenance (Schwartzman 2018). Their proposal for establishing Extractive Reserves (ER) presented an alternative approach to conservation, one that also emphasizes people's livelihoods and builds on their knowledge in using diverse forest ecosystems and resources sustainably. The concept of ER was inspired by the reserves of indigenous people, with whom Chico Mendes had formed alliances in defense of the Amazonia. The concept of ER paved the way for the establishment of other people-based protected areas and hybrid land tenure models (Ehringhaus 2005). The model has till date been established in a variety of ecosystems under various federal and state-level political context in Brazils, spanning over 14 million hectares as of 2018. In other words, the RT's desired way of living has not only been empowered and recognized, but successfully institutionalized at the national and international levels (Schwartzman 2018; Gomes *et al.* 2018)

Another exemplary movement that empowers different ways of knowing is the Zapatista movement, which have not only produced alternative discourses, but also created spaces for alternative practices that transform subjectivities.

Gahman (2019) gives three examples of the Zapatistas' way, i.e. 'We want a world where many worlds fit', 'Everything for everyone, nothing for us', and 'When a woman advances, no man is left behind'. These ways signify their emphasis on plurality, autonomy, mutual aid, and responsibility, as well as gender justice. Blume (2018) further demonstrated how the Zapatistas have exercised their power in creating self-governing communities and social services such as education and health, thereby denying both state legitimacy and power in those regards. The movement capitalized on information technology to spread their ideas and discourses, which are themselves dynamic and evolving, and served as an inspiration for other anti-hegemonic movements in the future.

Given the above, grassroots actors and movement planners can potentially empower different ways of knowing by their communities via two manners. First, they can strive to ensure extended participation by affected parties in decision-making, by bridging different languages, and supplementing adequate information (such as scientific data, international norms, diverse views on development) to local stakeholders for strengthening their positions or widening their options. Extended participation requires not only consultation and presence of societal actors in the decision-making process, but actual valuing and incorporation of their knowledge and experience (Arora-Jonssen 2016). For complex situations with high stakes, 'expert' knowledge alone cannot be the sole basis of ethical decision-making and may in fact require dismissing it for more grounded, experiential forms of knowledge (Takeda and Ropke 2010). Second, they can propose collaborative knowledge production efforts by drawing references from existing works with indigenous nations. For example, there is a collaborative land-use planning project unfolding in Haida Gwaii, Canada, which has been co-managed and co-organized by the Council of the Haida Nation (Takeda and Ropke 2010). The planning process emphasizes both the Haida Land Use Vision, that outlines the contemporary indigenous vision of nature-society relations, and a common set of scientific resources for ecosystem-based management. Another example is cross-cultural environmental research underway between Maori and settlers in New Zealand which has been organized around several useful principles. These include creating shared research visions with indigenous peoples, to design different 'spaces' for different knowledge systems to operate, to use a methodology compatible with indigenous' worldview, and to develop a set of indigenous values, beliefs and cultural norms, as guiding principles for decision-making (Hardy and Patterson 2012). The third way is to create territories, i.e. geographical and socio-material spaces to defend and enact ways of living that depart from the mainstream and hegemonic manner, such as those by the Zapatista and RT. However, it is important to remember that the operation of such territories often involve or even require support from and collaboration with others such as NGOs and academic institutions (e.g. see van den Berg et al. 2019)

Conclusion

For social movements to make meaningful changes, I argue for an approach that actively links local problems outward in space and backward in time, including to the way in which wider institutions and structures pre-figure those problems. By progressively contextualizing a local problem, movement planners can see connections across different scales and levels, enabling more diverse conceptions of justice as well as possibilities in terms of broadening movements, solidarities, and political frameworks. This provides numerous possibilities for a movement to frame and, indeed reframe itself at different times and for different audiences. I outline four different ways of analyzing a local issue: (1) Identifying different actors and experiences (2) Learning the history (3) Making connections to national and global institutions, as well as (4) Empowering different ways of knowing. Each of these actions supports movement planners in understanding the complexity of the issue, while expanding the set of conceptual tools to draw from as movement strategies. By tapping into predetermined and widely accepted framings drawn from EJ activism and academic literature such as those of ecological economics and political ecology, local movements could draw upon the momentum of broader struggles and in doing so, can leverage greater support in local contexts, thereby strengthening the force of political, social and environmental demands.

Using existing movements as examples, my paper also suggests that the PC framework is more comprehensive than any single approach to social movements. It incorporates major movement theories of resource mobilization, political processes, and framing alignment, as well as critical approaches such as intersectional and decolonial analysis. It can be useful in both descriptive and prescriptive manners. Movements are likely to find all four steps in the PC framework to be relevant, and that one step leads quite naturally to the other--intersectionality is embedded in historical experience of people's social positions, and historical marginalization is likely to be embedded in systemic forces, which are further built upon western, scientific and capitalist ways of knowing. In addition, existing movements also show that neglecting any of the four steps can pose a risk in alienating some supporters and jeopardizing long-term movement impacts. For instance, NBA has been criticized for neglecting intersectional experiences of *Adivasi*, while the RT had been negligent of gender justice. While both the NBA and RT movements had engaged with multilateral institutions, the latter had been able to empower their ways of knowing more sustainably by institutionalizing their proposal of extractive reserves at the national and state level. The former's engagement with the state governments involved and the Indian Supreme Court had been less successful, though it had certainly influenced discourses of development in the country. Therefore, the PC framework will be useful not only in terms of operationalizing EJ, but also in helping movements iteratively self-reflect and criticize to better address the issues at hand, both ethically and practically.

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"It is people who make education work": a content analysis of trade union teach-outs in leading UK universities

Phil Hedges

Abstract

This research note examines what academic trade unionists teach when they are no longer constrained by institution and curriculum. To do so, I undertake a content analysis of the February-March 2020 teach-out programmes of University and College Union (UCU) branches based in 23 of the leading (Russell Group) universities. Striking over pensions and pay, equality, casualisation and workload, these branches were part of the 74 undertaking the largest wave of industrial action in UK higher education history.

I begin the note by defining a 'teach-out' in the context of the range of activities occurring as part of the strike wave, before highlighting some of the public motivations behind organising teach-out programmes. I outline the influence of Covid-19 upon my research design, outlining how my methodology helped to resolve the procrastination that had set in under lockdown conditions.

I then present my findings, demonstrating that the topics covered by the 491 teach-outs analysed can be understood as belonging to 8 'code families' - equalities; environmentalism; work, protest and social change; critiquing/reimagining the university; arts and literature; history; wider politics; and a range of 'other' topics. These categories be usefully understood as a typology of teach-out content.

The note concludes by questioning the relationship between equalities teach-outs and the goals of UCU, suggesting that the apparent overlap may - alongside further research - illuminate the relationship between member concerns and union policy.

Keywords: Education, higher education, industrial action, strike, teach-out, trade union, UCU, unionism, university

It was my experience of the labour studies MA at Ruskin College that fed my curiosity about a very different type of activist education – the UCU teach-outs that characterised the industrial action within the UK university sector. Simply put, having graduated with from a masters programme that was run by and for trade unionists, I wondered: *what do academic trade unionists in other disciplines plan to teach when they are not restrained by curriculum and their institutions?*

To answer this, I undertook a content analysis of the February-March 2020 teach-out programmes of UCU branches based in 23 Russell Group universities. Concerned with pensions and pay, equality, casualisation and workload, these branches were part of the 74 undertaking the largest wave of strikes in UK higher education history¹.

I begin this note by defining a 'teach-out' and suggesting some of the motivations behind organising teach-out programmes. I then outline the influence of Covid-19 upon my research design before describing how the content analysis was undertaken. I critique the quality of the data before presenting my findings, demonstrating that the topics covered by the 491 teach-outs analysed can be understood as belonging to 8 code families - equalities; environmentalism; work, protest and social change; critiquing/reimagining the university; arts and literature; history; wider politics; and a range of 'other' topics. I conclude by questioning the relationship between equalities teach-outs and the goals of UCU.

What and why

I understand a teach-out as:

A bespoke event organised during industrial action in education whose principal purpose is the education of staff, students (and occasionally the wider community). This education focus is distinct from entertainment/morale boosting activities; overt organising activities towards maintaining the strike/related issues; and the educational elements of activities that would be popularly understood as a component of a different 'type' of event (e.g. rally, strike meeting). This event typically takes place at a site not used for higher education teaching.

This definition was developed inductively in parallel to undertaking the content analysis. Impressed by the wide range of creative activities that accompanied the withdraw of academic labour, I cast a broad net whilst collecting my sample before narrowing the definition as a result of this overview. This process was necessary because many of these 'other activities' were listed on strike and/or teach-out programmes.

Doubtless the motivations behind organising these teach-out programmes during the strike wave varied across institutions. Nonetheless, blurbs accompanying the programmes occasionally outlined some overarching public goals:

¹ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10643/UKs-biggest-ever-university-strikes-as-staff-begin-14-days-of-walkouts-on-Thursday>

We all acknowledge the disruption the strikes will cause to teaching, learning and research, and deeply regret that the employers have created the untenable situation we find ourselves in. However, we also maintain that learning is not the sole preserve of university classrooms and lecture theatres – it can take place in any space, at any time. Students and staff can create alternative spaces of community and learning in and around the strike action - University of Edinburgh UCU²

Here there is a distinction between the university-as-an-institution and the university-as-community. The programmes demonstrated that it was possible in the short term to maintain the latter without the disruptive former, prefiguring of a different university. As Nottingham UCU noted: "Come along to learn more about the modern university, and how we can improve it, as well as a range of other pressing topics."³

Other teach-outs stressed the role of staff in providing this education, that there is in the final analysis no university without workers. This message is quoted in the title of this essay: "The teach out programme also reminds the University that it is people who make education work, not the buildings or the technology inside".⁴ Or: locked out of the resources provided by the university-as-institution, some form of education endures regardless.

Covid-19

The degree to which research is inevitably shaped by the environment in which it is produced notwithstanding, this essay is indelibly shaped by Covid-19. Unlike many PhD students, I was relatively unaffected by lockdown. But inevitably, the "three app anxiety scroll" (Norton 2020) took over, and I found myself constantly flicking between Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, unable to focus. I'm given to chronic anxiety, but as the horrifying death-count in the UK rose alongside the economic and social cost, I wasn't unique in having difficult moments (ONS 2020).

I admitted defeat in early June. My attention-span shot, I found it increasingly difficult to focus on the thematic coding required for my thesis. Procrastination is not normally something I suffer with but increasingly become an affliction. After talking with my supervisor, I took a month off to focus on 'something else.'

This essay is that 'something else'. One cure for procrastination is the setting of defined, realistic tasks (Cottrell 2019; Murray 2014) – and the collation and reformatting of teach-out programmes lent itself to this. I was able to process a set number each evening, and in completing this, able to see the outcome of work as lines on the spreadsheet. I could put the stereo on and make a pot of

² <https://edinburghteachouts.wordpress.com/>

³ <http://uonucu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/strike2.pdf>

⁴ www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/teach-outs/

coffee, mute my phone and work for an hour and feel that something had been achieved. I hope that sharing this context is helpful for others working under similar conditions.

Methodology

My methodology drew upon Bryman's chapter on content analysis (2012, 288-308). I balanced the need for a precise and defined coding schedule (ibid) with the inductive sensibility that my PhD supervisors have laboured to instil in me, holding in tension for as long as possible this precision with an openness to 'seeing what is there' within the sample.

In developing codes describing the content of teach-outs, I drew upon my experience of qualitative thematic analysis (Saldana 2016; Gibson & Brown 2009). Although seemingly methodologically incoherent, it meant allowing the codes to emerge iteratively from the sample, mirroring my experience of thematically coding interview transcripts. The content of the programmes did not fit a standardised format and this approach enabled the development of codes that more closely matched the painfully shifting parameters of the data being analysed.

The Sample

I worked with resources on the UCU website⁵ alongside an initial examination of strike programmes to define the parameters of my sample. In terms of the range of dates for collecting material from Twitter, I focused on the strike dates for each institution, the work days interspersed between them, and Tweets published up to 2 days before the strike began at that university.

Constrained by time, I decided I would capture the data on teach-outs recorded on branch websites. If this was unavailable, *only then I would then examine the branch Twitter account*. I later discovered that Twitter often linked back to branch websites or to blogs set up to promote teach-outs; where these occurred I similarly prioritised these resources over collecting Tweets.

Given the ambiguities of data collection from Twitter (Hedges 2018), I excluded from the sample retweets from personal accounts.

Exploration

I recorded data on my coding schedule, working A-Z through the institutions involved in the strike wave. This meant recording the details of any events that could not immediately be dismissed as *not* being a teach-out because they were

⁵ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/heaction-institutions> - <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10399/UCU-members-back-strikes-over-...1> - https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10694/HE-pay-reballot-results-January-2020/pdf/ucu_pay-reballot_result-breakdown_jan2023.pdf

popularly understood as another 'type' of action. I kept a research journal and recorded early code names for each talk, as well problems as they arose. Despite a union-wide cancellation at a national level of gatherings and pickets due to Covid-19 late in the strike wave,⁶ I rejected as too time-consuming proactively identifying which scheduled talks were cancelled.

Coding

Having examined an initial 12 universities, it became apparent that examining all striking institutions was impractical given time constraints. The focus of the study was narrowed to Russell Group universities, reducing the number of institutions from 72 to 23 of the 24 Group members⁷ (LSE having failed to meet the ballot threshold). I grouped and merged the initial codes to develop a provisional coding manual to categorise teach-out content. I then collected data for the remaining Russell Group universities and coded the sample, continuing to record observations in my research journal - particularly when the provisional codes proved inadequate. The codes were revised further at the end of this process, and the sample recoded. Having defined a 'teach-out' more concretely, I also excluded from the sample events that appeared to fall outside of this.

I used two key questions to make sense of the sample. Firstly, 'is the topic of the teach-out *solely* focused on the UK or is there a more international focus?' Where this was unclear, the UK was used as default, given the teach-out took place during a UK strike wave. Secondly, 'does the teach-out *solely* relate to academia or to wider society?' Where this was unclear, I categorised the teach-out as related to wider society as the more encompassing category.

These questions created 4 broad categories in which I situated 20 codes, grouped into 8 code families (although two 'families' contained a single code, I use this term for expediency). Where it was impossible to distinguish an appropriate code, I selected the code that appeared first in the content description.

Rigour

Content analysis is only as good as the source material (Bryman 2012) – and this was inconsistent. For example, Cambridge UCU provided an extensive blurb for many of their talks⁸ whilst teach-outs at Kings College were often described only by their title⁹. Some records, such as the branch website for the

⁶ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10692/Reballots-postponed-due-to-Covid-19-pickets-cancelled-but-action-continues?list=10241>

⁷ <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/about/our-universities/>

⁸ <http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/teach-outs/>

⁹ https://twitter.com/KCL_UCU/status/1232051087760338944

University of Southampton UCU¹⁰, were obviously incomplete, and there is the sense that in some institutions, the branch UCU account is not the sole Twitter account.

The nature of the source material also foregrounded the inevitable subjective decision-making involved in coding. The interpretation I was required to undertake remained pronounced throughout. Despite a coding scheme designed to mitigate this, it was obviously problematic to categorise the content of a teach-out armed purely with a title. Such were the limitations of the data in this instance, however.

Results

The table of headline results is ordered by the number of occurrences within the sample. In the explanatory text below, I present these categories in the order of how they best relate to each other. These code families can also be usefully read as categories within a typology.

Code families by frequency	#	%
Equalities	114	23.22
Work and protest	68	13.85
Art and literature	60	12.22
Critiquing/reimagining higher education	57	11.61
Other	56	11.41
Wider politics	48	9.78
History	46	9.37
Environmentalism	42	8.55
Total	491	100.01

Art and literature

This code includes teach-outs on creative writing, literature, classics and the study/practice of/discussion of poetry, music, film, theatre and the visual arts. It includes zine and sticker making, crafting, and critiques of marketing. This code overrules all others where the poet/author or the title of poem/fictional work is mentioned in the teach-out title or blurb. It is coded to 60 teach-outs (12.22%).

¹⁰ <https://southampton.web.ucu.org.uk/strike-information/>

Equalities

Teach-outs coded to *Equalities* in UK academia cover topics and social movements (including UCU) focusing on UK higher education where they relate to: anti-racism, PREVENT, immigration, the hostile environment, feminism, LGBT+, disability - including mental health - and other equalities related themes. 57 teach-outs (11.61%) are coded as this in the sample. Similar themes relating to international academia are limited to anti-racism and coded to just 2 teach-outs (0.41%).

Teach-outs coded to *Equalities* in UK society cover topics and social movements (including trade unions) focused beyond higher education when they relate to: anti-racism, immigration, the hostile environment, feminism, LGBT+, disability - including mental health - and other equalities related themes. There are 38 teach-outs (7.74%) coded to this. Similar themes within international society - including first nations rights (but with disability notably absent from the sample) - are coded to 17 teach-outs (3.46%).

Environmentalism

Teach-outs coded to *Environmentalism* in UK academia cover topics and social movements (including UCU) focusing on UK higher education where they relate to ecology and environmentalism. There are 10 teach-outs (2.04%) coded to this, whilst similar topics within international academia are entirely absent from the sample.

Teach-outs coded to *Environmentalism* in UK society cover topics and social movements focused beyond higher education where they relate to similar themes of ecology and environmentalism. These are coded to 27 teach-outs (5.50%). Environmentalism and related social movements internationally are coded to 5 teach-outs (1.02%).

Work and protest

Teach-outs coded to *Work and protest* within UK academia cover industrial relations within UK higher education, including teach-outs relating to UCU issues such as pay, pensions and precarity where they are not principally organising opportunities. It covers changes in the nature of university work, critiques of higher education management/realism, and work-focused social movements within the UK university and related topics. In all cases, it applies only where the teach-out topic falls outside of *Environmental* and/or *Equalities* codes. There are 18 teach-outs (3.67%) coded to this. The international equivalent - covering boycotts and international solidarity from within UK work based social movements alongside case studies and examples of activism within HE internationally - is coded to 11 teach-outs (2.24%).

Teach-outs coded to *Work and protest* in UK society cover similar issues and social movements to the UK academia code, except that here these are focused

beyond higher education. This code also encompasses generic teach-outs concerning generic social movements, protesting and organising skills. This code appears within the sample 31 times (6.31%). The international equivalent, covering precarity, global supply chains, case studies and examples of activism internationally, are coded to 8 teach-outs (1.63%). It does not cover the generic territory of its UK equivalent.

Critiquing/reimagining higher education¹¹

Teach-outs coded to this within UK academia relate to radical education and progressive pedagogy. This includes talks that 'reimagine' the university and outline what a preferred model of high education could look like. It also encompasses related UK social movements/critiques within HE that do not fall naturally into other codes – e.g. calls for universities to engage with demilitarisation, de-securitisation and abolitionism, and the generic "student movement". There are 51 teach-outs (10.39%) coded to this. The international equivalent relates to 6 teach-outs (1.22%) relating to student movements, 'reimagining' higher education and inclusive education.

History

History in its UK form, refers to radical history, purely historical case studies, and local history. It includes archiving, historiography, and archaeology with a UK focus, and museum fieldtrips. It appears 29 times (5.91%). The international equivalent encompasses radical history, purely historical case studies and historiography and relates to 17 teach-outs (3.46%).

Wider politics

Teach-outs coded to this relate to austerity, Brexit, housing, poverty, health, police and abolitionism, and other related political issues and social movements outside of higher education where they do not properly relate to other codes. This code refers to 28 teach-outs (5.70%). The international version of the *Wider politics* code relates principally to teach-outs concerning contemporary international case studies and issues, and expressing solidarity with contemporary international social movements outside of higher education where they do not properly relate to other codes. This encompasses 20 of teach-outs (4.07%).

¹¹ As benefits the subject matter, the code family for critiquing/reimagining higher education, focuses solely on topics related to UK and international academia, with no teach-outs coded to wider society. Conversely, the code families for history and wider politics are focused on topics outside of higher education, with no teach-outs coded to academic codes.

Other

Unsurprisingly, not every teach-out topic appears frequently enough to warrant its own code. These errant subjects include topics such as physics, critical theory, linguistics, yoga and more. This code encompasses the rare occasion when I was unable to hypothesise the teach-out topic, as well as teach-out slots allocated to the chairs of multi-lecturer events. This code appears 56 times (11.41%).

Conclusion

Having presented the methodology and findings of my content analysis, I want to briefly conclude by highlighting a correlation between equalities teach-out topics and UCU policy. Whilst content analysis cannot answer *why* particular topics are popular (Bryman, 2012), the prevalence of equalities-based teach-out content paralleled one of aspect of the "4 Fights" dispute. The pay claim called for action to be taken to close the pay gaps within the sector, demanding a "...national, time specific, agreement detailing how action will be achieved by each HEI to close the gender and ethnic pay gap."¹²

There are of course other parallels within the equalities code family - such as between teach-outs on Prevent and UCU criticism of this policy.¹³ This prompts me to ask: How far are the themes of teach-out sessions consciously influenced by UCU's goals? What is the relationship between equalities teach-outs directly related to issues within UK academia (both those of academics and those of their students) and similar themes explored in a wider UK or international context? What does the content of teach-outs tell us about how far UCU members can be said to be shaping or responding to the concerns of their union?

Put another way: did the teach-out "Challenge and Disrupt: Women's Protest Movement in India Today" at University of Edinburgh¹⁴ occur because the issues highlighted by UCU around gender inequality prompted their exploration in a different context? Or did examining an international context lead to an awareness of the UK concerns that fed in to UCU policy? If UCU concerns, UK teach-out topics, and teach-outs exploring similar topics in a wider context are mapped as sides of a triangle, the question becomes: *What, if any, are the connections and direction of travel between each element?*

This formulation means remaining open to the relationship between these different elements, rather than – for example - assuming that teach-out topics

¹² https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10185/UCUBAN54-HE-pay-claim-2019-20/pdf/UCUBAN54.pdf?utm_source=lyr-ucu-members&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=members&utm_term=he-full-jnches&utm_content=Higher+education+joint+unions+pay+claim+2019-20

¹³ <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10412/Prevent-is-under-review>

¹⁴ <https://edinburghteachouts.wordpress.com/>

simply reflect UCU policy. Answering this more complex question calls for a very different type of research.

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Book Reviews: *Interface*, 12 (2)

Reviews editor: Dawn M. Paley

Books reviewed in this issue:

Daniel Sonabend, 2019, *We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain*. London: Verso. \$45.95 CAD hardcover, 369 pp.

Review author: Alex Khasnabish

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Review author: Plácido Muñoz Morán

Amber Day (ed.), 2017, *DIY Utopia: Cultural Imagination and the Remaking of the Possible*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. £77 hardcover, £73 eBook, 290pp.

Review Author: Evangelos Chrysagis

Isabel Wilkerson, 2020, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*. New York: Random House. Hardcover, US \$32, 440 pp.

Review author: Isaac Oommen

Brian Whitener, 2019, *Crisis Cultures: The Rise of Finance in Mexico and Brazil*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. Hardcover, \$45.00, 232 pp.

Review Author: Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe

Touré Reed, 2020, *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism*. New York: Verso, 2020. £11.99, 202 pp.

Review Author: Jay Arena

Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (eds.) *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*. Palgrave Macmillan. Paperback, £24.00, 720pp.

Review Author: Tomás Mac Sheoin

Miguel A. Martinez, 2020, *Squatters in the Capitalist City: Housing, Justice, and Urban Politics*. London: Routledge. paperback, £27.99, 278 pp.

Review author: Ben Duke

Book review: Daniel Sonabend, *We Fight Fascists*

Review author: Alex Khasnabish

Daniel Sonabend, 2019, *We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain*. London: Verso. \$45.95 CAD hardcover, 369 pp.

In the aftermath of World War II and under the long shadow cast by the horrors of the Nazis' Final Solution to the "Jewish Question" Jewish servicemen returned home to England to find their struggle against fascism was far from over.

In *We Fight Fascists: The 43 Group and Their Forgotten Battle for Post-war Britain*, Daniel Sonabend tells one aspect of this story through the experiences of the 43 Group, an organization founded by 43 dedicated anti-fascists in 1946 (the vast majority of whom were Jewish ex-servicemen just returned from war).

Sonabend's history of the 43 Group is not only engaging and highly readable, it is an important and timely book offering vital lessons for the struggle against fascism today. After reading the book it seems incredible that Sonabend's account is one of the few published about the 43 Group given the importance of the grassroots campaign to defeat fascism they waged from 1946-1950.

While Oswald Mosley and his inter-war British Union of Fascists (1932-1940) get most of the attention when considering attempts to build an authentic fascist movement in Britain, both Mosley and fascism would return in the post-World War II context. Frustrated by the timidity and complicity of the Anglo-Jewish political establishment, the founders of the 43 Group wanted to create a militant organization that was committed exclusively to anti-fascism and unafraid to pull it up by its roots.

Indeed, other than this foundational anti-fascism, members were explicitly prohibited from discussing politics, giving the Group a singular orientation and criteria for membership. Despite the Allied victory over the Axis and, specifically, the defeat of Nazism, fascist organizers continued to find fertile ground amid the devastation, deprivation, and enduring relations of oppression that characterized Britain in 1946 and after.

World War II is often memorialized as a righteous struggle of good versus evil, a convenient myth that obscures the grotesque injustices very much at home in liberal democratic countries as well. Recognizing that the ruling class and its institutions, particularly the police and the courts, had neither the willingness nor the ability to effectively confront the fascists, the 43 Group resolved to do so.

Sonabend's historical narrative tells the story of the Group's militant, community-based, and directly confrontational anti-fascism. In the telling, he

offers many important insights of value to the contemporary struggle against a resurgent fascism.

We Fight Fascists is populated by richly realized characters and the lived, human drama of the anti-fascist struggle is powerfully foregrounded. Political intrigue, personal details, and dramatic public, violent confrontations are here in roughly equal parts, pacing the story well and giving it depth and weight.

Sonabend's history is exciting and inspiring but, as he notes in the last pages of his book, the 43 Group's successful struggle against Mosley's Union Movement hardly signalled the defeat of fascism. A new generation of fascist organizers and activists would emerge in Britain before the end of the 1950s, beginning a new and protracted era of fascist activity, much of it intensely racist, violent, and xenophobic.

This doesn't mean that the victory of the 43 Group over Mosley's Union Movement was really a defeat. But it is worth considering what this shows us about what is necessary to defeat fascism over the longer term rather than episodically.

While the militant, community-based anti-fascism of the 43 Group was absolutely critical, if we are to do more than respond to individual manifestations of fascism we must also address the socio-economic and political conditions in which it grows. Sonabend points out how addressing prevailing relations of ruling and posing alternatives to them was not part of the 43 Group's mandate, indeed it was explicitly disavowed, a feature of the organization that did not allow it to persist past the downfall of its fascist nemesis.

Through archival research and the testimonies of the few surviving Group members, Sonabend's is a thorough history of anti-fascist work in all its dimensions. *We Fight Fascists* provides rich material for reflection and discussion by those currently engaged in efforts to defend their communities against the surging far right.

While the street fights between fascists and anti-fascists are grippingly re-told, Sonabend also shows us the intelligence and logistical work critical to solid anti-fascist practice. Some of the most compelling stories in *We Fight Fascists* are about 43 Group operatives working as spies behind fascist lines, the risks they take, and the costs they bear.

Sonabend describes a complex, collective anti-fascist practice enacted by the members of the 43 Group and he shows us some of the tensions and contradictions too. As mentioned above, because the Group had no politics beyond anti-fascism it also lacked a critical, shared analysis of other powerful institutions like the state. This meant it often ended up deferring and appealing to the ruling class and its institutions, like the courts and police, tacitly reproducing the *status quo*.

As Sonabend tells us, "The 43 Group was not a revolutionary organisation; it wanted to preserve the state and its democracy, and only acted because the

Labour government of the day would not” (p. 324). It is enough that the 43 Group was key to driving Mosley and his Union Movement into oblivion; but given the rapid emergence of a new generation of fascist activists it’s worth asking what this teaches us about long term anti-fascist strategy.

Reflecting on the story of the 43 Group, Sonabend concludes *We Fight Fascists* with two crucial lessons to be learned from their struggle. The first is that “The members of the 43 Group chose violence” (p. 324). That is, they recognized the necessity of meeting fascism’s essential violence with a superior violence of their own, mobilized by a community that had been so clearly targeted by the fascist threat. Sonabend is clear and unequivocal about the importance of this lesson and I agree wholeheartedly.

The second lesson he offers is derived from the 43 Group’s exclusively anti-fascist criteria for membership: “It is vital that anti-fascists never forget they are always on the same side, and that every potential new recruit to the fight should be welcomed with open arms, no matter what their other politics are” (p. 325). As Sonabend highlights, this radically inclusive approach allowed the 43 Group to grow its membership into the thousands at a time when rallying people to confront fascism was absolutely critical. Unfortunately Sonabend doesn’t take this analysis any further and while he admits that the prohibition against talking politics within the Group was probably more of a principle than an enforced practice, issues of political conflict and their consequences within the Group seem somewhat conveniently marginalized.

The openness that allowed the group to rapidly recruit and organize in the face of an imminent fascist threat proved decidedly less useful as a point of unity when the battle lines were less viscerally and clearly drawn. There’s nothing wrong with a group dissolving or project ending in its due course but, as history would show, the fascist threat had not been expunged and would take only a handful of years to reconstitute itself. Clearly there remained work to be done and the Group’s refusal to consider larger political questions can’t simply be dismissed in this context. It should also offer an important point for reflection for contemporary anti-fascist organizing.

In addition to its value as a highly readable political history, *We Fight Fascists* is also an important contribution to the scholarship on social movements and fascism. Sonabend’s book stands alongside other excellent works focusing on fascism and anti-fascism that explore the lived, social dimension of these movements and not just their organizational formations or ideology (Blee 2018; Belew 2018; Bray 2017; Moore and Tracy 2020; Renton 2019; Strickland 2018; Tenold 2018).

We Fight Fascists is a valuable politically-engaged contribution to social movement scholarship that takes movements seriously not only as vehicles for contentious politics but as knowledge-producers and vital engines of social change. Sonabend offers us an inspiring history of people collectively organizing and fighting back against those who would dehumanize and then destroy them.

Confronted by a resurgent far right and accelerating eco-social crises, we would do well to attend to the lessons it offers.

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About the review author

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Book review: Susana Draper, *1968 Mexico*

Review author: Plácido Muñoz Morán

Susana Draper, 2018, *1968 Mexico: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy*. Durham: Duke University Press (251 pp., paperback, \$ 20.99).

In *Mexico 1968: Constellations of Freedom and Democracy*, Susana Draper proposes a series of encounters at the margins of the '68 global movement. The incorporation of less known voices, views and locations fills the gaps of the dominant imaginary of the '68 in Mexico and beyond.

Draper presents the movement of 1968 in Mexico as a contemporaneous open-ended process shaped by multiple situations, bodies and temporalities. Drawing on an alternative politics of memory, the author explores the impact of collective processes of emancipation activated by the movement. The main body of the philosophical analysis that informs the book is built upon the experiences of participants in the movement and how they reflected and embodied ideas of freedom, equality and democracy.

1968 is known today for a series of global movements that pursued the social transformation of everyday life through collective participation. However, the author notes that academic studies have tended to exclude until recently the participation of countries in the Global South. Mexico played a particular role between the north and the south in 1968, hosting the Olympic games that year just days after its government had repressed demonstrators in the Tlatelolco massacre.

But the better known 1968 massacre in Tlatelolco (a neighbourhood in Mexico City) and the prominence of social agents linked to the National Strike Council are, in *1968 Mexico*, eclipsed by Draper's focus on less visible and less heard experiences and actors. The uncovering of these memories counters the imbalance between the memory of horrors of repressive state practices and that of collective processes of emancipation produced within the movement.

Making connections between the most remembered memories of '68 and those of the margins, Draper fosters the production of new meanings and ways of understanding the Mexican social movement. To do so, she depicts the '68 as a polyphony of voices which welcomed participation regardless of class, gender or political affiliation. More than a spontaneous and apolitical movement of the past, she helps us understand this movement as a flow of social transformations and ways of making politics that have lasted until today.

1968 Mexico highlights the transgressive nature of the movement, which questioned the entirety of existing political, artistic and philosophical orders in Mexican society. This critical perspective is present throughout the book, in connection with different temporalities of the movement or the role of history within it. In regard to the former, Draper avoids falling into a chronological and continuous narrative of events. In contrast, she proposes a fragmented and

incomplete history of the movement which is shaped by encounters across situations and over time. This extraordinary book on the '68 events in Mexico is itself driven by the memories of some of the people who ended up in prison or were politically and socially marginalised due to their participation in the movement.

Draper's analysis of the philosophical and literary work of José Revueltas (1914-1971), who actively participated in the movement and helped produce the foundations of its theoretical framework, is used as a catalyst for the encounters with the protagonists of the different chapters in the book.

Revueltas' concepts such as "Self-Management and Cognitive Democracy" (p. 40) become operative channels to interpret the ways of understanding and making politics within the movement. In this context, Revuelta argues that the idea of a Marxist revolution based on state takeover by a political party must be substituted by a democracy in practice, in which everyday life is transformed into a contested arena against social alienation.

Social transformation, therefore, is understood in *Mexico 1968* as a never ending experience that is shaped by experiments within the complexity of everyday life. For instance, the writing of Revueltas is intermingled with tales of his life in prison. His body, the prison and the time that he spent in it, are transformed into conceptual and creative elements that allow the reader to reflect about temporalities and forms of freedom in an alienated society.

The conception of language as a site of political struggle in which new meanings can be imagined is one of the main singularities of the 1968 movement in Mexico. These creative and imaginative attitudes take the form of emancipatory experiments within social and sensory orders. In these experiments, the boundaries between everyday life, art and philosophy are blurred and converted into spaces of political experience.

The work and life of José Revueltas and the effects of '68 on cinema are shown as examples of the experimental character of the movement in Mexico and beyond. This experimentation allowed the survival of the movement during the state repression in Mexico.

In the afterlife of the movement, the creation of cinema played a remarkable role, acting as a bridge between places and people and opening up dialogues and discussion. The cinematic experiences are portrayed as encounters among non-equals in which the process was emphasised over the final product. Draper provides an insight into these processes to illustrate how collaborative films were created in connection with the movement.

Draper documents how the creative process of the film *History of a Document* (p. 110) lies between the inside and outside of the Lecumberri prison. The process of filming became a means to question not only the state system and its structures in Mexico -making visible the reality of political prisoners- but also the conventional norms of creating cinema. In addition, Draper connects this and other so-called militant cinema to Revueltas' concept of self-management

reinforcing the philosophical discussion about freedom and participatory democracy within the movement.

Mexico 1968 analyses feminist movement in Mexico through the experiences of women who participated in the movement as a way to explore participatory democracy within the 1968 movement. The role of women is emphasised as part of multiple struggles against social patriarchal constructions; the monopolisation of movement memory by men; or the sexual division of labour. These struggles inspired the philosophical work and the political activism of Fernanda Navarro who played a key role in the theorization of the movement and its continuation. Navarro's writing embraces the struggles of the 1968 movement and of women through solid philosophical work in which language again becomes a site to discuss the authoritarian-state capture of ideas of freedom and democracy.

The notion of encounter, which spans the book and connects the reader with different situations in the movement, takes its highest conceptual complexity in Draper's consideration of Navarro's work. Navarro's expression "Today is always" (p. 152) synthesized the multifaceted nature of '68 within a constant process of becoming.

The encounters in *Mexico 1968* make and remake intersubjective experiences between people who embody multiple temporalities, requiring a constant, critical approach to the conception of a homogeneous and essential subject. This approach highlights the importance of alterity among different actors and demonstrates how alterity opens the way for social transformation.

The encounters between Roberta Abedaño and Gladys López - outside and inside prison - materialise and activate the discussion and bring to life the concepts introduced throughout the book. The memories of these two women show the prejudices they faced inside and outside of prison, but also how they had to deal with their own prejudices towards different women inside prison. This tension between equality and inequality is the force that moves the main argument of *Mexico 1968* and, at the same time, is what made the political and social struggles of '68 carry on until present.

Though Draper makes an effort to connect events in 1968 with current movement and repressive state practices in Mexico and beyond, *Mexico 1968* would have benefitted from more references and discussion on how and if ongoing Indigenous movements connect to the '68 movement. Overall this is an original and interesting book that is accessible for students and experts, making a great contribution to the study of social movements in general and to the Mexican movement of '68 in particular.

About the review author

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Book review: Amber Day (ed.), *DIY Utopia*

Review Author: Evangelos Chrysagis

Amber Day (ed.), 2017, *DIY Utopia: Cultural Imagination and the Remaking of the Possible*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 290pp. £77 (Hb), £73 (eBook).

In describing an array of cultural activities that invite us to cast a critical eye on our present circumstances and imagine alternatives, Amber Day's new edited collection *DIY Utopia* grapples both with the concept of utopia and the notion of "Do-it-Yourself."

For Day, DIY activities contrast with the rampant consumerism of mainstream culture, infuse cultural practices with a sense of play, and present an alternative politics in-the-making. The DIY ethos of participation, sharing resources, activism and collaboration underpin a variety of projects, taking many forms such as underground music scenes, guerilla farming and artist cooperatives, to name but a few examples.

In this context, not only does DIY constitute a mode of operating but is also in itself a utopian enterprise: never perfect or complete, it continually strives to highlight how things *could* be.

In all four parts, *DIY Utopia* collects several of these "homemade strivings for utopia" (p. ix), which seek "to create miniature versions of alternate worlds" (p. xi), delineating a space within which politics, economy and culture can be re-imagined.

While at present it is indeed hard to conceive of anything beyond neoliberalism, *DIY Utopia* explicitly aims to transcend what is already there. Yet we must remember that DIY is part of the existing system, sometimes presenting a counterargument to dominant narratives, but in many cases emerging as a form of cultural production largely appropriated by capitalist structures. As Day writes, "[t]here is certainly nothing about the DIY aesthetic that would make it automatically resistant to reabsorption" (p. x).

Still, the intrinsic values of DIY continue to mobilise practitioners and give rise to a multitude of initiatives that privilege collective activity, ethical practice, the learning of new skills and the use of public spaces, while simultaneously presenting a case against consumption and environmental destruction. Many DIY practices achieve these objectives not through explicit resistance or oppositional politics but through embracing irony and playfulness, an indication, perhaps, of DIY's evolution and adaptation towards presenting social issues and concerns.

Different projects under the rubric of DIY may not always share the same values. For example, a distinctively political "DIY culture" (McKay 1998) could not be equated with DIY entrepreneurship and global creative trends in music

and fashion (Luvaas 2012). Like utopia, DIY cannot be fixed, but it must be perceived as a floating signifier, which many cultural practitioners keep at arm's length, along with the negative connotation of amateurism normally associated with the term. And just like utopias, DIY pursuits are not meant to be taken literally but used as blueprints or, as Day puts it, as "provocations" (p. xiii) that encompass a series of prompts or questions about the reality of our current condition.

As Stephen Duncombe notes in Part I, "'What if?' is *the* Utopian question" (p. 12). Asking this very question, Duncombe argues, is simultaneously a criticism of existing conditions and an act of conjuring up an alternative. Instead of constituting mere negation, utopias seek to bring into view novel approaches and ways of thinking. Imagination is the *sine qua non* of utopias, an integral element of critical thought and action, while its absence underscores the proliferation of dystopian futures.

Experimenting with and building on the premises of Thomas More's book *Utopia*, Duncombe decided to open it up to collective imagination by creating a website and making *Utopia* publicly available for download. In addition to allowing multimedia contributions ranging from videos and readings of *Utopia* to utopia-related art and illustrations, Duncombe created Wikitopia, a collaborative effort to re-write and re-imagine More's book. Although *Open Utopia*, as the website was named, eventually became a media sensation, it was slow to take off. Over time, it became a vibrant nexus for the creation of overlapping alternative visions of the future. The lesson from the website's trajectory, according to Duncombe, is that utopias and radical undertakings are decidedly unfinished and open-ended, becoming a horizon of possibilities characterised by continuous struggles.

The potential of utopian ventures to form relational nodes and stir collective imagination further becomes evident in Part II of *DIY Utopia*.

Adapting Levitas' definition of utopia, Linda Doyle and Jessica Foley define "utopia as a dynamic repository of desire for better ways of being alive with others" (p. 103). In their respective capacities as an artist and an engineer, the authors examine the relationship between DIY radio and utopia, exploring how the study of and quest for utopia coalesce. In doing so, the authors eschew the conventional meaning of utopia as "wishful thinking," by stressing utopia's transformative force.

Using DIY radio as an analogy for utopian projects, they trace how radio practices culminate in the formation of subjectivities and counterpublics, thus promoting change. Both radio practices and utopias, the authors explain, derive their essence from the interplay between (or problems with) their function, form and content. The complex and heavily regulated radio landscape, however, is at odds with utopian DIY radio activities. It follows that to oppose the contemporary configuration of these elements, a novel synthesis between medium, device and message is needed. This stands as a metaphor for utopian

forms of thinking and action that aspire to get their message across loud and clear.

In one of the rare studies of DIY cultural activities in Africa, Clovis Bergère opens Part III with an examination of self-organised social spaces for Guinean youth called *bureaux*. The popularity and ubiquity of these DIY youth centres contrast with their complete absence from official policy discourses on youth culture. In the context of Guinean and African cities more generally, *bureaux* emerge as alternative forms of urbanism, becoming open spaces where different modes of urban living can be rethought and worked upon.

For Bergère, in addition to providing Guinean youth with an everyday social experience and an authentic grounding within the shifting landscapes of cities in transition, these self-organised spaces are also urban institutions with political resonance, allowing young people to exercise their right to the city. One is left wondering about the cultural connotations, if any, that DIY has for Guinean youth, especially in light of the fact that *bureaux* are genuinely DIY spaces, created out of the collaborative spirit and drive of the people who make use of them. While the cross-cultural comparison of DIY urban practices can enrich the meaning and advance the significance of DIY, further attention to how the terms are used by research participants in their effort to realise their own utopias is required.

Like many subversive or emancipatory ideas and practices, utopia is not only the privilege of groups who seek to change the *status quo*. Rather, imagination can be appropriated and put in the service of capitalism, too. This is the subject matter of Lisa Daily's chapter in Part IV, in which she dismantles the "ethical capitalism" oxymoron.

The ethical dimension of capital accumulation, according to Daily, is mainly expressed in discourses of empowerment, poverty reduction and global solidarity. Ethical capitalism is meant as a form of critique towards "bad" capitalism –and indeed in many cases the intentions are noble– but the forms of activism that it supports are framed by market-oriented discourses that fail to shake the foundations of the existing system and promote the public good. The failure to go beyond the confines of a consumerist lifestyle and challenge commodity-based systems and hierarchical social relations suggests that not all utopias are worth pursuing.

There is nothing inherently virtuous in the notion of utopia. Instead, what the utopian project of so-called "ethical capitalism" demonstrates is that the real enemy is the colonisation of our imagination and the lack of mechanisms to undo the ideological work that compels us to keep reproducing structures of exploitation, leaving the promise of a truly ethical economic system unfulfilled.

DIY Utopia is a timely reminder that, if anything, we must resist the idea that "there is no alternative." The revolutionary thrust of DIY practices inheres in their capacity to bring people together, encourage them to share resources, exchange ideas and build on their common aspirations. It is life affirming and a playful endeavour, but contemplating alternatives –let alone practising them– is

also hard work. DIY may be utopian by definition, but its ability to bring together art and politics, economy and ethics, and technology and grassroots sociality also offers concrete examples not only of how the world could be, but how it already is.

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Book review: Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste*

Review author: Isaac Oommen

Isabel Wilkerson, 2020, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, Random House, New York. Hardcover, US \$32, 440 pp.

If there are two forms of all-encompassing domination in the world, they would be those faced by Black folks in America and lower caste people in India. The former has been documented by a myriad of Black multidisciplinary artists, scholars and writers, as well as through the news media. The latter, though not as well-known internationally, has gotten increasing attention due to the work and advocacy of Dalit and other lower caste scholars and activists.

Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* takes on the ambitious task of comparing and creating solidarity between the experiences of Black people in the US and Dalits in India (and southern Asia in general).

Introducing the idea of caste to a western audience, Wilkerson is careful to note the differences between this form of oppression and racism, as well as the US and India. She is clear that "caste and race are interwoven in America" (p. 70) and states that "what some people call racism could be seen as merely one manifestation of the degree to which we have internalized the larger American caste system" (p. 71).

Key to Wilkerson's comparison are anecdotes from the history of Black and Dalit struggles. One such story is of how when he came to India, Martin Luther King was introduced by a principal to schoolchildren as "a fellow untouchable from the United States of America" (p. 22).

Wilkerson touches upon the idea of solidarity across these two struggles early in the book when she talks about the correspondence between the now-grandfather of the Dalit liberation movement, Bhimrao Ambedkar, and Black intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois. Started in 1946, the two men sought to theorise the familiarity between their experiences. In particular, Du Bois "seemed to have spoken for the marginalized in both countries as he identified the double-consciousness of their existence" (p. 26).

These two experiences provide the foundations that help build the rest of the book. After defining and going through the history of caste and anti-Black racism, Wilkerson underlines a wealth of parallels between the two experiences. From the arts to sports as well as from her own experiences as a Black journalist, Wilkerson notes the similar experiences of Black folks that show that, as noted by the scholars Raymond T. Diamond and Robert J. Cottrol, "Blacks became like a group of American untouchables, ritually separated from the rest of the population" (p. 107).

Perhaps most poignant of the parallels are those regarding resistance by respectively white society and high caste people to affirmative action in the US

and reservations in India (the latter being a system by which seats in universities and workplaces are reserved for lower caste folks).

Of the saddest of the stories contained in *Caste* is one which shows the awful impacts of the racial system in the US, in which Wilkerson details how in the confusing immigration boom of the early 1900s, both Japanese and Indian people tried to claim whiteness in the US in order to escape being put in the same caste as Black folks.

In describing how the opioid overdose crisis moved from the Black population to affect white middle class America, Wilkerson signals how medical racism could have contributed to both crises. "[T]he undertreatment of the subordinate caste leaves them to suffer needlessly, and the overtreatment of the dominant caste may have contributed to the rising mortality rate for white Americans who became addicted to opioids" (p. 188).

It is in the coverage of recent events that the biggest weakness in *Caste* shows up. Though the book covers a large portion of international race relations, including a history of the slave trade, it does not delve deeper into the symbiotic relationship between racism and classism.

Wilkerson analyses Obama's presidency as one that freed white people of white guilt while simultaneously cutting the status of certain high-level whites. She concludes that "the caste system had handcuffed the president" (p. 320), consequently not allowing him to do as much as he had wished. This analysis is similar to what Obama himself wrote in his new memoir, particularly in terms of his voracious bombing campaign in the Middle East, which he said was meant to prove his mettle to the rest of the American governmental leadership. However, both Wilkerson and Obama's own analyses of these events miss important aspects of class and race/caste.

Even Al Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri had a more critical perspective of Obama's time in office, as shown in a video released by his organisation¹ shortly after the latter's inauguration. In the video, al-Zawahiri uses Malcolm X's idea of the house Negro to foretell Obama's policies.

Other than the problem of class and race, *Caste* suffers from the usual shortfall of most western analyses on the topic of caste: an American-centred perspective.

As much as *Caste* explains race relations in the US and even German Nazi influences on the current state of things, not enough time is spent on the situation in southern Asia. What is needed here is what has been called for by Dalit academics and activists based outside of the US: a subaltern analysis that looks at power critically, including that wielded by upper caste south Asians in the west in relation to their lower caste counterparts. Subaltern analysis looks at how the power dynamics present in south Asia are transported to and intensified in the west.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/19/alqaida-zawahiri-obama-white-house>

A deeper analysis of these complex realities would do well to examine both south Asian caste dynamics in the US as well as the situation of Africans in India, where they also fall into a caste category that holds memories of Indian indentured labour in Africa and other historical meeting points between the continent and subcontinent.

Review Author:

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Book review: Brian Whitener, *Crisis Cultures*

Review author: Mathias Sosnowski Krabbe

Brian Whitener, 2019, *Crisis Cultures: The Rise of Finance in Mexico and Brazil*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. hardcover, \$45.00, 232 pp.

“It is difficult to find an aspect of social life that has not been touched by finance’s rise” (p. 9). This becomes evident in the monograph, *Crisis Cultures: The Rise of Finance in Mexico and Brazil*, which shows how financialization since the 1970s in Latin America is articulated and analyzed in cultural artefacts such as films, TV shows, novels and poetry from the last four decades.

Brian Whitener engages with political economic thought from the general and heterodox Marxist schools of thought in order to focus on the consequences of financialization and make intelligible the consequences, responses and ramifications to finance in Latin America.

Particularly notable is Whitener’s observation that as the size of surplus populations (a Marxian concept of people left under- or unemployed) increases, states will use violence in order to subordinate them. Paradoxically, surplus populations exist alongside surplus capital that is part of the rise(s) of finance in Latin America. Whereas finance and culture are foregrounded in this monograph, surplus populations, racialization and state violence operate in the background.

Two national contexts are the focus of *Crisis Cultures*: Mexico and Brazil. Both countries have been affected by financialization over the last couple of decades and which has resulted in growing inequality, violence and exploitation. Moreover, these two cases demonstrate that the impact of financialization is far from homogenous and is in fact shaped by local socio-historical contexts as well as the nation states and their political and legal frameworks. For example, Brazil and Mexico responded to falling capital accumulation and the economic downturn in the 21st century by using two different strategies: there was massive consumer credit expansion in Brazil and while the Mexican government focused on a reshaping the relationship between circulation, the sphere in which value is realized, and production, the sphere in which commodities are produced (p. 119).

The introduction elegantly situates the rise of finance historically and geographically, creates a common point of departure for the two national contexts, and presents the reader with a nuanced theoretical framework that draws on heterodox marxists scholars such as Annie McClanahan and Josua Clover. Whitener conceptualizes finance as connected with (instead of opposed to) the real economy through the form of temporal arbitrage, which is the attempt to realize future surplus value in the present (p. 28).

An example of this is Eike Batista, who became the seventh richest person in the world as the oil company OGX attracted investment through the Brazilian stock exchange because of expectations that vast amounts of oil would be discovered. However, when this projected future did not materialize, Batista became Brazil's first "negative billionaire" (p. 105). From this perspective, a financial crisis may occur whenever a claim on future value is not actualized, causing a domino effect cascading throughout the entire economy.

Aside from the introduction, *Crisis Cultures* is divided into four chapters and a coda. Two chapters each outline the historical periods of (1982-2001 and 2011-2015) in Brazil and Mexico, respectively. The first chapter deals heavily with Jorge Volpi's novel *En busca de Klingsor* and argues the novel represents a theorization of history shaped by 'ongoing catastrophe' due to the financial crisis in Mexico.

The second chapter is on the post-debt crisis Brazil in which the author works with cultural and popular texts such as Zuenir Ventura's *Cidade partida*, Paulo Lins's *Cidade de Deus* and the film *A cidade é uma só?* to demonstrate how *favelas* (informal settlements) are part of a wider discourse of divided urban space, which is marked by the absence of the state in all but the performance of racialized state violence.

The second half of the book investigates financial para-corporatism in Brazil, and how the nation state of Mexico fails to provide adequate 'lifeworlds' that are inhabitable for its citizens due to a turn towards circulation.

The third chapter deals with the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) government expansion of personal credit and the fragility of finance. It is this chapter that particularly spoke to me as the author proposes the term "anti-subject" (p. 11). Whitener pushes Foucault's analysis from Discipline and Punish regarding the effects of disciplinary procedures further by arguing that in Brazil there is a shift away from the focus on the 'interiority' of a subject and towards the anti-subject, who is in fact a gateway for creditors to seize future income and assets. This shift is enabled by the state granting creditors the authority and legal right to claim not just a debtor's assets but also their future wages (p. 111-113).

The final chapter is about Mexico after 2001 and its turn towards circulation, and in the process away from production towards state violence as well as the forms of nonstate collectivity that are produced. It engages with films such as *El Infierno*, *Norteados*, *La jaula de oro* and *Heli* as well as the poetry of Dolores Dorantes in order to capture the relations between individuals and the collective within surplus populations.

Readers who are not familiar with the cultural texts may have a difficult time following the author's argumentation and analysis, but the *Crisis Cultures* does provide a summary that enables readers not familiar with the cultural work analyzed to get caught up enough to follow along.

Besides the introduction and the coda, the two national contexts are kept relatively separate, which leaves the reader without any conclusion that summarizes and elevates the empirical discussions and analysis presented

across four chapters. In fact, the breadth and depth of the analysis across the four chapters may have been better used to provide a more theoretical contribution to the study of financialization in “peripheral” contexts, especially given the author’s insightful discussions of, and within, political economy.

Nevertheless, this book provides scholars of cultural studies - as well as activists - with tools to better grasp the process of financialization as well as the role that the state and capital has played in the exploitation and repression of (surplus) populations in Latin America, as well as the need for class alliances to challenge far right projects (p. 151).

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Book Review: Touré Reed, *Toward Freedom*

Review Author: Jay Arena

Touré Reed, 2020, *Toward Freedom: The Case Against Race Reductionism*. New York: Verso. £11.99, 202 pp.

I write this review in the midst of the unprecedented mass protests that have broken out across the United States, from large, diverse metropolises to small, mostly white, cities and towns in revulsion to the gruesome police murder of George Floyd and so many others, disproportionately black, who are killed every year by the police. As with all movements, the latest mobilizations, while unified in their opposition to police violence, have also been, as the late sociologist Colin Barker argued, “fields of argument.” In a 2014 essay, Barker asked:

What is the movement’s meaning and purpose? What is it seeking to defend and change? How are its boundaries defined? Who are its opponents? How should it define... and pursue its objectives? What strategies, tactics, repertoires of collective activity should it deploy? How should it respond to specific events and crises?

“All these and other matters,” Barker emphasized, “are open to ongoing contestation among a movement’s varied adherents” (2014, p. 48).

A June 11th *New York Times* article on the protests in Seattle honed in on these intra-movement questions, pointing out that “some people here in recent days have pushed for a wider focus” beyond the racial inequities of police violence. This included the Socialist city councilperson Kshama Sawant, who used the upsurge to rally support behind her tax Amazon initiative. A Black Lives Matter activist objected to Sawant’s call, arguing “black men are dying and this is the thing we should be focusing on” (Baker 2020).

A race-centric focus was also advocated by renowned intersectional theorist and legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. She argued the protests highlighted how the narrow, “colorblind” class-agenda promoted by Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaigns was unable to address structural racism and anti-Blackness. “Class,” she argued, “cannot help you see the specific contours of race disparity.” In contrast, while dismissing Sanders, Crenshaw lauded the responses of corporations to the protests, which have been centered on initiatives mending racial disparities (Ember 2020).

The relationship between racial inequality and political economy is central for social movements, particularly in the US, and is at the heart of historian Touré Reed’s timely new book, *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism*. Reed argues throughout that to effectively combat racial disparities and oppressions we must have a social movement fighting to

transform the capitalist political economy that produces them. In contrast, a competing “race reductionist” politics, which Reed notes increasingly gained strength in the post-war era in the US, has periodically faced challenges, denied and obscured “the political-economic roots of racial disparities” (p. 12).

Toward Freedom delves into how the battle between those two positions has played out in US social science, public policy, and social movements between the 1930s and the two Sanders campaigns. During the militant labor struggles of the 1930s and 1940s, there was broad consensus among liberals and leftists, black and white, that black advancement was tied to a labor movement working for a social democratic or in some cases a socialist transformation of US capitalism. In that period, even relatively conservative, middle class-led, black advocacy groups, such as the NAACP and the National Urban League, increasingly focused on supporting inter-racial labor organizing. They recognized that advancing the interests of black Americans was vital to the success of the labor movement, while still challenging *de jure* forms of racial discrimination.

To further underscore how intertwined the fate of African American and labor rights have been, Reed points out that while major civil rights victories would not come until the 1950s and 1960s, New Deal labor legislation—a product of the labor militancy of the era—laid the juridical and institutional basis for affirmative action and challenging employment and other forms of discrimination that courts had previously considered a private matter. Further highlighting the link between New Deal legislation, the labor movement, and the fight against racial discrimination, was the change in the framing of the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement in the 1930s. Exemplifying “a new class-inflected militancy among African American civil rights activists,” movement leaders, Reed argues, “came to frame their employment demands in accordance with New Deal labor law” (p. 26).

Of particular relevance for current social movement struggles, including growing demands for a mass, green public works and services program, is Reed’s critique of the argument that “ontological race/racism ensures that universal redistributive programs are incapable of redressing racial disparities” (p.19). Reed disputes the claims of authors such as Ira Katznelson, who see the New Deal as essentially an affirmative action program for whites. In contrast, Reed argues that African Americans, overwhelmingly working class, garnered real material gains and benefits from the New Deal, ranging from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to the Wagner Act. Indeed, as Reed notes, in some cases, such as relief rolls, black people received benefits in greater proportion to their representation in the population, though underrepresented in relation to their need.

In the case of Social Security, the exclusion of farm and domestic workers from coverage disproportionately excluded black workers, due to their concentration in these sectors. But, as Reed points out, the overwhelming majority of workers in these two occupations were still white—11.4 million white workers, compared to 3.5 million black workers.

Among all the categories of workers excluded from Social Security coverage at the time of its passage in the mid-1930s, black workers made up 23 per cent, more than double their representation in the population. Nonetheless 74 per cent of excluded workers were white, with many excluded occupations employing few African Americans.

In *Toward Freedom*, Reed emphasizes these statistics to push back against the argument that an all-encompassing, transhistorical racism makes unattainable truly universalistic programs that would benefit black Americans. In the case of Social Security, the opposition of plantation owners, who excluded white and black workers alike, was the crucial explanatory variable. While they most likely held racist views, “their motives owed less to the ‘original sin of racism’ than a desire to keep their labor costs down and to retain control over the operation of their farms” (p. 107). This case underscores how movements have to go to political economy to understand—and effectively combat—the roots of racial inequality.

In the post-war era, as the Cold War and McCarthyism took hold, the labor orientation of civil rights activism faded as the focus shifted to combatting race prejudice uncoupled from the larger context of capitalist labor and social relations (p. 54). *Toward Freedom* charts this change in the academy by documenting the rise of “ethnic pluralism”—its most influential exponent being anti-communist historian Oscar Handlin—which jettisoned, on the right and left respectively, biological racist and class-based theories of inequality. For Handlin, ethnic groups, understood as reified, undifferentiated cultural formations defined by values and norms that transcend material circumstances, were the basic unit of society. Thus, crucially, the theory separated the trajectory of ethnic groups from the larger political economy, and instead attributed “success” or “failure” to the group’s values—a boot strap, “groupist worldview” (p. 56).

This led, on one side, to the post-war advances of white, earlier racialized southern and eastern European immigrants, being attributed to superior cultural attributes. Excised from this idealized history was the hand-up provided in their ascent by the federal government’s New Deal and combined with the timing of their arrival to the US, just as low skilled industrial jobs were expanding.

In contrast, while Handlin recognized the burden of at least *de jure* forms of discrimination faced by African Americans, he also diagnosed a culture of poverty as the primary cause of high levels of poverty and other social ills afflicting black Americans. According to Handlin, this debilitating culture took hold due to the lack of voluntary associations that could have, per the Chicago School of Sociology assimilationists, provided tutelage to millions of urban black migrants during the Great Migration.

In his critique, Reed points out that Handlin not only ignored the variety of institutions northern African Americans had forged, but most problematically disregarded how the larger political-economic context impacted their fortunes.

In particular, the discriminatory real estate industry and New Deal housing policies, combined with automation and deindustrialization that were destroying low skilled jobs that earlier waves of European immigrants had benefited from, were determining factors on the material fortunes of African Americans.

Toward Freedom goes on to place the controversy over the 1965 Moynihan report—authored by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then a Department of Labor official in the Johnson administration—within the historical context of the civil rights victories of the mid-1960s. Moynihan argued the key obstacles for black Americans achieving “equal results” were not only continuing racial discrimination but the social pathologies and a culture of poverty produced by slavery and Jim Crow’s disorganization of the black family (pp. 82-83). In contrast to Moynihan and others Reed calls “institutional structuralists,” there were also “economic structuralists,” such as economist Charles Killingsworth, and labor and civil rights activists Bayard Rustin and A. Phillip Randolph, who rooted black poverty in political economy, in particular with automation and the flight of industry from cities. The prescription of the “economic structuralists” was a social democratic, federally funded public works and services program that was open to all races and that would generate the good jobs and services that American capitalism could not and would not provide.

In the end, conservative forces, centered in the Council of Economic Advisors of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, defeated the redistributive agenda advocated by the “economic structuralists.” In its place, a “race reductionist” War on Poverty, which refused to situate African American poverty within its broader political-economic context, and focused instead on trickle-down tax cuts, anti-discrimination measures, expanded means tested programs, and various “empowerment” initiatives, won the day.

Toward Freedom posits that the 1960s War on Poverty did not fail because of a refusal by the federal government to recognize and address the distinctiveness of black poverty. Rather, according to Reed, the source of the problem was race reductionism: the failure of the initiative to attack the fundamental political and economic roots of poverty that disproportionately (but not exclusively) affected poor and working class black families.

Reed’s analysis of Moynihan and the War on Poverty serves as the springboard for his critique of Ta-Nehisi Coates and the famed author’s fellow “black emissary of neoliberalism,” Barack Obama. Coates’ ascendancy as a public intellectual emerges with, indeed was in great part a product of, growing disillusionment with Obama’s post-racial politics following his 2012 reelection as President. Deepening racial disparities under the first black president, protests over the police and vigilante murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, and the rise of the white-nationalist-infused Tea Party and later Trumpism, all highlighted that in fact “racial prejudice was still alive and kicking” (p. 102).

Obama's race reductionist post-racial politics was exemplified by his insistence, delivered in various heralded speeches, including his breakthrough 2004 address at the Democratic National Convention and his 2008 Father Day's speech, that black poverty was primarily a result of social dysfunction—the black poor's self-inflicted wounds. In *Toward Freedom*, Reed perceptively points out that Obama also promoted the “divorce of racial inequality from class inequality” by concocting a biographical Blackness that conformed with popular perceptions (p. 136). Despite being reared in relative affluence, including attending an elite private school in Hawaii, he projected himself as someone that could have been a “statistic” when he dabbled in drugs and questioned the value of education, and built a personal narrative about how through perseverance and discipline, he avoided the pathologies that have ensnared so many of his fellow “brothers.”

Coates, in contrast to Obama, has eloquently and forcefully critiqued the blame the victim, personal responsibility trope that Obama and African American elites from Bill Cosby to Oprah Winfrey have trafficked in to explain away black poverty. But, like those he critiques, Coates also engages in “tales of black pathology”, though he blames an eternal white racism abstracted from political economy, not poor black people, for inflicting the damage. By focusing on a transhistorical, pervasive white racism, disconnected from the larger political economy, Reed points out that Coates reinforces “the underclass framework,” wielded by those he critiques, “that has contributed to liberals’ and conservatives’ failure to redress structural sources of inequality” (p. 153).

Race reductionism is also deployed by Coates in his critiques of the racial disparities of New Deal policies, and contemporary mass incarceration. Due to his commitment to a “racial ontology,” it appears that all Coates can see, from black farmworkers and domestics excluded from social security, to redlining and white flight, to the war on drugs, are further examples of “whites’ ‘plunder’ of ‘black bodies.’” The problem with this worldview is that it obscures the complex “political economic underpinnings” of racial disparities and the contingent character of racist attitudes and discriminatory behavior (p. 109).

With regard to mass incarceration, Reed argues the focus on racial disparities in much of the social science literature and among activists obscures the role that political economy, particularly social class and neoliberal retrenchment, have played. For example, citing the work of political scientist Marie Gottchalk, Reed points out that a perpetrator's class background appears to exert greater influence over incarceration rates than race. In addition, cuts to the state public defender budget have further contributed to incarceration disparities since “African Americans are overrepresented among the poor”, in part due to the racially disproportionate impact of deindustrialization and public sector retrenchment (p. 120).

What lessons can we draw from *Toward Freedom: The Case against Race Reductionism* that could help in building a movement that can surmount race reductionism and address the political and economic roots of racial inequality?

That is, is it useful movement theory that “[helps] us think about what to do?” (Nilsen and Cox 2013, p. 64).

Maybe the most important insight in *Toward Freedom* on how to best affect change in the US is regarding the question of the relationship of movements to the Democratic party, historically a contentious issue within intra-movement “fields of argument.”

While looking back favorably at the New Deal, Reed also recognized FDR and the Democrats’ fundamental agenda was to salvage capitalism, itself the primary obstacle to seriously addressing racial inequality. Later attempts by Rustin and Randolph, and more recently Bernie Sanders, to use the Democratic Party as a political vehicle for achieving sweeping social democratic reforms ended in utter defeat.

The key lesson to be drawn from *Toward Freedom*’s impressive historical account is that to achieve what Reed calls the “public-good-oriented” agenda championed by Sanders, much less the socialism the author prefers, the labor movement must break free from the suffocating embrace of the race-reductionist Democratic Party.

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About the review author

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**Book Review: Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring,
*The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective***

Review Author: Tomás Mac Sheoin

Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (eds.) *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*. Palgrave Macmillan. Paperback, £24.00, 720pp.

The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective is an ambitious undertaking, attempting to survey social movements in a global historical perspective. The editors summarise their approach in the book as one that “does not seek to provide a coherent explanation or even line of enquiry. Instead, we wish to highlight the ‘multiplicity of the world’s pasts’” (p. 4-5). After a long introduction, the book is divided in three parts, containing three theoretical papers, eight regional overviews and eleven papers on specific movements. The theoretical section includes articles on subaltern studies, the women’s movement and an essay on theories of social movements by Dieter Rucht.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective* is that social movement theories will need to become more flexible in order to encompass the wide variety of social movements the book recounts. Having surveyed a wide variety of social movements, the populations that they mobilised in Latin America and the wide variety of situations to which they responded, Claudia Wasserman writes “This variety of situations does not allow us to classify social movements as new, classical, traditional, old or innovative” (p. 118).

From the US, Felicia Kornbluth notes “Beyond questions about tactics, the major challenge for Rucht’s model in terms of North American history is the most basic. It is anachronistic to apply the language of social movements to most campaigns for social change in North American history” (p. 149).

“If European social movement theory suggests a sharp division between ‘new’ and ‘old’, Australian experience discloses a mixture of collaboration, conflict and family resemblance much more than any epochal change. The mobilization of Indigenous peoples further frustrates theoretical distinctions between the ‘old’ and the ‘new,’” writes Sean Scalmer (p. 45).

In an article on labour, Berger notes “Political parties, trade unions and co-operatives, which form the three columns of the labour movement in the West, are all separate from social movements in that they are far more tightly organised and structured and do not resemble the loose ‘network of networks’ that is characteristic of social movements, according to Dieter Rucht” (p. 386). These comments show the problems involved in the attempted application of theories formulated in specific geographical and historical circumstances to other areas and times.

Berger and Nehring stress the need for their history of social movements to be global. On the most obvious of criteria, that of including writers from around the globe, of the 23 writers who participated in the project, nine are women, and four are located in the periphery (three in South Korea and one in Brazil). The majority of the book is written by academics based in core countries, three in the USA, one in Australia and fifteen in Europe. This indicates one immediate future priority for this research programme: to contact, involve and mobilise researchers from peripheral nations to avoid the problem of Euro-centrism they identify. One advantage of including analysts from the periphery is demonstrated by the Korean contribution, where the writers frame their work not through core models but through Korean thought, thus adding to the richness of available theoretical frames.

Another way of looking at this issue is to see what attention is given to which countries' movements: a simple analysis of the number of page references in the index to countries and continents as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Countries' representation in The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective as shown by index references

Country/ies	Number of references in index
France	113
Germany	107
India	93
England	88
Italy	68
Egypt	43
Japan	39
Australia	37
Russia	35
Spain	32
Korea, China	30
Algeria, Brazil	25
Iran, Palestine	20
Morocco, Syria	18
Hungary	17

Austria, Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia	16
Mexico	15
Libya, Vietnam	14
Netherlands	13
Canada, South Africa	12
Ireland, Poland, Portugal	10
Belgium, Cuba, Sweden	9
Afghanistan, Bolivia, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay, Yemen, Yugoslavia	8
Bahrain, Czechoslovakia, Romania	6
Balkans, Chile, Jordan, North Korea, Switzerland	5
Bulgaria, Ecuador, New Zealand, Pakistan, Qatar, South Korea, Taiwan, USA, Venezuela	4
Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Nicaragua, Norway, Philippines, Senegal, Slovakia, Sudan	3
Cameroon, Columbia, El Salvador, Zambia	2
Abyssinia, Angola, Congo, Dubai, East Timor, Guatemala, Guinea, Hong Kong, Moldavia, Mozambique, Somalia, Thailand, Togo, Ukraine	1

The ten most mentioned countries include six European nations, three Asian nations and one African nation. India's high score is explained by being the subject of two articles. Continental totals are as follows: Europe (587), Asia (239), Africa (151), Middle East (131), Latin America (68), Australasia (61) and North America (16), showing the difficulties of avoiding Eurocentrism and a bias towards core rather than peripheral movements.

The editors note continental divisions are problematic, an example being the annexation of North Africa to the Middle East, and the resulting partition of Africa is manifested in the poverty of Eckert's article on sub-Saharan Africa. There is no regional article on Asia; rather there are chapters on India and post-colonial Korea. The article on North America consists of coverage only of the USA. In his chapter, Van der Linden covers Europe from over a one thousand year span; an object lesson that is worth the price of the book. However Van der Linden's motor of history splutters to a halt in the 1960s in western Europe and after 1989 in eastern Europe.

The surveys on Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East are excellent.

For specific movements, the editors admit omissions, such as anarchism, religious movements, nationalism and revolution; all the while including an article on terrorism, which is not a movement but a tactic. Missing are articles on agrarian, Indigenous, landless or peasant movements, while the specific movements covered by individual articles are moral movements, labour, environmental, women and peace movements, 1968, fascism, post-fascist right wing movements, the anti-globalisation movement and the Arab Spring.

Particularly illuminating are two articles on movements of the right, a blind spot in much social movement research, especially useful is Kevin Passmore's superb essay on fascism. In the chapter by Britta Baumgarten, the anti-globalisation movement is depicted as conservative, noted for holding meetings rather than street confrontations, an institutional focus that fails to reflect the historical importance of the activist wing of the movement.

Frank Uekotter provides a highly critical view of the environmental movement, casting doubt on whether environmentalism as a movement exists: "strictly speaking, there is no such thing as global environmentalism: we merely have a huge number of environmentalisms around the globe" (p. 442). Even worse, Uekotter writes, "There is no common denominator, no common foe, and not even a widely accepted philosophy that holds the environmental movement together" (p. 443). Where he sees failure and confusion, others would see disparate types of environmental movements emerging locally, nationally, regionally and transnationally at different times in response to different cultural, economic and social contexts and histories. The article on the Arab Spring is informative, and attributes its spread to historic urban modes of mobilisation, not mobile phones.

The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective concludes with the editors writing that they "hope to inspire more work in the history of social movements by showing what a fascinating and exciting field of research this currently is" (p.16-17). The more successful sections of this book, especially the excellent introductions provided by some of the continental overviews, indicate how fascinating and exciting this research could be.

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**Book review: Miguel A. Martinez,
*Squatters in the Capitalist City***

Review author: Ben Duke

Miguel A. Martinez, 2020, *Squatters in the Capitalist City: Housing, Justice, and Urban Politics*. London: Routledge. paperback, £27.99, 278 pp.

Squatters in the Capitalist City looks at multiple aspects of squatting, which resonate with feminist, functionalist, historical, public, rational choice and socio-spatial perspectives. Due to the transnational nature of squatting social movements, the definition of squatting is contested. New aspects of differences between squatting for immediate need, as compared to strategic or tactical purposes are discussed (p. 49).

Martinez highlights how squatting can be for housing purposes, but also for social development uses ranging from community crèche to panopticism. The book intervenes in the migration debate, a significant policy discussion in many countries. Squatting is often used for kinship and protection by migrants, and as a housing outcome by the state. Many people who for any number of reasons fall through social welfare cracks turn to squatting as the source of shelter of last resort. Some observers feel the state tacitly supports squatting for people who they can't house, due to qualifying criteria and for surveillance purposes (Watts, 23 September 2019). While there are multiple definitions of squatting,² in essence Martinez informs us that "...by definition squatters only target properties which are vacant" (p. 7).

Squatters in the Capitalist City provides a history of squatters' social movements, the section called 'Squatting and the Radical Left in Berlin' (p. 86) is particularly revealing. Martinez provides us with an early introduction of a variety of state responses implemented to reduce the effect of squatting. State interventions range from criminalising squatting to mass demolition followed by urban renewal (occasionally a change in policy success for the squatter's social movement) and legalisation (p. 88).

The first section of *Squatters in the Capitalist City* explains that there are multiple justifications for squatting, including agenda setting, hegemony,

² See RTE Archives (2020) <https://www.rte.ie/archives/2020/0109/1105318-squatting-in-dublin/> ; Also Elaine Dobson (2011) "UK: Abolition of Squatters Rights Depends Upon Definition of 'Squatter' says Property Lawyer." <https://www.mondaq.com/uk/Government-Public-Sector/127454/Abolition-Of-Squatters-Rights-Depends-Upon-Definition-Of-Squatter-Says-Property-Lawyer> ; Also Raymundo Larrain Nesbitt (2012) "Squatters in Spain and how to evict them from a Spanish property." <https://www.spanishpropertyinsight.com/2012/06/08/squatters-in-spain-and-how-to-evict-them-from-a-spanish-property/>

paradigmatic thought and power relationships (p. 16). There is also the simple need for people to access temporary accommodation, who do not qualify for any statutory agency support.

Geographically the book is based on squatters' movements in Europe. The location of study has relevance due to the global credit crisis in the noughties. Policy responses from the IMF and the EU affected housing supply in Africa, Asia and Latin America and European countries quite differently. *Squatters in the Capitalist City* goes on to detail how the autonomist approach to direct action has been replicated by other social movements e.g. workerism (p. 67; see also Angelbeck and Jones 2019).³ Examples cited by the author include: the squatted Ex Hotel Commercio in Italy, which was considered to be the largest urban commune in Europe (p. 68); the 2001 anti-G8 mobilisation in Genoa (p. 72); and the 2009 referendum against water privatisation in Paris (p. 72).

Martínez goes on to examine some psychosocial aspects of squatting. He informs us that the squatting movement is influenced by structural opportunities and constraints which evolve over time. Societal responses to squatting are discussed, including gentrification, legalisation, change of use and surrounding social spatial awareness.⁴

How social movements should be recognised underpins the book's description of the five main socio-spatial and historical causal factors which engender squatting. In *precis* these are: housing shortages; urban renewal regimes; applicable legislation and law enforcement; activist networks; and mass media coverage of squatting (p. 99).

"Social movements, in my view, are better understood by accounting for the articulations between agency and structure" (p. 97). The prevailing urban political economy of location is a key determinant in the extent and sustainability of squatting. For example, an abundance of empty properties, high unemployment rates and cuts in welfare spending, can all result in the emergence and rise of squatting (p. 100). In addition, market forces, letting practices, urban renewal (p. 105) and vacancy rates, can occasionally enable squatter's social movements. In some countries, private landlords can claim loss of rent income from their personal tax liability (p. 104).

³ Angelbeck and Jones' (2019) article is about direct action taken by indigenous people to protect their archaeological sites, cultural heritage and environment.

⁴ See World Bank (2015) 'Managing the Potential Undesirable Impacts of Urban Generation: Gentrification and Loss of Social Capital.' <https://urban-regeneration.worldbank.org/node/45>;

Also Steve Holland (2016) 'Gentrification: Causes and Consequences.' <https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/1135>;

Also Publius (2017) 'Understanding Gentrification and the Government's Response.' <https://thelibertarianrepublic.com/understanding-gentrification-and-governments-response/>

The process of urban regeneration can create multiple opportunities for collaboration between squatters, tenants, business and private property owners. This often occurs during city renewal projects, when the state buys property for renovations (p. 92).

Squatters in the Capitalist City then moves into a historical exploration of the 'Motivations and Outcomes' of various squatters' social movement experiences in post-modern Europe (p. 148). Social movement goals of housing, free spaces and preservation are highlighted as motivations (Garcia 2019). Some activists participated in "demonstrative squatting," the outcome of which often resulted in temporary political coalitions being formed. This could be to provide alternative voices to reopen public buildings e.g. hospitals, libraries or schools which have closed (Deutsche Welle, 20 May 2018; Abbit, 13 March 2019).⁵

Martinez (p. 148) suggests a new classification of squatting when it is motivated by wanting to raise awareness of policy fields which exacerbate social problems. The outcomes of this particular strand of the squatters' social movement are increased social capital, mutual aid and learning for all, including migrants (p. 151; see also Roufos 2020, 12).⁶

In the fifth section 'Anomalous Institutions' (p. 190) *Squatters in the Capitalist City* expands on how the act of squatting as a social movement is a means and a goal. "The concept of 'anomalous institutions' is introduced as a way to understand squatter resistance to state assimilation despite the occurrence of some forms of legislation" (p. 190). What this means, is that the squatters' movement in a particular location has been subsumed, consolidated and become socially accepted. However the motivation and possible outcome of challenging power relationships in housing remain in place. An anomalous institution can be defined as a squatting social movement's resistance to an institutionalised outcome, or state assimilation (Polanska 2014, 327).

Martinez informs us that squatter's institutionalisation varies between "terminal," where the squatting group totally disappears; or "flexible," where activists participate in "formal and bureaucratic planning procedures" (pp. 204). Terminal institutionalisation takes place when a local squatters group either gets evicted, or buys the property they were squatting. Flexible squatting institutionalisation comes into being by the autonomist route previously discussed, where squatters reach agreements resulting in state assimilation. However there is often a by-product of state assimilation, manifest in the form of

⁵ These two media articles reinforce the legitimacy of the squatter's social movement. People are squatting in disused public buildings, which should be being put to good use.

⁶ Roufos' (2020) article covers migration and refugee policy, alongside community concerns regarding the poor treatment of migrants. Along the way, additional capacity has been acquired by migrant people, their support workers and the community after campaign project work. The article is included due to the overlaps between the issues migrant support groups address, which harmonise with the ethos of squatter's social movements.

representation of new political groups. These are political partnerships which have formed, who are perceived to have a wider consensus than an apparent single issue of squatting (p. 216).

In the final section, Martinez indicates how squatters are presented in the media, producing negative and stigmatised stereotypes. The discourse used in mainstream settings, replicates the power relationships controlled by private property owners, and/or local and national state housing officials. Media manipulation and Bourdieu's "symbolic violence" come to the fore (1991, 5).

Discussion in media outlets rarely includes consideration of the social or urban contexts motivating people to squat. Instead, "Spectacular Narrations" inform selective discussion of "mass consumption, political disenfranchisement and homeownership" by the mainstream media, dumbing down "alternative narration" (p. 236). Politicians throughout Europe have been all too ready to "disassociate homelessness from squatting" (p. 249). Martinez provides examples from several European countries of how the media demonises squatting. European neoliberal urbanism legislative responses have criminalised squatting, partially underpinned by negative stereotypical images of squatters (Mayer 2016, 59). The media have also highlighted the "soft gentrifiers" (p. 244) aspect of squatting, which encourages a neoliberal housing agenda (Mould, 26 September 2019).⁷

Martinez's analysis provides a counter-hegemonic narrative with two broad classifications: "Reversive Responses" (p. 256) and "Subversive Alternatives" (p. 257). The ethos of these "counter tactics" is to provide a "positive image of squatting" and a "refusal to engage with the media" (p. 254).

Squatters in the Capitalist City demonstrates that the "criminalisation of squatters invigorates class domination" (p. 262), as power relationships are underpinned by stigmatisation of squatters in the media. The book's conclusion articulates how bourgeoisie state responses against squatting are neoliberal housing policies reinforcing the class divide. "...The criminalisation process is articulated with economic crises and neoliberal policies so squatters are targeted not only as deviated or dangerous groups, but mainly as symbols and practitioners of subversive threats to the capitalists' rule in the housing and labour markets" (p. 264).

Squatters in the Capitalist City is a treat for multiple audiences, providing an up to date overview for researchers, students and tutors. The book provides new insights on various social dynamics, like neoliberal housing market manipulation, which perpetuate the need for squatters' movements. The role of collective action by urban stakeholders is particularly important here, as constructive allegiances can be formed between unlikely partners. Martinez's text acts to remind us of the importance of squatters' social movements, an issue given added resonance by the

⁷ Mould's (2019) article details how media manipulation takes place by a process of 'artwashing', manifested in the form of 'squat-washing' by property developers.

welcomed, but obviously transient COVID-19 policy response of temporary accommodation provision for homeless people and squatters.

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