Interface

A journal for and about social movements

Interface volume 13 issue 1
Open issue

Interface: **a journal for and about social movements**
Volume 13 issue 1 (July 2021)
ISSN 2009 – 2431

Rebecca Rose, 2019, *Before the Parade: A History of Halifax's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Communities*. Review Author: Lorax B. Horne

Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa and Federico Demaria, 2020, *The Case for Degrowth*. Review author: Alexander Dunlap

Andreas Malm, 2021, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*. Review Author: Sakshi

William I. Robinson, 2020, *The Global Police State*. Review Author: Dawn Marie Paley

Cover art

Photo by Gaia Marturano

www.gaiamarturano.it

Traveling through Cuba in 2016 and 2018 Gaia Marturano tries to capture the spirit of the island and its people at a time when the country is facing an uncertain future due to the beginning of its leadership transition. In April 2021, Raul Castro stepped down as the leader of the Cuban Communist Party and left the leadership to a generation born after 1959's revolution.

The photo "Playing with the waves" was taken in Baracoa in January 2018.

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, Sutapa Chattopadhyay

Like many of the movement projects we work with around the world, *Interface* is living in interesting times. The rise of new authoritarianisms, far-right movements and state and freelance repression of movement spaces and radical academic work create pressure on some of us individually and on the other projects we are involved in. The ongoing pandemic, the crisis of care it has highlighted and the sudden transformations of work particularly for the precarious have disrupted the time and energy of many activists and engaged researchers.

Many of our editors have had to put their engagement in the project on hold for the duration of the crisis as they struggle in solidarity with their own movements, with people immediately in need, with their students and colleagues and as they try to cope with the disruptions of their own lives. Others of us have not been able to do as much as we had hoped.

"And yet, it moves!" We are still here, starting to recover and with new editors beginning to join us, part of global movement struggles to resist crisis politics from above and the attempt to impose a "new normal" that reinscribes racism and patriarchy, capitalism and authoritarianism, climate death and cultural destruction on our planet.

Now, more than ever, movements "from below and on the left" around the planet need to be talking to and learning from each other, to find out what works and what doesn't, and to make many worlds possible in place of the one devastation the Empire offers us.

In this issue

This issue's 22 pieces (16 articles and 6 reviews) cover movements in Aoteoroa / New Zealand, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Catalonia, Cyprus, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Latin America, South Africa and the UK as well as several globally-focussed pieces.

Our opening article, Antje Daniels' "Rhodes Must Fall", executes a multi-layered de-colonial and intersectional movements' analysis that follows racialized students protest against discrimination and demands to free education. This study is based on a historical analysis of South African universities, in particular Cape Town University. Intersectionality here is not perceived as a tool for understanding movements but as a movement tactic.

Hosna Shewly and Eva Gerharz fervently use a case analysis of an incident of brutal rape of a 37-year old woman in Noakhali, Bangladesh in the start, but moves on to sexualized violence of the hill tribes and minoritized populations to argue rape as a political tool in relation to patriarchy and toxic masculinity. The

article further questions state inaction and elaborates on the mis-carriage of rape statistics. Against the backdrop of rape, histories of anti-colonial struggles to current (student and women's) mobilizations and political consciousness around LGBTQI rights, gendered land reforms and deliberations to modify women's socio-political and economic rights are analysed. This piece recalls Silvia Federici's analysis of decriminalization of rape and commodification of gendered bodies, in Europe, at the advent of capitalism.

In the essay "peasant autonomy", Peter M Rosset and Lia Pinheiro Barbosa argue relevancy and urgency of Indigenous and peasant autonomy in rural social movements. In the context of rural Latin America, they explore the meanings, context and historic specificity, functionality, multi-layered significance and use of the concept of autonomy in movements, in particular the Zapatistas and MST.

"The platform of people affected by mortgage (PAH), a transformation of power relations" by Matías G. Durán Quintanar documents the mechanisms of everyday day organizing processes, limits, and possibilities generated by housing movements to contest and amend housing policies.

Dorothea Schoppek and Mathias Krams' article "Challenging Change" carefully articulates that debates and deliberations on climate crisis and climate justice movements have not been in suspension due to the attention received by the pandemic. The authors observe the disagreement between knowledge about social and ecological crisis and analogous transformative politics.

In "United We Stand: fostering cohesion in activist groups", Liane Munro studies group cohesion as an important mechanism to foster group solidarity, group culture and group wellbeing. Mix method analysis is followed to comprehend cohesion skills, knowledge, practices and processes as cultivated by activists.

Meanwhile, Huw Morgan disucsses the weak organizational structure, poor tactics, lack of cohesive strengths and implementation dilemmas of the UK-based climate change collective Extinction Rebellion in Aoteaoroa, New Zealand.

Processes, actions and engagements of the civil society in negotiating anti-nuclear deal, in Aoteaora, New Zealand, formulates the central thesis of Pinar Temocin's article "From Protest to Politics". Peace and security stories are employed in narrating anti-nuclear policy discussions and a wide variety of movement tactics and strategies that are used by political actors and community activists. The analysis upholds a vibrant platform that combines and includes a resilient leadership and a responsive political environment.

Elaine McKimmons and Louise Caffrey, in "Discourse and Power in Ireland's Repeal the 8th Movement", attempt to understand the historical and context specificity and situatedness of social movements through an intersectional lens drawing from reproductive rights activism. The authors employ qualitative analysis to detail the pro-choice campaign towards the removal of Article 40.3.3 from the Irish constitution, highlighting social movement as a strategy to

mobilize people, access to influence power and use it to drive the movement to success.

Dalilah Shemia-Goeke in "Resistance to Economic Reforms in Greece" examines non-violent social and labor movements that sparked in response to economic reforms and adjustments owing to the debt crisis. The analysis of civil resistance is the central them of this piece.

In our next article, collective action and collective identity is analysed in the context of the cutback of student housing as an austerity measure. The space of the analysis is the University of the Aegean, Greece. Besides studying the meanings and political significance of collective action, Marios Panierakis questions the notions of collective identity and demand drawing from field notes, semi-structured interviews and texts.

In another article on student-worker movement titled "The aesthetics of protest in the UCL Justice for Workers campaign", Thomas Cury uses a critical geography and urban studies lens to proceed an analysis of University College London campaign that aims to stop outscoring of catering, cleaning and security workers. This case study examines precarity, space, aesthetics and *left-wing melancholia.*

The article by Antônio Augusto Braighi and Marco Túlio Câmara uses the importance of social media activism to analyse movement mobilization mechanisms. According to the authors, media functions, within militancy, invigorate the cause but does not determine it; thereby media activism is used to understand the positionality of an individual over institutions or collectives.

Christopher Robé analyses the new forms of digital media activism using archival and narrative methods to understand collective organizing, diverse revolutionary perspectives, and social transformations that erupted during the Egyptian revolution. The Mosireen collective directs attention to the privileged space that many media activists occupy in diasporic struggles in aligning themselves with working class movements using the sophisticated tools to raise global political consciousness through social media activism.

Using the theory of "counter-information", James Ellison and Travis van Isacker examine two methods anti-border movements and migrant solidarity initiatives to communicate that counter mapping and counter evidencing can be used for militant research. This article establishes the freedom enjoyed by militant researchers in the production of movement knowledge that is highly critical, urgent and contested around militarization of borders, bureaucratic management of migration and the violence at borders.

Lastly Giorgos Charalambous' interview with the Cyprus Movements Archive brilliantly upholds the practicalities, challenges and prospects of self-managing an online archive that stands as an exhaustive resource documenting radical movement in the island. The information generated is available in three languages through publications from the past without overlooking the present.

Book reviews

In this issue we have a wealth of reviews of new books about a wide range of social movement struggles.

Kei Takata reviews *Amorphous Dissent: Post-Fukushima Social Movements in Japan*, edited by Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka and Kiyoto Tanno. Nandita Sharma's *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* is reviewed by Elise Hjalmarson.

Rebecca Rose's *Before the Parade: A History of Halifax's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Communities* is reviewed by Lorax B. Horne. Alexander Dunlap reviews *The Case for Degrowth* by Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo d'Alisa and Federico Demaria.

Sakshi reviews Andreas Malm's *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*. Lastly William I. Robinson's *The Global Police State* is reviewed by Dawn Paley.

Fundraiser for translations

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. We are running a fundraiser to support translations between English, Spanish and Portuguese so that a selection of the articles can appear in at least two of these languages.

As an open-access and non-indexed journal run by activist scholars on the basis of commitment, unlike commercial journals, we do not have any funds at our disposal, and this is where we ask you, the readers and supporters of open-access, multi-lingual and politically committed publications like *Interface*, or with an interest in supporting anti-racist movements, for help. The translation of key publications will facilitate the debate across cultural and socio-linguistic boundaries and enable a broader audience and engagement for our authors.

Our objective is, initially, to raise 2000 Euro before September 1 (2021) to cover translation fees of selected contributions from Spanish/Portugues into English, and vice versa. Your financial support will sponsor this important, multi-lingual multilogue! Any remaining funds from this collection will support similar efforts of this journal in future.

https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-a-multilingual-conversation-about-racism

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.

Interface **editorial changes and a call for volunteers**

We salute to *Interface* past editor Aziz Choudry who died suddenly on May 26th. The editorial spokescouncil's tribute to Aziz follows separately.

In this issue *Interface* says farewell to our editors Ian Anderson, Irina Ceric and Alexander Waters. We want to thank 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 activists and movement struggles. We have new editors joining us for Australia / New Zealand and Canada / US and look forward to welcoming them properly in our next issue.

Interface's editorial collective for western Europe is looking for new editors to join Laurence Cox and Brecht de Smet. We handle articles sent in by people across a very wide range of social movements, academic disciplines, countries and languages, support new writers learning the craft, find reviewers when needed and take part in special issue projects from time to time as well as helping to run the journal as a whole.

Interface is an entirely voluntary project: we see this as an important political contribution to helping movements learn from each other and to developing dialogue between researchers and movements outside the constraints of conventional academic journals and career-building.

We're looking for movement activists who are good with words and ideas: ideally scholar / activists who have time and enthusiasm to bring to this, but we're also open to people outside academia altogether who have strong writing / editing / theoretical skills. We're hoping to find people who complement the existing editors in terms of movement interests / involvement, languages / countries and disciplines / intellectual traditions (we don't have to agree on everything!) We're informal, comradely but also organised in how we work together.

If you're interested, please email Laurence (laurence.cox@mu.ie) by September 15th with a few paragraphs about yourself and why you'd like to do this / how you see it fitting into what you want to do politically or intellectually. Do also please let us know how we can get the best sense of your work - a CV, a website link, a sample of your writing...

Thanks!

In Memoriam
Abdul Aziz Choudry (1966 – 2021)

Activist, scholar, professor, *chacha*, son, popular educator, friend.

It is with heavy hearts that we mourn the passing of Aziz Choudry. Aziz was an editor of the Canada/US section of Interface from 2011 - 2016. In his role with the journal, he edited a special issue on anticolonial and postcolonial social movements and brought in new editors from South Asia.

Aziz was the quintessential activist scholar. He was deeply rooted in anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements, and sought to help movements to understand the changing context, and how to build capacity. The questions he asked are the ones movements asked - how historical patterns trap movements, how to win, how to organize in changing contexts.

Aziz's first moment of politicization came out of growing up in 1970's and early 1980's England where he was influenced by the anti-nuclear movement, migrant justice, anti-racist struggles by Asian and Black communities, as well as

being inspired by national liberation struggles in the Third World and Indigenous people's struggles in settler colonies. He settled in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1988 where he was involved in a number of small organizations where he worked on campaigns against free trade agreements while linking with Maori anti-colonial struggles. Those experiences generated important reflections that fed into his future writings that critically examined NGOs (e.g. with Dip Kapoor, *NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects*), state surveillance of social movements (e.g. the edited collection in *Activists and the Surveillance State*), and how social movements are sites of knowledge production (e.g. *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements*). Aziz moved to Montreal, Canada, in 2002 for graduate studies. There, he was actively involved in the Immigrant Workers Centre, and would eventually become a professor at the Faculty of Education at McGill University. His local and transnational organizing for migrant justice was mirrored by scholarly collaborations like the co-edited volume with Adrian A. Smith *Unfree Labour? Struggles of Migrant and Immigrant Workers in Canada*. In Montreal, Aziz was also involved in Palestine solidarity, Indigenous solidarity, anti-globalization efforts, anti-war activism, and struggles against Islamophobia. In the past few years he was a visiting professor at the University of Johannesburg. He recently moved from Montreal to Johannesburg in February 2021 to take a position there in the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation.

In *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements*, Aziz wrote:

> "Some individuals achieve extraordinary things, but I believe that social change is driven mainly by ordinary people organizing, learning, and creating knowledge together—by people consciously and collectively taking steps to bring about change. Not to rule out spontaneity, but most struggles emerge from the hard work of organizing, incremental learning, lineages of earlier movements, and efforts to organize together. Although it is often overlooked, this work is both informed by and contributes to the intellectual work that takes place within social movements, as in social, political, and ecological activism. Everyday acts of resistance are not always visible, nor is much of the long-haul work of organizing that takes place in communities, workplaces, fields, homes, and other spaces down the street and around the world, 365 days a year. This work is often slow, painful, and painstaking. It involves a lot of patient work in small groups and organizations." (Choudry 2015: 9)

For him, this was not just a theoretical insight, but it described the way he lived his life. He considered himself an ordinary bloke who worked collectively for social change. This included everyday acts of resistance in the institutions where he worked, doing the grunt work of writing out and photocopying pamphlets for a campaign, and an important part of his praxis in movement-building was by being a friend and in several cases a mentor.

We will miss his insight, his humour and his incredible energy for doing the work. He brought dozens of people together over the years, helping them to think in his humble, sly way.

He left us better. Thank you for everything.

Choudry's publications in *Interface*

Choudry, Aziz, Mandisi Majavu, and Lesley Wood. (2013) "Struggles, strategies and analysis of anticolonial and postcolonial social movements." Editorial for Special Issue. *Interface* 5 (1): 1-10.

Austin, David, Aziz Choudry, Radha D'Souza, and Sunera Thobani. (2013). "Reflections on Fanon's Legacy." Article for *Interface* 5 (1): 128-150.

Call for papers volume 14 issue 1
(May-June 2022)
Open issue

Learning from each other's struggles

Are you involved in thinking about your own movement's practice – as activist, theorist, militant researcher, writer? Or an engaged university researcher, activist/academic, or otherwise trying to develop research and theory from and for movements? *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* (http://www.interfacejournal.net/) is an open-access, global, multilingual space for dialogue between social movements, activists, communities in struggle in different countries, around different issues, across different theoretical traditions, and between activists and researchers. What works, what doesn't work, what makes a difference, how can we know, how can we do it better? We're looking for short stories of struggle, notes on practice, formal research pieces, interviews, book reviews and anything else that helps further this dialogue.

Our May - June 2022 issue will be open-themed. We hope to receive submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fits within the journal's mission statement (http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/). Submissions should contribute to the journal's purpose as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses from specific movement processes and experiences that can be translated into a form useful for other movements.

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. 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 very wide range of different formats, such as conventional (refereed) articles, stories of struggles, 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.

All contributions should go to the appropriate regional editors by the deadline of 30 November 2021. Please see the guidelines for contributors (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/) for more indications on content and style. We can accept material in Bengali, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak and Spanish.

Deadline and contact details

The deadline for initial submissions to this issue, to be published in May-June 2022, is 30 November 2021. All manuscripts should be sent to the appropriate regional editor, listed on our contacts page (https://www.interfacejournal.net/contact-us/).

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.

Lastly…

We're looking for new editors to join our western Europe collective; full details in this issue's editorial.

We're also running a fundraiser to support translations of articles in our next issue (November / December 2021), on movements against institutional racism in the Americas. This issue will feature reflections, interviews, ethnographic accounts event analyses of collective action against racism primarily in the Americas from scholars, activists and practitioners. We are organising translations between Spanish, Portuguese and English to help advance the growing movements of anti-racism, create connections, understandings and interactions across the Americas and beyond. If you can help, please go to https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-a-multilingual-conversation-about-racism

Interface is entirely open-access and non-commercial, relying on its editors', contributors' and reviewers' political commitments to develop learning and dialogue between social movements for a better world.

Thanks!

Rhodes Must Fall: different layers of intersectionality in students' protests in South Africa
Antje Daniel

Abstract

Since 2015, students have been protesting against the discrimination of students racialised as black and demanding free education in South Africa in the name of decoloniality and intersectionality. The notion of decoloniality is related to the historical experience of racism against "black" people and the particular history of the South African universities. Based on qualitative research at the University of Cape Town, the paper analyses the students' movement from an intersectional perspective. First, intersectionality has been used as an argument within the movement. Second, it has became a practice of the movement. Third, by considering the intersectional categories of race, class and gender, power dynamics and social inequalities within the movement become apparent. Thus, intersectionality is not only a tool for understanding social movements, but also a demand and a practice of student activism. The paper investigates these different layers of intersectionality in the student protests called Rhodes Must Fall.

Keywords: students' movement, intersectionality, gender, South Africa

Introduction

On 9th March 2015, Chumani Maxwele threw faeces at the statue of the British colonialist Cecil Rhodes. This form of resistance is usually considered as the birth of the student movement #Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) at the University of Cape Town (UCT).[1] The protest grew into a nationwide protest known as #Fees Must Fall, which lasted three years and became one of the most important struggles of post-apartheid South Africa. The student protests demanded decoloniality, which includes free education for everybody, and decolonial knowledge production at the university. The students revived visions of decoloniality from African liberation struggles, and related them to transformation at the university (Biko 1979; Fanon 1968). Decoloniality was framed as an alternative future, which would interrupt previous practices at the university, and introduce debate, reflection and change. With regard to decoloniality, mostly *black*[2] students were seeking to overcome the structural

---

[1] However, the beginning of the movement is contested. Some students placed the start of the *movement* in the mass meeting which was later (cf. Chikane 2018).

[2] *Black* and *white* are used as socially and politically constructed categories of discrimination and *racism* (for a debate on the use and meaning of the concept see Vally & Motala 2018).

violence, discrimination and racism which they experienced at university and in society. Intersectionality was used as a collective action frame and thus a demand. At the same time, intersectionality was also a movement and a practice, and an analytical tool for dismantling discrimination within the movement and in society.

These protests developed into a countrywide mobilisation sweeping across numerous universities. There were different slogans such as "Open Stellenbosch" at University of Stellenbosch or "Transform Wits" at the University of Witwatersrand. But all these protests were joined together by the common demand "Fees Must Fall" (see Langa 2017). The growing pressure of the mass protests finally led to the introduction of free tertiary education for poor students in 2017. The student uprising in 2015 was in line with previous and ongoing protests in South Africa which expressed grievances such as the lack of state services, human rights violations, or discontentment with politics (Alexander 2010; Beinart & Dawson 2010). Nevertheless, the number of student uprisings between 2015 and 2017 is remarkable, as are their demands for "decoloniality" and "intersectionality".

My paper focuses particularly on the student protests at the University of Cape Town[3]. I started my research in 2016 and conducted 15 biographical interviews with students and 13 guided interviews with academics and civil society actors.[4] In particular, the interviews with queer and feminist students contributed to understanding the intersectional dimension of the protests. Due to the reference to postcolonial feminist methodology (cf. Smith 2012), the students' demand for self-representation is pronounced; for this reason, sufficient space will be given to the self-documentations as well as the interview narratives of students. I also make an examination of the limits of research, and show the necessity to critically reflect on methods of data collection and the production of knowledge and related privileges (cf. Daniel 2019).

The main aim of the paper is to show the different layers of intersectionality within the students' protests. I will consider intersectionality first as a demand and then as a practice. This leads to the third dimension of intersectionality: as a lens to show how a critical view of movement activism can reveal hierarchies and power relations within the movement.

The paper is structured in five parts: First, I will embed my analyses of student protests in the debate on intersectionality and social movements (1). Then, I

---

[3] The uprisings at the universities differed with regard to their size and their demands. See Booysen et al. 2016, Chikane 2018, Langa 2017 or Nyamnjoh 2016.

[4] My research on student movements is part of a bigger research project entitled "Aspiring to alternative futures: lived utopia in South Africa". Beyond the students' protest, the project considers other collective actors such as the housing movement Reclaim the City and environmental activism of Oude Molen Eco Village and Green Camp Gallery Project in the South African. For publications related to the project see Daniel 2019, 2020, 2021a,b. Some core quotes from the students can also be found in these articles.

will introduce the genealogy of the student protests and comment on the grievances behind the uprisings. Against this background, the different meanings of decolonisation and intersectionality as demanded by the movement will become visible as collective action frame (2). Using the notion of intersectional activism, I will then describe the intersectional practices in the movement (3). I will explore power dynamics in the movement through an intersectional lens (4). Finally, the different approaches to intersectionality will be discussed and a summary of what we can learn from RMF will be offered (5).

1   Intersectionality and social movement research

Research on intersectionality emerged because of activism and can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s (Davis 2008, Lenz 2010). Scholars have drawn attention to the intersection of oppression, mostly in women's or feminist movements (Chun et al. 2013, Laperriere & Lepinard 2016). The core meaning of intersectionality is multiple marginalised identities. Scholars have examined how the intersection of *race*, class, gender, sexual orientation, legal status and other categories are linked to structures of inequality and have produced different life courses and forms of oppression (Hancock 2007, Fisher et al. 2019). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), in particular, described the intersection of *race* and gender as overlapping forms of oppression. Some scholars also argue that the ability of movements to represent a broad spectrum of society legitimates protests. A movement is legitimised by its inclusiveness (Laperriere & Lepinard 2016). Intersectionality emerged out of feminist struggles, and recently entered mainstream social movement studies (Chun et al. 2013).

However, intersectionality is not mentioned in the Wiley Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements, one of the most comprehensive handbooks, with about 400 keywords relating to social movements. Nevertheless, there are many studies on social movements that implicitly adopt an intersectional perspective. For instance, quantitative protest event analyses examine the stratification by exploring socio-demographic data on gender, age, class or *race*. Moreover, studies of movement alliances highlight the role of coalition building between different social groups, composed of different genders, ages, classes or *races* in order to build movements. In research on women's movements, intersectionality was, and still is, an integral part.

This implicit preoccupation is increasingly being replaced with an explicit analysis of social movements through the use and appreciation of the notion of intersectionality. Currently, intersectionality is increasingly entering mainstream social movement research and social science debates. In addition, at the last Forum of the International Association of Sociology in February 2021, intersectionality was included in the titles of many presentations and panels. This shows that there is a shift and a growing lively debate on intersectionality in social movement studies. Sabrina Zajak and Sebastian Haunss (2020) plead for bringing the focus of social movement research back

to stratification and intersectionality, and analysing how social inequalities persist and endure in protest. This makes it even more urgent to explore what significance the concept of intersectionality may have in the analysis of protest.

When applying intersectionality to social movement studies, we need to distinguish between intersectionality as 1) a movement's demand (collective action frame), 2) a tool of practice (intersectional activism), and 3) an analytical perspective.

First, intersectionality has increasingly become a normative goal of social movements. Most academic work on intersectionality focuses on women's movements. Against this background, the question arises of how movements refer to intersectionality as a "collective action frame". To what extent and in what way do social movements use the term intersectionality to draw attention to dissatisfaction and to formulate demands? Considering intersectionality as a collective action frame means analysing intersectionality as a framing strategy with which movements inspire action and define grievances (Ishkanian & Saavedra 2018).

Second, intersectionality is a tool of movement organisation and becomes visible through intersectional activism (Heaney 2019, p.1). This approach can be traced back to Crenshaw (1989). According to Crenshaw, intersectionality is not just an analytical perspective but a strategy to resist and to promote coalition. Thus, intersectionality can be perceived as a strategy and practice of inclusiveness (Fisher et al. 2017, p. 1). "Without intersectionality, group unity threatens to degenerate into compulsory unity that benefits some members of the group at the expense of the others" (Chen et al. 2013, pp. 923). Likewise, intersectional practice reveals whether the needs of the most disadvantaged groups prioritised (Laperriere & Lepinard 2016). Many scholars argue that movements have failed to be intersectional (see Heaney 2019).

Third, an intersectional approach enables us to see how social movements are shaped social categories. It helps to investigate the internal dynamics, power, hierarchy and exclusion within a movement (Zajak & Haunss 2020). By using an intersectional lens, the combination of *race*, class, gender, sexuality and other categories of identity, which produce different experiences and forms of oppression, can be considered (Carbado et al 2013; Fisher et al. 2017). Through an intersectional lens, we can also examine how alliance building, power dynamics and processes of exclusion are used by movements to reach their goals. Thus, intersectionality can be applied as a theory or as an analytical framework. Applying an intersectional perspective in studies of protest means analysing how these intersections shape movement activism, in order to reveal differences, contradictions, conflicts or power relations within the movement (Chen et al. 2013).[5]

---

[5] This ties in with a post-structuralist debate on social movements (see Leinius et al. 2017, Daniel 2021b).

In sum, intersectionality can be used as a demand (collective action frame), a tool (intersectional activism) and a research lens. Not all these levels of analysis apply when analysing social movements; but one perspective is frequently applied – the analytical lens. Not all social movements demand or practise intersectionality. If this is the case, they are not necessarily subjected to intersectional analysis. It is exciting to investigate those movements that demand intersectionality, and thus to examine whether an intersectional lens reveals the intersectional collective action frame and practice, or whether the movements reproduces power and hierarchies in its struggle for intersectionality.

Revealing the different layers of intersectionality bear the potential to describe it as a collective action frame and practice, and to explore a movement's internal dynamics. The fact that student protests allow us to apply these three different perspectives makes them an exceptional and ideal case for studying intersectionality. So how was intersectionality used as a collective action frame and practice in the students' protest at the University of Cape Town? And which internal dynamics become visible by using an intersectional lens?

2   "Decoloniality" and "intersectionality" as collective action frames

2.1   Decoloniality as collective action frame

Critical debates have a long tradition at UCT and there have always been protests about the reform of the educational institution (see Chikane 2018, chapter 5, Godsell & Chikane 2016; Ndelu 2017; Xaba 2017, p. 98). After Chumani Maxwele threw faeces at the statue, the first mass meeting a little later led to the emergence of the movement. The symbolical act by Chumani Maxwele marked the birth of the student movement Rhodes Must Fall (RMF).[6] A black student explained:

> We using human excrements to express the kind of feeling how Rhodes threated our people (…). We are using the human excrements to delegitimise Cecil Rhodes (…) This will also deal with the psychological issue and with broader issues of the society (Interview student 07.09.2018).

Students complain that the Rhodes statue symbolises the imperial, exploitative system of colonial rule, the exploitation of *blacks* and the collective trauma they experienced. Cecil Rhodes isn't a hero but an evil (Interview student 07.09.2018). that contributed to exploiting the *black* majority, as one PhD student explains:

---

[6] Even before protests and critical debates shaped the space of the university.

> Rhodes may represent heroism to those who have benefited from his unethically stolen inheritance, but to the majority of black people, he is a national shame, not a national hero (Kasibe 2015).

The continuity of the past in the present and the structural prolongation of apartheid in memory culture is an important critique. This criticism of "encountering the history in the present" reflects the collective trauma and the ongoing discrimination and racism. The students criticised the fact that the government has failed to keep the promise of the multicultural rainbow nation (Turner 2019) and to overcome discrimination against the *black* majority. Others perceived the rainbow nation in itself as a problem and questioned this national ideology. With reference to decolonisation, *black* students especially perceived a continuation of discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa (Danel 2021a,b; Ngcaweni & Ngcaweni 2018, Platzky Miller 2019).

What emerged as a protest against the colonial heritage at South African universities developed into the largest student protest since apartheid. When the University of Witwatersrand announced a 10.5% increase in tuition fees at the end of 2015, the slogan Fees Must Fall replaced RMF (Booysen 2016b, p. 23).[7] Students at universities across South Africa called for a reduction or abolition [8] of tuition fees and highlighted the discrimination against and precarisation of *black* students. Although the universities opened up to *black* students after the end of apartheid, so that their numbers grew steadily, access to higher education remained dependent on income, *race* and gender (CHE 2016; Swartz et al. 2018, p. 1). Not least, stagnation in economic growth and increasing youth unemployment exacerbated the situation, as *black* students could no longer afford tuition fees and had little prospect of finding a job (Booysen 2016b, p. 16). Thus, decolonisation was partially related to a demand to enhance the number of *black* students at universities and to ensure free education.

Due to the low numbers of *black* students, many of them perceived the university culture as isolating and alienating (Daniel 2021b; Nyamnjoh 2017). During the colonial and apartheid periods, the *white* minority dominated the universities.[9] Research and teaching were based on European and US debates (Jansen 2017). The *Western*-oriented content of degree courses, as well as the low percentage of *black* academics, was a cause of criticism. One student

---

[7] FMF and RMF protests differ, and RMF cannot be assumed to merge into all FMF protests. Rather, with FMF, the protests became complex and locally specific, differentiated from university to university, and were henceforth held together by the objective of "Fees Must Fall".

[8] While some students wanted the fee increase abolished, others demanded reduced fees, and others wanted to abolish fees entirely.

[9] It is important to notice that UCT accepted *black* students from the 1920s. Under apartheid UTC was pressured to stop admitting *black* students.

explained: "In South Africa, educational institutions were built to cultivate European ideologies and to create an 'enlightened' Africa" (Matandela 2015). Consequently, UCT was strongly oriented towards international standards and did not pay sufficient attention to the history and culture of the *black* majority (Cornell & Kessi 2017, p. 7; Kessi & Cornell 2015, p. 10)[10]. This became evident in musicology, for instance, where the focus is on classical European music. A *black* student explained:

> Then I started finding it problematic and became highly aware of how African music is taught to African students from a *Western* perspective in this African institution. (...) I found it actually violent to read some of that stuff and read about like myself and my history in these unbelievable *racist* demeaning works that were held as being kind of core studies in the field and I just felt like okay, that's the field and I don't want to participate in it, but I was actually pushed (Interview student 25.03.2017).

The fact that UCT is the highest ranked university in Africa in the worldwide classification of universities, and is regarded as ground-breaking in research and education, makes a rethinking of the curriculum even more necessary, and, at the same time, trailblazing. Decolonisation also implies a demand for a curriculum change (Garuba 2015).

Because of experiences of discrimination and *Westernised* knowledge transmission, many students have perceived the university as alienating (Daniel 2021b, Nyamnjoh 2017). The social experience of alienation and isolation is here expressed as a reality in the physical suffering of the individual. Commonly, this feeling is related to embodied emotions such as inferiority, isolation, shame or anger. A *black* student said:

> So, the first time that I went to the university (...) I hated learning (..). And in a retrospective, I was quite depressed and had a lot of anxiety and I didn't have the language to explain how I was feeling of blaming kind of the situation here. So I generally thought that I was going crazy and that I was like seeing things that were not there in terms of how people were treating me and how I was occupying spaces and I felt completely like I didn't deserve to be there, that I wasn't welcome and I worked really, really hard because I felt I had to like prove myself and prove my work to continue being in the space. So, I was really, really stressed out for a very long time (Interview student 25.03.2017).

---

[10] The debate which emerged was multifaceted and encompassed different dimensions, such as the relationship between knowledge and capitalism, knowledge and indigenous knowledge, and many other areas. It was played out in many UCT institutions and among students. See Garuba 2015 or Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018.

Alienation at the university became the embodied experience of students. Students realised that their emotions were created by structural violence at the university, which was expressed in discriminatory practices. The alienating university culture also includes *racism*. Many students complain about "macroaggression that happens around language, around professionalism, around who knows, who the knower is" (Interview student 13.09.2018). For instance, a student explains: "because they were requesting and demanding things from me that they would never ask *white* people" (Interview student 28.09.2017). Another student says: "*blacks* in South Africa or anywhere whether in the work place or in academia, you must work ten time harder" (Interview student 29.08.2018). There is a prevalence of negative stereotypes in respect of *black* students at the university, such as that *black* people are lazy or unintelligent (Cornell/Kessi 2017, p. 5).

In addition to the embodied pain, students also argued that decolonisation involves a search for one's own identity. With reference to the *Black Consciousness Movement* in South Africa (Biko 1979), the student protests against apartheid in 1976, and the American *Black Power Movement* in the 1970s (Booysen 2016a, pp. 12-14), students demanded acknowledgement of *black* identities. They used the writings of Steve Biko and Franz Fanon in order to reflect on the meaning of being *black* (cf. Indaba et al. 2017). Consequently, students used decoloniality for regaining of *black* identity or the creation of a new identity or even a post-*racial* identity, for instance through self-liberation and cultural cohesion (Interview student 28.08.2018). A *black* student explained:

> I think that's [*black* identity], what kept us all there, is that we were all *black* and we were all fighting the system, yes, but were not all fighting it for the same reasons. But, yeah, so we ended up all staying, simply because under the umbrella we were all *black* (Interview student 29.08.2018).

Some students also demanded a broader social and political change. In the "Outsourcing campaign", students drew attention to the exploitative working conditions of university staff (Nieftagodien 2016). The campaign was driven by the desire to show that discrimination and marginalisation is not just a matter that concerns students, but is part of the social and the political structures in the country. Others followed pan-Africanism, related their struggle to the workers struggle of Marikana or to party politics. For instance, these debates were particularly important amongst students affiliated to Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) or the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC/PASMA). Decolonisation was perceived as a political transformation.

Students used the notion of decolonisation in connection with varying experienced injustices at the university, and related them to demands such as free education, change of curriculum and university culture, and/or the (re)formation of a *(black)* identity and political transformation. The manifold

meanings of decolonisation facilitated a broad mobilisation of students and alliances across gender, class or political affiliation (Daniel 2021a). In contrast, there was also criticism that the movement was so broad that it lacked a focus (Jansen 2017).

2.2 Intersectionality as collective action frame

From the outset, decolonisation and intersectionality were two sides of the same coin, as students wrote in the founding statement of Rhodes Must Fall (2015):

> We want to state that while this movement emerged as a response to racism at UCT, we recognize that experiences of oppression on this campus are intersectional and we aim to adopt an approach that is cognizant of this going forward. An intersectional approach to our *blackness* takes into account that we are not only defined by our *blackness*, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our able-bodiedness, our mental health, and our class, among other things. We all have certain oppressions and certain privileges and this must inform our organizing so that we do not silence groups among us, and so that no one should have to choose between their struggles. Our movement endeavours to make this a reality in our struggle for decolonization.

Students understood intersectionality as an overlapping form of oppression of *black* students that relates to gender, *race*, class, and physical and mental conditions. Intersectionality was a tool to uncover overlapping forms of discrimination. A *black* queer student explained:

> So, I think for me, there cannot be a decoloniality without intersectionality. In the sense that for me decolonization is about liberation and justice and self-determination for people and if we are going to decolonize and the only issue that we are going to focus on *race* then oppression will continue to be perpetuated in the sense that for example if it's just about race you putting *black* man in the same position as *white* man and then *black* women and *black* queer people and *black* trans people are going to continue to be facing superior suppressions and working class people will be oppressed and so it's about challenging all of those issues, dealing with them all at the same time (Interview student 28.09.2017).

Students used intersectionality as a collective frame and thus interpreted the experienced and observed discontents, and discovered overlapping forms of discrimination. From this framing process, their demands were formulated. The intersectional collective action frame was intended to overcome existing oppressions and structural discrimination, and to recognise differences which were based on social categories such as gender. In this sense, students

perceived intersectionality as an essential orientation to complement the decolonial frame.

Part of the intersectional collective action frame was the desire to challenge the heteronormative culture. For instance, the Trans Collective, a queer student group, advocated for an intersectional interpretation of decolonisation and connected this with the body politics of "*black* love" (Daniel 2021a). *Black love* can overcome the embodied suffering of *black* pain. *Black love* aims at overcoming structural discrimination of *black* people by challenging the heteronormative *black* culture through an intersectional, queer and anti-patriarchal position, which is not based on resistance but on loyalty and *love* towards those who do not share this position. This is expressed in a Trans Collective statement:

> It was as early as April 2015, just a month after the inception of RMF, that what is now known as the Trans Collective flagged the issue of a rigid loyalty to patriarchy, cisnormativity, heteronormativity and the gender binary within the space. (…) We maintain that decolonisation is necessary for a reclamation of our humanity as *black* queer trans people. Our intervention is an act of *black* love. It is a commitment towards making RMF the fallist space of our dreams. It forms part of the journey towards the 'logical conclusion' of the decolonisation project. There will be no Azania [used as a decolonised space that is liberated] if *black* men simply fall into the throne of the *white* man without any comprehensive reorganisation of power along all axis of the *white* supremacist, imperialist, ableism, capitalist cisheteropatriarchy. To our minds, this interpretation is in line with the commitment that RMF has made in its mission statement in March 2015: "AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH" (Trans Collective 2015).

Due to the involvement of feminist and queer activists, such as the Radical Black Feminists[11] or the Trans Collective, and many individual students who shared a feminist and intersectional position, the movement had this intersectional perspective on decolonisation. Students who had experienced multiple forms of discrimination at the university were part of the movement from the beginning. Radical Black Feminists or the Trans Collective were leaders and supporters of the student movement. The participation of queer* feminist activists is remarkable because it is the first time in history that such a coalition emerged so that their demands were equally visible through the notion of intersectionality (Khan 2017, pp. 114).[12]

---

[11] Radical Black Feminists are a young group of activists who distance themselves from the women's movement. They use a confrontational strategy in contrast to the existing women's movement (see Miller 2016).

[12] Khan (2017) argues that during the anti-apartheid struggles, queer activists were not part of the liberation movement. A closer look at history shows that they were very much part of the apartheid struggle (see Croucher 2002; Cock 2003).

3   Intersectional activism

Intersectionality was a collective action frame, but also described the political desire for decolonisation, and the aim to overcome hierarchical power relations. According to Patricia Hill Collins (2014), intersectionality is thus a form of resistance (Matandela 2017, p. 17), a reflection of power, domination and a continuous reflection of the decolonial process. Consequently, intersectionality in the student protest described the cause and process of decolonisation. The process of decolonisation was expressed by intersectional activism.

Intersectional activism became visible when students occupied the administrative Bremner building (Daniel 2021b). On Friday, March 20 2015, just a few students occupied the building, while over the weekend and during the following week 50 to 60 students were all over the building. The occupation lasted six weeks. In a first step, they renamed the Bremner building as Azania House.[13] Azania is a reference to pre-colonial social boundaries and pan-African ideas, so the building was perceived as a liberated and decolonial space. A student explained:

> Azania is (…) an original name of South Africa, which is pan-Africanist. It comes from a pan-Africanist tradition. You can trace it from Steve Biko. Azania is a name for free liberated space for *black* people. We said that Bremner house must be changed to Azania because it is a place for *black* people to speak about their pain and to reengineer the society. And we start with the University of Cape Town. And decolonization become a relevant point of departure (Interview student 23.03.2017).

Azania House was a place to reflect and to create and practice intersectionality and decoloniality. It was also to offer a home to those students who felt alienated at the university. Therefore, Azania House provided a space for feminists and queer students to talk about their experiences of discrimination. A *black* female student narrated:

> I think at first it was like completely just that overwhelming finding people who are feeling the same as you and like feeling very validated in your experience and like saying that a whole lot of people felt super isolated and (…). So I think at first I was like oh, my goodness's this is just a daydream (…) I feel like I got a better education in 18 months of an activists space, from an activists to the space than I got from university at the best university of the continent and I think that's to reflect on (Interview 11.04.2017).

---

[13] The etymology of Azania is unclear. While some scholars use Azania as the land of Zeus in Greece, others argue that Azania was expressed first in Zanzibar with the meaning of being *black* (Hilton 1992; Ranuga 1986).

The students started reading groups, lectures, debates, and even invited academics for intellectual support in order to use the occupation for creating future aspirations based on intersectionality and decolonisation. Azania House become a lively space for debate in which academics participated. As one academic put it: "There was such a remarkable energy and solidarity at the beginning" (Interview academic 30.09.2017).

For many students it was the starting point of reflection on intersectionality and decolonisation. Students said they learned how to relate their experiences to academic concepts and understood the dimensions of structural violence and the need for transformation. Based on these experiences, students wanted to establish an intersectional practice that avoids structural discrimination and recognises diversity and equality. Basic democratic decision-making procedures were followed in order to form a contrast with the hierarchical university. Flat structures and direct democratic decision-making were intended to pave the way for intersectional practices.

Moreover, the students revealed a desire for intersectional practice by establishing an Intersectional Audit Committee. They set up a committee in order to ensure the participation of feminists and queer activists in the student protests (Matandela 2017, pp. 12). In addition, they questioned the symbolic representation of the movement in slogans, posters or protest songs. For instance, they unpacked male dominance in protest songs and changed them. They integrated "Mama-we" as a maternal leading figure in protest songs and poems. In the same way, students gave a gender-sensitive component to the song "Nantsi indoda emnyama - Here is the *black* man) by singing "Nangu umfazi omnyama - Here is the *black* woman" (Matandela 2015, Gouws 2016). Thus, intersectionality became a reflexive form of resistance which questioned and unpacked hierarchies in usual behaviour and in the representation of the movement. The ideal of the many students striving for intersectional decolonisation was to achieve lived equality between the sexes, and beyond this to reflect on the different overlapping forms of discriminations along social categories. A particular significance was also attached to integrating non-binary positions.

The aim of intersectional activism was to create a space where various experiences of discrimination could be talked about and overcome, and, last but not least, a space where positive experiences could be collected. Some students described this as a "healing process" (Interview student 29.09.2017).

Another aim of the intersectional activism was to challenge the heteronormative culture. *First*, in relation to the narrative of *black* love (see above) the female *black* body contradicted the embodied suffering of *black* pain and should express pride and love. Therefore, female and queer activists used their *black* body to contest the heteronormative practices in the university and in the movement. For instance, a queer student had herself photographed on the pedestal where Cecil Rhodes used to stand. This photo self-documentation staged her as a queer hero and reminded people that

decolonisation as a political practice means liberation from discrimination as well as from structural and symbolic violence. Decolonisation without intersectionality is therefore unthinkable. With this self-staging, the student wanted to confront the masculine representation of RMF with an queer position and give queer a space (Cornell et al. 2016, 110, Daniel 2020, 2021a).

Second, intersectional activism was also accompanied by specific forms of protest, which were mainly used by feminist and queer activists. Feminists and queer activists interlinked intersectionality and decolonisation by using naked protests. On the one hand, the body served as an instrument for expressing multiple forms of structural discrimination and for disrupting and refathoming the social order through its presence. A *black* queer student said that she exposed her breasts in front of the university management during a protest. She interacted with mostly *white* elderly men and used the naked protests to underline her discomfort at the university. She narrated how she provoked the male leaders at the university:

> Do I make you uncomfortable Sir and he looked at me and said: *Of course, I mean I am a man and I am standing in front of you and your breasts are exposed*. And I am like: This is exactly how I feel as his student everyday walking on his campus (…). And if you guys are not come to do anything (…) I am going to come to this campus everyday topless until something is done. And he was like: *Oh no ah you will get arrested for public resistance*. And I said: No I am Zulu and according to my culture we walk air breasted so it is my culture to walk topless as a Zulu person who don't sleep with man. I am allowed to do this. I am definitely going to do it. Every day on campus I will attend all the lectures naked I will go everywhere in this university half-naked literally every day until something is done (Interview student 19.09.2018).

The students legitimised their naked protest by referring to cultural practices. The body is used to show discrimination and cultural colonisation and was used as a form of resistance. The presence of the *black* female body was used as a *dramaturgical* figure to awaken, frighten, make you think and provoke. Naked protests were also intended to illustrate multiple fragility and discrimination and demand the right to self-determination. The use of the naked body can be interpreted as a first step towards self-liberation. The enactment of physical autonomy in the public space and in the course of the protest became the starting point for the constitution of a political subjectivity (Daniel 2021a).

Third, the naked female body in its stereotypical perception as fragile was used to protect male students, during demonstrations for example, as a protective wall against attacks by the security forces (Ndlovu 2017). Heteronormative stereotypical ascriptions to the *black* female body were thus deliberately used to express loyalty to the decolonial project.

At this point, it became clear that the body as a politicised medium was used in multiple ways by the protesters. It had the potential to address the intersectional and decolonial demand and to create diverse affiliations. The body is used to distinguish oneself from the counter-group (the university management or the police); it is used as a form of loyalty towards male students and also to hold them accountable in respect of their intersectional promise. The body is a symbol of demarcation and loyalty within the movement.

These varying, multiple collective action frames, and the multiple meanings of body politics, made it possible for students with the most diverse backgrounds and positions to associate themselves with the movement. In this sense, the intersectional collective action frame and the multiple intersectional practices helped to build the movement. This only changed when conflicts arose within the movement which no longer allowed for multiple attributions. These conflicts can be analysed from an intersectional perspective.

4   Seeing student protests through an "intersectional lens"

Seeing student protests through an intersectional lens reveals which social categories, especially gender, *race* or class, differentiate engagement in a social movement, produce hierarchies and thus facilitate exclusion. While the student protests in South Africa started as a direct democratic, power-critical and nonpartisan movement, conflicts arose in the course of the protest. They emerged along social categories such as party affiliation, class, *race* or gender. The movement was challenged by its intersectional inclusiveness. These social categories played out differently in the movement. Partly, they related to individual or minority experiences, and could not be generalised. Nevertheless, these social categories show which differentiation processes were discussed. The most pronounced differentiation, which became conflictual, was gender. Conflicts about gender occurred at the same time as the structure of the movement changed. I will briefly mention the debates on class and *race* in the movement, and then focus on gender as a social category which shaped the movement.

In the course of the protests, the narrative of suffering became dominant and a precondition for being part of them. Thus, sharing the narrative of being *black* and poor and experiences of exclusion and discrimination created belonging within the movement, while a tendency emerged to exclude students who belonged to the middle class. For example, a *black* student explained that because of his middle-class background he could not subscribe to the narration of marginalisation and almost lost his voice in the student protest (Nyamnjoh 2017, pp. 264). In addition, *whiteness* was perceived as an embodied privilege. Being *white* goes along with being privileged and was regarded critically in the light of the decolonial demand (see Eggers et al. 2015). Thus, debates arose regarding the question of how and in what form *white* students should be involved. While *white* students did take part in the protests, occasionally they

were asked to leave the space or to stay in the background (for a debate on critical *whiteness*, see Eggers et al. 2015). A *black* student explained:

> *White* people were incorporated into the space as mere allies and were frequently reminded that they ought to be aware of their positionality when engaging in the space and should anticipate being expected to leave the space (Ndelu 2017, pp. 67).

A *black* academic who was active in the movement and supported the students protests added that the occupation was for understanding *blackness* (Interview academic 20.08.2017).

While some students completely rejected interactions with *whites* because of their embodied privilege, others argued that differentiation from the other was an intrinsic part of their *black* identity, so that *white* students should be only partially excluded (see also Daniel 2021b).[14]

Despite the proclamation of adopting an intersectional view of discrimination, the *black* identity was (strategically) essentialised (Hall 2016; Spivak 1988). In part, this position went hand in hand with a rejection of empathy and solidarity and a conscious distancing of the students from all those who did not want to, or could not, accept a narrative of *black* pain. These more radical positions by no means correspond to the majority of students.

Beyond, students also increasingly questioned an intersectional and decolonial promise. The question emerged whether and to what extent an intersectional position was necessary to address the decolonial project. Intersectionality was increasingly contested and a heteronormative position was presented. For instance, Khan has argued (2017) that students used buzzwords such as *black consciousness* to impose intersectionality under the guise of the overriding goal of decolonisation. They described intersectionality and being queer as un-African in order to eclipse counter-narrations. A female student said that "patriarchy, sexual violence, ableism and queer-antagonism were either normalised or ignored as negative elements of the movement" (Xaba 2017, p. 96). A participating academic described the debates on gender and heteronormativity during the occupation as follows:

> And it was a difficult learning process. I remember the first night (...). A conversation started on patriarchy and sexual orientation. (...) And nobody knew how to explain patriarchy without getting angry. (...) And then the conservation started on sexual orientation. And now all the lesbian and gay students, and the trans students have the feeling that they have to be the spokespeople about sexual orientation. (...) And that was the most painful day

---

[14] For a debate on black solidarity in the South African context, see also More 2009; Lamola 2016.

for me. (..) I realised that the smartest people of the campus (..) and in this room there were the best thinkers of the university and that they can't understand, and they cannot listen to a young women saying 'you should be ok with the fact that I have chosen not to have an intimate or sexual relationship with a man'. They couldn't accept that. And for the movement it was a sense of failure (Interview academic 20.08.2017).

This shows that the intersectional practices of the movement were not deeply grounded and were discarded. What began as an intersectional collective action frame turned against queer and feminist students. Once again the most vulnerable students have been affected by discrimination. Altough intersectionality was coninously used as a buzzword. A *black* student told how the situation in the movement changed:

But yeah, I think, intersectionality, we just used a bunch of words, stringed together, and we called ourselves intersectional, we called ourselves whatever, which I think has come back to haunt us (quoted from Kahn 2017, pp. 117).

At the same time, some women were sexually harassed (Bernardo 2015). One student described the situation as follows: "I also feel like you can't really be in that space unless you've got a male partner or a male comrade to (…) not necessarily to legitimate your voice but like, to protect you" (Matandela 2017, pp. 25). Another student confirmed:

But it turned out that *black* men in the movement wanted *black* male freedom and continue to rape *black* women and that the straight people were homophobic. (Interview student 07.09.2018)

Feminists and queer activists experienced the student protests more and more as exclusionary. They challenged the increasingly dominating male leaders who perceived decolonisation as a heteronormative project. Queer and feminist students felt increasingly unrepresented in the movement. A queer student confirmed "I don't believe that any man can liberate me" (Interview 07.09.2018).

These changes in the movement should also be seen against the backdrop of changing actor dynamics and a modification of the structure of the movement. At the beginning, the movement was described as having no official leadership due to its power-critical and non-partisan aspirations (RMF 2015). In the course of the protests, some students who followed a masculine and more political understanding of decolonial transformation were able to assert their interests and gained leadership positions. Some of these male leaders were members of political parties. For instance, students affiliated to PAC/PASMA

or from EFF increasingly dominated plenaries, mass meetings and negotiations with the university management. A student explained:

> It became more of a populist movement rather than one that was actually engaging with challenges and trying to unpack them and speak very critically and very strongly and it's definitely become an issue of partisan in politics and it's very hard to tell what's coming from where. So, Rhodes Must Fall the founding intent was not partisan (…), but everyone was asked and committed to kind of leaving the party affiliation and kind of the party ideology at the door of that space and that didn't really happen (Interview student 23.03.2017).

Many student leaders in powerful positions argued for heteronormativity and pushed for decolonisation without intentionality.

Queers and feminists reacted to these changes in different ways: some students subordinated their sexual identity to their *blackness* and remained in the movement or even tried to achieve change within the movement; others left or created a counter-strategy. For instance, some decided to leave the movement and sought alternative forms of expression for their discontentment. Students seeking a gender-sensitive and intersectional decolonisation used social media. With the slogan "writing and rioting", a decolonial and intersectional practice was continued that no longer seemed possible in offline spaces (cf. Godsell et al. 2016). Students were no longer dependent on being represented by their male colleagues, and presented themselves as independent political subjects and even criticised the leaders of the movement.

Others tried to bring intersectionality back into the movement as a collective frame. For instance, they created counter-strategies to the RMF movement in order to ensure that decolonisation was intersectional, such as *#Rape Must Fall* and the *#Silent Protest*, where students protested against sexual harassment at the university (Daniel 2020; Ndlovu 2017). The protests condemned sexual violence at the university and criticised sexual assault within the movement (Interview academic 05.09.2018). With *Patriarchy Must Fall* female students criticised the male leaders of the movement and demanded the reintegration of intersectional activism (Ramaru 2017). Queer students and feminists also used nude protests. The female body was used to question the dominance of hyper-masculinity, to frighten and confront people, and thus to remind them of the movement's intersectional promises (Interview academic 05.09.2018). Students thus used their bodies to overcome the current state of affairs with their physical presence and reclaim university spaces.

Body politics as a form of resistance to the student movement is also evident in the photo exhibition held in 2016: The photo exhibition, entitled *Echoing Voices from Within*, was intended to present the student protests photographically and thus provided a place to reflect on the course and successes of the movement. Before the opening, the Trans Collective stormed

the photo exhibition naked, blocking the entrances and thereby gaining a presence. The queer students smeared paint on the photos, which mostly depicted male students. This action reclaimed non-binary gender positions and their acceptance at the university space and in the movement. It illustrated the radical nature of body politics. It was not a rejection of the decolonial project per se, but a demand to reintroduce an intersectional perspective into decolonisation, as one activist from the Trans Collective explained:

> The revolution will be *black*-led and intersectional or it will be bullshit. The voices of the Trans Collective had been marginalised within RMF, alleged Kim, and the exhibition reflected neither their contribution to the RMF cause nor their unique struggles as transgender and transsexual students. "This," said Kim, ostensibly referring to the exhibition and more broadly to the power dynamics in the student movements, "is bullshit" (Activist HeJin Kim in Omar 2016).

The Trans Collective argued that it is not about weakening the student protests, but about reclaiming the decolonial project:

> We must, however, state unequivocally that our disruptive intervention at the RMF exhibition should not under any circumstances be construed as a rejection of RMF or a departure away from decolonisation (Trans Collective 2015).

Due to the protest of the Trans Collective, the exhibition was never opened. But queer students continued to be committed to maintaining an intersectional perspective. This is the reason why some students persevered in the movement and repeatedly advocated for an intersectional position (Interview student 29.09.2017). However, this position was contested among feminists and queer students.

5   What can we learn from RMF?

The student protest spread across the country, several protests allocating themselves to Fees Must Fall emerged, and had an impact on the universities. In December 2017, due to student pressure, President Jacob Zuma agreed to fee-free tertiary education for poor and working-class students. However, the protests have continued, because although access to study has been made easier, discrimination and alienation still exist at universities and the curriculum is still in the process of changing. The movement initiated a process that is still ongoing. Protests are still taking place at some universities.

The movement also resonated globally and inspired Oxford students to protest (Rhodes Must Fall Oxford 2018). In addition, the notion of "Must Fall" was used for other protests. In the South African context, this includes the protest

against the then president, called Zuma Must Fall (Gwisai 2017). In Senegal, young people demonstrated against the statue of Louis Faidherbe, a French soldier and demanded an interruption and the critical reflection of the colonial past (Ndiaye 2020). In the Sudanese revolution, the notin "Must Fall" was used to draw attention to the need for radical change and thus a break with the authoritarian regime of Omar Basir (Bishai/Elshami 2019). The term "Must Fall" was used in order to express the need for a radical and structural change, for a radical change in political culture that overcomes structural violence. Therefore, the notion "Must Fall" expresses the urgency of action to overcome structures of oppression. In this sense, the Must Fall protests can be interpreted as another wave of decolonial protests, in line with other liberation movements in Africa since the 1940s (Lamer 2020, Okech 2020). Decolonial movements are not unique to Africa. All over the globe, such movements highlight structures of oppression, as in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement. They reveal the importance of dismantling structures of oppression and the ongoing legacies of colonialism.

However, in this paper I have shown how important it is for decolonial movements to be critically examined in terms of how they assert their interests and whether they trigger hierarchies and processes of exclusion in the process.

RMF can be differentiated according to various social categories such as class or *race*, and these have repeatedly played a role in interactions between the students. However, gender, and thus non-heteronormative positions, became the most challenging point of conflict. RMF shows that an intersectional perspective makes it possible to demystify the cohesion within a movement, and reveals the power dynamics and processes of inclusion and exclusion. Dominant identities marked the contestation of intersectionality and the increasing acceptance of a heteronormative position, that went along with the emergence of a male, *black* and heteronormative leadership. In this process, *blackness* became the most important identity marker, which overshadowed gender. Non-binary gender identities and thus the intersectional collective action frame were contested. The reaction of queer students and feminists was ambivalent: some stayed in the movement, others tried to re-anchor intersectionality in the movement, and others left the movement or created counter-movements to draw attention to the importance of gender and intersectionality.

Intersectionality as an analytical lens describes alliances and cleavages in the movement. Intersectionality helps to understand the multivocality in the movement, dynamics of power and processes of exclusion. However, the particularity of this movement is that intersectionality was also a collective action frame and was performed as intersectional activism. Therefore, intersectionality and decolonisation were two sides of the same coin. If you want to understand the role of intersectionality in RMF, it is important to consider these different layers of intersectionality. Intersectionality is an important analytical lens, but also a collective action frame and a movement practice. Intersectionality describes the goal and the course of the process by

including a power-critical lens. Consequently, considering intersectionality within movement dynamics enriches social movement research, as it enables us to understand manifold dynamics in protests.

An intersectional lens also allows us to see the ambivalences in the practice of the movement, between inclusion and exclusion. This means that an intersectional perspective is linked to questions activists have in the course of mobilisation. For instance, how inclusive should a movement be in order to legitimise demands? Does inclusivity mean a specific group of people? Is it legitimate to exclude activists in order to defend the overarching goal? Does a movement always have to be measured by being as inclusive and diverse as possible? In the pursuit of inclusiveness, can a movement even destroy its goals by trying to make it inclusive for everyone? An intersectional approach addresses questions regarding mobilisation and creates self-reflexivity, as it shows unconscious or conscious demarcations from other social actors. Thus, intersectionality can be a tool for reflection. Questions can be addressed such as: Whom do you want to mobilise? Who should remain excluded? This reflection is important for demarcation and for creating belonging. Intersectionality thus has another layer: it can be used by activists as a tool for self-reflection, helping the movement to clarify its mobilisation strategy and reveal alliances and exclusions at the same time.

References

Alexander, Peter 2010. "Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests - A preliminary analysis." *Review of African Political Economy* 37 (123): 25-40.

Biko, Steve 1979. *Black Consciousness in South Africa*. New York: Vintage Books.

Bernardo, Carla 2015 (November 19.). "#RapeAtAzania accused in court." *IOL News*. https://www.iol.co.za/news/rapeatazania-accused-in-court-1947968 [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Beinart, W. and Marcelle Dawson. 2010. *Popular politics and resistance movements in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Bishai Linda and Azaz Elshami 2019 (January 29). "We are all Darfur!" – Sudan's Unity Protests Stand a Real Chance. Time for the West to Step Up. http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/we-are-all-darfur-sudans-unity-protests-stand-a-real-chance-time-for-the-west-to-step-up/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Booysen, Susan 2016a. Introduction. In *Fees Must Fall. Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*. Edited by Booysen, Susan. Johannesburg: Wits University: 1-21.

Booysen, Susan 2016b. "Two weeks in October. Changing governance in South Africa." Pp. 22-52. In *Fees Must Fall. Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa,* edited by Susan Booysen. Johannesburg: Wits University.

Booysen, Susan Ed. 2016c. *Fees Must Fall. Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University.

Carbado, Devon, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Vickie M. Mays and Barbara Tomlinson 2013. "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory". *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 10 (2): 303–12.

Chikane, Rekgotsofetse 2018. *Breaking a Rainbow, building a Nation: The politics behind #MustFall movements.* Johannesburg: Picador Africa.

Chun, Jennifer Jihye, George Lipsitz and Young Shin 2013. "Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates". *Signs* 38 (4): 917–40.

Council on Higher Education 2016. *South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy.* Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Cock, Jacklyn 2003. "Engendering gay and lesbian rights: the equality clause in the South African constitution." *Women's Studies International Forum* 26(1): 35–45.

Cornell, Josephine and Shose Kessi 2017. "Black students' experiences of transformation at a previously 'white only' South African university: a photo voice study." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(11): 1882-99.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams 1989. *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.* University of Chicago Legal Forum: 139-167.

Croucher, Sheila 2002. "South Africa's Democratisation and the Politics of Gay Liberation." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28(2): 315-30.

Daniel, Antje 2019. "Ambivalenzen des Forschens unter Bedingungen post-dekolonialer Praxis." *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 311: 40-9.

Daniel, Antje 2020. "Brüchige Allianzen: LGBTQI* Aktivismen im Kontext der intersektionalen und dekolonialen Praxis der Studierendenbewegung der University of Cape Town". *Peripherie. Dekolonialität von Geschlecht*: 102-24.

Daniel, Antje 2021a. "Dekolonial und intersektional? Ambivalenzen der Herrschaftskritik in der südafrikanischen Studierendenbewegung." Pp. 203-224. *Intersektionale und postkolonial-feministische Perspektiven als Mittel politikwissenschaftlicher Macht- und Herrschaftskritik,* ed. Heike Maurer Heike and Johanna Leinius. Opladen: Verlag Barbara Burdrich.

Daniel, Antje 2021b. "Must Decolonisation Occur on an Island? The Role of Occupation in Developing Future Visions within the #Rhodes Must Fall

Movement." Pp. 193-212. *Indigenous Knowledges and Decolonisation in Higher Education*, edited by Irina Turner, Emnet Woldegiorgis and Abraham Brahima. Current Discourses, Pertinence and Prospects. London: Routledge.

Davis, Kathy 2008. "Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful." *Feminist Theory* 9(1): 67-85.

Eggers, Mauren, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche and Susan Arndt Eds. 2005. : Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland. Münster: Unrast.

Fisher, Dana, Dawn M. Dow and Rashawn Ray 2017. "Intersectionality takes it to the streets: Mobilizing across diverse interests for the Women's March". *Science Advances* 3 (9): eaao1390.

Fanon, Frantz 1968. The Wretched of the Earth. NY: Grove Press.

Garuba, Harry 2015. What is an African curriculum? https://mg.co.za/article/2015-04-17-what-is-an-african-curriculum/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021].

Godsell, Gillian and Rekgotsofetse Chikane 2016. "The roots of revolution." Pp. 54-73 in *Fees Must Fall. Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa,* edited by Susan Booysen. Johannesburg: Wits University.

Godsell, Gillian, Refiloe Lepere, Swankie Mafoko, Ayabonga Nase 2016. "Documenting the revolution." Pp. 191–224. *Fees Must Fall. Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa,* edited by Susan Booysen. Johannesburg: Wits University.

Gouws, Amanda 2016 (June 15). How South Africa's young women activists are rewriting the script. https://theconversation.com/how-south-africas-young-women-activists-are-rewriting-the-script-60980 [Accessed 12.03.2021].

Gwisai, Munyaradzi 2017 (May 25). "Zuma Must Fall" and the Left: Lessons from Zimbabwe. Review of African political economy. https://roape.net/2017/05/25/zuma-must-fall-left-lessons-zimbabwe/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021].

Hall, Stuart 2016. "Rassismus als ideologische Kritik". Pp. 172–188, in Was ist Rassismus? edited by Dorothee Kimmerich, Stephanie Lavorano and Franziska Bergmann. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Hancock, Ange-Marie 2007. "When Multiplication Doesn't Equal Quick Addition: Examining Intersectionality as a Research Paradigm". *Perspectives on Politics* 5(1): 63–79.

Heaney, Michael T. 2019. "Intersectionality at the grassroots". *Politics, Groups, and Identities*: 1–21.

Hendricks, Ashraf 2016 (March 10). Rhodes Must Fall exhibition vandalised in UCT protest https://www.groundup.org.za/article/rhodes-must-fall-exhibition-vandalised-uct-protest/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021].

Hill Collins, Patricia 2014. *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. London, New York: Routledge.

Hilton, John Laurence 1992. "Azania – some ethymological consideration". *Acta Classica* 35: 151-9.

Ishkanian, Armine and Anita Peña Saavedra 2019. "The politics and practices of intersectional prefiguration in social movements: The case of Sisters Uncut". *The Sociological Review* 67 (5): 985–1001.

Jansen, Jonathan 2017. *As by Fire. The End of the South African University*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Kasibe, Wandile2015 (March 17). No middle ground on genocidal Rhodes. Cape Times. https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/no-middle-ground-on-genocidal-rhodes-1833325 [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Kessi, Shose and Josephine Cornell 2015. "Coming to UCT. Black students, transformation and discourses of race". *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 3/2: 1-16.

Khan, Khadija 2017. "Intersectionality in student movements. Black queer womxn and non-binary activists in South Africa's 2015-2016 protests." *Agenda* 3-4: 110-21.

Lamola, John M. 2016. "Biko, Hegel and the End of Black Conscioussness. A Historico-Philosophical Discourse on South African Racism." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42:2: 183-94.

Lamer, M. 2010. "Social movement struggle in Africa". *Review of African Political Economy* 37(125): 151-62.

Langa, Malose Ed. 2017. *#Hashtag. An analysis of the #FeesMustFall Movement at South African universities*. Johannesburg, Cape Town: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Laperrière, Marie and Eléonore Lépinard 2016. "Intersectionality as a tool for social movements: Strategies of inclusion and representation in the Québécois women's movement". *Politics* 36 (4): 374–82.

Lenz, Ilse 2010. "Intersektionalität: Zum Wechselverhältnis von Geschlecht und sozialer Ungleichheit". Pp. 158-165. *Handbuch Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung: Theorie, Methoden, Empirie,* edited by Ruth Becker and Beate Kortendiek. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Leinius, Johanna, Judith Vey and Ingmar Hagemann 2017. "Poststrukturalistische Perspektive auf soziale Bewegungen. Plädoyer für eine notwendige Blickverschiebung". *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 30(4): 6–20.

Matandela, Mbalenhle 2015. *Rhodes Must Fall. How black women claimed their place.* https://mg.co.za/article/2015-03-30-rhodes-must-fall-how-black-women-claimed-their-place/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Matandela, Mbalenhle 2017. "Redefining Black Consciousness and resistance. The intersection of Black Conciousness and Black feminist thought." *Agenda* 3-4: 10-28.

Miller, Darlene 2016. "Excavating the vernacular: Ugly feminists, generational blues and matriarchal leadership." Pp. 270-292, *Fees must Fall. Student revolt, decolonialisation and governance in South Africa,* edited by Susan Booysen. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

More, Mabogo P. 2009. "Black Solidarity. A philosophical defense." Theorie: 20-43.

Ndaba, Baldwin, Therese Owen, Masego Panyane, Rabbie Serumula and Janet Smith 2017. *The black consciousness reader.* Auckland Park: Jacana Media.

Ndelu, Sandile 2017. "Liberation is a Falsehood. Fallism at the University of Cape Town". Pp. 58-82, *#Hashtag. An Analysis of the #FeesMustFall Movement at South African Universities,* edited by Malosa Langa. Johannesburg, Cape Town: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Ndiaye, Khadim 2020 (July 7). In Senegal and France, Faidherbe Must Fall. Review of African Political Economy. https://roape.net/2020/07/07/in-senegal-and-france-faidherbe-must-fall/ [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Nieftagodien, Noor 2016. "Outsourcing is falling but aluta continua". *Amandla. South Africas's new progressive magazine standing for social justice.* 43/44, 10-1.

Ndlovu, Hlengiwe 2017. "Womxn's bodies reclaiming the picket line. The 'nude' protests during #FeesMustFall". *Agenda* 3-4: 68-77.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabello 2018. *Epistemic freedom in Africa.* London, New York: Routledge.

Ngcaweni, Wandile and Busani Ngcawni 2018. *We are no longer at ease. The struggles for #Fees Must Fall.* Cape Town: Janana Media Ltd.

Nyamnjoh, Anye 2017. "The Phenomenology of Rhodes Must Fall. Student Activism and the Experience of Alienation at the University of Cape Town". *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 39/1. Pp. 256-277.

Nyamnjoh, Ftancis B. 2016. *#RhodesMustFall. Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa.* Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG.

Okech, Awino 2020. "African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality." *Critical African Studies* 12(3): 313-29.

Omar, Yusuf 2016. Trans Collective stops RMF exhibition.
https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2016-03-10-trans-collective-stops-rmf-exhibition [Accessed: 02.04.2020].

Platzky Miller, Josh 2019. Politics, Education and the Imagination in South African and Brazilian student-led mobilisations (2015-16). Cambridge: PhD Thesis. https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.51079 [Accessed: 02.04.2021]

Rhodes Must Fall 2015. Mission Statement.
https://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-9/RMF_Combined.pdf [Accessed. 12.10.2019].

Rhodes Must Fall Oxford 2018. *Rhodes Must Fall. The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of Empire*. London: Zed Books

Ramaru, Kealeboga 2017. "Feminist Reflections on the Rhodes Must Fall Movement". *Feminist Africa* (22): 89–97.

Ranuga, Thomas 1986. "Frantz Fanon and Black Consciousness in Azania (South Africa)". *Phylon* 47(3): 182-91.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous People*. London; New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Swartz, Sharlene, Mahali, Moletsane, Arogundade, Khalema, Cooper and Groenewald. 2018. *Studying while black. Race, education and emancipation in South African Universities*. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council Press.

Swatz, Sharlene, Alude Mahali, Relebohile Moletsane, Emma Arogundade, Nene Khalema, Adam Cooper and Candice Groenewald 2018. *Studying while black. Race, education and emancipation in South African Universities*. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council Press.

Trans Collective 2016. Tokenistic, objectifying, voyeuristic inclusion is at least as disempowering as complete exclusion.
https://www.facebook.com/search/str/UCT+trans+collective/keywords_search [Accessed 12.08.2019].

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 1988. "Subaltern Studies. Deconstructing Histori-ography." Pp. 3–32, Selected Subaltern studies, edited by Ranajit Guha Spivak and Gayatri Chakravorty. New York: Oxford University Press.

Turner, Irina 2019. "Axing the Rainbow." *Modern Africa. Politics, History and Society* 1: 81-110.

Vally, Salim and Ever Motala 2018. "Troubling 'race' as a category of explanation in social science research and analysis." *Southern African Review of Education* 24(1): 25-42.

Xaba, Wanelisa 2017. "Challenging Fanon. A Black Radical Feminist Perspective on violence and the Fees Must Fall Movement". *Agenda* 3-4, 96-104.

Zajak, Sabrina and Sebastian Haunss Ed. 2020. *Social Stratification and Social Movements Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives on an Ambivalent Relationship*. London: Routlege.

About the author

Antje Daniel is researcher in Development Studies at the University of Vienna. Her research focus is on social movements, environmental activism, gender and intersectionality and future/utopia. She mainly works in East and Southern Africa but also on social movements in Austria (Europe) or Brazil (Latin America).

Email: antje.daniel AT univie.ac.at

Youth activism against rape and the culture of impunity in Bangladesh: street protests amidst COVID 19[1]

Hosna J. Shewly and Eva Gerharz

In October 2020, despite the fears surrounding COVID 19, protests erupted in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka and some other areas of the country. Spearheaded by students, but also supported by young and older adults, the protesters rallied against rape and the culture of impunity surrounding it both on the streets and social media. Demonstrators directed their anger towards government inaction and the failure of the law enforcement agencies to stop the ongoing violence against women. This protest movement did not emerge adventitiously, however, but rather it is the result of long-suppressed anger and frustration with an ineffective judicial system when it comes to resolving cases involving rape.

The spark for the current protests flickered to life on the 5th of October when a video was uploaded to social media showing a group of young men surrounding a 37-year-old woman- they strip her naked, bolstered her, and then begin to beat and drag her through a village in Noakhali. The video shows the woman crying as she begs for mercy while holding on to one of the men's legs. One of the offenders recorded a video of the whole scene, which originally took place on the night of the 2nd of September, and uploaded it a full 32 days after the incident on social media. The woman later told the press that the offenders had used the video of the assault to compel her to comply with their subsequent demands for sex. An investigation by the country's National Human Rights Commission found that the woman in the video had been raped and terrorised repeatedly over a period of almost a year. Police and media outlets, however, only started looking into the matter after the video had gone viral. A few days before the Noakhali video was made public, public anger had already been brewing after several members of the Bangladesh Chatra League, the student wing of the ruling party, had been arrested and charged with gang-raping a woman in the northern town of Sylhet. The video quickly went viral, taking social media channels by storm.

Students, feminist activists, left-leaning political parties, and cultural organisations regularly organise protest actions against rape in Bangladesh; such actions frequently spurned on by incidents of rape or violence against women, which go viral on social media. While news of rape is not uncommon in Bangladesh, the conviction rate for rape in Bangladesh is below one per cent (HRW, 2020). *Ain o Salish Kendra* (ASK), a Bangladeshi human rights organisation, tabulated 907 cases of rape of women or girls in just the first nine

---

[1] This write-up is an output of a German Research Foundation (DFG, Project Number 395804440) funded research on 'Youth movements and changes in political cultures in Bangladesh and Senegal'.

months of 2020. According to them, four women are raped every day in Bangladesh, and many more cases go unreported (ASK, 2020). The brutality of the publicised cases and a culture of impunity which increasingly characterises Bangladesh's political culture resulted in a collective rage particularly amongst young people which led to them claiming the streets in the middle of pandemic.

Contemporary social movement activism protesting against sexual violence differentiates itself from previous forms of mobilisation. In fact, Bangladesh has a long history of women mobilising on the streets in order to make demands for rights, a tradition which can be traced back to the anti-colonial movements in the former British-Indian territories. Building on the momentum of the social uprising, protests have addressed such topics as family law reforms, sex workers' rights, transgender rights, and violence against women, resulting in an immense contribution in the fight to change women's social, political, and economic situation in society. Over time, ideological divisions or those over political party lines, and the "NGOisation" of the women's movement, which resulted in an increasing institutionalisation and de-politicisation, weakened the ability of women's groups to develop effective alliances. The protests which took place in October 2020, however, offer new opportunities for renewed movement alliances and public activism. The week-long, largely uncoordinated, and geographically scattered protests are significant not only for the women's rights movement in Bangladesh but also for challenging the country's culture of political impunity. Therefore, this protest movement can be seen as vital for three significant reasons: its timing and spontaneity, its inclusivity, as well as the specific strategies and demands of the protesters. In the following pages, we will highlight these aspects in detail.

Notable aspects of this movement

Spontaneous street actions when freedom of speech is in quarantine

These protests found their spark at a time when participating in protest is virtually non-existence, with the fear surrounding COVID 19 resulting in strict government vigilance, off-the-record censorship of demonstrations, and legal actions against protesters. Like in many other countries, particularly those in the Global South, a young generation of Bangladeshis mistrust political parties altogether. This social phenomenon is exemplified by the last three major political movements between 2013 - 2018, which were organised by ordinary students. The government has tried to find ways to decoy and veer off the momentum of popular mandates taken up by these movements. Opposition political parties, often involved in violent protests, have also not been safe from forceful government suppression. When they tried to capitalise on the "road-safety movement" in 2018, the ruling political party branded the movement as an "oppositional party conspiracy" and therefore successfully disbanded and discredited it without responding to the movement's popular demands. At the same time, the government is underhandedly suppressing any opposition to government policy through various legal and extralegal actions, including the

Digital Security Act of 2018, an act which was passed after the success of the road-safety movement, which foresees imprisonment without bail for even Facebook posts criticising state ministers. Participation in protests today, therefore, brings with it some tough circumspections – nobody wants to ruin their lives for the interests of a political party.

Under such suffocating conditions for prospective protest, tens of thousands of college and university students spontaneously protesting in the street, shouting their slogans and demands are a significant break to the previous silence. Bangladesh has never before witnessed such large-scale protests against sexual violence over such a prolonged period. Although the pandemic has often been considered an impediment for protest movements, Bangladesh still experienced spontaneous street mobilisations, with the participants braving their fear of COVID 19. The protective face mask, in fact, has become a new textual political space, with protest slogans written on it (fig 1).

Figure 1: Slogans written on face masks. Source: Dhaka Tribune; photographer: Mahmud Hossain Opu

"In hills and plains, the fight will persist uniformly"[2]: a new inclusivity

This protest movement shows inclusivity at various levels, manifesting potential for changes in the movement's demands. The ethno-linguistically majority Bengalis are forming coalitions with women from the country's minority indigenous populations, exhibiting solidarity amongst differently situated women in society. Constituting a tiny minority, indigenous women and girls are the most marginalised and more likely to be victims of sexual violence (Guhathakurta, 2004; Nasreen, 2017). Frequently, rape tactics are used to evict indigenous people, in hills and plainlands of the country, from their land or more generally, to suppress indigenous communities' movements for autonomy in the past and present (The Daily Star, 2020). The protesters, including Bengali and indigenous activists, were marching and occupying the city spaces together and chanting the slogan "In hills and plains, the battle will persist uniformly". This is an essential step towards a unifying voice speaking out against violence against women. Another significant characteristic of this movement is that it has not been predominantly led or dominated by left-liberals, a problem which other movements have when it comes to being accepted by conservatives in society. Notwithstanding, the conservative backlash against women's rights is nothing new in Bangladesh. In an extremely patriarchal society where the belief that "clothing invites sexual harassment" still endures so strongly, women protesting while wearing various attires (religious, traditional, and western) and the slogan that "only the rapist is responsible for rape" provides a clear message to society. More and more men are participating in the protests. This inclusivity raises new hopes for the success of political and societal changes in Bangladesh.

"Break the culture that breeds the violence against women, stop victim-blaming" – uncoordinated yet powerful

The protest over the video from the 5th of October began on Facebook as thousands of users all changed their profile photos to an empty black space to denote their anger. Social media platforms were used to disseminate information related to protest activities – human chains, rallies, and demonstrations took place in different parts of the country. Musicians and artists also took to the streets and performed in various squares in the capital. An anti-rape photo exhibition showcased hundreds of photographs to portray social and political power imbalances and the patriarchy's role in the rape and oppression of women. A film festival, women's rallies, signed petitions, and a bicycle rally in Dhaka were just some of the actions associated with the protest that has taken place. And although actions did take place at the student protest

---

[2] Geographically, Bangladesh is a broad deltaic plain along with a small hilly region. Its population consists mostly of Muslim, Bengali speakers, it also contains a variety of other ethnic groups. Most of the Bengalis live in the plainland and the majority of the indigenous communities inhabit the district known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a region of hills and forests. The slogan indicates that anti-rape protests will go on across the country.

hotspot, Shahbag, a central square close to Dhaka University which became famous due to the protests demanding the punishment of war criminals in 2013, it was not the only focal point; instead, multiple demonstrations spread to various parts of the capital.

Although the occupation of streets or squares in different parts of the capital by various groups and organisations could be seen as somewhat uncoordinated, it has still been an extraordinarily powerful demonstration of disapproval by a cross-section of society on state inaction against rape. Fragile alliances were formed in recent social movements in Bangladesh among many different groups. However, these alliances broke because of contested political agendas, perhaps forgetting their commonalities and forgoing the chance to continue alliances. This in-fighting provided ample opportunity for the government to contain the splintered movements using law enforcing agencies or party goons. It is important to factor in these interconnectivities and complexities when talking about the fate of bygone protest movements in Bangladesh. This time, however, protesters were the claiming streets in a very individualistic manner and respecting each other's actions. "Co-presence" exhibited in various locations of the capital and other parts of the country is a new strategy enabling protests to be held peacefully.

Although they took place spatially separately, it came strongly from the majority of the rallies, and sit-in demonstrations delivered strong messages: "Justice has to be ensured in any case of rape", "Break the culture that breeds the violence against women", "Stop victim-blaming", and many more. The performative dimension of the protests and their slogans, clearly communicated to society, enabling the ordinary citizen to form a deeper understanding of the matter. This resulted in increased participation with each passing day, despite police and party goons orchestrating attacks on the peaceful rallies and sit-ins at various sites. There did indeed exist some divisions amongst the protesters, for example, over whether the death penalty is appropriate punishment for rapists. And beyond the dominant chants of "we want justice", some protest camps were calling for the Prime Minister to resign, accompanied by social media campaigns to overthrow the government, as protectors of the culture of impunity.

In this phase of mobilisation, therefore, we see how the protesters were deploying numerous forms of space appropriation and how their messages are slowly working in transforming some deep-seated perceptions related to rape and women in general. Coming from diverse social and political backgrounds, the activists and participants have a similar focus on the causes of rape, while differing on the solutions - particularly concerning the death penalty.

Government action and an end to public protests

The escalation of demonstrations resulted in the government passing a swift change in the law, to dismantle the momentum which was building across the country. On the 12th of the 12th of October the cabinet hastily approved a

proposal put forward by Aninsul Huq, Bangladesh's Law Minister, to allow the death penalty for all of the four types of rape defined under Bangladeshi law. This amendment actually fails to address the root causes which make obtaining a conviction for rape so challenging. Learning the lessons from the previous social movement's unpleasant end of late withdrawal, activists now continue with the longer process, using the transformative potential of the movement to change the stereotypes related to rape; and implementing such actions as organising a rally to Noakhali, the village of the victim, or communicating their messages to ordinary people through grass-roots activism; such as rickshaw arts (fig.2).

Figure 2. "Rapist is responsible for rape, not the dress".
Source: Pashe Achi Initiative, Rickshaw art project

Conclusion

In recent years, the government has strictly monitored, controlled, or prohibited street protests. The city's public spaces are instead associated with government control and one which is rarely challenged. For a week, the emancipatory potential of the streets, roundabouts, and central squares was taken up by

peaceful demonstrations and artistic performances, showcasing a movement of activists and supporters, young and old, men and women. This movement exhibits a different kind of collectivity by its sheer volume (i.e. the number of participants) in reclaiming the public space. By sharing the space, activists with different agendas are ultimately embracing the possibility of building a new form of political collectivity where disjointed actions and demands come together to stop incidences of rape.

Generally, the entrenched nature of patriarchal public discourse on women's sexuality – particularly in questioning women's freedom of movement or blaming women for sexual harassment and assault – means that an increasing public presence and new societal roles for women evoke male insecurities and a conservative backlash (Nazneen, 2017). Protest slogans and art performances by the movement in Bangladesh drawing attention to the culture of impunity as a root cause for the widespread instances of rape not only addresses patriarchal public discourses and corrupt political cultures but also unites women from various socio-political backgrounds. Alongside the possibilities of a new collectivity in the form of co-presence, the movement contests typical stereotypes connecting dress-styles and rape. The political significance of the anti-rape movement and its transgressive practices, expressive nature, and transformative potential is enormous for the prospects of future movements in Bangladesh.

References

ASK (Ain o Salish Kendra), 2020. "Violence Against Women - Rape (Jan-Sep 2020)", 06 October. http://www.askbd.org/ask/2020/10/06/violence-against-women-rape-jan-sep-2020/. Accessed on 15 November 2020.

The Daily Star. 2020. "Rape used as weapon." https://www.thedailystar.net/rape-used-as-weapon-35181 . Accessed on 29 November 2020.

Guhathakurta, M. 2004. "Women negotiating change: The structure and transformation of gendered violence in Bangladesh", *Cultural Dynamics*, 16, 2/3:191-211.

HRW (Human Rights Watch), 2020. "Bangladesh: Protests Erupt Over Rape Case", 9 October. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/09/bangladesh-protests-erupt-over-rape-case. Accessed on 12 October 2020.

Nazneen, S. 2017. *The women's movement in Bangladesh: A short history and current debates*. Country Report, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bangladesch/13671.pdf. Accessed on 20 October 2020.

Nasreen Z. 2017. *The Indigeneity question: State violence, forced displacement and women's narratives in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh*, PhD thesis, Durham University. Available at http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/12063/. Accessed on 06 June, 2021.

About the authors

Dr. Hosna J. Shewly is a senior researcher at the Department of Social and Cultural Sciences, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Currently, she is conducting an ethnographic research in a DFG funded project on 'youth movement and changes in political cultures in Bangladesh and Senegal'. Her research interests include everyday resistance, vulnerability and sovereignty at the borderlands, city and gender, mobilities and transnational activism of the stateless people. Corresponding author: hosna.shewly AT sk.hs-fulda.de

Dr. Eva Gerharz is a professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Sciences, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Germany with a focus on globalisation, transnational youth movement, and indigenous activism and social mobility in South Asia. She is the PI of several collaborative research projects including the above mentioned DFG project. Email: eva.gerharz AT sk.hs-fulda.de

Peasant autonomy:
the necessary debate in Latin America
Peter M Rosset and Lia Pinheiro Barbosa

Abstract

In this essay we argue for the relevance and urgency of the debate on peasant and indigenous autonomy for rural social movements in Latin America. The pandemic of the new coronavirus—Covid-19—has revealed a series of weaknesses and strengths of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant organizations, weaknesses that could be addressed, and strengths that could be capitalized on, through an autonomous turn in political strategies and in the collective construction of alternatives. In this essay we analyze: the ontological and epistemic roots of autonomy, both among indigenous peoples and in currents of thought of European origin; certain reluctances, within movements, to enter into the autonomy debate; autonomy as a category of analysis, and the facets through which it is expressed both explicitly and implicitly in the practice of organizations; and, finally, autonomy as a proposal and strategy of struggle for the larger Latin American peasant movement.

Key words: Autonomy; Social movements; Latin America; Peasants; Indigenous people; Zapatistas; La Via Campesina; CLOC; Landless Workers Movement

Introduction to the autonomy debate

A specter is haunting Latin America, the specter of autonomy.[1] Among the continent's rural organizations and social movements, the question of autonomy is proposed by many—especially the indigenous movement—yet is sidestepped by others—especially by segments of peasant and rural proletarian organizations most linked to the so-called "old Left."[2] We argue in this essay,

---

[1] Paraphrased from Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels, 1969).

[2] In this essay we use the phrase "old Left" to refer to a generation of intellectuals who were theoretically and politically formed by Marxism-Leninism, and whose formation was contemporaneous with the revolutionary processes in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and/or Nicaragua (e.g. Atilio Borón and Marta Harnecker). Their formation emphasized the centrality of the State and of the necessary dispute for state power as a mechanism for building a socialist project. Still within the broader Marxist tradition are those who express respect for the autonomy debate (e.g. Lucio Oliver) or even those argue for its central importance (e.g. Pablo González Cassanova), though tension has been injected into the whole issue by the intellectual conflicts with postmodernism. But there is a clear tendency in which political leaders and

designed to generate a healthy debate, that it is urgent to open a dialogue within the movements on the "proposal of autonomy," especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic opened a window that revealed the weaknesses and strengths of movements in the countryside, weaknesses that could be addressed, and strengths that could be capitalized, we argue, with a more autonomous turn in the strategies of struggle and of collective construction of territorial alternatives.

Despite great successes like the Zapatista autonomous communities in Chiapas, Mexico, and many more throughout Latin America, we perceive a reluctance to debate autonomy, or at least *A*utonomy "with a capital A." While there is a rich literature and history on the autonomy or lack thereof of peasant movements vis-a-vis political parties and state actors (Fox and Gordillo 1989; Hellman 1992; and many others), the arrival of the so-called 'Pink Tide' progressive governments in Latin America and their subsequent suffering of attacks from the right and from U.S. imperialism, has more recently led to the recasting of autonomy as somehow disloyal, and as playing into the hands of the right (Dinerstein 2015). The fidelity by many hegemonic movements to the these governments (in countries that had or have them) or to the possibility of them (in countries that have not) has led to a certain reluctance to address the autonomy question. Yet beyond some allegiance to a model that could labelled as "state centric" or "old Left," there is also a palpable disillusionment with the real harvests of these governments, in terms of both their largely disappointing policies for rural areas, and with the impermanence in time of many of them, giving way to the resurgence of the Right (Gaudichaud et al. 2019). Meanwhile, the indigenous movement and its organic intellectuals continue to forcefully put forth the proposal of territorial autonomy (Burguete 2018).

The authors of this essay, as militant intellectuals of the peasant struggle,[3] want to encourage what we consider to be a necessary debate, and appeal constructively and affectionately to the movements and to the organic intellectuals that accompany them, to join in a collective reflection on autonomy.[4] We believe that dialogue, debate and feedback between academics and social movement cadre can be beneficial to both, as long as academics are careful to be respectful and not overstep boundaries (Rosset 2020). For reasons of space, we largely focus on two countries, Mexico and Brazil, and draw many of our examples from two movements, the Zapatistas (EZLN), and the Landless

---

intellectuals who once argued most forcefully for armed revolution and the smashing of the bourgeois state (e.g. Álvaro García Linera and Dilma Rouseff) became those who now argue for electoral politics, reformism and class compromise strategies.

[3] We are organically linked to and accompany member organizations of La Via Campesina International, in addition to having direct experience with some of the experiences of territorial autonomy mentioned in this essay, such as Zapatismo.

[4] Throughout this essay, the statements about the movements that do not have bibliographical citations come from our personal experience with them, that is, from our own work as participant-observers.

Workers (MST), that are emblematic and illustrative of *explicit* (EZLN) and *implicit* (MST) autonomies (Vergara-Camus 2014). At the same time, we also address continent-wide processes, as shall be seen below.

Why autonomy? Autonomy represents strength, when seen as the opposite of heteronomy, dependence, which is nothing if not weakness or vulnerability. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a virtual X-ray of rural communities in Latin America, making visible and highlighting many previously present but not always clearly seen or appreciated (even by rural people themselves) strengths and vulnerabilities, which together, we argue, add up to a *prima facie* case for a more autonomic turn by rural movements. It revealed a Latin American rural world—peasant, indigenous and afro-descendant—crisscrossed both by dependencies (weaknesses) and by strengths, often invisible. In this essay we use the context of the pandemic to illustrate the importance of furthering a discussion on peasant autonomy—a means of capitalizing on strengths and minimizing weaknesses and vulnerabilities—as a political proposal and as a strategy of struggle and collective construction of alternatives. Autonomy is of course an issue that dates back to long before the pandemic, and that will last for much longer, but we argue that its importance was highlighted by the health contingency throughout Latin America.

Among the *dependencies* evidenced by the pandemic, we can identify the great fragilities inherent in a food and agriculture model based on long-distance transport, which triggered a discontinuity in terms of processed and packaged food available in rural towns, and in the distribution of external inputs for local agriculture.[5] Also, we saw dependence on intermediaries and agribusiness value chains, which normally buy the crops and animals raised in peasant territories, but stopped showing up and buying the production; dependence on public and private health systems, which had placed almost no clinics, let alone intensive care units, in rural areas; dependence on governments that did not implement quarantines in the small cities and towns of the countryside; and dependence on politicians and political parties that forgot about rural people during the crisis,

---

[5] The trends summarized here on the pandemic come from a culling of hundreds of social media posts and alternative media articles by and about rural social movements from throughout Latin America. Each trend is repeated numerous times in numerous countries, but for reasons of space we have omitted a listing of the URL's as well as the detailing of individual cases and social actors involved. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to provide the URL's of each activity. However, on the Facebook pages of La Via Campesina (LVC), of the *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (CLOC), of the member organizations of both, and of the *Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil*, among other organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, a series of activities carried out since the beginning of the pandemic context are abundantly registered, along with the weaving of collective reflections that lead naturally to the question of autonomy.

approving truly meagre emergency financial support for urban workers, and nothing, in most cases, for rural people.

At the same time, the pandemic made visible a world of capacities and strengths in terms of production and local economy, self-provisioning, collective self-defense, collective healthcare, and even self-government, all in the face of the institutional abandonment of communities. Of course, we should avoid romanticizing the pandemic, since it generally exacerbated rural poverty, in some cases even provoked famine, and the lethality of COVID was greater in rural than in urban areas in most countries (see for example, Cortez-Gómez et al. 2020).

But if one thing is certain, it is that all the forms of dependency that were evidenced were already problematic weaknesses and vulnerabilities long before the pandemic. What the pandemic did was reveal the pre-existing dependence on fragile structures of both governments and the private sector, neither interested in the problems of the communities, a dependence that had long prevented or slowed the advancement of rural social movements of the countryside, even under the so-called progressive governments. An example is dependence on electoral political parties and public sector budgets, which often make it difficult to build and/or strengthen autochthonous processes in communities and territories.   And in those countries that already face *authoritarian populist* and neo-fascist governments (Scoones et al. 2018; Borras 2020; Barbosa 2020;), depending on public institutions equals even greater vulnerability.

The material flowering of hidden capacities seen in the face of the pandemic has been accompanied by an immaterial (re)flowering of peasant and indigenous organizations in cyberspace, through innumerable "Lives" and "webinars" where cyberspace itself has reverberated with the words *autonomy*, *indigenous autonomy* and, increasingly, *peasant autonomy*.[6] In our opinion, we are witnessing a perfect storm, composed in equal parts of disillusionment and realism, a harsh political situation, above all due to the advance of Right-wing populist authoritarianism, a health, economic and food crisis, and some very interesting proposals, which should pave the way to debate issues of autonomy within the principal rural movements and organizations in Latin America.

In the current reality, the *autonomy proposal* is on the table, put there by a significant portion of the indigenous movement of Latin America, from its own ontologies and epistemes (Escobar 2020; Burguete 2018). It is a proposal that is reinforced day by day in both really-lived autonomies and theoretical elaborations. The indigenous autonomy proposal is not the same as the most internationally visible proposal of autonomy, that of anarchism, although in certain elements and moments they dialogue with each other. Here we point out

---

[6] As organic intellectuals and militants of these movements we have participated in and/or been part of the audience for literally dozens of such virtual discussions since the beginning of the pandemic.

that while the struggle for autonomy is central to peasant history (Chayanov, Sevilla Guzman, Wolf, van der Ploeg, Hellman, and Fox, cited below, and many others), part of the reluctance to debate autonomy on the part of contemporary peasant organizations comes from previous disencounters between the movement and urban and middle-class anarchism, memories of which are dragged into the current debate.[7] In this sense it is important to point out that the indigenous autonomy proposal has it's own ontological and epistemic roots, which are roots in the countryside and in indigenous-peasant life (Baronnet 2010; Baronnet et al. 2011; Mora 2017), and therefore ought not to generate the same rejection. It's roots are prior to the Conquest, based on modes of co-inhabiting territories and communal forms of organization (Escobar 2020). The very conception of *Abya Yala*[8] as a cross-border territory represents other and earlier forms of political organization.

In this essay we take up the proposal of territorial autonomy made by original peoples,[9] demonstrate its compatibility, convergences and dialogue during the post-Conquest centuries with selected currents of European thought (see Dinerstein 2015, and Modonesi 2014, for example), and argue in favor of its possible strategic importance for the *larger peasant movement*, which includes peasants, indigenous people, afro-descendants, rural workers, landless, nomads, artisanal fisherfolk, river dwellers, forest peoples, and inhabitants of small towns and villages sprinkled across the countryside. In this sense, what we offer here is an argumentative essay, in which we postulate that the autonomy proposal, based in part on the accumulated thought and praxis of indigenous peoples' movements, could be the key to unleash the enormous potential of rural social movements in Latin America. Thus we argue that territorial, community, collective, peasant, and indigenous autonomies, even when partial, implicit rather than explicit, and relative rather than absolute, can strengthen collective social subjects, granting them greater political force to confront the expansion of extractive capital in the countryside,[10] and be, to use the language

---

[7] Throughout this essay, statements about organizations and movements not accompanied by citations to the literature come from the authors' own "participant-observations" as militants of and participants in the movements.

[8] A widely used pre-Conquest indigenous name for what today is called the Americas.

[9] It is perhaps worth noting that many contemporary indigenous movements seek autonomy vis-à-vis the state without actively seeking state power (Ecuador and Bolivia are arguably exceptions), or in the case of some, like the Zapatistas in Mexico, even specific policies from the state. Yet over the years many social movement theorists, from progressive liberals like Tilly (2008) to Marxists like Hobsbawm (1990), see the defining feature of social movements as their antagonistic relation with the state and their aim of state power and/or concessions from the state. The autonomy discussion thus has potential for broadening the social scientific debate over social movements in general (Dinerstein 2015).

[10] By extractive capital we refer to private sector investment in agribusiness, mining, energy production and other large scale activities that rely heavily on natural resource extraction (see LVC 2017a).

of the "old Left," collective subjects of a *class character* ("in and for themselves"), with *revolutionary potential* (Shanin 1970).

Indigenous autonomy, although of different origin, does dialogue and converge with traditions of European thought, in particular with currents of heterodox agrarian and humanist Marxism, agrarian social anarchism, and radical agrarian populism, which together constitute part of what is analyzed today in *Critical Agrarian Studies* (see Table 1 in Roman-Alcalá 2020: 6-7, for an analytical-relational explanation of each).[11] In this sense, we argue that there ought be every possibility in the world for a constructive dialogue on autonomy between peasant and indigenous organizations within the larger movement.

In the remainder of this essay we: 1) describe the indigenous roots of the autonomy proposal, with particular emphasis on the Zapatista example; 2) review European thought on peasant autonomy and its expression in the rural commune; 3) take up autonomy as a contemporary *category of analysis*, in particular the facets of relative autonomies, which are elements often found in both indigenous and peasant experiences; and 4) reflect on autonomy as a proposal for struggle and for the collective construction of alternatives. We analyze autonomy as a series of historically situated theoretical constructions, as a proposal by and for social movements, and in terms of its different facets.[12]

The long and contemporary histories of indigenous autonomy: lived experiences and theoretical approaches

For Castoriadis and other European intellectuals, the construction of autonomy as a concept of struggle was possible "thanks to the heritage and tradition of the democratic movement present in the history of [European] countries, [and] to the social-historical project of autonomy born in the heart of the European world" (Castoriadis 1999: 138). But in Latin America autonomy has roots in other ontologies and epistemologies (Escobar 2020), though these have dialogued with European thought (Modenesi 2014). As Holloway affirms (2015:115, 117):

> For the indigenous peoples, peasants, popular, and afro sectors of Latin America...there is nothing that resembles a tradition of struggle for freedom like that which existed in European cities from the 13th century onwards... In Latin America we have a different genealogy: the rebellions of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari, the revolutions of Zapata and Pancho Villa, the revolution in Haiti, the quilombos and escaped slaves...these are the precursors... [whose] struggles were

---

[11] We will not address the "multitude" theories of the "autonomist Marxists" Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004), for reasons similar to Gunderson (2018a).

[12] We clarify that it is not the objective of this essay to exhaustively analyse empirical cases, but rather to highlight the potential that autonomy holds for peasant movements.

crushed with blood and flames... [Today's] autonomies of indigenous, black, and mestizo peoples are integral autonomies. The Zapatista *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, the Nasa *cabildos* of the Cauca, the autonomous Mapuche expressions, address all aspects of life, from food production to justice and power.   They are not part of hegemonic capitalist society but are something else, as, beyond whatever level of development they may exhibit, they point in a different direction.

A long history of autonomy in Latin America would have to begin with the European conquest of indigenous nations. For centuries there followed a tense interplay of peoples already subjugated by European colonies, of ongoing wars of conquest and resistance—even of peoples who to this day claim never to have been conquered (the Shuar of Ecuador, the Yaqui of Mexico, etc.)—of uncontacted peoples, of peoples with whom European crowns had signed treaties, and of conquered peoples who rose up again and rebelled (e.g. the Caste War in the Yucatan), even declaring themselves republics (e.g. the Republic of Yucatan). In this sense, the Conquest foreshadowed a territorial palimpsest in which, although there were conquered territories, there also persisted peoples fighting to maintain their original forms of territorial existence, even as "conquered" peoples.

To a certain extent we could say that contemporary indigenous territories represent a combination of redoubts—"what was left after the Conquest"—and the places of displacement and forced relocation of peoples, which are still inhabited and defended and by them. The long history has been marked by constant uprisings and autonomies, both made explicit in declarations and those left implicit. And not only of original peoples, but also of peasant peoples who are the product of *mestizaje*, and of the former enslaved peoples of African descent (e.g., in Brazil, we have, and have had, Canudos, Caldeirão, República de Palmares, Sete Povos das Missões Orientais and the *Cangaço*, to name a few).

At the end of the 20th century, the sharpening of the contradictions resulting from the implementation of neoliberalism caused a new cycle of struggle to emerge in Latin America. The *Continental Campaign for the Self-Discovery of Our America*, organized by the Latin American indigenous movement, and the *Campaign of 500 Years of Indigenous, Black and Popular Resistance (1989-1992)*, brought together the most diverse organizations and constituted frameworks for a regional articulation among peasant, indigenous, Afro-descendant and rural workers' organizations. They provided an opportunity to collectively develop a transnational political strategy for the defense of territories (Barbosa 2017b; 2019). A number of emblematic struggles emerged partially from this background, including the armed insurgency of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Mexico, multiple indigenous rebellions in Ecuador and Bolivia (1980s, 1990s, 2000s), and the formation of the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC) and La Via Campesina International (LVC), articulations of popular organizations and indigenous and

peasant movements on a regional and international scale (Gutiérrez-Aguilar 2008; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010, 2014; Barbosa 2015).

The indigenous movement is a constituent element of this cycle of struggles that, in reality, is the continuation of more than 500 years of resistance (López-Bárcenas 2007; Burguete 2011; Prezia 2015). Characterized by a social and organizational framework based on community life, the presence of indigenous movements gives other meanings to social struggle, while building a political project of historical character. In their political narrative, they recover the historical memory of their cosmovisions and the philosophical matrices of their languages, which demarcate their own onto-epistemic paradigm that underlies the nature of their demands, their practices and their political project (Barbosa 2017b; 2019). Although autonomy has been a common political demand in historical indigenous struggles, it has become more explicit and begun to offer a solid materiality in this cycle of struggles. In this sense, making explicit the historical-political roots of resistance has allowed indigenous peoples avoid being superseded as subjects of struggle in the construction of autonomy.

The contemporary history of indigenous autonomy proposals began with the debate and struggle for self-determination that arose from the decade of the 1960s through that of the 2000s, motivated by the establishment of normative rights in the UN, and by the decolonization processes of countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. It initiated a cycle of struggle in the field of international law, and the achievement of reference documents, such as the First UN Resolution on Decolonization, Convention 169 of the ILO, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which recognized of the right of peoples to self-determination. Issues such as the vindication of indigenous nationalities and plurinational states (e.g. Bolivia and Ecuador) derived from this cycle. The most recent part of the cycle was to lobby for the incorporation and ratification of these rights in national constitutions. Important achievements from this legalistic struggle were, for example, in Colombia, the Indigenous *Resguardos* (reserves) and Community Councils of afrodescendents, these with significant emphasis on autonomy, and more recently, Peasant Reserve Zones (ZRCs).

The absence of the State in many indigenous territories (Cortez-Gómez et al. 2020), together with the history of oppression, expropriation and discrimination against indigenous peoples, has created the historical conditions for raising the banner of autonomy, making it the cornerstone of the indigenous socio-political project (Díaz-Polanco 1997). In the discourse of indigenous peoples it is not so much a question of rejecting modernity and its legacy, but rather of demanding dialogue and the recognition of indigenous peoples as collective subjects with rights —specifically collective rights— at least equal to the rights that modernity recognized and guaranteed to individuals (Dávalos 2005).

Díaz-Polanco (1997) identified two major positions on autonomy: 1) autonomy as a juridical-political system with the purpose of re-dimensioning the nation

based on new relationships between indigenous peoples, socio-cultural sectors and the State, and 2) the conception of autonomy as something endogenous, close to autarchy, self-determined. Defining the concept of autonomy from the indigenous perspective is a complex task, since there is no univocal model and autonomy itself manifests itself in different forms and scales among different peoples. Increasingly, autonomy is revealed as a polysemic concept, in which indigenous movements are taking the lead in giving it meanings beyond the juridical sphere, generating projects of social change that are part of a project for life in community that articulates the local population, transforming internal social relations and local cultural policy (Burguete 2018).

Among the primary elements of autonomy, we highlight: 1) defense and reconstitution of territories; 2) reaffirmation of identity as original/indigenous peoples; and 3) the (re)construction of own political institutions, whether indigenous governments, self-governments or communal governments (Burguete 2018). From indigenous worldviews, three principles are central to autonomy: the principle of interrelationship, the principle of complementarity and the principle of reciprocity (Rendón-Monzón 2003). Burguete (2018: 18) affirms that autonomy "does not operate on a social body as totality, but rather on certain dimensions of social life." This is why autonomy can be manifested in the organization of the territory based on a legal framework in an autonomous government built collectively, at community, municipal and/or regional levels, in which dialogue is entered into with state institutions, or equally it can express a more radical posture, such as Zapatista autonomy, which seeks and receives no recognition by the State.

The important thing to consider in this newer cycle of struggle, which is still in force, is the fact that the Latin American indigenous movement managed to articulate the demand for autonomy in an emancipatory sense, in the struggle for decolonization (Burguete 2018). As a political project, autonomies mean building self-governments with specific powers and competencies over internal life (López-Bárcenas 2007).

The advance of autonomy as an emancipatory political project has provoked fear by States and driven immediate responses, either in the sense of repressing autonomy processes, as was the case in Guatemala and Mexico (where military and paramilitary presence surrounds autonomous territories), or with legal devices used for cooptation through "recognition" of the pluricultural character of society, as in Bolivia and Ecuador. Díaz-Polanco (1997) calls the latter a strategy of ethnophagous indigenism, that is, while the existence of identities is recognized, the true purpose is to undermine and absorb them into the institutional framework of the State. Thus we often see an appropriation of indigenous discourse by nation-states, with an emptying of the original more politicized content.

For indigenous movements, the construction of autonomy does not represent a struggle to topple the government and install themselves in power, but rather to build counter-power from the communities upward, capable of converting the

communities into collective political subjects with the capacity to make their own decisions. In a larger sense indigenous peoples seek to disperse power (López-Bárcenas 2007), this to enable the direct exercise of autonomy in the community.

There are self-management (*autogestión*)[13] and autonomous experiences of self-government in the recent political history of all Latin American countries. However, the EZLN insurgency in Mexico highlights a radical way of demanding and building *explicit* autonomy as a political project, leading it to become the autonomous experience with the greatest national and international resonance. It is important to remember that despite their apparent radicality, *Zapatismo* represents not so much an historical rupture, but rather the historical continuity of indigenous uprisings and autonomies since the Conquest.

Zapatista autonomy

Zapatismo offers the most complete, explicit and radical version of indigenous autonomy that we know of in the contemporary world, with a political identity and ideology that articulate the following elements (Barbosa 2015, 2017b): 1) political formation with a double basis: that of the pre-existing indigenous organizations in the region, which had already been organized by both Maoist groups and by priests and lay workers espousing Liberation Theology, and that of the Guevarist guerrillas of the National Liberation Forces (FLN), an EZLN precursor; 2) inspiration from Latin American revolutionary thought; 3) inspiration from by Marxism; and 4) the historical memory of Mexican politics, such as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the student movement of 1968. By taking up arms, the Zapatistas initially took a stand against NAFTA and denounced the situation of extreme poverty in which indigenous peoples lived, demanding recognition as subjects of law, and called for a constituent assembly to rewrite the Mexican constitution. Since that moment the Zapatista political trajectory has been marked by different moments, from an initial attempt at dialogue with the State, with the San Andrés Accords, to the total rupture and announcement of radical autonomy in their territories.

The product, expression and materialization of a long historical process of resistance by native peoples throughout Latin America, the Zapatistas named autonomy for the first time in 1995 in the *Third Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle* (Harvey 1998; Barbosa 2015). In 1998, autonomy was formally incorporated into their political project with the creation of the Zapatista Autonomous Rebel Municipalities (MAREZ). The Zapatistas have two leadership structures: a civilian one, the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-General Command (CCRI-CG) and a military one, the army, or

---

[13] Unfortunately there is no satisfactory English language equivalent to *autogestión* in Spanish, which goes beyond the entrepreneurial connotations of "self-management," to mean something more like a self-organized and collectively governed process.

EZLN as such. In 2003, the Zapatistas announced a new phase of the autonomy project, with the creation of the *Caracoles* (regional centers of self-government), the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (JBGs, or "Good Government Councils") and the structuring of autonomous government. The latter represented (Figure 1), respectively, by: 1) At the local level, autonomy agents and commissioners, who are the authorities in each community; 2) At the municipal level are the autonomous municipal authorities, responsible for organizing the dynamics of life in the communities that make up each MAREZ; 3) In 2003 there were five Caracols and these were expanded in 2019 with eleven more, now also called Centers of Autonomous Resistance and Zapatista Rebellion (CRARZ) (Barbosa 2015, 2016). All the spaces of self-government are collective and rotating.

Figure 1. *Territorial and self-government structure of Zapatista Autonomous Government*. Source: Elaborated based on information from *Subcomandante* Insurgente Marcos (2003), and EZLN (2013, 2019).
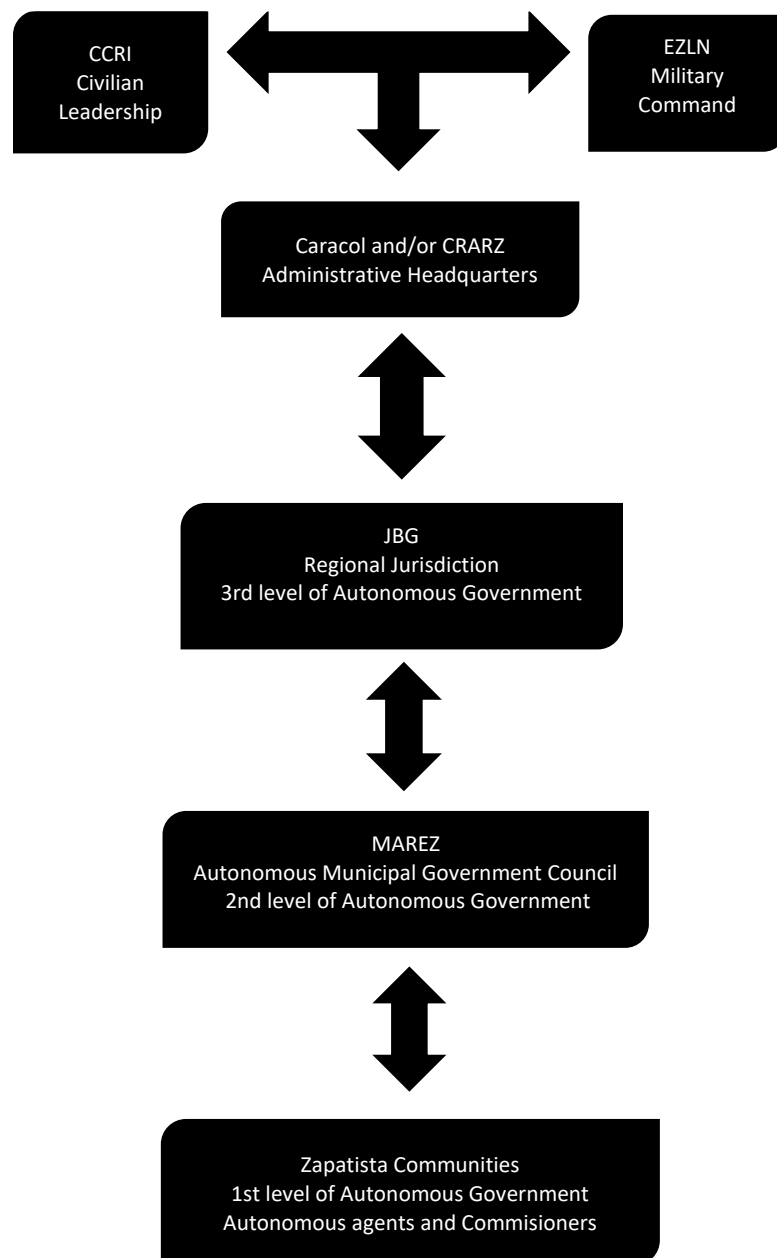
The JBGs are the administrative heart of each autonomous region, and are based at a Caracol. They are made up of one or two delegates from the autonomous councils of each MAREZ in their region, who are elected, by assembly, for two-year terms. The JBG is responsible for coordinating a certain

number of MAREZ and has specific functions (Burguete 2005): coordinating, promoting and monitoring the social projects developed in the MAREZ; deciding on the support funds that enter each MAREZ, on which a 10% tax is levied; providing justice and vigilance; accompanying activities linked to local production, trade and transportation; working to reduce imbalances between the MAREZ; mediating conflicts between the MAREZ and other municipalities and non-Zapatista communities; regulating membership, rights and obligations; regulating the entry of visitors, researchers, and others into the MAREZ; monitoring compliance with agreements. The JBGs are accompanied by the CCRI-CG, to avoid acts of corruption, arbitrariness, injustice, intolerance and/or deviation from the Zapatista principle of *mandar obedeciendo* ("lead by obeying the collective will"). This principle is directly related to the form of political participation of the Zapatistas, the construction of a direct grassroots democracy, in which the people give their voice to the representative bodies within the movement—JBGs, Autonomous Councils, CCRI-CG—so that they can lead, while obeying the people and their decisions, as agreed upon in community assemblies (Stahler-Scholk 2007; Starr et al. 2011; Baronnet 2010; Baronnet et al. 2011; Mora 2017), which allows expanding the process of building territorial autonomy (Alkmin 2017).

In the consolidation of their political project, the Zapatistas specify seven axes of what they call "autonomous resistance" (Zapatistas 2013): economic resistance, ideological resistance, psychological resistance, cultural resistance, political resistance, social resistance, and resistance to military and paramilitary presence in and around their territories. In almost three decades, the facets of Zapatista autonomy have been quite palpable, including self-government; autonomous education; autonomous community health care; agroecology; autonomous administration of justice; collective self-defense; autonomous land reform; autonomous communications and culture; economic organization and commerce in the communities, in the autonomous regions and even inter-regionally; collective work enterprises; and the active and visible participation of women and youth. In the collective work enterprises, there are local groups responsible for carrying out the tasks of cooperatives, of local shops, of cultivation of crops, of cattle raising, of local security, of information and culture, among others. It is striking that all the tasks assumed within the structure of the autonomous government, as well as in the aspects that structure autonomy, are carried out without receiving a salary, that is, by community commitment to all the activities that are linked to the material and socio-cultural reproduction of life in their territories.

A decade after the Zapatista uprising, Burguete (2005) contrasted *de facto* autonomies with *de jure* autonomies, that is, autonomies legally recognized by the State. Burguete explains that de facto autonomies are forms of indigenous resistance that challenge the state itself and question the legitimacy and legality of its institutions. Therefore they break with the legal order of the State and build their own institutions. Zapatismo, then, is an emblematic expression of de facto autonomy.

Peasant autonomy in thought of European origin

Although the roots of indigenous autonomy are from the original ontologies of Abya Yala, we can find a similar thread in thinking of European origin, in the currents of agrarian social, populist, libertarian and anarchist thought, and in heterodox currents of Marxist thought (Sevilla-Guzmán 2006, 2011; Shanin 1983; Modonesi 2014). Many great activists and thinkers emblematic of these tendencies were inspired by the mutual aid, collectivism, communality, solidarity, ethics and moral economy of traditional peasant communities and communes, that is, in the *autonomies* and in the *autonomous facets* of peasant community and culture.[14]

Much of what we recognize today as the European tradition of peasant studies had an important moment of gestation in Russia during the Czarist period of the 19th century, in the diverse and complex thought and movement of Narodnism (Seville-Guzmán 2006, 2011; Shanin 1983), which gave birth to Marxist, anarchist and populist currents. Much of the debate centered on the revolutionary question (does the peasantry have revolutionary potential or not?; is it a class in and of itself?) and whether or not it was necessary to go through capitalism first in order to develop the productive forces, giving birth to the revolutionary class of the industrial and urban proletariat, in order to launch a socialist revolution and eventually reach communism.

It is interesting that a clandestine revolutionary movement called Land and Liberty (*Tierra y Libertad* in Spanish) was born from Narodnism, "with the autonomous organization of the peasantry as a starting point, and rural peasant commune as the nucleus of socialism" (Sevilla-Guzmán 2011: 59). *Tierra y Libertad* would later become the slogan of Mexican revolutionary anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, whose banner of struggle was then adopted by Emiliano Zapata as the most famous slogan of the Mexican Revolution, and in his proposal for the *Plan de Ayala* and in the Commune of Morelos, an exemplary case of territorial peasant-indigenous autonomy (Sevilla-Guzmán 2006, 2011; Paz Paredes 2013). And obviously, if it was an influence on Zapata, it is also an influence on contemporary Zapatismo. Maldonado (2000) explains that Flores Magón's anarchism was influenced by his own claims of indigenous origin (Lomnitz-Adler 2016), and in itself represented a dialogue between European and indigenous anarchisms, with the recognition of the revolutionary character of indigenous peoples. Mexican agrarian expert Armando Bartra (2014) also identifies continuities and convergences between revolutionary agrarian thought in Europe and Mexican agrarian *Magonismo*.

---

[14] We would like to highlight a difference from indigenous thought on autonomy. The legacy of European thought is, above all, that of non-peasant intellectuals inspired by the peasantry, so that unlike the former case, it did not arise directly from the ontologies, cosmovisions, epistemologies and ways of seeing and being in the world of the subject him- or herself (Escobar 2020). Although, as we will see, it was assimilated by various peasant movements and directly dialogued with, and influenced, indigenous and peasant thought in Latin America.

Key thinkers such as Bakunin and Kropotkin emerged in the anarchist currents of Narodnism. For example, Bakunin (1990) repeatedly analyzed the peasantry as a rebellious and revolutionary subject, and emphasized the autonomy of the peasant commune. He spoke of the universally felt conviction in the commune that the land belongs to the people collectively, to those who "watered it with their own sweat and fertilized it with the work of their own hands," and emphasized "the almost absolute autonomy and self-government of the commune" (1990:604-605). And highlighted the political dimension of the commune which endows it with capacity to resist the state, to fight against it and even to destroy it (Sevilla-Guzmán 2006, 2011). Kropotkin was his disciple and analyzed communal property, the ethics of communal institutions like mutual aid and critiqued the State as the agent of the interests of the dominant classes, in charge of dismantling human institutions based on solidarity and cooperation. He argued that the rural commune facilitated equal access to land, was based on mutual aid, administered justice, organized the defense of the commune and the territories against external threats, and was the vehicle for democratic participation in decisions of common interest (Kropokin 1978:143-168; Sevilla-Guzmán 2011:65-66).

If Bakunin and Kropotkin represented the agrarian anarchism that emerged from Narodnism, there was no lack of later currents composed of what Sevilla-Guzmán calls neo-Narodnist heterodox Marxism (Sevilla-Guzmán 2011). In fact, many of those who historically defended the idea of the peasantry as a class with revolutionary potential, and the traditional peasant commune or community as a model for a future communist society, represented and drank eclectically from Marxist, anarchist and populist thought (Shanin, 1983; Sevilla-Guzmán, 2006, 2011) to the point that, from our perspective here of searching for the roots of autonomous thought in peasant studies, these currents blended and hybridized even if often presented as contradictory.

For Chayanov (1925-1974, 1986), the peasant economy and forms of cooperation could form the basis for human progress toward communism, without first going through the industrialization of agriculture, nor through land consolidation in agribusiness or large-scale state production. Shanin (1983, 2018b) revived Marx's "late" thought, who devoted his last decade of life to studying the Russian peasantry, and who, in his drafts and letter to Vera Zasulich, among other works identified by Shanin, defended the peasant commune as a model society, and made it clear that there are multiple paths to communism, not all of which run through the urban industrial proletariat.

We place Mariátegui (1928, 1982) in this tradition, the Peruvian Marxist who postulated that in Latin America the revolutionary class was not the tiny industrial proletariat, but rather the enormous indigenous peasantry.[15] For his

---

[15] In fact, in note 67 in his book "Siete Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana," Mariátegui (2008) builds a broad argument around the historical evidence of Incan communism based on the analysis of the *ayullu* in the Andean world.

part, Eric Wolf (1966, 1969) analyzed the characteristics of the peasant community and the leading role of the peasantry in the revolutions of the 20th century. He wrote that the peasantry has "natural anarchist tendencies" (Wolf 1969: 295), a position that is echoed in the work of James Scott (1998, 2009).

Shanin (2018a) has argued that during the same century it was not orthodox, "non-peasantist" Marxism that was most successful in conducting revolutionary processes, but rather the heterodox Marxisms of leaders such as Mao and Ho Chi Minh. These Marxisms hybridized with local ontologies and epistemologies, which Shanin calls "the vernacular," in most cases at least partially peasant.

Beyond Flores Magón and Mariátegui, the thinking of the EZLN also draws on various sources, including the worldviews and communal forms of the original peoples of Mesoamerica, in particular the Mayas, but also the original Zapatistas of Emiliano Zapata, Latin American revolutionary thought, and the legacies of Marxism and the Soviet, Cuban and Sandinista revolutions, among others (Barbosa 2015, 2017b). While strongly influenced by the preceding generation of guerilla movements in neighboring Central America, the Zapatistas from the start differentiated themselves from them and from Leninist party ideas by taking a decidedly non-vanguardist approach (Rosset 1994; Rosset et al. 2005). Mattiace (2003) argues that both Zapatismo and the Mexican indigenous movement as a whole express a growing tendency in the Americas for collective action based on pan-indigenous identity.

Gunderson (2017, 2018b) shows how the long history of uprisings in Chiapas dating back to the Conquest (see also Wasserstrom 1983), has always been influenced by events in the world-system, including ideas from, for example, the Peasant Wars in 16th Century Germany (the same ones that were analyzed by Engels 1967), from anarchism, from the Communist Party, from Maoism and, of course, from liberation theology. These prior influences on the Zapatista communities, along with Mayan cosmovision, in one way or another all played roles in the formation of what he calls the "Provocative Cocktail" of Zapatista ideology. In other words, in Zapatista thought and their proposal for autonomy, they converge and dialogue from other ontologies and epistemologies, with European visions of the commune - and of communism. It is not so much a break with the European legacy of Marxism and communism, as it is a convergence from another history.

For Veltmeyer (2019) the new geoeconomy of capital, based on neo-extractivism[16], with changes in the dynamics of the expanded reproduction of capital in Latin America, has transformed the specific forms that class struggle assumes today. The assault of capital is now directed increasingly towards the territories of the peoples in rural areas, with the advance of agribusiness, mining, wind power, and forms of extractive capitalist exploitation of natural

---

[16] Neo-extractivism refers to the return in recent decades to greater dependence on raw material extraction, production and export in order to finance public sector budgets and social programs and to address trade imbalances.

resources. Thus class struggle, which before was expressed mainly through the issues of wages and access to land, is increasingly expressed in terms of the collective defense of territory and community.   In a similar vein, Barkin and Sanchez (2017a,b) identify a "communitarian revolutionary subject," a collective, communitarian subject, and add an additional element, which is the capacity of this subject to provide leadership along "the path of new routes for social progress, formulating strategies to improve their quality of life, control their production systems, defend their territories, and conserve their natural heritage" (2017b:15).

Autonomy as a category of analysis, and the facets of autonomy

Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor[17] argues that we must avoid the temptation to use the very comprehensive and explicit Zapatista autonomy as the unit of comparison to determine whether a given process is autonomous or not. It is not only "declared autonomous" movements that struggle for and exhibit elements of autonomy. With a bar set as high as that of Zapatismo, the risk would be to disqualify many processes that actually, to a greater or lesser degree, possess important *implicit* autonomous facets. She suggests the use of autonomy as a *category of analysis* in the sense of social science research, and, we would add, autonomy as an *element in the collective (re)construction of alternatives,* in the sense of social movements.

We can put this another way, to make it clearer. If we define autonomy in "absolutist" terms, we could say that the Zapatistas are fighting for autonomy, and that their proposal is autonomous. On the other hand, one would then say that the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil is *not* an autonomous movement, because it disputes public resources *within* the framework of the bourgeois state. But we would then be blind to the many implicit facets of autonomy that the MST actually exhibits, and to its struggles to increase its degree of autonomy in many aspects (Vergara-Camus 2014). Doesn't the MST fight to have its own schools in its territories, with its own curriculum? (Barbosa, 2015; 2017a). That is a struggle for educational autonomy. Doesn't the MST fight to transform its production into agroecological production, which does not depend on external inputs? That is a struggle for "autonomy from capital," to use its own words (MST 2016). Doesn't the MST fight for self-government in its encampments and settlements, based on the self-organization

---

[17] Dr. Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor, an expert in indigenous autonomies at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS) in Chiapas, Mexico, gave a class on July 10, 2019 on "Autonomy, and Resistance in Mexico," at the doctoral seminar "Processes of Territorial Autonomy," co-taught by one of the present authors, at *El Colegio de la Frontera Sur* (ECOSUR), also in Chiapas. It was in the class that she made the observation.

and coordination of families? (Miranda and Cunha 2013; Starr et al. 2011). That is a struggle for self-government, a central facet of autonomy.

In fact, the organizational structure of the MST in its different bodies —National Directorate, State Directorates, Brigades, Sectors, Base Groups and Collectives— articulates a political coordination and autonomous decision-making at the local, state, regional and national levels. This could be considered, in itself, as a kind of autonomous self-government in the peasant territories of the MST. It has an organic structure and autonomy in the conduct of socio-cultural, productive and political-economic processes in the encampments, agrarian reform settlements and in the relationship of these territories with allies and other external entities. Likewise, participation in all these instances is collective, rotating and with gender parity (Starr et al. 2011).

In other words, when we situate autonomy as a category of analysis and draw on emblematic examples of indigenous and peasant struggle in the analytical and political scenario of Latin America - with the cases of Zapatismo and the MST - we intend to make explicit how autonomy manifests itself *intentionally*, that is, as an autonomous political project (as in Zapatismo), or *implicitly*, sometimes unconsciously or unintentionally, yet which, in the end, reveals crucial facets of autonomy (as in the MST). From our perspective, this is a way to reveal the existence of bridges for dialogue between indigenous and peasant movements with respect to the potential of autonomy to strengthen their social fabric, territories and the political horizon of their praxis.

Facets of autonomy revealed by the pandemic

As we argue, the pandemic highlighted some of the contradictions inherent in capitalism, but also revealed how rural communities are increasingly resorting to their own structures to maintain their resistance and existence. Based on what we have identified in online social networks,[18] we highlight seven axes that articulate these initiatives taken in response to the emptying of the public dimension of states in providing immediate and effective responses the rural crisis created by the pandemic:

   1. *Agroecological food production*: the pandemic has highlighted the centrality of the peasantry in guaranteeing the production, trade and circulation of healthy food. Throughout the world, we have observed the increase in agroecological peasant production during the period of the pandemic;

   2. *Social solidarity, humanitarian donations and barter*: many indigenous, peasant and traditional communities organized humanitarian deliveries and barter exchanges as a strategy for exchange of food and seed

---

[18] As mentioned in footnote 5 above, we followed the online presence of member organizations of LVC, CLOC, and APIB, among others mentioned in the body of the essay.

between communities facing shortages. We see initiatives like this in the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca (CRIC) in Colombia, as well as some regions in Guatemala, Bolivia and Ecuador, guaranteeing the distribution of food among communities that were prevented from selling their products in municipal capitals, due to social isolation measures. We also observed the donation of tons of food in urban slums by peasant movements in Brazil, such as the MST, the Small Farmers' Movement (MPA) and the Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), and in Argentina by fisherfolk and by the Landless Workers' Union (UTT), in addition to CLOC/LVC organizations in several countries;

3. *Popular and traditional medicine*: in many indigenous communities, traditional medicine has been strengthened, especially remedies to revitalize the respiratory and immune systems. Traditional midwifery has also been strengthened to attend low-risk births, preventing women from running the risk of infection in rural clinics. In many communities natural medicines, based on popular and ancestral recipes have been used for Covid-19 symptoms, with some success;

4. *Community health protocols and sanitary cordons*: for prevention and mediation in territories and communities, as in the initiatives of the Mayan organization Ka' Kuxtal Much Meyaj, located in Campeche, Mexico, or in the agrarian reform settlements of the MST;

5. *Diverse forms of self-management*: during the pandemic, many communities strengthened their process of conservation, multiplication and commercialization of native seeds. Many organized internal commissions with rotating activities in to plant and rear short-cycle food crops and farm animals.

6. *Marketing of agricultural production*: many peasant and indigenous organizations created digital platforms and/or applications for use on cell phones, which allowed them to expand and maintain the marketing networks for agroecological products, by means of food baskets that are delivered to homes. This is stimulating an increase in agroecological production and has strengthened exchange networks between rural cooperatives and urban communities.

7. *Defense of territory*: many communities have created or (re)activated instances of territorial defense, above all due to the increase in violence linked to neo-extractivist mega-projects and enterprises, which have taken advantage of social isolation to make stronger incursions into their territories. In different countries, such as Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, violence in the countryside and in indigenous territories worsened during the pandemic. The Indigenous Guard of the Cauca, in Colombia, and the community guardians in Guerrero and Oaxaca, in Mexico, are examples of this process of territorial defense. In Brazil, in different indigenous territories, community security commissions were organized that

functioned on a daily basis, to monitor, and prevent the entry and movement of outsiders.

Observing these responses to the pandemic, we conclude that, in reality, peasant and indigenous organizations are exercising facets of autonomy, which sets the stage for the autonomy debate. Extrapolating, we propose some initial *facets of autonomy* that could be analyzed in their degree of autonomy (from less to more autonomous), in a wide range of processes, organizations and movements. These might include *political autonomy and self-government*; *productive autonomy*; *food autonomy*; *economic autonomy and local economy*; *collective self-defense of communities and territories*; *health autonomy*; and *solidarity autonomy*. To these we could add *autonomy in the administration of justice*, characteristic of Zapatismo and many traditional indigenous communities.

These examples make it clear that autonomy, and in particular its facets and degrees, can serve as *categories of analysis* to interpret any process of social struggle and collective construction. It is important to reiterate that autonomy is not absolute, but relative to a condition of total dependence (van der Ploeg 2008, 2010). For example, a case of agroecological food production can be more or less autonomous from the market for agricultural inputs, depending on the technology used (Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2012). Or, according to Gazolla and Schneider (2007), to the extent that a family or peasant community covers its food needs and consumption with its own production, it will have greater autonomy vis-à-vis the larger social and economic context. To this we could add that it would also have greater political autonomy in the sense of not being so vulnerable to external political pressure or blackmail, if they at least have enough to eat. Furthermore, as asserted by van der Ploeg (2008), the peasantry builds autonomy at levels of aggregation that go beyond individual units of production, for example via territorial cooperatives.

Peasant autonomy

We propose, in an effort to unblock the debate in Latin American peasant movements on the issue of autonomy, an expanded concept of *peasant autonomy* to distinguish it from, although in dialogue with, the *autonomy of anarchism*, particularly *urban* anarchism.

Peasant autonomy can extend from the partial and relative levels of using agroecological practices instead of purchased chemical inputs, to having local and territorial self-government and self-defense. Peasant autonomy, we argue, is compatible with, and shares roots and social subjects with, indigenous autonomy. It should be able to dialogue with, and learn and be inspired by, Zapatista autonomy, even as peasant organizations demand better public policies for the countryside, and enter political "broad fronts against fascism," or even participate in an electoral campaign, without excessively ceding their (political) autonomy to politicians and their parties.

Peasant autonomy implies profound changes of anti-systemic nature, and puts on the table important axes of what for us might be termed the "peasant movement concept of autonomy," using the perspective of *sovereignty*: food sovereignty, territorial sovereignty, water sovereignty energy sovereignty, etc. In what follows we examine how the debate on peasant autonomy is being shaped, taking as a starting point the experience of the CLOC/LVC, the transnational social movement that brings together 115 Latin American organizations of indigenous people, peasants, afro-descendants, rural workers and traditional communities.

Autonomy as a proposal of struggle for rural social movements

Today rural social movements in Latin American find themselves in a kind of stalemate, fighting fascism without much correlation of forces in larger society, and calling for the return of politicians and governments who did little for them when they were in power. Those "progressive" governments betrayed many of their promises of agrarian reform, and negotiated and compromised with Capital to the detriment of the working class and the subjects of the countryside, and, on top of that, in several countries (Brazil, for example) they are currently sidelined from the national political dispute. During these governments, many movements suffered a relative demobilization of their membership, their political and organizing work with their social bases was neglected, and as a resulted they were weakened in rural communities and territories. Faced with this somewhat discouraging reading, we think that a new (or renewed, as the case may be) emphasis on the construction of local and territorial autonomies could offer the key so needed to unleash the realization of much of their potential as movements, both in the materiality of territories and communities, and in the accumulation of forces for larger political disputes.

In order to situate autonomy as a proposal of struggle for contemporary rural social movements in Latin America, it is important to review the context at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. Out of the brutality of neoliberalism a generation of social mobilization and social movements emerged. From the anti-neoliberal and anti-globalization revolts, governments sometimes labeled as "Left" or "progressive" emerged in different countries of the region, although a critical analysis characterizes them more as "neo-populist" and "neo-nationalist" (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017). In most cases, they did not manage to escape from the historical rent-seeking behavior of the State[19], and the rents of neo-extractivism allowed them to pursue a model based on class conciliation or class compromise —political-economic pacts with important fractions of national and transnational capital— sweetened with

---

[19] By rent-seeking behavior we refer both to a primary community to finance the state through taxes on exports (Sadik-Zada et al. 2019), leading to deindustrialization as well as the displacement of rural peoples, and the tendency of political parties to function as parasites that feed on public sector budgets (van Biezen and Kopecky 2007).

populist measures of social containment such as direct cash transfers to vulnerable sectors and the expansion of credit for consumption by the masses (Barbosa 2020; Rosset 2018; Bautista Segales 2020; Machado and Zibechi 2017; Gudynas 2015; Mazzeo 2018; Katz 2017; Svampa 2016). In the countryside, although peasant organizations obtained some important concessions (programs of public acquisition of food; credits and investments; educational programs; etc.), on the balance, the period saw enormous advances in the transnationalization of national economies (Barbosa 2020), in the total land area dedicated to the activities of extractive capital, including 'green deserts' of soybeans and sugar cane, mining concessions, windturbine parks, etc. (Rosset 2018), all signifying incursions and land grabbing in the territories of peasant, indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples (LVC 2017a,b), that is, the virtually unrestrained advance of what David Harvey (2004) calls "accumulation by dispossession".[20] As Giraldo (2020:62) put it, social movements and peasant organizations were "imprisoned by a Left that in its discourse fought the neoliberal phase of capitalism, but did not fight capitalism itself."

A large part of the Left, including a significant part of the rural social movements grouped in the CLOC/LVC, remained in one way or another implicated in the institutional political process, demanding and administering public support programs, receiving budgets and investments in schools and cooperatives, such that in some way they were "trapped" in the electoral process, tied to electoral political parties. On the one hand, they received concrete benefits, although very limited ones compared to the largesse of public sector subsidies to agribusiness and the mining and energy industries, and on the other hand, they suffered both the depredation of their lands, territories and natural assets, and a notable decrease in their mobilizing capacity. The individualized direct assistance programs demobilized their social bases, and their relationship with the institutional Left in power often meant leaving aside or toning down criticism and "radical" demands, so as not to "do the dirty work of the Right."

Many of the important cadre of the movements and organizations were involved in the tremendously bureaucratic administration of public programs for the countryside, to the extent that there was, in many or most cases, a net neglect of political-organizational work with the grassroots, and even greater neglect of

---

[20] "The continuation and proliferation of accumulation practices which Marx had treated of as "primitive" or "original" during the rise of capitalism. These include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations...; conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights...; suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade (which continues particularly in the sex industry); and usury, the national debt and, most devastating of all, the use of the credit system as a radical means of accumulation by dispossession," according to Harvey (2007: 159).

political work with other sectors with whom the movements should have been building alliances and doing grassroots and political education work as well. The *coup de grâce* was the re-emergence and, in many cases, taking of power by the far Right, a context in which the social movements and the Left in general now find themselves with very little capacity for mobilization to confront the Right and, in some countries, fascism. The decision to take advantage of public resources to create schools, agroecological processes, cooperatives, etc., had the unintended effect of generating or cementing the dependence of communities and organizations on the public sector and on "friendly" politicians, in such a way that, when the Right came to power and cut subsidies, budgets, credits, and purchase contracts committed to by governments, many processes today are on the verge of collapse, because they lack sufficient strength of their own, independent, and autonomous, to persist without support from governments (Rosset and Altieri 2017, 2018; Giraldo and McCune 2019). Giraldo and McCune (2019) conclude that the movements and organizations to some extent erred by choosing to build processes dependent on a government currently in power, relying more on what Spinoza (2001) calls *potestad* (external power) than on the construction of *potencia* (internal strength). For Vergara-Camus and Kay (2017: 434-435), "access to the state did not yield more concrete results than building autonomy from below and outside the state".

Giraldo (2020) points out that the leftist critics of the autonomy proposal argue for the non-viability of giving up the aspiration of acceding to the State and its public institutions, because they consider taking the State as the only viable political strategy for large-scale change. In this regard Marxist anthropologist Gilberto López and Rivas (2011) argues that the construction of territorial autonomy does not necessarily imply the renunciation of pressure on, and dialogue with, the State, although it does imply buidling and strengthening a collective subject more capable of confronting it.

Thus we question the apparently insurmountable nature of the contradictions between autonomous visions and the currents of Marxism and the "old Left" that are still hegemonic in many of the social movements. It is unfortunate that the struggle for the State and the proposal for autonomy are often seen as mutually exclusive, as antagonistic, and we argue that this apparent antagonism explains in large part a certain reluctance to address the issue and enter the debate. We suggest that overcoming this barrier and launching processes of territorial autonomy could be a very important way to overcome the stagnation that currently characterizes many movements and organizations, and allow them to reach much more of their potential. We can use an emblematic case like the MST as a hypothetical example.   As we pointed out, the MST already exhibits various facets of autonomy, and engages in constant struggle in the settlements to broaden and deepen these autonomies. However, the relationship with politicians and public officials of the institutional Left often slows down and undermines these autonomies, and conforming to the norms of state bureaucracies generates contradictions and new dependencies. It is impossible not to see the enormous size, capacity and strength of the MST as being

somehow held back, tied to and weakened by these relationships. It is hard not to imagine what an MST that was more autonomous of the State would look like, freed from the dysfunctional relationships that block the full expression and development of its potentialities.

We attach great importance to dismantling the apparent contradiction and mutual exclusivity between the focus on the one hand on the State, government, and public policies, and on the other, the autonomy proposal, at least in its versions of relative and partial autonomies. The Zapatistas have their very good reasons, based on Mexico's particular history, for rejecting any relationship with the State. But beyond them, in terms of the Latin American peasant movement, we believe that it is not a wrong to have interest in the State. Still, it is a mistake to make a fetish of the State, allowing electoral cycles to derail any progress toward autonomous territorial processes, and to make too many small and large concessions to politicians and political parties in order to attract programs and funding, which often disappoint (and typically generate dangerous levels of dependence). And it is a mistake to thereby neglect "taking care of one's own," at the grassroots, with political education work, and ignoring self-sufficiency and territorial and local autonomy. But *Yes!* to the fight against fascism, in the political sphere, *Yes!* to demanding other educational policies for the countryside (for example), but at the same time, *Yes!* to building autonomies in the territories.

On the positive side of the ledger, we can identify the tentative beginnings of dialogue between indigenous autonomy and the possibilities of peasant autonomy inside of CLOC/LVC. There is an tendency among the indigenous organizations of Guatemala, with the adhesion of some in Peru and Bolivia, around an ancestral sense of conceiving politics in a communal perspective. In the preparatory document for the 7th Congress of CLOC/LVC held in Cuba in 2019, the indigenous organizations emphasized the perspective of original peoples with respect to the contradictions of nation states, and laid out the pillars of their ontologies and epistemologies with regard to their conception of political struggle and the construction of a new civilizing model (CLOC, 2019: 49):[21]

> The contribution of original peoples does not constitute a third way between capitalism and socialism; on the contrary, the worldview, culture and values of original peoples cannot be realized in societies dominated by capitalism, which by nature has proved to be antagonistic to the vision and practice of indigenous peoples. What we are clearly proposing is that the richness of the struggles of original peoples, with a history of some hundreds of years, be combined with the richness of struggles for the construction of socialism, and in that very synthesis,

---

[21] Although in the preparatory document, these points were not addressed in the discussions held in the plenary sessions.

the socialism of the 21st century should be a communitarian socialism, with the roots and projection of the original peoples, and in harmony with Mother Nature.

Similarly, they argued, autonomy means breaking with the system of domination and oppression of capitalist, imperialist, colonial, racist and patriarchal society (CLOC, 2019: 45). Likewise, in the internal political debates in CLOC/LVC, the indigenous-based organizations spell out that autonomy cannot be seen just in the institutional terms of ILO Convention 169, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and similar instruments. In their words (CLOC, 2019:45), "it is not a matter of having an autonomy statute where original peoples govern themselves under [state] tutelage."

At the level of LVC International (not only Latin America), there is a very preliminary consensus, with autonomous, territorial tints, concerning some challenges and commitments facing the movement (LVC 2016: 7-9):

> • We have new approaches —such as the territorial approach— and new strategies, such as the construction of autonomous spaces, relative autonomy and self-sufficiency, and the massification of peoples' agroecology.

> • Rethink the relationship between our popular movements, the State, political parties and electoral processes, according to the different history and situation of each country.

> • Transform the struggle for land into the struggle for territory.

> • Deepen a more "autonomous" agroecology, based on the rescue of ancestral knowledge and on our own local resources and inputs.

We believe that CLOC and LVC are the ideal spaces for dialogue between autonomies and other visions and epistemes present in the movement (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2014; Rosset 2015). Not only the indigenous side contributes to this possible construction. Non-indigenous peasant organizations, such as the Small Farmers' Movement of Brazil (MPA), a member of the CLOC, point to peasant diversity and being a peasant as a "mode of being, mode of living and mode of producing," and demonstrate many elements in common with the principles of indigenous autonomy (da Silva 2014). According to the CLOC (2019:55), "peasant culture is based on daily relations with nature, on spirituality, on broad empirical knowledge, on orality and practice, on family and community, [and] on diversified relations of cooperation."

The territorial dimension is a common element between indigenous autonomy and peasant autonomy, that is, the collective right to belong to a territory as a space for the social and material reproduction of life, a place in constant dispute with Power, and a place for the construction of peoples' counterpower. Thus the territory is where it should be possible to reach a consensus among the varied

epistemes that make up the movement, a consensus in favor of autonomy proposals, and thus the importance of the challenge to "transform the struggle for land into the struggle for territory."

It is worth pointing out that the debate is at a very initial stage, and that many of the facets of autonomy present in peasant movements are more commonly referred to by them as "sovereignties" (food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, etc.). Therefore the similarities and differences between *sovereignties* and *autonomies* needs to be explored. However, little by little the term *autonomy* is emerging, especially in peasant discourses on defense of territorial and agroecology, and in educational projects and their own schools.

Conclusions

We have argued throughout this essay that rural social movements in Latin America are at a difficult moment in their history, caught between dependencies, heteronomies, demobilization, dysfunctional relationships with electoral processes, and the (re)ascent of populist and authoritarian Rights. This situation was made more evident by the pandemic, which at the same time revealed the autonomous strengths of the movements themselves.

Although we have argued extensively in terms of the fragility and weakness generated by dependence on external actors, another interesting way of addressing the difference between states of autonomy and states of heteronomy, to use the language of Spinoza (2001), is between *potentia* (internal power) and *potestas* (regulation by external power). The question is not only: *on whom do you depend?,* but also: *what is the power that you practice?* In this sense, we have argued that a more explicit "autonomy turn" could liberate much more of the potentialities (*potentia*) of the movements.

Faced with this negative panorama, we maintain that autonomy proposals offer a possible way out, to liberate the full potential of the movements, in the collective construction of alternatives in their communities and territories, and to accumulate forces and build strength in the "rearguard," in the "home bases," for both confrontation and negotiation with the State. Using two concrete examples - Zapatismo and the MST - we shed light on some key elements of the construction of autonomy not only in the context of the indigenous movement, but also among peasant organizations. In essence we observe, based on the axes that articulate the initiatives of varied organizations to confront the Covid-19 pandemic, that there is a set of factors related to socio-community life, the defense of territories, the legacy of ancestral knowledge, and the inward and outward oriented dynamics of the organizations, that lay the foundations for the construction and lived experience of the facets of autonomy. Thus we argue for the urgency to put indigenous and peasant organizations in dialogue, in order to overcome possible misunderstandings about autonomy.

We have observed that, at the level of leadership and coordinating bodies, there is a certain reluctance or fear of opening up the full debate on autonomy. Part of

this may come from the difficulty of dialoguing with orthodox Marxism, although there are great possibilities for dialogue with the heterodox currents of Marxism to build common perspectives. We believe that in the Latin American context, original peoples —much more than anarchists— are the vanguard of the autonomy proposal, although we have highlighted the historical dialogue between them.

In the CLOC/LVC the debate on autonomies is filtering in from below, from the subjects themselves, above all indigenous, but also peasants, and laterally from movement processes like as education and agroecology. The debate is initial, but at the same time it is very urgent, necessary and hopeful.

For a political and research agenda it will be fundamental to carry out specific studies to highlight and deepen our understanding of the elements that sustain the construction of peasant autonomy, including the identification of convergences and divergences in relation to autonomy as expressed in indigenous, Marxist and anarchist terms. We reaffirm that our intention in this essay is to invite dialogue based on our belief that in the current political context, it behoves the peasant movement – and its organic intellectuals inside and outside of the academy - to engage in a collective political process of reflection and re-thinking with regard to autonomy.

References

Alkmin, F.M. (2017). *Por uma geografia da autonomia territorial zapatista em Chiapas, México*. São Paulo: Humanitas/FAPESP.

Bakunin, M. (1990) *Statism and Anarchy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barbosa, L.P. (2015). *Educación, resistencia y movimientos sociales: la praxis educativo-política de los Sin Tierra y de los Zapatistas*. México: LIBRUNAM.

Barbosa, L.P. (2016). Educação rebelde e autônoma na *práxis* revolucionária zapatista, en Rebuá, Eduardo y Silva, Pedro (orgs). *Educação e filosofia da práxis: reflexões de início de século*. Rio de Janeiro: Letra Capital, p. 48-79.

Barbosa, L.P. (2017a). Educação do Campo [Education for and by the countryside] as a political project in the context of the struggle for land in Brazil, The Journal of Peasant Studies, 44:1, 118-143, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2015.1119120

Barbosa, L.P. (2017b). Legados e rupturas da Revolução Soviética desde as lutas sociais na América Latina. *Tensões Mundiais,* V. 13, n. 24, 107-138.

Barbosa, L.P. (2019). El *Popol Wuj* na contemporânea luta indígena Mesoamericana. *Tensões Mundiais,* V. 15, n. 28, 75-102.

Barbosa, L.P. (2020) Challenges facing Latin American peasant movements under progressive governments and new right-wing parties. *Latin America Perspectives*, 47(5): 94–112

Baronnet, B. (2010). Zapatismo y educación autónoma: de la rebelión a la dignidad indígena. *Soc. e Cult., Goiânia*, 13(2): 247-258.

Baronnet, B., Mora Bayo, M. and Stahler-Sholk, R. (eds). (2011). *Luchas "muy otras" Zapatismo y autonomía en las comunidades indígenas de Chiapas*. Mexico: CIESAS and UNACH.

Bartra, A. (2014) Tierra y Libertad: los campesinos rusos y la revolución según Lorena Paz Paredes. *Argumentos* 76: 279-283.

Borras, S.M. (2020) Agrarian social movements: The absurdly difficult but not impossible agenda of defeating right-wing populism and exploring a socialist future. Journal of Agrarian Change 20(1): 3-36.

Bautista Segales, R. (2020). Pensar el mundo desde Bolivia. Original available at: https://kaosenlared.net/pensar-el-mundo-desde-bolivia/ [Accessed 29 July 2020] English translation available at: https://greennetworkproject.org/en/2020/07/25/thinking-the-world-from-bolivia/ [Accessed 29 July 2020]

Burguete Cal y Mayor, A. (2018). La autonomía indígena: la polisemia de un concepto. A modo de prólogo, en López, Pavel y García-Guerrero, Luciana (orgs.) *Movimientos indígenas y autonomías en América Latina: escenarios de disputa y horizontes de posibilidad*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, p. 11-22.

Burguete Cal y Mayor, A. (*et. al.* (2011). *Movimientos indígenas en América Latina. Resistencias y nuevos modelos de integración*. Dinamarca: IWGIA.

Burguete Cal y Mayor, A. (2005). Una década de autonomías de facto en Chiapas (1994-2004): los límites, en Dávalos, Pablo (compilador). *Pueblos indígenas, Estado y Democracia*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, p. 239-278.

Castoriadis, C. (1999). *Figuras de lo pensable*. Madrid: Frónesis.

Chayanov, A.V. (1925-1974) *La organización de la unidad económica campesina*. Buenos Aires;: Nueva Visión.

Chayanov, A.V. 1986. *The Theory of Peasant Economy*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cortez-Gómez, R., Muñoz-Martínez, R., and Ponce-Jiménez, P. (2020). Vulnerabilidad estructural de los pueblos indígenas ante el COVID-19. *Boletín sobre COVID-19*, 1(7-8): 7-10.

Da Silva, V.I. (2014) *Classe Camponesa: modo de ser, de viver e de produzir*. Porto Alegre: Padre Josimo.

Dávalos, Pablo (2005). Movimientos indígenas en América Latina: el derecho a la palabra, en Dávalos, Pablo (compilador). *Pueblos indígenas, Estado y Democracia*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Díaz-Polanco, Héctor (1997). *La rebelión zapatista y la autonomía*. México: Siglo XXI Editores.

Dinerstein, A.C., (2015) *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organising Hope*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Engels, Friedrich. (1967) *The German Revolutions: The Peasant War in Germany, and Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Escobar, A. (2020). Desde abajo, por la izquierda y con la Tierra. *El País, Serie Desafíos Latinoamericanos*, 7, published online. Available at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/01/17/contrapuntos/1453037037_145303.html [Accessed on 30 september 2020]

Fox, Jonathan, and Gordillo, G. (1989) Between state and market: the campesinos' quest for autonomy. In: W. Cornelius, J. Gentleman, and P.H. Smth (eds.) *Mexico's Alternative Political Futures*. San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.

Gaudichaud, F., Webber, J., and Modonesi, M. (2019). *Los gobiernos progresistas latinoamericanos del siglo XXI. Ensayos de interpretación histórica*. Mexico: UNAM.

Gazolla, M., Schneider, S. 2007. A produção da autonomia: os "papéis" do autoconsumo na reprodução social dos agricultores familiares. *Revista Estudos Sociedade e Agricultura*, (15):89-122.

Giraldo, O.F. (2020) El desmoronamiento de la creencia en el Estado: buen vivir y autonomía de los pueblos. En Mora, A. (ed.), *Buenos vivires y transiciones. La vida dulce, la vida bella, la vida querida, la vida sabrosa, la vida buena, la vida en plenitud: convivir en armonía*. Bogotá: Uniminuto.

Giraldo, O.F., McCune, N. (2019). Can the state take agroecology to scale? Public policy experiences in agroecological territorialization from Latin America. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 43(7-8): 785-809.

Gudynas, E. (2015). La identidad del progresismo, su agotamiento y los relanzamientos de las izquierdas. *América Latina en Movimiento*, published online. Available at: https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/172855 [Accessed on 30 September 2020]

Gunderson, C. (2017) The communist roots of Zapatismo and the Zapatista uprising. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 16: 167-179.

Gunderson, C. (2018a) Autonomist marxist interpretations of the Zapatista uprising: a critique. Science & Society 82(4):531-554.

Gunderson, C. (2018b) Cycles of accumulation, cycles of struggle: the Zapatista revolt in world-systemic perspective. *Critical Sociology,* 45(4-5): 667-681.

Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, M., and Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin.

Harvey, D. (2004) The 'new' imperialism: accumulation by dispossession. *Socialist Register,* 40: 63–87.

Harvey, D. (2007) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, N. (1998). *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hellman, J.A. (1992) The study of new social movements in Latin America and the question of autonomy. In: A. Escobar and S. Alvarez (eds), *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Hobsbawm, E. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Holloway, J. (2015). Pensar la esperanza, pensar la crisis. En: R. Sandoval (ed.), *Pensar desde la Resistencia Anticapitalista y la Autonomía*. México: CIESAS, pp. 87-97.

Katz, C.I. (2017). Reestructuración productiva mundial: una nueva fase en la dialéctica de la dependencia. *Estudios Críticos del Desarrollo* 12(6): 87-124.

Kropotkin, P. (1978) *El apoyo mutuo, 1a ed. 1902*. Bilbao: Zero-ZYX.

La Vía Campesina (LVC). (2016a). International Conference of Agrarian Reform: Marabá Declaration. Available at: https://viacampesina.org/en/international-conference-of-agrarian-reform-declaration-of-maraba1/ [Accessed 28 July 2020]

La Vía Campesina (LVC). (2016b). Conferencia Internacional de la Reforma Agraria: Declaración de Marabá. Available at: https://viacampesina.org/es/conferencia-internacional-de-la-reforma-agraria-declaracion-de-maraba/ Accessed 28 July 2020]

La Vía Campesina (LVC). (2017a). *Struggles of La Via Campesina for Agrarian Reform and the Defense of Life, Land and Territories*. Harare: La Vía Campesina. Available at: https://viacampesina.org/en/struggles-la-via-campesina-agrarian-reform-defense-life-land-territories/ [Accessed 28 July 2020]

La Vía Campesina (LVC). (2017b). *Las Luchas de La Vía Campesina por la Reforma Agraria, la Defensa de la Vida, la Tierra y los Territorios*. Available at: https://viacampesina.org/es/las-luchas-la-via-campesina-la-reforma-agraria-la-defensa-la-vida-la-tierra-los-territorios/ [Accessed 28 July 2020]

Lomnitz-Adler, C. (2016) *El Regreso del Camarada Ricardo Flores Magón*. México, D.F: Ediciones Era.

López-Bárcena, Francisco (2007). *Autonomías indígenas en América Latina*. México: MC / Centro de Orientación y Asesoría a Pueblos Indígenas.

López y Rivas, G. (2011). Autonomías indígenas, poder y transformaciones sociales en México. En: Bajo Tierra Ediciones (eds.), *Pensar las autonomías Alternativas de emancipación al capital y el Estado*. México: Bajo Tierra, pp. 103-115.

Machado, D. and R. Zibechi (2017). *Cambiar el mundo desde arriba: Los límites del progresismo*. Mexico City: Bajo Tierra.

Maldonado, B. (2000). El indio y lo indio en el anarquismo magonista. Cuadernos del Sur 6(15): 115-137.

Mariátegui, J.C. (1928). *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*. México: ERA.

Mariátegui, J.C. (1982). *Obras. Tomo II*. La Habana: Casa de las Américas.

Martínez-Torres, M. E., and P. M. Rosset. 2010. La Vía Campesina: The birth and evolution of a transnational social movement. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 37 (1):149–75.

Martínez-Torres, M. E., P. M. Rosset. 2014. Diálogo de saberes in La Vía Campesina: food sovereignty and agroecology. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6):979–97.

Martins de Carvalho, M. (org.) (2014). Chayanov e o Campesinato. São Paulo: Expressão Popular.

Marx, C., y Engels, F. (1969). *Selected Works, Vol. One*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ [Accessed 3 August 2020]

Mazzeo, M. (2018). ¿Es posible un nuevo «ciclo progresista» en Nuestra América? *Rebelión*, published online. Available at: https://rebelion.org/es-posible-un-nuevo-ciclo-progresista-en-nuestra-america/ [Accessed on 30 September 2020]

Miranda, R.d.S., Cunha, L.H.H. (2013) A estrutura organizacional do MST: lógica política e lógica prática. *Caderno CRH*, 26(68): 363-376.

Modonesi, M. (2013). S*ubalternity, Antagonism, Autonomy: Constructing the Political Subject*. London: Pluto.

Mora, M. (2017). *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities*. Austin: University of Texas.

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). (2016) Jornada de Agroecologia reafirma necessidade de construir espaços de resistência e autonomia frente ao capital. Available at: https://mst.org.br/2016/08/02/jornada-de-agroecologia-reafirma-necessidade-de-construir-espacos-de-resistencia-e-autonomia-frente-ao-capital/ [Accessed 29 July 2020]

Paz Paredes, L. (2013) *Tierra y Libertad. Populismo y marxismo en las revueltas campesinas rusas de los siglos XIX y XX*. México:UAM-Xochimilco,

Prezia, Benedito (2015). *História da resistência indígena. 500 anos de luta*. São Paulo: Expressão Popular.

Rendón-Monzón, Juan José (2003). *La comunalidad. Modos de vida en los pueblos indios*. México: CONACULTA.

Roman-Alcalá, A. (2020) Agrarian anarchism and authoritarian populism: towards a more (state)critical 'critical agrarian studies.' *Journal of Peasant Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/03066150.2020.1755840

Rosset, P. (1994) Insurgent Mexico and the Global South: A new kind of guerrilla movement? *Institute for Food & Development Policy, Food First News &Views* May 1994.

Rosset, P. 2015. Epistemes rurales y la formaciónagroecológica en La Vía Campesina. *Ciencia y Tecnología Social* 2:1–10.

Rosset, P. 2018. América Latina y la conciliación de clases. La Jornada, 19 de agosto de 2020. Available at: https://www.jornada.com.mx/2018/08/19/opinion/022a1mun [Accessed 28 July 2020]

Rosset, P. (2020) Social movements, agroecology, and food sovereignty: research for, with, and by social movements, accompanying the collective reading and transformation of reality. *Misc. Publ. Mus. Zool., Univ. Mich., Special Vol., Publications of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Michigan Special Publication* 1:50-53. Available at: https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/153951/VandermeerTribute%20pub.pdf [Accessed 27 April 2021]

Rosset, P., Altieri M. (2017) *Agroecology: Science and Politics*. Halifax: Fernwood.

Rosset, P., Altieri M. (2018) *Agroecología: Ciencia y Política*. Quito: SOCLA.

Rosset, P. M., and M. E. Martínez-Torres. 2012. Rural social movements and agroecology: context, theory, and process. *Ecology and Society* 17:3. doi:10.5751/ES-05000-170317. Available at: https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol17/iss3/art17/ [Accessed July 30 2020]

Rosset, P., M.E. Martínez-Torres, M.E., and L. Hernández-Navarro. (2005). Zapatismo in the Movement of Movements. *Development*, 48(2): 35–41.

Sadik-Zada, E.R., Loewenstein, W., and Hasanli, Y. (2019) Commodity revenues, agricultural sector and the magnitude of deindustrialization: a novel multisector perspective. *Economies* 7, 113. Published online. Available at: https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7099/7/4/113 [Accessed on 30 September 2020]

Sevilla Guzmán, E (2006). *Desde el pensamiento social agrario*. Córdoba: ISEC.

Sevilla Guzmán, E (2011). *Sobre los orígenes de la agroecología en el pensamiento marxista y libertario*. La Paz: Plural editores.

Scoones, I., Edelman, M., Borras, S. M., Hall, R., Wolford, W., White, B. (2018). Emancipatory rural politics: Confronting authoritarian populism. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(1): 1–20.

Scott, J. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Scott, J. (2009). *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Shanin, T. (1970) Class and revolution. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1(2): 22-35.

Shanin, T. (1983). *Late Marx and the Russian Road*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Shanin, T. (2018a). Marxism and the vernacular revolutionary traditions. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(7), 1151-1176.

Shanin, T. (2018b). Late Marx and Russian peasants: an aside concerning 'deviations.' *Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(7), 1177-1182.

Spinoza, B. (2001). *Ethics*. Hertford, UK: Wordsworth Editions.

Stahler-Sholk, R. (2007). Resisting neoliberal homogenization: The Zapatista Autonomy Movement. *Latin American Perspectives*, 153: 48-63.

Starr, A., Martínez-Torres, M., Rosset, P. (2011). Participatory democracy in action: practices of the Zapatistas and the Movimento Sem Terra. *Latin American Perspectives* 38(176-1):102-119.

Svampa,. (2016) *Debates Latinoamericanos: Indianismo, Desarrollo, Dependencia y Populismo*. Buenos Aires: Edhasa.

Tilly, C. (2008) *Contentious Performances*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press.

van Biezen, I, and Kopecky, P. (2007). The state and the parties: public funding, public regulation and rent-seeking in contemporary democracies. Party Politics, 13(2): 235-254.

van der Ploeg, J.D. (2008) *The New Peasantries. Struggles for autonomy and sustainability in an era of empire and globalization*. London: Earthscan.

van der Ploeg, J.D. (2010) *Nuevos Campesinos: Campesinos e Imperios Alimentarios*. Madrid: Icaria.

Veltmeyer, H. (2019) Resistance, class struggle and social movements in Latin America: contemporary dynamics. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 46(6): 1264–1285.

Vergara-Camus, L. (2014). *Land and Freedom: The MST, the Zapatistas and Peasant Alternatives to Neoliberalism*. London: Zed Books.

Vergara-Camus, L., and Kay, C. (2017) The agrarian political economy of left-wing governments in Latin America: agribusiness, peasants, and the limits of neo-developmentalism. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(2): 415–437.

Wasserstrom, R. (1983) *Class and Society in Central Chiapas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wolf, E.R. (1966) *Peasants*. London: Prentice-Hall.

Wolf, E.R. (1969) *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harper & Row.

Zapatistas (2013). *Resistencia Autónoma. Cuaderno de texto de primer grado del curso "La libertad según l@s Zapatistas"*. Chiapas, México.

Zapatistas (2019). *Y rompimos el cerco. Comunicado del CCRI-CG del EZLN*. http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2019/08/17/comunicado-del-ccri-cg-del-ezln-y-rompimos-el-cerco-subcomandante-insurgente-moises/

About the authors

Peter M. Rosset, Ph.D. (corresponding author) is Professor-Researcher at the Department of Agriculture, Society and Environment of *El Colegio de la Frontera Sur* (ECOSUR) in Chiapas, Mexico; Visiting Professor BPV-FUNCAP at the Graduate Program in Sociology (PPGS) of the *Universidade Estadual do Ceará* (UECE), in Fortaleza, Brazil.; visiting professor at the Social Research Institute (CUSRI) of Chulalongkorn University in Thailand; former long-term staff of La Via Campesina International. Email prosset AT ecosur.mx

Lia Pinheiro Barbosa, Ph.D. is Professor and Chair of the Graduate Program in Sociology (PPGS) and Professor of the Intercampus Masters in Education and Pedagogy (MAIE) both at the *Universidade Estadual do Ceará* (UECE), in Fortaleza, Brazil. Member of the Collective of Educators of the Agrarian Reform of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) of Ceará, Brazil. Researcher of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO). Email: lia.barbosa AT uece.br

Acknowledgments

The Platform for People Affected by Mortgages, a transformation of power relations

Matías G. Durán Quintanar

Abstract

Since its emergence, the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH) has succeeded in preventing a large number of evictions as well as changing housing legislation in Catalonia. From 36 interviews based on Grounded Theory Methodology, a process was found where both the increased visibility of the Housing Conflict and the image damage that the PAH causes to banks and local governments are causing an inclusive social transformation in horizontal power relations within Catalonian housing policy. The purpose is to record some of the valuable knowledge that the PAH produces in a day by day basis, so other activists can use it to explore new organizing processes and researchers can evaluate limits and potentialities of social movements actions in alternative policy arenas.

Studies on relations between the state and social movements usually highlight an antagonistic position and a conflict dynamic wherein street protests are the most common of interactions (Zaremberg & Lucero, 2019). Other studies, by contrast, show that some social movements collaborate with the government so as to increase their chances at reaching their goals (Giugni & Florence, 1998). Tilly's *Dynamics of Contention* (2008), for example, details direct protest actions, while *Repertoires of Interaction* (Abers & Von Bülow, 2011) describe a set of actions that allow the collaboration between government institutions and social movements. Actions taken by the Platform for People Affected by Mortgage (PAH) since the 2008 economic crisis show that a strategic combination of both has been key to impact housing policy, its governance and starting a transformation in power relations.

One of the major negative impacts of the economic crisis has been the infringement on the human right to housing of a large portion of Spanish families. According to the General Judiciary Council, by 2005, 5 million people had lost their work and nearly 700,000 foreclosure procedures had started (Consejo General del Poder Judicial, 2015). Even in 2018, daily evictions averaged at 184 throughout Spain, and in Catalonia alone, 115,000 foreclosures were filed between 2008 and 2014, while evictions went from 4,538 evictions in 2007 to 9,229 nearly ten years later (PAH Barcelona, 2019).

Despite the troubling data showing the magnitude of the housing problem, governmental response has not been enough to stop the big number of evictions nor to control the opportunistic behavior of many financial institutions. Not only did legislative reforms passed in the first years after the crisis fail to halt evictions, but in fact they facilitated them (ODESC-PAH, 2013, p.47). The 2009, 2011 and 2013[1] reforms effectively expedited the evictions for rent and mortgage. For instance, the reforms allow the start of a foreclosure after missing only one monthly payment.

Another ineffective answer from the government was financial rescue (Recio, 2015). Banks such as Caixa Banc and Bankia received packages where their assets were placed in foreign investment funds with a discount of up to 40% (ODESC-PAH, 2015; Rusiñol, 2015a); in addition, the sale was billed as an 'asset management' fee, which allowed substantial tax savings without any governmental regulation (Rusiñol, 2015b).

The housing issue combined with ineffective public policies motivated the emergence of new social groups who contested government policies and actions. Because of the influence that the PAH has had on many of the legislative and public policy changes, it may be the most representative and legitimate social movement currently defending the human right to housing in Spain. The PAH has focused on tangible results such as: avoiding loss of home by stopping more than 2,000 evictions by 2018 (França 2018), incorporating 'payment in kind' deals with banks into mortgage legislation, and successfully promoting and guaranteeing access to housing for families facing eviction who lack any recourse from the government.

This work aims to substantively explain how the PAH has promoted a transformation in power relations in Catalonian housing policy through the study of strategic actions from the PAH to effectively prevent evictions and successfully change housing legislation. The analysis found that the success of the PAH stems from a process that makes housing conflict visible and damages the image of financial institutions and local governments. Findings show a transformation in power relations and a change in Catalan housing policy. The new relational context promoted by the PAH balances the protection of social rights vis-à-vis corporate rights, promotes self-organization for access to housing and establishes a more horizontal and inclusive governance of housing policy

This article has four sections. The first section highlights the aspects determining the advantages of grounded theory methodology for this work. Section two proposes issue awareness as *conflict visibility* exerted by the PAH

---

[1] For example, the law of flexibilization and promotion measures of the rental market in 2009, the law of procedural expediting measures of 2011, or the law of flexibilization and promotion measures of the rental market of 2013, commonly referred to as the 'Law of Express Eviction'. The reports of the Observatory on economic, social and cultural rights (ODESC) present an in-depth analysis of the limitations and negative effects that the responses of the different levels of government have had (ODESC-PAH 2013, 2015).

and details the fours conditions necessary to consolidate it and operate it. The third section addresses how *image damage* constitutes the largest impact that the PAH causes to financial institutions and local governments. Finally, the transformations promoted by the PAH are grouped into three main features that define a new diagram of power within housing policy: an externally induced metagovernance, a substitution of the governmental function and a shift towards a social and shared governance around housing.

Research method

This work used the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) (Glaser and Strauss 1967), especially Charmaz's constructivist approach (Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Charmaz 2008). GTM seeks to bring forth concepts that explain a certain social process, unlike conventional methods that seek to test an existing theory (Corbin and Strauss 2008). If the purpose of the research is to test some hypothesis constructed based on literature, it is most convenient to develop a model that allows for conclusions to be drawn about the degree to which various variables explain a given problem. If, on the contrary, what is sought is to investigate the reasons why a social phenomenon or process occurs, GTM is the most appropriate (Birk and Mills 2012).

The explanation power of this methodology is attributed to the fact that the resulting theory considers the experience and meaning of the actors themselves who are immersed in a problematic situation. Under this approach, the variables that determine a relevant problem for the researcher are not defined *a priori*; on the contrary, the research question is defined by taking into account what is relevant for the protagonists of the social field under research. The analysis then discovers concepts, their properties and dimensions, and discusses how these categories may vary in different situations.

This manuscript incorporates the constructivist approach of grounded theory because it recognizes that the understanding of social life and events in a given context are built on the meaning that people themselves assign to their behavior and actions. It also recognizes, on the one hand, the influence that the knowledge baggage of the researcher may have on the discovery of the resulting theory and, on the other hand, that interaction between the subjects interviewed and the researcher influences the construction of the categories found. This is what Charmaz refers to as *sensitive concepts*, which according to her, rather than limiting or adding bias to the research -a common critique from traditional grounded theorists-, they sharpen the attention put on data in such a way that they promote analysis of the interviews (Charmaz 2006, 17).

The analysis of interactions between the PAH, banks and local governments, uses the *microphysics of power* as a sensitive concept because it allows to explore the relational level of the actors and captures the dynamics of change as *mutations of the power diagrams* (Foucault 1999; Foucault 2009). Therefore, attention has been placed on locating the powers of resistance because '... only

by apprehending them, can the mutation of a diagram be understood. This is why a diagram has changed in favor of a new distribution of power relations' (G. Deleuze 2014, 402).

Preliminary explorations of the field allowed the verification of the existence of a change process in power relations that was inherent to housing policy, so the purpose of the research was to develop an explanation about:

• The way in which different new forces and resistances transform previously established working power relations.

• The actions and the impact caused by the PAH on the dynamics and behavior of the main actors in housing policy in Catalonia for the last fifteen years; and,

• The characteristics of the new distribution of power, i.e. the resulting power diagram (G. Deleuze 2014) of housing policy.

The proposed substantive theory, i.e. the *conflict visibility* and *image damage*, derives from the analysis of 36 open and in-depth interviews conducted between 2015 and 2016 with public administration officials, PAH activists, banking institution officials and other people involved in the housing emergency[2]. The spatial delimitation corresponds to the Autonomous Community of Catalonia since it is this level of government who has the capacity to develop housing policies. The urban area of Barcelona has considerable weight because: i) it is the seat of both regional and city governments, ii) it is the city where the PAH was born, and iii) because of the centrality that PAH-Barcelona has within the PAH network in all of Spain. The selection of the interviewees followed GTM *strategic sampling* guidelines and ended upon *theoretical saturation* of the obtained categories. Finally, the Qualitative Analysis software *atlas.ti* was used for transcription as well as data analysis.

The visibility of conflict as a driving force for change

The PAH launched its first Stop Evictions campaign in 2010[3] and from then on it has successfully prevented thousands of evictions, mediated numerous payment in kind contracts and accomplished social rent agreements between those affected and the banks. How is it that the Platform manages to promote changes that neither the financial institutions nor the governmental institutions had granted? The analysis carried out allows for the argument that the impact of the PAH on housing policy is explained by its ability to build and exert a force that lends visibility to both the conflict and those it deems accountable for it. The effect is *image damage* to local governments and financial institutions that facilitates negotiation for the benefit of those affected and consolidates changes

---

[2] The interviewees decided to keep their name anonymous in the textual quotes and only authorized references to their workplace.

[3] The PAH was founded in 2009 but it was not until February 2010 that the first 'Stop Evictions' took place in Bisbal del Penedés, Tarragona. For more details see França (2014)

in housing policy. In order to effectively cause *image damage* from the *visibility of the conflict*, the PAH must ensure that four necessary conditions are met: first, the building of a solidary activist collective; second, production of technical and pragmatic knowledge among all the activists; third, the establishment of an interdependent communication among territorial, media and social networks layers; and fourth, the dissemination of victories as a reinforcing mechanism of the internal and external social legitimacy of the platform.

Solidary activist collective

> There's nothing we can do on our own; there's nothing we can't do together.
>
> *Well-known PAH saying*

Before the existence of the PAH, each affected person had to bring their case to the bank individually and the vast majority would end up losing their home. Once people with existing foreclosure procedures came together, they quickly reaped results, such as the decrease in the number of evictions and changes to national mortgage regulation. Soon, the Platform understood the benefits of solidarity and the necessity for an internalized complaint culture across different media. This analysis identifies that the PAH has developed three practices in order to build a *solidary activist collective*, to wit: *consolidating citizen activism*, *ensuring group empowerment* and b*roadening its presence in external networks*.

The first practice, citizen activism, focuses on achieving an identity transformation in people so that they go from seeing themselves as victims of the financial system to agents who defend their right to housing. This individual empowerment gives people permission to rid themselves of feelings of guilt and irresponsibility, ever present in people facing eviction. For the PAH, it is indispensable to explain the causes of the economic crisis and to make it clear that the large number of non-payments correlates more with socioeconomic structures than with individual failures, as the official discourse and mass media have claimed.

Likewise, it is essential that the affected internalize the PAH's value framework. The values of the Platform are focused on changing current mortgage regulations, stopping loss of housing and, above all, promoting the human right to decent housing. Internalization is to be the result of daily meetings, committee work, campaigning where people gradually incorporate what is known as 'PAH language'.

Another important aspect of PAH citizen activism is the individual development of necessary defense and negotiation for each case. A constant mantra of the movement is that 'no one's fighting your battle if you haven't started fighting

yourself' since 'you are your own best defense'. As this requires members to de-identify as guilty and irresponsible parties, the PAH must provide each of them with sufficient knowledge and skills of housing legislation in order for them to follow up on their own cases. 'Its about giving you a toolbox so you can negotiate with the bank and the city, so you can find a solution by yourself.' (PAH spokesperson).

The second practice promoted by the PAH for collective solidarity is *group empowerment*. The strengthening of the PAH as a group is the natural result of individual transformation towards citizen activism. The group is empowered by the knowledge that each individual solution depends on the rest of them. Thus, success is always shared, as stated by a member:

> When the bank sees one person, they don't listen. When it's twenty or thirty people, the answer is different. You're well aware that even though this is your problem, it's the group that gives you strength. This understanding makes you get involved with the group and take action to fight others' evictions.

The third practice for building a solidary activist community is the promotion of group actions in alternative and external networks. Through this strategy, the PAH bonds with other citizen groups who also fight against the dominant, systemic vision of all economic, social and political activities. One of the activists says:

> What we have done is bonded with other city groups, entities and neighborhood associations. That is, we work hard to create a city network, which, more than an accomplishment in itself, is the root of all other accomplishments. When there's an eviction, four hundred of us will show up to lend support.

This practice seeks networks on two levels: local-territorial and international. The first establishes relationships with neighborhood groups involved in issues of sociopolitical vindication other than housing . This allows the group to broaden the scope of the complaint to make banks more visible when they are responsible for evictions. The second is a joint visibilization strategy, along with other right-to-housing organizations internationally. Specifically, the PAH is looking to reach the presence that financial institutions have at a global level, thus proving to citizens of other countries how these banks are violating the human right to housing of Spanish families.

The creation of technical and practical knowledge

This condition is achieved by a collaborative alliance between the Observatory for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ODESC) and the PAH through a loop

where, on the one hand, ODESC produces technical and legal knowledge, based on the needs of those affected; and on the other, the Platform lends ODESC legitimacy and media presence in order to influence the public agenda. This joint collaboration facilitates institutional level transformations.
The strength in the production of knowledge generated by this loop is the feedback from the practical and legal experience. As a former worker from ODESC shows, at the beginning of the first decade of the century it was clear that the issue of housing would require grassroots support:

> ODESC had been working on defending social rights since the year 2000 and had identified housing as one of the most affected rights that surely would need more support. The Observatory wanted to boost the housing program and started doing research. Therefore, it was necessary to create a space for the PAH. It was not an accident, we saw the need beyond mere office work, we needed to generate assembly, to create a collective and all the other work that has been done in the PAH.

The first of the collaborative axes is promoted by the ODESC based on the study and systematization of knowledge based on a human rights perspective. The technical and legal contribution is found in the technical-regulatory instruments that have impacted housing policy, for example: the legal figure of payment in kind, the citizen bill both at the state and regional level promoted by the PAH in 2013 and 2015, respectively, or the motions presented to city councils with the goal of imposing sanctions on those financial entities that kept housing vacant and under financial speculation.

The second axis corresponds to the PAH and although the substantive content of all these instruments comes from the ODESC, its defense and positioning on institutional orbits has been done by the Platform. Here, the PAH provides for three interconnected aspects: first, it ensures that the human right to housing has an important level of exposure within the network of actors involved in housing policy; second, it makes impact on the Catalonian Congress' political agenda possible; and third, it expands ODESC's legitimacy by positioning it as an actor with practical experience, rather than just technical and specialized knowledge.

This feedback loop makes the PAH's transformative strategy effective. Firstly, it sets specific short and long-range goals within the Platform, such as, specific legislation on payment in kind and a deep reform of mortgage law, respectively. Secondly, it consolidates broad social legitimacy by incorporating human rights in its actions and discourse. The relevance is that they give visibility to the tension between private rights that benefit a few, and human and social rights that should benefit everyone. Both facilitate the understanding of the Platform's goals among those affected and give strategic meaning to their actions.

Layer-based communication

The layered communication strategy carried out by the PAH is the third necessary condition to make the housing conflict visible. It is achieved through three interconnected layers: territorial, media and social media.

The territorial layer is developed by the physical presence of those affected in a specific space, such as a bank occupation and has a double purpose: first, it points a finger at those responsible for the economic crisis and the loss of homes, and second, it demonstrates the vulnerability of affected families, the type of problem they face, and how those affected do not meet the profile of criminals or irresponsible people touted by official discourse since the advent of the crisis. To wit, an impression from a journalist from weekly paper La Directa:

> Yes, it is true that disobedience is more visible and therefore more annoying and effective. I understand that they are looking for public spaces with foot traffic since (protesters) are not just trying to be noticed by the institutions, but by passersby. They want pedestrians to see the kind of people who are protesting and what they are asking for. That is to say, they want the population to be able to see them by themselves.

The second layer of communication, the media, has been essential in finding a viable opportunity to break from the official version and changing public perception. As Rovira (2017, 87) points out, this is possible only when the message of the movement breaks into the public domain. In that regard, the outcome of negotiations with banks and governments depends very much on the media coverage achieved, so the PAH seeks that the coverage not only happens in the media with pre-existing editorial lines favouring right to housing, but across larger, more conventional media, even if many of these have among their shareholders capitals related to banking[4]. Some journalists highlight the importance of this PAH strategy: 'I think they are the first activists who do not see the media as enemies but as allies' (El País journalist).

This feature of interaction with the mainstream media fits well within the *repertoires of interaction*, specifically with the proximity policies in which the social movement executes a kind of lobby with the Executive and Legislative power (Abers, Serafim, and Tatagiba 2014, 333). However, the case of the PAH adds variation to the concept as it extends the influence on the mass media. This kind of alliance promoted by the PAH has the particularity that it is not established with the global media conglomerate but instead through contact with specific journalists. To this end, the PAH spokespeople approach individuals directly through relational-dynamics-based actions that yield bonds

---

[4] Such as newspapers as El País or La Vanguardia in which among its shareholders are people linked to banking. A text that delves into this topic is *Els senyors del boom* de Garcia Fàbrega (2014).

of trust and have been very effective for them. As an Official of the housing area of Barcelona City Council says:

> They stablish a keen alliance with the press. Unlike other social movements that have been very reluctant and elusive towards a media presence, the PAH made a point of approaching the media, journalists, TV3, all public and private chains. They have always acted in a friendly and respectful manner so that their message has also come across as such. From the get-go, they forged an alliance.

This proximity strategy requires that the mainstream media not be labelled as enemies, but as actors who, despite having particular interests and very specific rationalities, can also be useful in the construction of public opinion.

> People get their news from big media around 90% of the time, so you can't give up the main channel of information simply because it is controlled by those you consider bad. I believe the PAH's strategy, one of their greatest successes, is being able to invest (in these relationships) and trying to use the media to their advantage, not the other way around.
>
> Former housing manager of the city council of Barcelona.

Finally, the PAH's social media layer takes advantage of information technologies (ITs) in their political communication strategy, allowing them a broad range of media coverage without relying exclusively on traditional media as well as protecting their speech from erasure by some of them. In addition, they are able to reach people who consume their news from non-traditional media and, finally, they can challenge biased messages from public or private actors. In this case, instead of a substitute, social media provide an alternative for the mainstream media to have larger access to the Platform. This is clear to both activists and journalists:

> The PAH's social media are continuously communicating, because sometimes things happen so fast that that's the only way we can put out information. And the press pays attention to these messages and they come to cover us.
>
> Former PAH spokesperson

> (Social media) make you visible, they alert you of actions taken, they set the agenda and they are a useful tool, but they cannot replace the other (traditional media).
>
> Journalist of La Directa.

Social media have become a direct and effective means of communication for the PAH. One example is the constant Twitter denouncing of instances of energy poverty by the PAH and other groups such as the Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE). The activists themselves highlight the effectiveness of the mechanism because it makes culprits visible and leads to concrete solution:

> When you get a case of shutting off a person's utilities, we cannot wait 15 days. Normally, we start a twitter campaign where we tag the energy companies and the government, the City Council involved in the issue, and within a few hours the company contacts us, asks us for the data and cancels the shutoff. They DM us on Twitter, asking us to give them the person's information'. We put them in contact, and they solve it.
>
> Spokesman of the Alliance against Energy Poverty

Another benefit of the social media layer is the 'virality' of videos where the PAH explains, in plain language, the problems they're fighting (www.youtube.com/PAH). The rapid spread and the number of views has proven a successful strategy for the spread of information and positions that contradict the official discourse from the banks.

> The PAH uses social media to challenge other media. A medium can no longer say something outrageous without being questioned or ridiculed. Back in the day, if you wanted to question a journalist, you had to write a letter to the editor, which they would never publish.
>
> Alternativas Económicas Magazine journalist

The PAH's IT strategies are an example of 'cyberinteractions' used by contemporary social movements, which are relevant as they increase the chances at an impact on the political and institutional arena (Ortiz Galindo 2019). As an example of the effervescence created by the PAH on Twitter, the following image shows the Platform's mobilization against BBVA in February 2016 after the bank refused to negotiate any mortgage alternative or social rent. A 'swarm effect' (Toret Medina et al., 2015) is visible from all communities and similar collectives against BBVA.
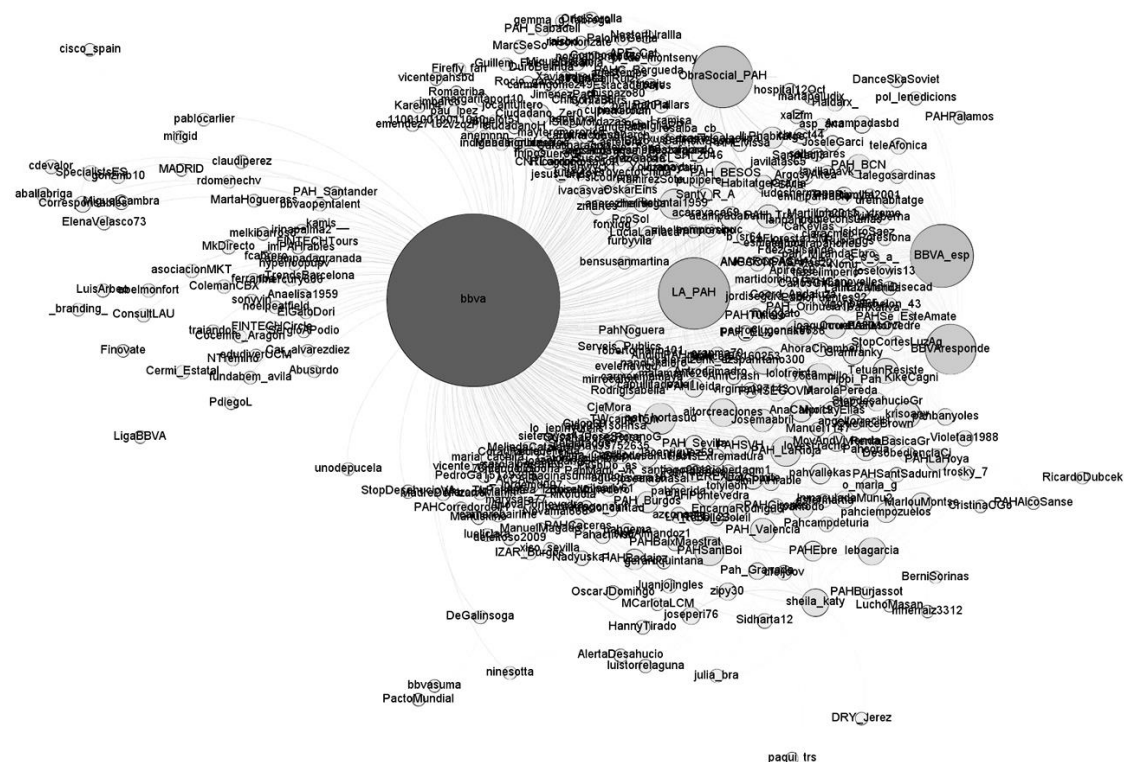
Source: Self-made based on Hashtag #BBVAresponde. The graph represents the recording of 3,000 tweets. Data collection was done with the help of the Flocker platform and was worked on Gephi software. The graphic is the result of the application of the algorithm to show the degree of centrality.

Victory broadcasting

This is the fourth necessary condition for *visibility of the conflict* force and it has two effects. First, some of the agreements secured by the PAH with city governments and financial institutions. By depicting them as victories, the PAH portrays itself as capable in dealing with these actors. The most well-known examples are payment in kind and social rent after foreclosure. These deals usually happen informally and focus on practicality, as they are discrete, but factual commitments. They are not publicized in the press, as governments are supposed to enforce the right to housing. However, the PAH broadcasts them as triumphs, as this spreads word of their 'power to affect' (Gilles Deleuze, 2014) administrations and achieve 'small, great victories'.

The second effect of the victory broadcasting directly strengthens the legitimacy of the PAH both inwards and outwards. By presenting the agreements achieved as victories, the Platform can build a perception of success and effectiveness in the fulfillment of their objectives, of the exercise of a force powerful enough to enforce agreements with the public administrations and financial institutions,

and the exercise of a new power capable of resisting and transforming the established power relations.

> The PAH publishes everything as a victory, and this is very relevant because of the empowerment it produces. Because people from outside see this and say: 'they are doing many things', things that other movements can't. Inside the PAH as well, people feel that what they are doing is useful and effective.
>
> El Diario.es journalist

One example is the promotion of Law 24/2015 as a Popular Legislative Initiative (ILP), headed by the PAH at both the national and regional levels. The internal organization required in order to present the bill to legislators, not only strengthened the organizing processes (Arellano et al. 2013; March 2007) within the movement, but also gave them a sense of collective identity with the power to change the public agenda that permeated the movement. According to surveys published in El País (Garea 2013) from private polling institution Metroscopía, 81% of citizens trusted the PAH more than politicians. And in the specific case of the ILP presented to the Spanish parliament, not only was it backed by 1.5 million signatures, but in general, nine out of ten people agreed with the measures proposed by the platform.

> The PAH had such social legitimacy that it entered the public and private agenda, around the time when signatures were being collected for the national ILP bill. There's a boom happening for these things. Big Media will always depend on their audience, if not for journalistic reasons, then at least for economic reasons.
>
> El diario.es journalist

To sum up, the four conditions necessary to build and exercise *conflict visibility* are: i) the existence of an activist citizen collective, ii) the creation of technical and practical knowledge, iii) communication by territorial, traditional and social media layers and, iv) victory broadcasting. None of them can individually consolidate the institutional and behavioral changes of the different actors involved in housing policy. In addition to their existence and effectiveness, a successful interaction between them is also required due to their interdependence. When the PAH is able to create these four conditions, it can exercise *visibility of the conflict*: a force that changes power relations in Catalonian housing policy.

Image damage as a consequence of conflict visibility

Conflict visibility is only the first part of the transformation of power relations in Catalonia's housing policy. When the PAH manages to meet all these

conditions, the resulting force necessarily has an effect that facilitates power transformations: damage to the image of the bank's corporate brand or a political cost to governments. The analysis of the interviews shows that the effectiveness of *image damage* relies on, first, the characterization of the financial sector as criminally guilty for the crisis and the violation of the rights of thousands of Spanish families; and second, evidencing the government agencies' insolvency government agencies regarding the housing emergency, as well as their and their inability to guarantee the human right to housing.

Image damage happens through peaceful civil disobedience. The best-known example are the so-called occupations, or 'temporary takeovers' by protestors of the offices of financial institutions that refuse to find a favourable solution for affected families. Usually, the bank is unwilling to accept payment in kind, social rents or suspend evictions, which motivates the affected to occupy bank branches in very visible points of the city in order for *conflict visibility* to cause *image damage* to the bank by showing their refusal to listen to the socially vulnerable and their disinterest in human rights.

Some interviewed bank officials shared this perception about the impact and effectiveness of *image damage* in order to reach agreements that did not happen before *conflict visibility*.

> I believe banks are having a bad time. Some, more than others, have made some changes to their payment-in-kind policies. These days banks rarely evict people but instead offer alternatives. If I am discussing a Payment-in-kind with you, but I do not have much faith in it and my bosses have told me not to favor this form of payment, I'll hold off on it, but if you come here and occupy my branch, you have already got an agreement.
>
> Banking Officer

The same logic and procedure apply to public administrations. For example, when a family is going to be evicted and the owner is a small holder[5], the PAH usually directs the force of *conflict visibility* towards public administrations by demanding their obligation to enforce the right to housing for all people. Through the occupation of government offices, the PAH forces the establishment of a new interaction with government officials that ends in concrete agreements. The following quote refers to the occupation that PAH-Barcelona held in the Sants delegation in July 2014:

> We occupy (the offices) and ask them to call the delegate. We get their phone number, call them, they blow us off and hang up. They try to wear us down. We

---

[5] A small holder is someone who rents out a flat to live. When this is the case, the actions of the PAH are not oriented towards this person as their only source of income would be affected. On the contrary, the actions are directed to public administrations.

spend hours there with no food. They card us, then they threaten to arrest us, to forcibly remove us, legal repercussions, blah-blah-blah. They try to wear us down or scare us away. Since we're not afraid, we stay. We tell them 'oh they aren't showing?' There's 60 people downstairs and 11 people up here. We got a lot of coverage in the media. Is that what you want? The political cost is much higher than the economic cost of fixing this. We're here because you did wrong. In the end, they show up.

Former PAH-Barcelona spokesperson

A relevant aspect of the effectiveness of *image damage* is that it makes public administrations leave their formal-legal action orbit for a practical and informal one. It is there that the Platform can get government to change their position to one of openness to negotiation. The commitments made by officials are not legally and rationally bureaucratic as usual government action is. On the contrary, they need to leave the formal orbit in order to find an acceptable and practical solution for both parties. This juncture is an expression of 'liminal situations' that officials and politicians face constantly (Pina E Cunha & Cabral-Cardoso, 2006). Under these circumstances, informal action is required in order to do right. Activists understand this and actively benefit from it through practices and strategy:

> We sit with the councilor of Sants and make them act outside of the administration's regular allocation channels. (We say) you have a public commitment. You are violating the rights of children and you cannot tell us you have no legal competency. Human rights are not a matter of competency. Then we make him take an exceptional measure, which he himself recognizes as exceptional, so he does not want to sign any papers. He makes a verbal commitment to look for an apartment in the neighbourhood, lease and subsidize the rent. He keeps his word because he's got no choice.
>
> Former PAH-Barcelona spokesperson.

In summary, *conflict visibility* as a driving force for change, and the resulting Image damage, constitute a transformative process in housing policy and motivate new relationships, new agreements and, in short, a new distribution in the exercise of power. Thanks to the deployment of the *conflict visibility - image damage* dyad, a high number of evictions have been prevented, social rents have been achieved for vulnerable families and numerous payments in kind have been accepted by the banking institutions.

Conclusions: a new power diagram in Catalonia's housing policy

The study of relations between the State and social movements commonly assumes conflict between both. That is why protests have been the common means to force the government into dialogue. However, some social movements in recent years have innovated in the form and content of their relationship with the State, and thus increased their capacity to influence public policy.

The impact the PAH has had in Catalonian housing is evidence of the new set of strategies that goes beyond contentious routines (Tilly, 1978, 2008) but also displays a series of interaction routines (Abers, Serafim, & Tatagiba, 2014) with local governments and financial institutions. The analysis shows that the strategic combination of both routines has been key to the success of initiating a transformation of power relations around Catalonian housing policy. Direct and traditional protest actions, such as occupations at banks and government offices still occupy an important place, but at the same time, they are complemented by the PAH's choice to appear in formal spaces of citizen participation in local governments. Examples of these are their participation in the Municipal Council of Social Welfare of Barcelona or their awareness and training campaigns for Catalonian city officials of Law 24/2015.

The process through which the PAH has promoted transformation can be understood as the exercise of a new resistance, capable of redistributing existing power, that is, establishing a new power diagram (Foucault, 1999; Deleuze, 2014). The conclusion is that *conflict visibility* and *image damage* caused by the PAH to banks and government institutions have resulted in a transformation of power relations with social, inclusive and horizontal features in housing policy-wise, its governance and its legislative framework. There are three characteristics that summarize the new power diagram and give an account of a new way in which the PAH interacts with local governments: an externally-induced metagovernance, a substitution of government function and the shift towards a social and shared governance. Figure 2 summarizes the main argument.

Transformative process in housingpower relations in Catalonia
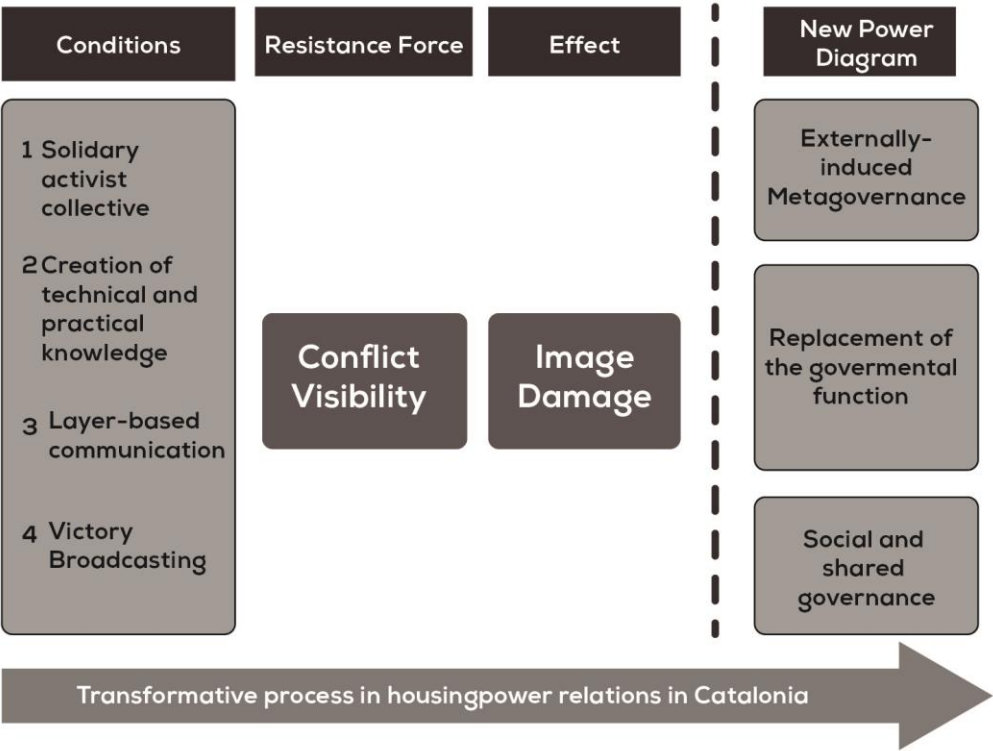
Externally-induced metagovernance

The literature on policy networks refers to meta-governance as a quality of self-regulation that arises as a check on opportunistic behaviors as well as a way to achieve the purposes of integration (Sørensen & Torfing, 2008). The role of meta-governor can be performed by any of the network participants. However,

it is commonly governments that occupy this role since they have the legal and economic resources to execute different strategic actions.

Catalonian housing policy is designed and executed by different public, private and social actors, so that it can be understood as a policy network (Heclo 1990; Marsh & Rhodes 1992; Smith 1993). As such, it shows situations that fit the characteristics described by the literature on governance and other characteristics with some variation. While it is true that current policy possesses some features of metagovernance exerted by local governments in the face of the problem of housing emergency, unlike what the literature implies, the role of meta-governor and the means for execution of metagovernance have not been an internal response from the network. On the contrary, it has been the result of practices carried out by actors considered external, such as the PAH. It is a process consisting of two types of strategies, a so-called "hard strategy" and another called "soft strategy".

Hard strategy is the process that the PAH uses in order to get governments to regulate various aspects that have caused housing problems. As a result of *conflict visibility* and *image damage*, the PAH has achieved the discussion and approval of new laws in such a way that it has sanctioned aspects not previously considered. An example are the measures contained in Law 24/2015 that require the provision of social rents by administrations to vulnerable families facing eviction processes. The soft strategy, on the other hand, is based on mediation between the parties and their interests. It is a process where PAH makes governments promote mediation between government authorities, banks and those affected in order to find "win-win" solutions. As an effect of *image damage*, the PAH manages to get administrations to informally establish communication channels to facilitate collaboration opportunities and allow overcoming stagnation and relational confrontation, all of which results in concrete and effective solutions.

In summary, externally-induced metagovernance allows to verify that governments have used different means to intervene as meta-governors in the housing problem. However, the strategies have not been a response from within the network, but, on the contrary, the regulatory and mediating actions of the conflict have been a consequence of the practices exercised by the PAH.

Replacement of the governmental function

This second feature refers to a reaction by those affected seeking the solutions that the administrations had not offered. Through dynamics of self-organization and social innovation, the PAH has achieved that financial institutions, and even energy and gas suppliers, fulfill a social responsibility, on the one hand, and that their actions guarantee the human right to housing, on the other. Both situations exemplify a government substitution by the PAH and in that sense introduce a *new institutional framework* (Blanco, Fleury, and Subirats 2012) in the face of inaction by local governments.

The social function required of companies in Catalonia has a legal basis in the Law 18/2007 on the right to housing. The housing emergency has shown not only the fault of financial institutions and providers of utilities in this regard, but also the lack of government regulation. Consequently, the PAH has had an impact so that private actors and governments fulfill their social responsibility. For example, the occasions when the platform has achieved that gas and energy suppliers themselves assume the debt coverage of families in vulnerable conditions. A third example is the elaboration, by the PAH itself, of a vacant house registry as a basis for the government to establish sanctions on entities that speculate on these empty properties. These examples prove how the PAH has defended the social interest, and in that sense has filled a void left by public institutions.

Another aspect where the Platform replaces the government's function is in guaranteeing the Human Right to housing through the provision of public housing. The PAH exercises a series of pragmatic and informal actions that are established as an explicit censure of the violation of human rights made by private entities and insufficient guarantee from public institutions. The clearest example is the so-called 'PAH Social Work' which, by occupying empty homes seized by banks, provides housing for families in housing emergencies and thus contributes to the solution of the problem[6]. The practice of occupation carried out by the PAH constitutes a veritable force of resistance because it is proposed and executed from the social, legal and media legitimacy granted by the human right to housing.

Social and shared governance

Until a few years after the 2008 crisis, housing policy decisions were made by local governments, banks and housing developers. In addition, the agreements were made behind closed doors, away from the public[7]. As a result of *conflict visibility* and *image damage*, the PAH managed to transform governance of the housing issue in Catalonia; their actions opened up the decision-making process, created new ones and added new actors to the housing policy network.

The approval of the popular legislative bill promoted by the PAH in Catalonia, Law 24/2015, can be considered a turning point in the governance of the housing issue in Catalonia. The ordinance constituted a new framework for interaction between local governments, PAH and other social organizations such as the Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE), and even the involvement of

---

[6] The social work of the PAH recovers empty blocks or flats that are in the hands of financial institutions, investment funds or large holders, but that come from evicted families. The purpose is that families in conditions of social exclusion and without alternative housing by the administrations, can have the certainty of having a flat to live and cover all their social needs.
[7] This stage corresponds to the Spanish model of housing production driven in the so-called expansive phase. For more details of its dynamics and harmful effects, review Alguacil et al. 2013; Terrones 2015; or Naredo 2004.

financial institutions. This law promotes a new governance of open, inclusive, participatory social orientation, that is to say, a socially shared governance.

The law resulted in the emergence and reactivation of new governance spaces such as the Consell Social de l'Habitatge de Barcelona (CSHB) which representatives of financial attended for the first-time. Thanks to these new decision-making spaces and the contribution of new participants, new definitions of the problem could be included, as well as new solution proposals with effective and concrete results such as: training for municipal officials developed between the PAH and the Generalitat -Executive government of Catalonia-, the Development of guidelines and protocols for joint action, creation and reform of housing emergency regulations or housing assignment agreements signed between governments and financial institutions.

The activities that took place from the presentation of the ILP to the deployment of its contents once it became Law 24/2015, meant an iteration of meetings in such a way that the participants agree to be at the forefront of developing a new housing policy with new features of inclusiveness and social legitimacy. In the words of an official of the regional housing agency Habitat of the Government of the Generalitat, "This is a new issue for the administration as well. I have the satisfaction (…) of living an exciting time, of re-defining what social housing is from the ground up". Even Law 24/2015 created a sense of inclusion and participation for the PAH: "The Platforms are now participating in designing public housing policy at the local level", said a former PAH-Barcelona spokesperson. Finally, a governance that encourages changes to mortgage regulations includes a more legitimate dynamic as it incorporates the voices of previously excluded new actors and contains new alternatives for effective results in the fight to stop the loss of housing for vulnerable and affected families by the 2008 crisis.

Final reflection

The Platform for People Affected by Mortgage (PAH) has become one of the most successful social movements in the last 20 years in Spain. Innovative actions of protest and interaction with government and banks, the achievement of concrete goals, and a malleable and effective organizational process, are distinctive features of this social movement constituted by citizens of diverse ideology, nationality and economic level. With every strategic action they implement, they produce valuable knowledge relating to the organizing process of social movements. This research work aims to record and systematize some of the practical knowledge they deliver day by day, with the purpose of other social movements can practice some of the effective PAH strategies in their own arenas.

The use of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) made the theory of *conflict visibility* and *image damage* constructed by the PAH to change the distribution of power in Catalonia emerge. GTM fit well because the idea from the beginning

was to record some of the practical knowledge that the PAH had created and practiced from streets and with great innovation. The impact has meant the beginning of a socially inclusive transformation of horizontal power relations in the governance of housing policy and its legislative reforms. This analysis is an effort to move from an empirical description and generalization to a substantive theory (Charmaz 2006, 142). The effectiveness of *conflict visibility* and *image damage* is that it incorporates protest actions coinciding with what the literature of social movements calls *contentious routines* (Tilly 1978; 2008) and deploys *interaction routines* (Abers, Serafim, and Tatagiba 2014) that facilitate collaborative relationships with local governments.

For all these reasons, this work considers that *conflict visibility* is a useful tool so activists and researchers can contrast the limits and potentialities that social movements have had or may have in their struggle to transform power relations within their respective policy arenas. It is expected that with its application in other substantive areas, the model will reach saturation that expands its explanatory power.

References

Abers, Rebecca & Marisa Von Bülow. 2011. "Movimentos sociais na teoria e na prática: como estudar o ativismo através da fronteira entre Estado e sociedade?" *Sociologias* 28.52-84.

Abers, Rebecca, Lizandra Serafim, & Luciana Tatagiba. 2014. "Repertórios de interação estado-sociedade em um estado heterogêneo: a experiência na Era Lula". *Dados* 57:2.325-357.

Alguacil, Aitana, Julio Alguacil, Juan Arasanz, Guillem Fernández, José León Paniagua, Sonia Olea, & Víctor Renes Ayala. 2013. La Vivienda en España en el siglo XXI : diagnóstico del modelo residencial y propuestas para otra política de vivienda. C Española y F Foessa, Eds.

Arellano, David, David Demortain, Christian Rouillard, & Jean Claude Thoenig. 2013. "Bringing Public Organization and Organizing Back in". *Organization Studies* 34:2.145.

Birk, Melanie & Jane Mills. 2012. Grounded Theory: a practical guide. London: SAGE.

Bryant, Antony & Kathy Charmaz. 2007. The SAGE handbook of grounded theory. Calif.: SAGE.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Constructing grounded theory : a practical guide through qualitative analysis. Thousand Oaks : SAGE.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2008. "Constructionism and Grounded Theory Method" Pp. 397-413 in *Handbook of constructionist research* edited by Holstein James A. & Jaber F. Gubrium. New York: The Guilford Press.

Consejo General del Poder Judicial. 2015. *Estadística sobre ejecuciones hipotecaria*. http://www.poderjudicial.es/cgpj/es/Temas/Estadistica-Judicial/Estadistica-por-temas/Datos-penales--civiles-y-laborales/Civil-y-laboral/Estadistica-sobre-Ejecuciones-Hipotecarias/ (Last accesed date: april 13, 2020)

Corbin, Juliet & Anselm L. Strauss. 2008. Basics of qualitative research :techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. Thousand Oaks etc.: Sage.

Deleuze, Gilles. 2014. El Poder. Curso sobre Foucault. Buenos Aires: Cactus.

Foucault, Michel. 1999. Estrategias de Poder. Obras esenciales Volumen II. Barcelona: Paidós.

Foucault, Michel. 2009. Vigilar y castigar : nacimiento de la prisión. México, D.F. : Siglo Veintiuno.

França, Joao. 2014. El primer Stop Desahucios: La PAH ha significado conservar mi casa y que mi hijo tenga un techo. *El Diario*. https://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/Recuerdo-Stop-Desahucios-PAH-significado_0_231326883.html (Last accesed date: April 13, 2020).

Garcia Fàbrega, Gemma. 2014. Els senyors del boom : [qui i com va fer diners durant la bombolla immobiliària als Països Catalans]. Barcelona: Saldonar.

Garea, Fernando. 2013. "Los españoles confían mucho más en los movimientos sociales que en los políticos". EL PAÍS. http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2013/03/16/actualidad/1363470095_882443.html (Last Accesed date: April 13, 2020)

Giugni, Marco & Passy Florence. 1998. "Social Movements and Policy Change: Direct, Mediated, or Joint Effect?". Working Paper No. 48, Collective Behavior and Social Movements series, American Sociological Association.

Glaser, Barney G. & Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine.

Heclo, Hugh. 1990. "Issue networks and the executive establishment". *The New american political system* de King Anthony,. Washington, D.C.: Aei Press.

March, James G. 2007. "The study of organizations and organizing since 1945". *Organization Studies* 28.9-19.

Marsh, D. & R.A.W. Rhodes. 1992. Policy networks in british government. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Naredo, José Manuel. 2004. "Perspectivas de la vivienda". *Revistas ICE* 815:Mayo-Junio.143-154.

ODESC-PAH. 2013. Emergencia Habitacional en el estado Español. Barcelona.

ODESC-PAH. 2015. Emergenia habitacional en Cataluña. Barcelona.

Ortiz Galindo, Rocío. 2019. "Cibermovimientos sociales y receptividad política. Ciberacciones Trending Topi y peticiones online en el contexto del 15-M". *AdComunica* 17. 119-145.

PAH Barcelona. 2019. El PP: Partido de la corrupción, los desahucios y la cárcel. https://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/2019/02/01/el-pp-partido-de-la-corrupcion-los-desahucios-y-la-carcel/ (Last Date Accesed: April 13, 2020).

Pina E Cunha, Miguel & Carlos Cabral-Cardoso. 2006. "Shades of Gray: A Liminal Interpretation of Organizational Legality-Illegality". *International Public Management Journal* 9:3.209-225.

Recio, Albert. 2015. La Caixa: negocio privado, desposesión pública. *Minetrastanto.org*. http://www.mientrastanto.org/boletin-129/notas/la-caixa-negocio-privado-desposesion-publica (Last Accesed Date: April 13, 2020).

Rovira, Guiomar. 2017. Activismo en red y multitudes conectadas : comunicación y acción en la era de Internet (I Editorial, Ed.). Ciudad de México.

Rusiñol, Pere. 2015a. "La lucha por la vivienda se hace global". *Alternativas Económicas* 30.

Rusiñol, Pere. 2015b. "Wall Street: el casero del mundo". *Alternativas Económicas* 30.

Smith, Martin J. 1993. Pressure, power and policy :state autonomy and policy networks in Britain and the United States. New York etc.: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Sørensen, Eva & Jacob Torfing. 2008. "Theoretical approaches to Metagovernance" Pp. 169-182 in *Theories of democratic network governance,* Edited by Eva Sørensen and Jacob Torfing. Gran Bretaña: Palgrave Macmillan.

Terrones, Albert. 2015. "L'habitatge en l'entorn metropolità de Barcelona. Evolució recent i factors estratègics", Collecció Pla Estràtegic 2025 No. 38 Barcelona: Diputació Barcelona.

Tilly, Charles. 1978. From mobilization to revolution. New York : Random House.

Tilly, Charles. 2008. Contentious Performances. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Toret Medina, Javier, Antonio Calleja-López, Óscar Marín Miró, Pablo Aragón, Miguel Aguilera, Xabier E. Barandiaran, Alberto Lumbreras, and Arnau Monterde. 2015. Tecnopolítica y 15M: la potencia de las multitudes conectadas : un estudio sobre la gestación y explosión del 15M. Barcelona: UOC.

Zaremberg, Gisela and Álvaro Fernando Guzmán Lucero. 2019. "Aborto, movimientos y femocracias: Un análisis relacional". *Revista Mexicana de Sociologia* 81:4.145-177.

About the author

Matías G. Durán Quintanar is a post-doctoral researcher at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco (Mexico) at the Communication and Politics Department. He holds a PhD in Public Policy and Social Transformation from the Institut of Government and Public Policy (IGOP-Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona) and a Master's in public policy and administration from the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City. Email: matias_duran_q AT hotmail.com

Challenging change:
understanding the role of strategic selectivities
in transformative dynamics

Dorothea Elena Schoppek and Mathias Krams

Abstract

The challenge of realizing a social ecological transformation to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis has been a prevailing topic in public debates over the last few years. What has long been negotiated as a rather technical and scientific issue, reached the political agendas with the flare-up of protest by groups such as 'Fridays for Future', 'Extinction Rebellion' or the campaign 'Ende Gelände' in Germany. Even the dominant topic of the Corona pandemic in recent months has not changed the omnipresence of the climate crisis in political debates. Nevertheless, political and structural change seems to be challenging. In this article, we investigate the mechanisms by which an unsustainable mode of living upholds its resilience against transformative attempts. We will illustrate our conceptual models with examples from the field of energy and climate policies in Germany.

Keywords: social movements, social ecological transformation, strategies, selectivities, state theory, climate crisis, transformative dynamics

1) Introduction

> *The world has warmed more than one degree Celsius since the Industrial Revolution. [...] The climate scientist James Hansen has called two-degree warming 'a prescription for long-term disaster.' [...] Is it a comfort or a curse, the knowledge that we could have avoided all this? [...]Why didn't we act?*
>
> *(Rich 2018).*

Despite shifting public discourses and a high sensibility among citizens for environmental concerns, we witness the failure of transformative strategies to bring about serious social ecological change. How is it possible that peoples' knowledge about global crisis phenomena, such as global warming or the loss of biodiversity, and their environmental awareness increase (Blühdorn, 2017, 56), while their use of resources and the ecological and social footprint of their lifestyles are only temporarily put on hold by dramatic ruptures such as the recent pandemic-induced lockdowns (Global Footprint Network 2021)? How is it possible that there is an abundance of policy statements, popular and academic books, conferences, events and discussions about the need of a great

transformation towards sustainability (cf. Dörre et al.2019; Steffen et al. 2018; WWF 2016; IPCC 2013), whereas we can simultaneously observe politicians not taking the necessary steps to prevent the planetary crises that has been forecasted for such a long time (Krams 2018), not to speak of its social consequences in terms of global inequality (Bourguignon 2013, 14; 17; Moran 2015, 869)? Why do we need court rulings like those in the Netherlands or, most recently, Germany to get governments to comply with international climate commitments (Oroschakoff 2021)?

The puzzle we are investigating here has been pointedly called the 'resilience of unsustainability' (Hausknost, Deflorian and Blühdorn 2018). A telling example in this regard is Germany's faltering energy transition, in which – despite broad popular support and international commitments – no adequate measures have been taken so far to put Germany on the path to climate neutrality by 2045.

In this article, we will make a *conceptual* contribution to this puzzle by analyzing different movement strategies for change and their interaction with so-called strategic selectivities, a concept borrowed from Cultural Political Economy (CPE). We are convinced that it is crucial to conceptualize and understand what is happening on a more detailed level in order to make sense of transformative processes or their absence. Therefore, we aim to answer the following research question: **What are the mechanisms by which an unsustainable mode of living upholds its resilience against transformative attempts through counter-hegemonic movement strategies?** Answering this question also permits to draw conclusions about the strategic possibilities in dealing with those mechanisms and why some strategies are more successful on specific dimensions than others.

I Research on social ecological transformation

Developments around the international climate movement – especially those before the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 – have revealed the limitations of prominent social movement theories in explaining the success or failure of fundamental transformation efforts beyond capitalism. The movement has succeeded in mobilizing enormous resources in a very short time - financially, organizationally and in terms of personnel. It has made offers of interpretation that have found their way into the population, the media, and numerous political statements. In many contexts, there were also supportive political opportunities - be it through events of climate catastrophes or party political shifts. Nevertheless, it must be noted that for the time being, other than the approaches of resource mobilization, political opportunity structures or framing theories would suggest, the movement has failed on a material level. So far, there has been little acceleration in the phase-out of fossil fuels - the EU, for example, has invested billions more in fossil infrastructure (Ambrose 2020). The fixation of the economy on growth, which underlies the climate crisis, has never been seriously questioned – this also applies to the EU's central sustainability strategy, the European Green Deal (European Commission 2019).

At the same time, the inequalities associated with the climate crisis have become even more pronounced (Banos Ruiz 2019) – a development that has dramatically continued during the corona pandemic (Oxfam 2021). In that context, it also became apparent that the root cause of the global climate crisis - the (almost) unlimited expansion of the appropriation of nature for the production of surplus value - can also result in other global crises: the expansive, habitat-destroying appropriation of nature has also paved the way for zoonosis, the jumping of species boundaries by viruses, and thus potentially unleashed the corona pandemic (Wallace and Davis 2016; Brad, Brand and Krams 2020).

All of this suggests that in order to analyze the preconditions and paths of a fundamental systemic transformation, it is central to consider not only the strategies of the actors but also the context of power and domination. However, prevailing approaches of social movement research often do not to take sufficient account of this: the structure of the dominant hegemonic discursive and material order, the power relations underlying it and the contested limits set by this order remain obscure (cf. McAdam and Tarrow 2019: 33). This is expressed, for example, by the lack of a state theoretical underpinning of the analysis. Instead, the state is understood as a neutral battlefield and a rational-intentional conceptualization of actors is used. Important aspects of the interaction between transformation strategies of social movements and structural contextual factors are thus not taken into account (Leinius, Vey and Hagemann 2017: 6).

In this article, we will therefore analyze movement strategies from a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) perspective. In doing so, the context of movement actions is operationalized through the concept of strategic selectivities, thus also taking the interdependencies between strategies and discursive and structural conditions into account. The theoretical toolbox of CPE offers the possibility to bridge theory strands that are more interested in the obstacles of transformation (e.g. Blühdorn 2020, Hausknost 2020, Brand and Wissen 2021; 2018) with those that focus on transformative agency (e.g. Wright 2010; 2019). Let us briefly introduce those strands before we set out our own approach.

The first strand of theory comprises of research that attempts to work out why socio-ecological transformation proves so difficult despite the promising starting conditions of the climate movement. In this line of research, social scientists have been dealing with the 'paradox' of the 'resilience of unsustainability' for quite some time and have tried to make it more comprehensible by giving different explanations (i.a. Brand and Wissen 2021; Hamilton 2015; Norgaard, 2011). Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen's (2021; 2018) concept of the 'imperial mode of living' provides a comprehensive social economic diagnose of a specific mode of living and production which they identify as 'imperial' and which they take as an explanation for the paradox set out in the introduction. The imperial mode of living describes how 'the everyday life in the capitalist centers is essentially made possible by shaping social relations and society-mature relations *elsewhere",* which implies the

externalization of its negative consequences (Brand and Wissen 2021: 39; emphasis in original). This mode of living is characterized by specific norms of production, consumption and distribution which are deeply enshrined in political, economic and cultural structures and everyday practices (ibid., 41). Drawing on Gramsci's ideas of hegemony and Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the authors consider this anchoring within common sense and the human body crucial for the reproduction and stabilization of capitalist societies (ibid., 41). The conceptualization of an imperial mode of living allows to articulate societal structures with peoples' everyday life, habits and routines as well as various strategies backing up the prevailing order (ibid., 42; 44). While Brand and Wissen convincingly explain the resilience of capitalism and its forms of unsustainability from an over-arching perspective, there is less attention paid to transformative strategies and their interaction with the different dimension of the imperial mode of living beyond a rough sketch of a solidary way of life and its preconditions.

A second example of a strong analysis of the resilience of unsustainability is Daniel Hausknost's diagnosis of the 'glass ceiling of transformation' (Hausknost 2020). He differentiates two spheres of sustainability: lifeworld and system sustainability. While lifeworld sustainability refers to 'a subjectively desirable and comfortable state of the lifeworld' (ibid., 24), system sustainability is defined as 'the objective biophysical planetary conditions under which a given socio-economic regime *can* be sustained in the long run' (ibid., 25; emphasis in original). Hausknost argues that people are primarily concerned with their lifeworld sustainability and become only interested in system sustainability if the latter negatively impinges on the former. Conversely, if transformative action in favor of system sustainability has negative consequences on lifeworld sustainability, the state is threatened to lose its legitimacy and hence an invisible glass ceiling for transformative actions has been reached. (ibid., 26). However, if the state only takes care of environmental issues, which do immediately impact on peoples' lifeworld, it will not solve the systemic crisis. The analysis primarily focuses on structural imperatives that states need to address if they want to secure their survival. It does not shed much light on the very mechanisms by which lifeworld sustainability receives a specific meaning that demands the resilience of unsustainability rather than an abandonment of ecological destructive economic growth. In that sense, Hausknost does not explain, why people want to sustain unsustainable consumer practices nor does he engage with the contestedness of social relations[1].

---

1 Ingolfur Blühdorn has recently expanded on Hausknost's glass ceiling analysis (Blühdorn 2020). He argues that one has to scrutinize social norms and values more thoroughly in order to understand why transformative attempts cannot be successful. According to him, it is the ever increasing emancipation from any boundaries that undermines the normative foundations of democracies and, with it, its companionship with ecologism. While Blühdorn is turning to the sphere of norms, his argument remains on a rather abstract level that does not take societal struggles and their (non-)effects into account.

The second strand of theory focuses more strongly on the possibilities of transformative action. Erik Olin Wright's work on transformative strategies (Wright 2010, 2019) develops a typology of transformative pathways. In his book *'Envisioning Real Utopias'*, he distinguishes three logics of transforming capitalism towards more emancipatory alternatives: confronting the state, building alternatives outside the state's sphere of influence and using the state[2]. Those logics are connected to the following three strategies, which we will later present in greater detail: 'ruptural', 'interstitial' and 'symbiotic' (ibid., 304; see next section). Wright's main interest is to analyze the potentials and limits of each strategy as well as their possible interplay. Wright, too, offers a quite comprehensive and thus rather abstract conceptualization, even if he draws his categorization from various empirical examples. This means that he is interested in different transformative logics but less so in the fine-grained contextual mechanisms upholding the resilience of unsustainability and shaping the scope for transformative efforts.

In the following we will therefore propose a conceptual approach that focusses on the mechanisms through which structures limit or enable the pursuit of transformative strategies by social movement actors. We will therefore rely on analytical concepts from CPE and bring them into dialogue with Wrights research on transformative strategies.

2) Conceptualizing transformative dynamics: strategies, selectivities and Cultural Political Economy

For a conceptualization of the interaction between structural obstacles and movement strategies, we rely on CPE and link it to the previously mentioned transformation perspectives according to Wright.

CPE, a neo-marxist theory approach with influences from regulation theory and insights from Gramsci and Foucault, attempts to explain the reproduction of power relations within capitalist societies. For this, CPE uses the concept of strategic selectivities. Strategic selectivities function as asymmetrical constraints and opportunities that both condition the outcome of movement actions and can potentially be subverted and modified by strategically reflective actors. With regard to strategic selectivity, Sum and Jessop distinguish structural, discursive, technological and agential selectivities.

We will argue that it is exactly these selectivities that function as the fine-grained mechanisms that can explain the resilience of unsustainability. By analyzing how the three transformation strategies suggested by Wright interact with the four modes of selectivity, we develop a typology of transformative

---

2 In his recent book, Wright differentiates the three transformative logics even further in five strategies (Wright 2019). Since we strive for a parsimonious concept of analysis and since Wright's further subdivision does not provide added value for answering our research question, we retain the distinction between three transformative strategies.

dynamics, which contributes to answering the question of why some movement strategies are more promising in specific contexts than others. Transformative dynamics are understood as the interplay of a strategy's transformative logic with the specific configurations of selectivities in a political context, triggering a certain tendency of development. After developing this typology, it will be applied to the field of energy and climate policies in Germany. Thus, we will demonstrate why fundamental social ecological transformation has thus far been unsuccessful in this field and identify possible counter-strategies that will become politically necessary in order to prevent disastrous climate change.

I Strategic selectivities

Influenced by the works of Marx, Gramsci and Foucault, Sum and Jessop developed CPE to explain the production and reproduction of (capitalist) social relations. For this, they suggest looking at the evolutionary process of variation, selection and retention through which certain imaginaries – 'semiotic systems that frame individual subjects' lived experiences of an inordinately complex world and/or inform collective calculation about that world' – become hegemonic (Sum and Jessop 2013, 165; 403). While there are various ideas, discourses and strategies promoting them in the first place (*variation*), only some of them get selected (*selection*) and then retained within institutions, practices and other types of structural fixes (*retention*). So-called strategic selectivities play a central role in this process: They 'interact across different conjunctures and settings to condition the variation, selection and retention of hegemonic […] and counter-hegemonic projects and their societal repercussions and contradictions' (ibid., 214). In other words, strategic selectivities explain why some strategies, thoughts, practices, institutional settings are chosen over others and then appear to be naturally and without alternative. Sum and Jessop distinguish four modes of selection, taking into account different dimension of social interaction: structural, discursive, technological (in a Foucauldian sense) and agential. *Structural selectivities* are defined as 'asymmetrical configurations of constraints and opportunities on social forces as they pursue particular projects' (ibid., 214). They appear as institutional arrangements and orders that support specific courses of action and that have a path-shaping effect on further institutionalization.

Discursive selectivities restrict 'what can be enunciated, who is authorized to enunciate, and how enunciations enter intertextual, interdiscursive and contextual fields' (ibid., 215). Empirically, these inscribed asymmetries of meaning production become apparent in the form of dominant ways of framing a situation, in broader cultural norms but also in technical language or in etiquette rules. It is the terrain of what Gramsci called (cultural) hegemony.

Technological selectivities are to be understood in a Foucauldian sense of the term. They refer to 'the asymmetries inscribed in the use of technologies (and their affordances) in producing objects and subject positions that contribute towards the making of dispositives and truth regimes' (ibid., 216). Specific

'mental infrastructures' (Welzer 2011, 14) in the form of internalized norms, rationalities and schemata of interpretation function as technological selectivity, thereby not only reproducing social relations but also shaping peoples' receptivity for certain assemblages of knowledge.

Agential selectivities refer to the varying degree of capacities of agents to exploit or change structures, discourses and technologies in accordance with their interests. This capacity depends very much on agents' positioning within society, i.e. their power resources, and is hence greatly affected by the configuration of the other selectivities (Sum and Jessop 2013,217; Hauf 2016, 57).

It is at the heart of our argument that strategic selectivities function as the mechanisms by which a hegemonic, unsustainable mode of living upholds its resilience against transformative movement actions and that taking them into account can help to explain why and when a specific transformative strategy is more promising than others. Our thesis is that introducing the four types of selective mechanisms to the analysis promotes the understanding of transformative dynamics or their impediment and thus also enables more robust explanations for movement success. By explaining what is being selected in specific historical conjunctures, why and how, the potentials and limitations of each movement strategy become visible.

II The selectivities of transformative strategies

As set out in the introduction, Wright (2010) categorizes three types of transformative strategies: ruptural, interstitial and symbiotic. We will exemplify our thesis in reference to each of those strategies in turn.

II.1 Ruptural strategy

A ruptural strategy of transformation is guided by the logic of breaking with the hegemonic form of societal organization: 'Ruptural transformations envision creating new institutions of social empowerment through a sharp break with existing institutions and social structures' (Wright 2010, 303). The basic idea of a ruptural strategy originates from a revolutionary socialist tradition and is associated with historical events such as the Russian Revolution (Holloway 2010, 21ff.).

In terms of selectivities, a ruptural strategy basically aims at replacing existing selectivities with alternative ones. From a revolutionary understanding, the legitimacy of the hegemonic discourse must be undermined (*discursive selectivity*), institutional fixes would have to be tore down and replaced by new arrangements (*structural selectivity*), new subjectivities formed in the course of the revolution (*technological selectivity*) and ruling elites needed to be exchanged and power resources redistributed (*agential selectivity*). For initiating such a ruptural revolutionary process, particularly the undermining of the hegemonic consent and sufficient power resources seem to be of utmost

importance (ibid., 308; Temper et al. 2018, 754ff; Geels 2010, 501f). A promising starting point for ruptural strategies are situations of systemic crisis in which hegemony cannot be easily uphold.

Wright clarifies, however, that 'the robustness of the institutions of the state in developed capitalist democracies make ruptural strategies implausible' as the latter are unlikely to quickly increase the material welfare of the majority and, moreover, to be maintained without becoming authoritarian (Wright 2010, 309; 318; Holloway 2010, 26). However, 'it is possible that in some unanticipated future the contradictions of these societies could dramatically undermine those institutions', which paves the way for ruptural strategies to potentially take effect (Wright 2010, 309). To prepare for such situations, other strategies, such as the interstitial strategy, which will be introduced below, lay the foundation, by experimenting with alternative institutional orders and transforming subjectivities in terms of establishing new interpretative frameworks and normative orders.

Limited ruptures

In the current absence of such a situation, Wright points to limited, more temporary ruptures within particular policy fields or institutional settings (ibid., 308). If ruptural strategies are employed on such a more issue-specific or temporal basis, say in occupations or blockades, they ignore *structural selectivity* and serve to disrupt structural processes. They thus challenge the hegemonic consent on progress and open up discursive space for the presentation of alternatives (*discursive selectivity and technological selectivity*). Rather than following up other strategies, they here might even become their precondition, e.g. a strike as door opener for a new round of collective bargaining (see symbiotic strategy below).

A realistic ruptural strategy, aiming at replacing existing selectivities, rarely stands on its own and has to be thought of in combination with the other strategies that will be introduced in the following. Regarding the configuration of selectivities, a ruptural strategy is either dependent on 1) massive power resources (*agential selectivity)* and on tottering *discursive, technological* and particularly *structural selectivities* or - when aiming at more limited forms of rupture - on 2) a strategically well-chosen target for direct action adapted to the capacities available. In the latter case, a ruptural strategy particularly aims at raising attention and opening up new discursive spaces (*discursive selectivity*). If neither of the stated preconditions is in place, a ruptural strategy will have great difficulty to break open the *resilience of unsustainability* by itself or initiate processes that will do so.

II. 2 Interstitial strategy

An interstitial transformation strategy follows the logic of building alternatives 'outside of the state': 'Interstitial transformations seek to build new forms of

social empowerment in the niches and margins of capitalist society, often where they do not seem to pose any immediate threat to dominant classes and elites' (Wright 2010, 303f.) Interstitial strategies can be traced back to an anarchist political tradition and belong to the realm of prefigurative politics (Tokar 2017, 32; cf. Yates 2014; Monticelli 2018). In contrast to ruptural strategies, interstitial transformations can be better understood in terms of metamorphosis than in terms of break (Wright 2010, 303). Wright distinguishes two pathways of interstitial transformations: revolutionary anarchist and evolutionary anarchist (ibid., 328). The first is closely linked to what has been set out in the section on ruptural strategies. Interstitial strategies serve as preconditions for ruptures; they, in Wright's words, 'pave the route to rupture' (ibid., 328). Hence they make rupture possible in the first place once the 'untransgressable limits on the possibilities of democratic egalitarian emancipatory transformations' (ibid., 332) within capitalism have been reached. The second pathway perceives of transformation without the necessity of rupture at all and proclaims a stepwise erosion of the binding limits of capitalism until it will have been completely transformed (ibid., 332ff.; see also the similar concept of 'tipping points' in transformation research: Bender 2012, 229f; Grießhammer and Bohrmann., 24f.).

Using again strategic selectivities as our analytical instrument, we claim that the logic of interstitial strategies is to ignore and circumvent existing selectivities. Instead, niche-spaces will be created – following different logics and rules – that allow for experimenting with alternative, solidary modes of living and producing together. It is key for this transformational path, that people become aware of alternatives to the hegemonic order (Zelik and Tauss 2013; Fisher and Ponniah 2015), thus laying the foundation for and facilitating both ruptural and symbiotic strategies for change (Klein 2014, 106). A regular participation in alternative social practices leads to the experience of new forms of subjectivity and can result in an alteration of identity concepts (*technological selectivity*) (Eversberg and Schmelzer 2016, 15). Niche-spaces also provide room for articulating critical opinions and telling different stories (*discursive selectivity*). There is furthermore the chance to experiment with innovative institutional settings by means of try and error (*structural selectivity*).

One of the biggest challenges regarding interstitial strategies is their parallel existence with capitalism: 'They may even strengthen capitalism by siphoning off discontent and creating the illusion that if people are unhappy with the dominant institutions they can and should just go off and live their lives in alternative settings' (Wright 2010, 326; Graefe, 2006, 97; Schoppek 2020, 12). While interstitial strategies can lead to change and an alteration of selectivities *within* the niche-spaces, it remains unclear, whether and to what extent these new configurations affect agents' capacities (*agential selectivity*) to strategically induce discursive and structural change also in the broader society *discursive and structural selectivity* and thus to break the resilience of unsustainability (Schoppek 2021, 7ff.).

II.3 Symbiotic strategy

The third transformation strategy analyzed by Wright – following a social-democratic, reform-oriented political tradition – adheres to the logic of using the state and collaborating with the ruling class to achieve tangible improvements: 'Symbiotic transformations involve strategies in which extending and deepening the institutional forms of popular social empowerment simultaneously helps solve certain practical problems [...]' (Wright 2010, 305; see also the concept of *radical reformism*, e.g. in Roth 2018). They thus alleviate acute situations under which people suffer, they help the dominant classes and elites to react to challenges and they can open up space for interstitial strategies to take effect (Wright 2010, 305, 365).

The strategy of symbiotic transformation aims at a gradual transformation of strategic selectivities. By means of associational power (in terms of institutionalized rights for unions, works councils, and political parties) and by making compromises with the ruling class (*agential selectivity*) the strategy is used to achieve structural adjustments, thus shaping the *structural selectivity* impacting on future transformative attempts (Klein 2014, 105). Wright describes a mutually beneficial cooperation between opposing classes as positive class compromise. Such a class compromise, however, requires the subordinated class to accept the general rules of the game and thus also upholds their dependence on the dominating class (*discursive, technological and agential selectivity*) (Wright 2010, 355). This starting point bears the danger of reproducing the very system that is ought to be transformed. While through small structural changes an increase in social empowerment might be achieved, systemic limits will not be crossed and potentially even stabilized: '[...] the historically most impressive examples of symbiotic strategies - [...] franchise [...] and [...] expansive welfare state [...] – both contributed to consolidating very robust forms of capitalism' (ibid., 364).

The main challenge to a symbiotic strategy therefore is its need for a specific interaction with the other strategies that will render its achievements a transformative instrument in the hands of progressive agents rather than a stabilization of the system. By means of class compromises (*agential selectivity*) and by framing their request in system-compatible ways (*discursive selectivity*), agents following symbiotic strategies potentially broaden the scope of action for other transformative agents through structural adjustments (*structural selectivity*). If in this process the system as such is not questioned, however, symbiotic strategies carry the risk of upholding the fundamental elements of the resilience of unsustainability.

III Interim conclusion

Guided by our intention to shed some light on the dynamics and mechanisms by which an unsustainable mode of living upholds its resilience against transformative attempts, we have analyzed three different transformation strategies and their interaction with the four modes of selectivities. We found

that each strategy follows a distinct logic for dealing with those selectivities: 1) attack and replace; 2) ignore; 3) adapt and use. As we have shown, the interaction between selectivities and strategies is a dialectical one: aiming at transformation, hegemonic selectivities do not only need to be changed by movement agents in order to make change happen but simultaneously limit/enable the scope of action for these endeavors. This means that due to a specific configuration of selectivities in particular historic conjunctures, only some strategies seem useful for trying to break open the resilience of unsustainability.
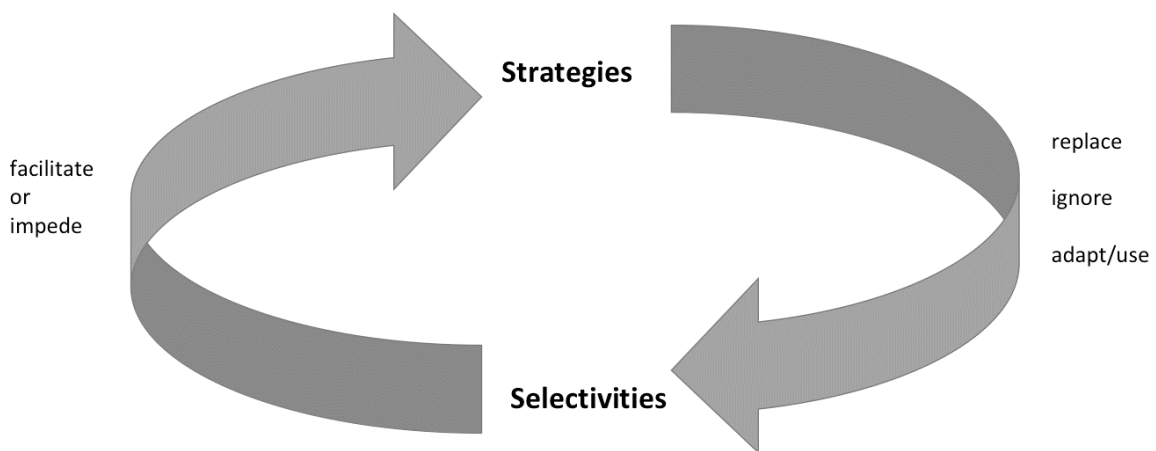
Fig. 1: Transformative dynamics: mutual influence of strategies and selectivities.

Having introduced a model of transformative dynamics in theory, we now want to illustrate our argument by looking at a specific field of conflict: energy and climate policies in Germany.

3) Application of model to the field of energy and climate policies in Germany

I Faltering energy transition in Germany

A survey published by Greenpeace (Rinscheid 2018) demonstrates that a majority of the population favors a quick coal phase out – even in those areas that would be most heavily affected by the accompanying structural change. What we see in practice, however, is that despite alarming climate forecasts, numerous protest events by actors such as Ende Gelände, Fridays for Future and various citizens' initiatives as well as supporting majorities in the population, a speedy coal phase out has not been implemented so far. Instead,

the so-called coal compromise was adopted in 2020, which included high compensation payments for the decommissioning of fossil-fuel power plants and was also oriented towards climate targets that have since been judged inadequate by the Federal Constitutional Court (Löw Beer et al. 2021: 17). Burkhart et al. (2017, 81) attribute this delay to the powerful interests backing coal power and a consequent lack of political assertiveness to realize a quick transition. The concept of strategic selectivities, introduced before, revealed four mechanisms that can explain this *resilience of unsustainability*: The hegemonic discourse on climate policies (*discursive selectivity*) is backed by an alliance of powerful actors (*agential selectivity*), it is deeply subjectivized in the form of sedimented knowledge structures and schemata of interpretation (*technological selectivity*), which are also inscribed in institutional settings (*structural selectivity*).

Discursive selectivity in this context affects, on the one hand, *what can be stated*. The hegemonic discourse on national as well as international climate governance can be described as 'neoliberalization of the climate' (Bedall 2014, 4; translation by the authors) or 'ecological modernization' (Sander 2016a, 71; translation by the authors). It rests on the discursive genres of economic growth, ecological (technical) modernization and market mechanisms, which structure what can be plausibly stated and proposed within this discourse. Aspects that do not fit into this hegemonic order of genres or even question their core assumptions are excluded or marginalized (Bedall 2014, 133). On the other hand, discursive selectivity also affects *who can enunciate* and *who is heard*. Consequently, NGOs adopt their framing to the hegemonic genres in order to have a say in public debates, to prevent a decline of their status and an exclusion from negotiations. In this way, they reproduce the hegemonic discourse by accepting its rules and by adapting to its genres (Bedall 2014, 134f.; Candeias 2003, 327; Krams 2019, 59).

With regard to *agential selectivity* in the field of German energy- and climate policies, two lines of conflict can be distinguished. First, we see a powerful alliance of actors, sometimes described as brown or grey hegemony project[3]. It is backed by the four large energy corporations, so far large portions of the German industry – however, a change towards 'green' capitalism seems to be emerging here - and associated institutions and think tanks, the conservative media, the economic wings of the political parties CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP, as well as the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWI) (Haas 2016, 368). Their aim is to optimally exploit the fossil-nuclear generating capacities, keeping the electricity price, especially for industrial consumers, on a low level,

---

3 We utilize the concept of 'hegemonic project' following Kannankulam and Georgi (2014: 64), who define it as an aggregation of 'the myriad of actions, practices, tactics and strategies that are pursued by an often unaccountable number of actors in any given societal conflict, and that are chosen by actors before the background of their vastly different, specific power resources [...]. In distinguishing different hegemony projects, a claim is made that the practices comprised therein share a distinct, common direction.'

thus slowing down the energy transition and giving it a more centralized character (ibid., 368). This alliance is opposed by a so-called green hegemony project, which shares the common interest to facilitate a rapid transition of the energy system to renewable energies. Actors involved include the so-called green segment of capital, which means companies in the renewable energy sector and their lobby organizations, all relevant environmental NGOs, left-liberal newspapers, multiple think tanks, the Green party, sections of the Left party, the environmental wings of the CDU/CSU and the SPD as well as the Federal Ministry of the Environment (BMU) (ibid., 368f.). Within this green hegemony project, we can see a second line of conflict when it comes to climate policies. Whereas the majority of the project follows a *green capitalist* approach, relying on market mechanisms and green growth to solve the crisis (Brand and Wissen 2021: 161), the radical social ecological climate justice movement demands fundamental societal change to overcome the hegemonic societal nature relation of domination (see section on *structural selectivity* below) and the inequalities which are produced in the course of the neoliberal management of climate change (Sander 2016b, 416). Due to this internal split with regard to more or less radical transformation, it is even plausible to speak of a third social ecological hegemony project.

The realization of this endeavor of the climate justice movement proves to be very difficult, due to a capitalist 'mental infrastructure' (Welzer 2011, 14), which functions as *technological selectivity*. It takes the form of deeply sedimented, normalized and day-to-day reproduced 'norms of production and consumption, societal interests, [as well as] hegemonic and marginal value orientations' (Brand and Wissen 2013, 694). Besides affecting the schemata of interpretation of the wider public, these patterns also 'shape perceptions and practices of state personnel and politicians' (ibid., 700) and similarly of actors in the media field. When reporting on climate issues, journalists and editors tend to privilege those contents and news sources which can be integrated into the neoliberal interpretative framework regarding climate governance and which do not undermine its basic logics (Korte 2011, 204).

Structural selectivity works as a mechanism that privileges certain interests, material strategies of production and consumption and hegemonic knowledge formations as well as interpretations regarding the ecological crisis over others (Brand and Wissen 2011, 92). Particularly relevant in this policy field is, how the material exchange between humans and nature is conceptualized and thus materialized in concrete institutional settings. Under capitalist relations of production, the relation between society and nature takes the form of the domination of nature, its unrestrained exploitation, destruction and subsumption under capitalist value realization (Sander 2016a, 44; Görg 2003, 101; Brand and Görg 2003, 46). The state 'serves to institutionally secure the multifaceted society nature relationships' (Brand and Wissen 2013, 694) by managing the access to and the consumption of fossil resources via market mechanisms on the one hand, and by dealing with greenhouse emissions at least symbolically for conflict reduction on the other hand (Bedall 2014, 123; Brunnengräber 2008, 32). Approaches that are based on other modes of

regulating society nature relations than the capitalist one thus have difficulties to prevail in the existing institutional setting.

Only by taking those selectivities into account it is possible to understand, why attempts of fundamental social ecological transformation are, despite the deepening social ecological climate crisis, strongly disadvantaged in contests over shaping our futures. Being aware of these selectivities nevertheless helps to identify possible counter-strategies (Bedall 2014, 128-131).

II Strategies for change in the field of energy and climate politics

After having sketched out how the policy field of German energy and climate policies is structured by the four modes of selectivity, in what follows we want to outline how the three types of strategies interact with this environment in aiming for change.

II.1 Ruptural strategies of the movement for climate justice

Due to societal relationships of power, in the short run a clear break with the capitalist state and a complete replacement of operating strategic selectivities seems currently not to be a feasible option (Wright 2010: 208). Even though the corona crisis has raised new hopes for an end to the hegemony of neoliberalism, despite partial adjustments and a more Keynesian rhetoric, the actual European management of the crisis speaks more for continuity: There was - clearly limited - state interventionism to bail out corporations and huge investment programs like the EU's Covid recovery fund to stimulate growth. Social and environmental concessions that could jeopardize profits, however, have been avoided. Social power relations have therefore been reproduced in the crisis and inequalities have even been exacerbated (Oberndorfer 2021; Oxfam 2021: Arps et al. 2020; Harvey 2019).

Since no systemic crisis has yet emerged in Germany, actors in the climate justice movement who pursue a strategy of rupture aim at temporarily bogging down the running of the hegemonic system and at creating ruptures on the discursive level, as means for initiating larger processes of societal transformation (Sander 2016c, 10). They attempt to bring about ruptures at the discursive level in order to create the conditions for larger-scale social transformation processes (Sander 2016c, 10).

For this, collective actors compensate their lack of power to take and shape systemic decisions *(agential selectivity)* by making use of *disruptive power* (Schmalz and Dörre 2014, 222). They use mass actions of civil disobedience, which include blockades of coal diggers, coal power plants and coal harbors as well as small group actions to sabotage the coal infrastructure to – at least temporarily – disrupt the process of the commodification of nature (*structural selectivity*) (Sander 2016c, 10; Brock and Dunlap 2018, 34). These acts of resistance exacerbate the political conflict over how to deal with climate change: Movement actors use the attention they receive for these actions to introduce a

system critical perspective into the media discourse, addressing the inequalities caused by neoliberal climate governance (*discursive selectivity)* (Görg and Bedall 2013, 97; Sander 2016c, 28). Precondition for these kind of actions and the accompanying press work have been *interstitial strategies*, such as the climate camps, which facilitated processes of skill-sharing and establishing networks (Sander 2016c, 21).

Even though the demands of the movement have not been recognized in state apparatuses so far and hence could not unfold a transformative impact (Thompson 2020: 225), in non-state fields embedded in civil society the consensus on neoliberal climate governance broke up, making it possible to articulate critique and demanding climate justice (Görg and Bedall 2013, 88; 97). For actually transforming deeply sedimented hegemonic selectivities, the power basis of the movement must be further strengthened, however. Brand and Wissen (2021) therefore see a need to form broader societal 'center-bottom' alliances along with dissident, progressive elites which promote a solidary mode of living, to make it capable of seriously challenging the *imperial mode of living* (ibid., 204f; Brie and Hildebrandt 2015).

II.2 The Climate Camps as elements of an interstitial strategy

For illustrating how *interstitial strategies* interact with strategic selectivities, we refer to the so-called *climate camps* and camps in the course of forest occupations: temporary niche-spaces created by the social movement for climate justice, in which social relations of domination shall be transformed into a solidary mode of living.

The climate camps in Germany started in 2008, being inspired by similar events in the UK. Since then, they established themselves as the central gathering place for the climate justice movement and grew constantly over the last years, initiating similar camps in neighboring countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Poland, Austria and Czech Republic[4]. The occupation of the Hambach Forest, with interruptions since 2012, represents another form of the construction of counter-hegemonic practices and structures at the immediate site of destruction by clearing for lignite (Kaufer and Lein 2018). Climate camps and forest occupations constitute spaces for sharing knowledge and skills, experimenting with sustainable modes of living and parallel institutions, putting them into practice while simultaneously empowering participants through direct actions (Sander 2016c, 21; Berger 2018; Bosse 2016). Similar to the idea of the *Temporary Autonomous Zone* (Bey 2003), they constitute spaces in which the efficacy of hegemonic selectivities is temporary abrogated. Thus they can be understood as 'an uprising which does not engage directly with the state' (ibid., 99f.) but avoids systemic influences in order a) to experiment with parallel institutions and alternative forms of organization (*structural selectivity*); b) to create *subaltern counter publics* (Fraser 1992, 123) in order to

---

4 cf.: https://climatejusticeaction.net/en/climate-camps/ [21.06.2021].

formulate and spread radical criticism of the existing conditions, which cannot be disseminated via the mass media (*discursive selectivity*); c) to facilitate the formation of new forms of subjectivity, of relating to each other and of interpretative frameworks, (*technological selectivity*); and d) to empower participants through skill-sharing and establishing networks which make future actions for change possible (*agential selectivity*).

A challenge, however, is to improve the continuity of these counter-hegemonic practices, to transform them into 'sustainable and everyday practices of resistance and transformation at all levels' and to embed them in 'a wider project that gives them some political meaning beyond their highly localized intervention' (Müller 2008, 50; 54). This is a difficult task in view of the effective force of hegemonic strategic selectivities in wider society (Blühdorn 2017, 57).

II.3 Symbiotic strategy:

The Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) in Germany

A prime example for a symbiotic approach to social ecological transformation, meaning fighting out concrete improvements in the field of the state, thereby also improving future scope for action, has been the so-called *Energiewende* – the energy transition in Germany.

By pushing through the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) in 2000, the green hegemony project achieved a milestone: it materialized its strategic goals into the state apparatus, thus 'shift[ing] social and political force relations in the energy sector' (*agential selectivity*) and significantly broadening the future scope for action in the field (*structural selectivity*) (Müller 2017, 7f.). The law guaranteed a fixed feed-in payment for 20 years, promoted a decentralization of energy production and was extremely successful in promoting the development of renewable energy sources, changing renewables' share of total electricity consumption from 6,2% in 2000 to 36,2% in 2017 (Umweltbundesamt 2018, 7; Haas 2016, 369). In addition, it also broadened the scope for experimenting with new forms of decentralized and democratically organized energy production (in the form of energy cooperatives), taking these projects – from which the *Energiewende* originated – out of their niche (Haas 2017, 170; Müller 2017, 8).

This success was possible, as the project had been in line with the operating strategic selectivities: It was backed by a powerful alliance in form of the green hegemony project with a concrete material base (*agential selectivity*), it was framed in terms of green growth and ecological modernization (*discursive/technological selectivity*) and – besides limited political interference – it was generally in compliance with market rules (*structural selectivity*) (Müller 2017, 12). The law has subsequently been under heavy attack from the grey hegemony project, as it reduced the power and market share of the large energy enterprises (Haas 2017, 213). It was weakened by several amendments, leading to a greater market integration, a stronger centralization

and a general slowdown of the transition process (ibid., 214). Nevertheless, the EEG has been essential to protect – at least partially – progress achieved against a strong fossil alliance (Müller 2017, 7).

Hence actors struggling for a social ecological transformation need to reflect on how to implement a step-wise transformation by pushing for pragmatic policy successes and inscribing gains into state institutions, while simultaneously being aware that these 'gains will always be precarious and vulnerable to counterattacks' and acknowledging the repressive-dominant character of the state (Wright 2010, 337; Sander 2016c, 33).

Another expression of the symbiotic approach in the more recent past was the so-called Coal Commission, which was set up by the German government in 2018 (Löw Beer et al. 2021). Its aim was to develop an exit plan from lignite mining in Germany. It was made up of representatives from politics, science, industry, trade unions and NGOs. At the beginning of 2019 it presented its final report in which a coal phase-out by 2038 was laid down. While the NGOs involved in the negotiations supported the report because of the aforementioned inscription of gains into state institutions, it met with fierce criticism from the rest of the climate justice movement. This was because of the late exit date and a heavily delayed start of the phase-out (Groll 2019). The example therefore shows that symbiotic strategies have the potential to split movements if too great compromises are made in achieving targets on the territory of the state.

4) Conclusion

We started by the observation that there is a large discrepancy between knowledge about the social ecological crisis and corresponding transformative efforts. While we found some very convincing approaches explaining the resilience of unsustainability in the scientific literature as well as research on strategic agency, both strands of literature for itself do not sufficiently explain the fine-grained, concrete mechanisms impeding or furthering movements success in transforming society. So we were interested to investigate how these mechanisms challenge change.

Applying a concept from CPE, i.e. four modes of strategic selectivity, we demonstrated the challenges met by three different transformative strategies that have been conceptualized by Wright. We argued that structural, discursive, technological and agential selectivities serve as both the limitation as well as the target of action of transformative agents. Hereby, the strategies of ruptural, interstitial and symbiotic change apply different logics of interacting with the selectivities in their environment, thus resulting in different transformative dynamics: Ruptural strategies aim at attacking and replacing the selectivities in place; interstitial strategies ignore selectivities as long as possible; symbiotic strategies adapt to and use selectivities in order to stepwise transform them.

As demonstrated by the application to the policy field of energy and climate policies in Germany, all three strategies have their relative strengths and weaknesses. For working towards a fundamental social ecological

transformation, it thus seems most promising, to combine the three approaches, so that one strategy in dealing with the selectivities can alternatingly compensate for the weakness of the others (Wright 2010, 307).

Strategies aiming at temporal and issue specific ruptures help to make the strategic selectivities in a field visible and challenge the legitimacy of the hegemonic order from which they emanate. As we found, due to their limited scope they mainly affect *discursive and technological selectivity*. This strategy is often dependent on but simultaneously lays the foundation for the extension of interstitial strategies, i.e. experimenting with alternative ways of relating to each other and of organizing everyday life. For criticism and critical consciousness formation (*discursive and technological selectivity*) to develop and prosper under the dominant order, it requires niche-spaces, which avoid the selective impact of the four described mechanisms. For generalizing these alternative approaches, for reaching a broader share of society and creating new opportunities for action, a symbiotic strategy of securing gains that have been achieved on the terrain of the state seems necessary (*structural and agential selectivity*). This, however, requires making compromises and partly adopting to the selectivities of the respective policy field.

While a combination of the different strategies suggests itself, it is open to further empirical research and political experimenting to investigate how exactly it is possible for movement strategies to be mutually reinforcing instead of mutually weakening. Transformative effects are always only tendential and can also turn into opposite dynamics. In both cases, however, looking at the selectivities at play will help to better understand potentials and limits for overcoming the resilience of unsustainability.

> *Keeping the planet to two degrees of warming, let alone 1.5 degrees, would require transformative action. It will take more than good works and voluntary commitments; it will take a revolution.*
>
> *(Rich 2018)*

References

Ambrose, Jillian 2020. EU could waste €29bn on gas projects despite climate action plan. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jan/20/eu-could-waste-29bn-on-gas-projects-despite-climate-action-plan (21.06.2021).

Arps, Jan Ole, Nelli Tügel and Paul Dziedzic 2020. Die Situation ist nicht »offen«, sondern scheiße. In der Corona-Krise sehen manche Linke eine Chance – vielleicht aus Vergesslichkeit?. https://wirkommen.akweb.de/thema/pandemie/die-situation-ist-nicht-offen-sondern-scheisse/ (21.06.2021).

Banos Ruiz, Irene 2019. Climate change reinforces inequalities - even in developed countries. https://www.dw.com/en/climate-change-reinforces-inequalities-even-in-developed-countries/a-50596957 (21.06.2021).

Bedall, Philip 2014. *Climate Justice vs. Klimaneoliberalismus? Klimadiskurse im Spannungsfeld von Hegemonie und Gegen-Hegemonie*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Bender, Harald 2012. "Transformationsstrategien und Wandlungsprozesse". Pp. 207-234 in *Kapitalismus und dann? Systemwandel und Perspektiven gesellschaftlicher Transformation*, edited by Bender, Harald et al. München: oekom.

Berger, Mattis 2018. "Wenn die Revolution nicht warten kann... Wie Ende Gelände den Aufstand erprobt und Klimagerechtigkeit erfahrbar macht". https://www.graswurzel.net/gwr/2018/01/wenn-die-revolution-nicht-warten-kann/(21.06.2021).

Bey, Hakim 2003. *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Brooklyn, New York: Autonomedia.

Blühdorn, Ingolfur 2017. "Post-capitalism, post-growth, post-consumerism? Eco-political hopes beyond sustainability." *Global Discourse* 7(1): 42-61.

Blühdorn, Ingolfur 2020. "The legitimation crisis of democracy: emancipatory politics, the environmental state and the glass ceiling to socio-ecological transformation". *Environmental Politics* 29(1): 38-57.

Blühdorn, Ingolfur and Michael Deflorian 2019. "The Collaborative Management of Sustained Unsustainability: On the Performance of Participatory Forms of Environmental Governance." *Sustainability* 11(4): 1-17.

Bosse, Jana 2016. "Analyse: Kein Land mehr für Kohle – Kohleausstieg ist Handarbeit." *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 28(4): 394-399.

Bourguignon, François 2013. *Die Globalisierung der Ungleichheit*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.

Brad, Alina, Ulrich Brand and Mathias Krams 2020. Zur politischen Ökologie von Klima- und Corona-Krise. *Forum Wissenschaft* 3/2020: 4-7.

Brand, Ulrich and Christoph Görg 2003. *Postfordistische Naturverhältnisse.*

Konflikte um genetische Ressourcen und die Internationalisierung des Staates. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.

Brand, Ulrich and Markus Wissen 2011. "Sozial-Ökologische Krise und imperiale Lebensweise. Zu Krise und Kontinuität kapitalistischer Naturverhältnisse." Pp. 78-93 in *VielfachKrise im finanzdominierten Kapitalismus*, edited by Alex Demirović, Julia Dück, Julia, Florian Becker, and Pauline Bader. Hamburg: VSA.

Brand, Ulrich and Markus Wissen 2013. "Crisis and continuity of capitalist society-nature relationships: The imperial mode of living and the limits to environmental governance." *Review of International Political Economy* 20(4): 687-711.

Brand, Ulrich and Markus Wissen 2018. *The Limits to Capitalist Nature. Theorizing and Overcoming the Imperial Mode of Living*. London: Rowman&Littlefield.

Brand, Ulrich and Markus Wissen 2021. *The Imperial Mode of Living. Everyday Life and the Ecological Crisis of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Brie, Michael and Cornelia Hildebrandt 2015. "Solidarische Mitte-Unten-Bündnisse." *Zeitschrift Luxemburg*. https://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/solidarische-mitte-unten-buendnisse/ (21.06.2021).

Brock, Andrea and Alexander Dunlap 2018. "Normalising corporate counterinsurgency: Engineering consent, managing resistance and greening destruction around the Hambach coal mine and beyond." *Political Geography* 62: 33-47.

Brunnengräber, Joachim 2008. "Die Ökonomie des Klimawandels. Sozial-ökologische Lösungsansätze für den Klimaschutz." *Ökologisches Wirtschaften* 4: 30−33.

Burkhart, Corinna, Matthias Schmelzer and Nina Treu 2017. "Ohne Bewegungen keine Transformation. Das Mosaik der Alternativen als Kompass für Postwachstumspolitiken." Pp. 77-88 in *Postwachstumspolitiken. Wege zur wachstumsunabhängigen Gesellschaft*, edited by Frank Adler and Ulrich Schachtschneider. München: oekom.

Candeias, Mario 2004. *Neoliberalismus - Hochtechnologie - Hegemonie. Grundrisse einer transnationalen kapitalistischen Produktions- und Lebensweise. Eine Kritik*. Hamburg: Argument Verlag.

Dörre, Klaus, Hartmut Rosa, Karin Becker, Sophie Bosse and Benjamin Seyd, eds. 2019. *Große Transformation? Zur Zukunft moderner Gesellschaften*. Sonderband des Berliner Journals für Soziologie. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

European Commission 2019. The European Green Deal: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf (21.06.2021).

Eversberg, Dennis and Matthias Schmelzer 2015. "Über die Selbstproblematisierung zur Kapitalismuskritik Vier Thesen zur entstehenden Degrowth-Bewegung". *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 29(1): 9-17.

Fisher, William and Thomas Ponniah 2015. *Another World Is Possible: World Social Forum Proposals for an Alternative Globalization*. London: Zed Books.

Fraser, Nancy 1992. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." Pp. 109-142 in *Habermas and The Public Sphere*, edited by Craig J. Calhoun. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Geels, Frank 2010. "Ontologies, socio-technical transitions (to sustainability), and the multi-level perspective." *Res Policy* 39(4): 495-510.

Global Footprint Network 2021. "Earth Overshoot Day 1970-2021." https://www.overshootday.org/newsroom/past-earth-overshoot-days/ (21.06.2021).

Görg, Christoph 2003. *Regulation der Naturverhältnisse. Zu einer kritischen Theorie der ökologischen Krise*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.

Görg, Christoph and Philip Bedall 2013 Antagonistische Positionen. "Die Climate-Justice-Koalition vor dem Hintergrund der Theorie gesellschaftlicher Naturverhältnisse." Pp. 75-106 in *Die internationale Klimabewegung. Ein Handbuch,* edited by Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Graefe, Peter 2006. "Social Economy Policies as Flanking Mechanisms for Neo-Liberalism. Transnational Policy Solutions, Emergent Contradictions, Local Alternatives." Pp. 95-110 in *Neo-Liberalism, State Power and Global Governance*, edited by Simon Lee and Stephen McBride. Dordrecht: Springer.

Grießhammer, Rainer and Bettina Brohmann 2015. Wie Transformation und gesellschaftliche Innovationen gelingen können. Freiburg/Darmstadt: Öko-Institut e.V.

Groll, Stefanie 2019. Coal Commission Final Report – Assessment. https://www.boell.de/en/2019/02/18/coal-commission-final-report-assessment (21.06.2021).

Haas, Tobias. 2016. "Die Energiewende unter dem Druck (skalarer) Kräfteverschiebungen. Eine Analyse des EEG 2.0." *PROKLA,* 46 (3), 365-381.

Haas, Tobias 2017. *Die politische Ökonomie der Energiewende. Deutschland und Spanien im Kontext multipler Krisendynamiken in Europa*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Hamilton, Clive 2015. *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change*. New York: Routledge.

Harvey, David 2019. Anti-Capitalist Politics in the Time of COVID-19. https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/david-harvey-coronavirus-political-economy-disruptions (21.06.2021).

Hauf, Felix 2016. *Beyond Decent Work. The Cultural Political Economy of*

Labour Struggles in Indonesia. Frankfurt: Campus.

Hausknost Daniel 2020. "The environmental state and the glass ceiling of transformation." *Environmental Politics* 29 (1): 17-37.

Hausknost, Daniel, Michel Deflorian and Ingolfur Blühdorn 2018. „Transition Impossible? Ambiguous Transformations and the Resilience of Unsustainability. Conference call Institute for Social Change and Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business." https://www.wu.ac.at/fileadmin/wu/d/i/ign/IGN_Vienna_-_CfP_Transition_Impossible.pdf (21.06.2021).

Holloway, John 2010. Die Welt verändern, ohne die Macht zu übernehmen. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.

IPCC 2013. Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Working Group 1. Cambridge: University Press.

Kannankulam, John and Fabian Georgi 2014. "Varieties of capitalism or varieties of relationships of forces? Outlines of a historical materialist policy analysis." *Capital & Class*, 38 (1): 59–71.

Kaufer, Ricardo and Paula Lein 2018. „Widerstand im Hambacher Forst: Analyse einer anarchistischen Waldbesetzung." Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen 31 (4). FJSBplus: http://forschungsjournal.de/sites/default/files/fjsbplus/fjsb-plus_2018-4_kaufer_lein.pdf (21.06.2021).

Klein, Dieter 2014. "Doppelte Transformation." Pp. 101-124 in *Futuring. Perspektiven der Transformation im Kapitalismus und über ihn hinaus*, edited by Michael Brie. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot.

Korte, Mareike 2011. "Der Köder muss dem Fisch schmecken und nicht dem Angler." Pp. 187-208 in *Zivilisierung des Klimaregimes. NGOs und soziale Bewegungen in der nationalen, europäischen und internationalen Klimapolitik*, edited by Achim Brunnengräber. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Krams, Mathias 2018. "Die Klima- und Vielfachkrise der letzten Dekade: Dynamiken, Wechselwirkungen und Interventionsfelder." *Kurswechsel: Zeitschrift für gesellschafts-, wirtschafts- und umweltpolitische Alternativen,* 4: 67-77.

Krams, Mathias 2019. "Macht und Selektivität in diskursiven Feldern: Die Cultural Political Economy als Ansatz zur Herrschaftsanalyse von Deutungskämpfen um die Bearbeitung der Klimakrise." Pp. 54-69 in *Handbuch Poststrukturalistische Perspektiven auf soziale Bewegungen: Ansätze, Methoden und Forschungspraxis*, edited by Judith Vey, Johanna Leinius, and Ingmar Hagemann. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Leinius, Johanna, Judith Vey and Ingmar Hagemann 2017. „Poststrukturalistische Perspektiven auf soziale Bewegungen. Plädoyer für eine notwendige Blickverschiebung." *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 30 (4): 6-20.

Löw Beer, David, Konrad Gürtler, Jeremias Herberg and Tobias Haas 2021. „Wie legitim ist der Kohlekompromiss? Spannungsfelder und Verhandlungsdynamiken im Prozess der Kohlekommission." *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41358-021-00261-8.

McAdam, Doug and Sidney Tarrow 2019. "The Political Context of Social Movements." Pp 19-42 in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements, edited by* David .A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, Hanspeter Kriesi and Holly J. McCammon. Oxford: Blackwell.

Monticelli, Lara 2018. "Embodying Alternatives to Capitalism in the 21st Century". *tripleC* 16 (2): 501–17.

Moran, Timothy 2015. "It's Good to Be Rich: Piketty's Capital in the Twenty-First Century." *Sociological Forum,* 30 (3): 865-69.

Müller, Tadzio 2008. "The Movement Is Dead, Long Live the Movement." *Turbulence* 4: 48-55.

Müller, Tadzio 2017. "Diversity is Strength. The German Energiewende as a Resilient Alternative." *Source*. New Economics Foundation.

Norgaard, Kari Marie 2011. Living in Denial. Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Oberndorfer, Lukas 2021. "Auf zum grünen Festungskapitalismus? Die EU-Pläne für einen ‚grünen' Aufbauplan zur Bewältigung der Corona-Krise." Pp 685-694 in *Die Welt nach Corona. Von den Risiken des Kapitalismus, den Nebenwir-kungen des Ausnahmezustands und der kommenden Gesellschaft, edited by* Bertz D.F., Berlin: Bertz und Fischer

Oroschakoff, Kalina 2021. "Top German court rules the country's climate law is partly 'unconstitutional'." https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-climate-change-law-court-rules-partly-unconstitutional/ (21.06.2021).

Oxfam 2021. "The inequality virus. Bringing together a world torn apart by coronavirus through a fair, just and sustainable economy." https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621149/bp-the-inequality-virus-250121-en.pdf (21.06.2021).

Rich, Nathaniel 2018. "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change." New York Times, August 8. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html (21.06.2021).

Rinscheid, Adrian 2018. "Soziale Akzeptanz eines Kohleausstiegs in Deutschland und in den Kohlerevieren: Ergebnisse einer Umfrage und Conjoint-Analyse." https://www.greenpeace.de/sites/www.greenpeace.de/files/publications/2018-05-07_energie_kohle_studie_-_soziale_akzeptanz.pdf (21.06.2021).

Roth, Michael 2018. "Radikaler Reformismus. Geschichte und Aktualität einer politischen Denkfigur. Pp. 219-240 in *Zur Aktualität der Staatsform: Die*

materialistische Staatstheorie von Joachim Hirsch, edited by Ulrich Brand and Christoph Görg. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Sander, Hendrik 2016a. *Auf dem Weg zum Grünen Kapitalismus? Die Energiewende nach Fukushima*. Berlin: Bertz+Fischer.

Sander, Hendrik 2016b. "Die Bewegung für Klimagerechtigkeit und Energiedemokratie in Deutschland. Eine historisch-materialistische Bewegungsanalyse." *PROKLA* 46 (184): 403-421.

Sander, Hendrik 2016c. "Die Klimagerechtigkeitsbewegung in Deutschland. Entwicklung und Perspektiven."
https://www.rosalux.de/publikation/id/9303/die-klimagerechtigkeitsbewegung-in-deutschland/ (21.06.2021).

Schmalz, Stefan and Klaus Dörre 2014. "Der Machtressourcenansatz: Ein Instrument zur Analyse gewerkschaftlichen Handlungsvermögens." *Industrielle Beziehungen* 21 (3): 217-237.

Schoppek, Dorothea Elena 2020. "How far is Degrowth a Really Revolutionary Counter Movement to Neoliberalism" *Environmental Values* 29 (2): 131-151.

Schoppek, Dorothea Elena 2021. "How do we research possible roads to alternative

futures? Theoretical and methodological considerations." *Journal of Critical Realism* 20 (2): 146-158.

Steffen, Will et al. 2018. "Trajectories of the Earth System on the Anthropocene. Proceedings of the National Academy of Science." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 115 (33): 8252-8259.

Sum, Ngai-Ling and Bob Jessop 2013. *Towards a Cultural Political Economy. Putting Culture in its Place in Political Economy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Sum, Ngai-Ling and Bob Jessop 2015. "Cultural political economy and critical policy studies: developing a critique of domination." Pp. 128-150 in *Handbook of Critical Policy Studies*, edited by Frank Fischer, Douglas Torgerson, Anna Durnová, and Michael Orsini. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Temper, Leah, Mariana Walter, Iokine Rodriguez, Ashish Kothari, and Ethemcan Turhan 2018. "A perspective on radical transformations to sustainability: resistances, movements and alternatives." *Sustainability Science* 13: 747-764.

Thompson, Clara S. 2020. "#FightEveryCrisis: Re-framing the climate movement in times of a pandemic." *Interface* 12 (1): 225 –231.

Tokar, Brian 2017. "Social Ecology: Communalism against Climate Chaos." *ROAR Magazine* 7: 28-39.

Umweltbundesamt, ed. 2018. "Erneuerbare Energien in Deutschland Daten zur Entwicklung im Jahr 2017."
https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/376/publikationen/180315_uba_hg_eeinzahlen_2018_bf.pdf (21.06.2021).

Wallace, Robert and Mike Davis 2016. *Big Farms Make Big Flu: Dispatches on Influenza, Agribusiness, and the Nature of Science*. NYU Press.

Welzer, Harald 2011. "Mentale Infrastrukturen. Wie das Wachstum in die Welt und in die Seelen kam." *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*, *Schriftenreihe Ökologie,* 14. https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/Endf_Mentale_Infrastrukturen.pdf (21.06.2021).

Wright, Erik Olin 2010. *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London and New York: Verso.

Wright, Erik Olin 2019. *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century*. London and New York: Verso.

WWF 2016. Living Planet Report 2016. Risk and resilience in a new era. Gland: WWF International.

Yates, Luke 2014. "Rethinking Prefiguration: Alternatives, Micropolitics and Goals in Social Movements." *Social Movement Studies* 14 (1): 1–21.

Zelik, Raul and Aaron Tauss, eds. 2013. *Andere mögliche Welten? Krise, Linksregierungen, populare Bewegungen: Eine lateinamerikanisch-europäische Debatte*. Hamburg: VSA.

About the authors

Dorothea Elena Schoppek works as a research assistant at the Institute of Political Science at Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany. In her dissertation project, she is interested in the chances and limitations of counter-hegemonic strategies in bringing about a social ecological transformation in the field of agriculture. schoppek AT pg.tu-darmstadt.de

Mathias Krams is a research assistant and doctoral candidate at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria. He works on social and international conflicts, critical state theory and the social ecological transformation of the urban mobility sector. Mathias.Krams AT univie.ac.at

United we stand: fostering cohesion in activist groups
Liane Munro

Abstract

Group cohesion is an important factor in the effectiveness of activist group work. Cohesion fostering practices and processes can be prioritised and adopted into an activist group's culture to improve group member and whole group wellbeing and effectiveness. Methods to improve the internal group dynamics of activist groups include broadening people's self-awareness and the ways they behave in their groups. As well, there is an emphasis on the relationships group members build and the deeper connections they make in order to develop a cohesive group culture. To date, very little group cohesion dynamics research has been conducted with activist groups. Analysis of interview data identified a range of cohesion fostering practices and processes that activist groups have applied. From those practices identified, a self-disclosure activity called personal narrative was tested in a workshop intervention. Data analysed from questionnaires, free text and observations showed a preliminary indication of increased prosocial feelings and behaviours consistent with improved group cohesion. No single tool or combination thereof is a panacea guaranteed to create collegial groups at all times. However, when an activist group actively and strategically focuses on its cohesion by inculcating cohesion skills, knowledge, practices and processes they are more likely to be more cohesive and effective.

Keywords: Activist groups, group cohesion, group dynamics, cohesion strategy, prosocial behaviour.

Introduction

Sixty thousand people rallied on the streets of Paris on the 21st of September 2014. The drummers led the march, and the rest of us chanted in rhythm to the beat; the energy was palpable. I felt as though I was part of something bigger than myself and we were all in this fight together. The People's Climate March organised by 350.org and supported by climate action groups across the globe saw millions of people attend 2646 rallies in 162 countries that year. It was the largest global action raising climate change awareness in history (350.org 2015).

Rallies like the one described above, and the broader campaigns and social movements they are part of, don't happen by accident. They are built from the ground up by individuals working together in activist groups. As activists, we

come together with a specific purpose or goal, often inspired by personal values and fuelled by our frustration with the level of dysfunction and inaction in the political, social and cultural spheres. Initially, it may feel as though our personal energy and passion rousing this momentum will carry us through to goal completion. Yet in my experience, and that of many others, the success or failure of an activist group often hinges on the group's internal dynamics. When activist groups devolve into internal conflict, factionalism, power plays and other dysfunctions, their effectiveness can be severely compromised (Vannucci & Singer 2010:31-40; Gastil 2014:89-107). I argue that prosocial self-knowledge and interpersonal skills, as well as cohesion fostering participatory group practices and processes, are vitally important in supporting a group to attain its goals.

On and off, for the past three decades I have been a member of an activist group, often several at a time. More often than not, at some point the group loses energy and focus, gets caught up in the minutiae of personal differences due to unmet individual expectations, or descends into internal conflict losing sight of and/or failing to achieve the group's initial goals. These familiar pitfalls are far too common in my experience, and for many years this has frustrated and confounded me. Group dysfunction or breakdown feels like a squandered opportunity at a time when we can least afford it. These experiences prompted me to ask, *would a whole group focus on cohesion offer any advantages to activist groups?* This query guided me in exploring some of the purposeful cultural changes that activist groups can apply to foster cohesion in their groups.

Rather than focusing on the factors from the external environment that influence and impact a group, I concentrated on what goes on within groups, including the thoughts and feelings of individual group members, and asked what kinds of group processes and training practices are effective for fostering activist group cohesion. There is research on cohesion and conflict in groups available in behavioural science, organisational behaviour and other social sciences, however little of this research is specifically oriented to activist groups. To overcome this omission, I examined activist training manuals and texts to identify cohesion fostering practices and processes currently available in activist literature. As well, I reviewed literature on group conflict and cohesion from behavioural science, organisational behaviour and other social sciences. From this, I developed a 2-stage research process. First, I invited Australian activists with nonviolent direct-action (NVDA) training to identify and list which practices and processes foster cohesion in their groups. Then I chose one of these cohesion fostering practices, called *personal narrative,* to test whether it fosters group cohesion in a research intervention. To the best of my knowledge, Australian NVDA trained activists have not been asked what practices and processes foster cohesion in their groups and the personal narrative practice has not been tested in an intervention to see whether it fosters cohesion in activist groups.

Stellan Vinthagen (2018:7-8), editor of the *Journal of Resistance Studies,* identified in an editorial a need for research exploring the efficacy of activist training manuals which provide hands-on specialised skills for front-line activists. He also suggested the need to develop practical activist knowledge by drawing upon the collective hard-won wisdom of resisters along with the academic conceptual discourse of resistance. He said that practical outcomes should be developed through a collaborative partnership between the activist and the academic. Vinthagen's recommendations framed my investigations into cohesion in activist groups. The goal of this research project is not to establish causal inference or produce highly generalizable scientific results. The sample size for this study is small so causal inference can not be established. The goal of this project was to ask NVDA trained activists what practices and processes they thought fostered group cohesion and to explore some of the purposeful and practical cultural changes that activist groups can apply to foster cohesion in their groups. As well, there is a hope that this project will encourage more group dynamics research undertaken collaboratively between activists and academics.

What follows is an outline of the group dynamics research that dissects group cohesion and endeavours to explain why cohesion is an important factor for activist groups. As well, the negative impacts of group cohesion such as *groupthink* are explored. Next, group conflict types are examined and some practices and processes to limit conflict in groups are highlighted. The research methodology is explained, and a brief outline of the research process is presented. The discussion section considers the importance of prioritising the skills, knowledge and practices that develop a cohesive group culture as part of a strategy for activist group effectiveness. Concluding statements highlight the importance of group dynamics research in activist groups.

Group dynamics research

Conceptualising group cohesion and conflict

Cohesion is a complex group dynamic and arises in groups in multifaceted ways. Scholars have offered various definitions of cohesion, each being influenced by their research group's context, the scholar's theoretical perspective and the scholar's perceived source or origin of the cohesion (Levine & Moreland 1990:603; Siebold 1999:9). My preferred definition of cohesion was devised by Kurt Lewin 1948 cited in (Forsyth 2018:128):

> the forces that keep groups intact by pushing members together as well as countering forces that push them apart.

Lewin's definition draws attention to the balance between the elements that hold groups together and those elements that can break the group apart. An example would be sharing communal meals after a meeting as a way to draw

members together while adopting processes that prevent destructive shouting matches. This is important because I'm focusing on cultivating constructive practices to deal with group conflict and ways of fostering cohesion in activist groups.

Cohesion can be understood as an *emergent state*. An emergent state is typically characterised by constant change and varies depending on the group's context (Marks et al. 2001: 357-8). Severt and Estrada (2015:21) offer a "structural conceptualisation" of cohesion to highlight why and how cohesion is so important to groups (see table 1). According to Severt and Estrada (2015:8-10) cohesion can be deconstructed into two functional properties, *affective and instrumental,* and four structural factors, *interpersonal, group pride, social and task*. Severt and Estrada looked at the emotional and interpersonal functions (affective) and the everyday practical functions (instrumental) of cohesion to uncover in more detail why and how cohesion is beneficial for group members and the group as a whole. These dimensions differ in the following ways: affective cohesion refers to the emotional support that group members can provide for each other, as well as a sense of belonging and group pride. Additionally, the interpersonal aspect refers to the friendship bonds that group members form over time. Instrumental cohesion, on the other hand points out the practical and functional aspects of coming together in groups. Social cohesion describes the improved flexible, positive and productive working relationships between group members. The examples identified in Table 1 give further explanation of each function of cohesion. Similar to Severt and Estrada (2015), Forsyth (2018:128-136) has identified five factors that express group cohesion. These factors, he suggests, are influential in developing cohesion in a group (see table 2). The following tables are a visual representation I have constructed of these concepts.

Table 1. Functional and structural factors of cohesion (drawing on Severt & Estrada 2015)

Functional properties	Structural facets	Examples
Affective (emotional)	Interpersonal	Feelings of belonging and connection. Emotional support, willingness to engage in personal/informal conversation
	Group pride	Pride in group values, connect with like-minded people, group principles strengthen members' identity
Instrumental (applied)	Social	Social bonds between group members – displaying behaviours of flexibility, positivity and reciprocity in working relationships.
	Task	Shared commitment to group task, belief that group task will be completed successfully, collective desire to perform task effectively

Table 2. Five factors of group cohesion (drawing on Forsyth 2018)

Five factors that express group cohesion	Examples
Emotional cohesion	Group pride and loyalty. Positive feeling attributed to the group and communicated in the group's morale and vitality
Collective cohesion	A "we are all in this together" feeling. The use of plural pronouns such as *we* and *us*
Social cohesion	Interpersonal connection and bonding between group members
Task cohesion	The group's focus is the task which is expressed as a collective commitment and trust
Structural cohesion	Defined responsibilities, clarity of roles, and standardised group processes. The group's behavioural norms are well established

What is important to notice in these two tables is the number of factors to consider when activists seek to foster cohesion in their groups. The functional properties identified by Severt and Estrada have *emotional* and *applied* components. The emotional components have two structural facets these are *interpersonal* and *group pride*. These are expressed as the level of interpersonal connection and bonding between group members as well as a deep pride in the group as a whole. The applied components have the structural facets of *social* and *task*. These are expressed as a shared commitment to task completion and the development of bonding and reciprocity in the group. However, it is interesting to note that the lines can blur between these factors. For example, some of the emotional, collective and social factors share similar properties. Forsyth also identified the importance of distinguishing between emotional and structural cohesion separating out emotional, collective and social cohesion from structural and task cohesion. Forsyth's five factors offer an even clearer distinction between the emotional and practical functions. The practical components that create cohesion include *clarity of roles and responsibilities*[1] as well as *established behavioural norm*s. The two tables clearly demonstrate the complexity of the cohesion dynamic.

When we deconstruct cohesion in this way, we can begin to see how interwoven the affective and instrumental functional properties are in the behaviour of group members and the group as a whole, and how important cohesion is as an overall focus for activist groups. Although each of these components is highlighted separately, in order to foster group cohesion, the components can be viewed as being in cooperation, operating together to foster group cohesion. If instigated separately, the cohesion effect may not be achieved to its full potential. The value of group cohesion can be insufficiently recognised by activist groups and from my experience is rarely intentionally prioritised as part of an activist group's culture[2]. Once an activist group has an awareness of this dynamic, it can develop a strategy to adopt skills, practices and processes to foster cohesion with these factors in mind.

It is important to note that not all outcomes of group cohesion are constructive or easily achieved. *Groupthink*, identified by Janis (1982:9), is an unhelpful group phenomenon recognised when group participants are more focused on remaining agreeable during group participation and decision-making than embarking on a dialogue that may be difficult. Groups that have fallen into groupthink have an over reliance on hierarchy and a desire to preserve group harmony. An awareness of the pitfalls of groupthink are needed so that all group

---

[1] Although these practices are described by Forsyth as important for structural cohesion, a reviewer has highlighted Kia and Ricketts (2018) as an example of other ways of organising in groups to build structural cohesion.

[2] Despite the general truth of this statement, as suggested by a reviewer some groups have systematically worked to develop cohesion. The Australian Nonviolence Network conducted a comprehensive and compulsory 3-day training at the 1982 Franklin river blockade that prioritised cohesion building exercises.

members participate equally in group discussion and decision-making processes and that space is opened for voicing of alternative viewpoints. Likewise, to achieve cohesion, Lakey (2010:51-2) cautions that cohesion building is a gentle process that cannot be forced. He stresses the need to provide a group culture that nurtures cohesion to flourish over time.

Conflict regularly occurs in groups. Group conflict can arise when everyday dealings are disrupted by disagreement or irritation due to the awareness of discrepancies or conflicting interests (Forsyth 2018:410-11). Research into group conflict has identified three conflict types - task, relationship and process (Jehn & Mannix 2001:238). These conflict types correspond loosely with the functional properties of cohesion listed above. Several practices and processes were identified in the group conflict literature that enhance the potential for group cohesion. One of the practices known as *emotions management*, the inner work we do to be more emotionally flexible, works to enhance cooperation and limit the disruptive consequences of conflict. Emotions management can improve group functioning across the three conflict types listed above (Barker et al. 2008:423-24; Jiang et al. 2013:726-30). Similarly, task, relationship and process conflict are reduced when group members are skilled in deliberative dialogue processes. The practice of deliberative dialogue has a set of clear principles that guide a discussion. These principles ask group members to seek clarification of others' views and attitudes before disagreement, provide equal opportunity for group members to contribute to discussion and respectful listening (amongst other skills) to help foster open mindedness and a more relaxed attitude towards disagreement (Johnson et al. 2014:77; Schirch & Campt 2015:9-10). Other research has highlighted the importance of a conflict style that is pre-emptive rather than reactive by employing practices such as being pragmatic in anticipating when group conflict may arise. Also useful is developing and implementing management measures such as acknowledging the perspectives of all group members, co-creating group rules that make expectations clear and balancing the individual interests of group members with the collective interests of the group (Behfar et al. 2008:185).

Research into whether conflict has a negative or a positive impact on the effectiveness of a group has been inconsistent. Research into the productive nature of conflict shows some positive benefit of low-level task conflict (Jehn and Mannix 2001). However, subsequent research undertaken by De Dreu & Weingart (2003:748) suggests that both task and relationship conflict are negatively correlated with group performance. Additionally, further research into relationship conflict highlighted the need for careful management as there is no beneficial level of relationship conflict to the longevity of a group (Behfar et al. 2008). However, as identified above, how a group anticipates and proactively deals with any potential group conflict can often be an important factor in its management.

This section has undertaken to deconstruct the concept of cohesion in order to show why group cohesion is important for activist groups, but also to provide a

description of the essential elements that come together to foster group cohesion. These cohesion elements are important for activist groups to be aware of when developing their group cohesion strategy. Similarly, this section has broken down the essential workings of group conflict in the hope that, when understood, triggering elements can be anticipated and prevented. The next section looks at a review of activist literature to uncover what sort of practices and processes they suggest for fostering cohesion in groups.

Insights from activists

A group's cohesion strategy can include the adoption and inculcation of individual member and whole group cohesion capabilities. To identify these capabilities, I explored English-language writing by and for activists to gather information on the kinds of practices and processes available to activists and to ascertain whether cohesion is identified as a valuable quality in activist group culture. Training manuals reviewed include the nonviolent direct-action (NVDA) *Trainers Resource Manual 2005*, which is used as a training guide by NVDA trainers when conducting workshops. Helpful texts were also reviewed, include *Getting Our Act Together* (Ochre 2013) a practical guide containing practices and processes to help group members overcome common problems and work better together; *In the Tiger's Mouth* (Shields 1991) which offers applied methods for engaging with others in social action; and *Come Hell or High Water: a handbook on collective process gone awry* (Vannucci & Singer 2010) which offers insights into the group dynamics of egalitarian organisations and the problems that can be experienced in this type of group[3]. These and other writings gave me an awareness of the types of resources currently available to activists[4]. Further information on group practices and processes was found in group dynamics, social science, psychology and organisational management journals.

Some of the personal practices identified in the literature include self-awareness through self-reflection, emotions regulation, deliberative dialogue skills, and respectful listening (Johnson et al. 2014; Schirch & Campt 2015). These prosocial practices add to a group member's capacity for emotional flexibility and a personal awareness of their impacts on their group. Emotional flexibility is defined as having the ability to reflect on and gain a greater insight into one's own ways of thinking, viewpoints and biases about a topic (Schirch & Campt 2015:15). Some of the helpful group processes include fair and inclusive decision-making, check-ins, safe meeting principles and the conscious inclusion of all group members so that they feel encouraged to share their ideas, opinions and contributions. Group processes such as these offer ways of supporting the

---

[3] These are just a sample of the texts and manuals I reviewed for this research.

[4] As suggested by a reviewer, there are many other texts and manuals that can be examined in this context: Branagan (2013), Cohen et al. (2011), Popovic et al. (2007), Ricketts (2012), WRI (2009).

group's culture that embraces empowerment, respect, self-responsibility and belonging (Lakey 2010:24; Mindell 2014:18,33; Ochre 2013:31-2; Shields 1991:12-28; Starhawk 2011:44; Vannucci & Singer 2010:30-1). These are all vital components for activist groups to flourish (Severt & Estrada 2015:4).

The information assembled from activist writings and the practices and processes from the group dynamics literature offer a repertoire of skills that can be implemented to foster cohesion in activist groups. These skills purposefully create the conditions that support a more collegial group. However, I haven't come across any research that prioritises cohesion building as a group strategy or any reference to a group cohesion strategy as a proactive approach to activist group function. Additionally, it seems that there is little or no research on group cohesion specifically oriented to activist groups. What is needed is an intentional approach to cohesion building in activist groups that promotes prosocial capabilities to shape a regenerative group culture.

Methodology

To determine how to better foster cohesion in activist groups, I set out to answer the practical question, *what kinds of group processes and training practices are effective for fostering cohesion in activist groups?* I interviewed ten environmental/social justice activists across Australia who had participated in nonviolent direct action (NVDA) training and asked them to identify which practices and processes they found fostered cohesion in their groups. Then I took one of the suggested practices called *personal narrative* and, working collaboratively with my activist allies, applying an action research approach where the researcher is also a participant in the intervention, tested whether it fostered cohesion in our activist group. For action research, the participant-researcher undertakes an investigation with the intention of influencing change within their organisation or to improving their group's practices. Action research was originally developed in the 1930's by John Collier. It was further developed in the 1940's by social psychologist Kurt Lewin whose focus was on organisational behaviour, and understanding and improving decision making in workplaces, schools, communities and national and state governments (Lewin 1946:34; McNiff & Whitehead 2011:41-42; De Chesnay 2014:6-7). Since then, action research as a method has been applied to many workplace environments including teaching and nursing. Similarly, it has been applied as a research method when investigating environmental advocacy, and also in conflict resolution and activist research (Coleman et al. 2014:1064-1065; McNiff & Whitehead 2011:41-42; Whelan 2002:179).

When determining the meaning of a group process and a training practice I used the following definitions. *Practices* were defined as interpersonal and self-awareness skills, bonding actions or behavioural expectations that enhance group members' prosocial capacity and psychological flexibility, enriching the group's overall cohesion. Practices in this instance would include *deliberative dialogue skills*. These skills would manifest as a capacity to listen respectfully to

a challenger's ideas and opinions, seeking clarification of ideas before disagreement and detaching personal worth from the critique of their own ideas and do the same for their challenger. A *process* denotes the methods adopted by the group to facilitate group governance and have a cohering effect on a group's culture. An example of a group process would be *consensus decision-making*. When facilitated well and group members participate in good faith, this group process offers all group members the opportunity to express an opinion and to cooperatively participate in the group's decision-making.

Research stage 1

The lack of publicly available lists of NVDA trained activists made it a challenge to make contact and invite them to participate in the research. To counter this, I used snowball sampling in the following way. I contacted my NVDA trained activist friends to invite them to be interviewed and then asked them to make contact with their NVDA activist friends and networks to let others know about this research project. To collect the relevant data, a simple structured interview was devised. I had two aims: collecting recommended cohesion fostering techniques and connecting with other NVDA trained activist to become participants.

I asked each activist two questions:

1. I'd like you to think back on your experiences with nonviolent direct-action training. Did any of the techniques seem useful for fostering cohesion and/or resilience in groups? Which ones would you recommend?

2. Can you suggest one or two other activists that you know who have participated in NVDA training and that might be interested in participating in this research?

The first cohort of interviewees were NVDA trained activists who lived in my local community, so I could talk to them face-to-face. Their ages ranged from 50-60 years; they were all women of Anglo origin who had participated in NVDA training between 1980 and 1990. The other interviewees were spread throughout Australia. I interviewed them by phone, so their gender and age were unknown to me. These activists had undertaken NVDA training within the past ten years. I contacted and interviewed activists until the information they shared started to be repeated.

Research stage 2

I then undertook a second research stage which was to devise and implement an intervention that would test the cohesion-fostering efficacy of one of the

suggested practices. Based on the findings in stage 1 and supported by the literature of the positive effect storytelling has on group cohesion, I chose to test in stage 2 the practice called *personal narrative*[5]. The research methods underpinning the design were action research, observations and questionnaires.

Personal narrative

The *personal narrative* practice asks group members to write down and share the story of their activist journey, exploring deeply their personal values and the motivators for their activist identity. These stories, when shared with other group members, are often inspirational and uniting (Light 2013). Nummenmaa et al. (2014:498-99, 508) measured brain activity whilst research participants listened to recorded stories, demonstrating that participants *caught* the emotions heard in the narrative. Emotional sharing, foundational to the personal narrative practice, is a central factor in creating social bonding and group cohesion (Rennung & Goritz 2015:4). As a consequence, story-sharing creates a "we are all in this together" feeling, which was identified as significant to group cohesion by many of the NVDA-trained activists.

Theoretical perspective

I employed Tuckman's small-group development theory as the underpinning theoretical perspective in the research design. Tuckman's small-group development theory sees groups moving through several development stages, often not sequentially: *forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning* (Tuckman 1965). Tuckman's theory was a natural choice as it provided a clear way of coding when a group is either not cohesive (storming), cohering (norming) or productively cohesive (performing). Tuckman's original study in 1965, as well as Miller (2003) and Kiweewa et al. (2018), provided key words for the coding frame that denoted emotions, and phrases that define observable behaviours (see Table 3). The coding frame was chosen prior to data collection and used to analyse the data gathered from questionnaires and observations. I formulated Table 3, below, to show words denoting emotions and observable behaviour themes identified in the studies conducted by Tuckman (1965), Miller (2003) and Kiweewa et al. (2018). The words denoting emotions and observable behaviours indicate which of Tuckman's (1965) group development stages a group is in. Tuckman, Miller and Kiweewa et al.'s themes were analysed to produce the coding themes for this study, which are identified in the column on the far right. I focused on the storming, norming and performing stages in my study because the participant group (research stage 2) is a well-established group with no plans to fold in the near future.

---

[5] I chose to test personal narrative simply because the intervention was easy to conduct in the time I had to complete my research. As well, I found the literature investigating the positive effects of storytelling intriguing and I wanted to explore this further.

Table 3. Observable themes table

Tuckman's stages	Themes identified from Tuckman, B (1965)		Themes identified from Miller (2003: 126)	Themes identified from Kiweewa et al. (2018: 286)	Feelings words for the stage 2 intervention
	Observable themes	Correspon-ding feelings and qualities	Observable themes	Observable themes	Feelings wheel
Storming	Criticism of ideas, poor attendance, polarization, coalition formation, rules are broken, increased friction	Defensive-ness, jealousy, heightened negative emotions, fight-flight tendency, hostility, frustration	There was conflict between group members

Individuals demonstrated resistance towards the demands of the task

The group was experiencing some friction

Group members became hostile towards one another | Vicarious modelling

Dealing with conflict | Defensive
Inadequate
Stupid
Jealous
Frustrated
Furious
Irritated
Sceptical
Bewildered
Discouraged
Insignificant
Weak
Foolish
Anxious
Confused
Rejected
Critical
Hateful
Angry
Hostile
Hurt |
| Norming | Agreement on procedures, reduction in role ambiguity, acceptance of members' idiosyncrasies, group establishes new group norms to ensure | Harmonious, trusting, thoughtful, openness, relaxed, appreciative/ appreciated, unified | Individuals identified with the group

The team felt like it had become a functioning unit | Cohesiveness/ bonding

Genuineness/ authenticity

Self-disclosure | Harmonious
Relaxed
Content
Sentimental
Thankful
Cheerful
Appreciated |

	existence, open exchange of ideas on tasks, increased "we-feeling"		Group norms were developed Team members had become comfortable with each other		Hopeful Faithful Nurturing Trusting Thoughtful Peaceful Joyful
Performing	Decision making; problem solving; mutual cooperation, minimal emotional interference, practical solutions-based discussion	Creative, friendliness, encouraging, connected, intelligent, responsive, respectful/ respected, cooperative	A unified group approach was applied to the task Constructive attempts were made to resolve project issues Solutions were developed and chosen	Genuineness/ authenticity Self-disclosure Validation/ acceptance	Creative, encouraging, cooperative innovative assertive proactive Daring Fascinating Stimulating Satisfied Valuable Worthwhile Intelligent Confident Responsive Important Respectful/ed Proud Aware Creative Playful Energetic Excited Powerful

Questionnaire design

In designing the questionnaire for the intervention, I deliberately avoided asking participants their perceived level of cohesion in their group. Research suggests individuals have faulty recall of past actions and a tendency to make up

unreliable retroactive justifications of behavioural responses[6] (Johansson et al. 2005; Miller 2003). As well, I designed the questionnaire to rule out potential biases such as social desirability where research participants respond in ways they think others will see as desirable. This can impact the validity of the data collected (Miller 2003:123). To do this, I designed the questionnaire using hypothetical group scenarios that were general in nature and did not ask direct questions about their group. Factoring in social desirability bias is important due to the nature of action research. Often, when conducting action research, the participant-researcher has a close friendship with the research participants and the research participants are aware (in general) of the research topic, which makes it vital to design data collection instruments that anticipate these potential human characteristics and biases. Additionally, the questionnaire design took advantage of the ideas on group cohesion dynamics gathered from the literature, as well as the suggestions gathered from the NVDA trained activists (more detail can be found in Author 2019).

The participant group

A political activist group, of which I am a member and that is based in regional New South Wales, agreed to participate in the intervention. Established in the early 1990's, the group undertakes activism in the environmental and social justice arena. Six group members agreed to participate in the intervention; I, as the participant-researcher, brought the total to seven participants. Prior to conducting the intervention workshop, I observed the group's behaviour to identify which current group practices and process could be improved or which new processes instigated. Additionally, after the intervention I observed group members to see whether they had changed their behaviour as a result of the intervention.

The intervention

The seven people who agreed to participate in the intervention came together one morning in a specified location. First, participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire, which asked them to comment on a series of scenarios (listed in Table 4) using both a feelings wheel[7] and written responses to three question. The participants were asked to indicate on a feelings wheel what feelings were evoked by the scenario and to write a written response explaining how they would respond to each scenario. The questions requiring a written response were the same for each scenario and were:

---

[6] Nevertheless, as suggested by a reviewer, some useful data may have been gained by asking this and comparing answers.

[7] A feelings wheel is a circular tool that has feelings listed in a spoke-type display that enables people to identify, indicate and articulate the emotions they are feeling in relation to a particular situation or context.

1.   Please explain your feelings if you can.

2.   How do you respond to the scenario? What actions would you take?

3.   What are your reasons for your actions?

Table 4. Questionnaire scenarios

Scenarios	Justification for scenario context
Scenario 1 You belong to an activist group that is in the process of deciding on your group's foundational values that will be included in the organisation's constitution. The debate is getting heated and Kia starts to criticise your ideas and opinions.	Scenario 1 has drawn upon ideas from Gastil (2014:11-34) and Johnson et al. (2014:76-103) which recommends that group members develop and engender communication practices that foster cohesion.
Scenario 2 You are part of an activist group that is running a campaign and one or two people seem to be taking on the majority of the responsibility for organising and completing the tasks/actions. You're feeling a little left out and annoyed that they're not including you.	The justification for scenario 2 also draws from ideas in Gastil (2014:11-34) which highlight the importance of a whole group approach to creating a cohesive group. Each group member can participate proactively in task allocation.
Scenario 3 Frankie, a group member, has suggested we start having a shared meal with our monthly meetings.	The ideas behind scenario 3 came from the NVDA trained activists interviewed in stage 1, and Lakey (2010:42-52) who emphasised the extraordinary influence informal socialising had in fostering cohesion in groups.

Second, they participated in a workshop that took them through the process of writing a personal narrative. Writing a personal narrative involved telling the story of their activist journey, sharing their personal experiences, feelings, values and motivations in relation to their activist group and the broader movement the group is a part of (Shields 1991:89-90). There is a growing body of evidence that suggests connecting through storytelling fosters cohesion in groups (Aron et al. 1997:327; Heffernan 2015; Laloux 2014:159-64; Pollack & Matous 2019:473). Finally, if/when comfortable, the participants were asked to share their personal narrative with the group. Two weeks after the workshop, participants were asked to fill in the same questionnaire. The participant group held a regular monthly meeting after the intervention and before the second round of questionnaires were completed. I spent time in the meeting observing the intervention participants to note any change in their behaviour.

As highlighted above, for this study I collated Tuckman's words that denote emotions and behaviours into a coding frame of themes. Additionally, feelings words and behaviours applied in the group dynamics research conducted by Miller (2003) and Kiweewa et al. (2018) influenced the final compilation of feelings words used in the feelings wheel (see Table 3). Their studies were relevant because they were also based on Tuckman's research. These predetermined feelings words provided the basis for the thematic analysis of data collected from the feelings wheel in the questionnaire. Thematic analysis is a tool commonly used to collect and analyse data in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke 2006:78). The data collected from the initial questionnaire was compared to the data collected from the second questionnaire to identify any feelings or behavioural changes.

Results

Research stage 1

During the interviews, I took notes as we talked and highlighted the practices and processes that were recommended. Question 1 was completely open-ended, and the participants' responses formed the raw data.

> I'd like you to think back on your experiences with nonviolent direct-action training. Did any of the techniques seem useful for fostering cohesion and/or resilience in groups? Which ones would you recommend?

The table below is a complete list of the practices and processes suggested by participants during their interviews. Informal socialising, consensus decision making, and personal narrative are examples from over thirty suggested cohesion fostering practices and processes gathered from the activist participants. Some of the more popular practices suggested were group member support, active listening, conscious inclusion and respect. Table 5 below gives a

breakdown of the practices and processes suggested by my interviewees, and the number of them who suggested each method.

Table 5. Cohesion fostering practices and processes suggested by interviewees

Cohesion fostering practices and processes	Number of suggesters
Consensus decision-making	6
Affinity Groups	5
Informal socialising	5
Roleplay/spectrum exercises/trust games (not themselves but the practice learned within)	5
Swapping stories/personal narrative/stories of self	3
Learning together/working together	3
Introductions/check ins/ understanding others' motivations for being there	2
Buddy up	2
Police liaison	2
Group code of conduct/shared agreement/collective understanding	2
Facilitation skills	2
Group member support	1
Emotional welfare	1
Active listening	1
Communication	1
Conscious inclusion	1
Respect/non-hierarchal	1
Egalitarian	1
Fishbowl[8]	1
Step up-step down[9]	1
Community of selves	1
Naming the ghost[10]	1

[8] A process where group members observe the functioning of their group. Some group members sit in an inner circle conducting normal business whilst others sit in an outer circle observing the groups behaviour and issues of group process

[9] A practice where group members step into leadership positions when needed and then step back to allow others to lead

[10] A practice of naming the unspoken feelings or events that haven't been raised because some in the group may think it will cause upset or conflict in the group (Ochre 2013:47)

1 participant didn't think fostering cohesion was the focus of NVDA training and could not directly relate the training to group cohesion building. 1 participant was purposely excluded because of phone connection problems during interview.	

Research stage 2

The initial questionnaire undertaken prior to the intervention provided a baseline of each participant's feelings and observable behavioural themes. The questionnaire had two sections: a feelings wheel and free text responses. In Table 3, the column on the far right titled *words for stage 2 intervention*, shows a list of words that were built into a feelings wheel and categorised to represent the storming, norming and performing words. Themes of feelings identified by the respondents in both questionnaires were compared and any differences were noted (see Table 6). Table 6 is an extract of the original data showing the results of scenario 1 and shows a comparison of the responses between the first and second questionnaires. As an example, the feelings wheel data from the first questionnaires were compared with the post intervention questionnaires. Similarly, the free text responses from the first questionnaires were compared with the free text responses from the post intervention questionnaires.

Example – Participant A – Scenario 1 – first questionnaire

Scenario 1

> You belong to an activist group that is in the process of deciding on your group's foundational values that will be included in the organisation's constitution. The debate is getting heated, and Kia starts to criticise your ideas and opinions.

In response to scenario 1 in questionnaire 1 prior to participating in the stories of self workshop, Participant A marked down the following Storming feelings on the feelings wheel: *inadequate, stupid, frustrated, irritated, discouraged, insignificant, weak, anxious, angry, hurt* and the Norming feeling of *thoughtful*. These are the feelings participant A associated with scenario 1. You can see this represented in Table 6: participant A identified ten storming feelings, one norming feeling and no performing feelings.

Following is Participant A's written response in questionnaire 1 to the question *please explain your feelings if you can*

> I guess it would depend a bit on what I already thought/know about Kia. If I respected/admired her and thought her very intelligent, I would feel that I must be wrong in my ideas. This would lead to feeling embarrassed, stupid, alone, anxious etc. It would make me doubt my opinions and this would be uncomfortable. On the other hand, it might also depend on how strongly I felt

about my opinions. If I know I hadn't thought them through very well, I would wish I had kept my mouth shut – so again feeling wrong and stupid. If I didn't respect Kia all this would be different.

Example – Participant A – Scenario 1 – second questionnaire

In response to scenario 1 in the second questionnaire (post intervention), participant A marked down the following Storming feelings on the feelings wheel: *frustrated, anxious*. As well, participant marked down the following Norming feelings: *relaxed, thoughtful, hopeful, trusting*, and these Performing feelings: *confident, responsive, creative, energetic*. These are the feelings participant A associated with scenario 1 post interaction.

Following is Participant A's written response in the free text section of the questionnaire to the question *please explain your feelings if you can*

> I am really surprised at my change of feelings for this scenario. Somehow (obviously through the workshop and this process) the possibility of experiencing Kia's opposition to my ideas as an opportunity rather than a threat. In the first questionnaire I focused on the "things are getting heated" but this time I didn't so much. And even if I take that into account, I feel unthreatened by it.

As you can see by the written responses, the participant's feelings in response to scenario I has shifted, and the participant was feeling less threatened, more open, trusting and confident in the second questionnaire.

Table 6. Example of coding- scenario 1

Participant	Storming feeling themes			Norming feeling themes			Performing feeling themes		
	Q1	Q2	Difference	Q1	Q2	Difference	Q1	Q2	Difference
Participant A	10	2	-8	1	4	3	0	4	4
Participant B	5	1	-4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participant C	6	5	-1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Participant D	7	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participant E	4	3	-1	1	2	1	5	4	-1
Participant F	14	10	-4	0	1	1	1	0	1
Total	46	30	-16	2	7	5	7	9	4

Table 6 shows the different responses in scenario 1 from each participant between the first questionnaire they completed (Q1) and the second questionnaire they completed (Q2). When I compared the results, I found a

reduction in Storming feelings and behaviours and an increase in Norming and Performing feelings and behaviours.

Observations post the intervention for any changes to the group's dynamic were made during the participant group's monthly meeting held four days after the intervention and the completion of the first round of questionnaires. There were three possible outcome paths that could have eventuated after the intervention. These outcomes were anticipated as I undertook observations of the participant group's monthly meeting. Possible outcome 1: the interpersonal interactions between group members could have deteriorated into the group norms identified in a storming stage (research participants more disconnected, more hostile or defensive, experiencing friction). Possible outcome 2: interactions could have stayed the same as prior to intervention. Possible outcome 3: interactions could have improved: research participants could have become more engaged, more comfortable in expressing their opinions with the group, goal oriented, solutions discussed and acted upon as noted in the norming and performing stages. Due to the already identified level of cohesiveness of the participant group (between norming and performing), I was aware the potential impacts of the intervention (workshop) may have been subtle or difficult to observe. The following is an extract from my notes:

> Overall, the research participants exhibited more confidence, organisation, self-assuredness and trust. Participant group members also displayed increased connection to the group and the broader movement the group is part of. Participants reluctant to take on new roles in the past volunteered more readily. Towards the end of the meeting, a group member reminded the group of a prior commitment to have a shared meal at the regular monthly meetings. All research participants showed heightened enthusiasm and commitment to this idea with generous offers of contribution.

Finally, data collected from the questionnaire, free text and observations were triangulated to offer a combined perspective of the impacts of the intervention. Individually, each data collection method showed only a small change to the group members' feelings and behaviour. However, combining the evaluation methods shows these data are sufficiently promising and creates a clearer picture of increased prosocial behavioural characteristics amongst the group members. Despite this outcome, concrete conclusions cannot be drawn that prove causation. Additional research would need to be pursued to provide more solid evidence that the personal narrative practice was the cause of the increased group cohesion.

Discussion

Several practical concerns underpinned this research project. Firstly, I wanted to assemble research that would support my and other activist groups to be

more cohesive. Additionally, I intended my research to help bridge the academic-activist divide by drawing upon Australian activists' contextual knowledge and applying this to my group in an action research setting.

The literature reviewed for this project was gathered from three key areas: group cohesion dynamics, group conflict dynamics and activist training manuals and texts. The group cohesion literature highlighted the mostly constructive aspects of cohesion in groups. As well, it drew attention to the reasons why prioritising cohesion practices and processes as an essential factor of group culture is important. Conflict management processes that have a pre-emptive and pragmatic approach were emphasised as a supportive feature to enhance group cohesion. Activist training manuals and texts revealed many cohesion fostering practices and processes that can be implemented to support activist group cohesion. My stage 1 research in this study reinforced the value of some of the techniques described in existing activist literature. The literature reviewed, along with the research conducted, has established the value of cohesion in groups and strongly supports an argument for the prioritising of cohesion as a group focus.

The purpose of the first stage of research was to gather information from NVDA trained activists of the practices and processes that foster group cohesion. The ten activists interviewed for the first stage of research identified many cohesion fostering practices and processes whilst undertaking NVDA training (see Table 5). When asked to name which NVDA techniques fostered cohesion in groups, only one participant said that they didn't think fostering cohesion was the focus of NVDA training. However, during the interview this participant recalled many techniques such as trust games, managing emotions and check ins which are considered cohesion building techniques. They also mentioned the strong bonds that were built with other participants during the training that still remain forty years later. Many of the other research participants in stage 1 believed the practices, processes and knowledge gained during NVDA training were cohesion building and were transferable to other groups they participated in. Additionally, one participant articulated that:

> it was all the things that happened around the training that built cohesion – emotions welfare, buddy systems, eating together, sharing stories, going to the pub or sharing a meal after training. Or participating in creative stuff like painting a banner or writing a protest song – these activities fostered cohesion.

The detailed information shared in participant interviews identified many techniques that fostered cohesion and were consistent with the techniques established in literature reviewed for this research.

The purpose of the second stage of research was to test whether the personal narrative practice fostered cohesion in an activist group. The data analysed from the questionnaires, free text and observations showed a preliminary indication

of increased prosocial feelings and behaviours consistent with improved group cohesion according to the observable themes identified by Tuckman, Kiweewa et al. and Miller (see table 3). When there is a reduction in Storming and an increase in Norming and Performing feelings, this indicates a shift to more prosocial feelings and behaviours. The participants are moving away from divergent feelings and moving towards more cohering and productively cohesive feelings.

Understanding the structure of cohesion was identified as an important aspect when nurturing cohesive groups (see *Group dynamics research* section above). A group cohesion strategy that takes into account the five critical cohesion areas — *social, collective, emotional, structural and task* — should become a factor in the formation of a group's cultural structure. Group cohesion skills and knowledge, as well as practices and processes based on these five areas, would form the foundation of a proactive group cohesion approach. Intentionally prioritising cohesion as a group practice reinforces group member skills in interpersonal connection, which can improve group wellbeing and the effectiveness of the group as a whole.

Established as well as newly formed groups could develop and implement a cohesion strategy to underpin the resilience of their group and the wellbeing of the group members. The factors considered in a group cohesion strategy would pivot around five critical cohesion areas: *social, collective, emotional, structural* and *task*. Cohesion capabilities that support each of the critical cohesion areas would form the foundation of a proactive and pre-emptive group governance approach. Group members would be encouraged to be responsible for their level of contribution using constructive deliberative processes. Since much of our behaviour happens at an unconscious level, self-awareness through self-reflection techniques and being accountable for our own behaviour are important factors for group members and a significant factor in a group's cohesion strategy.

I think that, as activists, when we collectively imagine and practise prioritising group cohesion, we begin to collaboratively develop new skills that intentionally keep our groups connected, self-sustaining and resilient. This is a different kind of commitment to our group. It is a commitment to a regenerative culture, one that has intentionality and review in the design. This approach, I believe nurtures a whole group culture that embraces respect, self-responsibility and belonging as well as individual and whole group wellbeing and flourishing. No single tool or combination thereof is a panacea guaranteed to create collegial groups at all times. However, an activist group can actively and strategically focus on its cohesion by inculcating cohesion skills, knowledge, practices and processes.

Limitations

The methodological design for the study was a pilot. Other researchers may benefit from retesting or modifying the design. Some modifications to consider would include altering the wording and construction of the scenarios devised in the questionnaire. Removing the words that describe emotions as well as names that gender the actors in the scenarios may change the results. The reason for this suggestion is because several of the participants assumed a gender to the actors in the scenario. Feedback from these participants indicated they would have responded differently to the scenario if they had assumed a different gender.

The study was conducted in Australia and recruited a small sample size. Ten NVDA trained activists participated in the first stage and only one activist group participated in the second stage. Interviewing a higher number of participants located in other parts of Australia or the world may yield other practices and processes that foster cohesion in activist groups. Likewise, more conclusive outcomes may be arrived at if multiple activist groups take part in the intervention. Similarly, other conclusions may be drawn if the research was conducted over a longer time frame. Additionally, the underpinning framework for this study, Tuckman's Small Group Development Theory, should be reviewed as there may be more suitable choices available. Other insights and/or conclusions may be reached by applying a different group development theory to the methodological design.

Conclusion

To date, most of the published activist research focuses on the external factors that influence activist groups and the big picture implications of activist group work (Atkinson 2017:12). This research usually explores the impacts activists have on the political, social and environmental power structures and may include topics such as how activists can mobilise civil society to act on climate change (Gunningham 2018), how effective nonviolent protest is (Chenoweth & Stephan 2011), and the role humour can play in facilitating resistance (Sørensen 2014). I have argued there is value in researching the internal workings that can influence and have an impact on activist groups and their effectiveness. Developing research projects that prioritise the internal factors can provide information, knowledge and skills that support and/or strengthen our activist groups to be more effective, cohesive and stable. Activist research that focuses on group dynamics can be shared in activist group circles to support other groups to be more robust. This in turn, strengthens the social movements the activist groups are part of and the vital work they perform.

There are a variety of ways to go about conducting group dynamics research in activist groups. In my research on group cohesion, I devised a research methodology that provides an example of one way of exploring the group dynamics of activist groups. This research involved getting suggestions from

experienced activists and then designing an intervention to investigate one of their suggestions. My intervention involved testing the personal narrative practice. However, there are many other intervention design possibilities. Applying the action research method is one such way for activist groups to assess or review their group processes, governance and/or group culture to support their groups to be more robust and resilient. Attention is needed in order to produce rigorous research data. Research can potentially validate what we think we already know, offer ideas for new group practices, or has the potential to reveal that widely used and accepted practices are not as effective as believed. These shortcomings will only be revealed with further research. More research in the group dynamics of activist groups is needed to reveal the group practices and processes that are effective in supporting our groups to be more robust and cohesive.

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

350.org 2015. "Peoples Climate March – Wrap Up." Available at: https://bit.ly/1Gk5Cfi (accessed May 15, 2019).

Aron, Arthur, Melinat, Edward, Aron, Elaine N., Vallone, Robert Darrin and Bator, Renee J. 1997. "The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness: A Procedure and some Preliminary Findings." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 23 (4): 363-77.

Atkinson, Joshua D. 2017. *Journey Into Social Activism*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Barker, Chris, Martin, Brian and Zournazi, Mary 2008. "Emotional Self-management for Activists." *Reflective Practice* 9 (4): 423-35.

Behfar, Kristin J., Peterson, Randall S., Mannix, Elizabeth A. and Trochim, William M. 2008. "The Critical Role of Conflict Resolution in Teams: A Close Look at the Links Between Conflict Type, Conflict Management Strategies, and Team Outcomes." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93 (1): 170-88.

Branagan, Marty 2013. *Global Warming, Militarism and Nonviolence: The Art of Active Resistance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, Virginia and Clarke, Victoria 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77-101.

Chenoweth, Erica and Stephan, Maria J. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Cohen, Cynthia, Gutierrez Varea, Roberto, Walker, Polly O., Milosevic, Dijana and Mulekwa, Charles 2011. *Acting Together 1: Performance and Creative Transformation of Conflict: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence.* Oakland: New Village Press.

Deutsch, Morton, Goldman-Wetzler, Jennifer, and Chung, Christine T. 2014. "A Framework for Thinking About Research on Conflict Resolution Initiatives" Pp. 1064-1065 in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice* Third edn., edited by Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch, and Eric C. Marcus. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

De Chesnay, Mary 2014. *Nursing Research Using Participatory Action Research: Qualitative Designs and Methods in Nursing.* New York: Springer Publishing Company.

De Dreu, Carsten K.W. and Weingart, Laurie R. 2003. "Task Versus Relationship Conflict, Team Performance, and Team Member Satisfaction: A Meta-analysis." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88 (4): 741.

Forsyth, Donelson R. 2018. *Group Dynamics 7th edn.* Boston: Cengage Learning.

Gastil, John 2014. *Democracy in Small Groups: Participation, Decision Making, and Communication 2nd edn.* United States: CreateSpace.

Gunningham, Neil 2018. "Mobilising Civil Society: Can the Climate Movement Achieve Transformational Social Change?" *Interface* 10 (1-2): 149-69.

Heffernan, Margaret 2015. *Beyond Measure: The Big Impact of Small Changes.* London: Simon and Schuster.

Janis, Irving L. 1982. *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes.* Boston: Houghton Miffin.

Jehn, Karen A. and Mannix, Elizabeth A. 2001. "The Dynamic Nature of Conflict: A Longitudinal Study of Intragroup Conflict and Group Performance." *Academy of Management Journal* 44 (2): 238-51.

Jiang, Jane Y., Zhang, Xiao and Tjosvold, Dean 2013. "Emotion Regulation as a Boundary Condition of the Relationship Between Team Conflict and Performance: A Multi-level Examination." *Journal of Organisational Behaviour* 34 (5): 714-34.

Johansson, Petter, Hall, Lars, Sikström, Sverker and Olsson, Andreas 2005. "Failure to Detect Mismatches Between Intention and Outcome in a Simple Decision Task." *Science* 310 (5745): 116-9.

Johnson, David W., Johnson, Roger T. and Tjosvold, Dean 2014. "Constructive Controversy: The Value of Intellectual Opposition." Pp. 76-103 in *The*

Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice, Third edn. edited by Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch & Eric C. Marcus. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Kia, Annie and Ricketts, Aidan 2018. "Enabling Emergence: The Bentley Blockade and the Struggle for a Gasfield Free Northern Rivers." *Southern Cross University Law Review* 19-2018: 49-73.

Kiweewa, John M., Gilbride, Dennis, Luke, Melissa and Clingerman, Tamara 2018. "Tracking Growth Factors in Experiential Training Groups Through Tuckman's Conceptual Model." *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work* 43 (3): 274-96.

Lakey, George 2010. *Facilitating Group Learning: Strategies for Success with Diverse Adult Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Laloux, Frederic 2014. *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage in Human Consciousness.* Brussels: Nelson Parker.

Levine, John M. and Moreland, Richard L. 1990. "Progress in Small Group Research." *Annual Review of Psychology* 41 (1): 585-634.

Lewin, Kurt 1946. "Action Research and Minority Problems." *Journal of Social Issues* 2 (4): 34-46.

Light, John 2013. "How to Tell Your Story of Self." Moyers & Company. Available at: https://bit.ly/2We2qgn (accessed 23 June 2019).

Marks, Michelle A., Mathieu, John E. and Zaccaro, Stephen J. 2001. "A Temporally Based Framework and Taxonomy of Team Processes." *Academy of Management Review* 26 (3): 356-76.

McNiff, Jean, and Whitehead, Jack 2011. *All You Need to Know About Action Research. 2nd edn.* London. Sage Publishing.

Miller, Diane L. 2003. "The Stages of Group Development: A Retrospective Study of Dynamic Team Processes." *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration* 20 (2): 121-34.

Mindell, Arnold 2014. *Sitting in the Fire. Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity.* California: Deep Democracy Exchange.

Munro, Liane 2019. *United We Stand: Fostering Cohesion in Activist Groups.* Honours Thesis. Wollongong University.

Nummenmaa, Lauri, Saarimäki, Heini, Glerean, Enrico, Gotsopoulos, Athanasios, Jääskeläinen, Iiro P., Hari, Riitta and Sams, Mikko 2014. "Emotional Speech Synchronizes Brains Across Listeners and Engages Large-scale Dynamic Brain Networks." *NeuroImage* 102: 498-509.

Ochre, Glen 2013. *Getting Our Act Together: How to Harness the Power of Groups.* Melbourne: Groupwork Press.

Pollack, Julien and Matous, Petr 2019. "Testing the Impact of Targeted Team Building on Project Team Communication Using Social Network Analysis." *International Journal of Project Management* 37 (3): 473-84.

Popovic, Srdja, Djinovic, Slobodan D., Milivojevic, Andre J., Merriman, Hardy and Marovic, Ivan 2007. *Canvas Core Curriculum: A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle*. Belgrade: Canvas.

Rennung, Miriam and Göritz, Anja S. 2015. "Facing Sorrow as a Group Unites. Facing Sorrow in a Group Divides." *PloS one* 10 (9): 1-22.

Ricketts, Aidan 2012. *The Activists' Handbook: A Step-by-step Guide to Participatory Democracy*. London: NBN Publishing.

Schirch, Lisa and Campt, David 2015. *The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects: A Practical, Hands-on Guide*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Severt, Jamie B. and Estrada, Armando X. 2015. "On the Function and Structure of Group Cohesion." Pp. 3-24 in *Team Cohesion: Advances in Psychological Theory, Methods and Practice: Volume 17*, edited by Eduardo Salas, William B. Vessey & Armando X. Estrada. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Shields, Katrina 1991. *In the Tiger's Mouth: An Empowerment Guide for Social Action*. Sydney: Millennium Books.

Siebold, Guy L. 1999. "The Evolution of the Measurement of Cohesion." *Military Psychology* 11 (1): 5-26.

Sørensen, Majken Jul 2016. *Humour in Political Activism: Creative Nonviolent Resistance*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Starhawk 2011. *The Empowerment Manual*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.

TEDx Talks 2018. "School Strike for Climate – Save the World by Changing the Rules: Greta Thunburg: TEDxStockholm." Available at: https://bit.ly/2QzOmiD (accessed May 15 2019).

Tuckman, Bruce W. 1965. "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups." *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (6): 384-99.

Vannucci, Delfina and Singer, Richard 2010. *Come Hell or High Water: A Handbook on Collective Process Gone Awry*. Oakland: AK Press.

Vinthagen, Stellan 2018. "We Need High Quality Research that is Useful for Resisters." *Journal of Resistance Studies* 4 (1): 5-8.

Whelan, James M. 2002. *Education and Training for Effective Environmental Advocacy*. PhD thesis. Griffith University.

WRI 2009. *Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns: 2nd edn*. London: War Resisters' International. https://bit.ly/3sfPK7Z

About the author

Liane Munro is a PhD candidate at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Her work focuses on the group dynamics of activist groups. Her work pays particular attention to the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, practices, processes, as well as participatory systems and models that can foster prosocial behaviour in groups. She has been a social and environmental justice activist for over three decades. ls519 AT uowmail.edu.au

Extinction Rebellion in Aotearoa:
the possibilities and pitfalls of importing
a social movement organisation
Huw Morgan

Abstract

As social movement organisations spread across the world in chains of influence and inspiration, local activists have an opportunity to form a branch, capitalise on the international recognition and attract new members. Extinction Rebellion in Aotearoa New Zealand did just this and faced two familiar dilemmas. At the level of strategy, we failed to respond to criticism of our key demand from some indigenous activists. At the tactical level, a lack of cohesion over the organisational structure and tactics at our formation led to a weak organisation unable to successfully engage in complicated strategic or tactical discussion.

Key words: climate justice, social movement, decolonisation, organisation, structure, New Zealand, indigenous rights

XR in a global context

Extinction Rebellion (XR) has been widely written about, including by the co-founder of this journal. What has been less discussed - in mainstream news media and the activist media (Waltz, 2005) of which I'm aware - are the fates of XR groups that have emerged around the world, taking inspiration from, and trying to adapt, the XR model to their context. Globally, the reach of the XR social movement organisation (SMO) was most obviously seen during the 2019 October "Rebellion" - members are called rebels, since XR is in "rebellion" against governments. Across Europe, mobilisations drew consistently upwards of 200 people into action. XR France had hundreds occupying a bridge in central Paris for five days before joining an occupation of a shopping centre with the *gilets jaunes*, amongst other groups.[1] Eastern European XR groups, notably in Prague, experienced 130 arrests for blockades that were quickly and brutally repressed. Tens of thousands of people across Australian[2] and North American cities turned out, whilst smaller protests, many with direct action tactics, were carried out in Israel and Slovakia. So too micro actions, with handfuls of people,

---

[1] The gilets jaunes are a largely working class group who emerged to context the introduction of a higher tax on fuel. Notable since their coordination was the kind of cross-class mobilisation that critics demand of XR.

[2] If you're in need of a cheer up, the Melbourne civil disobedience video should make you smile. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGMKumKBZJI&list=PLy9GWp6Jz-SMFeYE7XpEj5qXztdwoRtAW&index=12&t=7s

happened in places like Sri Lanka, Kiev, Moldova and the Democratic Republic of Congo.[3]

Though analysing the success or significance of XR groups globally in terms of their outcomes is outside the scope of my reflections, here in Aotearoa, along with pressure from school climate strikers, all of the regional councils have now declared a climate emergency in one form or another. In the UK a much watered down citizens assembly was installed by parliament.

Criticisms of the UK mothership have centred on its middle-classness, lack of membership diversity and unsuitable tactics for engaging minority communities (Knights, 2019 and Cox, 2019).[4] The UK groups strategy was to overwhelm the police and justice system by tactically saturating it with arrests was criticised for excluding people of colour, since many experience the police as structurally racist and an agent of oppression. Though the UK has no indigenous population and affiliate groups such as XR Muslims and XR Jews exist, the majority white membership was seen as an obstacle to building a truly representative and powerful movement (Knights, 2019). Climate and ecological justice can not be properly achieved unless those bearing the brunt of climate breakdown, be it populations in the Global South, or the working poor in the UK, are represented at the table when solutions are formed.

The XR group in Aotearoa New Zealand - XR ANZ - is an excellent example of a white-led movement grappling with these contradictions in a country with an indigenous population. My hope is our successes and failures can help to illustrate what to do, and perhaps more importantly, what not to do. I believe they are representative of the possibilities and pitfalls of importing a social movement organisation.

Through this lens, XR ANZ has faced three key challenges; one structural, one tactical and, most salient in the context of a global resurgence of anti-racism, one strategic. Firstly, Aotearoa lacked the structural resources to capitalize on the wave of global protest; by this I mean a lack of a well-known radical tradition or a deep soil from which effective movements could emerge. Secondly, we struggled with a tactical problem of replicating the UK structure. One built for a much bigger organisation than ours and one that was not formulated by those who started the XR ANZ organisation. Finally, we imported a white-led concept into a country with an indigenous population and faced the strategic problem of how to resolve this tension. Our key demand, for a Citizens Assembly, was seen as illegitimate by an influential group of indigenous activists.

---

[3] The international XR newsletter provides round-ups from many of the smaller groups which don't cut through to international media.

[4] These criticisms have come constructively from XR members and encouraging observers, as well as the legacy media, with an altogether less constructive attitude

Introduction

XR UK's foundation, structure and strategy have been widely discussed (Beckett, 2020).[5] I will only explain these again when contrasting them to our local context. By way of a brief introduction though, Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a social movement organisation engaged in non-violent civil disobedience demanding governments install a Citizens Assembly to deliberate and decide the policy response to climate breakdown. It began in the UK in November 2018 and quickly found fame with its April 2019 "Rebellion", which for ten days ground central London to a halt and resulted in over 1,000 arrests. The movement has spread to seventy countries, Aotearoa New Zealand being one of them.

Over the last eighteen months, XR ANZ has tried to come to terms with the critiques of XR's theory of change and strategy. Though I believe our experience with the strategic problem of how to integrate Māori *kaupapa* - Māori principles - into XR ANZ is the most valuable lesson from our work, I will start with the tactical and structural problems we faced, since it allows for linear narrative.

Origins

A recurring phenomenon in the origin of social movements is the existence of the 'deep soil from which they grow' (Austin, 2018). So many iconic and successful movements grow from an ecosystem that preceded the immediate trigger point. Either from a network of activists or an intentional training institute, the consistent presence of an ecology of people and groups is striking. The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements had the Highlander Center and the cadres from political organisations like the NAACP and the SWP. More recently, the Sunrise Movement and Black Lives Matter founders attended the Momentum training centre, 'front-loading' their DNA, vision and strategy before launching.[6] Even in revolutionary settings such as the Arab Spring uprisings, in Tunisia, emergent protesters had been in contact online, in groups like Nawaat, before the movement sparked to life (Tufecki, 2017). Similarly before the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement turned to direct action, three organisations existed that were already strategising for democratic renewal (Ma and Cheng, 2019).

The same was true for XR in the UK. Many of the founding group knew one another from past campaigns and were part of a fledgling network called Rising Up! which laid out a grand strategy document in 2017, foreshadowing what eventually became Extinction Rebellion.[7] Rising Up! itself was preceded by Compassionate Revolution, which Gail Bradbrook and Sarah Lunnon - two XR

---

[5] I refer here to its origin story, it's decentralised leaderless structure and its key strategic element of deliberately seeking arrest

[6] Momentum runs movement building trainings based on the work of the Ayni Institute. They've had groups such as Cosecha, If Not Now and Black Visions come through

[7] Available online https://risingup.org.uk/about (Last accessed 14 November 2020)

co-founders - launched in 2015. Roger Hallam, for a time a key strategist and spokesman, was part of the Radical Think-Tank, an activist blog-cum-website that went alongside his Phd and through which he tried to test many of the mobilising tactics that XR went on to use such as conditional commitments. The people that started XR ANZ had none of this shared training or history that builds trust and the cohesion of ideas.

A structural problem

The group who launched XR in NZ lacked both the cadre who could guide and support the group nor a specific institute that incubated it or that they could turn to for training. The initial founders weren't friends or acquaintances, instead they came together inspired by the declaration of rebellion issued in London in November 2018. They were from both the South and North Islands and they were a mix of anarchists, conservationists and environmentalists. To be sure, some early members had activist experience and had been, or were part of, other groups but it could not reasonably be described as a flourishing network.[8]

There have been short-lived attempts to provide this pillar of movement infrastructure in New Zealand. Various training organizations have come and gone, with Kotare, a 'school for social change', the only one to continually exist. Launched in 1999 it was set-up in the mould of the Highlander Institute to offer a sense of place and ground social change learning in the context of a settler-colonial nation. However it doesn't offer the kind of fixed curricula focusing on the craft of organising that one can see in organisations like NEON UK, Campaign Bootcamp or Momentum in the USA.

Indeed, though many iconic movements have flourished here; the Anti-Apartheid Springbok Tour of 1981, Nuclear-free New Zealand, Anti-GE and the Māori land rights movement to name a few, there appears to be a limited institutional memory easily available (Boraman, 2012).[9] We were home to the world's first environmental political party, the Values Party of 1972, that eventually became the Green Party (Gahrton, 2015). For a time in the mid twentieth century, Aotearoa had a scandanavian style welfare state, but neoliberalism was brought in by a Labour government in 1984 and smashed the power of the once powerful unions. All this to say that despite having a rich history of successful protest, we lack the infrastructure to maintain the knowledge of past movements.

---

[8] Experienced members came from a plethora of small community environmental groups, whilst others were part of Coal Action Network. However there was a lack of sophisticated activist knowledge in campaign building and strategic thinking.

[9] The NZ On Screen website has an excellent "Protest" collection of documentaries covering many of these movements

XR UK had developed a tight DNA, vision and strategy after deliberating about what had tried and failed in UK social movement history.[10] Whether or not it resulted in the best idea in the world, the key point is that there was consensus and ownership of this strategy before they launched, allowing for a thrust of 'singing off the same hymn sheet'. They settled on the ambitious tactic, a capital city shut-down through a street blockade, that whilst not new, was able to create in April 2019 what the US based Momentum movement building centre call a 'Moment of Whirlwind' (Engler and Engler, 2017, pp. 178). I freely admit I was inspired by the grand rhetoric and ambition of the tactic, but when I later read about the 1971 Mayday Tribe occupation of Washington, D.C. I was frustrated. That protest, with remarkably similar intentions, to literally shut down all government buildings, ended in a record 7,000 arrests but made little impact in terms of its strategic intent, foreshadowing XR UK's less successful Week of Action in October 2019.[11]

Those who reacted to the wave of action in NZ did not go through this process of deliberation and there were no institutions to guide them as they learned. Some ongoing coordination was sought from Greenpeace, but this was more like tactical training rather than strategic or organisational, and so did not help till the soil of the movement.[12] Indeed, there is a limited culture of organising in Aotearoa. A surprise and a shame perhaps, given that Aoteaora lays a claim for inspiring modern peaceful resistance. In 1881 Te Whiti o Rongomai, a Māori *rangatira* - a chief - along with Tohu Kākahi, led their people in defending their Parihaka *marae* - their village and meeting grounds - by using peaceful disruptive strategies and non-violently resisting arrest from police (Te Miringa Hohaia, 2001). Their land was under attack from government surveyors who, true to colonial form, sought to claim it for the white settler people. Te Whiti instructed his people to erect fencing across roads and plough up Pākehā - non-Māori European - farmers' paddocks. Their militant pacifism went as far as offering soldiers who entered the village fresh bread and a song. Embarrassed by their failure to seize the land by provoking the Parihaka people to fight them, on 5 November, more than 1,500 armed men led by the Native Affairs Minister surrounded the township and finally arrested Te Whiti. In the following weeks, residents were evicted and their houses destroyed. News of the event made its

---

[10] They have drawn much ire from long-time campaigners for their narrative that says everything else before them has failed, nothing except what we're proposing has failed. Though on reflection this is clearly disingenuous, it arguably worked wonders as a rhetorical tactic to ignite passions amongst new activists.

[11] My jaw dropped when I read about this action, the tactic and the rhetoric they sued in 1971 was so similar to XR UK in the lead-up to their London action.

[12] Greenpeace were very generous with use of their office space in Auckland for things like banner painting and equipment borrowing, a less celebrated but nevertheless essential cog in the functioning of an active protest movement

way to Mohandas Gandhi via the liberal press in London and is said to have influenced his formulation of *satyagraha* (McDonald, 2018).[13]

Many of the members active in the first few months of XR ANZ soon drifted away, to be replaced by a new group bringing the same inexperience and lack of personal connection. At a national level, this led to a weak institutional memory and decisions were repeatedly discussed, having already been agreed. Similarly, with a largely new activist base, there was a lack of understanding and acceptance of the core strategy and tactics of XR. We encountered the classic problem of interpreting our main tactic as our strategy. The XR UK tactic that was so inspiring - occupying the city centre for ten days - became our entire strategy, and critical discussions about its efficacy lacked the sophistication necessary to pivot us to something different.

In the run-up to our first big day of action in October 2019, the organising XR Wellington branch lacked both the skills to pull off the ambitious tactic that it had not demonstrated it could do, and a lack of awareness of the action as existing within our wider strategy. The location of the road blockade was changed the evening before the action. The original choice had been of no logistical value, whereas the last minute change - the result of late consultation with more experienced activists - to outside the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment gave the action a stronger narrative.[14] Many of the organisers suffered total burnout and left XR ANZ shortly after. Indeed, had a couple of activist veterans - one was an XR member and the other an employee of Greenpeace - not taken control of operations on the day of the action, it would have ended once the blockade was set-up at seven in the morning. In the end they were able to lead a series of spontaneous swarming tactics, resulting in an occupation of ANZ bank, which turned out to be the high point for 54% of those who completed the Action review survey.[15]

Tactical problem

This lack of experience and cohesion meant that as a national organization we faced a familiar tactical problem; how to structure ourselves. We watched as XR UK grew exponentially, producing YouTube explainers and online resources about how to build the movement, but we struggled to apply them here. We tried to import the structure of XR UK wholesale. Their sophisticated 'Self-Organising System' (SOS) was based on decentralisation and strategic

---

[13]I can't find any scholarly reference to this fact, but it seems likely Gandhi would have heard of the story in London, given New Zealand was a British colony, and the strategy of resistance at Parihaka was so novel to colonial officers.

[14] The MBIE had granted new oil drilling licenses despite there being an incoming ban on new permits

[15] Again this initiative was encouraged by one of those experienced activists. XR Auckland wrote the survey a review of the day of action. 152 people responded. Available here https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dgWxKtQ4ZmG3EZIxMTV5Ccg-GA8WSPNV/view?usp=sharing

autonomy within each 'circle'.[16] They had dozens of activists working full-time and being paid voluntary living expenses (VLE), whereas in Aotearoa, during 2019, we had a handful of members who were retired or else out of employment, but only a few people treating XR ANZ as a full-time project. This meant that separating accountabilities, for example by copying the UK and having one person travel the country running public talks and finding local volunteers to set-up regional branches, was hard. This is, of course, not unique to us, as anyone who's campaigned will know, but I believe what is unique to importing a social movement organisation, is that the roadmap, or documentation coming from the UK - which was really impressive and helpful - also made us over complicate too quickly. We weren't able to provide the steady accountability that comes when people are focused on one role or are available full-time. This issue was periodically brought up as a point of tension, but we had no-one with the experience to suggest and then implement a different structure.

By trying to implement this structure to a group of near-strangers working voluntarily, we were successful only in creating a complex web of working groups at both a local and national level that became a bureaucratic jigsaw. In the Auckland branch, when I joined in May 2019, there were supposedly eight working groups serving a core of around ten active members.[17] At a national level we worked through three main circles; Organisation, Action and Communication, and each had their own meetings. Though in reality the same people attended each one, we created the illusion of growth and coherence when in fact it was confusing to those keen to take part but unsure where key decisions were made. Key activists were attending two or three meetings a week and without people focusing on action, the time was spent on structural and organisational disputes. A sure sign of movement inertia (Alinsky, 1946). This was one of the biggest and most simple lessons I learned. An absence of focus on action leads to internal disagreement.

As COVID-19 hit in March 2020 a handful of people held multiple key roles each. As an example, I was the National Coordination Circle facilitator, the newsletter writer (for Auckland and National) and the Coordinator of; the May Rebellion Action group, the Auckland induction sessions and one of two volunteer coordinators.

Our weak institutional organisation proved decisive again in January 2020 when myself and two other Auckland members had the opportunity to work full-time on XR if we had been able to draw some basic living costs, as the UK activists had done. We had $40,000 in the bank, but a lack of precedent and process meant this opportunity fell by the wayside. It is highly likely others would have stepped forward had we been able to create a transparent process

---

[16] A recent video explaining how the structure works
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3qr7sRg0Ds Last accessed 3 September 2020

[17] An internal policy document written in February 2019 outlines our dizzying number of working groups https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mqQ3e0fhrdsoopDEstwl4-6y5g6E-TgVvbqhiHSLGxA/edit?usp=sharing Last accessed 3 September 2020

for making this happen. As studies have shown (Schussmann and Soule, 2005) biographical availability is key in determining participation in protest, especially in movements attempting intensive street protest. Having full-time activists increasingly feels necessary to produce a mass movement and we missed this opportunity. The more one reads about big movements, the more one realises they contain a dedicated core of people devoting their working life to them.[18] A factor under discussed when strategizing in mass popular movements to transform society. In particular for contexts like Aotearoa, with a small and dispersed population without a strong philanthropic culture of foundation grant giving, it is an area I'd like to research more about what they do in places like Norway, or Estonia, or Bolivia or Paraguay to build and sustain participation[19]

As alluded to earlier, XR ANZ's organisation has been poor, suffering the symptoms many movements will be familiar with; transient membership, volunteer burnout and inexperienced activists unfamiliar with good organisational hygiene. Specific to Aotearoa New Zealand and frequently highlighted in internal dialogue is our geographical inaccessibility between regions. There is no inter-city train network and our members are dispersed across a landmass similar in size to the UK but with only 4.5 million inhabitants. As such, national in-person meetings, so key for relationship and trust building have been non-existent outside of our October 2019 mobilisation. When one compares the genesis of XR ANZ with its contemporaries like the Sunrise Movement, Black Lives Matter or, indeed, XR UK, the differences become stark.[20]

A lack of national coordination has an interesting precedent in Aotearoa when the Progressive Youth Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in the Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland branches all had distinct politics, cultures and class composition (Boraman, 2012). Had a group consciously come together to build a movement, this spadework may have been done and a culture of travelling between the regions to build a relational foundation could have been installed.

Strategic problem

The strategic innovation of XR UK, as we understood it, was to unite under a broad enough demand that could accommodate the individual policy preferences of anyone who joined. If you've attended even five minutes of an

---

[18]I refer to movements like the Umbrella Movement or Sunrise, who have a core paid staff, as well as the obvious like the American CRM, which was also backed up by enormous amounts of unpaid labour from african-american women (Collier and Franklin, 2001)

[19] I refer here to the many training materials I have seen from various organisations providing training for activists and to a lack of specific discussion on formal staffing

[20] There was much internal wrangling about whether to travel to our Wellington Rebellion in October 2019 by plane. For many, it was fly or don't come, given the bus travel times. Auckland to Welington is an 11 hour bus ride, for example, and twice the price of a flight. But there were still some who chose not to attend because they did not want to fly and couldn't spend three or four days away.

environmental activist meeting you'll likely have suffered the tendency toward endless debate on the merits, or otherwise, of people's pet solutions to the climate crisis. XR UK bypassed this problem by demanding that a Citizen's Assembly be installed by the government to deliberate on the policy response to climate breakdown. Thus anyone who wanted change could agitate through XR, because the possibility of their personal vision being realised remained alive. Nuclear-energy advocates, sustainable business consultants and anti-capitalists could all, in theory, support the demand.

Despite it being the only substantive of XR's three demands, it was rarely discussed in XR ANZ. Indeed, many members were not even sure what it actually meant and deliberations on its suitability for our context were slow to arise. It took the national coordinating group until February 2020, eighteen months after its establishment, to begin a formal process to draft a document stating exactly what XR ANZ meant when we demanded a Citizen's Assembly from the government of Aotearoa New Zealand. Until that point we had been sharing XR UK resources when we were asked to define it.[21]

Though adhering to the three demands and ten principles is the only requirement to take the XR brand, little thought had been given to the fact that we were operating in a country whose founding document is *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, the Treaty of Waitangi. Signed in 1840 by the Crown and Māori iwi chiefs, in the original *Te Reo Māori* translation it states that Māori will have *tino rangatiratanga* - or self-determination. In other words, it was supposed to be a power-sharing agreement with the *Pākehā* - the white-European settlers. It won't come as a surprise to readers to share that this wasn't what happened.[22] Though contemporary governments nominally and in rhetoric, if not in practice, recognise this to be true, they avoid serious contemplation of the constitutional transformation required to reflect the original agreement.[23]

The decision to finalise our interpretation of a Citizens Assembly was spurred by the negative reaction to the idea from some indigenous activists who saw it as yet another *Pākehā* introduced constitutional structure that would further marginalise *tangata whenua* - indigenous Māori. The strategic dilemma was thus twofold. Firstly; how to interpret an imported idea to a context where we claim to support climate justice, but supporting climate justice means centring indigenous voices and some indigenous voices were calling out our demand as fundamentally at odds with climate justice. And secondly, can we properly endorse *Te Tiriti*, Māori self-determination and constitutional transformation

---

[21]The XR UK guide https://extinctionrebellion.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Extinction-Rebellion-Guide-to-Citizens-Assemblies-Version-1.1-25-June-2019.pdf Last accessed 3 September 2020

[22]The crown systematically stole land from Māori, displacing them and pushing them into cities to find waged work.

[23] A Waitangi Tribunal was created after the Māori Lands Rights movement of the mid 1970s to process historical claims from iwi. Financial compensation numbering in the billions of dollars have been paid out for the land that was stolen.

when it is seen as a left-wing idea and the only parties in parliament to accept this trio are the newly re-elected Māori Party, with 2 MPs, and the Greens, with 10 MPs, who together only win around 10% of the vote and are seen, through traditional parliamentary political eyes, as left-wing.

Before I discuss the contention around the Citizens Assembly I will interrogate the tactical value of a Citizens Assembly a little further. As a tactic it is designed to allow more conservative minded people to engage and support its use. This is what XR's frame of "Beyond Politics" means: to reach across the left/right political binary. This was the story we told ourselves, but new research from the UK shows how this is in fact not what has happened. It showed that a majority of those arrested were Left-leaning voters and I've no reason to think it is any different here (Doherty et al, 2020). XR ANZ has made no strategic effort to engage socially conservative or National[24] voters who are concerned about the degradation of the natural world but who shy away from calls for radical economic change. It thus seems that ignoring the criticisms and demands from sections of the climate justice movement would undermine our credibility in what is the actual realistic base for potential future XR membership. Namely, indigenous climate activists, radical *Pākehā* activists who support Māori issues or Left-leaning voters more broadly.

The contention about a Citizens Assembly did not directly stem from a reaction to XR ANZ, but it could be said we were responsible through our absence. In May 2019 a splinter group from XR ANZ launched called Aotearoa Climate Emergency (ACE). With the sole intention to lobby for the creation of a Citizen's Assembly it convened a *hui* - a meeting - in November 2019 in Wellington. Dr Mike Joy, a freshwater ecologist and prominent campaigner spoke, as did Green MP Chlöe Swarbrick. It had significant interest amongst the climate movement. One attendee wrote a review of the *hui* for the left-liberal media outlet the Spinoff.[25] Of Māori *whakapapa* - genealogy - herself, she was concerned with how the random selection process would affect Māori,

> The words 'representation' and 'power' triggered alarm bells. I wanted to know what this means for minorities, let alone tangata whenua [the original inhabitants of New Zealand]....How convenient, I thought, for the Citizens Assembly to use a numerical system of representation in a land where the indigenous population has already been decimated by colonisation.[26]

A reply of sorts was made three months later by *Pākehā* academic Max Rashbrooke, one of NZ's most well-known writers, who produced an article in

---

[24] The conservative, right-wing Party in Aotearoa

[25] https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/23-11-2019/who-gets-to-be-an-ordinary-new-zealander-on-citizens-assemblies-climate-change-and-tangata-whenua/ Last accessed, 3 September 2020

[26] Māori now make up only 16.5 percent of Aotearoa's population, indeed the Asian ethnic group is not far behind, at 15.1 percent and the white-Europeans are at 74 percent.

the same publication and defended the idea of Citizen's Assemblies by promoting their democratic potential. There was a negative reaction online from some indigenous activists that saw his reply as white-splaining on what is deemed a colonising idea to a *wahine Māori* - a Māori woman - and the Spinoff quickly took the article down.[27] He'd suggested that the Assembly would be better for Māori than many current democratic processes. One leader of an indigenous and youth climate organisation called *Te Ara Whatu*, wrote on Twitter, 'No matter which way you cut it, citizens assemblies are not tino rangatiratanga and I'm not really here for people whitesplaining why this model should be acceptable for us.'

It was shortly after this controversy that XR ANZ formed a working group to try and find a way to incorporate these criticisms. Calls for interest in doing this work through internal communications channels were met with a stony silence and only four people showed interest, joining the relevant Mattermost channel.[28] The key dilemma that needed to be resolved was how, or indeed whether, a Citizens Assembly could comply with the Treaty of Waitangi. In this initial group there was a consensus to make it so for two reasons; because it aligned with our personal political vision for the country i.e. the vision that matched that of those who had criticised the idea in Aotearoa; secondly it was too the most strategic thing to do, to try and win back support amongst those indigenous activists who felt that XR was just another *Pākehā* organisation undermining Māori sovereignty. We saw this is our realistic base of members, and thought the best way to build solidarity and thus a more powerful climate justice movement would be to belatedly begin trying to be better allies.

Our initial draft included a recommendation to produce two reports at the end of the deliberation process; one from the whole assembly; and a second from only the Māori participants. We hoped this would enable both a distinct Māori voice whilst also maintaining the essential element of a Citizens Assembly. We were confident that this option significantly improved the XR UK proposal that was being used as the de facto position of XR globally. Inconsistencies still remained, centring on the fact that Māori politics is conducted through *iwi* and *hapū* - tribes and sub-tribes - and selecting members at random is not a political tradition in *tikanga Māori* - the Māori way. However there was no way to allow specific representatives of *iwi* and *hapū* to attend the assembly without it losing the essential element of random selection that in theory allows for a truly representative selection of the population to take part, free from any power structures that may hinder their honest opinions and ideas. The central thesis of XR in the UK being that people have not made the best decisions about the political economy we have to address climate breakdown because of interests

---

[27] For obvious reasons this article is no longer available, but for the detectives among you, the broken link to the article from his tweet is visible at
https://twitter.com/MaxRashbrooke/status/1232783196669874176 Last accessed 3 September 2020

[28] Mattermost is the encrypted chat platform used by XR groups globally. Part of an enormous digital infrastructure custom made for the movement.

that get in the way; be they political party interests and re-election, corporate interests and profit-making, or in defence of private assets such as freedom to use cars, build houses or use energy. With a totally random and representative selection of everyday people, the theory goes, the solutions to climate breakdown could be deliberated on freely, and the outcome would be a report and policy platform far more in line with what is required to address the problem.

We felt it was clear that many governmental working groups, inquiries or policy commissions are conducted in far less democratic ways and with far less Māori representation than would be included with a Citizens Assembly. What was more important though, we learned, than establishing *if* a perfect Citizens Assembly model exists for a colonised nation, was *how* that deliberation was made. The fundamental essence remained that it was a white-led initiative, once again going to indigenous communities and asking for a blessing or consultation, rather than a joint idea creation. This is no way to build support from indigenous activists who you have given no reason to trust you (Margaret, 2015). We had not made our vision clear immediately on launching the group in late 2018, nor sought a diversity of Māori opinion on it's benefits or otherwise.

That said, what was being criticised in New Zealand was the model promoted by the Aotearoa Climate Emergency group, which was lifted wholesale from the XR UK model. The members of ACE, in conversations with us, expressed no desire to try and address the concerns raised about the marginalisation of *tangata whenua* in their version. The possibility remains that had we produced our intention for a Citizen's Assembly at our founding; recognising its limitations; presenting it as a tactical move to win support from conservatives; explaining the outcome as a tactical move to create leverage over the government for the wider movement, and then placing it as a 'better-than-the-statue-quo' tool, things might have been different. To be sure, Māori representation in XR ANZ exists. There were a dedicated core of five in the Māori caucus, who were given the status of a full branch, despite being dispersed around the country.[29] Those in the Māori caucus who shared the concerns about Citizen's Assemblies saw it like we did, as imperfect but better than the status quo and that XR ANZ was a new, popular vehicle attracting new people and within which they could further their environmental campaigning.

In 2015 the Matike Mai report was published.[30] The result of three years of hui - assemblies - across *te ao Māori* - the Māori community - it established six potential constitutional futures for Aotearoa that would properly acknowledge and implement *Te Tiriti* as the nation's founding document. A beacon of hope for Māori activists, any new initiative not leading to full constitutional transformation was now seen as illegitimate by some. Historically, campaigns

---

[29] For comparison, the bigger cities had cores of around 15-20 people, and smaller places around 5-10

[30] The report is available at https://nwo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MatikeMaiAotearoa25Jan16.pdf Last accessed 7 September 2020

for decolonization, or economic and social justice more broadly, both in Aotearoa and globally, usually emerge from either the working-class communities themselves, or else left-wing groups. In Aotearoa, to endorse Māori sovereignty, deepen tikanga Māori in everyday life or engage in structural change to reduce the inequality between Māori and non-Māori is seen as something of the Left. Famously, before the 2005 general election, incumbent Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark, part of a Third Way social democratic politics, chose to back away from government reforms aimed at doing just this. She was spooked by new National Party leader Don Brash, whose strategy to provoke pākehā racial resentment by speaking out against any moves to separate the spheres of influence of the government and iwi and hapu - the Māori governing structures. (Hager, 2006). Brash ultimately lost, but Clark's capitulation and retreat from deepening Māori self-determination, set back the project of liberation for Māori. Thus any *Pākehā* group now seen to endorse the vision of the report is labelled as left-wing, something XR globally has sought to avoid. As our draft Citizens Assembly document went to an expanded working group for revisions a split emerged, with one member insisting, and thus objecting, because it had become 'a left-wing document'. The draft, explicitly recommending two separate reports, became instead a list of options, with our recommendation now just one of six possible choices.

Shortly after, beginning in March 2020, a series of workshops led by Te Ara Whatu were held, seeking to establish a coalition of demands from the climate movement for the September general election. Participants included the big NGOs like Oxfam, Amnesty and 350.org, as well as community level groups, including XR. It was immediately clear that to fulfill a commitment to climate justice in the eyes of the facilitators would mean dropping the citizen's assembly demand from XR's platform. It had lost all credibility to them.

We considered avoiding campaigning on the demand, though without it there was really nothing substantive that we were proposing. Indeed it was central to our planned campaign leading to the election. Another option, dropping the demand altogether, was not possible if we wanted to keep the XR name that had been such a magnet for new activists over the last year.

Māori representation

On the morning after the October 2019 rebellion, which was XR ANZ's first national day of action, a group of Māori XR members went back into the city and defaced a statue of Richard Sneddon, Prime Minister of NZ in 1893, with a banner reading 'colonisation = exploitation = climate change'.[31] Sneddon was an avowed imperialist abroad and stole a lot of land from Māori. The action, which wasn't well communicated to the wider group until the night before, caused disillusionment from a minority of *Pākehā* members who felt it wasn't relevant

---

[31] The picture is in the news article available at, https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2019/10/extinction-rebellion-aotearoa-vandalises-statue-outside-parliament-to-protest-colonisation-climate-change.html Last accessed 3 September 2020

to the climate crisis and would lose us support from 'middle New Zealand'.[32] However at the *hui* debrief later that day, a clear consensus emerged amongst the 200 hundred or so rebels to centre Māori voices in our future work. The Māori caucus was formed to help do this.

The functioning of this caucus, *Te Waka Hourua*, soon rubbed up against our weak organisational processes. They produced a *Te Reo Māori* translation and re-interpretation of the XR demands and principles.[33] Taking inspiration from XR USA, they added a fourth demand, recognising *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as the founding document of Aotearoa.[34]

By May 2020, the document had been completed and open for feedback for four months, though few branches or people responded. XR ANZ's national rules were such that an adoption of significant quasi-constitutional changes, like accepting this document, required a National Council meeting to be called four weeks in advance by the National Coordination group. The knowledge of this process was made clear at several meetings but a Council was never called. The translation was adopted unilaterally by those present at a NatCo meeting on July 6th, with three members of the Māori caucus present. In other words, our historically agreed process was ignored and branches weren't given warning that a big decision was being made. Though much of the membership did not notice, and most members agreed with the decision - including me, for the record - this episode clearly demonstrates a lack of organisational hygiene that could easily end in a negative result.

It is too early to tell how this new orientation will affect XR ANZ's engagement but there is a consensus amongst the most active members to continue to embrace decolonisation. Money was granted by the global XR fund for anti-racism and Treaty workshops and several branches have begun to organise these. For now, there has been no immediate rush to the exit door from members, though one did email me privately saying 'the devotion to climate justice is what has finally driven me out.' However he'd only ever sporadically been involved and was the type of older white man who often spoke at length during meetings, so he won't be missed.

Conclusion

XR ANZ rode the wave of attention and excitement that XR UK created. After April 2019 our meetings were flooded with new activists inspired by the scenes from London but XR ANZ developed neither the organisational hygiene nor

---

[32] "Middle New Zealand" is a common phrase to describe the stereotypical, socially conservative white people who live in the smaller towns and cities

[33] https://extinctionrebellion.nz/a-matou-nonoi-rarangi-tono/ Last accessed 3 September 2020

[34] Interestingly this strategic dilemma was evident too in the fate of XR USA. In April 2020 a group split to form XR America, citing the focus on communities of colour as an obstacle to urgent climate action. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xtF5lvTyumoDAfOS6-6-kOCgn2Predsg0GcvWqoaoug/edit Last accessed, 7 September 2020

experienced membership to capitalise this into a cohesive movement.[35] We tried to adopt their structures, their organisational methods and their tactics without adjustment, which led to much time and effort wasted on bureaucratic discussion and confusion.

There were, of course, other flaws and strengths that XR ANZ has had which are outside the scope of this article. I hope the experience of negotiating criticism by influential indigenous activists is instructive to other groups wishing to push for racial and ecological justice. We can't know what the reception to the Citizens Assembly would have been had we adapted it to our context immediately and worked with a wider representation of the activist indigenous community from the start. Fundamentally, white-led groups need to earn the trust of marginalised ethnic communities *before* they can cooperate effectively and be seen as acting in good faith. And we must show solidarity, with resources as well as rhetoric, over a sustained period of time.

XR ANZ faced a familiar strategic dilemma. If we heed the calls to support the demands of the marginalised will we alienate a conservative block that currently holds power? It is as depressingly familiar as it is essential for us to overcome. It seems to me that unless and until groups have a serious strategy to change the mindsets of those who object to a full throttle climate, social and economic justice narrative, then we should show unrestrained support for the less powerful because we are not doing the organising necessary to bring the persuadable 60 percent middle to our side (Cassehgari, 2020). XR ANZ did not, in any systematic way, attempt to engage those conservative communities who could, in theory, be turned off by this climate justice message, so the extension dilemma (Jasper 2004) in hindsight, was a chimera. We were just undermining our realistic base of activists.

Fundamentally, XR ANZ suffered from poor organisational practice stemming from a lack of escalating and continuous action directed at strategic targets that galvanised the wider population. We tried to copy the UK and aimed straight for blockading a big city, hardly an innovative tactic, and did not have the resources to pull it off. In the space between our rhetoric and our actions, were built the stresses and strains of structure, indecision and disagreement. I hope our story can illuminate the path for others to follow when importing a social movement concept from abroad.

---

[35] We were equally unable to capitalise on the interest after the Australia bushfires, in Auckland we had 47 people attend our monthly induction in January, when our usual attendance was 8-12.

References

Alinsky, Saul, 1946. *Reveille for Radicals*. University of Chicago Press.

Austin, Curtis. 2018 "Conclusion: The Black Panther Party in Summation." Pp 194-200 in The Black Panther Party in a City near You, edited by Jeffries Judson L., ATHENS: University of Georgia Press

Boraman, Toby. 2012. A Middle-Class Diversion from Working-Class Struggle? The New Zealand New Left from the Mid-1950s to the Mid-1970s. In *Labour History*, (103)

Cassehgari, Roxane. 'Gemeinsam Menschlich (Together Human): A Public Campaign to Move the Middle - A Case Study | Social Change Initiative', 2020. https://www.socialchangeinitiative.com/gemeinsam-menschlich-together-human-a-public-campaign-to-move-the-middle-a-case-study.

Collier and Franklin, 2001. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, NYU Press

Cox, Laurence. 2019. Dear XR, why not be more honest with your participants? https://whysocialmovementsmatter.com/news/2019/10/3/dear-xr-why-not-be-more-honest-with-your-participants Last accessed 30 August 2020

Doherty, Hayes and Saunders, 2020. A New Climate Movement? Extinction Rebellion's Activists in Profile | A Report https://www.cusp.ac.uk/themes/p/xr-study/ (Last accessed 10 September 2020.

Engler, Paul and Mark Engler. 2017. *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*. Nation Books.

Gahrton, 2015. *Green Parties, Green Future: From Local Groups to the International Stage*. Pluto Press

Judson, Jeffries. 2018. *The Black Panther Party in a City near You*. University of Georgia Press

Kauffman, L.A. 2017. *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*, Verso.

Knights, Sam 2019. Extinction Rebellion: We Need To Talk About The Future https://medium.com/@sam.j.knights/extinction-rebellion-we-need-to-talk-about-the-future-95459aa4d4e0. Last accessed 30 August 2020

Hager, Nicky, 2006. *The Hollow Men*. Potton & Burton.

Ma, Ngok and Cheng, Edmund. 2019. *The Umbrella Movement*. Amsterdam University Press

Margaret, Jen. 2013. *Working As Allies: Supporters of Indigenous Justice Reflect*. AWEA.

McDonald, Jack. 2017. A milestone day for Parihaka https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/09-06-2017/a-milestone-day-for-parihaka-and-for-the-long-march-to-justice-and-peace-in-aotearoa/ (Last accessed 10 September 2020)

Payne, Charles M. 2007. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. University of California Press

Prakash, Varshini. Ezra Klein Show podcast https://www.vox.com/ezra-klein-show-podcast/2019/7/31/20732041/varshini-prakash-sunrise-movement-green-new-deal (Last accessed 31 August 2020)

Taylor, Matthew, The Evolution of Extinction Rebellion. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/04/evolution-of-extinction-rebellion-climate-emergency-protest-coronavirus-pandemic (Last accessed 10 September 2020)

Te Miringa Hohaia, 2001. *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*. Victoria University Press

Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press

Walker, Ranginui, 2004. *Ka whawhai tonu matou: struggle without end*. Penguin

Waltz, Mitzi, 2005. *Alternative and Activist Media*. Edinburgh University Press

Webb, Danielle. A Socialist Compass for Aotearoa: Envisioning Māori Socialism in *Counter Futures NZ Journa*l. https://counterfutures.nz/8/Webb%20article.pdf (last accessed 3 September 2020)

About the author

Huw Morgan produces Blueprints, a podcast about political strategies, which tells the story of campaigns, movements and organisations in an immersive, audio documentary style. huwmorgan AT protonmail.com

From protest to politics: the effectiveness of civil society in shaping the nuclear-free policy in Aoteaora New Zealand

Pinar Temocin

Abstract

Anti-nuclear civil society activism starting with peace advocacy is considered to be a process consisting of strategic actions and civic engagement in the decision-making process. This research examines what made civil society in Aotearoa New Zealand successful between the mid-1960s and 1980s with a particular focus on their action repertoire through a goal-oriented approach. This study highlights the importance of civil society engagement in activism while identifying the relationship between maximized tactics, strategies and political environment in the anti-nuclear struggle in New Zealand.

To gain an accurate analysis of success in New Zealand's anti-nuclear debate, this research focuses on the extent to which anti-nuclear actors have been able to achieve their objectives and the degree to which influential activities have effectively been involved in the process. The results reveal that the political actors and civil society actively participating in the policy-shaping process and their involvement signified strong anti-nuclear advocacy under the peace and security narratives.

Introduction

Since it is a geographically small and isolated island, New Zealand had never played a major role in the world's nuclear debate until the 1960s. The nuclear issue has played an important role in New Zealand's domestic politics since then due to the social and political forces that have contributed to shaping the anti-nuclear stance. Anti-nuclearism rendered New Zealand a disarmament champion on the world stage by the mid- 1980s through organizing and coordinating actively, sustaining efficient campaigns, and engaging in the policy-forming process. Why does New Zealand, a nation that has never sought to possess nuclear weapons or never been a particular target for a nuclear attack, have such a strong anti-nuclear movement? And what are the influential elements of the mobilization that lead to the desired policy outcome?

The anti-nuclear movement in New Zealand is a well suited case to study the effects of strategies and engagement (as an intertwined term with 'participation'). Numerous documents, articles, and books on New Zealand's nuclear-free policy, mainly written by peace activists and politicians especially

after the movement dissipated, provide a rich source of information. It is all relevant to the recent social movement history and contributes to our understanding of what civil society can achieve and what makes them effective in policy transformation. The contribution of this research to the current state of knowledge in the field is based on providing a historical understanding of a civil society mobilization and also 'real politics' on a national stage. The case of New Zealand provides a solid insight for it. Additionally, there is a need to scrutinize successful civil societies in history and particular recent events that are influential for the successful civil society mobilizations, since they enable us to develop a much deeper evaluation for today's civil societies and nuclear debate.

Theoretical framework and literature review

Social movements are seen as collective actions based on solidarity, active response to conflicts, and going beyond the limits of the system available (Melucci 1985). The socio-political aspect of it has been discussed in literature especially in relation to the state-society relations. The discussions on the open/closed and weak/strong relations models are centered on the adoption of assimilative strategies towards the demands of movements, paying careful attention to protest, and seeking to build constructive public policies accordingly (Kitschelt 1986).

In the past few decades, the integration of social movement approaches with theoretical frameworks focused on resource and process-centered analysis has gained momentum, contributing to a better understanding of collective action as well as policy structure and mechanisms. Considering these approaches together suggests that available resources facilitate the achievement of social goals through mobilizing actors and boosting the productivity of movement efforts, thus gaining political influence and bringing about political change in an effective way (Caren 2010). This article brings together social movement theories centered on resource mobilization with consideration of the political opportunity structure.

In social movements, the concept of resource utilization and mobilization focuses on a number of factors: the capacities of supporters from the public, media, state agencies, tactical-goal orientation, available networks and materials, and mass communication techniques. All of these are critical for movement constituents and determine the characteristics, stability, and future of a movement. They also help the movement to grow out of its rudimentary period, maintain its organizational structure, and increase its power through utilizing and improvement of the available resources over the course of mobilization. Proponents of resource mobilization theory focus on how different actors bargain and compromise when there is a need for policy-shaping or creation. At the center of the analysis is the ability of movement members to acquire financial, human and material resources and mobilizing toward the movement goals through these resources.

The theory of political opportunity structure provides an understanding of the

existing political conditions, settings, and actions that determine a social movement's characteristics and trajectory. It claims that the failure or success of movements is dependent upon the government's position and the nature of the political status-quo (strong, open-minded, democratic, or vice versa). In other words, if the government is weak and/or has a repressive approach, a movement is most likely to fail. Alternatively, if the government is supportive and political circumstances are convenient in moving further, a social movement might grow and flourish and reach the desired outcome thanks to the political efficacy. Furthermore, the political structure provides favorable conditions for the movement where challengers or movement actors can express their demands appropriately for a common purpose and thus cooperate with politicians in line with this purpose.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) support the idea that effective challenger groups require not only organizational resources but also support from people familiar with legal and political processes and allies in the political system. Resources can attract third-party supporters for their own benefits. For Burstein and Linton (2002), the link between resources, political structure, and preferences affects desired outcomes of a movement. These researchers also claim that the success of organizations and interest groups depends on both the resources they deploy and the context of a majoritarian struggle for influence (Burnstein and Linton 2002). In other words, the characteristics of the state and third parties influence not only the availability but also the utility of a movement's resources. Burnstein and Linton point out that an organization's resources and its influence on governmental bodies (in terms of their responsiveness and reflectiveness toward the contested issue) affect each other and also the outcome of the movement. When considering the case of New Zealand, it is worth mentioning that the resources for peace works are provided by volunteers who have initially mobilized themselves with limited resources. And their motivation led to the establishment of peace organizations and collaboration among themselves.

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) centered their arguments on outcomes; for them, citizen participation in every sphere of society in the presence of a responsive state produces positive effects. In this regard, democratic openness in the political context plays an important role. According to their cross-national case study, the presence of strong democracies characterized by high experience of positive engagements and interactions between citizen and state and shorter histories of democratic participation affect the outcome to a greater degree. To demonstrate this, they looked at the characteristics and democratic quality of political regimes (with a particular focus on the quality of governance, political participation, and political culture) for 20 countries, including New Zealand. They found that engagement can make positive differences through the practice of citizen participation (through local associations, social movements, campaigns, and formal participatory government spaces) and responsive as well as accountable states.

Elsie Locke (1992), a political activist and peace campaigner, wrote a book

called *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* focusing on the proud history of New Zealand peace movement combined with the origins and activities of the New Zealand Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is also equally important to mention that Marie Leadbeater (2013) provided one of the most comprehensive books available, *Peace, Power & Politics: How New Zealand Became Nuclear Free,* on the peace-related activities carried out in New Zealand with its historical dimension. Additionally, former Prime Minister David Lange is also the author of a major book called *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way.* Lange offers a view on the events leading up to the Labour Party's decision to declare the country a nuclear-free zone and of the events that consolidated anti-nuclear stance in New Zealand, thanks to the 1987 legislation. The legislation is based on the prohibition of any nuclear weapon or other explosive devices capable of releasing nuclear energy in all the land, territory, and inland waters within the territorial limits of New Zealand. Manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, or having control over any nuclear explosive device and weapons of mass destruction was also strictly forbidden.[1]

Prof. Kevin P. Clement's book (1988), *Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-free New Zealand,* focuses on the implications of New Zealand's stance and its repercussions on the new policy written through the viewpoint as a sociology lecturer and pacifist. Clement's book helps us to understand the determinants of movement outcomes arguing for the presence of both strong organizations and a sympathetic political context. According to him, successful mobilization typically requires mediation by supportive actors in political institutions. In other words, in addition to the plurality of organizations and associations, the presence of sympathetic regimes and state bureaucracies made it easier to negotiate and attain the desired policy outcomes. On the one hand, as a response to Clement's claims, a critical approach is made by Dr. Ramesh Thakur (1989) in *Creation of the Nuclear-Free New Zealand Myth: Brinkmanship without a Brink.* Dr. Thakur discusses whether or not the Labour Party genuinely reflected the people's democratic preferences over the policy choice.

It is also important to acknowledge New Zealand oriented research produced since the 1980s. In particular, Tom Newnham (1986), a political activist, documented the waterborne protests against nuclear vessel visits in and around the coast of New Zealand, in his book, *Peace Squadron.* Likewise, in *Making Waves: The Greenpeace New Zealand Story,* Michael Szabo (1990) looked at the history and development of Greenpeace New Zealand, which is considered a well-established international anti-nuclear organization. In *Standing Upright Here: New Zealand in the Nuclear Age 1945-1990,* M. Templeton (2006), a former New Zealand Foreign Service officer, told the story of nuclear tests and technologies and their repercussions in New Zealand society. Rebecca Priestly (2012), in *Mad on Radium: New Zealand in the Atomic Age,* looked at the

---

[1] New Zealand Legislation, New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987, http://www.legislation.govt.New
Zealand/act/public/1987/0086/latest/DLM115116.html

history of New Zealanders' engagement with the nuclear issue as well as the nuclear-free identity. These resources provide a detailed history and evolvement of the nuclear issue in New Zealand.

There are also some relevant dissertations with a particular focus on the denuclearization process of New Zealand. Dr. Eleanor N. Hodges (1990) focused on the New Zealand's peace movement, the anti-nuclear actions of the Labour Government and also the success of peace activism between the 1970s -1990s with a particular focus on nuclear conflicts and deterrence. In her dissertation completed in 1990, *David and Goliath in the ocean of peace: Case studies of "nuclearism," "nuclear allergy" and "the kiwi disease"*, she elaborates the post-nuclear situation in New Zealand following the passing of the Nuclear Free Zone legislation in 1987. For anti-nuclear and peace activism, an important source is provided by Dr. Catherine F. Dewes (1999) in her dissertation, *The World Court Project: The Evolution and Impact of an Effective Citizens' Movement*. As a long-time member of the international peace movement and educator, her dissertation explores the ways in which the World Court Project influenced the process of government decision making, both nationally and within the UN, using New Zealand as a case study. It also focuses on empowering stories with ordinary people struggling to have their voices heard as well as working closely with the government.

One of the up-to-date dissertations is written by Dr. Lyndon Burford (2016) based on the deep analysis of national identity associated with the anti-nuclear stance. Burford's doctoral dissertation examines the role of 'national identity' as a driver for nuclear disarmament advocacy by Canada and New Zealand. He discusses the history of contemporary New Zealand to illustrate the emergence of a point of view centered on the illegality of nuclear weapons and opposition to nuclear testing. This history, in his view, led the public to internalize a merging of national anti-nuclear identity, which he characterizes as 'a New Zealand nuclear taboo' (Bulford 2016; 106).

The Peace Foundation[2] and the university library archives based in Auckland provide most of the documents relevant to this paper. Significant websites also dedicated to the de-nuclearization stories and narratives of New Zealand include 'disarmsecure.org' as part of the Disarmament & Security Centre[3] initiated by a passionate activist Dr. Kate Dewes and Robert Green and 'nuclearfreeNew Zealand.org'[4] with the aim of providing information related to the history of nuclear weapons activities in the Pacific, and their impact on indigenous Pacific peoples and highlighting events to celebrate New Zealand's 30 years of nuclear freedom. New Zealand History[5] provides many original documents on historical events, politics, and government.

---

[2]The Peace Foundation: http://www.peace.net.New Zealand/

[3] Disarmament and Security Center: http://www.disarmsecure.org/about-us

[4] Nuclear Free Peacemakers: https://www.nuclearfree.org.New Zealand/

[5]New Zealand History: https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/

Methodology

In the civil society part, this study examines the dynamics of civil society in New Zealand, considering the resources they used and the openness of the state that led the movement to become a 'nuclear-free zone'. Basing the dynamics of civil society in the center, this study started from the observation that considerable primary materials on the nuclear issue of New Zealand by human rights and peace activists have been produced, mostly by those who witnessed the movement in situ. They shed light on "why New Zealand became a nuclear free zone" but do not propose a systematic approach to "what particular elements made the anti-nuclear struggle an efficient one?"

This article accordingly is not a study questioning why people participated in the movement. Rather, it focuses on the process and motivating factors influencing the mobilizing dynamics and vitality of the movement. Referring to the dynamism, I would not underestimate the structural factors and conditions that provide a space to facilitate the process in New Zealand, such as small size and isolated position in the South-West Pacific, as well as a population of less than three and a half million people between the 1970s and 1980s. Besides, the time frame for this research has been chosen in accordance with the acceleration of activities during the mobilization.

In addition, the 'national identity factor' based on anti-nuclearism is exclusive in this research. An anti-nuclear national identity in New Zealand emerged together with the movement's achievement and continuously has played an important role. This study claims that it is not the main factor influencing the mobilization itself, but is an important element pertaining to the nuclear debate in New Zealand. This paper focuses on anti-nuclear activism in New Zealand that can be traced back to the 2nd World War with a moral and emotional stance under the global peace and international security narratives. With regards to this, it would be accurate to say that 'peace activism' was transformed into 'anti-nuclear' or 'anti-nuclear peace activism' due to the nuclear threat in the 1960s.

The empirical data for this study consist of a range of sources: semi-structured interviews with peace activists in and outside New Zealand over two years, the archive of the University of Auckland, the Peace Foundation, and Disarmament and Security Center, and the documents that are based on relevant events, newspaper articles, internet sites, and statements. This research also makes use of the scholarly work of researchers who have studied the nuclear history of New Zealand. A supplementary source of background information is provided by wide-ranging discussions on the political history of New Zealand with people who actively took part in the movement and also scholars who documented the process in the past decades.

While it was not possible to include all of the many campaigns, demonstrations, educational tools, activities, groups, committees, sub-formations, and individuals involved in the movement, I chose to focus on the remarkable and high-impact ones for this study. The multiple additional sources used, such as

documents, archival investigation, and regular consultation with the other people involved in the process were taken into account to ensure the accuracy and verification of this sample. Additionally, the limitation of this research is based on the inaccessibility of material used a few decades earlier. I do value the inputs from each interviewee who did their best to recall the mobilization process including the campaigns and to provide accurate information.

Nuclear spark

The devastating effects of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were very relevant to New Zealand people mobilising the campaigns. The realisation that a nuclear war could be over in a day, in which millions of people would die instantly, millions more would die slowly and most of the planet would be contaminated with radiation poisoning, motivated people with fear to prevent such an atrocity by marching in their millions in street protests. However, it was to no avail. No amount of education about the horrors of Hiroshima is sufficient to change political policies that support nuclear weapons 'as defence / deterrence', even in Japan.[6]

The ANZUS Treaty was signed in 1951 as a collective security agreement between the US, Australia, and New Zealand to co-operate on military matters and ensure regional stability in the Pacific Ocean region (Catalinac 2010). The ANZUS Treaty together with involvement in the Korean and Vietnam War created repercussions for the majority of New Zealand citizens who would prefer greater autonomy in foreign policy not relying on the US guarantee under the defense ties. Being tied into America's plans or being under its nuclear umbrella was not acceptable. They hoped that New Zealand could establish a more independent peacemaking defence and foreign policy. Thus, a vocal and well-organized anti-militarist movement was created challenging the New Zealand government following the US into participation in the war. Regarding this, the Peacemaking Association produced and circulated many articles which explained the importance of withdrawal from ANZUS.

The continuation of French testing in the mid-1960s was also the last straw, and resonated as a political crisis. After World War II, the frequent nuclear testing of the US, along with its French and British allies in the Pacific region and Australia (317 nuclear weapons in total between 1945 – 1995) elevated this attention. Academics and church people (e.g. the Quakers) gathered, and local campaigns organized immediate actions calling for the termination of nuclear tests - more generally for disarmament. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand (CND New Zealand) was formed in 1959 with the purpose of stopping nuclear testing and eliminating nuclear weapons in general.[7] Subsequently, the campaign focused on the flow of information on the danger of nuclear-related activities and their potential effects on the

---

[6]Laurie Ross, e-mail interview, March 2019.

[7]Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018

atmosphere, environment, and human health. It also actively called for withdrawal from ANZUS. What is also important is that after its formation CND Auckland presented the 'No Bombs South of the Line' petition and received more than 80,000 signatures for the New Zealand Parliament intending to discuss further the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the southern hemisphere. Since the 1893 petition for demanding votes for women, CND Auckland's this attempt is regarded as New Zealand's biggest petition[8]. The campaign could be deemed successful in getting considerable attention from the people thanks to enormous participation in televised marches, activist campaigns, pamphlets, and popular artistic events such as street theatres, public galleries, and movie screenings.[9]

The mid-1960s were the most crucial time for protesting the nuclear testing in French Polynesia. There were a high number of atmospheric tests carried out by France on the French Polynesian atolls (more than 40 atmospheric tests concentrated on Mururoa and Fangataufa between 1966 - 1974) leading to nationwide protests.[10] When the anti-war movement together with anti-nuclear dissidents gained momentum across the country, the Labour Party declared that they would withdraw New Zealand troops from Vietnam if elected (Smith 2005). Consequently, this drew a benign picture for the people of New Zealand and affected the 1972 election with the victory of the Labour Party. However, the link between anti-nuclear and peace activists persisted because of the continuation of French nuclear testing in the Pacific atolls.

The Labour Party received significant support by favoring a nuclear-free status for New Zealand, and promoted a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ). Following the death of the Labour Party's popular leader N. Kirk in 1974, Bill Rowling from the Labour Party took over as the 30th Prime minister by the 1975 General Election. Subsequently, the conservative National Party led by Robert Muldoon was re-elected and ruled New Zealand between November 1975 - July 1984. Pro-US and The ANZUS approaches as well as the acceptance of the US and UK's nuclear warship visits sparked a backlash for the people.[11]

---

[8] The Anti-nuclear movement in New Zealand, Peace Organizations, https://New Zealand-antinuclearmovement.weebly.com/peace-organisations.html

[9] Anti-nuclear Protest in New Zealand, accessed 12 June 2018, http://antinukeNew Zealand.weebly.com/

[10] New Zealand History, HMNZS Otago sails for Mururoa test zone (1973), https://nzhistory.govt.nz/hmnzs-otago-sails-for-mururoa-test-zone

[11] Lyndon Burford, interview, April 2018.

Civil society in New Zealand: contestation and consensus

As a multicultural and pluralistic country, civic actors in New Zealand in the anti-nuclear movement include a variety of faith-based organizations, sports groups, students, pacifists, Māori (or tangata whenua – people of the land), women's groups, business networks and associations, and also occupational groups based on doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. These civil society actors have been concerned about peace issues since New Zealand's involvement in the aforementioned major wars. Among these, the Vietnam War was a milestone in the coordination of protests and demonstrations. Individual actors in civil society (to use E. Locke's term, "peace people") consisted of people unified to protest the war and call for the soldiers to return home.

The dynamics of civil society in New Zealand are based on having broad and effective tools, strategies, and public engagement in the decision-making process, which is entrenched in the nature of New Zealand politics. In that sense, a focus on the forms of actions of the anti-nuclear consensus would help us to understand the sprouting process over the course of mobilization. These actions have been described as "a small nation's continuous heady attempt toward the aligned superpowers so as to limit their nuclear options" (Clements 1988).

a. Elements of protest activism

In organizations and networks, the components of the anti-nuclear movement are diverse throughout the country. Among the most significant ones are Christian pacifists, outspoken academics, scientists, students, women, environmentalists, church members, and indigenous people. The groups embodied under 'peaceful purposes' as a national coalition include (but are not limited to) the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Peace Squadron, Greenpeace, The Peace Media, Peace Council, The Society of Friends (Quakers), Peace Movement Aotearoa, the Disarmament and Security Centre, Women for Peace, Just Defence and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement in here as well as Maori Women's Welfare League, United Nations Association of New Zealand (UNA New Zealand), Progressive Youth Movement, New Zealand Nuclear Free Peacemakers, The Foundation for Peace Studies, Friends of the Earth (FoE), Environmental Defense Society (EDS), Ecology Action, and many other occupational groups.[12] Most of them evolved after the mid-1970s and some of their names have been transformed. All the components of the movement played a notable role in shaping the demand: a nuclear-free New Zealand and the rejection of warfare ideology. They also created space for newcomer groups, organizations, and associations.

The diverse components of the movement are essential. The pacifist stance of churches (the Christian Pacifist Society, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Christians

---

[12]Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

for Peace, PAX Christi, the Christian Peace Network, Quakers, etc.) contributed to the movement as pacifist grassroots groups. The visible and strong role of women in New Zealand can be traced back to the country's suffrage legacy. New Zealand became the first country in the world in which all women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections in the late 19th century.[13] Since then, women have actively taken part in all spheres of political life such as forming women's political organizations (Else 1993). In the case of anti-nuclear mobilization, they participated in local and international peace organizations, with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom especially supportive of their involvement. They were also very active in marches.[14]

Along with destroying Pacific communities by testing, other small components interlinked this issue as part of social justice and racism. Indigenous people, Māori groups, and pacific peacemakers formed "the Pacific People's Anti-nuclear Action Committee" and the "Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific."[15] Through the nationwide nuclear issue, they created their own opportunities to receive attention to particular issues that concerned them, such as decolonization, liberation from the colonial power, land rights, and a nuclear-free Pacific.

Most of the aforementioned groups had their own committees. Apart from them, there were some minor ones. These are, included but not limited to, The Peace Ad Committee, The New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee, the Committee Against Foreign Military Activities in New Zealand, They focused on campaign strategies, public education, political policy petitions for the New Zealand parliament (such as "No Bombs South of the Line"), lobbying, the production and distribution of fact sheets from authoritative sources, popular merchandise for promotion, and advertising such as financing badges, stickers, leaflets, etc.[16]

The groups, organizations, associations, committees, and individual activists sprang into action heterogeneously, but with a dominant message. No doubt today, socio-political movements enjoy social media where they reach a larger audience. Considering that there were limited communication facilities, New Zealand's mobilization attracted tremendous attention to the nuclear issue from the local to the national level by reaching people through phone calls and newsletter writing. Interestingly, local peace and anti-nuclear groups with limited financial resources accessed their local MPs and posted letters to the New Zealand Parliament in Wellington. Thanks to effective management, the groups' representatives met regularly for forums and events, and to widen their

---

[13]New Zealand History, Women and the vote, https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/

[14]The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) - The Oldest Women's Peace Organisation in the World meets in Christchurch, http://voicesagainstwar.New Zealand/

[15]Disarmament Security Center, Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific, http://www.disarmsecure.org/

[16]Kate Dewes, interview, July 2018.

coordination and networks.[17] Mobilization activities and resources were financially supported by like-minded individuals engaged in the movement and by donations such as the media toolkit including local newspapers financed by the writers and editors.

On the subject of consciousness-raising activities and expert knowledge, the existence of organizations and the relative ease of networking were not enough. A second important element of civil society effectiveness lay in the choice of activities intended to bring public attention to endemic issues. Those who mobilize are required to do their utmost to spread materials (such as the circulation of pamphlets, flyers, etc.) to raise awareness. These activities mainly include conference and seminar series and expert-knowledge sharing. In the New Zealand case, an enormous number of pamphlets, booklets, posters, and public speaking events were created to draw attention to the nuclear issue in the country.[18] For example, Peace Movement Aotearoa, The Peace Foundation, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand, Nuclear Free Zone Committee, and Greenpeace were the major producers of public events and education materials during the 1980s.

Dr. Helen Caldicott, an expert in the field and a popular name worldwide in the nuclear freeze campaign, was invited by the groups for a talk. Her visit created a domino effect by getting a great deal of media attention and encouraged the movement. After Dr. Caldicott's visit, 40 peace groups were organized in Auckland alone to oppose nuclear warships (Leadbeater 2013). Not only Dr. Caldicott, but also some professional scientist groups (e.g. International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War New Zealand (IPPNW New Zealand), Scientists Against Nuclear Arms (SANA), Engineers for Social Responsibility, among others) emerged to produce materials and cooperate with activists. Activists distributed vast quantities of literature on the danger of nuclear weapons, and provided expertise and knowledge benefiting the movement with scientific justification against radiation and nuclear-centered issues.

University students and professors also mobilized around the issue of nuclear energy. Professors in various fields (science, medicine, economics, etc.) met the chair of the Royal Commission to give presentations and talk about other options using their knowledge and evidence. For example, after the submission of professors to the Royal Committee, they reported to the government on what needed to be done appropriately. Expert knowledge was particularly useful in the case of nuclear energy. Substantial portions of the efforts and evidence were effective in convincing the committee and government that New Zealand had no need for nuclear energy. The organization "Friends of the Earth" helped in the circulation of books, such as physician Walter Patterson, who toured in person to discuss the issue.[19] For the case of nuclear arms, IPPNW New Zealand and

---

[17]Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

[18]Laurie Ross, interview, April 2019.

[19]National Library Archive, Wellington, New Zealand, accessed 12 July 2018.

SANA provided 'Fact Sheets' used by the anti-nuclear groups with a large distribution among others in the 1980s and thus increased the credibility of the opposition.

Attention to peace education is also crucial to see how schools and teachers organized under a tenacious anti-nuclear stance. Most of the schools were involved in the process with a supportive teacher (e.g. Epsom Girls Grammar School was part of a Peace Group). They cooperated with other high schools through a network called "Youth Peace." Importantly, Alyn Ware established the Mobile Peace Van in the 1980s travelling the schools to lead classes in peace and disarmament education.[20] They reached many schools. The project helped school children understand the disastrous effects of nuclear weapons. The schools set up peace education stalls, attended demonstrations, raised funds, and organized a tour in France for presentations as well as urging France to stop nuclear testing in the Pacific. The educational materials and texts were also diversified in the meantime. Interestingly, Greenpeace published extensively in the 1970s and 1980s about the effects of nuclear radiation in the Pacific. Together with the bombing of the Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace produced many articles against French nuclear testing. It also went beyond its role as an environmental organization, contributing to the anti-nuclear claims to a greater extent.

The high level of national and regional coordination of anti-nuclear activists noted above made it possible to mount effective campaigns. One of the well-known campaigns was Peace Squadron, which lobbied and confronted visiting nuclear warships between 1976 and 1984 with the usage of small and privately-owned vessels in blockading the New Zealand harbors to prevent nuclear warships from entering. They took immediate action when a nuclear warship or submarine came into New Zealand waters.[21] Furthermore, they presented radical acts of protest such as civil disobedience. The head of the campaign was George Armstrong, whose high-profile actions produced media attention and generated public interest with the focus on stopping nuclear ship visits. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament New Zealand (CND New Zealand), was a major player in supporting activists and providing materials and finance for actions. The members reached the government by fax, open letters and petitions, and extensive lobbying with the New Zealand government.

The members of the campaign carefully monitored the process. Larry Ross and the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Committee organized the first New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Campaign Tour throughout the country in 1982 for the broad dissemination of materials detailing nuclear danger. The campaign sought to advance its policy goal by mobilizing the mainstream general public to lobby the New Zealand government for their preferred policy option. The campaign leaders provided a national strategy and a template for autonomous Peace Groups to become effective in this work. The strategy was rooted in the 1978

---

[20]Alyn Ware, interview, April 2018.

[21]The Peace Squadrons, http://www.disarmsecure.org/

United Nations Resolutions on the value of states becoming Nuclear Free Zone regions, as a valuable contribution toward international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.[22] Thanks to the campaign by also the efforts of Peace Movement Aotearoa, many workplaces, schools, homes (even boats), councils and cities declared themselves as officially nuclear-free zones. By the election of 1984, over 66% of the population lived in locally declared nuclear-free zones (Dewes 1999).

One of the biggest campaigns was Campaign Half Million. Rather than being led by peace activists, it was launched by environmental groups that were opposing the nuclear power (Greenpeace, Friends of Earth, etc.). Although they targeted a half-million signature, their petition received more than 333,000 which is a remarkable achievement (one of the largest petitions ever) for a small country in terms of its population, and it was thanks to the help of the Values Party and well-coordinated volunteers (Leadbeater 2013).

Demonstrations, marches, and rallies were a popular tool to attract attention and show dedication to a cause, especially when noisily marching with banners to the parliament in the capital city of Wellington. Internationally important days (such as Hiroshima Day, Mother's Day, etc.) and national holidays (Christmas holiday, Anzac Day, etc.) were also appropriate due to the availability of people and their willingness to take to the streets aggressively. Protest marches and rallies with massive participation were organized mainly by the leaders of CND New Zealand and also by Greenpeace. Among the best known was the giant human Peace Symbol created in front of the Auckland Museum in 1983.[23] Mass attention was increased by the intensity of the demonstrations regardless of the race, gender, or age of the people involved. The same year, the Waiheke March for Disarmament organized by the Waiheke Peace Group with 400 women and children was notable among many others. While marching, they collected letters after visiting each town and delivered them to the parliament.

b. Political engagement

Pro-left-wing parties and leftist politics have a tendency to support ecological, anti-nuclear, and peace movements due to both ideologically and socially shared structures (Giugni 2014). Over time, there was a convergence on this issue of parties whose origins lay in the environmental movement with more traditional parties of the left for whom anti-militarism was the starting point. Over the 1970s, New Zealand Values Party (the first environmental political party in the world) and the Social Credit League (now the Democratic Party) declared themselves as anti-nuclear parties with the participation of the New Zealand Party later. The position of the Labour Party was already clear with the anti-

---

[22]Laurie Ross, interview, July 2018.

[23]Nuclear Free Peacemakers, Auckland Museum Domain Peace Symbol, https://www.nuclearfreepeacemakers.org.New Zealand/

nuclear stance and opposition to the ANZUS alliance.

Additionally, there are two important names from the Labour Party associated with the support of the movement and responded to the majority needs: PM Norman Kirk in the 1970s and PM David Lange in the 1980s. The Labour Party scored a victory in the election of 1972, elevating Norman Kirk to the position of Prime Minister for the following three years. As an enthusiastic party leader, he was against French nuclear testing and supportive of New Zealand's stance on the nuclear-free path. After his sudden death, the Labour Party was defeated by the National Party in the elections until 1984.[24] There is also another important name for New Zealand's nuclear history. Helen Clark (the 37th Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1999 to 2008), as chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Select Committee (1984–87), played a leading role in the adoption of a nuclear-weapon free policy. She was also an important name in the development of the Labour Party policy on the nuclear port ban in the 1980s.

A pro-US party victory under R. Muldoon's leadership was reflected in a policy transformation. It created a catalyst in the revival of mobilization due to two major issues; proactive acceptance of nuclear powered and nuclear capable US ships, and the continuation of French nuclear tests. Organizations (e.g. Greenpeace and Peace Media Organization) and political parties (e.g. Labour Party and New Zealand Values Party) helped to reshape the mobilization from being a small and largely conscience-based anti-nuclear sentiment to a strong and organized social movement with determination.

Furthermore, anti-nuclear groups and campaigners tried various channels in the 1970s and 1980s to convince parliamentarians and policy-makers. They were as follows:

- Petitions devised by committees and used by civil society groups to show majority support to the parliament;

- Lobbying members of parliament in their electorate offices declaring Nuclear Free Zones as part of the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Campaign;

- Media channels for keeping influential political representatives and decision-makers informed of the unity in diversity of public thinking;

- Local Council Nuclear Free Zones Deputations to local government bodies and other major organizations to establish policy;

- The invitation of authoritative respected overseas experts to raise moral confidence and empowerment of politicians to "do the right thing" in the face of apathy, despair, or pressure to maintain the status quo of power structures.

---

[24]Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, Nuclear-free 1980s, https://teara.govt.New Zealand/

Needless to say, political elites and policy-makers can and do play an important role in protecting and strengthening spaces for citizens to exercise their voices and can support the enabling conditions for citizen engagement through promoting the value of broad social movements, supporting the strong sentiments of engagement within the state, and monitoring state reprisals for increased citizen voice (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). The lack of shared values, mutual support, and alliance building with politicians was influential for the majority preference in the next election where the value-oriented collective effort favored the Labour Party approaches over those of the National Party.

Due to persistent public pressure, the nuclear issue became a hot-button election issue forcing each political party to adopt a policy arrangement. By 1984, the impact of the aforementioned activities was reflected in the program of the opposition parties. The Labour Party promised that they would ban the entry of nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered ships into New Zealand ports. In the 1984 snap election, 3 of 4 parties (Labour, the New Zealand Party, and Social Credit) took a clear anti-nuclear stand, and together gained 63.4% of the total votes to defeat the National Party (Lamare 1991).

The Labour Party was particularly sensitive to public preferences and also wanted to secure a political image and votes. They promised to write the policy into law as part of its 1984 election manifesto (White 1998). Thanks to the victory of the Labour Party in 1984, David Lange stood up for his country in the outside world and championed its nuclear-free policy at the United Nations disarmament conference for arms control saying that, "When the opportunity is given to any country to pursue a serious and balanced measure of arms control, then that country has a duty to all of us to undertake that measure" (Lange 1990). The same year, the Labour Party introduced the nuclear-free bill.

The desired election result and consequent incidents such as the refusal of the US Buchanan ship and the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior in 1985 helped to implement a strict policy option in legislation. The Rainbow Warrior incidence is the sinking of a Greenpeace ship in July 1985 by the French secret service agents to confront French nuclear testing in the Moruroa Atoll.[25] This incident became big international news worldwide that favoured the brave New Zealand nuclear-free stance. Following this, New Zealand was suspended from ANZUS in 1986. The peace movement already wanted the New Zealand government to withdraw from the ANZUS, however, the US had hoped to humiliate New Zealand into submission.[26] It would be claimed that the US punished New Zealand for rejecting its nuclear weapons and ships. Therefore, this suspension from ANZUS was appeared to be demoting or penalizing New Zealand.

Consequently, the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act was passed in 1987. The consequent incidences led New Zealand to

---

[25]The bombing of the Rainbow Warrior, Greenpeace, accessed 16 August 2018, https://www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/about/our-history/bombing-of-the-rainbow-warrior/

[26] Laurie Ross, e-mail interview, June 2021.

become a nuclear-free country.[27] This decision not only helped the country to be an independent nation but also projected a positive image on international anti-nuclear societies (Clements 1988). After the Rainbow Warrior incident, the government announced initiatives for peaceful development, peace education, environmental protection in the South Pacific, and protection of human rights, which were used for conferences, publications, speaking tours, and campaigns (Leadbeater 2013).

Taking all of these elements together, the 1987 anti-nuclear legislation represents the culmination of efforts by the New Zealand peace and anti-nuclear movement, the New Zealand Labour Party, the New Zealand Social Credit League (now the New Zealand Democrats), and the New Zealand Values Party.[28] Particularly, the nature of democratically accountable and open government (which is the essence of participatory democracy) and inclusiveness provided by the Labour Party was significant for the creation and also the continuation of the nuclear-free zone.

Conclusion

For the case of New Zealand, a strong and effective civil society activism was related to the pooling of resources and the political structure as the main determinants of the success that brought about the wanted change. Several distinct tools and resources (e.g. labour, expertise, support of the media) provided favorable conditions for the advocacy, motivation, and determination of New Zealanders. All these events were embodied in conscious-raising activities, campaigns, demonstrations, and other forms of actions leading to a peaceful nuclear-free nation with strong domestic legislation.

The organizational strategies through institutional channels had a clear impact. Well-established networking scaled up the movement while maintaining its deliberative manner, even though the peace group members were funding themselves with limited financial resources. Multi-actor dynamics (with the sense of DIY) and interactive essence of collective commitment from local to national level embodied the notion of 'power-to-people'. New Zealand is a country where it is easy to connect and mobilize; behind the extraordinary backing for a nuclear-free nation can be seen as commitment and a combination of knowledge and awareness for resisting nuclear-centric ideologies.

Although there was a political blockage due to the reign of the National Party and France's nuclear testing persistence, the policy goal was clearly defined and prioritized. All the actions toward nuclear tension were formulated, solidified, disseminated, justified, and backed by the people inside and outside of politics. It resulted in the victory with the legislation that pleased the majority. The parallel between the disarmament campaigns and the Labour Party's anti-

---

[27] New Zealand History, Nuclear-free New Zealand: Nuclear-free legislation https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/politics/nuclear-free-new-zealand/nuclear-free-zone

[28] NEW ZEALAND on Screen, accessed 16 August 2018, https://www.nzonscreen.com/

nuclear stance popularized and facilitated the process of anti-nuclear struggle that gained recognition and had legal status in the end. The opposition Labour Party, was vocal and sympathetic to the public tension. Following the Labour Party's victory in the 1972 New Zealand General Election, the party received support from the peace movement members (Clements 1988). The party included the nuclear discourses on the party agenda. On every occasion, they emphasized their opposition to the entry of nuclear-armed or nuclear-powered ships into the territory. Their openness to the people and receptiveness to political demands made them more approachable by civil society actors. It facilitated the process of lobbying on the local and national levels. Thus, they received a substantial membership in the 1970s.

As the findings indicate that although there are multiple pathways of conditions leading to desired policy outcomes based on anti-nuclear claims, the viability of the anti-nuclear mobilizations and socio-political movements are based on the convergence of the strong, diverse, and united civil society with a genuine political environment in which strong leadership and a responsive political environment are well-combined and integrated.

References

Burford, Lyndon. 2016. "National Identity and Nuclear Disarmament Advocacy by Canada and New Zealand." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Burnstein P. and Linton A. 2002. "The Impact of Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Social Movement Organizations on Public Policy: Some Recent Evidence and Theoretical Concerns." *Social Forces*, V: 81, N: 2.

Catalinac, Amy. 2010. "Why New Zealand Took Itself out of ANZUS: Observing Opposition for Autonomy in Asymmetric Alliances." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6(4). Pp. 317 – 338.

Caren, A. E. and Chiarello, E., & Su, Y. 2010. "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36(1), Pp. 287–307.

Clements, K. 1988. "Back from the Brink: The Creation of a Nuclear-Free New Zealand." Wellington, Allen and Unwin, Port Nicholson Press.

Clements, K. 1988. "New Zealand's Role in Promoting a Nuclear-Free Pacific." *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 25, No. 4, Special Issue on Militarization and Demilitarization in Asia-Pacific, Pp. 395-410.

Dewes, C. F. 1999. "The World Court Project: The Evolution and Impact of an Effective Citizens' Movement." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of New England.

 Else, Anne. 1993. *Women together: a history of women's organisations in New Zealand*: *Ngā Rōpū Wāhine O Te Motu.*

Gaventa, J. and Barrett, G. 2010. "So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement." *IDS Working Paper 347*, Brighton.

Giugni, M. 2004. *Social Protest and Policy Change: Ecology, Antinuclear, and Peace Movements in Comparative Perspective*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

Hodges, Elenaor. 1990. "David and Goliath in the Ocean of Peace. Case Studies of "Nuclearism," "Nuclear Allergy," and "The Kiwi Disease". Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California.

Kitschelt, Herbert. 1986. "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science*. vol. 16, issue 1, Pp. 57-85.

Lamare, J. W. 1991. "The Growth of Anti-Nuclearism in New Zealand." *Australian Journal of Political Science* 26, Pp. 472–487.

Lange, David. 1990. *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*. Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin.

Leadbeater, M. 2013. *Peace, Power & Politics: how New Zealand became nuclear free*. University of Otago Press, New Zealand.

Locke, Elsie. 1992. *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand*. Hazard Press. Christchurch.

McCarthy, J. D. and Zald. M. N. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology,* 82. Pp.1212-1241.

Melucci, A. 1985. "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements." *Social Research,* Vol. 52, No. 4, Social Movements. Pp. 789-816.

Newnham, T. 1986. *Peace Squadron: The sharp end of nuclear protest in New Zealand*. Graphic Publications.

Priestley, Rebecca. 2012. *Mad on Radium: New Zealand in the Atomic Age*. Auckland University Press, New Zealand.

Smith, A. L. 2005. "Southeast Asia and New Zealand: A History of Regional and Bilateral Relations." ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Szabo, Michael. 1990. *Making Waves: The Greenpeace New Zealand Story*.

Thakur, R. 1989. "Creation of the Nuclear-Free New Zealand Myth: Brinkmanship without a Brink." *Asian Survey,* Vol. 29, No. 10. Pp. 919-939.

Templeton, M. 2006. *Standing Upright Here: New Zealand in the Nuclear Age 1945-1990*.

White. R. E. 1998. "Nuclear Free New Zealand: 1987 – From Policy to Legislation." Center for Peace Studies, Working Paper, no. 8.

Supplementary resources

Disarmament & Security Center, Christchurch: http://www.disarmsecure.org/publications/papers/papers_by_subject.php

Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand: https://www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/about/our-history/

Nuclear Free Peacemakers: http://www.nuclearfreepeacemakers.org.New Zealand/history/page01.html

The Peace Foundation, Auckland: http://www.peace.net.New Zealand/history-of-the-peace-foundation

New Zealand History: https://New Zealandhistory.govt.New Zealand/world-court-issues-injunction-against-french-nuclear-testing-in-the-pacific

New Zealand Legislation: http://www.legislation.govt.New Zealand/act/public/1987/0086/10.0/DLM115116.html

New Zealand on Screen: https://www.New Zealandonscreen.com/collection/nuclear-free-new-zealand

30 Years Nuclear Free New Zealand: http://www.nuclearfreeNew Zealand30.org.New Zealand/further-reading

Interviews

Alyn Ware (Peace educator and nuclear disarmament consultant), April 2018

K. Dewes (Director of the Disarmament and Security Centre), June 2018

Laurie Ross (Peace Activist), July 2018

Lyndon Burford (Scholar from the Univ. of Auckland), April 2018

About the author

Ms. Pinar Temocin was trained in Philosophy in Turkey and Germany and Comparative Politics and Public Policy in France. She was a visiting research student at Seoul National University, and a graduate fellow of The Nuclear Nonproliferation Education Research Center, The Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, South Korea. She did research at The Peace Foundation, Aotearoa/New Zealand, while studying at the University of Auckland as an exchange student in 2018. She interned and carried out projects in several research institutes and non-profit organizations across the globe on international politics, sustainable community development, and nuclear-free advocacy. She is currently a doctoral student at Hiroshima University, Japan, majoring in Peace Studies and Development Science. For her doctoral studies, she focuses on the environmental civil society organizations in post-Fukushima Japan. Email: pnrtemocin AT hotmail.com

Discourse and power in Ireland's Repeal the 8th movement

Elaine McKimmons and Louise Caffrey

Abstract

Understanding the success of social movements in terms of their situatedness in the social and historical context is a necessary direction for social movement research. In Ireland, much of the research on reproductive rights activism since the 2018 referendum that legalised abortion has examined distinct aspects of the movement that might be improved going forward. The present study endeavoured to examine the discursive strategies used by the Repeal campaign. Qualitative data, collected from 23 activists from the 'Repeal the 8th Campaign' at a critical moment in time - ten months before the referendum - were subjected to critical discourse analysis. Situating the Repeal movement within a theoretical framework, we propose that initial pro-choice activism since 1983 maintained the abeyant movement until the receptive environment re-opened. From 2012 to 2018 pro-choice activists capitalised on the newly receptive environment to remove Article 40.3.3 from the Constitution of Ireland successfully. Findings demonstrate how activists created social change by mainstreaming discursive categories that were not previously culturally dominant, drawing on discourses of feminism, modernity versus traditionalism and approaches of strategic consciousness-raising.

Keywords: Feminism, Pro-choice Activism, Repeal the 8th, Intersectionality, Social Movement Lifecycle, Critical Discourse Analysis.

Introduction

In 1983, the Irish public voted to enact the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution (Article 40.3.3). The Eighth amendment was deemed by Irish law to make abortion illegal in all cases – except where there was a 'real and substantial risk to the life of the mother' (Attorney General v. X, 1992; Irish Statute Book, 2013). It is estimated that between 1980 and 2016 at least 168,705 women travelled from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom to obtain an abortion, and at least 1,547 travelled to the Netherlands for the same reason. These figures only account for women who provided an Irish address and so likely underestimated the correct figure (Bardon, 2018). In May 2018 another referendum was held in which 66.4% of voters in Ireland chose to repeal Article 40.3.3. The referendum result changed the Irish law on women's healthcare by permitting abortion on request for up to 12 gestational weeks and beyond this point in limited circumstances.

Discussion in Ireland since the 2018 referendum has focused on asking what caused this shift. The current study aimed to contribute to our knowledge of the pro-choice movement in Ireland – and social justice movements more generally. It does this by analysing the accounts of activists that were collected at a crucial point in time (10 months before the referendum). Further, the study will take a theoretical approach to explore the Repeal movement in line with the lifecycle theory of social movements (Christiansen, 2009). We aim to use Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 2001) to illuminate how activists within the Repeal movement used language, action and visual displays, to strategically navigate the discursive environment and to win the referendum.

The current study offers a unique contribution to the literature on social movements by evaluating the 'Repeal' campaign as a social movement rooted in wider social and cultural change in Ireland. Critically, the study will account for the historical and social situatedness of a predominantly female-led social movement, whose primary goal is campaigning for bodily autonomy in a historically unreceptive environment.

Literature

Since the popular vote to repeal *Article 40.3.3* from the Irish Constitution, several studies offered a hindsight view of the strategies employed by the Repeal campaign. Findings from these studies emphasized successful aspects of the campaign and also the areas where the campaign may have been improved.

Hard cases and healthcare

Since the May 2018 referendum, hindsight evaluations of the Repeal campaign shed light on some of the strategic choices made by activists to drive the movement towards success. In a cross-cultural study, Cullen and Korolczuk (2019) compared how pro-choice activists in Ireland and Poland endeavoured to change social narratives on abortion. They noted that in both countries pro-choice activism has tended to focus on creating a discursive frame that attempts to destigmatise abortion by positioning it in line with narratives of tragedy, and by prioritising accounts of fatal foetal abnormality in campaign rhetoric. The authors suggest that both movements employed this rhetorical strategy as a way to navigate a gendered and socially conservative environment. The choice to focus on hard cases has been a topic of interest in several studies since late 2018. It was found that movement organisations tended to focus their rhetoric on so called 'hard-cases' because these cases were deemed as being easier for wider society to understand (de Londras, 2019; Carnegie and Roth, 2019).

Another successful strategy employed by the campaign was related to the discursive framing of abortion as a healthcare issue. The campaign sought to situate support for abortion in the context of women's health care, referring to it as "abortion care" and deliberately emphasising themes of care and compassion. The canvassing strategy avoided language that could be seen as absolutist,

favouring the terms "personal decision", "doctor's care" and "regulated", and avoiding the language of "choice", "on demand" "right to choose" or "bodily autonomy". Further, the campaign gathered and disseminated personal stories to illustrate the need for change (Griffin et al, 2019, p.140). This, along with the fact that the campaign gained widespread support from the medical community and the media, was shown to be an important factor for challenging stigmatising attitudes towards abortion (Taylor, Spillane and Arulkumaran, 2020). Findings have shown that, in the time after the death of Savita Halappanavar, the Irish media widely adopted the discursive frame of abortion as a healthcare issue and pivoted away from the previous discussion of foetal ethics (McDonnell and Murphy, 2019). This is said to have contributed to refocusing the topic of abortion as an urgent healthcare matter in mainstream discourse.

Other findings suggest that the Irish media choosing to frame the topic of abortion within rational and easy to understand terms (e.g. healthcare) was an important factor in recruiting new campaign supporters. Murphy and colleagues (2019) conducted a psychological experiment examining cognitive and social bias in people's understanding of the news as it related to the Repeal campaign and the opposing 'No' campaign. The researchers found that 'No' voters were more likely to believe false news stories framing the Repeal campaign as unreasonable and the same was true for 'Yes' voters who were more likely to accept fake news stories about the 'No' campaign. Both sides were significantly less likely to believe false stories concerning their side of the debate which were not in line with their own previously held viewpoints. This suggests that the decision to ground campaign discourse in terms of rationality was important. Art had a similar effect. For example, Chan (2019), Calkin (2019) and Enright (2020) offered perspectives on how art played an essential role in the Repeal campaign; particularly where it pertained to changing prevalent discourse surrounding the topic of abortion in Ireland.

Intersectionality and the 12-week access window

Intersectionality is an important issue in feminist activism and it has been a common theme within recent Repeal campaign research. Intersectional feminism emphasises the multiple identities individuals may have that when combined, can lead to novel types of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1990; Shields, 2008). It has been suggested that the decision to focus campaign rhetoric on hard-cases and women's healthcare, resulted in legislation that is perhaps inconsiderate to diverse identities. It was recommended that intersectionality should have played a more central role in the campaign (Cullen and Korolczuk, 2019; de Londras, 2019; Rivetti, 2019).

De Londras (2019) highlighted that exclusively female-centric language tended to be used by the Repeal campaign and subsequently by the Irish state in *the Health Act of 2018*. It was shown that the exclusive use of female pronouns had the unintentional effect of excluding transgender communities, who do not identify as female, yet might still require abortion services. The decision to focus

on hard-cases was criticised as being unnecessary. De Londras (2019) claimed that the focus could have been on narratives of choice for all people who can become pregnant and that this would have led to a more inclusive type of abortion care. Attention has also been drawn to the fact that there was, and still is, a lack of awareness regarding the experiences of migrants and asylum seekers who require access to abortion services in Ireland. According to de Londras (2019), to obtain an abortion in Ireland, people have to travel to a dedicated healthcare provider at least twice within a 12-week window, and this is often inter-county travel. For people living in direct provision, who are not legally permitted to gain paid employment; and who live on an allowance of only 155 euro per month – this is frequently impossible. The study also noted that the 'My Options' helpline set up by the Irish government to provide information about abortion, is available only in English and Irish languages. It was argued that, had campaign rhetoric been more inclusive, then perhaps the experiences of marginalised people would have been more sensitively considered at the stage of legislation.

Similarly, Carnegie and Roth (2019) also suggested that the 12-week access window permitted by the new abortion legislation is too restrictive; and they reiterated claims made by others (e.g. de Londras, 2019; Rivetti, 2019) that this has the most severe impact on marginalised groups. In other words, a lack of intersectionality may have led to legislation that serves most but not all. Other findings show that the restrictive 12-week access window may be unsuitable for some people living in remote or rural locations. Kasstan (2018) emphasised that medical professionals can legally object to provide abortion care on the grounds of a conscience clause within the new legislation. If an individual is living in a remote part of Ireland, they may have access to only one local GP. Should the only local healthcare provider choose not to engage with the patient regarding abortion care, then the patient will find themselves in a position whereby they need to travel elsewhere. This leaves one of the most significant problems with *Article 40.3.3.* unchanged for some people, as they will still need to find the time, money and the emotional capacity to travel somewhere unfamiliar to them, to obtain an abortion within a 12-week timeframe.

The lifecycle of a social movement

It has been theorised that the lifecycle of a social movement can be divided into four main phases. This concept is based on early research by Blumer (1951), who suggested that most social movements share a typical temporal structure. Since Blumer's original work, contemporary research (e.g. Tilly, 2004; Tarrow, 2011; Christiansen, 2009) named these temporal stages: "Emergence, Coalescence, Bureaucratization, and Decline" (Christiansen, 2009, p 16).

The first stage, 'emergence', occurs early in a social movement. A social or political problem brings about feelings of injustice among a given population. This stage is not strategic, and there is typically no common discourse framing it as a movement. People affected by the issue might be unaware that others

experience the same issue. Alternatively, it may be an overt problem within a specific community, meaning those affected are aware of others experiencing the problem, but they feel disempowered by dominant discourses that frame the phenomenon as a social norm. The second stage, 'coalescence', occurs when some of the affected population start to network and collectively establish shared discourses to communicate their perceived injustices. During this phase, movements may operate underground or be considered a 'grassroots' group. The members of the movement negotiate the movement's goals. They also attempt to raise awareness of the issue through small-scale acts of collective activism. At this stage, movements tend to be small and might face opposition from any outgroups who are exposed to the movement discourse.

The third stage 'bureaucratisation' occurs when the movement takes on a clear structure. According to Christiansen (2009), movements will have achieved some degree of success by this stage. Many movements decline before they make it to bureaucratisation. However, for movements that are advancing towards success, this stage marks a turning point whereby formal organisations within the movement must share a streamlined strategy. Fragmentation, at this point, can send the movement into decline. Presentations of movement discourse in the mainstream must be clear and consistent. Continued progress typically involves hiring paid staff who specialise in the topic of the movement and who can establish communication with more powerful institutions. Typically, ordinary people cannot sustain the level of involvement that is required for large scale social change. So while they are still of vital importance, a movement at this stage cannot solely rely on unpaid activists. The fourth and final stage 'decline' signals the end of a movement. Movements can decline because they achieved their goal, leaving no more requirement for a movement. However, movements can also fail. They may deteriorate in authoritarian or non-receptive environments where their activism is hindered by way of law or violence. Movements can also fail due to encapsulation, whereby activists start to overly identify with the movement. Over-identification of its members can lead to the movement becoming insular and unapproachable for new supporters (for a detailed outline of movement failure see Christiansen, 2009).

According to Taylor (1989), another structural trait of social movements is that they can gain a degree of success for a time, but then due to contextual changes in society, the social environment can become unreceptive. Taylor (1989) suggested that rather than movements failing at this stage, they can take the form of an abeyance structure. An 'abeyance' structure refers to a temporal point in a movement when wider society is highly unlikely or unable to respond favourably to the movement's goals. From the mainstream perspective, it can appear that the movement has declined or disappeared. Nevertheless, this is not the case. Abeyant movements are characterised by smaller factions of highly dedicated principal members of the original movement, who continue the discourse of the movement at an in-group level. This continuity and maintenance of structure can hold the movement's place in society. This structure of abeyance means the ideals and shared rhetoric of the movement remain intact; leaving them prepared for the social environment to become

receptive again. When the social or political environment re-opens, movement activity then refocuses its attention back to out-group and mainstream targeted activism.

The present study proposes that the lifecycle theory can be used as a framework to understand how the Irish feminist and pro-choice movements in the 1980s onwards, navigated the discursive norms of the pre-Repeal era, and how they, along with newer Repeal activists, used pre-existing movement discourses within the newly 'discursively receptive' Repeal era to accomplish the goals of the movement.

Tracing the lifecycle of the Repeal movement in Ireland

The emergence phase

The 1861 Offences Against the Person Act stated that any woman who "procures a miscarriage" or any persons who help a woman "procure a miscarriage" will be punished with a lifetime of imprisonment. The 1861 act formed the basis for women's lack of reproductive autonomy in Irish law for 157 years.

After Ireland gained independence, there was a clear enduring trend towards conservativism in Irish social policy, particularly where it pertained to 'moral' issues. The trend of conservativism is said to be a reflection of the influence of the Catholic Church on the State (Elkink, Farrell, Reidy, & Suiter, 2017). Fischer (2016) noted that the application of Catholic ideals, such as sexual purity, immediately problematised women's bodies. For example, Crowley and Kitchin (2008) noted 24 reports and government acts from between 1922-1937 that sought to reduce women's autonomy and regulate discourses surrounding sexual conduct in Ireland. The authors articulated that this was an attempt by the Irish state to produce "decent girls" who would represent the Catholic ideal of Ireland – at a critical time when Ireland was negotiating the type of country it wanted to be on the world stage.

Irish historical discourse rhetorically framed women as being people whose elemental function in society was to act primarily as wives and mothers. This notion was juxtaposed against the contrasting discursive category of so-called 'fallen women' who were severely marginalised and frequently institutionalised in brutally oppressive organisations, run by the catholic church and endorsed by the state (Luddy, 1997; Luddy, 2011). Notably, several feminist organisations started to become active in Ireland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Valiulis, 1995). The establishment of these groups was the beginning of trackable feminist organising in Ireland. However, in a period when women's movements were fighting for fundamental rights such as being allowed to participate in democracy equally – abortion rights likely appeared unattainable. Nevertheless, the unjust treatment of women in normative discourse at the time, paired with a clear drive towards feminist activism by small numbers of

people, indicates an emergent movement that decades later would evolve into the pro-choice movement.

The coalescence phase

The second wave of Irish feminism in the 1970s led to the establishment of organisations that advocated for the reproductive rights of women, such as the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (Farren, 2006) and the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA, 2008). Activism by these groups was instrumental in the legalisation of the sale of contraception to individuals with a medical prescription, which came into force in 1980 (Murphy, 2009). It was at this time that people in Ireland who felt affected by a lack of bodily autonomy started to form official movements that were visible in the public sphere – the coalescence phase.

Seven years earlier in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court made a landmark ruling in the case of Roe v. Wade where it was held that a woman's right to privacy, as outlined in the American Constitution, extends to the right to make her own medical decisions and this includes the right to procure a safe, legal abortion (Bacik, 2013). This ruling reflected a distinct shift in dominant discourses regarding women's bodily autonomy in broader western culture and subsequently created a wave of resistance among conservative groups in Ireland. Conservative groups lobbied for ten years to have the 1861 act reinforced. These groups recommended that policymakers should amend the Irish Constitution to ensure that abortion would not become legal in Ireland without a referendum. Despite the attempts from the opposing 'Anti-Amendment Campaign' which was led by grassroots reproductive rights activists, the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Article 40.3.3) was voted into law in 1983 by 66.9% of voters in Ireland. It declared that:

> The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right. - (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937, Article 40.3.3)

The abeyance phase

According to Christiansen (2009) and Taylor (1989), social movements do not necessarily move from one stage to the next in a predictable fashion. It may be the case that a movement will lay in an abeyant state for a while before re-emerging at an appropriate time. The Irish abortion rights movement took the form of an abeyance structure following the unsuccessful 'Anti-Amendment Campaign' that preceded the 1983 referendum. Some activists reported that they felt disillusioned with abortion activism after the referendum. They believed that the existing social norms in Ireland at the time meant the country was not a receptive environment for the introduction of pro-choice discourse.

For example, referring to the outcome of the 1983 referendum, one long-term activist claimed:

> I was very, very upset at the outcome of that referendum, even though it wasn't a surprise. A couple of years later, we lost a divorce referendum ... I thought, "I can't stand this, we've had two terrible losses; it is a terrible decade, the '80s, there's dreadful economic recession, there's huge repression ... I know, for myself, I really had to keep on going although it was terribly difficult. And everybody I know who was involved at that time. I think we all felt terribly demoralized. - (Smyth, 2002)

Despite their trepidation, a small number of grassroots pro-choice activist groups continued to work towards advancing abortion rights in Ireland in the years after 1983, along with the Irish Family Planning Association, which set up the "Safe and Legal in Ireland" abortion campaign in 2005 (IFPA, 2005). These activists acted as placeholders for the movement in a period when pro-choice rhetoric was not receiving public support. For example, one of the founders of 'Doctors for choice' talked about their involvement with the 'women on the waves' project in 2001, in which a ship was sailed to international waters to let doctors provide abortion care without facing legal repercussions. The doctor claimed that:

> We discussed the possibilities of, "Are women going to actually go down to this ship in broad daylight and in front of television cameras and look for an abortion? Is that going to happen? .... And we really felt in Ireland that it wasn't ... We couldn't have been more wrong because hundreds of women phoned looking for an abortion on the ship ... they were so desperate. It was heart-breaking. – (Bressan, 2002)

The Eighth Amendment was periodically called into question on multiple occasions in the decades after its enactment, but it seemed that the cultural climate was still generally unreceptive. Nevertheless, an ongoing series of prominent cases (as outlined in Taylor, 2015) slowly increased interest in abortion rights among the Irish public.

The bureaucratisation phase

Twenty years after the enactment of the Eighth Amendment, policymakers signed the *Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act (2013)* into Irish law. This event signalled the most significant change in Irish abortion law for over a century. The 2013 Act stated that women could access lawful abortion in Ireland in cases where the woman's life is deemed by medical professionals to be at risk.

This came one year after extensive interest in abortion rights broke into the mainstream consciousness following the high-profile death of Savita Halappanavar, who died of septic shock whilst under the care of the Irish Health Service. It was later acknowledged by the clinical director of the national maternity hospital, that it was "highly likely" that Savita Halappanavar would have survived, had her pregnancy been terminated (McCarthy, 2016). Soon after this, new pro-choice lobby groups formed to repeal *Article 40.3.3*. Activists established the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC) in 2012 as part of the campaign to repeal *Article 40.3.3* (ARC, Accessed 2017). ARC hosted highly attended protest marches annually, which became a central feature of the campaign until 2018 (D'Arcy and Pope, 2012; McGreevy and D'Arcy, 2017). While advocates applauded the *Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act (2013)* to some extent, it still stood that many feminists, medical professionals and other pro-choice advocates considered the new law to be an oversimplification of a much larger problem. Therefore, pro-choice activism continued.

Another high-profile case emerged in 2014, two years after the tragic death of Savita Halappanavar. The 'Ms. Y case' (Holland, 2014) involved a young woman who was seeking asylum in Ireland. During this time, she found out she was eight weeks pregnant as a result of being raped. The woman was informed that her status as an asylum seeker would complicate her ability to travel to another country to obtain an abortion. The woman was subjected to a lengthy process of waiting for the paperwork for several months that would allow her to travel. During this time, mental health professionals who were allocated to support the woman made attempts to persuade her to consider adoption; a suggestion the woman refused as she expressed that experiencing the pregnancy was emotionally traumatising. Eventually, the woman declared that she was suicidal – a condition that according to the *Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act (2013)* would mean abortion would be lawful in limited cases. Despite this, it was determined that the woman would be forced to carry the pregnancy to term. Eventually, 'Ms. Y' went on a hunger strike which led to her receiving a caesarean section 25 weeks into the pregnancy. The 'Ms. Y' case sparked protests in Dublin, Cork and Galway; and further reinforced public interest in Irish abortion law (McGuire, 2014).

Adding weight to these events, some years later it emerged the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that Irish abortion laws were in direct violation of two women's human rights in the cases of Mellet v Ireland (2016) and Whelan v Ireland, (2017). By 2017, seven different UN committees called for legal reform in Irish abortion law (de Londras, 2017). This UN criticism, along with the growing number of high profile cases, put pressure on the Irish government to fully engage with the topic of the Eighth Amendment. By November 2016 a Citizens' Assembly was established by the Irish government to evaluate the role of Article 40.3.3 in Irish law (Taylor, Spillane and Arulkumaran, 2020).

Taking all of this into account, it appears that from 2012 onwards there was a distinct reopening of the receptive environment. The abeyant abortion rights

movement had pivoted into the crucial 'bureaucratisation' phase. This was illustrated in numerous ways. The Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment was formed in 2013, initially with 12 organisations but eventually growing to over 100. By 2015 the annual March for Choice in Dublin had doubled in size from the previous year, with an estimated attendance of 10,000 people. A political lobbying campaign was rolled out in advance of the upcoming general election and an advertising agency was engaged to research and help develop the Repeal strategy, significant fundraising was achieved and paid staff were employed. Ultimately, a "Together for Yes" umbrella group of 70 organisations was formed to campaign in favour of the referendum (Griffin et al, 2019).

The Repeal campaign was also highly visual. For instance, black sweaters with the word 'Repeal' written in a bold white typeface became synonymous with the campaign and a mural painted by a political street artist known as 'Maser' became the unofficial iconography of the campaign. Photographs of people posing with the mural or wearing black Repeal clothing proliferated social media as a visual way to discursively align oneself with the campaign. Visual displays, clothing and art contributed greatly to mainstreaming pro-choice rhetoric and the purchase of 'Repeal' jumpers also contributed financial funding for the campaign. Therefore, art and clothing were utilised to build on discursive and financial power. The internet played a significant role in the visibility of the campaign. online discussions were on the increase. The popular #RepealThe8th Twitter hashtag is a useful marker for measuring the timing of movement activity. The hashtag first appeared on an individual's Twitter account on 25th November 2012, 11 days after the news of Savita Halappanavar's death broke publicly. By the time the Irish government held the referendum on 25th May 2018, the ARC social media accounts had amassed 23,149 followers on Twitter; 27,695 on Facebook and 9,423 on Instagram. In addition to this, several of the original activists who previously held the movement in place during the abeyant phase, and who founded the ARC, became household names through their involvement in the campaign (Duffy, 2019).

The decline phase

Following the explosion of new mobilisation in the pro-choice movement, the Irish government finally announced that they would hold a referendum on the 25th of May 2018. The referendum asked the Irish public whether they want to repeal or retain the *Eighth Amendment to the Constitution* (Article 40.3.3). The Irish public voted 66.4% in favour of repealing *Article 40.3.3*, making abortion legal in the Republic of Ireland for up to 12 gestational weeks; or in rare and exceptional circumstances beyond 12 weeks where there is a severe risk to the life of the woman or foetus. As noted previously, social movements can decline due to failure or due to success. The Repeal movement can be said to have declined due to successfully achieving its primary goals. However, Christiansen (2009) notes that movements do not necessarily entirely dissolve upon achieving their goals. Some movements re-orient to a new set of goals. The

emerging research findings since late 2018 (Carnegie and Roth, 2019; Cullen and Korolczuk, 2019; de Londras, 2019; Rivetti, 2019; Kasstan, 2018) suggest that the Repeal movement might be pivoting to focus on refining the legislation surrounding abortion care in Ireland; especially where it pertains to increasing intersectionality and inclusivity.

Methodology

The current study sought to understand the social underpinnings of the successful Repeal campaign. The primary objective was to provide a holistic view of the discursive environment associated with the campaign in the years between 1983 and 2018. The study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How can modern pro-choice discourse explain the social and historical background of pro-choice support in Ireland?
2. What discursive strategies do participants employ to justify their pro-choice subject positions?

Qualitative data was collected from twenty-three participants who provided detailed personal accounts of their engagement as pro-choice activists in the Repeal campaign. All data was collected using internet-mediated qualitative survey methodology. Unlike the quantitative survey, which aims to investigate populations as units; the qualitative survey aims to gather data that illuminate the experiences of individuals who exist within a population that is under investigation (Jansen, 2010).

Data was collected throughout August 2017, which was ten months prior to the 2018 referendum. Prospective participants were initially contacted through publicly available email addresses for pro-choice organisations that were sourced from the websites of official movement organisations, regional feminist groups, popular Repeal affiliated social media accounts and Repeal affiliated blogs. Overall 50 prospective participants were invited to participate in the study. The fifty prospective participants were also encouraged to share the survey with other activists in their network. According to Coleman (1958; as cited in Bryman, 2015), snowball sampling is especially useful for studies in which networks of people are the main focus of enquiry. Diani (2013) described social movements as connected networks of people and organisations that are committed to a mutual cause. Therefore, it was reasoned that snowball sampling would be a useful addition to the initial convenience sampling technique since it permitted greater access to the Repeal campaign activist community in Ireland. Finally, twenty-three participants completed the full qualitative survey.

The Repeal campaign, like other pro-choice movements internationally, is primarily female-led (Griffin et al, 2019). Therefore, the majority of accessible activists tended to identify themselves as female. In addition to this, the research questions were not gender-specific. For these reasons, the gender imbalance in the current sample is not seen as being exceptionally problematic.

Table 3 - Participant Profiles

		N = (23)
Education		
	Junior Cert	2
	Leaving Cert	1
	Apprenticeship	1
	PLC Course	1
	Diploma	1
	Bachelor's Degree	13
	Master's Degree	1
	PhD	3
Sex		
	Male	2
	Female	21
Age Bracket		
	18-25	4
	26-36	13
	37-50	6
Location		
	Dublin	6
	Cork	1
	Galway	1
	Limerick	1
	Waterford	1
	Donegal	2
	Meath	1
	Kilkenny	1
	Kerry	2
	Tipperary	2
	Wicklow	1
	Rural Ireland (Not Otherwise Disclosed)	1
	Small Village (Not Otherwise Disclosed)	1
	Working Class Area (Not Otherwise Disclosed)	1

	Northern European City	1

Two quantitative demographic questions preceded the survey. Following this, the main body of the survey was comprised of one qualitative demographic question and a further ten qualitative activism related questions. Finally, a general comment box was included at the end of the survey, whereby participants were encouraged to offer further insights into their pro-choice activism. Several participants used this box to elaborate on topics they mentioned earlier in the survey. The survey was intentionally designed to ask only the ten most important questions for addressing the overall research question. DeVaus (2013) emphasised the importance of keeping online surveys succinct since drawn-out surveys encourage non-participation. Also, as participants become more fatigued, they are less likely to provide high-quality responses. Therefore, it is considered good practice to keep internet-mediated surveys to between 10 and 15 questions overall (DeVaus, 2013). Collectively, the 23 participants spent 9 hours and 20 minutes answering the open-ended questions. Specifically, participants spent an average of 24 minutes completing the survey.

The final dataset was initially subjected to thematic analysis and then refined further through discourse analysis. Findings were understood using the critical discursive analysis (CDA) theoretical approach (Van Dijk, 2001).

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. - (Van Dijk, 2001, p.352)

The dataset was initially coded in an Excel spreadsheet using thematic analysis to organise any statements that were related to the research questions. These sub-codes were reorganised into broader umbrella themes in separate sheets of the same excel workbook. The broad themes were then analysed again, using discourse analysis, to identify the discursive strategies participants used in their talk about each of the thematic categories. In line with CDA, the analysis will be presented in light of social and historical power structures that are negotiated through discourse.

Ethics

This study was approved by the School of Social Work and Social Policy Research Ethics Committee in Trinity College, Dublin. Written informed consent was gained from all participants through an online interactive consent form which explained the terms and then required prospective participants to either click "I agree" or "I disagree". Only by providing informed consent could participants access the survey. Participants were encouraged to email one of the

researchers with any questions they might have before deciding if they would like to take part.

Participants could withdraw before, during or within one week of participating. Every individual who participated was informed that to withdraw after taking part they would need to email the primary researcher using the same email address they used to access the survey.

The survey did not ask participants their name or contact details, but their responses were associated with specific email addresses. Therefore, contacting the researcher using this email address would make the specific response identifiable to the researcher. The *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research* (BPS, 2013) note that partial responses in online research may indicate that the individual withdrew during participation by leaving the website. To account for this, only fully completed responses were accepted by the system. In addition, participants were informed that any data they provided would be anonymised and safely stored in line with the guidelines set by the *Data Protection Act 1988,* as amended in 2003.

Another ethical consideration was based on the potential disclosure of illegal activity. Notably, the study involved people who were campaigning for a medical procedure that, in most cases, was illegal in Ireland. However, at the time of data collection, neither citizens nor professionals were obliged to report cases where an illegal abortion is disclosed. The Clinical guidelines for health professionals on implementing the *Protection of Life during Pregnancy Act 2013* (Department of Health, 2014) did not make any particular recommendation on how health professionals should respond to a woman presenting for treatment after illegally inducing an abortion. Also, both the IFPA and Amnesty International called for it to be made explicit that professionals were not obliged to report to the police, as this would be breaching patient confidentiality (Irish Times, 2016). Therefore, it was concluded that the researchers would not have a legal or ethical responsibility to report if a participant disclosed a previous or planned abortion, whether in Ireland or abroad.

Findings

During August of 2017, qualitative textual data was collected from twenty-three participants – all of whom identified themselves as activists for the 'Repeal the 8th' campaign. Ten months later a 66.4% majority chose to repeal *Article 40.3.3* from the Irish constitution. This secured the right to abortion in Ireland within the first 12 gestational weeks. The study captured a moment in time, more than three decades after the introduction of *Article 40.3.3* and just ten months before the 2018 referendum which led to its repeal.

Participants varied in age between 18-50. Some activists had experience spanning over multiple decades for the pro-choice, sexual education and contraceptive rights movements. However, the most common age bracket for participants was in the 26-36 range. Therefore, we can infer that most

participants were not active in the pro-choice campaign that preceded the 1983 referendum due to their age. Perhaps they can be thought of as a second wave of pro-choice activists in Ireland. Nonetheless, the majority of activists in the study did have experience participating in multiple types of activism for a broad range of causes. Most commonly, the LGBTQ marriage equality campaign, in which over half of the current participants were active.

The most commonly occurring word in the dataset was 'people' which was used 98 times. This highlights the extraordinarily social nature of the Repeal movement. In order for the movement to work, activists had to understand how to be persuasive, how to communicate effectively and how to draw upon more acceptable discourses to justify the advent of new ones. In the following pages, we will outline the three most common discursive themes that emerged from the data. These were: 'Feminism', 'Traditionalism Vs. Modernity', and approaches to 'Discursive mainstreaming'.

Theme 1: Feminism

It was common for participants to frame pro-choice discourse within the context of broader feminist discourse. Clodagh talked about how "this time" women will not just go away. Here Clodagh alluded to a belief that something in Ireland has changed for women and that this time it will be different. She draws on discourses of power and strength in light of the previous referendum, or perhaps in light of women's treatment historically.

> Making ourselves seen and heard is vital to changing minds and letting those in power know that this time around women in Ireland are not going away. – Clodagh

Holly drew on the same narrative of female empowerment and how "women will not just go away". She emphasised that women are "half of the population" so deserve to be seen and heard. From a CDA perspective, Holly is discursively framing women as a powerful group – she wants to let the reader know that women are not marginal and cannot easily be controlled. She draws on discourses of strength and collective group confidence. She also offers a warning with "we will not go away until it is amended".

> We have to be seen and heard regularly and in large numbers because the government needs to know we will not go away until it is amended. – Holly

Nevertheless, it was more common for activists to draw on discourses of female oppression. For example, Jennifer talked about her frustration "that men make decisions about women's bodies" and Sarah talked about how she decided to become a Repeal campaigner because she thinks women in Ireland are treated

"like second class citizens". She draws strongly on discourses of disempowerment and a need to rise up and fight for women. Sarah immediately follows this statement with the claim that she has two nieces. Here Sarah is alluding to the idea that what women have in the present is not what women should have in the future. She draws on discourses of creating a better future for people in Ireland.

> It is such an important topic for women in the country. we are treated like second class citizens. I have two nieces and I want them to have bodily autonomy. – Sarah

Other participants drew strongly on feminist language. For example, Maura constructed a detailed narrative explaining her involvement with pro-choice activism over several decades. She talked about how she did not 'choose' to become involved with the Repeal campaign. Instead, she became a pro-choice activist because bodily autonomy is part of a larger feminist belief system that is important for how she understands the world and fundamental to her identity. Throughout her responses, much of her language was firmly rooted in academic feminist discourse. With her use of the term "integral to her social and economic liberation" Maura is drawing directly from feminist scholarship and activist rhetoric (e.g. Norlock, 2019).

> It wasn't so much a specific choice to get involved it was more that it was very important and I see a woman's right to control her fertility as being integral to her social and economic liberation. – Maura

Other participants claimed that being exposed to feminist discourse led them to change their opinions about abortion. For example, Fiona talked about how she was "quietly pro-life" when she started college. Yet, upon meeting new feminist friends, she became a dedicated Repeal activist. Noticeably, Fiona used the word "quietly" to describe her previous subject position. Fiona's discreteness about her former anti-choice subject position indicates that perhaps she believed that her college peers would not see her position as being socially acceptable. This marks a clear change from the social culture in 1983 when the Eighth Amendment was introduced. Throughout Fiona's talk, it is clear that not only are the young people in Fiona's college peer group openly feminist but they are also highly politically engaged.

Theme 2: 'Traditional Ireland' versus 'Modern Ireland'

The second discursive theme related to the dichotomous discourses of 'Modern Ireland' versus 'Traditional Ireland'. Notably, these discursive categories did not refer to the temporal structure of society. Instead, participants talked about

both categories as existing simultaneously. They discursively framed pro-choice individuals as living in a 'Modern Ireland', while they framed anti-choice individuals as living in an 'old' Ireland. The 'Traditional Ireland' category constructs a hypothetical model of a person who is highly conservative and religious. The hypothetical person who lives in Traditional Ireland makes sense of the world by drawing on discourses that were normative in the past.

Notably, the discursive category of 'Modern Ireland' is strongly embedded in broader western culture, while 'Traditional Ireland' is more locally focused. For example, Ciara casually mentioned that one of her parents is American, so she has "always been pro-choice". Here Ciara is drawing on the idea that having reduced Irish influence on her upbringing ensured that she would not be anti-choice. She discursively frames Irish norms as the problem. Furthermore, Ciara used the word "always" - as in "I have always been pro-choice". Here Ciara is constructing a narrative that 'even in the past' she was pro-choice, perhaps before it became a more common subject position in Ireland.

Indeed, the global gaze on Irish culture was a consideration for many of the activists. For example, Jennifer explained her mobilisation in the Repeal campaign as being related to cultural embarrassment. She feared that in the "global setting" people from other cultures might see Irish people as fitting into a discursive category that conflicts with her personal identity as a modern Irish person who is living in a 'Modern Ireland'. There is a subtext that this is embarrassing or undeserved. She is attempting to build new discourses to reject this narrative. In the following excerpts, Jennifer and Caoimhe show that they are not only interested in women's rights - they are also interested in Ireland's position in the world.

> Total embarrassment in the global setting that we are seen as the backward religious Irish. – Jennifer

> There is this idea that the majority of Irish people are anti-choice, which is arguably not correct at all so [marching] is important for visibility. – Caoimhe

Anti-choice campaigners tended to be discursively framed as being strictly Catholic people, who live in a construction of Ireland that is rooted in the past. For example, Fiona talked about being at a Repeal demonstration where anti-choice campaigners turned up and defiantly "read to the activists from a bible". Caoimhe talked about herself and other female activists being subjected to physical assault and "gendered insults" whilst at demonstrations. Later she draws on the discourse of 'Traditional Ireland' again with her claim that "these things still happen". Here she implies that perhaps it may not have been as unusual for somebody to be extremely religious before - but it is now.

> I've mostly had negative experiences from religious people. I have been literally
> exorcised at protests, have had holy water thrown at me several times. People
> would think you'd be making that up, but it's true these things still happen –
> Caoimhe

Another common theme in the activist discourse related to mistrust of the
Catholic church. Perhaps in light of the multitude of controversies that have
emerged in Ireland and abroad during the last decade. For instance, Aoife talked
about the "hypocrisy" of the Irish establishment and the Catholic church.
Several participants drew parallels between their choice to become Repeal
activists and their feelings of cultural disappointment in the Catholic church in
Ireland.

> I became pro-choice after my school distributed badges with tiny feet on them,
> one week after a classmate was expelled for becoming pregnant. This was at the
> same time that various scandals concerning bishops were being exposed and the
> hypocrisy of it all became too much to ignore. – Aoife

Another common use of the 'Traditional Ireland' narrative related to different
regions throughout Ireland. In particular rural areas were constructed as being
more traditional, religious and unlikely to be receptive to pro-choice rhetoric.
Laura talked about how she runs her rural regional group with a tone of
discretion. Roisin talked about people being "openly Repeal". This draws on
implicit power relations within her close-knit community. There is a subtext
that some people in the town are indeed pro-choice, but this would not be
acceptable within the discursive frame that constitutes the community. Aoife
draws on the same discourse but suggests that it may be possible to change
these power dynamics.

> We're aware that not everyone wants to or can be publicly vocal about being pro-
> choice (especially in rural Ireland). – Laura

> My town is very religious and there are only a few openly Repeal people – I chose
> to go this route as we know that [name of area] is historically very anti-choice but
> engagement by local people with local people does have influence in ways that
> 'outsiders' can never have. – Aoife

Theme 3: Mainstreaming approaches

Social movements use discursive strategies to negotiate power relations (Van
Dijk, 2001; Fairclough, 2013). Activists in the present study showed different
ways of doing this. One common approach used by participants was sharing the
stories of real people. This included activists own stories. Also, re-telling the

stories of people who were impacted by high profile cases. In particular, a large number of participants were disturbed by the death of Savita Halappanavar and made a point of sharing her tragic story as part of their activism. In reference to the death of Savita Halappanavar, followed by the 'Ms. Y' case, Aisling talked about feeling that she "had enough". Conor talked about how high profile cases showed him that "current legislation is unacceptable in modern Ireland". While drawing on discourses of 'Modern Ireland', Conor also draws on the hypothetical model of the listener as being somebody rational and empathic, and who will feel as shocked as he feels. At an implicit level, this is a discursive reasoning strategy whereby Conor highlights the inappropriateness of the Eighth Amendment with the assumption that the ethical listener will agree.

> When Savita Halappanavar died I found my voice. When the child was sectioned under the mental health act for asking for an abortion I'd had enough and began to physically get involved. – Aisling

> [The] death of Savita Halapanavar was the first public demonstration I attended, like many, because this was an event that made it perfectly clear that the current legislation is unacceptable in modern Ireland. – Conor

Activists who shared their personal stories tended to draw on discourses of anger, injustice and shame. As part of her activism, Roisin re-tells the story of someone close to her who almost lost their life due to complications from a crisis pregnancy. Holly describes multiple shocking experiences her friends and family suffered due to *Article 40.3.3*. Another participant, Caoimhe, decided to tell her personal story in the run-up to the 2018 referendum. She shares her story publicly because she wants to decrease feelings of shame for other women.

> I travelled to the UK to access abortion services when I was 18. I didn't have any support from or contact with my family and my relationship had ended. I wanted to get a degree and move past my upbringing as an unwanted child of a single mother living in poverty. When I travelled I felt so ashamed, like a criminal abandoned by my country for making a choice that was about me and my body, my future, my life. I took that anger and hurt and decided to use it to work towards a country that didn't abandon its people like I was. I just didn't want anyone to have to feel the helplessness and shame that I did. – Caoimhe

Another strategy within Repeal discourse was to frame activists as educators. Indeed, the majority of participants drew on discourses of education. They talked about their purpose as activists being to 'inform' undecided voters. Participants rhetoric tended to focus on 'spreading the word' and 'normalising' movement ideals to persuade undecided voters. Holly took this further by talking about the importance of educating people who are already Repeal supporters, in addition to educating undecided voters. Notably, activists did not

frame their educational efforts as being useful for bringing anti-choice campaigners in line with the pro-choice position. Anti-choice campaigners were constructed as unreasonable, inflexible and perhaps even lost causes.

> It can be as simple as talking to people in your family or social circle to help normalise something that seems strange to people who have no experience of the issue and no strong opinion either way. – Sophie

> Education. Short and straight to the point facts. If you want to get people on side and to stay on side, you need to use actual facts and not scare mongering … Finally, you have to educate your supporters so that they may hold real life, face to face debates. – Holly

Several activists drew on detailed strategic approaches regarding the type of language that movement members should use in public discussions. For example, Aoife talked about how she handles negative comments from anti-choice family members, by "exposing" them as "unreasonable". This type of essentialist thinking was common among participants. Participants' discourse constructed people with opposing subject positions as being inherently unreasonable. Participants did not frame this 'unreasonable' status as being fluid or changeable. Instead, they framed it as a fixed quality that is integral to that particular individual. For example, Aoife claimed that she does not get angry or react to anti-choice campaigners because she wants to represent pro-choice activists as being calm and rational. Aoife's choice of language frames people with anti-choice subject positions as fanatical or irrational - a discursive frame that wider society would associate with a low level of power.

> I handle [anti-choice family] by quietly bringing as many other family members as possible over to the 'vocal pro-choice' position so that their anti-choice position is exposed as unreasonable. – Aoife

> I try not to react. As campaigners, we strive to be calm and factual in all dealings with the public. – Aoife

Another emergent theme was related to the concept of mainstreaming through visibility. As mentioned previously, more than half of the studies participants were active in the LGBTQ+ marriage equality campaign. Some participants cited this as their primary reason for getting involved with the Repeal campaign. Sophie talked about how the visibility of the marriage equality campaign inspired her to be more politically engaged in the Repeal campaign. Aoife talked about how the marriage equality campaign helped her to network with Repeal activists.

"I was inspired by the success of the same sex marriage referendum. Having campaigned for that and having seen the referendum passed, I felt like young people in this country can do great things if we are more active in the political process".

- Sophie

"Once I returned to [Name of Hometown], my involvement ended as the local community was very hostile to the pro-choice movement. Years later, I cared much less about the opinion of others and I got involved with the Marriage Equality campaign. That lead me to other pro-choice supporters in my area and we have been campaigning for Repeal ever since".

- Aoife

With reference to creating a visible Repeal movement, several participants emphasised that it was vital for large numbers of people to attend public demonstrations and for this to be shown in mainstream media. Again this draws on the concept of discursive power – if the movement appears to have a large following on television, it will be considered more normative within Irish culture as a whole. Some participants repeatedly emphasised the term "people power" and another went as far as to refer to the movement as an "advertising campaign".

Kind of like any advertising campaign, it's repeating the same message in different mediums, posters, flyers, magazines, newspapers, radio. All forms. – Michelle

A movement has to swell and you need every drop of water in an ocean for its tide to rise. Not everyone has to speak or have a sign but they have to turn up. – Jennifer

Activists also emphasised the discursive power of public displays of support through art and clothing as a means of achieving normative status for movement ideals.

Our regional group was quite small, it felt like things would never change. But after the repeal jumpers, the maser mural and some of the horrific cases that have come to light, the movement has been increasing rapidly. Now we have loads of activists in our regional group. – Caoimhe

> I think clear leadership is important. Also having different levels of involvement for people, depending on what time they have to give i.e. the time to volunteer going door to door, versus the time to put on a Repeal jumper. – Sarah

Activists were successful in recruiting new supporters not only by sharing serious facts and personal stories of injustice but also by conveying an inclusive and friendly tone online. This may have contributed to building a sense of community and mutual support within the Repeal community. Approachability was particularly valuable for recruiting new supporters who had no previous experience participating in activist communities. Jennifer talked about how social media is "the recruiter" and 'the organiser". Participants regularly referred to how the internet influenced a pivot from passive to active support for many new activists.

> The internet has been so important. The Repeal movement has been very active online and on social media, as well as pages like [name of pro-choice website that uses irreverent humour]. – Sophie

Several participants talked about gaining power for the movement by accessing influential platforms. For example, Clodagh suggested that the reason the 1983 campaign was unsuccessful, was because dominant power structures such as mainstream media, did not allow the pro-choice movement's rhetoric to be portrayed accurately. She later goes on to talk about the idea of "false balance". Clodagh is referring to the national broadcaster in Ireland, RTE who attempt to give equal platforms to both sides of debates. Here Clodagh is drawing on discourses of power in the form of oppression. The underlying action in Clodagh's language illustrates to the reader that the pro-choice movement suffered an injustice by being silenced or misrepresented in the past.

> I think the crucial difference between the movement to legalise abortion in Ireland today versus in the past, is that because of things like social media, we are finally hearing from those who have been impacted by the abortion ban in a myriad of horrific ways. We didn't hear much from these people before through traditional media. – Clodagh

> Social media and new media amplify voices that would never be heard on traditional Irish media without false balance. – Clodagh

Overall, for most of the participants, it may be reasoned that their use of rhetoric and their discursive strategies for mainstreaming movement ideals, reflected a shift in Irish society for women since 1983. They also tended to make statements that reflected an implicit awareness of the theoretical relationship

between discourse and power which was perhaps crucial to how they orchestrated a successful social movement.

> The more people who speak up gives the rest of us courage to speak up and stand up and make our positions known. Now we all know that when we do so, we will be supported in a very real and visible way by thousands of others in Ireland and abroad. This is what has turned the tide. This is why this time, we will achieve our goals to make abortion free, safe and legal in Ireland. - Clodagh

Discussion

The present study set out to explore the discursive strategies employed by a sample of pro-choice activists in their talk about their involvement with the 'Repeal the 8th' campaign in Ireland. Findings were interpreted using the CDA theoretical approach (Van Dijk, 2001). Following this, the lifecycle theory of social movements was used as a framework to retrace the steps of the movement. The main findings showed that movement discourse tended towards themes of feminism, modernity versus traditionalism and approaches to discursive mainstreaming. Since the repeal of Article 40.3.3 in Ireland, journalist Alison O'Connor, along with the three women co-directors of the 'Together for Yes' Campaign – gave an important insider account, in which they told the story of the Repeal campaign from the viewpoint of the campaign leaders (Griffin et al, 2019). The present study adds to the official account of the 'Together for Yes' Campaign, and hence the 'Repeal' campaign, by highlighting the perspectives of the activists on the ground. Further, a CDA perspective, asserts the importance of considering power relations and social context in any social movement and this study, for the first time, situates the Irish pro-choice movement within wider theory on the life cycles of social movements (Blumer, 1951; Tilly, 2004; Tarrow, 2011; Christiansen, 2009).

By situating the Irish pro-choice movement within wider relevant social theory, our study contributes a theoretically informed understanding of the movement's success and develops the understanding of how and why its strategies were effective. In common with other social movements, our examination of the Irish pro-choice movement demonstrates that the dramatic social change that was achieved in 2018, as Christiansen (2009, p.1) puts it, "[did] not just happen". Rather, the social movement's success required many resources, employed through distinct stages of growth (Emergence, Coalescence, Bureaucratization, and Decline) that can be seen to have occurred in the Repeal case.

This study draws attention to deep roots that supported the success of the Repeal movement, which can be seen in an 'emergence' phase of the movement's lifecycle when women's organisations formed in Ireland during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Valiulis, 1995). Our analysis draws attention to how the Movement transitioned into the 'coalescence' phase when it established itself as a pro-choice movement during the run-up to the 1983 referendum as the 'Anti-Amendment Campaign'. Grassroots feminist organisations were

gaining traction in Ireland and other countries during the preceding decade. Here, implicitly agreed upon movement rhetoric was established, and people started to network in a more significant way. Crucially, the movement also introduced the pro-choice subject position into the mainstream – although the discursive environment was not yet receptive to it. Perhaps this was due to the existing power structures of the era (e.g. Elkink et al, 2017). We argue that the 1983 referendum loss pivoted the movement into an 'abeyance' phase (Taylor, 1989). The enduring dedication of a small number of activists and organisations who continued their activism despite the unreceptive environment held the movement in position until the social context became receptive. According to the lifecycle theory (Christiansen, 2009), this was critical for the later success of the Repeal movement. Many movements fail at this stage due to a lack of grassroots activism (Christiansen, 2009).

We proposed that the receptive environment re-opened in 2012, which ushered in the 'bureaucratisation' phase of the movement. The re-opening of the receptive environment would seem to have been supported by several co-occurring events in the local context, including the death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012 and the success of the 2015 Marriage Equality Referendum, and draws attention to the coalescences of external events and civil society responses. Research suggests that many social movements fail to bureaucratize and decline because the energy for continued mobilization is beyond what volunteers can sustain (Christiansen, 2009). On this basis, the Repeal movement's success is likely, in part, attributable to how it managed to formalise its response to the receptive environment through speedy bureaucratisation processes in the period from 2012-2018. Notable here, and evident in Griffin and colleagues (2019) account, is how that bureaucratisation process created and drew in newly formed activists and leveraged significant new resources, but it also built on the resources and expertise of long-standing individual activists and organisations, such as the Irish Family Planning Association and National Women's Council of Ireland. This bureaucratisation process can be seen to have culminated in the 'Together for Yes' campaign that successfully leveraged the power of a large and diverse coalition of civil society actors. Griffin and colleagues (2019, p.111) assessment that the successful coalition involved lessons in the "the art of compromise" and putting aside differences for a shared goal, is perhaps an important insight in the context of this successful bureaucratisation process.

The study adds further insight to the Repeal movement by examining the discursive strategies employed by a sample of pro-choice activists in their talk about their involvement with the 'Repeal the 8th' campaign ten months before the referendum. Other authors have highlighted how the Repeal campaign drew lessons from that of the successful 2015 Marriage Equality referendum (Griffin et al, 2019) and the current study lends support to the idea that the Marriage Equality referendum shaped activists' involvement in Repeal. This is evidenced in that more than half of the current study's participants were active in the LGBTQ+ marriage equality campaign and several claimed that the success of the marriage equality campaign is what inspired them to continue their activism

in the Repeal campaign. Participants' tendency towards discursively aligning these two movements originated during the initial wave of pro-choice activism in the 1980s (e.g. Cork LGBT Archive, 2019). From a CDA perspective, this strategy was mutually beneficial for both movements as it increased movement power through the ability to influence. In another example of this strategy, findings showed that participants commonly drew on discourses of feminism. Aligning pro-choice activism with broader feminism creates discursive power by letting the listener know that the Irish pro-choice movement is part of a bigger and more powerful movement. There is evidence of this approach in the early LGBT movement, which discursively aligned the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities.

The most recent manifestation of this approach is illustrated by the drive towards intersectionality evident from recent feminist and pro-choice research in Ireland (de Londras, 2019; Rivetti, 2019; Cullen and Korolczuk, 2019; Carnegie and Roth, 2019). Intersectionality discursively aligns a much larger group of people than historical feminism, which tended to be dominated by the discourses of white, middle class, educated, cisgender women (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013). Therefore, not only is intersectionality a fair and essential direction for pro-choice activism – it is also a means of increasing discursive power for feminist movements globally. Notably, current participants did not use a great deal of intersectional or inclusive language. This finding supports de Londras (2019) and Rivetti (2019) who claimed that mainstream Repeal discourse risked leaving some marginalised people behind. This finding also supports Cullen and Korolczuk (2019), who suggested that the focus on 'hard cases' may have been a rhetorical strategy to navigate the potentially conservative environment. This notion is particularly evident in the finding that participants tended to perceive two coexisting versions of Ireland – a 'Traditional Ireland', which participants framed as being conservative and religious – and a 'Modern Ireland', which participants framed as being liberal and globally focused.

While the formal Repeal canvassing campaign strategically avoided language that could be perceived as dogmatic and absolutistic, including words such as "choice" "right to choose" and "bodily autonomy (Griffin et al, 2019, p. 140), this study demonstrates how such language continued to dominate activists' discursive positioning as they talked about the reasons for their activist involvement ten months prior to the referendum result. Indeed, the findings suggest that some participants were drawn into activism, in part through these constructs, highlighting differing "audiences" in the strategic use of language.

Participants talked about the influence of governmental power structures. Findings showed that some participants were in part impelled towards activism through cultural embarrassment that on two separate occasions, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that Ireland violated fundamental human rights practices, and its constitution, when it refused abortions to two women (Mellet v Ireland, 2016; Whelan v Ireland, 2017). In the wake of multiple scandals in the Catholic church, when the country was re-negotiating

its cultural identity – the UN advising that Ireland was torturing women and violating its citizens' human rights, clearly did not align with new discourses of a modern Ireland. These events mobilised several activists to join the Repeal campaign. Furthermore, maintaining diplomacy between Ireland and the UN was likely to be a consideration for the Irish government, as it would conceivably be in their best interest as a nation. Therefore, the movement finally gaining rhetorical support from the Irish government is likely to have caused a significant shift in the opening of the receptive discursive environment in broader Irish culture.

At an international level, several other notable events occurred in 2012 that may have reinforced the newly receptive environment in Ireland. For instance, Twitter gained more users in one year than it gained in the entire five years since its conception (Fiegerman, 2012). The highly shared 'Everyday Sexism' website was established – a project that is said to have started 'fourth wave feminism' (Cochrane, 2013; Abrahams, 2017; Bowles Eagle, 2015). Furthermore in 2017, during the lead up to the 2018 referendum, the #MeToo movement gained considerable prominence online and offline. Notably, almost every participant cited the usefulness of the internet as a tool for activism in the Repeal campaign. Social media platforms gave activists a level of mainstreaming power that was unavailable in the past. Current findings suggested that activists had an implicit understanding of their newfound access to influencing power and used this to drive the movement towards success.

Conclusion

This study set out to explain how pro-choice activists created social and constitutional change in Ireland by mainstreaming a discursive category that was not previously culturally dominant. Using the CDA theoretical approach (Van Dijk, 2001), in conjunction with a lifecycle model of social movements (Christiansen, 2009), the study emphasised the importance of situating social movement strategy in the social and historical context. It demonstrated the merits of abeyance structures in social movements, and it offered insight into the unique perspectives of the activists who were essential for educating and mobilising enough people to win the referendum to repeal Article 40.3.3 in Ireland.

References

Abrahams, J., 2017. Everything you wanted to know about fourth wave feminism - but were afraid to ask [online] prospectmagazine.co.uk. Available at: https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/everything-wanted-know-fourth-wave-feminism [Accessed Oct 2019].

Amnesty International, 2017. UN Human Rights Committee Again Finds Ireland's Abortion Ban Violates Women's Human Rights [online] amnesty.ie.

Available at: https://www.amnesty.ie/un-human-rights-committee-finds-irelands-abortion-ban-violates-womens-human-rights/ [Accessed July 2018]

Attorney General v. X [1992] IESC 1 (Supreme Court of Ireland).

Bacik, I., 2013. Legislating for Article 40.3. 3. Irish Journal of Legal Studies, 3(3), pp.18-35.

Bardon, S., 2018. Fact check: Have more than 170,000 Irish women travelled abroad for an abortion?. [online] Irishtimes.com. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/fact-check-have-more-than-170-000-irish-women-travelled-abroad-for-an-abortion-1.3481581 [Accessed Oct. 2019].

Blumer, H., 1951. The field of collective behavior. Principles of sociology, pp.167-222.

Bowles Eagle, R., 2015. Loitering, lingering, hashtagging: Women reclaiming public space via# BoardtheBus,# StopStreetHarassment, and the# EverydaySexism Project. Feminist Media Studies, 15(2), pp.350-353.

Bressan, J., 2002. Interview with Juliet Bressan. [online] Tallgirlshorts.net. Available at: http://www.tallgirlshorts.net/marymary/juliet.html [Accessed Oct. 2019].

British Psychological Society, 2006. Code of ethics and conduct. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society.

British Psychological Society, 2013. Ethics guidelines for internet-mediated research. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society.

Bryman, A., 2016. Social research methods. Oxford university press.

Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937. The Constitution of Ireland. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Calkin, S., 2019. Healthcare not airfare! Art, abortion and political agency in Ireland. Gender, Place & Culture, 26(3), pp.338-361.

Carbin, M. and Edenheim, S., 2013. The intersectional turn in feminist theory: A dream of a common language?. European Journal of Women's Studies, 20(3), pp.233-248.

Carnegie, A. and Roth, R., 2019. From the Grassroots to the Oireachtas: Abortion Law Reform in the Republic of Ireland. Health and Human Rights, 21(2), p.109.

Chan, S., 2019. Speaking of silence, speaking of art, abortion and Ireland. Irish Studies Review, 27(1), pp.73-93.

Christiansen, J., 2009. Four stages of social movements. EBSCO Research Starters, 1248.

Cochrane, K., 2013. The fourth wave of feminism: meet the rebel women [online] theguardian.com. Available at:

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women [Accessed Oct 2019].

Crenshaw, K., 1990. Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stan. L. Rev., 43, p.1241.

Crowley, U. and Kitchin, R., 2008. Producing 'decent girls': Governmentality and the moral geographies of sexual conduct in Ireland (1922–1937). Gender, Place and Culture, 15(4), pp.355-372.

Cullen, P. and Korolczuk, E., 2019. Challenging abortion stigma: framing abortion in Ireland and Poland. Sexual and reproductive health matters, 27(3), p.1686197.

D'Arcy, C. and Pope, C., 2012. Thousands taking part in pro-choice rally in Dublin. [online] irishtimes.com. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/thousands-taking-part-in-pro-choice-rally-in-dublin-1.2804559 [Accessed Oct 2019].

de Londras, F., 2017. Mellet v. Ireland (HR Comm.). International Legal Materials, 56(2), 217-244.

de Londras, F., 2019. Intersectionality, Repeal, and Reproductive Rights in Ireland. Intersectionality and Human Rights, Forthcoming.

Diani, M., 2013. Networks and social movements. The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements.

Duffy, R., 2019. Together for Yes activists named on Time magazine's top 100 list of most influential people. Available at: https://www.thejournal.ie/together-for-yes-time-4596229-Apr2019/ [Accessed Oct. 2019].

Elkink, J.A., Farrell, D.M., Reidy, T. and Suiter, J., 2017. Understanding the 2015 marriage referendum in Ireland: context, campaign, and conservative Ireland. Irish Political Studies, 32(3), pp.361-381.

Enright, M., 2020. Four pieces on Repeal: notes on art, aesthetics and the struggle against Ireland's abortion law. *Feminist Review*, 124(1), pp.104-123.

Fairclough, N., 2013. Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language. Routledge.

Farren, G., 2006. The essential story of how Irish women cast off their chains. [online] independent.ie. Available at: http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/books/the-essential-story-of-how-irish-women-cast-off-their-chains-26412042.html [Accessed Oct 2019].

Fiegerman, S., 2012. Twitter now has more than 200 million monthly active Users. Finn, S. and E.

Fischer, C., 2016. Gender, nation, and the politics of shame: Magdalen laundries and the institutionalization of feminine transgression in modern Ireland. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 41(4), pp.821-843.

Griffin, G., O'Connor, O., Smyth, A. and O'Connor, A., 2019. It's a Yes!: How Together for Yes Repealed the Eighth and Transformed Irish Society. Orpen Press.

Holland, K., 2014. Timeline of Ms Y case. [online] irishtimes.com. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/timeline-of-ms-y-case-1.1951699 [Accessed July 2018].

Irish Family Planning Association, 2005. IFPA Launches Campaign for Safe and Legal Abortion in Ireland. Available at: https://www.ifpa.ie/ifpa-launches-campaign-for-safe-and-legal-abortion-in-ireland/

Irish Family Planning Association, 2008. IFPA annual Report 2008: Access choice & advocacy. Dublin, Ireland: Irish Family Planning Association.

Irish Statute Book, 2013. Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013.

Jansen, H., 2010. The logic of qualitative survey research and its position in the field of social research methods. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research (Vol. 11, No. 2).

Kasstan, B., 2018. Irish voters repealed the eighth: now it's time to ensure access to abortion care in law and in practice. Reproductive health matters, 26(52), pp.51-53.

Luddy, M., 1997. "abandoned women and bad characters": prostitution in nineteenth-century Ireland. Women's History Review, 6(4), 485-504.

Luddy, M., 2011. Unmarried mothers in Ireland, 1880–1973. Women's History Review, 20(1), 109-126.

McCarthy, C., 2016. Types of Social Movements. [online] boundless.com. Available at: https://www.boundless.com/sociology/textbooks/boundless-sociology-textbook/social-change-21/social-movements-140/types-of-social-movements-768-4965/ [Accessed Oct 2019].

McDonnell, O. and Murphy, P., 2019. Mediating abortion politics in Ireland: media framing of the death of Savita Halappanavar. Critical Discourse Studies, 16(1), pp.1-20.

McGreevy, R. and D'Arcy, C., 2017. Thousands attend Dublin abortion rights protest. [online] The Irish Times. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/thousands-attend-dublin-abortion-rights-protest-1.3239832 [Accessed Oct. 2019].

McGuire, E., 2014. Both sides of abortion debate air views in Dublin demonstrations. [online] irishtimes.com. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/both-sides-of-abortion-debate-air-views-in-dublin-demonstrations-1.1906377?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fpolitics%2Fboth-sides-of-abortion-debate-air-views-in-dublin-demonstrations-1.1906377 [Accessed Oct 2019].

Murphy, G., Loftus, E.F., Grady, R.H., Levine, L.J. and Greene, C.M., 2019. False Memories for Fake News During Ireland's Abortion Referendum. Psychological science, 30(10), pp.1449-1459.

Murphy, M., 2009. History of the pro-choice movement in Ireland 1980's to 2009 [Audio]. Retrieved from: NUI Maynooth.

National Archives, 2019. Ferreting Out Evil - the records of the Committee on Evil Literature by Tom Quinlan [online] Nationalarchives.ie. Available at: https://www.nationalarchives.ie/topics/evil_lit/evil_article_2.html [Accessed Oct 2019].

Norlock, K., 2019. Feminist Ethics [online] stanford.edu. Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-ethics/ [Accessed Oct 2019].

Rivetti, P., 2019. Race, identity and the state after the Irish abortion referendum. Feminist Review, 122(1), pp.181-188.

Shatter, A. 2013. Third Report of the Constitutional Convention - Same-Sex Marriage: Statements. [online] oireachtas.ie. Available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2013-12-17/27/ [Accessed Oct. 2019].

Shields, S.A., 2008. Gender: An intersectionality perspective. Sex roles, 59(5-6), pp.301-311.

Smyth, A., 2002. Interview with Ailbhe Smyth. [online] Tallgirlshorts.net. Available at: http://www.tallgirlshorts.net/marymary/ailbhe.html [Accessed Oct. 2019].

Tarrow, S.G., 2011. Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics. Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, M., 2015. Women's right to health and Ireland's abortion laws. International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics, 130(1), pp.93-97.

Taylor, M., Spillane, A. and Arulkumaran, S., 2020. The Irish journey: Removing the shackles of abortion restrictions in Ireland. Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology, 62, pp.36-48.

Taylor, V., 1989. Social movement continuity: The women's movement in abeyance. American Sociological Review, pp.761-775.

Tilly, C., 1977. From mobilization to revolution.

Valiulis, M.G., 1995. Power, gender, and identity in the Irish Free State. Journal of Women's History, 7(1), pp.117-136.

Van Dijk, T.A., 2001. 18 Critical discourse analysis. The handbook of discourse analysis, p.352.

About the authors

Elaine McKimmons holds a BSc in Psychology and a MSc in Applied Social Research. She supported multiple justice movements through her activism – including the LGBTQ+ rights and pro-choice movements. Elaine is interested in the psychology of social change and the relationship between language and social power structures. Elaine Mckimmons can be contacted at: mckimmoe AT tcd.ie

Dr Louise Caffrey is an Assistant Professor in Social Policy at the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. Her research interests include a focus on policy implementation and how change in complex systems comes about and she has previously researched these issues in both health and child welfare systems. Louise has a longstanding personal commitment to pro-choice activism, in particular her involvement in the formation of Choice Ireland in 2006 and campaigning for the Repeal of the 8th Amendment in the run up to the 2018 referendum. Dr. Louise Caffrey can be contacted at: louise.caffrey AT tcd.ie

Resistance to economic reforms in Greece
Dalilah Shemia-Goeke

Abstract

This paper examines Greek protests against economic adjustment programs during the sovereign debt crisis by both the social and labor movements from a perspective of civil resistance theory.

While the movements were influential enough to shape the political landscape of the country, by toppling the governing party and helping a previously small party to be elected, they underestimated to what degree economic policy- and decision-making are shielded from democratic pressures and how forcefully its beneficiaries can assert their interests by economic means, for instance via the leverage of debt. Thus a 'people power' strategy to effectively challenge economic policies must be based on an analysis of pressure points and leverage affecting this economic regime.

After a brief description of the economic reforms that were protested, some central theoretical concepts of civil resistance are briefly presented, which are then applied to two examples of resistance, concluding with strategic considerations for research, analysis and action.

Keywords: nonviolent action, civil resistance, civil disobedience, Greece, IMF, structural adjustment, labor movement, social movements, economic policies, European Union

Crisis and resistance

In order to get financial assistance, following the sovereign debt crisis, the Greek government had to adjust its economic structures according to bailout deals with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission and the European Central Bank, and later the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) (Riedl et al. 2015, p.52). These measures were stipulated in three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between the government and the international lender community involved.

Yet, these structural adjustment programs (SAPs) did not only address public spending. They also weakened labor rights by simultaneously promoting corporate privileges (Clauwaert and Schömann 2012, p.5). All these measures aim to eliminate existing barriers to profit and investment, even at the cost of workers and consumers.

From 2009 on, other European countries, like Ireland, Spain and Portugal, also struggled with debt crises (Riedl et al. 2015, p.53). Governments in these countries also tried to address the situation with austerity politics that were met

with widespread protests and resistance (Gerbaudo 2016). The movement in Greece, that initially became to be known in the media as the Indignants, (Aganaktismeni) showed many similarities with the Indignados movement in Spain or the Occupy movements in the US, as protestors established encampments, experimenting with direct democracy as in the form of assemblies, demanding change in official institutions and in the economic system (Simiti 2014, p.1). Notwithstanding, there were certainly also differences with regards to political goals, types of actions and developments.

The extensive changes in the private and public economy, the labor market and the welfare state led to a massive and sudden deterioration of working, living and housing conditions and public health, and to a decrease and loss of wages, thus resulting in amplified income inequality (Kennedy 2016, p.11). Certainly, a great part of the Greek population did not leave these new policies unanswered, but participated in massive rallies, strikes, actions, disobedience campaigns and occupations to protest, prevent or reverse their implementation (Leontidou 2012). I will give some examples of these methods of resistance toward the end of the article.

The movement and the events were influential enough to overthrow the governing party and bring to government a previously small left-wing coalition with the mandate to reverse adjustment programs. However, this new government did not carry out its mandate. Greek Prime minister Tsipras made a remarkable turn in the same direction as his predecessors just half a year after he and his party had been elected (Boukalas and Müller 2015, p.392, 400). Many people who had put their hope into this party thus underestimated to what degree economic policy- and decision-making is shielded from democratic pressures and how forcefully its beneficiaries can assert their interests by economic means, for instance via the leverage of debt[1].

This case requires further analysis as it may be of interest for many activists in the Global Justice Movement. Finding ways to effectively shift power imbalances between people and financial corporations, thus how to control financial power, is a vital task in the context of growing corporate control and expanding legislation in many countries that favor corporate interests over workers' rights and protection, welfare and the environment (Gilens and Page 2014).

In the last 150 years, people have stood up time and again. By sticking together, they have nonviolently ousted dictators, military occupations and colonial empires. They have won rights and legislation for justice, freedom and equality. Yet at the same time as people have emancipated from their political rulers and

---

[1] Eventually the most powerful leverage for neoliberal restructurings of economies has been worldwide the immense rise of public debt (Streeck 2013, p.6). The transition of a tax-based state to a debt-based state in almost all of the OECD-countries do correlate and can be both traced back to the 1970s (Ibid., p.2). In every instance of implementation of austerity measures, the main factor has been soaring public debt. External debt thus became an "efficient tool" (George 1990, p.143) of gaining access to cheap labor and infrastructure.

gained liberation, another form of power emerged, exploiting and abusing
people and the planet. Private companies, especially banks and financial
corporations, seem to have become the sovereigns of our times[2]. Would it be
possible, similarly to political struggles for freedom, independence and against
oppression and authoritarian regimes, to shift power once more vis a vis
economic exploitation and oppression, to expand democracy?

Over the past century a field of study has emerged dedicated to examining how
resistance works in asymmetrical power relations, based on which mechanisms
bring about social change and what dynamics occur between the protesters and
governments during such contentions (Sharp 1973). This field of research
examines nonviolent action, also called 'civil resistance', as a social technique of
contention, including methods such as strikes, boycotts or sit-ins. This set of
nonviolent civil resistance methods works for political struggles and against
coercion by military force, and as well for social struggles against coercion by
economic means. There are also a few accounts of applying this framework to
struggles targeting corporations (Chenoweth & Olsen 2016) or attempting to
transform or oppose capitalism or imperialism (cf. Martin 2001; Martin et al.
2012; de Ligt 1937).

This framework of analysis has the potential to analyze the successes and
failures of the Greek anti-neoliberal movement from a strategic perspective. The
outcomes of certain methods and approaches can be better understood, by
viewing them in the context of the power dynamics between protesters, the
government and economic forces. The aim here is to examine what civil
resistance studies can eventually contribute to the understanding of social
movement dynamics in the context of economic struggles and to broaden the
scope of civil resistance studies by applying its concepts not only to political
struggles, but to economic ones as well. The question guiding this article is:
How can civil resistance studies help to reflect about strategies of activists in the
context of struggles that involve economic actors or economic reforms, like in
the case of Greece? This is an attempt of cross-fertilization between civil
resistance studies and general social movement research.

Some clarification of terms seems appropriate. A movement is here understood
as a part of the population organizing and mobilizing around a shared cause or
interest over time. Participants in the movement may educate and inform the
public about the issue under critique, advocate for their cause in the public
debate, or lobby politicians. They can also organize protest events, such as
marches, rallies, actions or strikes addressing a common grievance, fighting for
a similar goal, vision, demand or set of demands. These efforts do not need to be
coordinated or orchestrated: they can be organized in parallel or independently
from each other. The important point is that a movement is more than just one
group, as it consists of different groups, networks and individuals, who may

---

[2] An empirical quantitative mapping of power, that for the first time ranked entities according
to their global control, suggests that a limited number of financial corporations are the most
influential entities of our times (Vitali et al. 2011, p.32).

coordinate in coalitions or may act independently of each other. Sometimes different parts of the movement do not agree on targets, methods and the underlying theory of change.

A movement is also more than just one protest event. Often a movement exists for years or even decades, sometimes with intensity, participation, activity and visibility ebbing and flowing in waves. Even if in a literal sense, a protest is a method that can be used by movement supporters, in this article the term 'protest' is at times used as a synecdoche for the movement spawning the protest, primarily because in the case of Greece the main acts of the movement against the memoranda and austerity have been public protests (like rallies, marches or demonstrations).

After a brief overview of the economic reforms that were being protested, I will present some key concepts of civil resistance, and give some examples of resistance methods in Greece, namely of economic noncooperation, like strikes, and payment refusal, concluding with strategic considerations for research, analysis and action.

Economic reforms in Greece

With the severe structural adjustment programs following the sovereign debt crisis of Greece, the whole country relinquished its ability to determine its own future in terms of political decisions. The bailout deals, the Memoranda of Understanding in 2010, 2012 and 2015, obliged the state, independently of the government in charge, to implement harsh economic measures, including flexibilization of labor markets, cuts in public expenditures and privatization of public assets. Credit arrangements thus pursue the explicit target of "internal devaluation" (European Commission 2012, p.2). Some researchers even claim that "Greece has completed one of the largest adjustments in the world" (Weisbrot et al. 2015, p.2). It is noteworthy that the austerity measures however did not lead to a reduction, but rather to an increase of indebtedness[3].

Around 430.000 citizens left the country within just a few years (ELSTAT 2016), most likely due to high unemployment of over 50% for those under 25 years old (Markantonatou 2013, p.17). Especially young educated persons tried to find employment elsewhere contributing to a so-called "brain-drain" (Markantonatou 2013, p.17).

Those who stayed had to accept a severe deterioration of living and working conditions, due to austerity measures and repeated deregulations of labor rights. Wages and benefits were significantly reduced, collective and individual redundancies facilitated and the collective bargaining system drastically restricted (Kapsalis 2012, p.12-13). Although an increasing part of the working population was "underpaid, overworked and struggling to meet the rising costs

---

[3] While in 2010 the debt-to-GDP-ratio of Greece stood at 146%, this value increased by 30 percentage points within four years, as in 2014 it stood at 176% (Riedl et al. 2015, p.60) and 176.6% in 2019 (Statista 2020).

of living long before the economic crisis of 2009–10" (Kretsos 2010, p.17), and although it is not proved that the crisis was a result of previous labor laws (Clauwaert and Schömann 2012, p.6), deregulation of labor markets was anyway implemented.

According to transnational labor studies, this economic "strategy shapes the Eurozone as a supply-side, export-oriented economy, and involves the creation of zones of cheap labor within the Eurozone" (Boukalas and Müller 2015, p.391).

Collective bargaining systems were decentralized and thus weakened by favoring (mostly worse) individual contracts (European Commission 2012, p.37). The remaining collective agreements tend to introduce wage cuts instead of guaranteeing income security (Daouli et al. 2013, p.4-11). Studies denote these developments as the destruction, abolition, illegalization or even death of the collective bargaining and collective agreement system in Greece (Kouzis et al. 2011, p.187). Moreover, Technocratic National Competitiveness Boards are being founded for intervention in collective bargaining, to guarantee that "regardless of electoral outcomes, no government will be able to chart a path away" from these types of policies (Kennedy 2016, p.13). Hence, institutional procedures to halt reforms are not available.

The results have been devastating for the population. According to a European report on consuming power, after the adjustment programs three out of four Greeks failed to pay their bills (Intrum 2016, p.22). In 2016, 53% of Greeks stated that their income is not enough to ensure them a decent living. 65% of people in Greece are worried that, after paying taxes, there is not enough money left to meet their needs, with the corresponding rate in Europe being 39% (Ibid.). In 2019, Greece even received the *lowest* ranks of all 24 measured European countries with regards to overall economic well-being of the population, including the ability to pay bills on time (Intrum 2019, p. 6). Moreover, after the labor reforms, around 125.000 employees received less than 100 € per month, according to the Greek ministry of labor (RLF, 2016). There are numerous additional social impacts of reforms including deterioration of public health (Karanikolos and Kentikelenis 2016), the rise of homelessness, and an unprecedented increase in the rate of suicides (Markantonatou 2013, p.17). In summary, "the impact of the austerity regime has been catastrophic" (Reynolds 2015).

In the following section a method of bottom-up struggle will be presented that has been used numerous times to put an end to unjust regimes, like dictatorships, racial segregation or external occupation in order to examine whether this technique of struggle may be useful to challenge exploitative economic regimes as well.

Nonviolent action: the theory on civil resistance

> The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of nonviolence from the crushing inequalities.
>
> Gandhi 1940[4]

Nonviolent action is a technique of struggle, an active response to a conflict with the aim to promote social or political change without using physical violence or the threat of violence[5], such as beatings, torture or killings. It has been used by a wide range of movements worldwide. Some of the best-known examples are Gandhi's Independence movement of India and the civil rights movement against racial segregation, e.g. the campaigns led by Martin Luther King Jr., yet there are numerous other historical examples (Ackermann and DuVall, 2006).

While Gandhi (1869–1948) is well known for his leading role in the movement for independence of India from British rule, it is less known that with his technique of achieving social change, he envisioned to not only overcome political oppression, but also economic exploitation. Besides national liberation, Gandhi thus also emphasized social and economic justice and "he warned against substituting the rule of the British elite with the rule by an Indian elite" (Schock 2015, p.304). For him freedom in his country also signified the thriving of direct democracy and self-management as an important precondition of a development beyond poverty (Gandhi 1945; Martin 2001, p.11). He is one of the first in history to consciously experiment with what he called *satyagraha* or, in other words, civil resistance (cf. Gandhi 2007). Inspired by this example but also independently, many movements of civilians worldwide were able to successfully democratize authoritarian regimes, achieve more civil rights, or to oust foreign military occupations (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

Gene Sharp is a political theorist who systematized the insights from those struggles and contributed to spreading and deepening the knowledge on this technique by inspiring new movements (Engler and Engler 2016, pp.76-77).

NVA is a conscious opposition to direct and structural violence, as well as confrontation (instead of mere de-escalation[6]) and direct action (Dudouet 2008,

---

[4] Quoted in Sharp (1973, p. 47).

[5] Although violence is not always defined in the same way, most scholars of NVA agree that an action is violent, if it targets the body of a human being (e.g. displacement, homicide or captivation). It is contested though whether property destruction should be called violent or nonviolent (Conway 2003, p. 516).

[6] Escalation in this context does not refer to violent escalation of conflicts. A nonviolent conflict escalation means an increase in intensity without making use of violent means, while direct violence refers to a situation where the actor(s) "intentionally threaten or harm other human beings physically" (Sørensen and Johansen 2016, p.3).

p. 240). NVA is also a technique of control of political power, that, when applied strategically, can help people to redistribute centralized power, in order to regain self-determination of their lives.

At the heart of the NVA framework lies the consent theory of power. All regimes, whether democratic or autocratic, depend on the consent of the people, in form of active contributions, cooperation, obedience, carrying out orders and tasks. Sharp refers in his analysis to the 'ruler' on the one hand and to 'subjects' or the 'ruled' on the other hand. The term ruler can refer to an individual (like a dictator) but normally it is "a small elite or an oligarchy. Most of the time, however, it is a very large number of persons" (Sharp 1973, p.49) who occupy positions that allow them to take decisions that impact the entire society. By withdrawing consent or support, for example by not cooperating, not obeying anymore, the power of the ruler can be kept in check, influenced or even destroyed.

However, in order to really control political power by denying assistance and contributions to continuation of the status quo, "noncooperation and disobedience must be widespread and must be maintained in the face of repression" (Ibid., p.32) by the opponent (e.g. the state) intended at coercing the subjects to resume obedience.

There have been used hundreds of methods worldwide aimed at the nonviolent control of power by targeting the above-mentioned sources of power. Sharp (1973, pp. 357–435) described and documented numerous types of protest and persuasion, social, economic and political noncooperation such as boycotts or strikes, and psychological, physical, social, economic or political intervention, like the hunger strike, sit-ins, building alternative social institutions, nonviolent occupations or overloading administrative systems.

A successful nonviolent action campaign is characterized by specific elements, including for instance laying the groundwork by a thorough preparation, including selecting the right methods as tactics in an escalating pressure strategy, or awareness training on overcoming fear and maintaining nonviolent discipline in the face of repression. If this discipline is achieved, the violence used against the movement can even backfire against the opponent himself, what Sharp calls political jiu-jitsu (Ibid., p. 657). If protesters can resist provocation, violence on the part of the state will increasingly seem illegitimate, the ruler might lose backing and support both from the population and from third parties.

Curiously, the main field of research on social movements does not consider nonviolent action literature and concepts but deals with different frameworks and questions. Social movement studies tend to put a greater emphasis on structure, while nonviolent action researchers tend to focus more on agency (Nepstad 2015, p. 416; Schock 2015, p. 11). However, both perspectives could use this difference and this respective gap to learn from each other and to be enriched by each other. Structural aspects need to be taken into account when dealing with cases that try to intervene in the context of corporate globalization.

This paper attempts to contribute to the development of strategic theory in social movement literature, as "there has been surprisingly little attention to strategy within the field of collective action" (Nepstad 2015, p.416).

Mainstream social movement theories concentrate on four main elements: framing of a movement's message; resource mobilization, thus professionalization of organizational structures, that enable use of resources; repertoire, that is the types of actions; and finally, opportunity structures (for an overview see della Porta & Diani 1999, and McAdam et al. 1996).

While the bulk of research literature is dedicated to movement characteristics (goals and organization), a much smaller part examines movement outcomes, namely the impact movements have on society, norms, laws, discourses and practices and the factors that lead to specific outcomes (Giugni 1998, p.371), in contrast to civil resistance studies in which scholars "have primarily examined outcomes, namely, the factors affecting whether movements achieved their goals" (Nepstad 2015, p.416). This prioritization of a movement's characteristics over understanding and trying to explain outcomes and consequences has been criticized by social movement researchers themselves (e.g. Luders 2010, p.14). Civil resistance studies may offer some concepts and research findings to bridge this gap in social movement research. In that sense, a nonviolent action framework can be a lens for activists to strategize as well as for researchers to understand dynamics between protesters and the entity they address.

Civil resistance in Greece: shifting the balance of power?

Since the outbreak of the crisis, many people in Greece[7] tried to resist economic adjustments in various ways. After a brief overview of anti-memoranda[8] protest developments, I will focus on methods of economic intervention, in the form of strikes and refusal to pay fees.

Though the movements did not intentionally use the approach or concepts of nonviolent action as an explicit framework, they did employ many methods of civil resistance and there were participants in favor of staying nonviolent. Thus, here the events and their analysis are framed from that perspective in order to show its potential usefulness for both activists and social movement researchers.

---

[7] It should be noted that it is impossible to speak of 'the' movement as one coherent, uniform group of people with the same ideas, values, political backgrounds and demands, as in most cases of mass protest when a broader part of the population is involved. An indicator of fragmented identities of participants is the participation of people from the left and right. For further elaboration on the contradictions within the indignants' movement in Greece, see Theodossopoulos (2014).

[8] I prefer the term 'anti-memoranda' over the more common 'anti-austerity' protests as it refers to all economic measures included in the Memoranda of Understanding, that go far beyond just austerity measures, as besides cuts in public expenditures, they also entail flexibilization of labor markets (e.g. deregulation of labor rights) and privatization of public goods.

While there are certainly also more violent elements in the political tradition of resistance in Greece[9], these were not included in the given examples, as the emphasis here is on the contributions of civil resistance studies and the nonviolent action framework to strategy formulation and movement outcomes, and not on the comparison between violence and nonviolence. The strategic disadvantages of using violent means and the relation of nonviolent movements and violent elements have been discussed elsewhere (e.g. Chenoweth and Stephan 2011: 8; Sharp 1973, 68; Satha-Anand 2015, 296; Howes 2009).

In 2010 mass demonstrations emerged and increased after the first MoU (Rüdig and Karyotis 2014, p.487). During this stage the main methods involved protest and persuasion, although economic noncooperation had already begun in the form of strikes and refusal of compulsory payments. The following year participation in protests increased and additional methods, like the occupation of central squares inspired by protests in Spain, Tunisia and Egypt (Gerbaudo 2016, p.5) were added to the repertoire of resistance.

In late June 2011 activists encircled the parliament building with the aim of keeping politicians from entering. They also pressured them to vote against the conditions (Simiti 2014, p.12). Even if parliament finally did vote for the agreement, the pillar of public opinion could be still targeted and partially won over in the long run.

The movement also intervened by building up alternative institutions and structures. These included social medical centers where doctors treat poor patients pro bono, self-organized pharmacies, where donated medicines are issued, self-managed cafés, shops, one workers-led factory and other cooperatives. There are networks collecting and distributing food for the poor, and markets and alternative trade networks where agricultural goods are sold directly by the farmers without intermediaries. Solidarity networks of all kinds spread all over Greece, in which citizens took on responsibilities and initiated projects regarding anything that helps people not to face the results of the crisis alone (Solidarity for All 2016).

As public opinion had successfully shifted, in mid-2012 the focus of activism seemed to slightly move from demonstrations to an increased focus on mobilizing electoral support for Syriza[10], a party which was widely perceived as an ally of the movement. Certainly, many movement participants remained critical and mistrustful of any political representation, while at the same time also the extreme right made gains in terms of support. The move of focusing efforts on Syriza was not an intentional one based on a shared strategy of the

[9] An in-depth historical background of nonviolent action in Greece goes beyond the scope of this paper. It should be mentioned that in 1973 there was a student uprising against the dictatorship at that time, which displayed elements of civil disobedience and nonviolent action (Migkos 2013).

[10] Syriza was formed as political alliance of the new left in Greece in 2004 and emerged as a political party in 2012. It was co-founded and is seen as the successor of SYNASPISMOS, a new left political party that existed from 1991 to 2013 (SYN 2014).

movement, yet it was noticeable (Theodossopoulos 2014, p. 494). This projection of hopes of many movement participants on Syriza, even by many who had refused to vote for a long time, facilitated it to grow from a small party[11], over the representation of the movement in the political arena, to the victor of parliamentary elections in 2015 (Karyotis and Rüdig. 2016, p.3).

In summary, the movement had managed to mobilize masses, publicly discuss democratic deficits of the implementation of the policies[12], influence the public debate, radically alter the traditional political landscape by toppling the governing party and help a new one gain political power, with the clear mandate to reverse reforms.

However, in June 2015 shortly after the prime minister Tsipras asked the Greek population to decide upon an agreement with the lenders, Greece became the first developed country to default to the IMF. In order to be able to service the payment of €1.6 billion, the new government decided to totally alter its policy orientation and to accept a third bailout-deal even worse than the one rejected by the Greeks in the referendum (Harrison and Liakos 2015).

This might have led to resignation and disillusionment among activists and the general population, as all traditional means and strategies of resistance proved inadequate to challenge the power of finance.

Historically, labor had been able to sometimes challenge industrial corporations due to their mutual dependency. By withdrawing the workforce, corporations could be forced to give in. But where is the dependency relation that would allow for an equivalent challenge with regards to financial capital? Who is actually in a position endowed with the capacity to issue reversals and changes of economic policies? And how can this target be challenged?

The ruler-subject dichotomy in Sharp's conception seems too simplistic to be applied to struggles against such economic reforms[13]. In the context of a complex intertwined network promoting these types of restructurings in Europe and the world (ranging from think-tanks, foundations, institutions, associations, organizations, international meetings, agreements, and treaties) it is impossible to identify some single targets isolated from the rest that have the main responsibility for authorizing and enforcing SAPs and reforms, and whose

---

[11] As explained in the previous footnote, this does not mean that Syriza was created by the movement. Yet, the movement and the widespread critical stance toward neoliberal restructuring surely were favorable conditions for it to gain parliamentary power.

[12] "In the Greek Square movement, protestors accused the existing political regime of being a phony democracy, violating citizens' rights" (Simiti 2014, p.21).

[13] Generally though, it is possible to apply this framework to economic struggles, when for way of example a targeted corporation is constructed in analogy to ‚the ruler' in Sharps model, while ‚the ruled' are workers, consumers or members of an affected community. Chenoweth and Olsen (2016) for instance conducted a quantitative study to identify core factors of success of civil resistance campaigns targeting corporate behavior in 840 cases.

neutralization of influence would be capable of bringing the entire process to a halt.

A revised approach to a transfer of Sharp's theoretical considerations to anti-austerity movements is required. NVA theory has commonly focused on how to use the technique to bring down authoritarian regimes. However, researchers in this field have presented various different conceptual advancements that are helpful for a better comprehension of social change in democracies as well (Engler and Engler 2014, 2016).

A theoretical refinement is the image of the pillars of support that sustain a regime (Helvey 2004, p.9). Those pillars can be coercive, exacting obedience by force, like the military, the police or courts. For example the police are used to enforce new laws related to the reforms and to suppress resistance against it, while the business community will certainly implement and try to make use of all the new regulations to reduce costs and increase revenues. The target or the oppressive system can also be supported by pillars that shape culture, common values and the public opinion, such as media, education and religion. Additional pillars might be the youth, civil society and NGOs, civil servants and so on (Ibid., pp.10-18). These are all elements, that in various ways, "provide a regime with the backing it needs to survive" (Engler and Engler 2014). Nonviolent action is the technique of addressing exactly this: One by one either winning over, neutralizing or bruising the pillars of support of the respective regime.

So how has the concept of pillars of support been used in social change struggles within democracies? According to activist authors and organizers Mark and Paul Engler, the struggle for same-sex marriage in the US was successful in 2014 because one after another the pillars supporting a hostile attitude towards the LGBT community, like media, entertainment, churches, education - all influencing in one way or another the public discourse - changed their views regarding same-sex marriage. By stating that "if social movements could win the battle over public opinion, the courts and the legislators would ultimately fall in line" (Engler and Engler 2016, p.89) they leave the impression that, in representative democracies, movements must only shape public discourse on many levels and social change will follow.

However, I would argue that the Englers' social-change scenario cannot be readily transferred to economic restructurings. The case of Greece makes clear that there are issues enforced by economic means of coercion via the pressure of debt and credits, which cannot be won in the arena of public discourse and opinion only. Public opinion was shifted to the maximum towards an anti-memorandum stand, including public servants, civil society, workers, the education system, politicians and the media. However, what forced Syriza to still accept the harsh conditions of the third bailout agreement was not that its rejection had not sufficient backing in society. Quite the contrary: a significant majority of 61% voted against the terms of the deal. What forced Syriza to bow to the will of financial capital were economic constraints and the uncertainty of whether the effects of exiting the Eurozone would be even harsher than accepting neoliberal adjustments. There was no feasible lever that could be

realistically pulled in order to coerce the creditors to step back from their demands.

The key is not whether an action is supported by the majority of the population, but whether it leads to sustained losses, damages and deficits. Only what threatens current income opportunities and earnings outlooks is indeed a challenge to corporations. This is consistent with findings by social movement researcher Luders (2010) who developed a persuading model to predict and understand social movement outcomes, that are rendered according to the level of concession and disruption costs. Put differently, a movement will likely be successful if granting the movements' demands will not be very costly for the target and if the costs imposed by disruptive actions of the movement are getting so high that the continuation of the status quo becomes increasingly unbearable for the targeted entity, be it a political or economic actor (Luders 2010, p.15). Concession costs also include loss of support among conventional constituencies of the target in case it would give in to movement demands.

Luders differentiates between economic and political targets (Luders 2010, p. 8). While political actors are assumed to be concerned with "the electoral consequences associated with both resisting and responding to movement demands" (ibid.), this fails to account for the behavior of politicians in Greece who both right and left were not able to satisfy the demands of the movement, despite the sanction of not being re-elected. Economic targets on the other hand "calculate their exposure [to disruption and concession costs] based on threats to current or anticipated profits" (ibid.). While the bulk of anti-austerity movements across different countries followed the logic of political disruption and concession costs, in the following two examples, nonviolent methods of resistance falling in the category of economic noncooperation will be given in order to give a glimpse into a possible alternative direction for movements to deal with economic struggles.

Economic noncooperation: two examples

In his famous list of 198 methods of nonviolent action, Sharp not only collected political types of actions, but also economic methods of resistance which can be and were used also as one part of a broader arsenal of tactics against corporations as well. These include economic interventions (Sharp 1973, p. 401), various forms of boycotts (Sharp 1973, p.219) and many types of strikes (Sharp 1973, p.257). The rationale of noncooperation in the context of nonviolent action is to withdraw one's own cooperation from those in decision-making positions, in order to cut them off from the sources of power that sustain them. In the following the focus will be on strikes and on a special type of boycott. Strikes and boycotts mainly aim at depriving the opponent of material sources of power. According to Sharp "[e]conomic noncooperation consists of a suspension of or refusal to continue specific economic relationships" (Sharp 1973, p.219), be it the provision, the payment or buying of goods and services.

The two examples, that will be described in more detail in the following were not so much selected based on their importance or centrality from the perspective of activists, but their suitability to demonstrate and illustrate core mechanisms and key dynamics underlying nonviolent action. Thus, economic noncooperation may not be representative of the overall movement, which is more largely known for marches, rallies, or demonstrations and camps on the Syntagma square. Yet, the main purpose here is to better explain the ideas and concepts of nonviolent action theories and civil resistance studies. Strikes are a very classic method to withdraw one's contribution to the smooth continuation of the status-quo. However, in order to also give examples that go beyond the classical labor movement and that show how economic cooperation can look like for people that perhaps are unable to participate at strikes, like for instance the unemployed, this paper draws on the refusal of payments movement, in a variety of areas ranging from road tolls, to public transport tickets, electricity and water bills and even privatized beaches.

Information on these examples was found in publications by research institutes, academic papers, newspaper articles, activist websites, public (national and international) entities and reports by civil society actors (such as trade unions and organizations), and served primarily to obtain descriptive understanding of the methods applied and to give some brief contextual background. However, the analysis of the context and the description of the case is not exhaustive, as this would go beyond the scope of this paper. The information provided mainly serves to give a brief overview and an idea of the basic characteristics. This is a limitation of the present preliminary attempt to apply the nonviolent action framework to economic struggles. Further research is certainly needed, including for instance quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews or participatory observation, as well as a wider range of online data sources. Interviews were not conducted for this article because its main endeavor is a conceptual discussion in which the cases mainly function as examples. What follows is to show its usefulness and its complementarity for social movement research calling for further studies in this direction. I will first analyze economic noncooperation in form of strikes and then as refusal to pay fees, to finally conclude with some strategic considerations.

Exerting pressure by strikes and other labor actions

According to Sharp, the strike is an economic means of noncooperation: it is a lever to shift power relations between conflicting groups (Sharp 1973, p.257). Strikes have the potential to directly address the heart of the nature of power. By refusing "to continue economic cooperation through work" (Ibid.) employees reveal the dependence of their employers on them. By making use of this dependency relation, workers can pressure employers to the degree that they give in to some demands[14].

---

[14] As such the logic of change underlying strikes can be fully subsumed under economic forms of nonviolent action. Certainly, labor actions sometime include violent elements. The strike

It is not surprising that employees in Greece tried to resist labor reforms and austerity measures by putting pressure on the state and the economy, thus on public and private employers, with the means of various industrial actions.

According to a survey conducted by the trade union research institute INE there were heightened occurrences of industrial actions in 2011 (Katsoridas and Lampousaki 2012). While the Ministry of Labor stopped recording strike activities in Greece in 1999, according to a report by the European Commission between June 2011 and April 2012 in Greece there were "838 strikes, including 46 general strikes, of which 30 were in the public sector" (European Commission 2013, p.152). Apart from regular work stoppages, most of them lasting 24 or 48 hours, a variety of forms of industrial actions were observed, like for instance 53 short and long-term occupations of workplaces, ministries and state institutions, resulting in several repeated temporal paralyses of the state mechanism (Ibid., p.99), as well as picketing in order to blockade the functioning of a company or evacuation of machines, and finally, nation-wide general strikes (Ibid.).

Reciprocal support was also shown with solidarity strikes among different groups of workers (Katsoridas and Lampousaki 2012, p.92). This would fall into Sharp's subcategory of "sympathetic strike" (Sharp 1973, p.267) in which workers withdraw their cooperation with employers in order to help other parts in society or other groups of workers by generating additional pressure upon the target.

Trade union struggles were also supported by activists and the general population. One example is the exceptional long-term strike of nine months[15] by the steelworkers of Greek Halyvourgia in Aspropyrgos that gained public support in the form of solidarity statements and visits from other workplaces and trade unions, to material and financial support for the workers and their families including food, medicines, money etc. (Katsoridas and Lampousaki 2012, p.98).

There are claims however, that country-wide strikes were not decided by the workers themselves, that they were not put in place strategically and had a negative psychological function (Karyoti 2012, p.167). The diagnosis of an apparent lack of a general consistent strategy of responding to the attacks on labor is the principal and over-riding conclusion of academic accounts of the situation of Greek trade unions[16] (Kapsalis 2012, p.16).

---

however, as an ideal type, is not based on a matching of (physical) forces: its logic does not depend on the use or threat of physical violence, but on the withdrawal of consent and support – and the dependence of the target on these (missing) contributions. Thus, the strike is included in the repertoire of nonviolent methods, even if it may occasionally be accompanied by more violent tactics depending on the historical case and the context.

[15] The strike started on 31st October 2011 and ended on 28th of July 2012 (Kapsalis 2012, p.17).

[16] While trade unions are often the main drivers of labor actions, such as strikes, giving a background here on the role, organization and way of functioning of trade unions in Greece, goes beyond the scope of this paper. It can be noted however, that union density is much

The lack of strategy is seen in specific patterns of the general strikes. They were either announced months before, leaving sufficient time for the targets to prepare, or they were announced just one day before, thus leading to low participation rates, as there was not much time for unions to mobilize (Karyoti 2012, p.168). Sharp would refer to this specific form as the "protest strike" (Sharp 1973, p.257) which is temporally limited and pre-announced, normally used as a warning to the officials, showing that the workers possess the strength to take action even more effectively if their demands are not met. Yet, aside from a few exceptions, the Greek unions were in most instances not able to overcome this stage of token strikes of demonstrating discontent by extending actions until concessions are made.

In addition, general strikes usually took place the same day (or shortly before) new measures were taken in the parliament, so unions lacked time to really build up pressure, as the crucial decisions had already been taken when the strike took place (Karyoti 2012, p.168). Isolated short-time strikes, not embedded into any long-term strategy, were not capable of gradually building up escalating pressure leading to a specific goal. Rather than protesting symbolically every time new measures are announced, strikes could be used more strategically. However, even strategically sound collective actions could only have the aspired impact with widespread participation. According to union researchers, mass mobilization by traditional trade unions was a difficult undertaking in a climate not only critical of political leaders but also of trade union representatives (Vogiatzoglou 2014, p.363). Apart from the lack of public trust in trade unions and a lack of legitimacy, other identified reasons that explain their poor performance were a lack of experience, an organizational deficit, and political fragmentation (Vogiatzoglou 2014, p.363).

General strikes had the long-term effect of spreading a demotivating sense of futility, as participants repeatedly invested a great amount of energy in actions that did not seem to lead anywhere. As many workers doubted that these arbitrary strikes could lead to any form of concessions, they were often perceived as ineffective tactics, as mere "bulwarks against the general discontent" (Karyoti 2012, p.168), by giving the feeling of having done at least something about the situation.

In Greece, around 70% of public sector and around 15% of private sector workers are unionized (Kapsalis 2012, p.7). Assuming comparable participation rates in general strikes, they are mostly public sector strikes. They repeatedly brought state functions to a stand-still, in order to put pressure on the respective government not to pass or to reverse certain policies. The question is, did this indeed challenge or pressure the stakeholders of reforms to a sufficient degree? Deducing from the devastating results apparently not. But why is that so?

---

stronger in the public sector and that leadership of unions and federations is fragmented in factions along the lines of political parties (Kapsalis 2012, p.18).

Imagine the situation as a chain of dependencies. The state depends on creditors. If the conditions of the creditors are not met, the state might not be able to financially survive. It has thus an existential interest in meeting the demands of the lenders. On the other hand, there are public servants on whom the state indeed depends for executing its functions daily, for example teachers and bus drivers. An announced, predictable and temporarily limited stand-still of some public services does not reduce pressure by (and thus dependence on) financial institutions and furthermore reduces one-off expenditures. Also, while creditors (or their representative institutions) put conditions on the money they lend, strikers in Greece did not put the granting of their demands "as a precondition of their resumption to work" (Sharp 1973, p.257). They resumed work in any case, whether reforms were stopped and reversed or not. The day after the strike, business as usual would continue. So why bother and make concessions? Strikes can be a very powerful tool of shifting relations in society, but in order to be effective and not only symbolic, the refusal to work must be maintained until demands are met.

Refusal of compulsory payments

> In this climate of a total collapse of the social contract between the government and the governed, citizens find it easy to declare that justice requires fiscal and civil disobedience. It does not begin as a political move. Non-payment is usually the result of a simple, sad inability to pay. But when the state reacts with aggression and unscrupulously, anger builds up which, spontaneously, takes the form of moral enthusiasm for defying a predator state.
>
> Yannis Varoufakis[17] 2011

The logic behind refusing to contribute economically to a political or economic regime has historically not only been to demonstrate the lack of legitimacy of rulers and thus lack of consent of the subjects, but eventually in the long run to also undermine the opponent's financial sources and means – when this defiance of payment obligations is sustained over a larger period of time (Sharp 1973, p.237). Sharps subsumes refusing revenue to the government in form of taxes, fees and so on to the broader category of different forms of boycotts.

The I-don't-pay movement[18] (Kinima 2012) was a nonviolent campaign of noncooperation that emerged in 2009 in Greece initially encouraging citizens to refuse to pay road charges (Hemikoglou 2011). At times toll stations were occupied, or barrier bars at toll stations were lifted by activists and drivers were waved through without paying the toll (Kassimi et al. 2011; DMN 2011).

---

[17]   Varoufakis is a Greek economist and was the minister of finance of the country from January to July 2015. He was a member of Syriza from January to September 2015.

[18] Κίνημα Δεν πληρώνω (Kinima Den Plirono)

Drawing on the constitutional right of freedom of mobility, and facing enormous tax and price increases by a simultaneous reduction of wages and employment, travelers refused to support the huge increase in tickets and road fees – increments of more than 200% (Den Plirono 2011). According to an article published in the *Financial Times* within "four months, Den Plirono has grown from a one-off protest to a nationwide anti-austerity movement" (Hope 2011). As the campaign's name developed to 'I won't pay for their crisis' it later broadened its scope to include a general struggle against privatization of public goods (Karatziou 2011).

As it is an act of defiance of legal obligation, it can be categorized as a nonviolent action of civil disobedience[19] – a label actually used by media internationally (cf. *The Guardian* 2011). Although the I don't pay campaign informed participants about laws regarding fines, thus, the legal consequences their actions might have, this was apparently not an obstacle for a not insignificant part of the population to participate (Tzanavara 2011). It is estimated that during the peak of the campaign (2010 – 2011), two out of ten drivers just passed through the toll station without paying, while 40% of bus-riders were fare dodgers (DMN 2011). Admittedly a central reason why so many people participated in its heyday is that many of them were really not able to pay price increases. According to the online self-portrayal of the campaign it is an act of self-organization, a denial of the commercialization of commons and public property and a symbol of opposition to a logic that sacrifices the needs and rights of the population in favor of private revenues (Den Plirono 2011).

The actual result is ambiguous. On the one hand, within three years it broadened from a small initiative to a mass movement but then declined again. It was visible, perceived and taken as a serious threat by media, politicians and economic actors on the national and international level. The German MNC 'Hoch-Tief', which was one of the companies[20] that received the money collected at the toll stations in order to finance its investments in Greece, had announced dissatisfaction with the situation, as this would lead to huge economic losses and difficulties (Höhler 2011). Hence, the management of the company prompted the political level in order to manage the situation. The plan was to impose even higher taxes in other areas in order to compensate for the reduced income (DMN 2011). The offensive step against neoliberalism by the people hurt multinational corporations, which sought to redirect the burden to the Greek people. In sharp contrast to most of protest actions in the anti-austerity movement, this specific campaign apparently effectively addressed an

---

[19] At the time many different forms of economic disobedience occurred, such as for instance collective expropriation, involving activists plundering supermarkets and handing out the items to people on the streets or in need (Pautz and Kominou 2013).

[20] Other shareholders of Greek highways and roads include the Spanish Cintra/Ferrovial (Ferrovial 2007) and Grupo ACS (cf. ACS 2006), the French Vinci, as well as Greek ones such as AVAX, Aktor AE or the Group Gek-Terna (cf. Olympia Odos 2020).

existing economic dependence relationship, as the shareholders of Greek roads depend on economic contributions by drivers.

In the course of reforms, the 'I-don't-pay'-campaign expanded to other areas of defiance of payment-obligations, such as electricity bills, tickets of public transport, housing rents and heating, as well as refusal of debt payment of private credits to banks (Linardou and Polychroniadis 2010). Privatized beaches were opened by activists (Karatziou 2011) and doctors refused to accept treatment fees (Kassimi et al. 2011). In the Athenian Metro, in trams and buses, ticket machines were covered with plastic bags or even dismounted entirely. Another method of disobedience in the payment of public transport tickets was to pass on a ticket to the next passenger as long as the 90 minutes duration of the ticket had not yet elapsed (Linardou and Polychroniadis 2010). The government reacted with new penal regulations against fare dodging and toll denial, deploying more ticket inspectors and police repression (*The Guardian* 2011).

In 2012 Den Plirono also founded a party and participated at elections in 2012, but votes remained below 1%.

The I-don't-pay-campaign continued organizing on the ground as the 'Front of Resistance and Reversal for Social Liberation' (METAA) supporting people against the consequences of non-payments, like evictions and cut-off from electricity and water. Members of the movement were illegally reconnecting hundreds of households to electricity that had been cut off due to inability to pay. The tactic of reconnection incrementally spread to other grassroots movements during the crisis, for instance the neighborhood assemblies that emerged throughout the country after the people's assemblies like those on Syntagma square. Among other things they also set up independent electricity reconnection committees and were very active and present on the local level (RT 2013).

What led to reconnection activities in the first place was the widespread inability to pay electricity bills. Besides the overall lack of economic well-being in the context of adjustment programs amidst the sovereign debt crisis, this inability to pay on the individual household level has been also a result of an obligatory tax that was levied on electricity bills. When it was first introduced the payment of the tax was part of the bill, so that refusal to pay the tax meant non-payment of the electricity bill. It can to a large extent be attributed to the reconnection committees and their impact within larger groups, such as the I-don't-pay movement or the neighborhood committees, that the tax was eventually removed from the electricity invoices, thus allowing at least those who could actually pay the bill (but eventually not the new additional tax) not to be denied electricity (Apostolakis 2013).

By 2016 though the mass-noncompliance movement had lost momentum and press coverage declined. The analysis of the reasons for the decline of participation on a mass scale would require additional research, which might look at factors like the consequences of sanctions and repression, an

improvement in the ability to pay bills and an overall decrease in protest activity also in other parts of the general anti-memorandum movement, perhaps related to a resistance fatigue. Yet eventually the main factor contributing to failure of the I-don't-pay campaign may have been a lack of strategy and clarity concerning the final objective of this tactic. To make a virtue out of necessity just to show discontent might not be a motive strong enough to sustain participation under severe consequences. In contrast, a detailed plan by which it could be ensured that the result of widespread and sustained non-compliance with payment obligations could put the opponent under sustained pressure might have provided a stronger reason to participate over a sustained period of time.

Concluding strategic considerations

The civil resistance framework can help make sense of past experiences and develop long-term strategies for the future, some of which will be shared briefly in the following. Notwithstanding there also are some limitations that need to be mentioned, and that have been pointed out even by nonviolence researchers themselves (Nepstad 2015, p. 416). One such deficiency is the lack of structural components in the analysis (Martin 1989). When trying to explain the failure of social movements in Greece to fend off neoliberal reforms, nonviolent action is helpful to understand the agency part of it, thus what activists could do or could have done better (Schock 2015, p.11). However, it must be acknowledged that more often than not structural conditions in the national and global political economy are less than favorable for movements, as in the context of an indebted state existentially dependent on further credits.

The argument of this paper is that while structural conditions matter and can seriously constrain the ability of a movement to achieve its goal, constraints and opportunities can also be influenced by movements themselves. Yet the degree to which this is possible, and again, under which conditions is arguable and contested. This paper aspires to contribute to the agency-part of the explanatory narrative with some pieces of understanding, identified as somewhat missing from the overall debate in social sciences about these matters, while accepting the premise that the failure of social movements can to a large extent be explained by political and economic conditions and by emphasizing that these should not be underestimated by overly voluntarist theories of change.

Considering what has and has not been done so far, some observations regarding possible reasons of failure and accordingly the following strategic recommendations from the angle of nonviolent action can be made that fall into two main categories: mapping the pillars of support and based on that planning the tactics more strategically.

a) Pillars of Support

A strategy of nonviolent resistance to neoliberalism in Greece should be based on extensive research and a thorough analysis of the concrete pillars of support that can be targeted and the possible opponents involved in the process of implementation of economic reforms in Greece.

Dependency relations and ways for the working and unemployed population, for civil servants and politicians to put under pressure other European governments, or multinational companies, as well as the European Commission or the IMF must be sorted out one by one.

Some exemplary starting points about how to make political use of leverages by socio-economic means could be orchestrated actions of noncooperation or intervention by dockworkers and airport employees, supported by outside activists. This could be powerful due to the structurally advantageous position in infrastructural intersections. It would be important to deploy such actions in well-thought-out points of time and that they are embedded in broader protests with more transformational aspirations than narrow trade union demands. These could potentially threaten MNCs investing in the Greek infrastructure, as important junctions of trade flows could eventually be brought to a standstill affecting transnational enterprises in tourism and trade. However, these approaches must be preceded by widespread training in which a general plan will be discussed and the logic of power and social change as well as the need to maintain nonviolent discipline, and the tactical implications and arising difficulties of using violence[21], will be dealt with in detail.

Greek trade unions that have already challenged investors, such as the aviation union OSYPA protesting against the take-over of 14 airports by a German MNC (Kadritzke 2016; The Press Project 2016)., could reach out for labor and social movement allies across Europe with the aim to strategically protest and strike against premises of this company in many different European countries simultaneously. In order to make use of the full potential of strikes, these should not be used only as a warning sign, or an expression of discontent, but should be assembled in a meaningful way, in order to increasingly build up pressure against a carefully pre-selected target with demands addressing the opponent's capacity to politically influence economic policies.

b) Nonviolent escalation

The methods to be used must be carefully selected and arranged by forming tactics built upon each other in an escalating pressure strategy. This could mean

---

[21] Although there was a general consensus among the demonstrators regarding the non-violent means of protests and the necessity to maintain this orientation (Simiti, 2014, p.10) there were violence-prone smaller groups renowned for attaching themselves to demonstrations to escalate them in terms of physical clashes with the authorities (U.S. Dep. of State 2015, p.20). Participants distanced themselves from these attacks and the contentions on this issue created repugnance between the movement and anarchist groups (Simiti 2014, p.10).

for instance, when a stated demand is not met until a set date, also called "the ultimatum" (Sharp 1973, p.510), the struggle is brought to the next level by increasing pressure on the target or one of its pillars. In this way over the course of contention, pressure is increasingly intensified by growing participant numbers and by turning from symbolic actions to direct means of noncooperation and intervention, that can harm the opponent or the pillars. Activists and grassroots organizers assume that besides intensity, pressure can also increase with a growing amount of support and participation on the one hand and more and more pillars being targeted, won over or neutralized in terms of influence on the other. People will then be able to measure, whether they "have reached a stated goal when they have succeeded in making people in power positions do things they would otherwise not have done" (Sørensen and Johansen 2016, p.7).

Finally, great efforts have to be put into public discourse intervention and addressing the pillars of public opinion with the long-term objective of boosting the willingness of politicians to potentially disobey bailout agreements and to accept and to deal with possible negative consequences of necessary noncooperation and intervention not only on the part of the people but also on the part of their elected representatives.

References

Ackerman, Peter and Jack DuVall 2000. A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict. New York: Macmillan.

ACS Group Directory 2006. "ACS and Cintra are awarded their first motorway concession contract in Greece: Together with a local partner GEK-Terna, they will build and manage a toll motorway for 30 years." Press Release (16.06.2006): https://www.grupoacs.com/press-room/news/press-releases/acs-and-cintra-are-awarded-their-first-motorway-concession-contract-in-greece/ (accessed 09.09.2020)

Amnesty International 2013. "Greece: Emergency action to thwart teachers' strike unnecessary." Amnesty International: http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/greece-action-thwart-teachers-strike-disproportionate-and-unnecessary-2013-05-15 (accessed 10.02.2014)

Apostolakis, Sakis 2013. "Οι άγγελοι της επανασύνδεσης". Enet – Eleftherotypia: http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=402840 (accessed 10.09.2020)

BBC 2011. "Greece protest against austerity package turns violent." http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13935400 (accessed 25.01.2017)

Blanchard, Olivier; Dell'Ariccia Giovanni and Mauro, Paolo 2010. "Rethinking Macroeconomic Policy." *IMF Research Department* 10/03.

Blanchard, Olivier and Leigh, Daniel 2013. "Growth Forecast Errors and Fiscal Multipliers." *IMF Working Papers 13/1*.

Boukalas, Christos and Müller, Julian 2015. "Un-doing Labour in Greece: Memoranda, Workfare and Eurozone 'Competitiveness'". *Global Labour Journal 6 (3):* 390 – 405.

Cahill, Damien 2014. The End of Laissez-Faire? On the Durability of Embedded Neoliberalism. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Chenoweth, Erica and Olsen, Tricia D. 2016. "Civil Resistance and Corporate Behavior". *Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series USAID/DCHA/DRG, Institute for International Education.* University of Denver.

Chenoweth, Erica and Stephan, Maria J. 2011. Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict. New York: Columbia University Press.

Clauwaert, Stefan and Schömann, Isabell 2012. "The crisis and national labour law reforms: A mapping exercise." *Working paper 2012:04.* Brussels: European Trade Union Institute.

Conway, Janet 2003. "Civil Resistance and the Diversity of Tactics in the Anti-Globalization Movement: Problems of Violence, Silence, and Solidarity in Activist Politics." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 41(2/2): 505-530.

Cox, Robert W. "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method." *Millennium* 12(2): 162-175.

Daouli, Joan; Demoussis, Michael; Giannakopoulos, Nikolas and Laliotis, Ioannis 2013. "The Impact of the 2011 Collective Bargaining Reform on Wage Adjustments in Greece". Draft Paper. *Department of Economics.* University of Patras.

della Porta, Donatella and Diani, Mario 1999. Social movements: an introduction. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

de Ligt, Bart (1972, [1937]): The Conquest of Violence: An Essay on War and Revolution. New York & London: Garland Publishing.

Den Plirono 2011. "About us – Why not pay for their crisis."   Den Plirono tin Krisi tous: http://denplirono.wordpress.com/about/ (accessed 07.01.2017)

DMN – Deutsche Mittelstandsnachrichten 2011. "Griechenland: Autofahrer reißen Autobahn-Mautstellen nieder." DMN: http://www.deutsche-mittelstands-nachrichten.de/2011/11/32242/ (accessed 03.04.2012)

Draper, Lucie 2015. "German, Russian and Chinese companies race to buy up Greek infrastructure." Newsweek – Business: http://europe.newsweek.com/german-russian-chinese-companies-race-buy-greek-infrastructure-327554 (accessed 01.02.2017)

Dudouet, Véronique 2008. "Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries." pp. 237-264 in *The Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation,* edited by Fischer, Martina; Gießmann, Hans J., and Schmelzle, Beatrix. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

ELSTAT – Hellenic Statistical Authority 2016. Estimated Population and Migration Flows 2015: http://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics?p_p_id=documents_WAR_publications portlet_INSTANCE_ (accessed 06.02.2017)

Engler, Mark and Engler, Paul 2014. "When the pillars fall — How social movements can win more victories like same-sex marriage." *Waging Nonviolence*: http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/pillars-fall-social-movements-can-win-victories-like-sex-marriage/ (accessed 23.01.2017)

Engler, Mark and Engler, Paul 2016. This is an uprising: How nonviolent revolt is shaping the twenty-first century. New York: Nation Books.

Kinima Den Plirono 2012. Epitropes Diodia Stop: *http://epitropesdiodiastop.blogspot.com/ (accessed 22.09.2020)*

Erodotos 2013. "Η πολιτική επιστράτευση των εργαζομένων στην Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης – Το χρονικό των επιστρατεύσεων [Political emergency action on employees in Greece after dictatorship – The chronicle of state mobilization]." Erodotos: http://erodotos.wordpress.com/2013/05/13/politiki-epistrateusi/ (accessed 09.02.2014)

European Commission 2012. "The Second Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece." *Occasional Papers 94* (March). Brussels: Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs.

European Commission 2013. Industrial Relations in Europe 2012. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/027bf4a1-b886-4d81-ba9d-54676a795dc6 (accessed 08.10.2020)

Ferrovial 2007. "Cintra signs its second toll road contract in Greece" Newsroom Press Releases (01.07.2007): https://newsroom.ferrovial.com/en/press_releases/cintra-signs-its-second-toll-road-contract-greece/ (accessed 09.09.2020)

Gandhi, Mohandas K. 1945. Constructive Program: Its Meaning and Place. Ahemadabad, India: Navajivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, Mohandas 2007. An Autobiography. The story of my experiments with truth. Wikilivres: http://wikilivres.ca/wiki/The_Story_of_My_Experiments_with_Truth/Part_IV/The_Birth_of_Satyagraha (accessed 22.02.2017)

George, Susan 1990. A Fate Worse Than Debt. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.

Gerbaudo, Paolo 2017. "The indignant citizen: anti-austerity movements in southern Europe and the anti-oligarchic reclaiming of citizenship." *Social Movement Studies* 16(1): 36-50.

German Foreign Policy 2017. "The only remaining boom sector." *German Foreign Policy:* http://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/fulltext/59000 (accessed 25.01.2017)

Gilens, Martin and Page, Benjamin 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12: 564–581.

Giugni, Marco G. 1998. "Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 371-93.

Guardian, The 2011. "Greece debt crisis: The 'we won't pay' anti-austerity revolt" *The Guardian:* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/31/greece-debt-crisis-anti-austerity (accessed 26.01.2017)

Jasper, James 2006. Getting Your Way: Strategic Dilemmas in the Real World. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Harrison, Virginia and Liakos, Chris 2015. "Greece defaults on $1.7 billion IMF payment" *CNN – Money*: http://money.cnn.com/2015/06/30/news/economy/greece-imf-default/ (accessed 31.01.2017)

Helvey, Robert 2004. *On Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals*. Boston: The Albert Einstein Institution.

Hemikoglou, Achilleas 2011. "«ΔΕΝ ΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ»Από την ανυπακοή στην ανομία" *To Vima 12/02/2011:* https://www.tovima.gr/2011/02/12/society/den-plirwnw-br-apo-tin-anypakoi-stin-anomia/ (accessed 22.09.2020)

Hermann, Christoph 2007. "Neoliberalism in the European Union." *Studies in Political Economy 79:* 61 – 90.

Hickel, Jason 2016. "Neoliberalism and the End of Democracy." Pp.142-152 in *Handbook of Neoliberalism*, edited by Simon Springer, Kean Birch and Julie MacLeavy. London: Taylor & Francis Group.

Höhler, Gerd 2011. "Griechenland: Proteste blockieren Athen." Handelsblatt: http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/griechenland-proteste-blockieren-athen/3829934.html (accessed 03.07.2012)

Hope, Kerin 2011. "Greeks adopt 'won't pay' attitude" *Financial Times* 09/03/2011: https://www.ft.com/content/84839398-4a6d-11e0-82ab-00144feab49a (accessed 22.09.2020)

Howes, Dustin E. 2009. *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Intrum Justitia 2016. European Consumer Payment Report 2016. Stockholm: Intrum Justitia AB: https://www.intrum.com/media/2633/epr2016.pdf (accessed 08.10.2020)

Intrum Justitia 2019. European Consumer Payment Report 2019. Stockholm: Intrum Justitia AB: https://www.intrum.com/media/6901/intrum-ecpr-2019_final_.pdf (accessed 08.10.2020)

ITUC 2012. Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights – Greece. UNHCR: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fd8894c2d.html (accessed 20.11.2013)

Kadritzke, Niels 2016. "Privatisierungsschwindel in Griechenland" *Le Monde Diplomatique:* https://monde-diplomatique.de/shop_content.php?coID=10007 (accessed 30.01.2017)

Kapsalis, Apostolos 2012. "Τα ελληνικά συνδικάτα στο περιβάλλον οικονομικής ύφεσης και κρίσης [Greek Trade Unions in the Environment of Economic Recession and Crisis]." *Rosa Luxemburg Foundation*: http://rosalux.gr/sites/default/files/kapsalis_greekfinal_0.pdf (accessed 23.10.2013)

Karanikolos, Marina and Kentikelenis, Alexander 2016. "Health inequalities after austerity in Greece." *International Journal for Equity in Health - The official journal of the International Society for Equity in Health 15:* 83.

Karatziou, Dina 2011. „«Δεν πληρώνω» και στις πλαζ" *Enet Eleftherotypia* 10/07/2011: http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=292037 (accessed 22.09.2020)

Karyoti, Olga 2012. „Es ist leichter Steine zu schmeißen, als unseren Arbeitsplatz dicht zu machen." Pp. 165 – 170 in *Politische Streiks im Europa der Krise,* edited by Alexander Gallas; Jörg Nowak and Florian Wilde   Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Hamburg: VSA.

Karyotis, Georgios and Rüdig, Wolfgang 2016. "The three waves of Anti-Austerity Protest in Greece 2010 – 2015." Prague: *European Consortium for Political Research*.

Kassimi, Alexandra; Bouloutza, Penny and Lialios, Giorgos 2011. "Κίνημα με σύνθημα «Δεν πληρώνω»" *Kathimerini* 15/01/2011: https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/415779/kinima-me-synthima-den-plirono/ (accessed 22.09.2020)

Katsoridas, Dimitris and Lambousaki, Sofia 2012. Οι απεργίες το 2011 (The strikes in 2011). Athens: Institute of Employment.

Kennedy, Geoff 2016. "Embedding neoliberalism in Greece: The transformation of collective bargainig and labour market policy in Greece during the Eurozone crisis". *Studies in Political Economy 97(3):* 253 – 269.

Kouzis, Giannis, Georgiadou, Penny, Kapsalis, Apostolos, Kousta, Eleni, Lambousaki, Sofia and Stamati, Anta 2011. Οι εργασιακές σχέσεις στην Ευρώπη και στην Ελλάδα. Ετήσια έκθεση 2011 [Industrial Relations in Europe and in Greece. Annual Report 2011]. Athens: Institute of Employment.

Kretsos, Lefteris 2010. "The Effects of the Crisis on the Greek Construction Industry: From the Olympus Mountain to the Kaida Cliff." *Construction Labor Research News:* http://www.clr-news.org/CLR-News/CLR%20News%203-2010.pdf (accessed 05.05.2013)

Leontidou, Lila 2012. "Athens in the Mediterranean 'movement of the piazzas'. Spontaneity in material and virtual public spaces" *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action* 16: 299-312.

Linardou, Georgia and Polychroniadis, Babis 2010. „Το κίνημα του «δεν πληρώνω, δεν πληρώνω»" *Eleftherotypia* 20/06/2020: http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=175009 (accessed 22.09.2020)

Luders, Joseph E. 2010. The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Maney, Gregory; Rachel Kutz-Flamenbaum, Deana Rohlinger, and Jeff Goodwin 2012. Strategies for Social Change. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Markakis, Menelaos; Dermine, Paul 2018. "Bailouts, the legal status of Memoranda of Understanding, and the scope of application of the EU Charter: Florescu." *Common Market Law Review*, 55(2): 643-672.

Markantonatou, Maria 2013. Diagnosis, Treatment, and Effects of the Crisis in Greece: A "special Case" or a "Test Case"? *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies Discussion Paper* 13/3.

Martin, Brian 1989. "Gene Sharp's Theory of Power." *Journal of Peace Research* 26: 213-222.

Martin, Brian 2001. Nonviolence versus Capitalism. London: War Resisters' International.

Martin, Brian 2005. "Researching Nonviolent Action: Past themes and Future possibilities." *Peace & Change. 30(2)*: 247 – 270.

Martin, Brian; Johansen, Jørgen and Meyer, Matt 2012. "Non-violence versus US imperialism." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 47(38): 82-89.

McAdam, Doug 1982. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McAdam, Doug, McCarthy, John D., and Zald, Mayer N. 1996. Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Migkos, Vassilis 2013. "The Polytechnic Uprising of Nov 1973: A Greek Nonviolent Movement against the Greek Junta" *Transcend Media Service*: https://www.transcend.org/tms/2013/11/the-polytechnic-uprising-of-nov-1973-a-greek-nonviolent-movement-against-the-greek-junta/ (accessed 22.09.2020)

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson 2015. "Nonviolent Resistance Research." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*. 20: 415-26.

Oberdabernig, Doris Anita 2012. "Revisiting the Effects of IMF Programs on Poverty and Inequality." *Department of Economics Working Paper Series*. Vienna University of Economics and Business.

Olympia Odos S.A. 2020. "Shareholders." *Olympia Odos*:
https://www.olympiaodos.gr/en/project/Metoxoi/ (accessed 09.09.2020).

Ostry, Jonathan D.; Loungani, Prakash and Furceri, Davide 2016.
"Neoliberalism: Oversold?." *IMF, Finance and Development 53 (2)*: 38 – 41

Pautz, Hartwig and Kominou Margarita 2013 "Reacting to 'Austerity Politics':
The Tactic of Collective Expropriation in Greece" *Social Movement Studies:
Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 12(1): 103-110

Statista 2020 "Greece: National debt in relation to gross domestic product
(GDP) from 2014 to 2024" *H. Plecher*:
https://www.statista.com/statistics/270413/national-debt-of-greece-in-
relation-to-gross-domestic-product-gdp/ (accessed 22.09.2020)

Press Project, The 2016. "Αυτή είναι η σύμβαση με την Φράπορτ [This is the
agreement with Fraport]". TPP:
https://www.thepressproject.gr/article/88058/Auti-einai-i-sumbasi-me-tin-
Fraport (accessed 15.01.2017)

Reuters 2012. "Council of Europe says some Greek labor reforms illegal." World
News: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eurozone-greece-court-
idUSBRE89H1M420121018 (accessed 27.08.2013)

Reynolds, Lionel 2015. "The Greek Economic Crisis, The Social Impacts of
Austerity. Debunking the Myths" Centre for Research on Globalization:
http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-greek-economic-crisis-the-social-impacts-of-
austerity-debunking-the-myths/5431010 (accessed 02.02.2017)

Riedl, Aleksandra; Silgoner, Maria A. and Knollmayer, Angelika 2015. "The
mixed success of EU-IMF adjustment programs in Europe – why Greece was
different". *Focus on European Economic Integration Q4/15:* 52-70.

RLF - Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation 2016. "Europa am Scheideweg." Audiofile:
http://www.rosalux.de/event/57385 (accessed 03.02.2017)

RT 2013. "'We Won't Pay': Greek activists reconnect power to poverty-stricken
homes" RT News: https://www.rt.com/news/dont-pay-movement-austerity-
212/ (accessed 06.02.2017)

Rüdig, Wolfang and Karyotis, Georgios 2014. "Who protests in Greece? Mass
Opposition to Austerity." *British Journal of Political Science 44 (3)*: 487-513.

Satha-Anand, Chaiwat 2015. "Overcoming Illusory Division: Between
Nonviolence as a Pragmatic Strategy and a Principled Way of Life." Pp. 289-301
in *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle,* edited
by Kurt Schock. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Schock, Kurt 2015. "Introduction: Civil Resistance in Comparative Perspective."
Pp. 1-32 in *Civil Resistance: Comparative Perspectives on Nonviolent Struggle,*
edited by Kurt Schock. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Scholte, Jan Aart 2005. "The Sources of Neoliberal Globalization." *Overarching Concerns. Programme Paper* Number 8. October 2005. Switzerland: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Sharp, Gene 1973. The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers.

Simiti, Marilena 2014. "Rage and Protest: The Case of the Greek Indignant Movement" *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe – GreeSE Paper No. 82*. London School of Economics. European Institute.

Springer, Simon, Birch, Kean and MacLeavy, Julie. 2016. Handbook of Neoliberalism. London: Taylor & Francis Group.

Soederberg, Susanne; Menz, George and Cerny, Philip. 2005. "Different Roads to Globalization: Neoliberalism, the Competition State, and Politics in a More Open World." pp. 1–30 in *Internalizing Globalization: The Rise of Neoliberalism and the Decline of National Varieties of Capitalism*, edited by Susanne Soederberg, George Menz, and Philip Cerny. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Solidarity for All 2016. Solidarity Structures: http://www.solidarity4all.gr/el/structures (accessed 29.12.2016)

Sørensen Majken Jul and Johansen, Jørgen 2016. "Nonviolent Conflict Escalation." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly 34 (1)*: 83 – 108.

Streeck, Wolfgang 2013. "The Politics of Public Debt: Neoliberalism, Capitalist Development, and the Restructuring of the State." *MPIfG Discussion Paper 13/7*. Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies.

SYN 2014. "Ιστορικό" Συνασπισμός της Αριστεράς των Κινημάτων και της Οικολογίας: http://www.syn.gr/gr/tmima.php?gl=el&page=59 (accessed 22.09.2020)

Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios 2014. "The Ambivalence of Anti-Austerity Indignation in Greece: Resistance, Hegemony and Complicity" *History and Anthropology* 25(4): 488-506.

Tzanavara, Chara 2011. "Πανελλαδικό αντάρτικο παρά τις απειλές" *Eleftherotypia* 07/02/2011: http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=248918 (accessed 22.09.2020)

UNCTAD 2013. *Review of Maritime Transport 2013*. United Nations Publications.

U.S. Department of State 2015. *Investment Climate Statement - Greece. May 2015*. Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs: https://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2015/241576.htm (accessed 01.01.2017)

Van Apeldoorn, Bastiaan 2013. "The European Capitalist Class and the Crisis of its Hegemonic Project." *Socialist Register (50)*: 189–206.

Varoufakis, Yanis 2011. "Can't Pay, won't pay!" From Dario Fo's play to our contemporary Greek dystopia" *Yanis Varoufakis – Thoughts for the post-2008 world*: https://yanisvaroufakis.eu/2011/10/22/cant-pay-wont-pay-from-dario-fos-play-to-our-contemporary-greek-dystopia/ (accessed 03.02.2017)

Vio-Me 2017. "Τέσσερα χρόνια αυτοδιαχείριση στην BIO.ME.[Four Years of Self-Management at Vio.Me]" Industrial Mining Workers' Union: http://biom-metal.blogspot.de/ (accessed 06.02.2017)

Vogiatzoglou, Markos 2014. "Die griechische Gewerkschaftsbewegung: Protest- und Sozialbewegungen im Kontext der Austeritätspolitik" *WSI Mittleiungen* 5/24. p. 361-368.

Weisbrot, Mark; Rosnick, David and Stephan Lefebvre 2015. The Greek Economy: Which way forward? Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Wenman, Mark A. 2005. "Power" pp. 370-399 in *Political Concepts. A Reader and Guide,* edited by Ian McKenzie. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

About the author

Dalilah Shemia-Goeke grew up in Berlin and Athens, studied Sociology, Political Science and Psychology (B.A.) at Humboldt University in Berlin, and Global Political Economy (M.A.) in Kassel and at Rutgers University, USA. She has been an activist, organizer, peace worker and nonviolent action researcher in the areas of social, environmental and economic justice. Currently she is a Doctoral Student at the University of Wollongong, Australia writing about people power for corporate accountability. She speaks German, English, Greek and Spanish. Contact: d.shemia-goeke AT posteo.de

In, against and beyond the demand:
Demand and identity as breakwaters of the content of collective action. The concept of form as the embodiment of emancipatory dimensions of struggle. The experience of the claim for housing at the University of the Aegean

Marios Panierakis

Abstract

The University of the Aegean did not remain unaffected by the overall implementation of austerity policies following the economic crisis of 2008. In this paper, we examine the collective action expressed in Mytilene in 2013, following the cutback on funding for student residences. In particular, we explore the meaning, political significance and limits of this collective action, questioning the notions of collective identity and demand. The latter interpret, at first sight, the outbreak of collective action, but fail to signify its emancipatory aspects. The paper's central thesis is that those categories (demand and collective identity) obstruct the development of its context. In contrast, we support that a concept of form that underlines the fragility of social relation can be the starting point of an emancipatory theory. This study is based on fieldnotes, semi-structured interviews, and on the assemblies and the texts of the collective actors.

Keywords: Demand, Collective Identity, Non-identity, Form, Occupation, Collective Action, Melucci, University of the Aegean

Introduction

Over the last 12 years a notable amount of collective action has taken place in Greece. The most memorable actions – but by no means the only ones – being the uprising that followed the assassination of Alexandos Grigoropoulos, the "laboratory of new worlds" that took place on the squares in 2011, and stORGI,[1] that poured out onto the streets after the assassination of Zackie Oh! In this paper, we will set aside the major uprisings in order to comment on a hitherto invisible collective expression: the struggle of the students of the Aegean

---

[1] The word "stORGI" (Greek: στORGH) is a constructed word created in the struggles that followed the assassination of Zackie oh! It has a double meaning in the Greek language. On the one hand it refers to 'οργή' (orgi) which means rage and, on the other, it alludes to 'στοργή' (storgi), which means affection/caring. More about this play of words in a future paper.

University for the right to housing that took place in Mytilene at the end of 2013.

In turning our attention to this small place, our aim is not only to remember the collective action itself but also to address larger issues. Therefore, our central concern is how the demand placed through collective actions relates to the content of those actions. More specifically, we express our fear that the demand of collective struggles can lead to the institutionalization of collective processes; however, we also voice our hope that the social relations created between collective actors can potentially lead to the emergence of emancipatory dimensions of the struggles. At the same time, our study is not free of desires: this research is driven by a desire, the desire to create different worlds. This central concern has also been applied to our hypothesis: the demand gives symmetrical (in relation to the dominant world) forms to the struggle and, thereby, undermines the emancipatory dimensions of the struggles and/or the possibility that the new worlds created in the inner core of those struggles can become rooted.

As regards the method, our physical presence in the invisible networks and in the collective action described points towards the use of field study as an observation tool[2]. Our research was complemented with texts and assembly proceedings of the "Struggle Committee of Lesbos[3] for Claiming Housing" (the

---

[2] By acknowledging our presence in the collective action of the SCL, not only do we substantiate our participation in the action and the discourse of the subjects under study, but, even more so, we set on track the adoption of an epistemological perspective that seeks the osmosis of the writing subject with the struggling subjects (subjects of study). In light of this fact, the act of our writing seeks to create a channel of communication between theory and practice, through which new forms of resistance can emerge. Similarly, our choice to communicate this research also carries the hope that the collective action of the SCL will be a source of inspiration for further mobilization. Motivated by this position, we make use of the first person plural. This choice is the result of two refusals. Firstly, the refusal to use the third person singular, the dominance of which coincides with the acceptance of an example that seeks 'objective knowledge' and 'truth'. Its use, therefore, signifies the clear distinction between the cognitive subject and the object of knowledge, a distinction which, particularly in the case of social sciences, can be characterized as false at the very least. In addition, the use of the third person singular reflects a condition that remains constant or whose change lies beyond our power. The second refusal is that of the use of the first person singular, both for the excessive graveness it exudes and for its symbolic content as a crowning of the academic rationale that prevails in contemporary scientific discourse due to the demand for productivity.

On the contrary, the choice of the first person plural symbolically recognizes the writing of this text as an act of 'we'. In other words, if it were not for this collective effort, we would not be able to convey these words to you. Thus, the use of 'we' will hereinafter be used to refer to all the above. However, the use of the first person plural does not align the given text with a collective reference. As such, the author is fully responsible for its content. Finally, this extensive parenthesis - small enough to cover the issues it opens up - was developed in the presentation: "Epistemological aspects of a squat or how I fell in love with Stella", of May 2019.

[3] At this point, we must make a geographical clarification. The University of the Aegean is located in a group of islands in the Eastern Aegean (Lesvos, Chios, Lemnos, Samos), the Dodecanese (Rhodes) and the Cyclades (Syros), while its headquarters are located in Mytilene, the capital of the island of Lesvos. The collective process we describe took place in Mytilene.

collectivity of students housed in student residences, henceforth referred to as SCL), as well as interviews with thirteen individuals who were directly involved in the mobilization (seven housing beneficiaries, four solidarians, an administration worker and the Vice Rector for Academic and Student Affairs of the University). Two series of interviews were conducted: the first took place a month after the completion of the mobilization, and its central questions had to do with the internal relations of the actors. The second took place in May 2014, and its central question was the political content of the collective action. However, what is of pivotal importance in the given text is the critical reading of Melucci's work concerning the conceptual category of form and that of identity/demand. That said, prior to moving on to the interpretation of the collective action, we must refer to some historical evidence.

The issue of housing at the University of the Aegean and the curtailment of available student residences

The University of the Aegean had been dealing with chronic housing problems. The lack of privately owned beds[4], the renting of rooms located 17km outside the city (at a distance of 20km from the University) and the absence of a regular transport network create an impasse for those living in student residences. In addition, the announcement of housing beneficiaries on 23/10/2013 included an unanticipated reduction of 26 beds[5].

The number of students who were able to secure accommodation for the academic year 2013-2014 was 154, far fewer than the beneficiaries and the applicants. This caused uproar among students who already had accommodation. More specifically, we attempted to deal with the matter through personal strategies (co-habitation, objections, leaving the island). However, we almost immediately opted for collective processes, such as daily assemblies at the region of Pirgoi Thermis, where most student residences were located.

The first public protest over the housing issue – following the cutback on funding for student residences – took place on 31/10/2013, outside the Regional Student Welfare Council (henceforth referred to as RSWC), which was examining the objections of the rejected beneficiaries. It is at this point that our first question arises: How does "I" become "we"? Even better, through which

---

However, one year before that, the collectivity of students housed in the dormitories was named "Struggle Committee of Lesbos" (SCL) (Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου in Greek), thus further highlighting the issue of the excessive distance of the student residences from the university itself.

4 The year that followed the occupation, the authorities of the University announced plans to construct student residences.

5 This reduction was part of the overall implementation of austerity policies carried out by the Greek Governments.

processes did the actors become collective? This is the guiding question in the following section.

The denial of student identity and the dimensions of non-identity

In our first public appearance we, the collective actors, shared a text entitled: "We are being deprived of our studies" (SCLCH 2013a). This wording presented, in a condensed form, the anger caused by the cuts in the number of beds. The value of the title is not merely that it is the first one issued by the collectivity regarding the cutback on funding; it also crystallizes the denial of student identity by the rectorate authorities.

The denial of identity can be found primarily in the words of the collective actors. We, the students, experienced intense feelings of injustice, disappointment and frustration. "*We were afraid that we were about to lose our lives in a sense, [...] they were pushing us away, we had nowhere to go, no idea what to do ...*" G. points out. "*Suddenly*", A. states, "*just as you are about to receive your degree, they tell you that you won't be able to attend classes because you don't have a home*". Similarly, P. notes: "*Some were crying. They were so disappointed at the idea of having to leave! That their studies were coming to a close, forcibly, violently. In a way, it seemed that their life, everything [...] they had built here, was somehow being taken away, [...] that they were being forced to leave*". For those who were banished from the student residences, student and academic life was over. "*They had to leave the island, discontinue their studies, this story had come to an end for them*", adds P. Therefore, we see that we, as rejected housing beneficiaries, shared anger, frustration, and emotion.

By refusing to launch a new tender for the provision of housing – which resulted in the loss of 26 rooms – the rectorate authorities directly intervened in the biosphere, the social relations, the needs and desires of the given subjects. Thus, they avoided identifying us as students.[6]

---

[6] As Melucci (1996) notes, identity is a relational state. Therefore, the lack of hetero-recognition means loss of identity, loss of a piece of one's self. This loss, however, opens up possible opportunities.

As a result, we "opened"[7] the conflict with the rectorate authorities, precisely in order to redefine and regain[8] our (student) identity[9], which the latter had denied us. We tried to reclaim things that belonged to us and which we recognized in ourselves: the right to housing and, consequently, the right to study.[10] As pointed out in the texts of the collectivity: "Whoever does not recognize our right to housing, does not recognize our right to study" (SCLCH and Solidarians 2013a & SCLCH 2013b).

Thus, we notice that the collective process is triggered by the feeling of frustration that permeates the housing beneficiaries. A feeling reflected in the contestation of student identity by the rectorate authorities. This challenge reveals two competing dimensions. The dimension of the non-student, imposed by the actions of the rectorate authorities[11] and a dimension that explodes through this former state of the non-student. This explosion may have been present in the first texts and in the demands of the collective actors as a student identity, but it is the openness of the suppressed dimension that sparks the dynamic of the collective process. The oppressed "us" draws its volcanic power from the very fact that it does not fit anywhere. (Holloway 2009: 13)

But what is the promise borne by the explosion of non-identity, this open state that unfolds a series of contingencies?

---

[7] It is not by chance that we use the verb 'open'; it signifies the prior presence of conflict and, therefore, the defetishizing of social relations brought about by the questioning of the student identity.

[8] The verb regain is problematic in this case, as it only projects one dimension of non-identity Indeed, the struggle often takes the form of a defense against old identities (Holloway 1996: 45). However, this form is rather restrictive with regard to the content of the struggle itself. On the contrary, we wish to argue that the non-identity movement, which exploded after the rectorate authorities refused to launch a new tender for housing, opened up a field of possibilities.

[9] The use of the word identity is already provisional. As Melucci himself observes (Melucci 2002: 207-208 & Melucci 1996: 72), the semantic root of the word implies an essentialist character, which presents it as a given reality. This character does not respond to its use. Therefore, the concept of identity could more accurately be portrayed as identification. This lexical transformation underlines the relational and procedural nature of the concept, eliminating its essentialist elements.

[10] The adjective that accompanies the term housing – namely: 'self-evident' – is indicative (SCLCH 2013b). Similarly, in the following text we observe: "*Housing ought to be considered every person's indisputable right*" (SCLCH and Solidarians 2013d).

[11] Moving forward in time, the phrase that was used in the texts of the rectorate authorities is worth mentioning, for it illustrates the fact that that the collective actors were not recognized as students: "*The rectorate authorities call occupiers to hand over the Rector's Building of the University of the Aegean to the academic community*" (text with collected signatures 2013 & Rectorate Authorities 2013). Here, the collective actors are referred to as being external subjects with regard to the academic community. This distinction is so pronounced that it is actually emphasized twice within the sentence.

A chronicle of the mobilizations

Before moving on, we consider it useful to submit a timeline of the mobilizations. On the fifth of November we marched on the streets of Mytilene – informing the public about the lack of student residences – and held an open assembly in the city center. Through this process we decided to symbolically occupy the Rector's Building with a series of demands: (a) immediate access to housing for those who are in need and are not staying in student residences; (b) reinstatement of (at least) 30 beds; (c) a monthly rent allowance for those who were entitled to housing and were not housed yet and (d) free public education for all. The following day, 6/11, we occupied the Rector's Building of the University. This occupation turned out to be long-lasting, following communications with the Vice Rector. This occupation was legitimized by the Student Associations, the Association of Professors and Researchers and the board of Administrator Workers of the University of the Aegean on the grounds that the demands of the actors were just.

In summary, with regard to the demands, on 15/11 the RSWC proposed a re-launch of the tender and the provision of financial support to the beneficiaries who were forced to leave their homes. Nevertheless, we continued the occupation until 23/11, the date set by the rectorate authorities as that of meeting the demands (Soulakelis 2013). The commitment was partly fulfilled and, following a thank-you party the next day,[12] we abandoned the building, (SCLCH and Solidarians 2013b). The nineteen-day occupation is the core of the empirical material upon which we will base our theoretical inquiry.

It must be noted that the decision to terminate the occupation was accompanied by an intense sense of awkwardness. At the last assembly of the occupation, the dominant question was: "*Can this be called a victory*?" The debate yielded affirmative answers, B. stresses: "*We are going to end the occupation with a victory that leaves a legacy behind*", while H. notes that "*it is a struggle that was won*" and urges for "*the fight to continue. There was a more general proposition: public and free education, rather than an abstract claim*". At the same time, there was a strong rhetoric regarding the uniqueness of the victorious outcome of the occupation: "*There has never before been a victorious occupation in Mytilene,*" note G. and A., among others (Assembly proceedings, 23/11/2013). The proceedings conclude with yet another question: "*I haven't understood! So, this is a closing, final-reflection assembly*?" (Proceedings of Assembly, 23/11/2013). How are we to interpret the frustration felt at the end of the occupation, given that the demands of the actors appear to have been met? How can we interpret this underlying conflict between the confirmation of a student's identity and the continuation of the struggle?

---

[12]One must not underestimate the significance of celebration and laughter within the context of collective action. However, we will not attempt to highlight this significant aspect in this article.

Beyond the contentious aspects of the struggle: the emancipatory dimensions of the occupation

We have already mentioned the demands of this specific collective action and the timeline of the mobilizations. However, the new dimension that the collective actors brought to the foreground adduces (at the same time) evidence with a deeper symbolic and material content. More specifically, we will argue that the very form of mobilization compounds contents that are quite different from those portrayed by established trade unionist forms.

Within the contentious framework, we, the collective actors, though often unknown to each other, developed meaningful relationships. In addition to the lack of competitive behavior and the climate of mutual appreciation, the protagonists themselves also note that: "*It was a community [...] we shared common concerns, [...] there was no sense of alienation, no place for critical looks, we were all in it together [...]. I don't know if it sounds rather romantic, but that is what it was like*", P. admits. Also, A. adds "*Some friendships have been created that I personally did not expect [...] all of a sudden you are talking and saying [...] important things about yourself /things that are important to you*".[13]

The bonds we formed were so strong that they resembled those of family. "*We had formed ties like those of a family, even though there were a lot of people I didn't even know*", S. notes, and A. adds. "*We had come to know each other, we had really become a family, and it was nice. And a family has its tensions [...], its tears, and its grievances. And so did we, this occupation had it all, it was a pleasant occupation! It had its flirts, its romances*".

It is no coincidence that we also sought communication through artistic expression. Despite the overwhelming exhaustion, there were many times when you would catch us all playing music together, reading or discussing. As S. says, "*We knew what the morning would bring. Tomorrow would be another day of endless struggle from morning till night. So, we had to [...] gather strength, and we could take some wine and drink it as a group, we could play our guitars and sing our song*". Overall, P. comments, "*we experienced a creative state like that found within all these struggles, [...] we found ourselves producing things*". This creative state, he continues, is different to capitalist production: "*Productive creation, rather than production*". As a result, the collective action developed by SCL was struggling to redefine housing but also to reclaim everyday life.

This distinct formation of social relations within the occupation was also reflected in collective decision-making processes, in assemblies. The assembly was a daily, open and dynamic process during the occupation. Despite its dynamic nature, some elements remained stable over time. Perhaps the most important was the circular arrangement. Al. points out the importance of the

---

[13] "Σημαντικά πράγματα για σένα» in Greek this phrase has a double meaning.

circle: "*The assembly [...] was for me [something] impressive. Even just looking at the circle of us as an image evoked something very collective*".

The circular arrangement of faces does not only serve practical purposes (the reading of the "other" body); it also emits a symbolism. It rejects bureaucratized and representative democracy and proposes a 'face-to-face' democracy. By extension, the circular arrangement of faces reflects the practice of horizontality observed by this particular venture. Furthermore, the positioning of the participants at the same level within the circle seems to correspond to the rejection of hierarchy and the conscious absence of the expert. As C. notes "*The collective occupation kept up well, it maintained horizontal relationships, I do not think it allowed any room for [the discovery of] a hierarchical structure, a vertical structure. And this, if you like, is also highlighted in the assemblies*". From G.'s words that: "*We managed to all be equal inside it, [...] no one is inferior, no one is superior*" to D.'s thought that "*there were no hierarchies. [...] I think that covers everything. And that was for me, as I said before, unheard of. When I realized this, I said [...] in our times, this alone is reason for hope*", it becomes obvious that the adoption of the circle in the assembly transformed the process from a mere administrative process to a deeply political one.

As a result, the assembly process is permeated by a deeper, dual meaning. On the one hand, it brings the collective actors into conflict with the institutionalized trade unionist form of student unions, as the latter insist on recycling the status quo. We are not dealing with a mere conflict between direct and indirect democracy but rather with a deeper discordancy between the form and the meaning of doing (prattein, πράττειν). At this point, reference should be made to an incident that took place on the second day of the occupation of the Rector's Building (7/11/2013), during the first open assembly at the occupation site. The assembly enjoyed massive participation. The circle created covered a space of 70-90 m². As in all assemblies of the occupation, the participants had direct visual contact with each other. The topics discussed included the daily actions of the occupation, procedural issues and financial assistance issues (Open Assembly proceedings, 7/11/2013). On this day, the presence of new colleagues in the field required a brief presentation of the situation. Thus, the issue of the lack of beds was raised, and the previous collective actions of the actors prior to the occupation were made public (Open Assembly proceedings, 7/11/2013). At that moment, a technical question regarding the functioning of the council of student welfare was raised. The particularity of the question was addressed with hasty and incomplete answers.

During this brief discussion, one could spontaneously take the floor, and this was done without a coordinator. After someone had finished speaking there was a few second's pause, until the next "bold voice" was heard. The only unwritten rules: be respectful towards speakers and listeners and show moderation so that everyone gets to be heard (Open Assembly proceedings, 7/11/2013). The abovementioned question was considered of minor importance and, as a result, it was followed by brief comments which attempted to address the issue hastily

(Open Assembly proceedings, 7/11/2013). At this point, there was an intervention by a student representative of the Welfare Council, who was also a member of the traditional left-wing party. When he began his intervention, he stood up and, stressing that he is a student representative dealing with these issues, he tried to answer the questions exhaustively. Apart from the symbolic nature of this move, his speech – as observed in the proceedings – focused on the bureaucratic steps that the university rectory tends to follow with regard to housing, a briefing on the work already done by the regional council and, finally, on the demands that the students ought to bring forward (Open Assembly proceedings, 7/11/2013). After this intervention, several participants left the room. The conversation ended abruptly. A telling piece of information: only nine lines were written in the proceedings after that.[14]

On the other hand, the assembly process it realizes in the 'here and now' not only the form of democracy but, more importantly, aspects of the world that collective actors envision. Therefore, we could characterize the assembly process as the organizational form that condenses the symbolic challenge to that which exists. At the same time, it captures aspects of the meanings that we, the collective actors, wish to communicate to the outside world. These challenges do not lie merely within the spatial and temporal boundaries of the occupation but, on the contrary, "travel", with the bodies and words of the participants. As C. notes: "*I think that this crack that opened up in the given place, in the people who lived it […] will stay! […] You cannot leave it behind, […] you carry it with you as a reminder that, through such forms of collective action, new meanings can be developed and born*".

The "organizational form" as the embodiment of the emancipatory dimensions of struggle

The abovementioned aspects include the emancipatory dimensions of the collective action under study. On the one hand, the questioning and denial of dominant social relations; on the other, the collective imprint – through the constitutional creation of different social relations – on the "here and now" of meanings that call into question the dominant signification of life while, at the same time, show at the "formal" society different ways of doing. According to Melucci, this is exactly what new social movements are striving for: namely, to give an alternative meaning to social action. This struggle to change society is embedded in everyday life (Melucci 1984: 827). In this sense, social movements

---

[14] This incident, typical of the clash of meanings between a trade unionist form of organization and the emancipatory aspects of social movements, has been interpreted in a previous article using Graeber's term of imaginary counterpower. Panierakis, M. (2017): «Symbolic aspects of an Occupation: Ritual, Non-Identity, and Imaginary Counterpower at the Collective Action of the "Struggle Committee of Lesvos" for claiming housing», Society's Dromena 3. pp.7-18, Thessaloniki. (in Greek)

state by their very existence that a different present is possible (Melucci 1985: 812 & Melucci1984: 830).

Therefore, Melucci (1984: 821) emphasizes the "organizational form" of collective action[15] as, according to him, the form of contemporary movements is the expression of the message that social subjects wish to convey to society. Thus, it urges us to interpret the meaning of any action through the actors' own internal relationships (Melucci 1985: 809)[16]. As he notes: "*the new organizational form of contemporary movements is not just "instrumental" for their goals. It is a goal in itself [...] the form of the movement is a message, a symbolic challenge to the dominant patterns*" (Melucci 1984: 830)[17]. Organizational forms, he continues,

> ...are the basis for the internal collective identity, but also for the symbolic confrontation with the system, People are offered the possibility of another experience of time, space, interpersonal relations, which opposes operational rationality of apparatuses. A different way of naming the world suddenly reverses the dominant codes (Melucci 1984: 830).

Melucci's two incomplete inversions

Here we observe an underground attack by Melucci on the contentious aspect of collective action. This challenge might not be referred to in name, but it is developed in another part of his work, namely when he comments that success and failure are meaningless concepts with regard to the symbolic challenge of movements (1985: 813 & 1984: 830). His insistence on linking the content of collective action not to the goal of the given mobilization (the demand) but rather to the everyday life shaped by the collective actors themselves separates the content of a collective process from its demand. This decoupling is extremely important as it emphasizes the social relations of the actors, the form of the mobilization. In other words, aspects that had not only been ignored by previous scholars but also, in essence, constitute the material basis for autonomy.

At the same time, while Melucci detects in the concept of "*organizational form*" the importance of the content/of the internal social relations in contemporary collective action – as it is through organizational forms that the desired social relationships of collective actors are reflected/realized and diffuse/resonate on a

---

[15] Besides, he traces the notable difference of new social movements compared to labor movements in the form of organization (Melucci 1985: 799).

[16] Back to the words of the collective actors, H. notes that the way the SCL is organized "*is by no means accidental*". The absence of hierarchy, the existence of equality, etc., carry meanings desirable for the actors.

[17] See also (Melucci 1985: 812).

symbolic level the changes that collective actors want to bring about – he fails to complete the reversal.

In a nutshell: (a) he does not highlight the way in which demands can place limitations on a collective process, as he focuses solely on the symbolic content of a collective action. Therefore, b) the concept of the demand, albeit exaggerated, returns through the confirmation of the identity (identity is the other side of the demand) and, much more importantly, c) he does not give prominence to the emancipatory dimension of a collective action as being in an ecstatic relationship with the demand. More particularly:

A) The demand as a breakwater of collective action and the emancipatory dimension in ecstatic relation to the demand

We observe that uprisings, mobilizations and collective processes in general appear in public discourse as a demand. Let us consider, for example, the occupation of the Rector's Building of the University of the Aegean: the mobilization was presented as a housing claim and recorded in a more general framework of contention, namely, that of public and free education. Therefore, collective action indicates its presence through the demand. In the collective action of the SCL, in particular, the existence of a demand for the restoration of the student residences for which funding had been curtailed may have initially led to a coming together (of students and/or other social groups of the University of the Aegean). However, it also placed limits on the collective process, for: (a) it presented an end to the collective process which had no direct relevance to the collective relations of the actors; b) it put collective action under the control of the university institutions and, thus, placed the collective process in a relationship of subordination within the existing trade unionist forms[18].

Furthermore, the demand obscures the wealth of the social relationships we create within the uprisings. Collective actions exist through the demand, but at the same time they exist against and beyond the demand. The content of a mobilization overflows; it escapes the demand. We have seen that we, the collective actors, have formed social relationships beyond the contentious framework we created. The emancipatory dimension of the mobilization is not identical to its demand. It is rather an ecstatic relationship, one in which the content revolts against the demand, seeking its own autonomy. The last assembly of the occupation proves exactly that: the social relationships we developed within the

---

[18] However it is very important to underline that collective actors have already rejected the logic of demand, as P. claims "*we are not demanding from the state to resolve the problem regarding our housing, we are doing it as political subjects; through our terms*" (Proceedings of assembly 19/11/13). In this respect, see the key discussion regarding prefigurative politics and the movement of the squares over the last years. For example, in an interview David Graeber (2011) claims "*If you make demands, (...) you're asking the people in power and the existing institutions to do something different. And one reason people have been hesitant to do that is they see these institutions as the problem*". In this context, see the discussion of van de Sande (2013) over the successfulness of the revolutions.

occupation created the image of a different world, a world that was challenged when the demands were met. Therefore, when we argue that the content of collective action appears through the demand, we are in fact saying that the content of the collective action is the crisis of the demand. Content and demand are in a state of inner conflict.

B) Identity as another aspect of the demand

Here we need to remind the reader that the concept of identity came to the forefront when the rectorate authorities refused to recognize us as students[19]. At the same time, the collective action of the SCL opened up possibilities of collective identities, which, in the end, reaffirmed the identity of the student through the satisfaction of the demands of the collective actors. We acknowledge that demands contribute to the development of the collective process for, without them, the "scream" of the collective actors would not have been expressed in the first place; neither would the struggle have resonated with the teachers and administrators.

However, we observe that identity is another aspect of the demand. The demands of the action of SCL presupposed and sought the recognition of the collective actors as students. Conversely, the identity of the student was, according to the discourse of the collective actors, directly related to the satisfaction of the demands. Nevertheless, if the struggle is solely related to the identity of the collective actors, then it is given an expiry date and it is limited to the strict boundaries set by identity itself. The expiry date is set by the acceptance of the demands by the rectorate authorities. Furthermore, the limits of the mobilization do not reach beyond the institutionalized social relations that exist within the social context of the University.

That said, we have seen that the outbreak of the collective process is explosive; the actors open up a field of possibilities without any prescribed path. The content of the struggle involved meanings that largely exceeded the logic of the demand (and the confirmation of the student's identity); contents that eventually came into conflict with the demands of the collective action itself.

Here, we recognize another dimension of identity (and, at the same time, of demands): the congealing dimension. The demand presents a homogenized mobilization and, at the same time, the mobilization is presented as an exogenous force that could change society; in other words, as an object. Thus, on the one hand, demands cannot capture the diversity of the collective subjects and, on the other hand, they present the conflict as something external. Consequently, the demand and the concept of identity congeal the potential mobility of a collective action and allow it to take only one direction. We could

---

[19] Here lies, first and foremost, the value of Melucci's perception, as he recognizes the possibility of the reconstruction of identity through the actions of the subjects. Therefore, the process of opening up identity is not simply the result of the rulings of the rectorate authorities but, rather, the result of the actions of the collective actors.

argue that the demand not only conceals the life existing within the movements but, more importantly, objectifies the social relationships we create within them.

C) From form to asymmetry

The notion of form in Melucci manages to place the social relationships we create within collective actions in a prominent position. However, in our view, the concept of "organizational form" in Melucci has two weaknesses: the first is that it presents the organizational forms of collective action as fixed, determinate, rather than as open processes. This results in both the absence of inner conflict within the struggles and the recognition of the system's "symbolic challenges" as challenges arising, exclusively, from the 'outside', from a source that is external to the social relations of capitalism. This way, Melucci removes the explosiveness that social relationships[20] themselves encompass and, at the same time, presents two worlds in conflict. On the one hand there is the 'official world' and, on the other, the world created by collective action. Melucci's second weakness is literally the fact that he does not complete this inversion; he does not take it a step further, to the sense of asymmetry.

At this point we must return to the concept of form in the writings of Marx. Marx alludes to the concept of form from the very first sentence of Capital[21] : "*The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as "an immense accumulation of commodities*" (Marx 1976: 125). However, the concept of form bears its own dynamic in Marx, precisely due to its procedural character. From the first chapter of Capital we conclude that form is a concept that historicizes the social relationships that appear as determinate and timeless in every society[22]. At the same time, the notion of form denotes the fetishized character that social relations possess within the context of capitalism; in other words, it conceals the struggle taking place behind the appearance of form.

Therefore, the concept of form calls into question – from its very beginning – the existing dominance of capitalist social relations. It recognizes their fragility and reveals the struggle that takes place within social relationships. At the same time, it states that the social relationships we build within collective actions are always a process; never finalized, always a question. Therefore, the internal relationships of collective actions, which Melucci urges us to focus on, are never a completed task but rather a continuous process. They are constantly on the go.

---

[20] And we must also stress that the demand-content relationship is an internal, ecstatic one.

[21] I follow here the ideas of John Holloway (2015) in the article: "Read Capital: The First Sentence".

[22] Social relationships are not carved in stone. In a similar sense, it is important to note that the demand is something that enters the daily lives of collective actors through Keynesian policies. However, today the demand for a mobilization seems to be a given.

This movement signifies a struggle with the social relations of capital. In the occupation of the Rector's Building, we, the collective actors, struggled daily to avoid reproducing hierarchical forms of struggle so as to not recycle a trade unionist form of protest. There is no pre-existing form of social relations that lead to the social relations of capital (symbolically or materially) but, rather, a constant struggle not to reproduce the latter and a ceaseless effort to create different kinds of social relations.

As such, the notion of form confers a certain internal connection between the relationships we create and the relationships of capital. The form itself is a struggle. This implies something particularly important for the study of social movements: the opponent is not a certain category of people (in this case the rectory); it is the social relations of capital.

The abovementioned imply that the very concept of form is a category of struggle, as it encompasses both the possibility of reproducing existing social relationships and the possibility of creating new worlds. Consequently, the notion of form challenges us to focus on the social relations themselves; it invites us to create social relations that are asymmetrical towards those of capital.

Against and beyond demand

Returning to the image of the last assembly of the occupation (see above), we recall the closing phrase of the proceedings, which made reference to the question of whether the assembly is recognized as a closing, final-reflection assembly. The persistence of the expressed viewpoints that referred to the collective action as victorious[23] gave great prominence to the demand itself, while ignoring the social relationships that we, the collective actors, had formed. Therefore, the characterization of the occupation as "victorious" undermines the attempt to create an alternative world. Even if we were to argue, in material terms, that the acceptance of the demands by the rectory authorities signifies the victory of the collective actors, we must not fail to admit that this material victory changed our living conditions only in a temporary and partial way. In addition, it confirmed the power of the rectory authorities and, thus, the established way of allocating resources (student residences). Thus, the – implicitly – affirmative answer to the last question of the proceedings was, in essence, stealing the content of the social relations of the occupation for the sake of the demand.

The significance of the last sentence of the proceedings lies in that it reflects the conflict between the demands of the collective action and the contents that the

---

[23] This is also repeated in the interviews: "*A student struggle has been won, especially in Lesbos where it had never been won in so many years,*" P. notes, while H. says: "*If we are to look at it in a material way, then it was successful. In the sense that it has managed [...] to have its demands satisfied.*"

collective actors developed within the occupation. The emancipatory aspects burst out through the demands. Therefore, the last question of the proceedings does not merely express an anxiety regarding the end of the occupation, regarding its termination. It expresses, to a much greater extent, *the internal conflict of form* within this specific occupation. In a sense, it disputes the view that the purpose of the occupation lies in its contentious aspect (in the demand). It indicates that the deeper meaning of the occupation does not end with the housing issue but, on the contrary, is located against and beyond the demand. Therefore, it implies that the collective action did not merely challenge the way resources are distributed; at an even deeper level, it questioned the existing content of society. This questioning, as we have seen, was reflected in the content of the collective action in which the actors' meanings were concentrated.

In conclusion, the questions that dominated the last assembly of the occupation reveal its symbolic and material content, the shaping (through asymmetrical ways in relation to capital) of a world that stands "*at the height of dreams and people*".[24]

Acknowledgements

References

Holloway, John (1996). La resonancia del zapatismo. *Chiapas*, *3*, 43–54. [en: The resonance of zapatismo]

Holloway, John (2009). "Why Adorno?" pp.12–17 in *Negativity and revolution: Adorno and Political Activism,* Edited by John Holloway, Fernando Metamoros and Sergio Tischler. London: Pluto Press.

Holloway, John (2015). Read Capital : The First Sentence or, Capital starts with Wealth, not with the Commodity. *Historical Materialism*, *23*(3): 3–26.

Marx, Karl (1976). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Volume 1)*. London: Penguin Books.

Melucci, Alberto (1984). "An end to social movements? Introductory paper to the sessions on 'new movements and change in organizational forms'", *Social Science Information,* 23(4): 819-835.

---

[24] Excerpt from the plea of Nikos Bellogiannis.

Melucci, Alberto (1985). "The symbolic challenge of contemporary movements", *Social Research,* 52(4): 789-816.

Melucci, Alberto (1996). *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Melucci, Alberto (2002). *Κουλτούρες στο παιχνίδι: Διαφορές για να συμβιώσουμε*, Αθήνα: Gutenberg. [original title: Culture in Gioco. Diferenze per Convivere]

Panierakis, Marios (2017). "Symbolic aspects of an Occupation: Ritual, Non-Identity, and Imaginary Counterpower at the Collective Action of the 'Struggle Commit-tee of Lesvos' for claiming housing", Society's Dromena, 3: 7-18 (in Greek)

Panierakis, Marios (2019). "*Epistemological aspects of a squat or how I fell in love with Stella*". Social sciences today, 9 June, Mytilene.

van de Sande, Mathijs (2013). The prefigurative politics of Tahrir Square: An alternative perspective on the 2011 revolutions. *Res Publica* 19 (3): 223–39.

Material from the web

Graeber, David (2011). "You're creating a vision of the sort of society you want to have in miniature." Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/youre-creating-a-vision-of-the-sort-of-society-you-want-to-have-in-miniature/2011/08/25/gIQAXVg7HL_blog.html (Last Accessed Date: 23 April 2020)

Primary sources

Rector authorities (2013). "*Internal briefing note*"

Soulakelis Nikos (2013). "*Briefing note*"

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing (2013a). "*We are being deprived of our studies*" [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου (2013α). «*Μας στερούν τις σπουδές μας*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing (2013b). *Text of 13rd of November 2013*[gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου (2013β). «*Κείμενο Τετάρτης 13 Νοεμβρίου 2013*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing (2013c). *University of the absurd* [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου (2013γ). «*Το πανεπιστήμιο του παραλόγου*» «*Μας στερούν τις σπουδές μας*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing and Solidarians (2013a). *Advertisement* [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου και Αλληλέγγυες/οι (2013α). «*Αγγελία*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing and Solidarians (2013b). *Announcement* [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου και Αλληλέγγυες/οι (2013β). «*Ανακοίνωση*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing and Solidarians (2013c). *Press release following the appointment with the Rector* [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου και Αλληλέγγυες/οι (2013γ). «*Δελτίο Τύπου έπειτα από συνάντηση με τον πρύτανη*»]

Struggle Committee of Lesbos for Claiming Housing and Solidarians (2013d). *They are not working for us... they are toying with us* [gr: Επιτροπή Αγώνα Εστιών Λέσβου και Αλληλέγγυες/οι (2013δ). «*Δεν δουλεύουν για μας... μας δουλεύουν*»]

Text with collected signatures (2013) "Inside note"

About the author

Marios Panierakis became politically active in December of 2008, after the assassination of the student Alexandros Grigoropoulos by the police in Athens. In 2009, he began his studies in Sociology at the University of the Aegean and (from there) took part in various collective actions and social struggles. These actions included the movement of the Squares, which he studied in his undergraduate thesis. He is currently a PhD candidate in Sociology at BUAP (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla /Mexico) and the ICSyH (Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades), in the context of which he is researching the new forms and the new vocabulary of social struggles.

e-mail: mariopsoc AT gmail.com

The aesthetics of protest in the UCL
Justice for Workers campaign

Thomas Cury

Abstract

In this study, I focus on the aesthetics of protest of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign, a University College London-based, student-led campaign dedicated to ending the outsourcing of workers at the university, including catering, cleaning and security staff. Drawing from my own participation in the movement, I explore how UCL Justice for Workers use aesthetics in order to communicate and perform a political voice. I use Enzo Traverso's reading of the concept of Left-Wing Melancholia to show how, through various aesthetic means, UCL Justice for Workers look to the past in order to recover the utopian imagination which has fuelled past workers' revolutions. Moreover, informed by scholars working in the fields of critical geography and urban studies, I detail how UCL Justice for Workers contest the spatial order of the university campus through the use of banners, posters, and other ephemera.

Keywords: student-worker movements, precarious workers, trade unions, Left-Wing Melancholia, memory, space, aesthetics

Introduction

On a bitterly cold night in November 2019, I sprung out of bed at 3AM and made my way to the bus stop around the corner from my house. I hopped on the number 28 bus which was headed towards the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, where UCL workers organising through the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB) had formed a picket line in preparation for a day of strikes in protest against their employers, the outsourcing companies Sodexo and Axis. Though the atmosphere was tense, and many workers were scared to participate in the strike, there was a lot of hope too; the workers' spirit uplifted by the many students, including myself, who had arrived to show their support.

The strikes were part of a wider campaign, jointly fought by students and workers, that seeks to end the outsourcing of cleaners, security, and maintenance staff and have them be directly employed by UCL. As has become a recurring trend among UK universities since 2010, in order to cut costs and "drive efficiencies and ensure value for money", UCL has outsourced a variety of jobs, including security, catering and cleaning roles, leaving large firms such as Sodexo and Axis to deal with the contracts of these workers (Singer 2018). Outsourcing led to sub-contracted workers being subject to far worse conditions than those who are directly employed by UCL. For example, outsourced UCL

workers, up until 2020, received no occupational sick pay, meaning they would be forced to go to work or risk severe personal consequences. In addition, poor pensions meant that many would retire into poverty. Furthermore, outsourced workers have been subject to precarious zero-hour contracts which offer very little job stability, causing them to live in constant fear of becoming unemployed (Action Network, 2019).

In late 2018, as a result of these poor conditions, outsourced workers at UCL began to organise through the IWGB, and launched a campaign demanding to be brought back "in-house", in other words, to be directly employed by UCL and thus share the same employment benefits as their non-outsourced colleagues. Around the same time, a student campaign was launched, organised by student activists, called UCL Justice for Workers. The ongoing campaign is dedicated to supporting unionised outsourced workers in their struggle to be brought back in-house, working and organising in conjunction with workers. The campaign has since made considerable gains, including improved pensions and full sick pay for non-zero-hour staff, although the fight to end outsourcing altogether and thus achieve full equality with directly employed staff remains.

This article is dedicated to the study of the aesthetics of protest of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign, drawing from my own personal involvement. I will be specifically looking into how the activists of the campaign use "visual culture to create self-images, new ways to see and be seen, and new ways to see the world" (Mirzoeff, 2020: 5). The first section will comprise a literature review, situating the article's findings within recent scholarship on the aesthetics of protest. Subsequently, the article will focus on two interrelated but distinct elements of the aesthetics of protest employed in UCL Justice for Workers. Firstly, I will analyse how the memory of workers' struggles is resurrected across the aesthetic materials of UCL Justice for Workers, using the concept of Left-Wing Melancholia as a theoretical backdrop. Secondly, I will explore how UCL Justice for Workers use posters, banners, and other ephemera as a means of materially engaging with the space of the university campus.

Literature review

This article undertakes a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of activism and social mobilization. In particular, I will be looking to explore the aesthetics of protest of the UCL Justice for Workers activist group. The aesthetics of protest can be defined as the "slogans, art, symbols slang, humour, graffiti, gestures, bodies, colour, clothes, and objects that comprise a material and performative culture" (McGarry and Others 2020: 18). This article will address the question: How do UCL Justice for Workers communicate and perform a political voice through aesthetic means?

The aesthetics of protest can be separated into two interrelated but separate categories, and this study will seek to touch on both: the immediate and the mediated (Faulkner, 2020). The immediate aesthetics of protest refers to what aesthetic elements protestors employ in real, physical space, including the

banners, signs and placards they carry, as well as how protesting bodies congregate and assemble in space. The mediated aesthetics of protest refers to how protests are captured in various media forms, such as photographs and memes (Faulkner, 2020).

The study of social mobilization: the structuralist/rationalist bias

The study of social mobilization has, until recently, tended to have a strong rationalist and structuralist bias (Ryan, 2020). Rationalist analyses of social mobilisation work from the epistemological position "that regards human reason as the paramount source and means for gathering and testing of knowledge", emphasising intellectual and deductive processes over the sensory (Ryan, 2020: 102).

In the context of the study of social movements and activism, scholars working with a rationalist lens have thus "emphasized the continuities between movement and institutionalized actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic problems confronted by movements, and the role of movements as agencies for social change" (Jenkins quoted in Ryan, 2020: 528). Prominent theories emerging from this rationalist tradition include the resource mobilisation framework (RM), which investigates how social movements draw from a variety of material and ideological resources in order to achieve their goals, as well as emphasising the importance of network building within and across movements to build support and momentum. Another key concept in the rationalist tradition is Political Process Theory (PPT), which assesses the political environments in which social movements take place in, and how this can shape how activists take action (Ryan, 2020).

Structuralist analyses, on the other hand, focus on the "material conditions and broader social, economic or political forces that operate to contain and shape the actions and activities of social movement actors" (Ryan, 2020: 103). For example, scholars such as Sydney Tarrow (Tarrow quoted in Ryan, 2020), focus on the different organisational structures that exist within social movements. In particular, they compare the effectiveness of hierarchical versus horizontal structures when organising for social change (Ryan, 2020). Meanwhile, Zald and McCarthy evaluate the material conditions that constrain or enable the success of social movements, such as financial resources, as well as the size and reach of membership (Zald and McCarthy quoted in Ryan, 2020).

The aesthetics of protest: a reaction to the rationalist/structuralist bias

Such analyses, however, tend to interpret social movements and activism in purely empiricist terms, overlooking the communicative and performative nature of protest. As a result, the aesthetic choices made by social movements are seen as ways that activists raise awareness of their campaigns or merely as forms of propaganda (McGarry and others, 2020). I am interested in moving

beyond such conceptions in order to explore how social movements across the globe have drawn from aesthetic techniques as a means of protest and affirming a political voice.

There has been a rise in scholarship which has analysed the aesthetics of protest from this perspective. For example, Tijen Tunali, in her article "The Art of Resistance: Carnival Aesthetics and The Gezi Street Protests" (2018) notes how during the Gezi Park protests, a wave of civil unrest and demonstrations against the authoritarian Turkish government in 2013, aesthetics were not merely an accessory to the political struggle, but rather played a key role in fomenting a staunch resistance to tyranny. The Gezi Park protests made use of a wide variety of aesthetic means, flooding the streets with graffiti, performances, memes, cartoons, murals and paintings (Tunali, 2018). Drawing from Bakhtin, Tunali points to how the Gezi Park protests employed "carnival aesthetics", principally involving the use of "grotesque symbolism, imagery, and language" as a means of subverting and resisting hegemonic forces which dictate social life and relations (2018: 378). In particular, the protestors employed a kind of carnivalesque humour, creating highly satirical depictions across placards, magazines and murals of then Prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as a means of challenging his authority and declaring their refusal to bow to his reign of terror (Tunali, 2018). According to Tunali, the Gezi Park protests did not make the boundaries between art and activism become blurred, but rather, they made visible "the political space in which the differences between aesthetic action and political action are erased" (2018: 392).

This study, as a result, seeks to add to this small but growing body of literature concerned with analysing how protest movements communicate and perform a political voice through aesthetic actions— thus shifting the focus to how "protestors document   and produce protest through aesthetics" (McGarry and others, 2020: 17). At the core of such research is a reformulation of the Kantian notion of aesthetics, which tends to view the concept as merely what is pleasing to the eye and thus a universal category detached from any material or political conditions (Ryan, 2020). Recent scholarship within the study of social movements has attempted to move away from such conceptions and   draw from theorists who have sought to politicize aesthetics (see McGarry and others 2020, Werbner and others, 2014, McLagan and McKee, 2012). Among these scholars which have revised the link between aesthetics and politics is philosopher Jacques Rancière. According to Rancière, aesthetics and politics are intimately linked because both are concerned with determining what can become visible and heard in society (2003). In such an understanding, aesthetics is considered to be both the site of power and of resistance. Building from the works of the likes of Rancière, scholars within the study of social movements have sought to understand "the interconnection between art, image-making and the socio-political sphere, including the ways in which artistic expression, popular culture and embodied sensory encounters of various kinds interact with – even alter – the prevailing landscape of power and possibility" (Ryan, 2020: 106).

This article also seeks to explore the various ways in which UCL Justice for Workers make visible past movements, ideologies and ideas through aesthetic means in order to bring about change to their status as precarious workers. Werbner et. al note how a key element to the aesthetics of protest is the use of citation and intertextuality, where social movements draw on past images, tropes, slogans and reformulate them into "new bricolages and assemblies" (2014: 15). This drawing on the past can be seen in various social movements across the globe – for example, during the nation-wide strikes in Botswana in 2011, the movement appropriated the "rolling hands" gesture used in the Indignados anti-austerity movement in Spain the same year (Werbner, 2014). However, their appropriation of the gesture came with a difference: while the original gesture during the Spanish protest signified the sentiment "I'm bored, get to the point", during the Botswana strikes, the protestors rolled their hands in a circular motion in order to voice their demand for regime change (Werbner, 2014: 245). More recently, the feminist performance piece *A Rapist In Your Path*, which originated in Chile, has now been used by feminist protestors across the world. The piece, which combines song and choreographed gestures and movements, was originally devised by Chilean feminist theatre group Lastesis (McGowan, 2019). The work has now been used as a tool of protest across the world, including outside the trial of Harvey Weinstein, a film tycoon accused of multiple cases of sexual assault (Hyde, 2019). This appropriation of symbols, practices and gestures creates what Werbner calls "'vernacular cosmopolitanism' – a widely shared invented language across countries and divisions of class, ethnicity, religion, religiosity, race and gender, which is nevertheless also inflected by local forms of popular aesthetics, power relations and politicised understandings of inequality and injustice." (Werbner and others, 2014: 16).

UCL Justice for Workers are in keeping with many forms of social mobilisation across the globe in the sense that they also make reference to a rich legacy of past iterations of social struggle. In order to better understand the significance of the use of intertextuality and citation in the aesthetics of protest of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign, I will apply Enzo Traverso's interpretation of the concept of Left-Wing Melancholia as a conceptual framework. Left-Wing Melancholia (also referred to as Left Melancholia, Left Melancholy and Left-Wing Melancholy) is a term which was originally coined by Walter Benjamin in his 1931 essay titled "Left-Wing Melancholia" to describe the Left's melancholic attachment to past workers' struggles and their history, which has been marred by a series of heavy defeats (Benjamin 1974). Many scholars since Benjamin have since tackled his diagnosis of the left's state of melancholy. For example, Wendy Brown sees the Left's fixation with its past as something that stifles its ability to organise and mobilise in the present (2017). Brown, in her essay titled "Resisting Left Melancholy", argues that the left's condition of nostalgia means that instead of adapting its strategies and ideological frameworks to address issues in the present, it instead focuses on mourning failed emancipatory projects (2017). Enzo Traverso's work *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory* (2017), on the other hand, seeks to highlight how the

Left's melancholia can be productive and fruitful. To Traverso, Left-Wing Melancholia is a way that the Left can look to its past defeats as moments of unrealised possibility, ones that can instigate the desire for radical change in the present (2017). By applying Traverso's reading, I hope to show that UCL Justice For Workers' appropriation of the memory of past workers' struggles is not a self-indulgent exercise in nostalgia and mourning, but rather a way the group seeks to bring about change in the present.

Although it is important to analyse the various references and symbols employed in the aesthetic materials of social movements, it is also important to understand how   protestors engage with material, physical space through the banners, signs, placards and posters which they produce. As Julia Tulke argues, the ephemera employed by protestors is a way in which protest lays claim to urban space, declaring their "right to the city"—Lefebvre's term for when citizens begin to shape public space according to their own needs and desires (2020). The ephemera used by protestors is actively engaged with contesting "notions of what urban space should look like, questioning public ownership and representational regimes" (Tulke, 2020:123). Along similar lines, Paulo Gerbaudo, in his analysis of the fly-posting practices of radical activists in Berlin and Rome, notes how the posters acted as a means of appropriating space, creating territories which were outside and oppositional to government control (2013). By creating these symbolic territories through the posters, activists challenged hegemonic forces which seek to dictate who and what can appear in public space (Gerbaudo, 2013). This article will build on this existing scholarship and seek to understand the ways in which UCL Justice for Workers engage with the material environment of the university campus. In particular, I will show how UCL Justice for Workers use ephemera to challenge the spatial order of the campus, making visible the often invisible struggle of the outsourced workers of the university.

Left-Wing Melancholia: recalling the past to re-imagine the future

There has been a growing interest in the role of memory in contemporary politics and social movements. Specifically, much of the discussion has centred around the nostalgic dimension of the memory work at play in political movements. As journalist Martin Kettle argues, the yearning for a lost past and a certain way of doing politics has become increasingly important in the way social movements organise, both on the Right and on the Left (Kettle, 2016). He cites, for example, the nationalist rhetoric characteristic of much of the Brexit campaign, which often played into a longing for a mythical past where Britain was uncontaminated by migration and had sovereign control of its borders. On the Left, he points to how Jeremy Corbyn looked to the workers' struggles of the past such as the miners' strike of 1984 to agitate his base and revitalise socialist ideas of worker struggle, solidarity and trade unionism. The increasing role that memory seems to play in politics today raises a series of questions, which are

worthy of delving deeper into in order to gain a better understanding of the role that it plays in contemporary activist movements such as UCL Justice For Workers. Is the increasingly pivotal role that the past plays in Left social movements a dangerous condition, symptomatic of what Huyssen diagnosed as a generalised societal inability to imagine a future beyond the present? (Huyssen quoted in Rigney, 2018). Or, as Eyerman has argued, is it instead a way to draw force and inspiration from previous movements in order to effect change in the present? (2016).

Leftist academics have long since debated whether looking to the past is a meaningful way to achieve transformative change in political and social realities. Much of the discussion has centred around the concept of "Left-Wing Melancholia". According to Wendy Brown, Benjamin used the term to denounce those on the left who were more attached to long-held ideological frameworks and political beliefs than serious about understanding and acting on the issues that affect the present day (2017). Here, then, Benjamin is pointing to a danger in the Left's obsession with the past, one that threatens to stifle its ability to achieve the transformative change it envisions (Brown, 2017). To Brown, this melancholic attachment to the past eliminates the possibility to be able to recover from it, and thus to be able to act freely in the present without being burdened by it. Brown states that this is what "renders melancholia a persistent condition, a state, indeed, a structure of desire" (2017).

Brown, however, argues through Stuart Hall that the Left's melancholia is not only to do with an attachment to an analytic orthodoxy, one based on the "determinism of capital and the primacy of class" above all else (Brown 2017). It also has to do with how, in contrast to the politically successful right-wing movements of the late 20th century, the Left refuses to adapt to the ever-changing nature of capital, rendering itself historically anachronistic in the process. She cites, for example, how Thatcher was able to respond to the era of flexibilization and "disorganised capitalism", placing privatisation at the center of ideology and policy in order to align itself with the new logics of capitalist development. It is by doing this that Thatcherism was able to make itself "appear to 'have history on its side', to be coterminous with the inevitable course of the future" (Brown, 2017). The Left, on the other hand, rendered itself obsolete by stubbornly refusing to adapt new, cultural and socio-political formations and strategies in light of these transformations. She returns to Hall to sum up this dual problematic of Left-Wing Melancholia: it "consists not only of a defensiveness towards the agendas fixed by now-anachronistic political-economic formations (those of the 1930s and 1945) but is also due to a certain notion of politics, inhabited not so much as a theory, more as a habit of mind" (Hall quoted in Brown, 2017).

Traverso's reading of the Left's condition of melancholia is altogether more optimistic. In stark contrast to Brown, Traverso sees the Left's look to the past and its revitalisation of past struggles and ideological frameworks as a productive means of effecting change in the present. Traverso places Left-Wing Melancholia as emerging from a context of the failure of the emancipatory

promises of communism in the 20th century. While at the beginning of the 20th century, communism presented the idea of a utopian future free of oppression, the collapse of the Soviet Union shattered such illusions (Traverso, 2017). Thus, the beginning of the 21st century was marked "by a general eclipse of utopias" (Traverso, 2017: 5). The promise of a better and altogether different future was replaced by a resignation to capitalism as an eternal and unshakeable reality (Traverso, 2017).

The ultimate result of this was a memory boom in the public sphere: as Traverso puts it, "a world without utopias inevitably looks back" (Traverso, 2017: 9).

However, as opposed to Brown, Traverso sees this as a positive progression. In his view, the resurgent interest in revisiting the past within left-wing movements is not the product of a fatally nostalgic mourning of lost utopian promises and failed emancipatory projects, as Brown argues. Instead, Left-Wing Melancholia is a way that the Left can reframe the past, reclaiming its defeats not as a sign of its failure, but rather as moments that represent tremendous, unrealised possibility: in other words, as *Jetztzeit*, Walter Benjamin's term for episodes filled with the revolutionary potential necessary to break from the natural course of history (Rigney, 2018). It is this desire to fulfil the unrealised radical potential of these moments in history that can fuel the desire for revolutionary change in the present (Traverso, 2017).

Traverso's reading of Left-Wing Melancholia as a productive agent of change can be seen in the rich aesthetic culture of UCL Justice for Workers campaign. As is becoming increasingly frequent in activist campaigns and groups today, UCL Justice for Workers draw from a rich aesthetic legacy of past movements, fusing images, tropes, and ideas, and appropriating them into new forms which attend to the particularities of their struggle (Werbner and others, 2014). This invocation of the past through aesthetic means is not simply a form of conservative, anachronistic nostalgia, but rather one that plays a vital role in "revitalising and (re)inventing the 'political'" (Werbner and others, 2014: 16). Though the group is specifically working within the current neoliberal context of increasing precarization, one can observe how the group often looks to past worker's struggles as a source of inspiration. In particular, the group revitalises the memory of trade unionist struggles and of student-worker social movements such as May 1968. They thus resurrect socialist ideas of camaraderie and collective struggle as an effective means of bringing about significant change to their lives and status as precarious workers.

One of the ways that UCL Justice for Workers invoke past workers' struggles is through the use of the symbol of the clenched fist. The symbol is consistently repeated and depicted visually including in photos and through emojis; it is also reproduced gesturally by activists in the movement during protests (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Images courtesy of the IWGB.

The clenched fist has become synonymous with many social movements throughout history; it is said to have originated from the imagery of the European revolutions of 1848 (Pretorius, 2009) and has since been appropriated in various movements for equality and justice, including in the Black Power Movement (Duffield, 2020) and the Suffragettes (Denney, 2017). In the case of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign in particular, the group identify themselves within a lineage of past workers' movements, such as SOAS Justice for Workers, which have also fought against outsourcing. They do this by referencing the logos of social movements which have incorporated the symbol of the clenched fist. However, in these logos, the symbol of the clenched fist is adapted and is depicted holding a broom (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: On the right, the UCL Justice for Workers logo (image courtesy of Dominique Hua). On the left, the SOAS Justice for Workers Logo[1].

Although the clenched fist symbol has been widely used throughout history, its popularity in workers' movements eventually declined toward the end of the 20th century, as it became strongly associated with the totalitarian state socialism of the Soviet Union (Moss, 2006). However, the symbol has since been resurrected in present-day social movements, as is the case in the UCL Justice For Worker's campaign. Thus, to re-appropriate such a historically charged image can only be a conscious decision, as socialist historian Sheila Rowbotham argues (Rowbotham quoted in Moss, 2006). It signifies that the UCL Justice for Workers movement is consciously revitalising the memory and idea of workers' struggles – they are carrying on their legacy in their fight against outsourcing.

In addition, UCL Justice for Workers also refer to past movements of outsourced workers who have also fought to end subcontracting. The group primarily did this through film screenings. The group held two screenings of the documentary *Limpiadores* (Fernando Mitjans, 2015), the first held in September 2018 and the second on the 12th of November 2019. The documentary chronicles the SOAS Justice for Cleaners campaign, which, after 8 years of battle, finally succeeded in its aim of having outsourced workers be directly employed by the university in August of 2018. Film screenings have been a valuable tool used by activsist groups in the formation of collective memories of worker struggle. De la Puente and Russo, in their analysis of

---

[1] SOAS Justice 4 Workers, n.d. [image] Available at: <https://twitter.com/soasj4c> [Accessed 28 June 2021].

activist groups in Latin America, note how, through the exhibition of films which depict past workers' struggles, activists ensure that past sacrifices and battles waged by workers are not forgotten and their memory is kept alive (2007). By doing this, activists break from "the uniformity of history, recovering the traditions of generations passed" (De La Puente and Russo, 2007: 16, my translation). The same can be said of the screenings held by UCL Justice for Workers: the memory of SOAS Justice for Workers is kept alive and brought into the present. The film was used as a means of exploring the connections between the injustices faced by UCL and SOAS outsourced workers, and the lessons that could be learnt from the SOAS campaign. Therefore, UCL Justice for Workers break from a linear conception of history which confines events to the past: instead, "past movements become active in the present, creating connections which bypass homogenous empty time. Time is connected directly, rather than through a line." (Firth and Robinson, 2012: 245).

Moreover, through these activist screenings, instigate a radical politics of melancholy. One of the key sections in *Limpiadores* documents the events of the 12th of June 2009. On this date, SOAS cleaners, who at the time were employed by the outsourcing company ISS, were called into a meeting held at one of the university's lecture theatres. The meeting was a cover for a UK Border Agency raid; 9 cleaners were arrested and later deported by the UKBA (SOAS Unison, 2009). The deportation was carried out under the orders of the outsourcing company, with the knowledge and complicity of SOAS's management (SOAS UNISON, 2009). Since the event, there have been commemorative events hosted at SOAS to remember the injustices that took place– the saying "never forgive, never forget" became a prominent rallying cry which signified a commitment to denouncing the culture of hostility and violence toward undocumented workers (SOAS Unison, 2009). In the second UCL Justice for Workers screening of *Limpiadores*, special attention was brought during the discussions that followed the exhibition of the film to the deportation raid of 2009. Many audience members expressed how they were unaware of the injustices that occurred and were appalled at what they had witnessed. Thus, through the screening, UCL Justice for Workers ensured that the university body was made aware of the violence enacted toward the workers, refusing to allow the injustices to become forgotten and concealed. The screening therefore represented an "indomitable refusal to let go, a defiance of the demand to forget" (Palmer 2017:381).

Furthermore, the powerful feelings of outrage and sadness provoked by the emotionally charged testimonies of the documentary did not serve to paralyze action. Instead, UCL Justice for Workers activists harnessed these emotions and used them as a call to action, urging audience members to join in the fight against the exploitation of outsourced workers. Therefore, UCL Justice for Workers drew "strength from *within* melancholy and bereavement" (Traverso 2017: 20).

UCL Justice for Workers also revitalise the imaginary of labour history and trade unionism. One example of the group doing this was through a meme made

by activists which makes references to traditional forms of labour organising, redeeming their memory and portraying them to still be relevant to the class struggle of the present day. The meme (see Figure 3) depicts a text message that says, "u at the picket line?", with the caption, "naughty next". The picket line here is invoked as a symbolic site of class struggle and worker solidarity. Invoking the discourse of picket lines, and thus traditional forms of labour organising, is significant in a context where in the United Kingdom, such forms of worker struggle are considered "a spent force (…) its history is no more relevant than that of the lost tribes of ancient Judea" (Davis 2009: 284). Trade unions, in particular, have been increasingly dismissed as irrelevant, with many pointing to the fact that union membership has fallen by half since Thatcher came to power and collective bargaining coverage by around two thirds (Dromey, 2018).

Figure 3. Image courtesy of Sofia Vázquez.

Moreover, the caption here framing this as a "naughty text", complete with the heart emoji, represents a reformulation of the historically charged symbolism of the picket line. The picket line in UK labour history has been a site of many defeats, as well as repression and violence at the hands of state forces (Kelliher, 2020).

Here, however, instead of focusing on the violence of picket lines, what is remembered in this meme is the often overlooked "pleasures of politics" (Hamilton, 2010: 270). The picket line is invoked as the site of a "multiform pleasure, one of physical and social transgression, of new friendships or

complicities to be gained" (Ross quoted in Hamilton 2010: 270). Thus, the imaginary of the picket line is rescued in order to point to the fact that social mobilization is not purely a matter of applying strategies and theories. It is also about the coming together of bodies, forming collective, visceral experiences that reach beyond the cognitive. There is thus a move toward a form of activism that embraces the affective: "processes of life and vitality which circulate and pass between bodies and which are difficult to capture or study in any conventional methodological sense." (Blackwell, 2012: 4). As a result, the meme represents a kind of fruitful melancholia which is not fundamentally concerned with lamenting the defeats of the past, but rather "rethinking a revolutionary project in a nonrevolutionary age" (Traverso, 2017: 20).

Furthermore, UCL Justice for Workers also resurrect the memory of May 1968, a series of student-protests, strikes and occupations that erupted in Paris in factories and universities. The May 68 movement was exceptional insofar that it involved a potent unity between students and workers, both joining together to carry out strikes and demonstrations in such a way that had never occurred in a Western country before (Memou, 2013). However, official histories related to the movement tend to downplay this particular dimension of student-worker solidarity, reducing it to being primarily a student revolt (Ross, 2008). In the UCL Justice for Workers ephemera, however, May 68 is invoked as a site of student-worker solidarity. In one such sign (see Figure 4), the group appropriates a common motif found in May 68 posters, that of the clenched fist rising out of a smokestack. The motif, used in its original context, was a way that students showed solidarity with striking workers (Baggett, 2014). In the UCL Justice for Workers poster, this motif is accompanied with the words, "students and workers, unite and fight!" Here, then, the UCL Justice for Workers group is looking to the past as a source of inspiration, as a site of solidarity between workers and students.
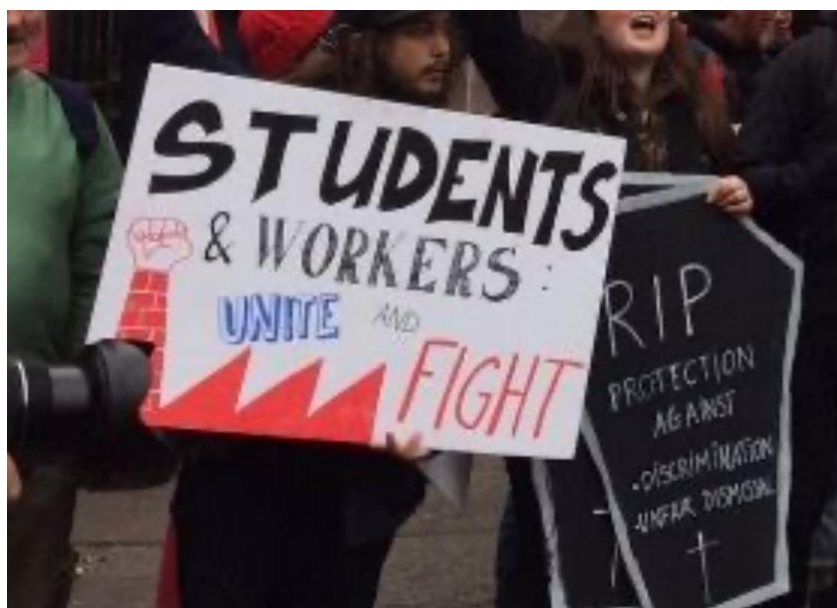

Figure 4. Image courtesy of Laura Esther.

The fact that May 68 is remembered this way is significant in a context where the notion that the events took place in Paris were largely inconsequential, insofar as they failed to achieve meaningful structural change, has become commonplace in discourse about the protests (Ross, 2008). The dominant discourse surrounding the May 68 events has been that, while the protests led to changes in cultural attitudes, especially with regard to the notion of sexual freedom and liberation, they led to no important political and institutional changes in the long term (Ross, 2008). The view that May 68 was primarily a cultural phenomenon and not a political one is shared by many notable intellectuals: Raymond Aron, the conservative philosopher and historian of ideas, described the events of May 68 as "a verbal delirium with no casualties" (Poirier, 2018). Along similar lines, liberal historian Marcel Gauchet, while noting the cultural impact of the events on French society and beyond, argues that the strikes led to no notable practical consequences, highlighting how the Left was crushed in the subsequent elections of 1969 (Sing, 2015). The dominant view, then, is that May 68 was simply a momentary disruption, one that ultimately failed to create the radical change which it envisioned. In the aesthetic materials of UCL Justice for Workers, however, the revolutionary potential of the May 68 protests is rescued, the events remembered as a tremendous moment in history where workers and students joined together to wage class struggle and fight for a better future. Therefore, although the intersection of student and worker struggle of May 68 was short lived, here it is invoked as a "struggle for emancipation as a historical experience that deserves recollection and attention in spite of its fragile, precarious, and ephemeral duration" (Traverso, 2017: 52).

What is striking about the way UCL Justice for Workers recall the past through their various aesthetic materials is that it is often done in a way that is somewhat non-specific and ambiguous. The group, in some cases, chooses to reference the past in rather general terms. This is evidenced by the group's use of the iconography of the fist in order to invoke the memory of workers' struggles, along with its memes which often conjure up   the imaginary of picket lines and trade union struggles— in both these cases, no specific historical figures or movements are referenced. Instead, what is evoked is a more general idea or feeling of workers' struggle and radical organising. Even when UCL Justice for Workers allude to specific movements such as May 1968, again what is revived is more a general spirit of student-worker solidarity than a coherent set of practices, strategies and ideological frameworks. Thus, what emerges from the various references and allusions made across the aesthetic materials of UCL Justice for Workers is not a clear-cut, monolithic version of the past, but rather a hazy, fragmented assemblage of memories. Jonathan Dean, in his analysis of the UK student protests of 2010/11, points to how the memory of May 68 continues to "yield a considerable affective pull and symbolic hold over contemporary forms of student and radical politics, but in a manner that is often vague, spectral and difficult to clearly demarcate" (2015: 314). Dean's analysis encapsulates the often vague and affective nature of the impact of memory on UCL Justice for Workers.

This ambiguity which Dean points to is crucial if we are to understand the left-wing melancholia imbued in the aesthetics of UCL Justice for Workers. Traverso indicates that Left-Wing Melancholia, "Before being an epistemological posture or an allegorical vision of the past (…) is a temper, a state of the mind, an atmosphere, and a mood" (Traverso, 2017: 50). This holds true if we consider the way UCL Justice for Workers evoke the past across its aesthetic materials: it is not simply a case of appropriating coherent ideologies or strategies, but rather more generally reviving a kind of spirit of student-worker solidarity and worker struggle. On the surface, this may seem to point to a rather pointless exercise in nostalgia, seen by some as endemic on the left, which holds little intellectual or strategic bearing (Bonnett, 2010).

However, following Traverso, it could be argued that what UCL Justice for Workers are trying to do by appropriating the memory of past struggles is reignite the "structure of feelings" of the Left, recovering the utopian imagination which had fuelled the revolutions of the past, one which had been all but lost following the demise of the Soviet Union at the turn of the century (Traverso, 2017). By recalling the past, UCL Justice for Workers attempt to collectively imagine an alternative to the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, whose logic seems inescapable and unshakeable (Traverso, 2017: 23). UCL Justice for Workers, then, embrace Traverso's assertion that radical change cannot be simply achieved through "valuable diagnostics of force relations, effective claims, and strong organisation," it also requires "a process of human self-emancipation [which] forcefully mobilizes powerful emotions, expectations, and hopes" (Traverso quoted in Souvlakis, 2019).

The spatial politics of UCL Justice for Workers

The role of space in social movements has been an emerging area of interest in social movement studies. In some aspects of social movement theory, space is treated as a given, as a naturally existing material environment which can significantly impact a social movement's actions, in both restrictive and emancipatory ways (Miller and others, 2016). For example, spatial proximity is said to enable participation in social movements, while distance hampers it (Miller and others, 2016). It is also thought of as both where contentious politics can occur and what social actors battle to take control over; one can cite Occupy Wall Street as an example (Auyero quoted in Miller and others, 2016). However, such theories are dependent on the idea that activism merely takes place in spatial contexts, but such assumptions do not take into account that "like time, space is not merely a variable or container of activism: it constitutes and structures relationships and networks (including the processes that produce gender, race and class identities; situates social and cultural life including repertoires of contention)" (Martin and Miller quoted in Miller and others, 2016: 26). Activists, then, do not take space to be merely an architectural given, but actively engage and produce space, creating *terrains of resistances*: "*sites of contestation* and the multiplicity of relations between hegemonic and counter hegemonic powers and discourses, between forces and relations of domination,

subjection, exploitation and resistance" (Routledge quoted in Miller and others, 2016: 29).

Such terrains of resistance are where social movements endow space with a variety of powerful symbolic, ideological, and cultural meanings (Routledge quoted in Miller and others, 2016).

The use of ephemera such as posters, banners and signs are one way that activists engage with the politics of space. As Paulo Gerbaudo notes, ephemera used in protest groups are often considered to function mainly as propaganda, or as vehicles of communication for activists. What is often neglected is that such ephemera are deeply tied to an understanding and engagement with the politics of space. This gap in the analysis of social movements can be explained by the widely held assumption that protest movements have largely migrated onto the digital and virtual sphere, and, as a result, have become "detached, by and large, from the physicality of public space" (Gerbaudo, 2018: 241). However, the practices of activist groups such as UCL Justice for Workers challenge such assumptions. According to Gerbaudo, activist groups often employ ephemera as a form of "symbolic appropriation of public space (…) predicated on a material appropriation of walls and streets and an exercise of control over them" (2018: 246). Such appropriation carries with it the explicit goal of demarcating a symbolic territory which is resistant and oppositional to the hegemonic forces of the state (Gerbaudo, 2018). However, activists are nevertheless aware that they can never fully escape such forces, and that their interventions into the city landscape are likely to be subject to government regulation (often they are simply removed). With this in mind, activist groups often strategically place their posters to ensure that they will not be taken down, even going as far as adding physical obstacles such as shards of glass to posters (Gerbaudo, 2018).

UCL Justice for Workers activists also use posters, banners, and other ephemera as a means of re-appropriating and laying claim to space. Specifically, UCL Justice for Workers use ephemera to materially engage with the university campus space. Like the activist groups which Gerbaudo identifies, UCL Justice for Workers are also strategic in their placements of such ephemera, ensuring that they can evade the possibility of their posters, stickers, etc. being taken down too easily by the members of the university's security team. However, in contrast to the activist groups which Gerbaudo cites, UCL Justice for Workers activists also place their posters in highly visible locations within the university campus which are likely to be subject to regulatory forces. In the strategic discussions of the group, of which I have taken part of, having ephemera being taken down by university staff is thought of as almost an inevitability, in full knowledge that ultimately the regulatory forces of the university are responsible "for what is considered 'out of place' in an ordered urban environment" (Dickens, 2009: 248). To this end, the activists of the campaign have even targeted buildings which were heavily patrolled and guarded, such as the university's Student Centre, which is invigilated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The fly-posting actions undertaken by the group in the Student Centre would be traditionally considered failures according to most activist groups, as they resulted in the posters being taken down almost immediately, sometimes before activists have even had the chance to try to place them on the walls, with security guards spotting them and preventing them from attempting to do so. In contrast to activist groups which largely attempt to avoid heavily surveilled areas, UCL Justice for Workers activists deliberately targeted the highly visible and patrolled space of the Student Centre, entering the building in broad daylight, using just blue tack as opposed to the much stronger wheat paste traditionally used in flyposting. Their transgression of space, then, seemed to almost invite confrontation with the regulatory forces of the university. What becomes clear as a result of this is that the group is not fundamentally concerned with permanently erecting "symbolic boundaries (...) in the maintenance of a peculiar form of territoriality" (Gerbaudo, 2018: 248). Rather, they intend to expose the fact that the university space, rather than being a neutral and pre-existing container of action, unmoored by ideology (Lefebvre, 1991), in reality contains within it "relations of power and discipline (...) inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life" (Soja, 1989: 10). By rendering the regulatory forces of the university visible, the group shows how the policing of space is "increasingly not simply the work of the public police force   but (...) an increasing array of public, private and voluntary sector providers (Yarwood, 2007), who seek to 'police' not only violations of law and legislature, but also violations of societal norms, and behaviours considered to be socially undesirable and threatening to the normative order of public space" (Cook and Whowell, 2013: 3). In doing so, the group demonstrates how there is a "contestation in and over space (what should or should not be made spatially manifest; what and who should give space form)" (Dikeç, 2015: 4). They intend to pose the question of who has a right to the university campus, and who is in control of its spatial order.

As a result, UCL Justice for Workers are not attempting to permanently lay claim to space through these high-risk interventions into the urban landscape. As seen in Chapter 1, UCL Justice for Workers draw power from the ephemeral, focusing on small-scale interventions which have the potential to cause a rupture from the natural course of history and the logic of capitalism. Many of the banner-drop actions aforementioned   would perhaps be considered ineffective since they were unable to create long-lasting, permanent change (Milligan, 2018). However, recent scholarship has pointed to how (see Milligan, 2018, Tonkiss, 2013, Swyngedouw, 2010) such ephemeral interventions into the urban landscape can be read as "cracks" (Milligan, 2018: 16), a necessarily fleeting break from the logic of capitalism, a "perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing" (Holloway, 2012: 21). This is evidenced by actions undertaken by UCL Justice for Workers activists such as banner drops at various locations throughout UCL's campus, including the Main Quad— such actions resulted in the banners being taken down almost immediately. However, they acted as ways of opening up fissures, gaps, and cracks in the "police order" of the campus (Swyngedouw, 2020),

making spatially manifest the struggle of outsourced workers who are rendered invisible by the university's authorities.

Moreover, the ephemeral nature of these "cracks" allow for space to be consistently challenged; the workers repeatedly lay claim to their right to space through these aesthetic interventions. "La lucha continua" (which means "the struggle continues" in Spanish), has been a unifying rallying call for activists of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign, and one that encapsulates the group's ceaseless desire to continue waging their battle against the spatial order of the university. The group's appropriation of the walls of the campus through posters and of space through the use of banners are, as we have seen, only momentary. They are quickly met with the regulatory forces of the university. This means that activists return again and again to appropriate the walls and spaces of the university— thus their challenge to the spatial order of the university is one that is repeated and continuous. As a result, the ephemeral nature of these banner drops and fly-posting actions allow for a continuous re-negotiation of space; their transience are thus powerful agents not in spite of, but rather "*because* of their temporality- for something which can pop up and disappear has the power to pop up again, to multiply, to spread cracks throughout" the university campus (Milligan, 2018: 18, emphasis my own).

It is through these "cracks" in the university campus that UCL Justice for Workers attempt to reclaim the university as a space of solidarity and shared collectivity, providing small-scale challenges to the university's dedication to the needs of the market and of capital. UCL can be placed alongside a recurring trend among universities which are dedicated to fast, aggressive spatial growth and expansion (Zhang, 2012). UCL

Estates, responsible for the university's entire estate and facilities infrastructure, has been responsible for UCL's growth on a massive scale, including the ongoing construction of UCL East, the largest single expansion in the university's history (UCL, 2020). The construction of UCL East also signifies another way in which the university embodies the logics of urban capitalist development: while notionally centred around its main campus located in Bloomsbury, UCL has continued to spread into many corners of London, including Camden, Canary Wharf, and now Stratford with the UCL East Campus (UCL, 2020). This means that UCL has no rigid or identifiable "centre", mirroring the modern city which "lacks what gave shape and meaning to every urban form of the past: a dominant single core and definable boundaries". (Fishman, 1993: 398). However, massive growth and profit has not translated into spaces that respond to the needs and desires of the inhabitants of the university— UCL students are subject to highly unaffordable housing, having to pay continuously rising rents that makes being able to get by in London very stressful (Packham 2017). Moreover, there is a generalised feeling of alienation in the University campus, as I exemplified in this quote:

> It is all very, very spread out and very big. Like others have said, UCL is not an enclosed campus and when you're walking around a lot of the buildings just feel

> like city buildings rather than those of a university. While there are a bunch of student cafes and the like, it didn't really seem like much of a community was fostered in them either"
>
> Student's perspective on the UCL campus (The Student Room, 2017)

A recurring theme, then, is the alienation and isolation felt in the space of the university. Often, students and outsourced workers have very little chance to come into contact with each other. In addition, there is a lack of connectivity between workers themselves, who often have to work long hours with little chance to communicate and work collectively. There is a lack of sense, then, of space as a "place of encounters, a focus and locus for communication and information, for meaningful interactions and for difference" (Zieleniec 2018: 12). Through bodily means, UCL Justice for Workers reclaim the university space as one of collectivity and community. The body here is understood as a "link in a larger spatial dance with other 'dividual' parts of bodies and things and places which is constantly reacting to encounters and evolving out of them" (Thrift, 2003: 103).

As Judith Butler notes, the body is a means of laying claim to space, "through seizing   and reconfiguring the matter of material environments" (Butler, 2012: 118). UCL Justice for Workers activists set up a weekly breakfast stall for the outsourced workers at UCL, every Friday morning. This stall means that workers, who often are leaving from their shifts or arriving for them, have a chance to talk with other workers and students over pastries, coffee, and tea. As the IWGB union states, "The stalls function as a community hub where strong relationships have developed between workers who might not see each other on shift and between workers and the union" ("IWGB", 2019). However, they are also spaces that build stronger bonds between students and workers, who get the opportunity to talk to each other about their daily routines and lives. In addition, students during these stalls offer their support to outsourced workers, listening to the grievances and issues that they are facing at work. It can thus be said that UCL Justice for Workers create spaces in which the individuals that make up the body of the university are "reintegrated into a web of social connections" (Purcell, 2014: 149). The breakfast stalls provide a challenge to the hegemonic distribution of space by creating unique spaces in which the constituent parts of the university body can engage "each other in meaningful interactions, interactions through which they overcome their separation, come to learn about each other, and deliberate together about the meaning and future of the city. These encounters make apparent to each inhabitant their existence in and dependence on a web of social connections." (Purcell, 2014:149)

As we have seen, UCL Justice for Workers are not concerned with creating fixed territories, rather, they are dedicated to carving out spaces within the campus that can counter and challenge the hegemony of the university over who and what has the right to appear. Another significant way that the group did this was through the use of film screenings. In Chapter 1, activist film screenings were used as a means of creating collective memory. There is, however, a second

dimension to this form of activism. Lyell Davies has analysed the political potential of activist film screenings: rather than functioning as mere entertainment, activist film screenings are means of providing testimony to social struggle and a way to make previously passive social actors "take responsibility for what they have seen and become ready to respond" (Davies, 2018: 24). Activists film screenings, then, are spaces which are actively charged with contesting the dominant order. They can be therefore be considered counter-publics: spaces in which individuals can foster counter-hegemonic ideas and attend to the needs and desires of a subaltern group (Davies, 2018). The formation of these counter-publics can be seen in the screenings held by the group, particularly the screening of the documentary *Limpiadores* (Fernando Mitjans, 2015), held on the 12th of November2019.

During the screening, the audience, composed of both academics and students, were not merely passive spectators to the film, but were actively engaged with the questions and problems posed by the documentary. Following the end of the film, activists from the campaign initiated a discussion about the lessons that can be learnt from the campaign, drawing particular emphasis to how the major successes achieved by the campaign seen in *Limpiadores* was due to the active organising of outsourced workers, as well as the support of students and academics, therefore instigating a call to action to the wider university body. For many, these discussions acted a sort of awakening— many members of the audience noted that they were not aware of the conditions that outsourced workers faced at UCL, as well as being oblivious to the fact that the university's management has consistently refused to take the workers concerns and issues seriously, shifting responsibility to the outsourcing companies which employ the workers. Many students and academics not directly involved in the campaign also voiced their questions on what they can do to support the outsourced workers' campaign to be employed directly by UCL. There was thus an "emergence of an engaged 'responsible historical subject'...[that] embrace[s] a political and moral standpoint regarding what they believe is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, and to thereby decide to 'take a position'" (Davies, 2018: 23). As a result, the film screening became a "counter-public" in which students, activists and academics discussed counter hegemonic ideas, in addition to reflecting on how to attend to the needs of the disenfranchised outsourced workers.

In summary, through aesthetic means, UCL Justice for Workers attempt to make their struggle and their presence as outsourced workers spatially visible. In this reading, the right and act of being visible is a form of empowerment. However, it is important to acknowledge that visibility is not taken to be a natural good and inherently a form of empowerment by activists, and this is true for the activists who are part of the UCL Justice for Workers campaign. As Brighenti notes, "visibility is a double-edged sword: it can be empowering as well as disempowering" (2007: 355). While UCL Justice for Workers contest regimes of visibility, this does not mean that they are not nevertheless subject to hegemonic forces which seek to "activate and define the scope of the visible, that is, what can be seen and, more importantly, by whom." (Hatuka and Toch, 2016:

3). The activists are sometimes subject to a kind of visibility which strengthens and upholds unequal dynamics of power. This visibility represents a disempowering force which seeks to "manage, in a routine way, the visibility of various identities" (Brighenti, 2007: 235).

One example of a disempowering form of visibility is the surveillance which outsourced workers are subject to from their bosses, who aim to prevent them from organising and unionising on a collective level. Outsourced workers have repeatedly voiced concerns about surveillance from their bosses, who intimidate and bully those that engage in trade unionist activities. Concerns of surveillance reached a peak in November 2019 when the workers' employer, the outsourcing company Sodexo, announced that it would begin to introduce monitoring systems in which cleaners would be forced to have their fingerprints scanned when clocking in and out of work (Chapman, 2019). Although the proposal was eventually scrapped after considerable pushback from trade unions, it clearly showed an intensified effort to surveil workers' activities and movements. In such a context, the workers are "obliged to be visible" (Brighenti, 2010: 49)—they cannot negotiate visibility in their own terms; visibility is used imposed on them as a form of domination and control. As a result of the intense scrutiny which workers are subject to in their workplaces, many feel that they cannot take part in some of the confrontational actions carried out about UCL Justice for Workers, such as fly-posting, for fear of retaliation. This shows how visibility, while it can be a form of empowerment, it can also be used as a weapon of domination and control by those in positions of power.

A significant way in which workers elude this form of imposed visibility is through the various aesthetic actions undertaken by student activists, such as flyposting and banner drops. While workers cannot physically appear in space for fear of surveillance and control, their presence becomes felt through these banner drops and posters. The banners and posters come to embody the voice and struggle of the workers. This exemplifies how outsourced workers seek tactics to shield themselves from the disempowering effects of imposed surveillance. In particular, it exemplifies how they "manage their visibility by controlling which aspects should be observed and by whom" (Settles and others, 2018: 2). Therefore, it becomes evident that visibility is constantly negotiated by the activists that make up UCL Justice for Workers. While outsourced workers fight to attain an empowering form of visibility, they also simultaneously must negotiate and combat forms of visibility which put them at risk.

Conclusion

In conclusion, UCL Justice for Workers use aesthetic means to communicate and perform a political voice. In this study, I have identified two key areas in which the aesthetics of protest operate: the first, in the realm of memory, where UCL Justice for Workers draw from a rich aesthetic legacy of past movements, fusing images, tropes and ideas and transform them in order to attend to the particularities of their own struggle. Second, I have explored how UCL Justice

for Workers engage with the physical space of the university through the use of ephemera as well as their own bodies.

With regard to the former, I hope to have shown how UCL Justice for Worker's invocation of the past through aesthetics represents a fruitful kind of melancholia. Wendy Brown sees the Left's fixation with its past as a conservative nostalgia which renders itself a prisoner to its past, leaving it unable to act in the present. Following Traverso, I have argued that, on the contrary, the Left's melancholia is what fuels its desire to continue the often tragic legacy of workers' struggles. For example, I have pointed to UCL Justice for Workers' use of activist film screenings, in which activists draw power from bereavement, declaring a refusal to let go of the past and thus announcing the need to continue to seek justice for workers who have suffered at the hands of a violent and exploitative system. Moreover, I have shown how UCL Justice for Workers reinvigorate, through the use of memes, the imaginary of picket lines and trade unionism. However, what UCL Justice for Workers attempt to recapture through these memes are not merely ideologies or a set of coherent practices and strategies, but rather the "pleasures of politics" and the affective synergies that circulate between protesting bodies. Left-Wing Melancholia imbued in the aesthetics of UCL Justice For Workers, then, represents an attempt to rekindle the utopian imagination which has fuelled the revolutions of the past.

However, I have also analysed how UCL Justice for Workers engage with the material and physical space of the university campus. Through the various references imbued in the aesthetics of the campaign, such as the group's references to May 68, UCL Justice for Workers elevate the importance of short-lived experiences which have the revolutionary potential necessary to break from the natural course of history. The activists' engagement with the material space of the university campus reflects a similar preoccupation with the power of the ephemeral, embracing the logic of Milligan's "cracks": necessarily fleeting moments in which activists break free from the logic of capitalism (2018). Through the use of these cracks, UCL Justice for Workers open up gaps and fissures in the university campus, creating zones of collectivity, community, and solidarity.

References

Baggett, Justin, 2014. *'L'Héritage Héritage' Is in The Streets: The Text, Images and Legacy of May 1968*. BA. The University of Southern Mississippi.

Blackman, Lisa 2012. *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation (Theory, Culture & Society*. Nottingham: Sage Publications.

Bonnett, Alastair 2010. *Left In The Past: Radicalism And The Politics Of Nostalgia*. London: Continuum.

Brighenti, Andrea Mubi 2010. *Visibility In Social Theory And Social Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brown, Wendy, 2017. Resisting Left Melancholia. *Verso Books*, [blog] 12 February Available at:<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3092-resisting-left-melancholia> [Accessed 17 February 2020]

Butler, Judith. 2012. "Bodies In Alliance And The Politics Of The Street". Pp 117-131 in: *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*, edited by Yates McKee and Meg McLagan. New York: Zone Books.

Cook, Ian R., and Whowell, Mary. 2011. "Visibility and The Policing Of Public Space". *Geography Compass*, [e-journal] *5*(8): 610-622. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2011.00437.x [Accessed 8 April. 2020]

Chapman, Ben (2019). UCL Outsourced Workers To Strike Over 'System Of Bullying And Discrimination. *The Independent*, [online] 06 June. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/ucl-strike-cleaners-security-guards-porters-axis-sodexo-bullying-a9187441.html [Accessed 5 April 2020].

Davies, Lyell. 2018. "Not Only Projections In A Dark Room: Theorizing Activist Film Festivals In The Lives Of Campaigns And Social Movements". *Frames Cinema Journal,* [e-journal] *13*. Available at: https://framescinemajournal.com/article/not-only-projections-in-a-dark-room-theorizing- activist-film-festivals-in-the-lives-of-campaigns-and-social-movements/ [Accessed 28 April 2020]

Davis, Mary 2009. *Comrade Or Brother? A History Of The British Labour Movement*. 2nd ed. London: Pluto Press.

Dean, Jonathan. 2015. "'Angelic Spirits Of '68': Memories Of 60s' Radicalism In Responses To The 2010–11 UK Student Protests". *Contemporary British History*, [e-journal] *30* (6): 305-325. Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13619462.2015.1099438 [Accessed 12 April 2020).

De La Puente, Maximiliano Ignacio, and Russo Pablo Mariano. 2007. "Estética y Política en el Cine Argentino Actual". *Question/Cuestión*, [e-journal] *1*(14). Available at: https://perio.unlp.edu.ar/ojs/index.php/question/article/view/358 [Accessed 20 April 2020]

Denney, Colleen J, 2017. "From The Hammer To The Fist: The Pleasures And Dangers Of March, Progress And Protest In Creating Social Justice From The First Wave To The Present". *Journal Of International Women's Studies*, [e-journal] *18*(2): 1-26. Available at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1926&context=jiws [Accessed 1 May 2020).

Dickens, Luke. 2009. *The Geographies Of Post-Graffiti: Art Worlds, Cultural Economy And The City*. PhD. Royal Holloway, University of London.

Dikeç, Mustaf 2015. *Space, Politics And Aesthetics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Duffield, Charlie, 2020. The Meaning And History Of The Black Power Fist Used By Black Lives Matter. *The I,* [online] 19 June. Available at: https://inews.co.uk/news/black-lives-matter-fist-symbol-meaning-black-power-history-raised-explained-432838 [Accessed 10 June 2020]

Dromey, Joe, 2018. Don't Blame Trade Unions For Their Declining Membership. *Newstatesman*, [online] 1 June. Available at: https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/staggers/2018/06/don-t-blame-trade-unions-their-declining-membership [Accessed 9 June 2020]

Eyerman, Ron. 2016. "Social Movements And Memory". Pp.79-83 In: *Routledge International Handbook Of Memory Studies,* edited by Anna Lisa Tota and Traver Hagan. London: Routledge.

Faulkner, Simon. 2020. "Photography And Protest In Israel/Palestine: The Activestills Online Archive". Pp. 151-171 in: *The Aesthetics Of Global Protest: Visual Culture And Communication*, edited by Aidan McGarry, Omut Korkut, Olu Jenzen, Itir Erhart and Hande Eslen-Ziya. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Firth, Rhiannon, and Robinson, Andrew. 2012. "The Non Linear Future Of Alternative Presents: Temporal Utiopianism And Immanent Revolution". Pp 242-255 in: *Movements In Time: Revolution, Social Justice And Times Of Change*, edited by Natalie Churn and Cecile Lawrence. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Fishman, Robert 1993. "Megalopolis Unbound: Decentralisation and The End of Metropolitan Culture". Pp.194-304 in: *Megalopolis: The Giant City in History*, edited by Theo Barker and Anthony Sutcliffe. London: Macmillan Press.

Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2014. "Spikey Posters: Street Media and Territoriality in Urban Activist Scenes". *Space And Culture*, [e-journal] *17* (3): 239-250. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331213501127 [Accessed 30 March 2020].

Hamilton, Carrie. 2010. "Activist Memories: The Politics Of Trauma And The Pleasures Of Politics". Pp. 265-277 in: *The Future Of Memory*, edited by Jane Kilby, Antony Rowland and Richard Crownshaw. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Hatuka, Tali, and Toch, Eran. 2016. "Being Visible In Public Space: The Normalisation Of Asymmetrical Visibility". *Urban Studies,* [e-journal] *54* (4): 984-998. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0042098015624384 [Accessed 20 May 2020].

Holloway, John 2012. *Crack Capitalism*. London: Sage.

Hyde, Marina, 'The Rapist Is You!': Why A Chilean Protest Chant Is Being Sung Around The World. *The Guardian*, [online] 03 February. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/03/the-rapist-is-you-chilean-protest-son g-chanted-around-the-world-un-iolador-en-tu-camino> [Accessed 13 April 2020]

Independent Workers Union of Great Britain, 2019. *Breakfast With The IWGB!* [online] Available at: <https://iwgb-universityoflondon.org/2019/05/31/breakfast-with-the-iwgb/> [Accessed 14 March 2020].

The Action Network, 2020. *Justice For UCL Workers - End Outsourcing*. [online] available at: <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/justice-for-ucl-workers-end-outsourcing?source=dir ect_link> [Accessed 19 April 2020]

Kelliher, Diarmaid. 2020. Class Struggle And The Spatial Politics Of Violence: The Picket Line In 1970s Britain. *Transactions Of The Institute Of British Geographer*s, [online] Available at: https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/tran.12388 [Accessed 01 June 2020]

Kettle, Martin, 2016. On Left And Right, Our Politics Is Now Dominated By Nostalgic Gestures. *The Guardian*, [online] 25 august. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/25/left-right-politics-dominated- nostalgic-gestures> [Accessed 13 February 2020]

Lefebvre, Henri, and Donald Nicholson-Smith 1991. *The Production Of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Limpiadores, 2015. [film] Directed by Fernando Mitjans. London: University College London / Open City Docs.

McGarry, Aidan, Itir Erhart, Hande Eslen-Ziya, Olu Jenzen, and Umut Korkut 2020. *The Aesthetics Of Global Protest: Visual Culture And Communication*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

McGowan, Charis, 2019. Chilean Anti-Rape Anthem Becomes International Feminist Phenomenon. *The Guardian*, [online] 06 December. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/06/chilean-anti-rape-anthem-becomes-in ternational-feminist-phenomenon> [Accessed 16 April 2020]

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 2020. "Preface: Devisualize". Pp. 11-15 in: *The Aesthetics Of Global Protest: Visual Culture And Communication*, edited by Aidan McGarry, Itir Erhart, Hande Eslen-Ziya, Olu Jenzen, and Umut Korkut. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Memou, Antigoni 2013. *Photography And Social Movements*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Miller, Byron, Nicholls, and Miller, eds., 2016. *Spaces Of Contention: Spatialities And Social Movements*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Milligan, R., 2018. *The Politics Of Occupation In The Neoliberal City*. MA. Université Libre de Bruxelles.

Moss, Stephen, 2006. The Origins Of A Clenched Fist. *The Guardian*, [online] 30 May. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/may/30/cannes2006.cannesfilmfe
stival> [Accessed 19 February 2020]

Packham, Alfie, 2017. Students Win £1.5M Pledge From UCL After Five-Month
Rent Strike. *The Guardian*, [online] 06 July. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jul/06/students-win-15m-
pledge-from-ucl-after-five-month-rent-strike> [Accessed 10 June 2020]

Palmer, Lucia Mulherin. 2017. "Melancholia And Memory In Ciudad Juárez:
Lourdes Portillo's Señorita Extraviada/Missing Young Woman (2001) And The
Communal Mourning Of Feminicide". *Studies In Spanish & Latin-American
Cinemas,* [e-journal] *14* (3): 367-385. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1386/slac.14.3.367_1> [Accessed May 15 2020]

Poirier, Agnès, 2018. May '68: What Legacy?. *The Paris Review*, [online]
Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/05/01/may-68-what-
legacy/ [Accessed 27 April 2020]

Pretorius, Deirdre. 2009. "Visually Constructing Socialist Identity In 20Th
Century South Africa: A Comparison Between Communist Party Of South
Africa Cartoons From The 1930s And Congress Of South African Trade Unions
Posters From The 1980s". Pp. 91-105 in *Imaging Ourselves: Visual Identities In
Representation*, edited by Leona Farber. Johannesburg: University of
Johannesburg Research Centre.

Purcell, M., 2014. "Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City".
Journal of Urban Affairs, [e-journal] *36*(1): 141-154. Available at:
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1111/juaf.12034 [Accessed 10 May
2020]

Rancière, Jacques 2003. *The Politics Of Aesthetics*. London: Bloomsbury.

Rigney, Ann. 2018. "Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism Beyond The
Traumatic". *Memory Studies*, [e-journal *11* (3): 368-380. Available at:
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1750698018771869 [Accessed
25 Feb 2020]

Ross, Kristin 2008. *May '68 And Its Afterlives*. Chicago: University of Chicago
Press.

Ryan, Holly Eva.2020. "Political Street Art In Social Mobilization: A Tale Of
Two Protests In Argentina". Pp. 99-121 i*n The Aesthetics Of Global Protest:
Visual Culture And Communication*, edited by Aidan McGarry, Itir Erhart,
Hande Eslen-Ziya, Olu Jenzen, and Umut Korkut. Amsterdam: Amsterdam
University Press.

Settles, Isis H., T. Buchanan, Nichole and Kristie Dotson. 2019. "Scrutinized But
Not Recognized: (In)Visibility And Hypervisibility Experiences Of Faculty Of
Color". *Journal Of Vocational Behavior*, [e-journal] *113*: 62-74. Available at:
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S000187911830068X
[Accessed 03 June 2020]

Singer, Matilda, 2018. Shift Work: The Campaigns To End Outsourcing At UCL. *Pi Media*, [online] Available at: <https://uclpimedia.com/online/shift-work-the-fight-to-end-outsourcing-at-ucl> [Accessed 19 April 2020]

Singh, Jasmin, 2015. "68 Thought" And Its Legacy - Has It Run Out Of Steam?. *Verso Books,* [blog] 27 August. Available at: https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2209-68-thought-and-its-legacy-has-it-run-out-of-steam [Accessed 13 May 2020]

SOAS Justice 4 Workers, n.d. [image] Available at: <https://twitter.com/soasj4c> [Accessed 28 June 2021].

SOAS UNISON, 2019. *SOAS 9 Deportations 10th Anniversary Commemoration Events*. [online] Available at: https://soas-unison.org.uk/events/soas-9-deportations-10th-anniversary-commemoration-events/ [Accessed 8 June 2020]

Souvlakis, George, 2019. Marxism, The Far-Right And The Antinomies Of Liberalism: An Interview With Enzo Traverso. *Verso Books*, [blog] 05 April. Available at: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4296-marxism-the-far-right-and-the-antinomies-of-l iberalism-an-interview-with-enzo-traverso> [Accessed 22 April 2020]

Soja, Edward W 1989. *Postmodern Geographies*. London: Verso.

Swyngedouw, Erik, 2010. Post-Democratic Cities: For Whom and for What?. In: Regional Studies Association*, Concluding Session Regional Studies Association Annual Conference*. Budapest, 26 May 2010.

The Student Room, 2017. *What is the UCL campus like?*. [online] Available at: <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=4573258> [Accessed 28 April 2020]

Thrift, Nigel. 2003. "Space: The Fundamental Stuff Of Human Geography". Pp. 95-109 in *Key Concepts in Geography*, edited by Gill Valentine, Sarah Holloway and Stephen P. Rice. London: SAGE.

Tonkiss, Fran. 2013. "Austerity urbanism and the makeshift city". *City*, [e-journal] *17*(3):312-324.

Traverso, Enzo 2017. *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, And Memory*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tulke, Julia. 2020 "Archiving Dissent" (Im)Material Trajectories Of Political Street Art In Istanbul And Turkey". Pp. 121-141 in *The Aesthetics Of Global Protest: Visual Culture And Communication*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Tunali, Tijen. 2018. "The Art Of Resistance: Carnival Aesthetics And The Gezi Street Protests". *ASAP/Journal*, [e-journal] *3*(2): 377-399. Available at: https://search.proquest.com/openview/8a67e0c12ca18f228127283e7068a9a4/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=4859079 [Accessed 22 May 2020]

UCL, 2020. *UCL East*. [online] Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-east/ [Accessed 14 March 2020]

Werbner, Pnina, Webb, Martin and Kathryn Spellman-Poots. 2014. "Introduction". Pp. 1-27 in *The Political Aesthetics Of Global Protest: The Arab Spring And Beyond,* edited by Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb and Kathryn Spellman-Poots. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Werbner, Pnina, 2014. "The Mother Of All Strikes: Popular Protest Culture And Vernacular Cosmopolitanism In The Botswana Public Service Unions' Strike". Pp. 22-260 in *The Political Aesthetics Of Global Protest: The Arab Spring And Beyond*, edited by Pnina Werbner, Martin Webb and Kathryn Spellman-Poots. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Zhang, Zhong. 2014. "'Let's Go For The Chicken Drum': The Everyday Production Of Social Space In The University". Pp. 182-203 in *The Physical University: Contours Of Space And Place In Higher Education*, edited by Paul Temple. London: Routledge.

Zieleniec, Andrzej. 2018. "Lefebvre's Politics of Space: Planning the Urban as Oeuvre". *Urban Planning*, [e-journal] *3*(3): 1-11.

About the author

Thomas Cury is a BA Language and Culture graduate from UCL. He is also an activist involved in various campaigns and causes; currently he is organising with the trade union Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) and Newham Anti-Raids. Email thomas.cury.16 AT alumni.ucl.ac.uk

What is mediactivism?[1]

Antônio Augusto Braighi; Marco Túlio Câmara

Abstract

The title of this paper signals an answer that we aim to find here — or at least deepen an important debate that is not only academic. Therefore, our objective is to present a conceptual proposal for the term "mediactivism" and reflect on its perspectives linked to social mobilization actions, whether they are organized movements or not. For this purpose, we performed a bibliographic review in order to delimit such a term and demonstrate its approximations and distances with other concepts. We also problematized the formation of the binomial "media and activism", analyzing what activism is and how it uses media to achieve its objectives. We close with brief considerations, after the conceptual proposal, leaving the field of theory and approaching the importance of practice in the defense of social rights.

Keywords: Mediactivism; Social Mobilization; Activism; Conceptual proposal; Internet.

Why should we talk about mediactivism?

As a consequence of greater consolidation and democratization of Internet access, the profusion of new communication and information technologies and, mainly, the emergence of online social networks, there is a new reality that can be used by all sorts of social movements. This reality is the possibility of articulating and carrying out large-scale protests organized and ignited by the digital network, as well as the use of digital media for many activist purposes. Several people, some even articulating groups for the same purposes, are now transmitting, for example, constantly and live, the dynamics of social mobilization events and street protests.

In this context, the term mediactivism[2], seen as a neologism, started to be used and circulate in common sense and in a recurring way. Many researchers affirmed it was a new idea, brought up with contemporary technologies. Despite giving credit to the development of Communication, we must do as Umberto Eco (1994) warned us: not so much to the integrated sea, as it may be an

---

[1] It is important to mention that this article brings advances and new reflections from previous paper also published by Braighi and Câmara (2018) in Portuguese, in Brazil.

[2] In Portuguese, we call it "*midiativismo*". Since it is a neologism, we have not found, in academic literature and in practice, a word that contemplated the concept presented here. This terminology is the closest we could find, then, to represent an idea that we rely on throughout this and other works. Throughout this paper, we will address other variations of terms.

exaggeration to accept certain fallacies that are published, such as the claim that new information and communication technologies have only lately forged concepts like the one mentioned earlier - or to the land of the apocalyptic, who deny their contributions to social actions.

In this sense, a question arises — or returns — which we (still) seek answer(s) to: what is mediactivism? This is the question we aim to answer to — or at least deepen the debate — by daring to present a conceptual proposal. At first glance, one can think of a simple fusion of the words "media" and "activism". But how to substantiate such a definition?

If we look for this terminology even in the academic environment, we will find several meanings that, although very close, lead us to contradictions and leave us facing the question about the width of the line that divides mediactivism from other concepts — such as free media, radical media, guerrilla media or simply alternative media, among many others. It seems interesting, therefore, to distinguish, at the outset, what mediactivism cannot be — as we do in the following sections.

Dealing with the lack of a clear definition, other recent studies have also focused on the search for a better defined concept of mediactivism. Eusebio (2016), for example, presents, in summary, an idea that helps us to reach this goal. For him, it "[...] is the theory of activism that uses media and communication technologies for social and political movements" (online), even emphasizing the importance and use of the Internet in this consolidation of practice. In this sense, we also want to use excerpts like this, presenting other possible readings to those interested in the topic, with which we agree and reaffirm what mediactivism can also be (helping us, further, in the delimitation we seek).

Carroll and Hackett (2016) understand that, due to the plurality of causes and identities claimed in activist actions that use media, a clear definition of what mediactivism is still uncertain, even though they consider it as a system of action, distinguishing its role in the emerging social formation[3]. Nevertheless, we will deal with this in a parallel way, related to the claimed/defended motto — worrying, perhaps, more with the ideological/encouraging conception of/to the subject who protests and uses media with determined purposes.

---

[3] In this perspective, Sartoretto (2016), for example, believes that mediactivism was born from the need to represent the plurality of groups and classes that exist in today's society, being, therefore, a space for "discussion and exchange of information" (Sartoretto, 2016, p. 120). We have reservations about the use of the term "representation", which does not seem to be much of a mediactivist perspective. We also do not understand that it is only related to the "current" (present) society; however, we reaffirm that our intention is not to omit fronts, but to put them into discussion. Even so, our proposal here is not to deal with origins or characteristics such as those addressed, but to focus on aspects related to the logic of praxis, agreeing with Sartoretto (2016) regarding the aspect of inciting critical work from mediactivism.

It is worth mentioning that we are based on a broader horizon. Authors like Maciel (2012) relate mediactivism to capitalist production and as a form of resistance to the system imposed on our society. We consider, on this same track, that such practice runs through social experience, and we also assume "[…] the need to understand its formation process and its forms of production and media appropriation" (Maciel, 2012, p. 41). Nevertheless, our mission in this paper will be more related to the appreciation of the practice, seeking a theoretical-practical outline that makes possible, if not a definition, a provocation to the debate that allows us to move forward in this direction, based on different inferences that we will present from now on. With these considerations in mind, in order to finally present the desired conceptualization, we will propose a more closed meaning for the term mediactivism, problematizing both what activism is and how it uses media (and not the other way around).

What mediactivism cannot be…

At first, let's discuss the construction of "mediatic activism". This expression does not refer to a concept, but it would be a substantive (almost adjective) construction that can designate a set of social actions that uses media (whether physical or vehicular) to carry out activism[4]. Mediactivism is different for us.

Free media, radical media and community media for us are forms of mediatic activism, but they are not mediactivism. We can give as an example some texts by Cicilia Peruzzo (2012; 2015). She presents a relativization when approaching community communication (community media), considering that the self-representation behavior of members of the community, when using the tools (the material media) and when looking for space in the media, constitutes a form of mediatic activism[5].

We also don't consider mediactivism to be the same as alternative media. The first has the gene of the second and could therefore be classified as "a type of" (and not "the") alternative media. In our opinion, the second, metaphorically, is an umbrella concept (or tree top), encompassing all others, with their various specificities. We rely on several observations for this point of view, such as Rendeiro (2003) and Chris Atton (2002).

Carroll and Hackett (2016), for example, consider mediactivism as a type of alternative media, listing as possible causes for this classification the low cost of production and the independence of major economic interests. We agree that these indicators comply with the alternative perspective, but mediactivism is

---

[4] In Portuguese: Ativismo Midiático

[5] In other words: the author does not use the term mediactivism, but it is common to see researchers citing the fragments in which Peruzzo deals with mediatic activism to define a concept that is not related to ours.

more than that. In other words, even though it is in (vertical) line with the concept of alternative media, it keeps idiosyncrasies that are beyond the matrix.

With recent information technologies, alternative media has been made in new ways, has gained original formats and spaces, becoming more and more inserted in the Internet, thus occupying cyberspace. In this sense, even though we find traces of alternative media in what we seek to conceptualize here, we cannot lose ourselves in indexes and restrict ourselves to this concept already so well worked by other researchers, conditioning mediactivism.

Within the alternative perspective, for us, there would be other fronts, such as free media, which, in turn, could not be confused with mediactivism. We understand that the primary commitment of free media is a targeted social activism. Although society benefits from its advances, its essence and its respective problems are the focus on a main struggle around the democratization of communication itself. So there is a specificity; there is a focus and a clear struggle, which contrasts with the generic character of mediactivism as a practice — which can relate to any cause (Braighi, 2016).

Another front quite confused with mediactivism is radical media. For Downing (2001), there is a very wide variety of alternative media that undertake actions in the sense previously presented. However, when members of a given media vehicle take an attitude that goes to the heart of the issues they aspire to defend, when they launch forces in the face of oppression, when there is a confrontation with the construction of political meaning (in the broadest conception of the term), there is the true demonstration of what it would be like to be radical. Thus, at first sight, there would seem to be a much clearer approach between this terminology and mediactivism.

However, the concept seems too broad (since it does not end in the few lines that we highlighted earlier) covering with little accuracy what (type of) media is addressed. Likewise, this radicalism, in our opinion, could only be effectively exercised by those who are directly affected by the problems for which the causes are sought. Perhaps this is the justification for the special place that social movements take in the work of Downing (2001) — differently, we emphasize, from mediactivism, which can also be exercised by someone who supports a cause and not necessarily supports an articulated movement.

These are probably the terminologies with the most fragile barriers, with tenuous relationships that are exposed when conceptualizing citizen initiatives that use media in the defense of various social causes. Cyberspace is perhaps the basic responsible for the advent of controversies. In fact, it is very common to see attempts to condition certain phenomena (mainly those that gain relevance due to their propagation on the Web), given their specificities, with variations of the terminologies listed above, adding prefixes and suffixes in many neologisms. It is necessary, therefore, to be a careful reader, sparingly observing what is precisely said in each case studied. We do not advocate a kind of purism of mediactivism, but only the study of conceptual separations that allow us to go

deeper and better in the face of future events, without reinventing the theory for each new event.

Mediactivism, therefore, is not cybernetic activism, as it is not guerrilla media[6], nor is it related to other expressions that could only increase the spectrum of terms. We agree that the term is under construction, or mutation, in the face of technological advances, but the boundaries with other fronts, even if they are tiny and imperceptible to practical eyes, cannot be allowed to be tampered with.

What is said about mediactivism that we agree with...

It is important to present some concepts that guide our way around the concept that we aim to present. From the start, let us ponder Huesca's considerations about mediactivism, indicating that such action is produced by "[...] radio, television, and other media practices that aim to effect social change and that generally engage in some sort of structural analysis concerned with power and the reconstitution of society into more egalitarian arrangements" (Huesca, 2008 apud Hug, 2012, p. 275); we take this path too.

The Italian researcher Alice Mattoni (2013) chooses this same path, but distinguishes activism in media from that which occurs about media and what happens through media. "Activism in media" is evident when using information technologies as a space for creating content to promote change. In addition, it is about changes in media representation, serving as a dissemination of the views of those who were silenced by mainstream media. This author considers the counterculture movement as an example of this form of activism, since it seeks to question and combat the dominant culture, currently driven by new technologies, which facilitate such a process. Founded in Canada in 1989, the Adbusters Media Foundation is an example of activism in media, as it maintains a magazine and defines itself as a space of resistance against the consumer culture in which the world is inserted.

"Activism about media" can be considered the social movement that aims at the political reform of media itself. In addition, media can be a means of connection among these movements, with effective participation in these processes, and providing information, content and infrastructure. Mattoni mentions the Wikipedia website as an example, as it allows the production of public online content, in which Internet users can create and edit information according to their interest in the subject.

"Activism through media", which interests us most and dialogues best with the type of mediactivism we aim to work on, would be a mobilization process that refers to the way that each activist uses media differently to achieve their goals and serve the respective movements (whether or not the activist is a member of the movement) with actions that go beyond digital social networks and reach

---

[6] On the subject, see Braighi, Emediato and Antunes (2016).

the streets. The author highlights the advantages that new information technologies have brought to this registration and content production, mainly because of smartphones and access to the Internet and digital social networks, regardless of location, which leads internet users to practice mediactivism — even if they don't consider themselves as activists.

Even so, we are concerned with symbiosis. For us, on the one hand, mediation without activism is a simple media record, which contradicts part of the idea presented in the previous paragraph. On the other hand, direct action without the medium artifact is only activism. It is at the intersection of the two fronts, and as much simultaneously as possible, that mediactivism would occur. But how can this synchrony occur?

We agree with Huesca (2008 apud Hug, 2012) that radio and television can carry out this process, allowing mediactivism to be fully exercised, aiming to promote social changes through its wide dissemination. However, such vehicles do not allow a more effective participation in the content production, collaboratively and committed, given the cost of its concession and maintenance.

The Internet, by contrast, is important in the greater dissemination and simultaneity of information transmission, besides opening space for subjects previously silenced due to the difficulty of finding space in traditional means of communication. It is evident that the way of producing and carrying out communication has also changed, reaching new means and products. As a result, these changes have changed the way of consuming information and its practical experience, expanding the production of content for those who use it. In this context, the Web seems to be the bulwark of a new communicational and activist process, since it popularized and facilitated the practice of mediactivism (and even what is conjectured to be and is attested as mediactivism) due to its practicality and immediacy, establishing itself as the most democratic way of doing it.[7]

Meikle (2002 apud HUG, 2012) believes that mediactivism encompasses these other intermediate forms of media appropriation, formerly considered incomplete and temporary. More recently, this author addressed Internet activism based on Berners-Lee's concept of "intercreativity". In short, the term goes beyond the concept of interaction of interlocutors, since Internet users are able to create content among themselves, performing new tasks and solving problems.

---

[7] Of course, we do not despise the human factor. In other words, the internet is what humans make of it. In this context, it has been used both as a democratic tool and by extremist and reactionary groups, for example, who have used it for different purposes. Our goal here is to demonstrate the mobilizing power that the internet has facilitated, from the possibility of use, by people, to promote content and coverage aimed at social change. This is at the heart of activism and, in this context, also of mediactivism.

Thus, Meikle (2010) uses this concept to analyze activism on the Internet from four aspects: texts, tactics, strategies and networks. Texts are reinterpretations or subversions of existing content; tactics address electronic civil disobedience, which may culminate in new forms of protest; strategies are based on alternative media, centered on the participating subject; networks refer to the Internet itself and the connections it allows to make in forums, interactions and campaigns, creating a new media model.

We agree, therefore, that mediactivism[8] could be a concept that appropriates "intercreativity", encompassing the previously reported forms of activism on the media, culminating in what the author believes mediactivism aims at: social change based on these descriptions, relationships and interactions[9].

How should mediactivism be defined?

As explained in the previous section, the concept of alternative media is not enough to characterize mediactivism. One way would be to dismember the quasi-binomial, presenting instead where we look at what activism is and the role of media for it.

Professor Tim Jordan is our main reference on activism. In a seminal work (Jordan, 2002), this author shows that the term designates the set of actions with the purpose of changing the established social reality. These are undertaken by subjects who, together, sharing feelings about a particular public situation, make efforts in a common direction. With solidary logic as a reference (which gives meaning to the approach), they aim to change the usual ways in which their lives are lived.

So these subjects are called activists as they are willing to work for the change that generates a certain common welfare, a cause. The motto "[...] comes to life when people recognize in each other the will and desire to change the routines of life" (Jordan, 2002, p. 12-13). It is important to note that Jordan, so far, does not address minority social groups, or relevant causes (when essential rights are taken away, for example); any activism, from any subject, would fit there – as long as it has the purpose of, we reinforce, a benefit to the community, aiming, above all, social equity. The position we share on activism here, then, does not apply to groups/people who act in favor of causes that restrict common rights,

---

[8] It is important to note that Meikle, at this time, does not use the term mediactivism, but activism on the Internet. However, Hug addresses the term referring to Meikle with regard to the purpose of mediactivism.

[9] We reinforce the notion that the burden of democracy is the participation of even those who use it for non-democratic purposes. Thus, we remember that the Internet is a plural space. In this sense, we need to mention that this public sphere also allows militants (who, conceptually, for us, should not be called activists) reactionaries and/or extremists, for example, to organize and articulate their actions through the web and in the web environment.

but rather to those who seek political-social change in the society in which these movements and people are inserted.

However, the term "activism" has a symbolic weight. It would be in the midst of the strength of other terms, such as "revolutionary", on one hand, and the constant exercise of a "militant", on the other. It is also different from the term "radical". It does, however, aim at a direct action (which is an important concept in activism which will be presented on the next pages); it is an action that has an impact on the "other". What usually comes to mind is the notably presence on the streets, but can include other approaches through features that activists hold (Assis, 2006).

In summary, we could see in the research by Érico Assis (2006, p. 14) that "[...] the activist is an engaged agent, driven by his / her ideology to concrete practices — of physical or creative strength — that aim to challenge mentalities and practices of the socio-political-economic system, building a revolution [even if] in small steps ". The author brings new and interesting perspectives: the notion of promoting an ideological background, which demonstrates a particular and personal involvement, of a non-ephemeral interest; the idea of practices that are not necessarily physical[10], but also creative; and the mentality challenge front, in the problematization that aims to generate critical analysis and change of conceptions, beyond the clash.

Thus, we conjecture that addressing mediactivism means considering that the use of technical-media devices serve the purposes of militancy in order to enhance them in different ways[11]. With a popularization of the Internet, open to all people, it allows a series of actions to be articulated, in a constant participation that results in the taking of mediation management of oneself. This means that today any of us is a potential information mediator, which does not make us an activist and, therefore, neither a mediactivist.

With the advent of new communication and information technologies, new models of social interaction become equally important fields, guiding practices of subjects in society. Even so, media(s) (vehicles and devices) are seen as accessories of other fields that apparently govern the dynamics of modern life. Therefore, it is necessary to ask what how we use new media and how they influence our common practices. We live a process of mediatization of our reality, which impels us to see it and to think about it in other ways (Fausto-Neto, 2008).

What would be the particularities for activism? Militancy, as a social field, would be superimposed by the characteristics of this mediatization. In this

---

[10] We partially disagree with this point when merging and constituting the quasi-binomial mediactivism, because of the demand for approximate involvement that the mediactivist must have, in our opinion. Thus, the concrete practice, for us, must be physical-creative.

[11] However, this conception would be somewhat reductionist. That is, it is not like seeing media today serving activism. By contrast, activism is being reconfigured by the nuances of the social mediatization process.

context, the activist actions would be crossed by the peculiarities of the exposed phenomenon. In other words, media serves activism, but also gives it other shapes through its peculiarities, transforming it.

Although we agree that media complexity influences the (media)activist practice, we corroborate the merit of actions of this kind, since they are situated in reality — even if the struggle sometimes turns into a symbolic flow that, in fact, intends to undertake resistance on the web itself. In other words: it is not intended to address here the particularities of a kind of simulacrum activism. There are real social problems, shared by a group of citizens who explore direct actions and have in communication practices an important tool to propel their intentions.

In this sense, we give examples from Brazilian reality. Between 2013 and 2014, for example, there were a series of protests in Brazil that addressed problematic issues still experienced in the country: the high price charged by public transportation, despite the terrible quality of buses and subways in Brazilian capitals, triggered the movements in that period. Actions increased when crowds took to the streets to express, for example, their dissatisfaction with corruption in politics, expanding the causes for which people fought in the protests. Online social networks, in this context, served as a mobilization tool (BRAIGHI, 2106). Recently, during the covid-19 pandemic, many people took to the streets to protest the current president, Jair Bolsonaro, because of his way of dealing, politically and socially, with the pandemic. His disbelief in the lethality of the virus and the lack of investment and credibility in Science were the main reasons for the revolt in Brazil, the second country in numbers of cases and deaths by the new coronavirus in the world. Once again, the Internet has taken a special place in the articulation of groups that have organized protests, even during the period of social isolation.

Another important case in 2020 was the strength of the #BlackLivesMatters movement, initially motivated by the murder of George Floyd, in the USA. We were able to observe several movements and protests in the USA and other similar actions in several other countries, expanding the discussion for racism, as in Brazil, for example. We also observe acts in the city of Rio de Janeiro against police violence in the favelas and in other social environments, such as the case of George Floyd and so many others in Brazil. This reality, experienced by a part of the population, gains more and more notoriety thanks to the greater democratization of communication tools. Material evidence of police arbitrariness is often disseminated due to access to devices and platforms such as YouTube and other digital social networks. Thus, the movements that fight for peace in the communities gain more strength and legitimacy, based on the visibility that the internet can provide them.

Thus, the position we adopt, without forgetting the issues surrounding the mediatization process (which not only verticalize the activists' way of acting, but help to shape specific and strategic ways of doing), is that of a sum of activist perspectives (previously exposed) and the classic, basic and didactic mediation

process. Therefore, while mediation aims at the profusion of information related to the causes and events highlighted by the media activists, they respond to the demand for personal incursion, interfering in the course of events not only telling, but actually writing the facts.

Indymedia[12], which represents a reference in independent media, given its primacy[13], is an interesting example in the context of this debate, since, for this organization, registering events "[...] means actively participating[14] in its elaboration and not just reporting the actions that take place when they manifest "(Antoun, 2001, p. 137).

Recently and taking the Brazilian reality as an example again, we could mention Mídia Ninja. It is a mediactivist collective that gained notoriety for the transmission and effective participation in the protests that took place in Brazil between 2013 and 2014. Assuming a strong involvement with the causes defended in those protests, the group, formed mainly by young people, assumed a leading role in the reports of the events, having even guided the mass media - which was often avoided, by the protesters themselves, to register the acts in that period (Braighi, 2016).

It was between 2013 and 2014, perhaps, that the term mediactivism have gained strength in Brazil, which generated a series of academic debates and repercussions in common sense. Even today, the terminology has gaps and interpretive possibilities. For this reason, we believe that the search for a relatively elaborate concept would help to think about the dimensions of the intervention that someone undertakes, in order to even strengthen it. It is not just a matter of providing a theoretical label, but of providing instruments to practice, with reflections that equip the activist in his/her work as someone who reports the facts in which he/she participates.

In order to see such dimensions, in 2018, we invited Brazilian and foreign researchers to write articles on the interfaces of mediactivism and we organized an ebook in which, among the various contributions, some papers dealt with case studies that demonstrated variations of the concept in practice (Braighi; Lessa; Câmara, 2018). In the publication, there are articles that addressed, for example, the French website Paris-luttes.info and perspectives related to online mediactivism; activist performances in live news - which makes us think, in comparison with other actions, of the difference among the three categories of mediactivism addressed by Mattoni (2013); the mediactivism of indigenous

---

[12] See https://indymedia.org/ (17 apr. 2020)

[13] According to Pasquinelli (2002), the Seattle summit protests, in 1999, in the United States, and the Group of Eight (G8) meeting in Genoa, in July 2001, are important events for the emergence of mediactivism — in addition to the cheapening of technologies and the irremediable adhesion to the Internet, which proliferated more and more. In this context, contemporary mediactivism is approached mainly from the use of digital resources and the Web.

[14] For us, this active participation, that Antoun (2001) calls attention to, is activism.

peoples, through the production of videos that explain the need for land demarcation for native peoples; the case of the collaborative cinema of Afro-indigenous *brodagem* (a neologism that unites the term "brother", with the term, in Portuguese, *camaradagem/*camaraderie) and a network of young people; among many others.

Therefore, taking real examples as a reference, and locating ourselves in the notion of "activism through media" (Mattoni, 2013), we build and present below a conceptual proposal for mediactivism. For the elaboration of this concept and theoretical discussion, we consider the convergences, recurrences, convictions and values that are expected of those who practice mediactivism, recognizing that such mediactivists already practice it. Thus, we confirm that mediactivism only seems to exist based on the actions taken by these subjects.

The conceptual proposal

Being a mediactivist is not just carrying a media; therefore, handing over the mediation process to an activist does not mean guarantees that it will work. Uses and purposes need to be considered. Likewise, in order to be a mediactivist, it is necessary to be trained not only in terms of technique, but also to have literacy in its aesthetics, in its language.

Mediactivism is not just a syntactic neologism; the formation of the quasi-binomial generates a hybrid term that, in practice, should be insurmountable, equated, and balanced. On one hand, there is the function of information, of mediation, which is associated with the other hand, of solidarity transgression (Jordan, 2002), in order to change contexts.

Mediactivism is only done with mediactivists, subjects with a solidary will, who undertake direct transgressive and intentional actions, and see their own capacities for social intervention, previously well situated, being enhanced. This must be done through a media record that necessarily aims to amplify knowledge, spread information, be present, undertake resistance and establish defense structures. Therefore, regarding this possibility of establishing a concept about mediactivism, it is worth making some other clarifications:

a) as a solidary will, it is understood the intentional, deliberate, personal and voluntary behavior of subjects who are imbued with altruistic value and aware of a shared otherness (Jordan, 2002);

b) reinforcing the idea of direct action, we understand it, like Jordan (2002), not only as a simple tactic, but as a wide range of possibilities, in the articulation of the most varied intervention ideas, from passive notions of civil disobedience to more active actions, in some cases even aggressive actions[15]. However, a new

---

[15] In this context, it is interesting to emphasize that there are violent and non-violent direct actions. Likewise, we note that the intervention to which mediactivism is linked (through the exercise of a mediactivist) makes no difference, and it remains what is proposed in the same way, as long as characteristics such as the solidary will and the intention are respected. If the

record is worth mentioning: the mere mediation of information, reporting the facts, does not constitute mediactivism — given the scarcity of transgressive meaning;

c) the word "intention" here must be considered within the perspective of purpose, with a sense of social change amalgamated in a given practice. Thus, mediactivism can be exercised both by a street protester who shouts slogans of causes, as well as by an adept of the Black Bloc tactic — the question is the purposes for which they serve with their way of acting[16];

d) the media record, as we have discussed, aims, in turn, to enhance direct action. The first item on this scale, as evidenced, is knowledge. Through the construction of a narrative parallel to that of the corporate mass media, mediactivists have been playing a positioning role alongside sectors of society that have less space for argumentative projection, providing conditions for their points of view to resonate. Nevertheless, the shock of the ideas propagated by the collectives only has a positive effect (generating knowledge and questioning), when used in a responsive and responsible way by readers — that is, in an active and conscious way. For Pasquinelli (2002), mediactivist collectives do not only serve to information, but act directly in the construction of political subjectivities (in a broad sense). Thinking of a media process closer to critical work, we understand that it should take into account a logic based on Paulo Freire, with processes based on problematization, dialogue, de-alienation and the horizontality of exchanges (Freire, 1973);

e) the second perspective of the concept is to scatter information. What is important to ratify is the consideration of this condition, which forms the backbone, a structural pillar of mediactivist actions. Although no words are spoken (in a simultaneous coverage of a protest, for example), text is transmitted by images. The pictorial is transformed into discourse which, in association with verbal discourse, projects itself effectively in the audience. Expanding horizons of something localized, through media potential, means not only informing, notifying or reporting, but also strengthening. We believe that each piece of information has value, especially when it is associated with the approval of a mediactivist. The more the information of activist value spreads in the large network, the greater the chance that it will reach the general public, as well as to reach the mass media themselves, which start to rule the subject, for example;

---

latter should not even be considered activists, even less would they be elevated to the hybrid category just for carrying a media.

[16] It is worth mentioning that the meaning of the subjects' presence in a given protest, since there may be an insertion of a casual subject in an act since it could be in vogue, or of a pseudo-anarchist revolted with personal problems who casually throws a stone at random.

f) the third front of the proposed mediactivist concept is to be present. There is, for example, the space-time mark of a subject on the streets[17], participating in direct actions of protest. Then, the recording of this individual acts as a check-in, informing not merely his/her participation, but the very existence of the action. This realization takes place in the same period as the absent one, which is now also present (under the conditions of the binomial already mentioned) in a media alignment. As it turns out, being present has three juxtaposed compounds. Direct action is formed in speech, in fact reported, but finally it appears. It takes place through the participation of a subject with a technical device; an individual that stands out from the description, but is just one more within the manifesting composition. However, this subject assures and protects himself/herself in the very emergence of mediation. He/she projects himself/herself as a flattening body, establishing conditions for transposing the viewer to the current scene. This presence is not only from the street to the web, but also the other way around. So the idea of a subjective camera here is important. There is a mediated experience that, due to the very conformation of a mediactivist mode of production, brings the Internet user[18] closer to the facts, thus aligning him/her with the causes in defense in the course of the approaches;

g) the penultimate perspective of our mediactivist concept is to undertake resistance. Such a front would be in a contiguous and narrow line with the defense structures, to be seen below. However, here we have more of the clash operations within the logic of the narrative dispute. Such behavior is safeguarded by — which also justifies — the ideological obstinacy. It is the militant insistence that presents itself as a resilience in exposing, registering, acting and observing. Not without reason, Bentes (2015) draws attention to the state of attention and urgency, a striking feature of mediactivism in places of social conflict. It is a type of record that transforms the cause into a discourse, shaping it with the performance characteristics of mediactivists that strengthen it;

h) finally, we have the establishment of defense structures as the last front of the articulated mediactivist concept. Perhaps we address here, more specifically, the performance in protests, for example. One of the elements of this composition would be the Copwatch. The goal is to keep a record active to help identify and mitigate arbitrary police actions. It is the strength of the device – giving even more strength to the activist – in the materialization of mediatization. This is because it is expected that people's behavior will change when they are on camera. When they know that they are in the place just to curb the action, what

---

[17] This is what we called attention to earlier, indicating the approximate involvement that the mediactivist must have. So, for us, mediactivism could not occur outside the front. Otherwise, the possible activist action would probably be closer to other terms.

[18] We understand that contemporary mediactivism is carried out exponentially through digital media, namely, in exploring the potential of the Internet and new technical devices (mainly smartphones), although several other tools/media can be used.

to expect as a reaction of these policemen? It is the coat of arms of the media-crowd (Bentes, 2015) in operation: a camera as a sword and shield[19], defense that allows the maintenance of militant obstinacy. In this case, mediactivism may even provoke a more combative stance by its individuals, questioning the authorities more sharply, for example. However, this record is not linked only to the defense against the police. The registration as a proof, alibi, and prevention occurs in several other actions that aim to show the reality even from the activist spectral point, in the whole extension of the action, in order to counter possible misrepresented narratives of the mass media vehicles, of the Law - in omitted cases, and even of detractors (and/or) protesters. The lines, as we can see, are blurred in relation to the media contributions to activist action.

Further explanations

We consider that the discussion evidently does not end here. In fact, this paper is a provocation that can be changed by several other future proposals. The important thing, after all, is that the discussions around mediactivism are highlighted. What was intended here, and we hope to have achieved, was not a closed design of the concept, but an outline that would minimally allow any reference, fostering criticism and analysis around mediactivist practices around the world, aiming at its validity — which could represent future research even for us who are authors of this text.

Without contradictions, it is worth making a particular mention that would help to redirect the concept previously exposed. Antoun (2001) marks the autopoiesis character of mediactivism, a condition ratified by Bentes (2015), remembering that the initiatives of the genre are marked by a "[...] language of experimentation that creates another sharing of the sensitive [...]" (p. 21), in reference to Rancière's proposals. Regarding the paradox of the mentions presented in this paragraph, let us remember that mediactivism reinvents itself, it recreates itself, precisely because of the vicissitudes of our times, by social demands and even by the opportunities offered by technological developments. Mediactivism is what is made of it, as long as there is the purpose of social change, effective involvement and that solidarity transgression remains the target.

Therefore, the ideal approach would be if we could not only try to fit the practice into theory, but demonstrate it in the exercise of mediactivism. If it were possible, we would do it by distorting the hegemonic narratives, raising the flag of the counter-discourse, in a perspective that is as close as possible to the facts, but that does not close the senses, expanding the questions as a way of maintaining the causes — since they are always open. It would be, however, in the hybrid perspective, mediation of our own activism, disregarding any self-

---

[19] Although the record may, in some cases, be used as evidence against the activist himself/herself.

centered condition — even though our direct relationship with the event is a basic clause for the correct implementation of the idea of mediactivism.

Invariably, mediactivism goes through a configuration of the record made by the subject who undertakes the action, which interferes with mediation. As obvious as it may seem, it is necessary to say that the mediation of the activist is also a story even if it comes from an activist. Sometimes it is based on points of view of a certain ideology - which do not represent the ideology itself, but how it influences the mediactivist. Thus, we consider and reaffirm the power of subjectivity in this mediactivist practice and how this action works according to the subject who undertakes it. However, it is important to highlight that such actions and productions, although loaded with subjectivities, must be guided by collectivity to contemplate the social role that mediactivism proposes as a concept and practice.

We would deepen in the defense of social rights, in the approach to the "other" (more specifically in what is important to us) with the objective of protecting vulnerable populations' causes. We would do that, we ratify, through information that would transform, that would open the black box, that would explain, illustrate, elucidate, and uncover.

Mediactivism for us, after all, (if it is not clear) means street, ground, melee. We could, to a certain extent, agree with those who believe that (media)activist existence occurs not only in the passion of the struggle, outside the asphalt, but also in new ways of highlighting their desires — given the contours and potential of the Web space. However, for us, network activism would differ from mediactivism. While the first makes use of technological devices and the Web for its emergence, the second serves activism, which, transmitted / registered or not, maintains the metric of social intervention, whereas the first, without the Web, does not exist (as a concept).

The media function, within the militancy, invigorates the cause, but does not determine it, even though the Web device intersects it with its conformation rebars. The decisive factor is the behavior of the mediactivist, when signing up for ongoing events, (inter)mediating and recording his/her narrative. Mediactivism stems from this position and not the other way around, understanding the place of the individual rather than that of institutions, groups or collectives, as we have always remembered. In other words, the most important thing, after all, is the Subject's behavior, in the greater expression that this other concept has.

References

Antoun, Henrique. 2001. "Jornalismo e ativismo na hipermídia: em que se pode reconhecer a nova mídia". In: *Revista Famecos*, Porto Alegre, v. 1, n. 16, p. 135-148, dec.

Assis, Érico G. de. 2006. *Táticas lúdico-midiáticas no ativismo político contemporâneo*. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências da Comunicação) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências da Comunicação, Universidade Vale do Rio dos Sinos, São Leopoldo (RS).

Atton, Chris. 2002. *Alternative media*. London: Sage Publications.

Bentes, Ivana. 2015. *Mídia-Multidão*: estéticas da comunicação e biopolíticas. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X.

Braighi, Antônio Augusto. 2016. *Análise do Discurso Midiativista*: uma abordagem às transmissões simultâneas do Mídia Ninja. Tese (Doutorado em Letras) – Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte.

Braighi, Antônio Augusto; Câmara, Marco Túlio. 2018. "O que é Midiativismo? Uma proposta conceitual". In: Braighi, Antônio Augusto; Lessa, Cláudio; Câmara, Marco Túlio (orgs.). *Interfaces do Midiativismo*: do conceito à prática. CEFET-MG: Belo Horizonte. P. 25-42.

Braighi, Antônio Augusto; Lessa, Cláudio; Câmara, Marco Túlio (orgs.). *Interfaces do Midiativismo*: do conceito à prática. CEFET-MG: Belo Horizonte.

Braighi, Antônio Augusto; Emediato, Wander; Antunes, Élton. 2016. "O jornalismo de guerrilha e o Mídia Ninja". In: Emediato, Wander (Org). *Análises do discurso político*. Belo Horizonte: FALE; UFMG. p. 306-326

Carroll, William K.; Hackett, Robert A. 2016. "Democratic media activism through the lens of social movement theory". In: *Media, Culture and Society*, UK, v. 28, n. 1, p. 83-104.

Downing, John. D. H. 2001. *Radical media*: rebellious communication and social movements. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Eco, Umberto. 1994. "Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals: Mass Communications and Theories of Mass Culture". In: *Apocalypse Postponed*: Essays by Umberto Eco, edited by Robert Lumley, 17–35. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fausto-Neto, Antônio. 2008. "Fragments of "analytics" of mediatization". In: *MATRIZes*, 1(2), p.89-105.

Freire, Paulo. 1973. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Trans.: Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.

Hug, Theo. 2012. "Explorations in the Tension Between Media Activism and Action-Oriented Media Pedagogy". In: *Journalism and Mass Communication*, USA, v. 2, n. 3.

Jordan, Tim. 2002. *Activism!* Direct action, hacktivism and the future of society. London: Reaktion Books.

Maciel, Danielle Edite Ferreira. 2012. *Midiativismo: entre a democratização e a assimilação capitalista*. 158 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências da Comunicação) – Escola de Comunicação e Artes, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

Mattoni, Alice. 2013. "Media activism". In: *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements*. New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing.

Eusebio, Andrew. 2016. "Media Activism". In: *Andrew Eusebio's Blog*. <http://www.andreweusebio.com/writingresearch/mediaactivism>. Acess: 22 jan. 2018.

Meikle, Graham. 2010. "Intercreativity: mapping online activism". In: Hunsinger, Jeremy; Klastrup, Lisbeth; Allen, Matthew. (Orgs.). *International handbook of internet research*. Dordrecht: Springer. p. 363–377

Pasquinelli, Matteo (ed.). 2002. *Media Activism*: Strategie e pratiche della comunicazione indipendente, Rome: Derive Approdi.

Peruzzo, Cicilia. 2015. "Civic Media, Meet Community Media" - Community Communication and Education for Citizenship. In: *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, v. 32, p. 143-157.

Peruzzo, Cicilia. 2012. "Challenges of Popular and Community Communication in Cybercultur@": approximation to the proposition of Emergent Local Knowledge Community. In: *Journal of Latin American Communication Research*, v. 2, p. 61-91.

Rendeiro, Mark F. 2003. *Defining alternativess*: the meaning alternative journalists give to their work. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Sartoretto, Paola. 2016. "Ativismo midiático circunstancial: uma análise da relação entre representações mídiáticas e políticas". In: *Animus: Revista Interamericana de Comunicação Midiática*, Santa Maria (RS), v. 15, n. 30, p. 118-129.

About the authors

Antônio Augusto Braighi holds a PhD in Linguistic Studies from UFMG (Brazil). Professor at CEFET-MG (Brazil). E-mail: antonioaugustobraighi AT gmail.com

Marco Túlio Câmara is a PhD student at Applied Linguistics Program at Unicamp (Brazil) and holds a MSc. in Language Studies from CEFET-MG. E-mail: marcotuliocamara AT gmail.com

Mosireen, the Egyptian revolution, and global digital media activism[1]

Christopher Robé

Abstract

The Mosireen Collective serves as a case study that represents a new form of diasporic, global media activism that operates across a series of commercial and non-commercial digital platforms (in addition to physical locations) and employs different video forms depending on the needs of the moment. Mosireen reveals a dynamic process at work where its media activism changes configurations to adapt to new circumstances all the while being deeply steeped in anarchist-based practices and certain digital logics that prioritize participants' ability to influence and restructure archival materials to produce multiple revolutionary perspectives. The Mosireen Collective stresses how struggles over narrative and archival materials play central roles in collective organizing and social transformation. Yet also worth noting is how this diasporic, global mode of media activism relies upon the labor of people from relatively elite backgrounds who speak multiple languages and can easily traverse locations due to their privileged socio-economic status.

Keywords: The Egyptian revolution; digital media activism; video activism; anarchism

Introduction

On Sunday November 25, 2019, Egyptian police raided one of the country's last independent news organizations, Mada Masr (Rashwan 2019). As many as nine armed plainclothes security officers stormed its offices and detained many of its staff. Reporters became concerned for their safety as their phones were confiscated and searched by authorities who refused to offer any information regarding their release (*Democracy Now!* 2019). The Committee to Protect Journalists has ranked Egypt the world's most aggressive jailer of journalists. Most of Egypt's privately owned media is run by intelligence agencies or allies of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who had assumed power in 2013 and has increasingly asserted dictatorial control (Associated Press 2019)

Egypt's repression against journalists gestures towards a greater struggle over how the inheritances of the Egyptian revolution are still being tallied in the ledgers of history. Protests continue to erupt throughout the country in response to el-Sisi's betrayal of the revolution's utopian aspirations (Wintour

---

[1] I would like to thank Kay Dickinson for her valuable comments regarding an earlier draft of this article.

2019). As Walter Benjamin reminds us, history is always relative to those who are writing it. It does not progress in a linear fashion, but instead "it became historical posthumously" (Benjamin 1968, p. 263). The Egyptian revolution might have only sparked up in 2011, but it feels both extremely distant and ever-present as events unfold in untold ways both within Egypt and in response to the weave of global revolts in Spain, Tunisia, Syria, England, the United States, Turkey, and elsewhere that Egypt belonged to.

Like most revolutions, the Egyptian uprising took on unforeseen directions as protesters occupied Tahrir Square in January 2011 and finally ousted Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Different political factions of protesters clashed and debated the forms of grassroots power and representational democracy they should pursue. Muhammad Morsi, chief of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, was elected president in June 2012. Struggling to control the revolutionary fervor that consumed Egypt, Morsi engaged in a series of missteps by consolidating his executive power and limiting the newly found freedoms the Egyptian people had claimed, thus triggering large protests against his control. Morsi's defense minister Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi demanded Morsi's removal in July 2013. Responding to the many violent street clashes between supporters and detractors of Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood, the army, and other political contingents, new elections were held in May 2014 with Al-Sisi declared president in June 2014. While occupying the presidency, Al-Sisi continues in systematically stripping Egyptian people of many of the hard-earned rights they won during the revolution.

During the height of the Egyptian revolution, The Mosireen Collective (2011-2018) occupied a prominent place both locally and globally. I argue it encapsulates a new form of diasporic, global media activism that operates across a series of commercial and non-commercial digital platforms (in addition to physical locations) and employs different video forms depending on the needs of the moment. Mosireen reveals a dynamic process at work where its media activism changes configurations to adapt to new circumstances all the while being deeply steeped in anarchist-based practices and certain digital logics that prioritize participants' ability to influence and restructure archival materials to produce multiple revolutionary perspectives. The Mosireen Collective stresses how struggles over narrative and archival materials play central roles in collective organizing and social transformation. Yet also worth noting is how this diasporic, global mode of media activism relies upon the labor of people from relatively elite backgrounds who speak multiple languages and can easily traverse locations due to their privileged socio-economic status.[2]

---

[2] One caveat, however, is that one should not over-generalize about this specific form of diasporic, global media activism being discussed here. Although it represents a certain sophisticated strain of media activism, there are many other forms of local digital media activism that do not aspire towards the global or even national. Furthermore, there are endless variations of failed or unsustainable digital media activist projects that litter the web. The reasons for these failures are complex. In part they result from most organizations being under-resourced to dedicate adequate time and energy to the digital realm. Furthermore, many

The contours of diasporic, global media activism

Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall have emphasized the diasporic configurations that define many present-day cultural and political struggles (Gilroy 1993). Hall stresses how the diasporic condition both harkens back with a nostalgia for a unified past that never existed and a way forward with a more hybridized identity (Hall 2017). At its best, diasporic cultures and political resistances look forward to new forms of identity produced by the contact zones where different cultures collide and intermingle. They can undermine essentialist identities by pointing towards the ways in which culture is always remade and remixed at specific historical conjunctures (Hall 1990).

Egypt represents an ideal diasporic contact zone as the nation under Mubarak opened itself up to privatization and other tenets of neoliberalism that have increased cultural flows from elsewhere as well as relied on the exploitation of global labor (Achcar 2013; Dickinson 2018a). One result of such a system that combines authoritarianism and economic liberal features is the creation of what Aihwa Ong calls "graduated sovereignty" (Ong 2006).[3] She writes, "Market-driven logic induces the coordination of political policies with the corporate interests, so that developmental decisions favor the fragmentation of the national space into various noncontiguous zones, and promote the differential regulation of populations who can be connected to or disconnected from global circuits of capital" (Ong, p. 77). As a result, a corollary "graduated citizenship" is produced that privileges certain populations over others in the matrices of neoliberalism. A group of new professionals emerges belonging to "a segregated stratosphere" that neoliberalism prioritizes (Ong, p. 80).

Not surprisingly, most of the members of the Mosireen Collective belong to this privileged professional class. Among its members are Sharief Gaber, a graduate student in law and urban planning in Texas; Lara Baladi, an artist born in Lebanon by Egyptian parents and who has lived in Beirut, London, and Paris; Khalid Abdalla, an actor in films like *The Kite Runner* (2007) and *The Square* (2014), educated in Oxford and raised in the U.K.; Jasmina Metwaly, an artist who studied in Poland and England; Omar Robert Hamilton, a filmmaker and author of British and Egyptian descent who studied in the United States; and Philip Rizk, a dual German-Egyptian citizen who studied at Wheaton College in Illinois and went to graduate school at American University in Cairo. Rizk admits during an interview: "Most of us who make up Mosireen . . . are the

---

activists are not well versed in strategies, tactics, and programming needed for successful digital campaigns. Additionally, often the historical conjuncture is not ripe for certain forms of digital media activism to take root. The point is: communication and film and media studies scholars need to dedicate as much time to the failed campaigns of digital media activism to gain a better sense of the existing terrain and more realistically assess the opportunities and limits that digital technology offers movement organizing.

[3] I would like to thank Kay Dickinson for drawing my attention to Ong's book in her talk, "The Labour of Revolutionary Video Collectives," *9th International Small Cinemas Conference: From the Grassroots to the Global*, November 9, 2018, Florida Atlantic University.

privileged few; speaking multiple languages, with more rights in a society with few to speak of" (Rizk 2016, p. 227-228). His comments highlight an often-overlooked class dimension that runs throughout much global media activism. Although diasporic culture and struggles relate to people of all classes, those who often participate on the frontlines of global media activism occupy relatively entitled positions. As James Clifford notes, diasporic discourses extend "to a wide range of populations and historical predicaments" with class cleavages producing widely divergent experiences and outlooks (Clifford, 1994, p. 312).

Although Mosireen incorporated a series of media practices that extended back to revolutionary film culture during the 1960s, a digital, anarchist-inflected outlook guided much of their organizing and practices.[4] Omar Robert Hamilton observes: "That non-hierarchical open-source structure was central to the original success of the revolution and to its ability to sustain itself now. So we try to apply it to our work as much as possible" (El Hamamsy 2012, p. 48). Kay Dickinson observes how Mosireen worked "interchangeably, pragmatically, trustingly and through debate on their many projects . . ." (Dickinson 2018a). Although the inherently non-hierarchical nature of online organizing has been disproven, Hamilton's comments nonetheless suggest how many view anarchist politics and digital logics as complementary practices.

Mosireen combines old analogue media activist practices with a digital sensibility. Maxa Zoller notes how their videos "sit between the tradition of Third Cinema, militant cinema, citizen journalism, essayist forms on experimental filmmaking, reportage and documentary" (Zoller 2014, p. 160). The types of videos they make and how they are used are altered depending upon the online platforms or physical spaces in which they are utilized. The collective harnesses many past practices found in Third Cinema, yet they cannot help but to re-inflect them in new directions that are more congruent with digital logics that emphasize a proliferation of meanings that accompany the constant reworking of video footage into new configurations (Hudson and Zimmermann 2015).

Raymond Williams' concepts of dominant, residual, and emergent cultural practices can assist us in understanding how multiple cultural logics can co-exist in the ways in which Mosireen balances older residual analogue media activism with dominant and emergent digital media activist practices. Residual cultural practices, according to Williams, do not simply remain in the past but are "an effective element of the present" as they are reworked by either being integrated into or resisting dominant and emergent cultural practices (Williams 1977, p. 122). In regards to Mosireen, their reliance upon certain Third Cinema practices, as will be discussed in the next section, reveal residual cultural practices at work. Dominant cultural practices have a hegemonic hold upon the present, illustrated by activists' reliance upon commercial social media.

---

[4] An anarchist-inflected outlook defines much contemporary media activism. See Robé 2017.

Emergent practices, on the other hand, represent new meanings, values and relationships under development that have not completely solidified and are difficult to identify. Williams cautions when analyzing emergent cultural practices, "it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture . . . and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it" (Williams, p. 123). This paper will conclude with analyzing the emergent practices Mosireen employs in its 858 archive in opposition to the dominant commercial culture.

Residual Third Cinema practices and on-the-ground organizing

Regardless if they were aware of prior Third Cinema practices or not, many contemporary media activists nonetheless rely upon the tactics and strategies forged during 1960s media activism since they still hold relevancy for the current moment. Sylvia Harvey provocatively suggests, "it is theoretically possible for cultural production to anticipate future class needs . . . ." (1980, p. 105). Third Cinema anticipated such needs in its desire to democratize cinema and ally itself to liberation struggles. In their manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino suggest how everyday people "participate collectively in the work [of film production] when they realize that it is the continuity of their daily struggle" (2000, p. 279). Likewise, Third Cinema filmmakers declared in Algeria in 1973:

> the task of the third world filmmaker is no longer limited to the making of films but is extended to other fields of action, such as articulating, fostering, and making the new films understandable to the masses of people by associating himself with the promoters of people's cinemas, clubs, and itinerant film groups in their dynamic action aimed at disalienation and sensitization in favor of a cinema which satisfies the interests of the masses" (Dickinson 2018a, p. 62).

Although the technology and costs limited Third Cinema practitioners' ability to achieve such goals at their moment of emergence, the proliferation of more affordable digital technology globally has made such aspirations more achievable.

Mosireen echoes such sentiments to democratize media in their manifesto, "Revolution Triptych":

> Everyday people run their own neighborhoods
>
> Workers take over the factories their bosses abandon.
>
> Then we too must take over the decrepit world of image creation. (p. 47)

Mosireen trained around 200 people in video production (Kasm 2018, p. 108). In essence, this impulse to train others in filmmaking speaks to the direct action impulse of both Third Cinema and anarchist politics. Being able to film for oneself revolutionary developments became an empowering gesture in its own right. As Jasmine Metwaly, a member of Mosireen, notes: "You're there with your camera saying: we also have our way of representation. We can show this reality ourselves. We don't need other people to come and do this for ourselves" (Metwaly 2013a). After decades of state media offering unilateral and inaccurate interpretations of events, individuals were finally empowered to not only film their own accounts but also to have them further legitimated by being incorporated into Mosireen's archive.

Additionally, the context of the Egyptian revolution and protesters' occupation of Tahrir Square dictated in part the incorporation of residual practices of Third Cinema where short agitational videos became a necessity in holding people's attention and galvanizing momentum behind the revolution.

Public screenings at Tahrir Cinema also used a physical event to constitute a critical public sphere. Raw footage often served to counter disinformation from state media. For example, much footage shows protesters being assaulted by tear gas, bullets, and armored vehicles to disprove the police and military's claims that they engaged in no wrongdoing.[5]

Mosireen members participated in Tahrir Cinema, which was held nightly over several months and provided a vital function of screening images of the revolution that were largely inaccessible to the majority of Egyptians lacking internet access (Dickinson 2018a, p. 117). Philip Rizk observes that Mosireen was "never content with the focus on the Internet audience; the Internet after all is not accessible to the majority of Egyptians and certainly not to those who we most sought to engage with . . ." (p. 229). Tahrir served as a contact zone between viral videos and those taking part in the Egyptian revolution.

Yet Tahrir Cinema provided an equally important purpose to utilize screenings as direct interventions in supporting the revolution and generating collective self-determination. Again, such an outlook stretches back to Third Cinema that argued "revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one that illustrates, documents, or passively establishes a situation: *rather, it attempts to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust or rectification*" (Solanas and Getino 2000, p. 277). It provides discovery through transformation by subordinating its own image making to the collective will of the people (ibid., p. 283).

Mosireen similarly argues for engaged forms of media making:

---

[5] Mosireen's *858* archive has numerous videos regarding assaults of tear gas on protesters. Available at: https://858.ma/grid/title/keywords==tear_gas (Accessed December 1, 2019).

> The images must lead to provocation, not a filthy self-aggrandizing cycle of an industry of empathy.
>
> We do not seek people's pity, we seek to drag you the viewer from your seat and into the street.
>
> We do not seek to inform, we want you to question your apathy in the face of the killing, torture and exploitation that is forced upon us.
>
> We do not ask for your charity, we do not ask for your prayers, we do not ask for words, but bodies. (Mosireen 2014, p. 48)

This is not to say that Mosireen lifted directly from Third Cinema practices but instead that revolutionary conditions created the need for a Third Cinema approach yet again in the present moment. Some members already had previous experience in organizing cultural events for political purposes along the lines of Tahrir Cinema. For example, Omar Robert Hamilton helped found the Palestinian Festival of Literature in 2008, which teams up artists from the United States, United Kingdom, and other Arab states with Palestinian authors. In 2012, it was held in Gaza. The event both supports Palestinian culture and also provides a public forum where Palestinian issues and resistance against Israeli occupation can be addressed (Williams 2013).

Khalid Abdalla realized the significance behind publicly screening images that had predominantly circulated over the internet in a shared physical space: "To give them a screen and to give them an audience who can hear each other and see each other and cry together or chant together or laugh together is an incredibly powerful thing" (Abdalla 2014b).

Screenings took on a life of their own despite what organizers might have intended. Abdalla recounts that screenings produce a "powerful response and mood around that you realize is the thing you have to follow, not the idea you have in your head" (Abdalla 2014b). For example, during one screening, one of the attendees is a woman whose son was killed. When her image appears on the screen, she stands in the audience recounting her son's life while the video plays behind her. According to the Mosireen members overseeing the screening: "And she says all these beautiful things, and she's crying and everyone's cheering and it's such an, not only emotional moment . . . these public screenings, they unleash something that you don't know of until it happened" (Mollerup and Gaber, 2015, p. 2915). The screenings remake the footage into something new where viewers use the images to reconfigure collective space in new directions and lead to new avenues of emotion, thought, and action.

Anyone in attendance at such screenings realized that their presence alone implicated them against the powers that be. Elaborate plans were hatched by those hosting the screening of what to do if the authorities showed up. Who would take the projector? Who would scuttle away with the laptop? Where would cables be stashed? Screenings were not simply a reflection upon the revolution's events but a continuation of them:

> Being present at a screening was a potentially dangerous action, and participants at screenings were watching a past as well as a potential future . . . They were a part of what they were watching. Through the screenings they explicitly became part of the revolution because by taking part in a revolutionary event, they became endangered like others with and before them (Mollerup and Gaber, 2015, p. 2916).

Not coincidentally, Third Cinema practitioners came to similar conclusions about how screenings endangered participants by representing solidarity with anti-colonial revolt. Solanas and Getino reflect: "We also discovered that every comrade who attended such showings did so with the full awareness that he was infringing the System's laws and exposing his personal security to eventual repression." (2000, p. 282). This reveals again how revolutionary circumstances create similar conditions despite vast differences in times and locations. Egypt 2011 is not Argentina during the 1960s. Yet the two moments resonate with one another as the residual practices of Third Cinema make themselves manifest during the Egyptian revolution since the historical conjuncture necessitates them.

Regardless of these residual Third Cinema practices, Mosireen does not simply seize upon the past. There were many core differences between the anti-colonial revolts of the 1960s and that of the Egyptian revolution. Philip Rizk asserts, "2011 was not the 'classic' revolution of the socialists: students and workers taking to the streets to replace a regime with their own. No matter how hard people tried, there were no political parties with a revolutionary blueprint prior to January 25, nor have any emerged since" (Rizk, 2014, p. 35). Rizk and others have also noted the central role precarity played in the revolution. A majority of those unemployed in Egypt received no public assistance. Youth unemployment in North Africa was around 28.8% in 2011. Significant numbers of college graduates could not find work. (Achcar 2013, p. 25-35).

Although often overlooked by Western media, labor revolts were in ascendance from 2004 until the 2011 uprising (Achcar 2013, p. 125). Students, for example, supported Mahalla workers who went out on strike for better wages in 2008, establishing what became known as the April 6 Movement. Rizk punctuates, "It was precarious workers and not Egypt's traditional working class that acted as the radicalizing factor of the revolution." (Rizk 2014, p. 26).

Furthermore, growing access to digital technology provided vital counter-public spheres that could challenge the Mubarak regime's narratives. Starting in the early 2000s, influential blogging sites discredited regime narratives (Faris 2103). Access to cell phone technology allowed for a greater number of people to shoot video and post on social media (Shafik 2013). Around 2005, independent film festivals emerged in Cairo that championed cell phone-made films (Salti 2012, p. 168). Finally, internet penetration of households grew from 8 percent to 24 percent from 2005 to 2010, which doesn't acknowledge the high

usage of internet cafes by many people. (Gerbaudo 2012, 52). Facebook launched an Arabic version in 2009 (Castells 2012, p. 57).

Additionally, Palestinian youth resistance provided an inspiring model for many Mosireen members in harnessing innovative uses of digital technology with resistance movements. During the second Intifada of 2000, Palestinian youth seized the internet to connect with "their peers, friends, and relatives in the diaspora" to popularize their movement, a tactic that Mosireen members would similarly employ by reclaiming the power of the internet in mobilizing global constituencies in support of the uprising and their work (Khoury-Machool 2007, p. 230). In 2012, Palestinian youth protested against Israeli occupation and Palestinian leadership that remained disconnected and unresponsive to everyday Palestinian concerns, which resonated with Mosireen's critique of Egyptian leadership's similar failure to represent popular interests (Høigilt 2013). Mosireen produced a video on November 18, 2013 during the fifth day of Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people of Gaza as 500 Egyptians joined them in solidarity (Abunimah 2012). Palestinian resistance, as a result, had a strong influence upon Mosireen's own media activism and political outlook.

An archival outlook also dictated Mosireen's actions from the beginning that could both challenge the narratives of state media and provide a reserve where multiple participant perspectives could flourish. Regarding Tahrir Cinema Philip Rizk notes, "The intention of such videos and screenings was to translate the reality of the counter-revolution, a reality that was completely at odds with the narratives promoted by the establishment at the time" (Rizk 2016, p. 228). Mosireen didn't even begin shooting its own videos until after the Maspero Massacre in October 2011, eight months after the revolution began since it didn't see a need to given the enormous amount of amateur cell phone footage it intook (Hamamsy 2012, p. 47).[6]

Tahrir Cinema served as an exchange point where the archive could grow. According to Omar Robert Hamilton, "We used it as a swapping point for material—people would take footage from us and contribute whatever they had to the growing archive" (Hamamsy 2012, p. 47). Peter Snowdon has stressed how these gestures of exchange proved crucial in building trust among strangers to "open the way to dialogues and connections that are not only more complex, but also more intimate . . ." (Snowdon, 2020, p. 183). Mosireen summarized the interactive nature of the archive in its manifesto, "Revolutionary Triptych":

> The moment becomes history with the 'save' button, but does not stop there. It gets a second life through counter propaganda montage. The same footage on the side of the enemy becomes a dangerous weapon that needs to be turned

---

[6] On October 9, 2011, protesters gathers in front of the state television and radio buildings in Cairo. Live coverage showed armored military vehicles running over protesters and killing some in order to clear them from the streets.

back at them. This footage is not for private collections. It is an oral history that becomes an active agent of resistance (Mosireen 2014, p. 52).

Yet Mosireen is not unique in prioritizing an archival function in their media activism. For example, the film unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine declared in an early 1970s manifesto a need for: "Preserving the film and photographic documentation of the Palestinian revolution in a special archive, as source material not only for Palestinian film makers but also for friends wishing to share in the revolution through Palestinian films" (Dickinson 2018a, p. 96). Filmmakers and photographers realize the importance of their material in emotionally engaging people in their struggles and countering reactionary media portrayals of their movements.

Mosireen produced an updated digital media archive that would not simply provide documentation of a particular struggle, but also serve as raw material for new interpretations and movements. Although it would still be five years before Mosireen would release their digital archive, *858*, where they culled 858 hours of footage for users to explore and remix, we can already witness how their activist media practices already had in mind digital futures for the work they were conducting on the ground and online.

Their archival practices in Tahrir Square were also being simultaneously conducted online. Mosireen's YouTube channel became one of the most viewed of all time in Egypt (Kasm 2018, p. 108). In January 2011, it was one of the most visited YouTube channels in the world. After the Maspero massacre in October 2011, Mosireen became a central source regarding the revolution for commercial news media (Abdalla 2014c). Foreign media would use their videos and photographs, often without permission. Journalists eagerly wanted to trail Mosireen members throughout Cairo in order to plug in and scoop the inside story. (Hamilton 2017, p. 149). Social media played an important role in Mosireen's ascendancy to international prominence (Dickinson 2018z, p. 117).

Social media, commercial logics, and media activism

Social media has played an increasingly important role for activists with YouTube becoming a central site for video activism (Askanius 2013 and Gregory 2012). Groups across the political spectrum battle over the platform for views and attention span (Roose 2019). Yet many valid concerns have arisen regarding the use of social media for activism. Social media sites can impute their logic on offline organizing by prioritizing short-term actions and the personalization of content online in order to harvest the largest number of views, which might undercut long-term goals (Poell and Van Dijck 2015). Additionally, a logic of aggregation might reign supreme online where participants congregate more as an atomized gathering of individuals rather than any strong sense of community. This can lead to weak ties between participants that make it more difficult to sustain movements and establish deep connective bonds (Juris

2012). Furthermore, online organizers make themselves and others vulnerable to surveillance by the state when using commercial social media websites that data mine users' information and have limited-to-no regard for users' privacy (Kennedy 2016 and Trottier and Fuchs 2015).

Yet there are many benefits as well in using social media, particularly where repressive governments operate. Many academics have stressed online media's importance in establishing some central preconditions for the Egyptian revolution since such online forums provided vital counter-public spheres that were unavailable in physical locations due to heavy state surveillance (Faris 2013 and Hassan 2015). Because Egyptian authorities failed to substantively regulate social media before the revolution, they ceded a fertile online terrain where discontent could be expressed and protests organized (Salem 2015, p. 186).

In addition to using YouTube to popularize their videos, Mosireen also started its own Indiegogo campaign to fund its work (Mosireen 2013). One could join at different sustainer levels. $20 support enabled film screenings in their downtown Cairo space. A $50 pledge went to building the archive. A $100 donation supported media skills workshops. $250 assisted Tahrir Cinema. $500 helped fund the collective workspace. A $1000 went towards film production. Most donations supported low-end costs—though one person donated a $1000. Ultimately, Mosireen reached their goal of $40,000.

A slick promotional video around three minutes in length accompanies the page. Electronic dance music plays over the carefully culled protest footage. Mosireen's professionally-grade footage is interwoven with striking yet roughly hewn amateur cell phone clips.[7] Interspersed throughout the footage are intertitles advertising the collective's achievements: "OVER 10,000 MB OF FOOTAGE COLLECTED," "OVER 100 PEOPLE TRAINED ON A PAY-AS-YOU-CAN BASIS." When the video states, "A COLLECTIVE WORKSPACE," we see accompanying footage of a crowded room of youth smiling with camera tripods huddled around them; other participants hunched over their laptops working at a collective table; activists on the floor designing posters. The sequence encapsulates the energy of the collective as well as hints at its multimedia approach by displaying cameras, computers, and poster board as integral components. After celebrating Mosireen's impact upon commercial media by showing a list of the news organizations that have cited them, the video ends on iconic footage of two protesters waving Egyptian flags at the head of an abandoned, rubble-strewn street at night. Distant fireworks explode, presumably because of the fall of Mubarak. We stand behind the protesters, symbolically on their side. The imagery resonates with some of the more iconic images of the Arab revolution in general that often focus on one or two

---

[7] The Indiegogo page and video can be found here:
https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mosireen-independent-media-collective-in-cairo#/

participants standing in defiance.[8] The overall video relays a sense of triumph, which will become a fleeting emotion but nonetheless remains an important index of a certain moment in time where popular power seemed in ascendance (or could at least be promoted that way in an online funding campaign with a straight face).

Image from Mosireen's Indiegogo promotional video, 2012

Omar Robert Hamilton provides sporadic updates on the webpage throughout 2012 regarding Mosireen's actions in producing videos, holding screenings, and engaging in media campaigns. For example, he writes, "One campaign we've been involved with for months has been the Right to Housing Initiative. Today we published the second video in a planned series of five that highlights the range of urban challenges in Egypt and their potential solutions" (Hamilton 2013). Such updates play into promoting Mosireen's ceaseless energy and multifaceted coverage of the revolution that remains largely ignored by commercial news media.

Yet Mosireen attempts to undercut part of the commercial logic of their Indiegogo campaign by noting under their "What You Get" section:

> We've thought a lot about the perks system of these crowd funding websites. And we realised that you're not going to support us so that you can get a Mosireen t-

---

[8] Some iconic photos are a Tunisian protester standing on the gun of a tank (https://www.washington.edu/news/2011/09/12/new-study-quantifies-use-of-social-media-in-arab-spring/); an Egyptian protester against an armored vehicle (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TramJWvqenY).

shirt or a mug. If you're going to support us it's going to be for the work, it's going to be because you consider yourself part of the global community pushing for change.

Mosireen self-fashions an idealized image of international supporters unconcerned with a simple exchange relation where they receive swag for a donation. Yet the collective nonetheless hedges its bets by stating in a following paragraph: "If you really want something in return, come by the workspace and we'll give you DVDs of films to spread around and help you make your own tea and coffee. And if you can't come by and want a DVD of our work, we'll find a way of getting it to you." The tensions between the commercial logic of the campaign and Mosireen's resistance towards it becomes fully apparent at this moment.

Despite the relative recent development of video activists being able to create online fundraising campaigns for their projects, the Left has long been embroiled in debates concerning the revolutionary imaginary's relationship to commercial spectacle. Hans Magnus Enzensberger reflected on the warped utopian promises that commercial advertising promotes and the need for the Left to hijack and reroute these hopes as their own (2000). Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques urged the Left to embrace such charitable events like Live Aid since "when politics makes contact with this culture, it finds itself in touch with the cultural language which, for the majority of young people today (and for many not-so-young people, too), most authentically express how they experience the world. (Hall and Jacques 1988, p. 253). Although such charitable donations alone might not be adequate, it "implies a commitment," not unlike what the Indiegogo page suggests for Mosireen (ibid).

More recently, Stephen Duncombe, one of the founders of Reclaim the Streets NYC during the 1990s, stated: "Spectacle is already part of our political and economic life, the important question is whose ethics does it embody and whose dreams does it explore?" (2007, p. 175). Granted, this engagement with spectacle has become even more fraught for present day organizers and activists with the rise of social media in calculating algorithms that favor certain content over others as well the immense amount of data mining and surveillance that such platforms necessitate. But concerns over using social media for activism develops upon longer debates of the Left's need to engage with the commercial vernacular that most people are familiar with.

Furthermore, as James Clifford notes, diasporic experiences and discourses are "never clear of commodification" (1994, p. 313). We can see Mosireen negotiating the terrain between grassroots organizing and the commodified logic of fundraising on their Indiegogo webpage as they solicit assistance from international communities for their work.

Although negotiating these commercial online sites remains problematic, part of the solution seems to be creating alternative platforms to them, which is indeed what Mosireen has done. Even though such alternative digital venues do not

provide the same traffic that YouTube and other social media sites generate, they provide autonomy from the commercial logics that dictate the nature of social media.

Digital frontiers and alternative logics: Mosireen's webpage and the 858 Archive

Mosireen created its own website where its priorities and specific ways of framing the revolution could take precedence.[9] Arabic serves as the primary language of the site. Not all of its sections are translated into English, and the few sections that are, one must scroll down to the English translations. This serves as an important statement whereby the site prioritizes an Egyptian-centered language rather than English, which has come to metonymically symbolize that of international capital and colonization. By prioritizing one language over another, Mosireen accents the website's ideal audience: people with Arabic backgrounds and most likely having some familiarity with the issues being presented.

The website contains a number of categories: a) a "DIY kit"; b) access to a small selection of their video archive; and c) a link to their 858 archive. The "DIY" kit provides shooting advice when using a camera such as basic rules regarding lighting and framing with many accompanying illustrated examples. It also provides advice on how to craft a story with particular emphasis upon montage and other information regarding a CopyLeft philosophy and the use of open software.[10]

Mosireen's website, written predominantly in Arabic

---

[9] The Mosireen website can be found here: https://www.mosireen.com/street-media-curriculum (Accessed November 30, 2019)

[10] CopyLeft is an arrangement where software and creative and intellectual work can be freely shared and re-mixed as long as attribution of the source is included. Open software is freely shared among users and is often improved through crowdsourcing.

Eight categories comprise the section of videos found on the webpage: Martyrs of the Revolution; Workers of the Revolution; Social Justice (with an emphasis upon housing, education, and healthcare); the Army (regarding its multiple atrocities); Mubarak's State (emphasizing violence and torture); The Muslim Brotherhood (and its violence unleashed against protesters); Connected Struggles (with videos covering protests in Gaza, Sudan, and Syria); and, finally, a link to Mosireen's YouTube page.

Unlike YouTube where commercial algorithms manipulate viewing habits by pushing viewers to the most popular of Mosireen videos, which are often the most violent, or away from Mosireen videos altogether to related content, the Mosireen website is mostly self-contained. Unlike YouTube where the number of views along with viewing time prioritizes certain videos over others, Mosireen's website thematically clusters under-represented content of the Egyptian revolution and remixes well-known material into new configurations. But the videos as whole remain singularly focused on revolutionary moments of Egypt or other areas of the Middle East and North Africa. The website holds too many videos to adequately cover here, so instead I will highlight select videos from an under-represented category (Workers of the Revolution) and a more popular category (Martyrs of the Revolution) where remixing popular material proves a central strategy towards reinterpretation.

The first thing worth noting about the videos under "Workers of the Revolution" is that they are more professionally filmed and edited and have longer running times. Rizk and Metwaly produced many of these videos although they remain unattributed since Mosireen believes that the images of the revolution do not belong to any one person. Metwaly suggests that longer videos were needed to start covering material outside of Tahrir Square: "We started putting things together like creating story or stories. Stories about workers, about the military trials on civilians, different stories. Not just things happening in the Square. What is it that constitutes a revolution? How does a revolution happen? That is how we started filming and making these short videos" (Metwaly 2013b). As mentioned earlier, many commentators and protesters suggested that the numerous worker revolts and strikes throughout the 2000s provided key mobilizations leading up to the 2011 revolution. As a result, Mosireen similarly prioritizes multiple testimonies from diverse group of workers in its videos. Doctors, various types of factory workers, and transit workers each have short films dedicated to their struggles.

In *We Inherit Disease* the camera tracks over dilapidated factory conditions where hazardous materials have eroded through concrete and metal, gutting the factory's infrastructure as rebar pokes out dangerously through walls.[11] The camera meticulously documents the decaying factory infrastructure as workers

---

[11] *We Inherit Disease*, 2012. The Mosireen Collective. Available at: https://www.mosireen.com/labour-1 (Accessed December 1, 2019).

recount dangerous working conditions where hoses blow-up in their hands and metal erodes underneath their touch. The state of ruin exemplifies the disinvestment and disregard management holds for its workers. One worker succinctly summarizes: "They inherit millions. We inherit disease."

Showing a decaying factory in We Inherit Disease, 2012

Another untitled video chronicles the strike of Ceramica Cleopatra workers who intend on taking over their factory themselves due management's negligence.[12] The opening of the video employs montage to juxtapose this disjunction between promotional artifice and factory conditions. A slick commercial where a camera pans across shiny white porcelain toilets in an expansive bathroom and soundbites from an interview with the corporation's owner who asserts, "The workers know how very well I treat them. Any worker of mine is my priority" contradict footage of workers crowded together striking outside the factory exclaiming, "Who gives a damn about us?" For much of the video's ten minutes, workers recount inadequate wages, unsafe working conditions, and an absentee owner. At one moment, a worker addresses the bone erosion he suffers from using chemicals without gloves. He displays his outstretched, gnarled and discolored hands. Another worker testifies about how after having his hands injured, the hospital compounded the problem by botching the operation leaving him with stubs for fingers, which the camera cuts to as he speaks. The factory's neglect is written on the workers' bodies. Accounts of neglect mount

---

[12] All the videos for "Workers of the Revolution" can be found at:
https://www.mosireen.com/labour-1

throughout the video. Finally, a worker asserts, "These workers are the most rightful people to take over the factory and run it." He states precisely how the workers plan on occupying the factory until they gain full rights to own it.

Most of the testimonies take place before other workers, suggesting a collective grievance. The sheer volume of testimonies regarding unsafe working conditions and low wages reveals how the mistreatment of the workers is not the result of an unfortunate but momentary oversight, but instead defines the very functioning of the factory. The workers clearly articulate this understanding through their accounts. One states: "This guy is leeching the life out of the people and puts it in his pockets, not the state." Sherief Gaber, a member of Mosireen relates the profundity of letting workers speak for themselves: "As much as one might have an understanding of the political economy and to be able to critique it . . . to be able to hear this from a position of discrete experience and not just stay at this level of 'me and my shop floor' but to then to explode into the marcropolitical and the macroeconomic is one thing that is always amazing and incredibly powerful" (Gaber).

Ceramica Cleopatra workers expressing their collective grievance in a Mosireen 2012 video

Mosireen furthermore helped connect Egyptian factory workers with Zanon factory workers who occupied and took over their own factory in Argentina. Mosireen provided Arabic subtitles for the film *The Take* (2004), which chronicles the Zanon factory take over, and screened it for Ceramica workers. Samah Selim further notes, "A message of solidarity from the Zanon workers for striking Ceramica Cleopatra factory workers was also translated as part of this

Mosireen initiative and screened for the workers in Egypt" (Salem 2015, p. 85). Through Mosireen's transnational contacts, the collective forged connections between global factory takeovers that united struggles among disparate populations. Although the Egyptian revolution had its own unique coordinates, the focus on workers' revolts suggests a longer and larger international resistance taking place.

Mosireen's section on Martyrs of the Revolution alternates between raw footage and a series of edited videos that are professionally shot and punctuated with testimonies. Some of the footage has not received much attention. For example, a brief one-and-a-half minute video follows a trail of blood in a single tracking shot.[13] A row of stones on each side borders the trail with people sporadically squatting next to it. Chanting trails off in the distance, making the quiet moment unique and mournful compared to the general intensity of more popular footage documenting the revolution. A group congregates around its endpoint. The anonymity of the trail of blood, the ritualized placing of the stones around it, the congregated observers, and the relative silence of the tracking shot suggest a broader mourning for all of the martyrs of the revolution. Judith Butler notes the inherent politics that undergird mourning: because certain images of the dead do not appear in state and commercial media since they are not recognized as valid deaths "such prohibitions not only shore up a nationalism [of who can and cannot be mourned] . . ., but they also suppress any internal dissent that would expose the concrete, human effects of its [the state's] violence" (Butler 2004, p. 38). Mosireen carves out a space for the martyrs of the revolution on its website with the understanding that such a gesture represents both a personal and political stance that validates their lives through visual recognition and by the testimonies of those who love them.

Much of the footage found under this section has been excerpted and exhibited elsewhere before. As a result, many of the videos remix this footage into new configurations that often highlight relatives' testimonies to add depth to those lives lost. The section leads with the video *Prayer of Fear*, a remix between older, iconic, amateur-shot footage and more recent footage shot by Mosireen. Many media studies scholars have suggested the importance of remix culture in creating political videos. Often such videos are comprised of a mixture of commercial content repurposed with new inflections. Yet *Prayer of Fear* only relies upon amateur and Mosireen-shot content. By doing so, it validates the importance of such footage in understanding the revolution in contradistinction from commercial accounts. Although some of this footage had circulated widely over commercial networks like Al Jazeera and CNN, Mosireen re-appropriates it away from the commercial terrain to construct an elegiac poem to the revolution and its martyrs.

---

[13] All the videos regarding the martyrs can be found here: https://www.mosireen.com/martyrs (Accessed November 30, 2019).

Amateur footage of the revolution—undulating bodies congregated in Tahrir Square, corpses being dragged off, the vortex of movement and jostled framing while filming among the crowd, trails of tear gas descending upon bystanders— is set against the image of a lone figure, dressed in black hoodie with face covered by a gas mask. The chaotic and crowded amateur footage jars against the lone image of the figure walking along empty streets at night like an afterimage from more tumultuous days. We hear strained breathing through the gas mask while a female voice recites a poem by Mahmoud Ezzat, written for Mosireen about the revolution. Whether this voice belongs to the lone figure we see on screen is unclear. However, overall, the disjointed imagery yet meditative poem creates a dreamlike atmosphere as if the amateur footage might be flashbacks belonging to the lone figure or simply stressing the post-revolutionary effects of feeling like time is out of joint. The narrator speaks without inflection as if in shock further stressing disassociation.

An alienated figure in Mosireen's Prayer of Fear, 2013

The screen starts out black. We hear breathing and the words: "Deliver us from evil. Spare us this trail." An extreme close up of the gas mask follows, rhythmically moving to the strides of the lone figure's pace. After following closely behind the figure, the video cuts to celebratory footage with Mubarak's fall: flags waving, fireworks exploding, music being played. Yet as the image continues it becomes increasingly violent, suggesting the revolution's descent into chaos and martyrdom.

The video and poem juxtapose contradictory imagery without reconciling it, embedding us in their uncertainty and turbulence. The narrator asks: "Shall we

build a wall of pride?" We see a singular shot of nine planes ascending into a cloudless blue sky with contrails streaking behind them, an image suggesting freedom and a future full of possibilities. Then the narrator continues: "or a fountain of blood?" A shot follows of an interior cement floor. An oily substance pours down stairs flooding the floor. Inside and outside, ascent and descent of the two shots collide. Montage of opposites in action that illustrate in figurative ways the poem's lines.

Prayer of Fear exemplifies Jacques Rancière's notion of dissensus, a political act that creates conflict between our sensory perception and our ability to make sense of it (Rancière 2015). Dissensus unmoors habits and reroutes desires into new directions through such disorientation. Art plays an important role in fostering such dissensus. Rancière notes, "Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination disrupts the way in which bodies fit their function and destinations . . . As such, it allows for new modes of political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective emancipation" (Rancière 2011, p. 72).

A Prayer of Fear illustrates dissensus on multiple levels. Its amateur footage reveals through its vortex of bodies celebrating and suffering how the Egyptian revolution provided a profound disruption to Mubarak's regime and the operation of the Egyptian state. Furthermore, *Prayer of Fear* was created in 2013, after the fall of Mubarak, after the ousting of Muhamma Morsi, and during the installment of a new dictator, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. As a result, the video profoundly struggles with the revolution's meaning and goals, leaving the viewer unsettled and uncertain of the way forward, not necessarily despondent but not hopeful either. The narrator incants: "Lead us out new like when we took the streets. A lot of kids walking. Not scared of anyone." We see an image of youth perched on top of a high wall. Their legs dangle. Their bodies precarious. They are defiant and vulnerable at the same time, a crystalized metaphor for the contradictions of the revolution.

Kids representing hope and precarity in Mosireen's Prayer of Fear, 2013

Rancière asserts that, "The images of art do not supply weapons for battle. They help sketch new configurations of what can be seen, what can be said and what can be thought and, consequently, a new landscape of the possible" (Rancière 2011, p. 103). This is precisely the discovery that many members of Mosireen ultimately had. Mostafa Bahagat realizes:

> I went through the experience where I believed what I was filming would make a difference, that when people see what's happening through my eyes, they'd understand my point of view and will start reacting accordingly but later I discovered that it's not like that at all. It depressed me to realize that the camera doesn't work as a weapon. Then I realized it isn't my duty to change things but simply to document, to state what happened that it might be important in 10, 15 years if someone might want to rewrite history." (Bahagat 2013).

The inheritances of the images captured remain uncertain. Perhaps some might be important years later for those who want to rewrite history and imagine new futures. But the videos document concrete actions at a certain moment in time that resist the abstractions of the State the often downplay or completely elide everyday people's ability to assert collective power in toppling state authority, if only for a brief moment, and asserting new ways of being, acting, thinking, and filming in the wake of such popular resistances. *Prayer of Fear* demonstrates where past and present collide in its poetic configuration where footage shot during the white heat of the revolution jars against more somber footage of the present moment. The video illustrates Walter Benjamin's observation of the

articulation of the past "as it flashes up at a moment of danger," with the danger being the assumption of state power in the form of el-Sisi. *Prayer of Fear*'s poetic form represents dissensus in action where images from the past and present crash, where hope and fear blur.

By the time of the creation of *Prayer of Fear*, many members of Mosireen were feeling the limits of traditional documentary cinema. Aida Elkashef, who was briefly a part of Mosireen before moving on to pursue her own creative projects, notes during the early days of the revolution, "We don't understand what is happening or we don't know where we are going . . . And to produce a film about that was just wrong to begin with on so many levels" by leaving a sense of false hope or certainty that simply didn't exist at the time (Elkashef 2014). Philip Rizk felt documentary's limited range as it played to small, self-selective audiences unlike earlier moments where footage was constantly being shown in public settings like Tahrir Square. Similar to Elkashef, he also felt that the form of documentary "delimit[ed] yourself to the realm of the given, rather than moving into the realm of the possible, the realm of the imaginary" (Rizk 2016, p. 232).

Growing misgivings about documentary form, activist burnout, and the increasing danger posed against any form of independent media by the el-Sisi regime caused Mosireen to stop video production in 2013. Yet their project was not over but instead took on a new incarnation as they dedicated their energies to producing one of the most remarkable online databases of archival footage yet produced: the *858* archive.

Mosireen members held retreats outside the country during 2016 where they discussed developing a new archive (Mosireen 2018). Debates ensued as to what to call it with main points of contention being between calling it "an-archive," which gestured towards Mosireen's anarchist tendencies, or something more specific to the Egyptian revolution. Neither side could agree on a name so they compromised by calling it *858*, based on the total amount of hours of raw footage the archive hosted at the time (Mosireen unknown date). The raw footage runs from minutes to hours. Footage can be searched by place, topic, date, and certain keywords. Some of the material has been translated into English but most has not. The sheer volume of unseen footage is overwhelming yet intoxicating along with the freedom to roam throughout it without any external distractions like ads popping up or algorithms suggesting new paths to follow.

Mosireen felt the creation of an independent raw footage archive as necessary for multiple reasons. First, much of the material from the various so-called Arab Spring revolutions had been scrubbed from the internet. Google announced in 2017 that it removed over eight million videos based on a machine-learning algorithm. Mosireen members noticed how many non-violent videos from the Syrian revolution went missing as a result. Therefore, there was a need for an independent archive that could safely house such footage (Mosireen unknown date).

Second, Mosireen felt that the fragmented nature of the archive best mirrored the turbulence and kaleidoscopic views of the revolution. One unnamed Mosireen member notes how the archive "is the only form that can accurately represent the revolution, I think, because it is not authored and it is not linear and it is not one narrative. It is totally poly-vocal and messy and with hundreds of different cameras at different times all putting something together something that is not an A to B story. Somehow, it is the most parallel form to the one the revolution itself took" (Mosireen 2018).

But in order for the archive to properly represent the poly-vocal nature of the revolution, the collective felt it needed its own space free from the commercial logic of YouTube. Although much of the material is available on YouTube, Mosireen stresses that the *858* website "has its own totality and its own flow, so that you can take your own path through it as a viewer, which you don't get on YouTube so much because you are surrounded by the sea of everything else. There is something in the separatedness and the containment of it that makes it a longer and larger experience" (Mosireen 2018). The experience is unique since the archive harkens both backwards and forwards—both to the web 1.0 before it had been commercialized but also an act of resistance in the present as it asserts an autonomy free from capitalist logic that dictates most online platforms. Navigating the site feels like both a residual and emergent practice—respectively a moment before capital hostilely took over cyberspace and a distinct resistance against a near capitalist monopoly of the web. The site confronts users with nothing but their own choices determining the videos they explore, a disorienting experience where we are normally accustomed to information overload from the circuits of capital attempting to cull our choices.
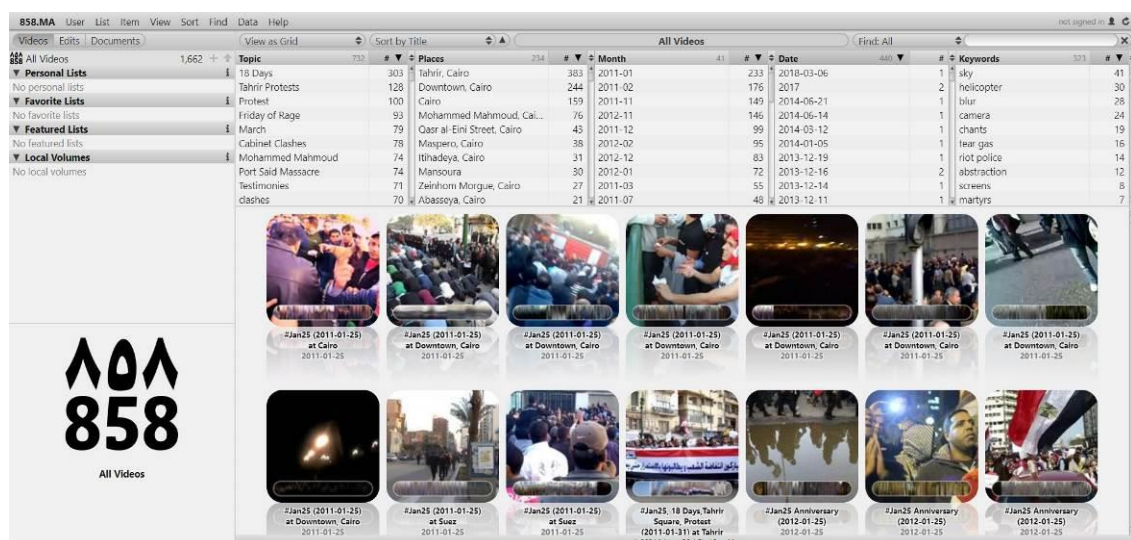
The non-commercial logic of Mosireen's 858 website

The site's autonomy from capital and other distractions is important in allowing users to interact with materials in the most direct fashion possible. Mosireen sees the archival material's primary purpose to be used and remixed into new configurations. Mosireen encourages, "What we need is to find new ways of looking at things, and for new eyes to look at this footage, get in there and pull out things that we haven't seen yet, because we've spent three years editing stuff, then three years indexing it, so we need a new perspective" (Mosireen 2018). They want to utilize the full potential of the digital environment. As Dale Hudson and Patricia Zimmermann note, screens serve less as surfaces in a digital world and more as interfaces and points of contact between physical and virtual worlds (2015, p. 16). *858* becomes such a contact zone.

This is precisely how I have used the archive in my own classes. Students are assigned to pick a minute's worth of raw footage from the archive and to pair it with one of the assigned class readings about the Egyptian revolution: an interview with Mosireen about the archive, Mosireen's manifesto, "Revolution Triptych," and sections from Omar Robert Hamilton's novel, *The City Always Wins*. Students present for five minutes and field questions for a remaining another five minutes. The content covered in class, I announce in advance, will be dictated by the students.

Some students rise to the occasion while others go through the motions. But, in general, many students engage more thoroughly with the archive than I anticipated. The experience is unique to many of them who have never had such self-contained online experiences with a site. Many are completely unfamiliar with a non-commercial website, and the newness of the experience both seems utterly foreign and yet captivating. Out of this engagement, sometimes a truly new vision emerges between the student's interest and the archival material.

One of my students picked a clip of people praying in public at night in Tahrir Square.[14] The video only lasts for roughly a minute as we watch people bow and exclaim, "Allah Akbar," over unsteady cell phone footage. My student, who is half Middle Eastern, said the clip reminded her of her father who grew up in Lebanon and experienced war there at fourteen. The clip "reminded me of my father and the hardships he had gone through when he was in Lebanon, fighting men while he was only in middle school. The faith he had kept for many years after reflected itself within those men who chose to resort to peace and perseverance [as seen in the video]." She continues that watching those on video exclaim "Allah Akbar" was a profound moment since it was "something that is familiar to Middle Easterners" and not assumed to be a "phrase of terrorism" that it is "for Americans after 9/11" (Melkonian 2019).

The personal way in which this video resonated for the student as well as her eloquent explanation before the class provided a stirring moment. She asserted her Middle Eastern identity, reclaimed a phrase that has been demonized by Islamophobes, and showed how the struggles occurring in Egypt can relate to

---

[14] The video can be found here: https://858.ma/BWK/player/00:08:23.154.

past struggles within the Middle East and impact a younger generation. She illustrated a contact zone between physical and virtual worlds, personal and political spaces, and relayed a moment of the Egyptian revolution that shuttles among past and present concerns. Through her analysis, my student revealed how her struggles, her father's struggles, the struggles of Lebanon and Egypt are all related and part of an invisible continuum that a well-selected image can help unlock with fresh eyes. If there is any emergent practices that *858* forges, it is this: the ability of non-commercial forms of the digital terrain to interface with everyday people's lives where historical and geographical connections can be deepened and enriched. It reveals a moment of self-discovery while sifting through the databases of other people's struggles in the desire to better understand them and see how they unite with aspirations of our own. *858* suggests the new possibilities that digital archives unleash when utilized in thoughtful directions.

Additionally, the encounter between Mosireen's archive, an anonymously shot video, and a user navigating the website embodies a diasporic cultural moment at work. As Stuart Hall observes, such encounters are "able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak" (1990, p. 236-237). Elsewhere, he notes how "culture itself has been fundamentally and irrevocably diasporized . . ." as capital itself has increasingly stretched itself across the globe and provided expanded communication and transportation technologies (2017, p. 169). This is reflected in Mosireen's pratices that seize upon these technologies to exploit them for more democratic and liberatory purposes. The *858* archive shuttles between documenting the concrete struggles occurring at distinct times and places and providing a digital platform that allows such raw material to be incorporated into other struggles and lines of thought whatever they may be. The archive represents a new form of potential collectivity that encourages autonomy and self-determination on users' part by confronting them with 858 hours of raw video footage to see what they might make of it. One can view the archive as an extension of the revolution in assisting people with seizing control of their lives outside of the circuits of capital and explore where the past and present might converge in new directions forward.

Conclusion

The Mosireen Collective signals the ways in which much global media activism has been developing: diasporic in nature, anarchist-inflected, and reliant on a certain level of class privilege to pursue its ends. Mosireen's multiple iterations and ability to work across digital platforms and physical spaces shows a dynamic type of media activism at work that is responsive to the various historical moments and pressures it operates within. Their use of video has morphed throughout their development. The collective began by compiling and screening mostly other people's rough footage in Tahrir Square and elsewhere. As the revolution continued and more coherent stories were needed about

groups outside of Tahrir Square, Mosireen began producing their own short-form videos that they posted on YouTube and on their own website. Such global digital media activism both employs commercial platforms for publicity and fundraising while maintaining more autonomous digital sites that prioritize other less acknowledged perspectives of the revolution. Although the alternative forms of representation that Mosireen promoted remain important, equally worth stressing is the dynamic ways in which the collective altered its practices to new demands.

The collective not only reveals a multifaceted approach to digital media by employing commercial and non-commercial forms as well as understanding the ways in which digital and physical terrains must interface, but it also relates how various forms of cultural practices overlay one another. Their residual practices of a Third Cinema intersect with dominant practices of social media websites while attempting to establish emergent non-commercial modes of digital interaction with the creation of the *858* archive. These negotiations between commodified and grassroots forms of culture signal that complex ways in which media activism and diasporic struggles mobilize upon both. Neither occupy a purified terrain but instead chart through messy realms between already existing cultures and unforeseen paths into the future.

The Mosireen Collective also directs attention to the privileged place many media activists occupy in such diasporic struggles and the challenges in allying themselves with working-class movements. This is not a new challenge but has often arisen within innumerable social movements of the past where cross-class alliances were being forged. Walter Benjamin, for example, posited the intellectual as a betrayer of one's own class by transforming oneself "from a supplier of the productive apparatus into an engineer who sees it as his [sic] task to adapt this apparatus to the purposes of the proletarian revolution" (1978, p. 237-238). But the danger, however, as Benjamin points out, is that "the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication can assimilate astonishing quantities of revolutionary themes, indeed, can propagate them without calling its own existence, and the existence of the class that owns it, seriously into question" (1978. P. 229). We witness this in action as Mosireen attempted to adapt various forms of commercial technologies like social media, video cameras, and cellphones in new directions that serve broader constituencies than they were originally meant for as well as challenging the very apparatus of production that made them possible in the first place. This challenge consumes most diasporic media activist collectives like Kazeboon and the Syrian-based Abounaddara in navigating commercialized platforms and technology along with their own class privileges in their pursuit of democratizing digital media and harnessing it for revolutionary purposes.[15] Such collectives can never be free of such contradictions, but their work can become blueprints and/or

---

[15] Ryan Watson writes about Abounaddara in his forthcoming book, *Radical Documentary and Global Crisis: Militant Evidence in the Digital Age* (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2021).

warnings regarding paths forward and dead ends that future diasporic movements might take in overcoming class, geographical, gender, racial, ableist, and many other divides. The Mosireen Collective marks one of the most sophisticated recent iterations of diasporic, digital media activism we have witnessed so far.

References

Abdalla, Khalid, 2014a. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/39/creating_an_audience_in_tahrir_square (Accessed December 1, 2019).

---, 2014b. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/39/creating_an_audience_in_tahrir_square (Accessed November 30, 2019).

---, 2014c. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/42/from_maspero_to_mohamed_mahmoud_mosireen_consolidated_its_efforts (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Abunimah, Ali, 2012. Video by Egyptian Revolutionary Media Group Shows Scenes of Distress at Gaza City's Main Hospital. *The Electronic Intifada*. November 21, 20120. Available at: https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/video-egypt-revolutionary-media-group-shows-scenes-distress-gaza-citys-main (Accessed March 3, 2020).

Achcar, Gilbert, 2013. *The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprising*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Askanius, Tina, 2013. Online Video Activism and Political Mash-up Genres." *JOMEC Journal* 4. Available at: http://doi.org/10.18573/j.2013.10257 (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Associated Press, 2019. El-Sisi Could Stay in Power until 2030 Under Egyptian Plan. *The New York Times* [online] April 16, 2019. Available at: *https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/16/world/middleeast/el-sisi-egypt-constitution.html* (Accessed November 30, 2019).

Bahagat, Mostafa, 2013. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/449/new_project_as_yet_untitled_will_be_a_collective_effort (Accessed November 30. 2019).

Benjamin, Walter, 1968. *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.

---, 1978. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographcial Writings*. Ed. Peter Demtz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York. Schocken Books.

Butler, Judith, 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso.

Castells, Manuel, 2012. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Clifford, James. 1994. Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3: 302-338.

Dickinson, Kay, 2018a. *Arab Film and Video Manifestos: Forty-Five Years of the Moving Image Amid Revolution*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dickinson, Kay, 2018b. The Labour of Revolutionary Video Collectives. *9th International Small Cinemas Conference: From the Grassroots to the Global*, November 9, Florida Atlantic University.

Democracy Now!, 2019. Police Raid Egypt's Last Independent News Outlet Mada Masr Amid 'Increasingly Hostile' Media Climate. November 25, 2019. Available at:https://www.democracynow.org/2019/11/25/mada_masr_egypt_media_sharif_kouddous (Accessed November 30, 2019).

Duncombe, Stephen, 2007. *Dream:Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*. New York: The New Press.

Elkashef, Aida, 2014. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/149/the_first_films_about_the_revolution_did_more_harm_than_good (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Enzensberger, Hans Magnus, 2000. Constituents of a Theory of the Media in *Electronic Media and Technoculture*. Ed. John Thorton Caldwell. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press: 51-76.

Faris, David M., 2013. *Dissent and Revolution in a Digital Age: Social Media, Blogging and Activism in Egypt*. New York: I.B. Tauris).

Gaber, Sherief, unknown date. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/88/from_the_archive_videos_of_workers (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Gerbaudo, Paolo, 2012. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press.

Gilroy, Paul, 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Gregory, Sam, 2012. The Participatory Panopticon and Human Rights: WITNESS's Experience Supporting Video Advocacy and Future Possibilities in *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*. Eds. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee. New York: Zone Books: 517-549.

Hall, Stuart, 1990. Cultural Identity and Diaspora, in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart: 222-237.

Hall, Stuart, 2017. *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*. Ed. Kobena Mercer. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Hall, Stuart and Martin Jacques, 1988. People Aid—A New Politics Sweeps the Land in *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left/* New York: Verso: 251-258.

Harvey, Sylvia, 1980. *May '68 and Film Culture*. London: BFI Publishing.

Hamamsy, Walid El, 2012. Shooting Under Fire: Filmmaking and the Aesthetics of Resistance: An Interview with Omar Robert Hamilton. *Wasafirl* 27, no. 4 (December 2012): 45-49.

Hamilton, Omar Robert, 2017. *The City Always Wins: A Novel*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

---, 2013. Update. Mosireen Indigogo page. Avaiable at: https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mosireen-independent-media-collective-in-cairo#/updates/all (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Hassan, Adalla F. Hassan, 2015. *Media, Revolution and Politics in Egypt: The Story of an Uprising*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

Høigilt, Jacob, 2013. The Palestinian Spring That Was Not: The Youth and Political Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4: 343-359.

Hudson, Dale and Patricia R. Zimmermann, 2015. *Thinking Through Digital Media: Transnational Environments and Locative Places*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Juris, Jeffrey S., 2012. Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation. *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2: 259-279.

Kasm, Saeb, 2018. Redefining Publics: Mosireen, State Crime and The Rise of a Digital Public Sphere. *State Crime* 7, no. 1: 100-140.

Kennedy, Helen. *Post, Mine, Repeat: Social Media Data Mining Becomes Ordinary*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khoury-Machool, Makram, 2007. Palestinian Youth and Political Activism: The Emerging Internet Culture and New Modes of Resistance. *Policy Futures in Education* 1, no. 1 (2007): 17-36.

Lebow, Alisa. *Filming Revolution*. California: Stanford University Press. Available at: https://www.filmingrevolution.org/ (Accessed March 29, 2020).

Melkonian, Meline, 2019. Email to the author on November 13.

Metwaly, Jasmina, 2013a. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/206/in_the_fight_for_representation_the_camera_was_our_weapon (Accessed December 1, 2019).

---, 2013b. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/207/moving_on_from_document_to_documentary (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Mollerup, Nina Gronlyke and Sherief Gaber, 2015. Making Media Public: On Revolutionary Street Screenings in Egypt. *International Journal of Communication* 9: 2915: 2903-2921.

Mosireen, 2018. *858*: Archiving as a tool of resistance. *MadaMasr*. February 11, 2018. Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/02/11/feature/culture/858-archiving-as-a-tool-of-resistance/ (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Mosireen, 2013. Indiegogo webpage. Available at: https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mosireen-independent-media-collective-in-cairo#/ (Accessed November 30, 2019).

Mosireen, uknown date. No Archive Is Innocent. *Mosireen* website. Available at: https://www.mosireen.com/-no-archive-is-innocent (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Mosireen, 2014. Revolution Triptych in *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East*. Ed. Anthony Downey. Lond: I.B. Tauris.

Ong, Aihwa, 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Poell, Thomas and José van Dijck, 2015. Social Media and Activist Communication. *The Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*. Ed. Chris Atton. New York: Routledge: 527-37.

Rancière, Jacques, 2015. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*. Trans. Steven Corcoran. New York: Bloomsbury.

---, 2011. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso.

Rashwan, Nada, 2019. Egypt Escalates Pressure on Last Major Independent News Site. *The New York Times* [online] November 24, 2019. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/24/world/middleeast/egypt-news-press-censorship.html (Accessed November 30. 2019)

Rizk, Philip, 2014. 2011 is not 1968: An Open Letter to an Onlooker in *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East*. Lond: I.B. Tauris: 30-38.

Rizk, Philip, 2016. Interview in *Translating Dissent: Voices from and with the Egyptian Revolution*, ed. Mona Baker. New York: Routledge.

Robé, Chris, 2017. *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerrillas, and Digital Ninjas*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Roose, Kevin, 2019. The Making of a YouTube Radical. *The New York Times* June 8, 2019. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/08/technology/youtube-radical.html (Accessed November 30, 2019).

Salem, Sara, 2015. Creating Spaces for Dissent: The Role of Social Media in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution in *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*. Eds. Daniel Trotter and Christian Fuchs, New York: Routledge: 171-188.

Salti, Rasha, 2012. Shall We Dance? *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 1: 166-171.

Shafik, Viola, 2013. Interview. *Filming Revolution*. Available at: https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/clip/342/both_the_political_and_cultural_shifts_predate_the_revolution (Accessed December 1, 2019).

Snowdon, Peter, 2020. *The People Are Not An Image: Vernacular Video after the Arab Spring*. New York: Verso.

Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino, 1969. Towards a Third Cinema in *Film and Theory: An Anthology* (2000). Eds. Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Maiden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers: 265-286.

Trottier, Daniel and Christian Fuchs, eds. *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime, and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*. New York: Routledge.

Williams, Raymond, 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Tate, 2013. Boston Palestine Film Festival Artist Talks Arab Spring, a Literary Festival in Gaza, and the Role of Media in Revolution. *Open Media Boston*, October 24, 2103. Available at: http://openmediaboston.org/content/boston-palestine-film-festival-artist-talks-arab-spring-literary-festival-gaza-and-role.

Wintour, Patrick, 2019. Egyptian Exile who Sparked Protests Launches Opposition Movement. *The Guardian* [online] November 20, 2019. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/20/film-maker-mohamed-ali-who-sparked-egypt-protests-launches-opposition-movement (Accessed November 30, 2019)

Zoller, Maxa, 2014. Potential Media: The Appropriation of Images, Commercial Media and Activist Practices in Egypt Today in *Uncommon Grounds: New Media and Critical Practices in North Africa and the Middle East*. Ed. Anthony Downey. London: I.B. Tauris.

About the author:

Christopher Robé is a professor of film and media studies at Florida Atlantic University who writes about community media. He has written two books: *Left of Hollywood: Cinema, Modernism, and Left Film Culture* and *Breaking the Spell: A History of Anarchist Filmmakers, Videotape Guerillas, and Digital Ninjas.* He is currently completing a book on state repression and collective resistance/digital activism concerning various communities of copwatchers, Muslim American neighborhood organizers, and animal rights activists.

Visual methods for militant research: counter-evidencing and counter-mapping in anti-border movements

James Ellison and Travis Van Isacker

Abstract

This article examines two methods for the production of visual material within migrant solidarity movements. These two methods, which involve evidencing and mapping, are explained in reference to the theory of "counter-information" (Cleaver 1995) and as examples of militant research in anti-border movements. An examination of militant research provides an ethical orientation, as well as a theory for explaining the creation and distribution of knowledge through movements, which is used to analyse the suitability of both approaches. With a focus on expanding methods associated with militant enquiry, this article argues that counter-evidencing and counter-mapping are practices for the production of visual material that are increasingly relevant for engaged research within radical social movements.

Keywords: militant research, counter-evidencing, counter-mapping, migration, borders, visual methods

Introduction

On 24 March 2016 hundreds of people left the informal refugee camp at Idomeni, marching towards Greece's border with North Macedonia. They walked for a few miles before reaching the Suva Reka River dividing the two countries. Despite its fast-flowing and freezing cold water, the people made a "human chain" to help each other to the far bank and into North Macedonia. However, police awaited them on the other side and most of those who made it were pushed back into Greece. The night before, three people from Afghanistan died trying to cross the river at the same point. Desperate to flee the terrible conditions for migrants in Greece and to continue their journeys to other European countries, the rewards of crossing the river outweighed its potential risks.

One reason why people crossed the river at this specific point that was reported in the news was because of a leaflet circulating in the Idomeni camp. This leaflet included a map showing where the border fence ended and the river could be crossed with directions to get there from the camp. 'Activists' and 'unknown people, perhaps groups that call themselves volunteers' in solidarity with those on the move were accused of producing and sharing the informational map by both authorities and NGOs, and ultimately for the previous night's deaths

(Salem 2016). However, while the map did provide a useful indicator as to where it would be easier to cross the border, and printing it out on paper made the information easier for people to share with one another, it merely provided a visualisation of knowledge that already was known and circulating among the migrants in other ways.

Ten months prior, and on the other side of the European continent, the group Calais Migrant Solidarity published a video of police violence against migrants trying to cross from France to the UK. The video depicted police assaulting and tear gassing people as they were being removed from UK bound lorries close to Calais's ferry port. Such violence was and remains routine; however, as this video went viral, the French police found themselves under increased public scrutiny and forced to briefly pause their programme of systematic violence against migrants. The video was just one example of visual material created by the group to document police violence in Calais, and resulted in a court case against the officers filmed.

These two examples reflect some different uses of visual material within anti-border and migrant solidarity movements. They each operated in a different way and were formally different—one was a black and white map printed on paper and circulated by hand, while the other was a digital colour video uploaded and shared on the internet—however, the motivations behind their production was the same. Both artefacts were created and circulated in order to challenge state mobility restrictions and aid struggles for free movement.

Since these events, now more than five years ago, there has been an explosion in the production of visual material recording the violence facing illegalised travellers in Europe. People on the move, investigative journalists, professional researchers and NGOs, autonomous groups and individuals in solidarity with migrants, and even state actors[1] have become increasingly active in monitoring border violence and demanding accountability for perpetrators. There has been a sort of 'documentary turn' emerging from the combination of digital communications technology and social media, which allows testimony from migrant survivors to spread quickly, and the proliferation of verification techniques by desk researchers using open source data and remote sensing to add evidential weight. Not just artefacts recording the brutal routine operation of the contemporary EU border regime for posterity's sake, this visual material and, the groups that create it, lie at the very heart of border abolition and migrant advocacy efforts today.

In this article we examine two methods for the production of visual material in the context of migrant solidarity movements. We investigate what we call counter-evidencing and counter-mapping to understand how documenting the

---

[1] One example is the Turkish Coast Guard's archive of recorded push-backs from Greek territorial waters. Although an example of the production of visual material which apparently condemns border violence, we recognise that the Turkish state does not publish this information with liberatory motivations but instead seeks to control the framing of migrant pushbacks, whilst continuing to cooperate with the EU in border externalisation and deportation.

violence of the border and creating maps which help people to circumvent them can contribute to a no borders politics. Both methods are conceptualised through what Harry Cleaver (1995), in his examination of the autonomous networked documentation and reporting on the struggle of the Zapatistas, has described as 'counter-information'; information that opposes the narratives contained in government press releases and spread by commercial mass media outlets. We analyse these methods through the framework of militant research as an ethical orientation and practical program for performing investigative work by/with/for social movements to better understand themselves and their context of struggle. Our argument is that, as struggles adapt themselves to the increasingly important role that visual media plays in political contestations, the production and analysis of visual material is itself a method for militant research. Whilst focusing on cartographic and evidential practices within migrant solidarity movements, our aim is to explain how militant research can be developed to include visual methods more broadly.

The first section of this paper describes militant research as a form of knowledge production located within social movements. The history of the concept in the Italian Autonomia intellectual tradition is presented, alongside a discussion of the ethics of performing militant research in and with social movements. The second and third sections discuss counter-evidencing and counter-mapping in the context of migration struggles as contemporary examples of militant research, which differ from the (auto)ethnographic methods it is typically associated with. Counter-evidencing offers a formulation of the production of grassroots collaborative documentary material which can then be used as an effective tool for advocacy. Counter-evidencing has its roots in documentary photography and the visual arts but has since developed beyondforms of investigative journalism. However, in examining it as a method for militant research it is possible to eschew some of the criticism associated with journalistic approaches and identify these practices at the centre of what movements do today. Counter-mapping is a method for producing cartographies that work against traditional state-based representations of territory, borders, and human mobility that lie at the heart of migration control regimes. A number of diverse examples of migration counter-maps are discussed in order to show how this practice can work to counter mobility restrictions and the depoliticisation of migrants across geographic, affective, and representative scales. In describing these two specific forms of visual production within the terms of militant research in/on migration struggles, we wish to offer inspiration for solidarity activists and researchers seeking methods of collaborative engagement that can contribute tangible, if contingent, artefacts and benefits to the struggle for free movement.

Militant research

Militant research is foremost a partisan undertaking aimed at developing intellectual tools for social movements to wield in their struggles rather than an

academic protocol to discover and elaborate some form of 'objective truth'. It takes political struggle as the starting point for developing knowledge while recognizing struggle as a form of understanding in and of itself. It is prefigurative knowledge production emerging within social struggles, where activist and academic work—doing and thinking—are not tasks divided from one another, but become complementary moments of revolutionary praxis (Herrera, 2018). Rather than privileging the 'expertise' of the theorist, it focuses on 'the ways in which militant praxis and organizing are themselves modes of understanding, of interpreting the world, and expressing modes of social being' (Shukaitis et al, 2007, 31). Two moves comprise militant research. One is directed inwards to facilitate the 'capacity for struggles to read themselves' by exploring their tensions and problematics (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003). The second is directed outward; amplifying struggles' knowledges, disseminating their critiques and reflections, and implementing social and political alternatives. Through a critical praxis of movement, alongside deep investigation of how formalised struggles work, fail, and even reproduce structural oppressions, knowledge is gained that contributes to struggle while forcing taken for granted understandings of how to do politics to be rethought.

Militant research has a specific history and developed in a particular social context as an approach to the study of anti-capitalist social movements. Its roots can be traced to radical scholarly endeavours within the Autonomia tradition (Garelli and Tazzioli 2013), and in Italy during the 1970s militant research inspired critical investigations into the struggle against capitalism, the state, and patriarchy. As an approach to research, militant investigation may have originated in the Italian Autonomia movement but it has been developed in a variety of other moments of crisis and conflict.

As participants and scholars our experience with militant research comes from our involvement with anti-border struggles, mainly in Europe, over the last ten years. Because of this, our understanding of how to apply and expand militant enquiry relies on several examples developed in conversation with this movement. However, our exploration of alternative methods within a militant enquiry framework is not limited by anti-border movements, it is merely the example that we are most familiar with and have chosen to expand upon here. Our examination of methods for militant inquiry develops the production of visual material in both an evidential and cartographic form, which have a role in a variety of different movements and contexts.

Ethical orientation

Militant research as methodology responds to the ways in which academic research so often reproduces the very extractive labour relations and structural oppressions opposed by grassroots social justice movements. Despite the best intentions of researchers, the restrictions placed on their engagements 'in the field' by institutions, as well as the political economy of publishing research outputs, often means that social movement research brings more benefits for

the researchers than participants while leaving the former less exposed to the dangers and challenges of the research context. Even if unable to completely avoid this tendency, militant research tackles such inequality head-on by asking the question 'of how to make this particular kind of work useful for militant goals' (Grappi 2013, 320) over the career ambitions of the researcher and beyond the parameters of a research grant.

For Nick Clare (2017), who writes about these ethical concerns as he experienced them during his field work in Argentina, reproducing structural oppression is a dilemma that forms the basis for a militant approach to research. By advocating for a militant research which 'studies up' rather than focusing on itself, Clare (2017, 378) describes a method for militant enquiry that is developed within or through a political movement, but with the explicit desire of producing information useful for that movement. The focus for militant enquiry must be on that which the movement is in opposition to in all senses. For researchers with certain institutional credibility, funding, and other privileges, mobilising resources and skills against elites, policy makers, and structures of power can create 'tangibly beneficial research for movements, uncovering information they may be unable to access' (Clare 2017, 378). By doing so, it is possible to take steps to avoid perpetuating and reproducing structural privilege and power against those whose struggles one is in solidarity with.

What qualifies a militant research practice is as much an ethical orientation, in terms of the application of time and resources by the researcher, as it is about the type of knowledge produced. For critical border studies scholar Maurice Stierl (2019), what militant enquiry offers is the opportunity to challenge the division between theory and method. Instead of a narrow 'set of principles', which guide research in the field, for Stierl (2019, 17) militant research as method can become 'the enactment of critical theory by a relational, situated, and subjective being' with the creation and production of understanding then conceived of as an 'everyday activity', not the preserve of the outside observer. These ethical questions and critiques form the foundation of our assessment of different methods for militant enquiry.

Developing different techniques for militant research means recognising how movements are themselves distinct arenas for knowledge production, which contain their own practices for the sharing and analysis of information. At the centre of militant research there is an explicit act of translation between the movement and other epistemic fora or settings. Transmission between these fora often begins with a focus on the academy but can include, among others, the media, the criminal justice system, and the public sphere. The various fora that contemporary movements engage with demand an extended grasp of how to operate within these arenas of knowledge production from the militant researcher. Between these different settings there are often overlaps, where the transferal of knowledge is relatively fluid, but there are also 'epistemic gaps' (Montesinos Coleman 2015) which reflect the different requirements applied to these distinct fields of knowledge production. This means certain information or

practices appear differently when they are removed from their original context and placed into another. As with all processes of translation, the validity and accuracy of any rendition is open to criticism and delegitimisation. For example, the sharing of information between the academy and within movements are two distinct forms of knowledge production, with their own requirements and demands. For militant enquiry to be successful it requires constant translation between these different contexts. In order for militant research to succeed it has to bridge these gaps and translate, backwards and forwards, between the movement and other arenas.

Within these processes of transferral there are several moments of possible disruption. There is the gap between production and presentation, as well as expectations and reception. Assessing where these gaps appear and how they manifest along lines of privilege is a necessary part of militant research. For example, what type of position would 'doing research' require to relate to those with whom one wants to be in solidarity with/research? Even if celebrating and describing the potency of resistance, would such research not contribute to undermining it at some level by rendering it knowable to power? In the context of anti-border movements, can those white-male EU nationals ever understand, much less articulate and represent, the movement or political subjectivity that motivates and performs the very real everyday politics of resistance to borders? In attempting to, would this not just fail and end up reincorporating them into another false understanding? These questions form part of an ethical orientation for thinking through expanded methods for militant research, in particular those involving the production of visual material in connection to anti-border struggles. Beyond these questions, there are also serious concerns about whether or not dissident knowledge production which unsettles, perhaps even undoes, the epistemological foundations of regimes of control is even possible, especially when it involves abstracting information and objects of analysis from their original context.

In order to better diagnose these questions and criticisms, it is helpful to expand upon how these issues manifest themselves in one specific context, i.e. the study of anti-border movements and migrant solidarity struggles. In this regard militant research has often been contrasted to the approach of migration studies. As Nicholas De Genova (2013, 252) argues, the move to differentiate a specifically *militant* enquiry is somewhat pointless because there is actually 'no neutral vantage point' from which to produce knowledge about borders and migration. By producing knowledge on the causes and practices of migration, it is rendered 'knowable' to state power and, in so doing, is complicit with its governance. In other words, all knowledge produced about migration and borders must be understood as emerging from a field of struggle in which we all have a position, whether or not we have actively chosen it.

De Genova (2002, 437) criticises militant research into borders and migration as promoting a somewhat 'journalistic' approach to knowledge. However, for Glenda Garelli and Martina Tazzioli (2013, 247) militant research into migration needs 'first of all to scrutinise and counteract the paradigm of an all-

encompassing governance of mobility and to unpack the fantasies this paradigm entails and engenders'. They also claim that through critiquing the 'knowledge-based governance of migration' developed in the academy and state research institutions it is possible to undermine the forms of mobility control which rest upon them. They place a focus on militant research's ability to counter the knowledge frameworks by which migration is made sense of, but also consider the epistemic consequences that develop from a host of methods which address more empirical questions. Through our examination of the production of evidential and cartographic material, we argue that these methods retain the ethical orientation of militant research whilst providing innovative ways to support struggle, counter specific frameworks of knowledge, and communicate movements' political critique and perspective in various fora. Furthermore, as specifically visual artefacts, they are more accessible and interpretable for broad sections of the public while perhaps being less valuable outputs for academic institutions that still over-privilege text.

Methods for militant research

As an approach to examining radical politics, militant research requires the researcher to engage with practices of knowledge production from within grassroots movements. The main method adopted by militant researchers is a form of radical (auto)ethnography. For Natasha King (2016, 9), who developed an 'activist ethnography' within anti-border movements in Athens and Calais, this involved participating in struggle and semi-structured interviews with co-participants. Anarchist and anthropologist David Graeber (2004) has argued that ethnographic methods provide an ideal basis for militant enquiry. Through participation with groups and networks that form part of anti-authoritarian movements, Graeber (2004) argues that ethnography offers the perfect toolbox for the production of non-vanguardist research into radical politics. One of the ways that ethnography assists militant enquiry is by deliberately blurring the distinction between research and political action, breaking down the barriers between types of knowledge production, in order for the 'researcher' to generate insights through and with movements (Apoifis 2016, 50).

Another method for militant enquiry adapted from ethnography is participant observation. This method positions the researcher within the everyday activities of a group in order to gain 'a deep understanding of a particular topic or situation through the meanings ascribed to it by the individuals who live and experience it' (McKechnie 2008, 598). Through shifting their position of enquiry, the militant researcher moves from being an '*observing participant*' to becoming a '*participating observer*' (Gordon 2012, 87, emphasis in original). Here, again, is a point at which the breakdown of the distinction between research and political action becomes central to militant research. In examining the production of visual material, both evidential and cartographic, as a method for militant research, our goal is not to supplant ethnographic methods, but to

instead show how, as movements are diverse arenas for the production of knowledge, methods for militant research can and should reflect this diversity.

Within the breadth of knowledge produced and motivated by a militant research agenda there are myriad outcomes and approaches. Militant research projects have engaged with various movements, such as the alter-globalisation movement (Fernandez 2008; Gordon 2007; Graeber 2009), anti-austerity protest movements (Apoifis 2016; Colectivo Situaciones 2011; Halvorsen 2015) and anti-border movements and migrant solidarity struggles (English, 2017; Mitropolous 2007; Starodub 2019). There are militant anthropologists who dedicate decades organising with a single community (Scheper-Hughes, 1995). Then there are militant research projects that provide analysis, but do not seem to engage directly with the everyday activities of a movement (Holmes, 2005). There have also been many militant investigations that investigate the relationship of different types of media to movements (Jeppesen et al 2017; Juris 2007; Pickerill 2007). However, few of these actually include visual material as the object of analysis.[2]

In this examination, the methods we wish to examine involve the production of explicitly visual material, either evidential, cartographic or both. In order to tie these methods into the literature on militant research, it is useful to examine mapping and evidencing as processes for the creation of 'counter-information' (Cleaver 1995) that works against the state's depiction of events, which so often poisons public opinion against social movements and legitimises their repression. We expand on these methods through the study of mobility and migration, with each approach holding the potential to challenge dominant narratives and undermine certain epistemic hegemonies (Vukov 2012; Vukov and Sheller 2013). However, we also recognise that these methods have their roots in state techniques for oppression and control; a key point. Both mapping and evidencing are tools of the modern state and criminal justice system. . Mapping is a tool of state formation and colonialism, as well as a fundamental element of border control, as the conquering of territory and its later division into bounded states relies on cartography. The formal constraints of evidential material were defined by the police—as a modern institution—through the application and development of techniques of image capture. The production of evidence or maps with liberatory aims has to contend with these histories, situating itself within and against them. As such, outlining what constitutes the 'counter' move is vital for the critical deployment of our two chosen visual methods of militant enquiry as a part of social movements.

Counter-evidencing in migration struggles

As a method for militant research, counter-evidencing describes the grassroots collaborative practices used within social movements to document moments of violence and injustice. The main component of these evidential practices is the

---

[2] Although there are some exceptions; for example Bookchin et al. 2013.

co-production of visual material as a tool for advocacy in courtrooms, as well online by contributing to social and news media. Similar to practices of cop-watching, which 'challenge the authority of police and traditional media' by borrowing from and disrupting 'traditional journalistic practices while giving voice to counter narratives', collectivity is a necessary part of the process (Bock 2016, 15). What separates these evidential practices from journalistic or photo-documentary practice is a reliance on the strengths of collectivity. Groups, made up of various individuals, as well as networks of different collectives, collaborate to film, edit and publish evidential material. Collectivity provides a degree of anonymity for individuals involved, which is one way of protecting participants from reprisals from the police, whilst also preventing any one contributor from claiming ownership over the visual material that has been produced. Practices of counter-evidencing are built on collectivity in order to challenge extraction and co-option, whilst also defending against the state and countering the dominant framing of violence.

Rather than beginning within the fields of anthropology or sociology, which have already been discussed as the most common sources of methods for militant research, counter-evidencing is most clearly theorised in the fields of documentary photography and the visual arts (Forensic Architecture et al 2014; Linfield 2010; Lowe 2014; Malaquais 2017; Sanyal 2017). Yet, counter-evidencing is not just about creating visual material in and of itself, but about producing evidential artefacts intended to operate in specific fora in order to document violence and call for perpetrators to be held accountable. By encouraging the production of visual material, in order to challenge the legitimacy of structures and acts of violence, the practice of counter-evidencing allows movements to document or communicate about what they are struggling against. In the case of anti-border struggles, counter-evidence is often produced to document acts of violence by state actors. These actors enjoy a degree of immunity or a lack of oversight and there is a contest over how freedom of movement struggles and the violence of state actors against people on the move is represented and framed. Videos and other visual material that show the brutality of border regimes are used simultaneously to document the injury and death caused by contemporary forms of migration control, while also presenting the struggle for recognition, redress, and an end to the injustice of border violence.

As has already been mentioned, anti-border movements provide the context for our examination of the use of visual methods for militant research. A specific example of counter-evidencing in migration struggles is Forensic Oceanography's (2018) *The Seizure of the Iuventa*. The evidence produced by Forensic Oceanography documents how the rescue ship Iuventa did not collude with people smugglers and was used in a court case to counter state evidence that attempted to criminalise the Iuventa crew. Another example is the secret footage of illegal push-backs on the Croatian-Bosnian border published by the Border Violence Monitoring Network (2018), which was widely circulated online as evidence of the mistreatment of migrants by the police on the border

between the two Balkan countries. Though these two projects are formally very different it is their function as evidence that we wish to examine. By combining critical theorisations of documentary techniques, with a perspective on their use as part of the campaigning and organising that happens within movements, we will provide an analysis of them as examples of counter-evidencing in migrant solidarity movements.

Formulating the techniques used in grassroots collaborative documentary practices as methods for militant research requires a critical diagnosis of what it means to produce visual artefacts as evidence. Counter-evidencing involves the production of visual artefacts that have a specific evidential function, which often means conforming to certain parameters for the representation of violence. These framings are connected to and produced by the state, which is also the subject for many practices of counter-evidencing. For Eyal Weizman (2017, 64) who is the Director of Forensic Architecture, which provided institutional support for Forensic Oceanography's investigation *The Seizure of the Iuventa*, counter-evidencing involves the adoption of a 'forensic gaze'. The forensic gaze is primarily associated with the state and originates with institutions of control, in particular the police, who pioneered the production of images as evidence (Tagg 1988, 2009). What a formulation of counter-evidencing provides is a reversal of the forensic gaze, whereby the production of evidential material is focused upon documenting acts of violence by states. In the case of *The Seizure of the Iuventa*, Forensic Oceanography presented a timeline of events, supported by sourced visual material, which provided clear evidence that countered the prosecution's narrative of cooperation with people smugglers. For theorist Thomas Keenan (2014, 67-68), who has collaborated extensively with Weizman, this describes a 'forensic sensibility' that involves a 'persistent commitment to evidence, testimony, and the document—and to the necessity of making arguments, in courts and elsewhere.' Collaborative documentary practices, like Forensic Oceanography, resist acts of state violence and repression by producing visual material that conforms to the formal constraints placed upon evidence by a court, but they do it in a way that is designed to subvert and challenge a specific framing of criminality and violence.

Unlike other methods for militant research, the foundation for counter-evidencing as an approach originates within literature associated with the examination of documentary photography. Photographer and scholar Allan Sekula (2014), in reference to the collaborative work of documentary photographer Susan Meiselas (1997) and forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow, describes this co-production of evidential material as a form of 'counter-forensics'. A focus on the forensic quality of a documentary project presents an existential challenge to the highly individualised discipline of documentary photography. A discipline that has often failed to mobilise the wealth of visual material it creates in order to challenge the regimes of violence and the injustices it records, preferring aesthetic speculation over political engagement (Sekula 1986). For visual artist and theorist Martha Rosler (2004, 185-186) the documentary image has always presented two constituents; as an instrument of

evidence and testimony in a legal sense, which argues 'for or against a social practice and its ideological-theoretical supports', whilst also acting as a historic document that is characterised by aesthetic pleasure and judged on qualities of 'well-formedness'. The deployment of documentary techniques in the creation of evidence attempts to dissolve these two constituents and involves the production of visual material that speaks in both a historic or aesthetic sense as well as a legal manner. For Antigoni Memou (2013), the relevance of documentary photography for social movements can be examined as 'counter-information' (Cleaver, 1995), which is a concept defined through the visual media produced within the Italian Autonomia movement as a response to government and commercial media reportage. What we seek to do is strengthen this connection to the history of militant enquiry by expanding upon the production of cartographic and evidential material within current social movements. Expanding upon these methods as tools for militant research requires the jettisoning of conceptions of individual artistic intervention in favour of collaborative endeavour. Techniques of counter-evidencing are not limited to the documentary photographer or individual artist but can and should be recognised as a component of the visual culture produced collectively within social movements.

Just as the outcomes of militant research must present themselves as knowledge, in order to act as evidence, the image must conform to the expectations of what constitutes 'the evidential'. Militant research fosters the growth of existing relationships, in movements, providing the opportunity to transfer time, resources, skills and information between institutions. In this way information is translated for different constituents. The production of counter-forensics involves a similar process of transferal, where information and artefacts are collected in the field, taken to a laboratory / studio or collated by a mediator, and then published in a forum (Keenan & Weizman 2012; Weizman 2014, 2017). On its most fundamental level the field is the site where raw information is gathered and the forum is the site where the results of the evidencing process are presented and contested (Weizman 2014, 9). For militant research the encounter is an act of translation of knowledge between two different constituents. In counter-evidencing the production of documentary material must speak to and is constrained by the fora it wishes to operate within. As an approach to militant research, counter-evidencing provides a method for visually documenting violence and injustice, particularly when considered in relation to migrant solidarity and border struggles.

As well as collaboration, what distinguishes counter-evidencing from other documentary practices is the explicit use of visual material for the purposes of advocacy instead of purely aesthetic reasons. Forensic Oceanography's (2018) investigation, *The Seizure of the Iuventa*, gathered video footage from journalists, the rescue team aboard the Iuventa, as well as log books from the ship, and a transcript of communication with the Italian Coastguard. From this material, Forensic Oceanography was able to reconstruct how the rescue operation took place. Through this process it was possible to provide a narrative

that contradicted the accusation that the crew of Iuventa were colluding with people smugglers. In submission as part of the case for the defence in the Italian Supreme Court, Forensic Oceanography provided evidence that countered the framing of events provided by the prosecution. A constituent element of Forensic Oceanography's approach involved collaboration with activist networks like Watch the Med - AlarmPhone, which provides a helpline and monitors refugees and other migrants who find themselves in distress whilst crossing the Mediterranean, as well as other NGOs and media platforms. Collaboration with other collectives and networks demonstrates how practices of counter-evidencing form part of wider campaigns and movements. By deploying techniques from the visual arts, but moving beyond the spaces of presentations associated with the art world, *The Seizure of the Iuventa* case demonstrates how counter-evidencing is developed within broader movements and translated for diverse fora.

As a method for the collection and publication of documentary material, the practices used within movements can be analysed as forms of counter-evidencing. Another example of this is the work of the Border Violence Monitoring Network (2018), and specifically the video footage they obtained of push-backs on the Croatian-Bosnian border. By producing representations of violence against refugees and other migrants, the Border Violence Monitoring Network attempts to undermine mobility restrictions and borders by framing them as sites of violence and illegality on the part of the security services. By creating evidence, which documents forms of border violence, groups like the Border Violence Monitoring Network effectively challenge and undermine the legitimacy of the border. Documenting violent push-backs, taking written testimonies, and compiling this material into legal dossiers has become a part of the repertoire of migrant solidarity groups. Through this practice the legal forum has been a primary context into which evidence is circulated, while other fora that feed back into the movement also play a role. As the anti-border and migrant solidarity movement has developed, in response to increasingly violent border regimes, the circulation and collation of evidential material has often been a priority for challenging the way that movement restrictions are represented in the public imagination.

Providing material support to people crossing borders without permission often includes, directly or indirectly, the recording, collating, documenting, and evidencing of violence as part of the reframing of borders and movement restrictions. Border-zones, by definition, constitute a peripheral space but they also present the common characteristics of a field for counter-forensic investigation, as sites where poverty is often rife and the myth of national belonging is used to justify violence and mobilise hatred (Weizman 2014, 10). The mediator in this case is the Border Violence Monitoring Network, a group involved in the transferal of artefacts from the field to certain fora. Different groups or networks pose as interlocutors of visual evidence, taking raw content from the field, preparing it and publishing it. There is no outside authority that legitimises the visual material they produce or their validity as a mediator of

evidence. These mediators are sometimes formed of collaborative alliances, which can include NGOs, activist groups, journalists, and most importantly migrants themselves.

Creating evidential material for a growing movement, like the one that emerged during the European refugee 'crisis', means producing visual material that can be shared and circulated widely, and often relies on social media. As Weizman (2014, 12) has diagnosed, these approaches are a response to 'the development and widespread accessibility of digital data', as digital technology has expanded so has the 'the capacity to bear witness'. As the number of images and publicly available information has increased, the process of producing evidence from this 'image complex' comprises a series of techniques for 'interpreting, verifying, decoding and amplifying' (Weizman 2014, 12). Organising and contributing to struggle then includes filming, editing, and publishing short documentary videos, with the co-production of visual evidential material an increasingly important part of social movements. If counter-evidencing was ever a method limited to documentary photography it has now out-grown this initial definition. Presently it seems to resemble a mode of engaged investigative journalism. However, even though practices of evidencing incorporate journalistic and photo documentary techniques, the fundamental basis for each approach is different. Not only is counter-evidencing wedded to collectivity, through form and motivation, these practices diverge from news media reportage by focusing on their efficacy as tools for advocacy. In this way the production and circulation of evidential material, documenting violence, is a grassroots and horizontal process that requires the participation of different individuals and groups in order to prepare and distribute evidence into several different fora.

Representations—images, photographs, videos, testimonies, reports, and articles—can all be critically studied as evidence. To explain how the production and analysis of this evidential material is a method for militant research, it is necessary to examine how certain depictions challenge the way in which violence is framed. Challenging the framing of the border involves contesting the presence or absence of different forms of violence, which forms a central part of evidencing as a method for anti-border movements. By delimiting what can be seen, the frame draws a boundary around what is determined as evidence. Framing is an operant function of the image, and is in turn a part of what produces visual representations as evidence of violence. The frame is a function of the camera and a component part of the creation of any photographic image (Azoulay 2008; Butler 2010). Any framing is itself situated within time and space, within a field of vision (Butler 2010, 80). Any image also has a relation to the conditions and the surroundings in which it was produced. The 'fora' in which images are imbued with an evidential quality vary and they all contain their own 'political reality' (Weizman 2017). Examining the process of framing is a key part of understanding how representation and the production of evidence operate. Framing is not just about what is included or excluded but also who is designated as the party responsible for carrying out

forms of violence (Butler 2010). As part of the evidential function of the image, photographs and video footage attest to one certainty; the conditions for the creation of an image (Sekula 1986). An ethical appreciation of the relationship between the people in front of and behind the camera is a constituent part of explaining how evidence is produced within social movements, and how it can be used as a method for militant research.

Counter-evidencing provides the tools for thinking through the analysis of collaborative documentary practices within movements. In conversation with theories used to describe the practices of socially and politically motivated documentary photography, counter-evidencing repurposes these tools and positions them within social movements. Politically committed documentary practice is no longer the reserve of an elite few but is a fundamental part of social movements that seek to evidence injustices and challenge forms of state violence. However, counter-evidencing has its limitations. It must conform to the standards for representation laid out by the fora it wishes to operate within. It can also be undermined by prejudices about its creators within those fora, revealing how the perceived authority carried by counter-evidence can be determined by the political positioning of its creators vis-a-vis the forum of presentation rather than its objective validity. Yet counter-evidencing has potential as a method for movements and militant enquiry, contributing to the struggle against borders by providing a clear set of practices that can be applied to document and represent state violence for all to see.

Counter-mapping in migration struggles

> Activist mapping of the EU border regime serve as organizing nodes rather than just navigational tools... [t]hese maps are often part of a *militant* or *activist research* embedded within social movements with the goal of deepening and advancing struggles and creating new subjectivities, as opposed to generating knowledge within a classical academic framework. (Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias 2008, 64)

As the opening quotation describes, another visual method for militant research in migrant solidarity movements is counter-mapping. This concept can be understood as the use of mapping techniques (a number of which will be presented shortly) to produce counter-information useful for people's autonomous movements, often against state control. Like other methods for militant research, there is a strong ethical orientation in counter-mapping and the collaborative nature of production is key. Decisions of what and with whom to map are important to consider when beginning a counter-mapping project. In counter-mapping every attempt must be made to produce maps useful to movements, but which do not aid the state in its understandings or repression of them. This requires adopting what Pezzani and Heller (2013, 296) call a

'disobedient gaze' which 'simultaneously refuses to disclose clandestine migration and reveals the violence of the border regime'.

However, the counter-mapping process, which is fundamentally about making visible sensitive information, is always fraught with danger. The term 'counter' must be used with caution as it may too readily imply that our maps work as we intend and do not facilitate state violence (L. Lambert 2018, 10). The decision to map, especially in the context of irregular migration, should never be taken lightly. A counter-map of border security infrastructure, if discovered by police, can end up aiding them in anticipating and capturing migrants circumventing controls, not to mention criminalise the people who made/possessed the map. However, here we argue that, both tactically and strategically, counter-maps can be useful artefacts to create as they provide an effective visual device through which movement actors can quickly understand, communicate and respond to their position within a given field of struggle.

In this section we describe two methods of counter-mapping within the context of migrant struggles; 1) the use of predominantly state cartographic logic and technology against migration controls and 2) the personal mappings of migrants journeys. There have already been a number of excellent reviews of migration counter-mapping practices in their wide diversity which this article draws from including Bacon et al. 2016, Casas-Cortes et al. 2017, Tazzioli 2019 and van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 2019. We expand on this literature to provide a clear argument for the proficiency of counter-mapping as a tool for militant research, both within migrant solidarity movements and beyond.

The basic function of a map is to fix a particular representation of space to allow for interventions upon it to be more easily conceived. Historically this function has mostly been applied to projects of exploitation and domination. Cartography as a way of 'seeing like a state' (Scott, 1998) facilitates governmental interventions by abstracting space from historical, social, and environmental processes. The lines maps then inscribe upon this abstraction are able to be realised through (the threat of) force (Wood, 2010). In just one example, colonial projects used mapping to 'inscribe the territories Europeans wanted to settle with an emptiness upon which they could overlay their geographical imagination', imaginings then realised through violence and dispossession (Mitchell 2012, 59).

However, Edward Said (1995, 27) states that geography, whilst an art of war, 'can also be the art of resistance if there is a counter-map and a counter-strategy'. Though cartography and state power are undeniably linked, it is possible to take advantage of the authority of maps to counter political domination if one controls their means of production (Crampton and Krygier, 2006). Cartographers who try to avoid the inherent structural problems in map-making, while advancing social struggle, can make maps which 'undermine dominant paradigms [and] have counter-hegemonic potential' (Craib 2017, 54). Just as in the practice of counter-evidencing, counter-maps of migration

produced as 'a vehicle of resistance' (Matless, 1990) appropriate the very tools to police mobility against state systems of mobility control.

An example of such a counter-map which may be practically useful to people on the move is a detailed map of border-zones, and the security infrastructures deployed in them, which must be avoided during unauthorised journeys (as in the case of the mass crossing of the Greece/ Northern Macedonian border mentioned at the beginning of this article). Such maps are actually produced all the time by those who are crossing irregularly as they collect and share information, sometimes with the use of technologies like smart phones with GPS and mapping applications and sometimes without. However, these existing practices can be augmented by other militant researchers who apply cartographic methods and other research tools to yield more extensive maps of border-zones.

One, now-historic, example is the 'bordergeography' of the French town of Sangatte, very close to the border with Britain, created by An Architektur (2002), and discussed at length by William Walters, (2008). Produced almost ten years ago, the maps created as part of this project of course need to be updated, however they did effectively model Calais' 'transit spaces' like the Eurotunnel terminal and ferry port that have been securitised against illegalised migration with architectural and cartographic techniques. This offered people the potential to study such spaces before and after irregular crossing attempts to better understand their composition. Another example in this vein is hackitectura's *Cartografía Crítica del Estrecho (Cartography of the Straits of Gibraltar)* (2004) which shows the Spanish-Moroccan border area and a number of the border security devices deployed there.

Such maps, and others yet to be made, could be augmented and updated to more accurately display today's border security infrastructures, perhaps using open-source investigative methods and satellite imagery. Researchers might also be able to take advantage of their citizenship status, racialisation or institutional affiliations to collect and make publicly available information on the composition of border-zones which others without such privileges cannot so easily glean without risking capture by (border) police. An inspirational and artistic approach here is Heath Bunting's *BorderXing Guide* (2002). In this work Bunting makes attempts at crossing several European borders, while documenting his journeys as well as the obstacles he encounters. Of course the situations in which he was attempting his crossings are incomparable to the daily realities illegalised migrants face, but his archiving and dissemination of useful, if basic, information is an example of the kind of engaged practice that counter-mapping as a method for militant research can build upon.

While these efforts attempt to map the security infrastructure used to police and capture unauthorised mobility, others have been made which visually depict the injury and death at militarised borders in order to denounce the state actors responsible. These counter-maps employ the same 'cartographic gaze' (Specht and Feigenbaum, 2018), disembodied and surveillant, along with the remote

sensing technologies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) used by states, but repurposed towards resistant ends, to hold them accountable for the violence they inflict at their borders (Dodge and Perkins, 2007). This approach is, in fact, a kind of synthesis of counter-evidencing and counter-mapping where testimonies and other data are displayed across time and space; making it easier to reconstruct complex events to show how they unfolded as well as allow patterns in the data to emerge more readily.

Examples of this type of counter-map in a migration solidarity context include the 'Watch the Med' map, which displays the boundary lines of territorial waters and search-and-rescue zones of various countries in the Mediterranean Sea alongside locations where migrant deaths at sea have been recorded (Casas-Cortes et al. 2017; Heller and Pezzani 2017). Nicolas Lambert and Maël Galisson's '*A Calais la frontière tue!*' 2017) also maps the deaths of people in the region of Calais who were trying to cross to the UK, or otherwise had irregular status. In the borderlands between the US and Mexico there are ongoing efforts to map the deaths of irregular migrants in the Sonoran desert to understand the human cost of the US' deterrence strategy (Stewart et al 2016). There is also the 'Push Back Map' (n.d.) that records, displays, and denounces the illegal push-backs of irregular migrants occurring worldwide, while the 'AlarmPhone's Aegean Archive' (n.d.) similarly maps push-backs and other abuses by the Greek authorities at their land and sea borders with Turkey. Finally, the '*Degagemap.info*' platform by Calais Migrant Solidarity and Human Rights Observers (n.d.) interactively maps evictions and destructions of migrants' homes at the UK's externalised border in Northern France, and operates both as a form of 'cartographic critique' (Mapping Safe Passages 2019) and as a way of 'keeping a memory archive of refugees' spaces that have been evicted, or "disappeared"' (Tazzioli and Garelli 2019, 407). As violence, injury, and death at borders so often go unrecorded by states who either deny it outright or outsource it to foreign actors, security infrastructure, or environmental hazards, these projects visibilise and seek accountability for both acts of state violence, and their 'violent inactions' (Davies et al. 2017), responsible for killing migrants in border-zones.

Apart from these examples of cartographic counter-information, another way migration counter-maps disturb governmental maps of migration is by pointing them out as reductive and politicised abstractions. Migrants' journeys are typically much more complex, non-linear, interrupted, dangerous, socially embedded and emotional than the governmental maps of mobility flows imply (Mainwairing and Brigden 2016, 247). Therefore, many counter-maps try to more accurately represent the embodied experiences of those moving irregularly on their discontinuous journeys; the push-backs, the periods of waiting and feelings of limbo between moments of crossing. These maps 'fill-in the blank space' on governmental migration maps through narrating people's experiences of their journey and it's hold-ups, and often result in more artistic vernacular cartographies than technical ones. In doing so, they disturb conventional maps by re-centring migrants as the primary agents of their journeys along creative

and unpredictable routes, and as containing individual autonomous motivations other than the 'push and pull factors' they are so often claimed to respond to.

One example of this is Amalia Campos-Delgado's (2018) representations of irregular migrant journeys transiting the US-Mexico border through counter-mapping. Campos-Delgado gets migrants to draw their journeys complete with the violence they experienced, their discontinuous crossings, and the environments they travelled through, producing a deeply personal alternative cartography of border crossing. In doing so, these maps counter the invisibility of their authors' experiences within dehumanised meta-narratives of the regime of migration governance, whilst punching holes in the perceived impermeability of nation-state borders as depicted on political maps through the retelling of stories of successful unauthorised border crossings.

In the European context some of the maps presented in Migreurope's new *Atlas des migrants en Europe* (2017) demonstrate a similar approach. One of these, `*La frontière Franco-italienne: crystallization des violences et violations des droits*', represents the border of the Roya River valley between the French-Italian border not as a straight line between two territories, but a detailed drawing of the very terrain which such a line cuts across. Apart from geographical points of interest (e.g. rivers, mountain peaks, roads, and valleys) and the police and military checkpoints which migrants must circumvent, subjective experiences and emotions have also been written onto the border landscape. Arrows do not just begin in Italy and end in France, but go off in every direction, sometimes even looping back on themselves. They end up in locations labeled 'fatigue', 'involuntary return to Italy', 'lost', 'cold', 'path of no return', 'police violence', 'deportation', 'rocky ledges', and 'danger'. This map thus displays not only the information relevant to those crossing in terms of police control points and geographic obstacles so that they might be appropriately planned ahead for, but also depicts the subjective experience of the upcoming journey. It highlights the specific dangers for illegalised border-crossers in the region, mapping not just the terrain they must traverse and the border regime which sits upon it, but also the affective obstacles that must be overcome.

Other examples of this type of migration counter-mapping are `*Le Parcours de Mustafa*', also from Migreurope's *Atlas*, and the "Drawing our own Map of Routes" workshops held in Centro Social Pantera Rosa (Casas-Cortes et al 2017, 15-19). These cartographic practices are a way for those who experience border violence and mobility restrictions to insert themselves into the terrain they have traversed, re-centring migrants' experiences of passage within the visual representation of borders. This type of 'deep mapping' (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy, 2019) privileges the affective space of movement in which physical geography is just one of many contributing factors. Spatial control mechanisms in border-spaces aim to not only physically disrupt unauthorised journeys, but have the added goal of demoralising and dissuading people from attempting them in the first place. Therefore, maps which provide a picture of the affective

geographies migrants need to navigate on their journeys can equally contribute to orienting their paths of escape.

Before concluding the paper we'd like to finish by noting that the power of counter-mapping can extend beyond the tactical. Returning to the quotation that opens this section, we'd like to highlight that the act of counter-mapping itself, as a method for militant research and knowledge production, can additionally create new political subjectivities and instigate political change (Counter Cartographies Collective et al 2012, 461). By creating tools to understand and illustrate a shared position of 'where we stand' in relation to broader, perhaps obscured, structures of power, collective subjectivities form and shift that in turn allow for different political expressions. Counter-mapping as part of social movements re-orients subjectivities away from prescribed positions and social roles, additionally facilitating political change.

Conclusion

We've suggested ways militant researchers can participate in freedom of movement struggles through the production of different types of visual counter-information. We argue that images that communicate the gratuitous violence, as well as specific functioning of oppressions, are effective tools for denouncing and charting paths of escape from violence, as well as objects worthy of analysis. Counter-evidencing and counter-mapping are differentiated from typical (auto)ethnographic militant research practices of scholar / activists, in particular those involved in migration struggles. What these methods aim to create are useful resources for movements to understand the geographic and political terrain on which they struggle while powerfully communicating grievances to the public, and in other fora. We have stressed the importance of militant research practices to not just begin in movements and continuously work with them throughout the stages of production to make sure research outcomes are relevant and useful, but to not fixate on movements. Rather, attention should be placed on the structures of power which movements oppose to reveal their logic, function, and consequences. Critical reflexivity nevertheless remains crucial; not just in terms of the positionality of the researcher in relation to movement actors and their terrain of struggle, but on the processes of translation necessarily a part of understanding and representing life and death at militarised borders.

Yet, we would like to end by re-emphasising caution in producing visual materials, even when the counter move is central to their production. Producing evidence of border violence is no doubt important for the public to see the suffering caused in their name, especially when one of the hallmarks of this violence is that it is deniable: externalised to foreign actors, security infrastructure, or environmental hazards; disbelieved due undocumented migrants' inability to access institutional complaint procedures; or unrecorded as migrants' digital devices are often taken, broken, or provoke further violence by police. Unfortunately, given the preponderance of sensationalised and

emotive images today, it is increasingly difficult for people to ethically reflect upon that which they cannot see. In this context, 'making visible' can still be an important, even necessary, task for solidarity activists.

However, discussed in the counter-evidencing section, images of border violence, especially those resulting in injuries and death, are always framed in a particular way through broader discourses of migrant illegality. It is difficult to, through images alone, not end up reproducing migrants as either criminal or victim; depoliticised subjects, alternatively threatening or at the mercy of the state. Therefore, practices of counter-evidencing and counter-mapping need to be combined so that we are not only producing denunciatory visual materials, but integrating them into re-conceptualizations of irregular migration and borders. More than an ocean of images of border horrors we need tools to navigate them; to see if, when, and how borders can be subverted or circumvented, and to take action against them. Learning how to pay attention to the very real human cost of state border security policy and its physical manifestation, but also chart how they work across physical and mental planes can allow for more strategic decisions about when using visual materials will work for or against social movements. Counter-mapping and counter-evidencing, if done correctly, can together reframe, not only understandings and imaginings of borders in many different fora (even those stacked against autonomous movements), but the ways in which they can be resisted. However, the 'counter' must never be taken for granted, but must always be a site of reflexive and translatory labour by militant researchers in conversation with their movements and audiences.

References

AlarmPhone. n.d. "Cases of Border Crimes." AlarmPhone Aegean Archive. https://aeg.bordercrimes.net/cases.

An Architektur. 2002. "Grenzgeografie Sangatte." *An Archtektur*, no. 3. http://anarchitektur.org/aa03_sangatte/aa03_sangatte.pdf.

Apoifis, N. 2016. *Anarchy in Athens: An ethnography of militancy, emotions and violence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Azoulay, Ariella. 2008. *The Civil Contract of Photography*. New York: Zone.

Bacon, Lucie, Olivier Clochard, Thomas Honoré, Nicolas Lambert, Sarah Mekdjian, and Philippe Rekacewicz. 2016. "Cartographier les mouvements migratoires." *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 32 (3–4): 185–214.

Bock, Mary Angela. 2016. "Film the Police! Cop-Watching and Its Embodied Narratives." *Journal of Communication*. 66: 13–34.

Bookchin, Natalie, Pamela Brown, Suzhan Ebrahimian, colectivo Enmedio, Alexander Juhasz, Leonidas Martin, MTL, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Andrew Ross, A.

Joan Saab and Marina Sitrin. 2013. *Militant research handbook*. New York: New York University.

Border Violence Monitoring Network. 2018. *Footage of push-backs on Croatian-Bosnian border*. Available from: https://www.borderviolence.eu/proof-of-push-backs/

Bunting, Heath. 2002. "Borderxing.Guide." Irational.Org. 2002. http://www.irational.org/heath/borderxing/home.html.

Butler, Judith. 2010. *Frames of war : when is life grievable?* London: Verso.

Calais Migrant Solidarity and Human Rights Observers. n.d. "Dégage! - A Counter-Map of Anti-Migrant Evictions and Destructions in Nord--Pas-de-Calais." https://degagemap.info/.

Campos-Delgado, Amalia. 2018. "Counter-Mapping Migration: Irregular Migrants' Stories through Cognitive Mapping." *Mobilities*, January, 1–17.

Casas-Cortes, Maribel, and Sebastian Cobarrubias. 2008. "Drawing Escape Tunnels through Borders." In *An Atlas of Radical Cartography*, edited by Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, 51–67. Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press.

Casas-Cortes, Maribel, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Charles Heller, and Lorenzo Pezzani. 2017. "Clashing Cartographies, Migrating Maps: Mapping and the Politics of Mobility at the External Borders of EU Rope." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 16 (1).

Clare, Nick. 2017. "Militantly 'studying up'? (Ab)using whiteness for oppositional research." *Area*. 49 (3): 377–383.

Cleaver, Harry. 1995. *The Zapatista and the Electronic Fabric of Struggle*. Available from: https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/zaps.html.

Colectivo Situaciones. 2003. "On the Researcher-Militant." *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* [online]. Available from: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en.html.

———. 2011. *19 & 20 Notes for a New Social Protagonism*. Wivenhoe, Essex: Minor Compositions.

Counter Cartographies Collective, Craig Dalton, and Liz Mason-Deese. 2012. "Counter (Mapping) Actions: Mapping as Militant Research." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 11 (3): 439–466.

Craib, Raymond B. 2017. "Cartography and Decolonization." In *Decolonizing the Map: Cartography from Colony to Nation*, edited by James R. Akerman, 11–72. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Crampton, Jeremy W, and John Krygier. 2006. "An Introduction to Critical Cartography." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 4 (1): 11–33.

Davies, Thom, Arshad Isakjee, and Surindar Dhesi. 2017. "Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Refugees in Europe." *Antipode* 49 (5): 1263–84

De Genova, Nicholas. 2002. "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 31: 419–447.

———. 2013. "'We are of the connections': migration, methodological nationalism, and 'militant research'." *Postcolonial Studies*. 16 (3): 250–258.

Dodge, Martin, and Chris Perkins. 2007. "Visuality, Secrecy and Cartography: Reversing the Panopticon Through Counter-Mapping." *Working Paper*. https://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/m.dodge/Visuality_secrecy_and _cartography.pdf

English, Claire. 2017. *Safe Cracking: From Safe(r) Spaces to Collectivising Vulnerability in Migrant Solidarity Organising*. PhD. Leicester: University of Leicester.

Fernandez, Luis. 2008. *Policing Dissent: Social Control and the Anti-Globalization Movement*. London: Rutgers University Press.

Forensic Architecture, Eyal Weizman, and Anselm Franke. 2014. *Forensis: the architecture of public truth*. Berlin: Sternburg Press.

Forensic Oceanography, *The Seizure of the Iuventa*. 2018. Exhibited as part of 'Counter Investigations: Forensic Architecture', The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, 07.03.2018 – 13.05.2018

Garelli, Glenda and Martina Tazzioli. 2013. "Double opening, split temporality, and new spatialities: an interview with Sandro Mezzadra on 'militant research'." *Postcolonial Studies*. 16 (3): 309–319.

Gordon, Uri. 2007. *Anarchy Alive!* London: Pluto Press.

———. 2012. Participant Observation. In: Ruth Kinna (ed.). *The Continuum Companion to Anarchism*. London: Continuum.

Graeber, David. 2004. *Fragments of an anarchist anthropology*. Chicago, IL.: Prickly Paradigm.

———. 2009. *Direct action : an ethnography*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

Grappi, Giorgio. 2013. "Three Problems without a Solution: The Militant Research Conundrum and the Social Condition of Migration." *Postcolonial Studies* 16 (3): 320–27.

hackitectura. 2004. "Cartografia Critica del Estrecho de Gibraltar." 2004. https://hackitectura.net/es/cartografia-del-estrecho/.

Halvorsen, Sam. 2015. Militant research against-and-beyond itself: critical perspectives from the university and Occupy London. *Area*. 47 (4): 466–472.

Heller, Charles and Lorenzo Pezzani. 2017. "Liquid Traces: Investigating the Deaths of Migrants at the EU's Maritime Frontier." In: Nicholas De Genova

(ed.). *The Borders of 'Europe' : Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*. Durham, NC and London, UK: Duke University Press: 95–119.

Holmes, Brian. 2005. "Continental Drift: Activist Research, From Geopolitics to Geopoetics." *Ephemera*. 5: 740–743.

Jeppesen, Sandra, Toni Hounslow, Sharmeen Khan, and Kamilla Petrick. 2017. "Media Action Research Group: toward an antiauthoritarian profeminist media research methodology." *Feminist Media Studies*: 1–17.

Juris, Jeffery. 2007. "Practicing Militant Ethnography with the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona." In: Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle (eds.). *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigations. Collective Theorization*. Oakland, CA: AK Press: 164 – 176.

Keenan, Thomas. 2014. "Counter-forensics and Photography." *Grey Room*. 55 (Spring): 58–77.

Keenan, Thomas, and Eyal Weizman. 2012. *Mengele's Skull : The Advent of Forensic Aesthetics*. Berlin: Sternburg Press.

King, Natasha. 2016. *No Borders : the politics of immigration control and resistance*. London: ZED.

Lambert, Léopold. 2018. "Introduction: Cartography and Power." *The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies*, August 2018.

Lambert, Nicolas, and Maël Galisson. 2017. "A Calais La Frontière Tue !" https://neocarto.github.io/calais/.

Linfield, Susie. 2010. *The Cruel Radiance : Photography and Political Violence*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.

Lowe, Paul. 2014. "The Forensic Turn: Bearing Witness and the 'Thingness' of the Photograph." In: Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick (eds.). *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict*. London: I.B.Tauris.

Mainwaring, Ċetta, and Noelle Brigden. 2016. "Beyond the Border: Clandestine Migration Journeys." *Geopolitics* 21 (2): 243–62.

Malaquais, Dominique. 2017. "Forensics (photography in the face of failure)." In: Gideon Mendel (ed.). *Dzhangal*. London: Ghost Books.

"Mapping Safe Passages." 2019. This Is Not an Atlas. https://notanatlas.org/maps/mapping-safe-passages/.

Matless, David. 1990. "The Uses of Cartographic Literacy: Mapping, Survey and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain." In *Mappings*, edited by Denis Cosgrove, 193–212. London: Reaktion Books.

McKechnie, Lynne. 2008. "Participant observation." In: Lisa Given (ed.). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. London: SAGE.

Meiselas, Susan. 1997. *Kurdistan : In the shadow of history*. New York: Random House.

Memou, Antigoni. 2013. *Photography and Social Movements*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Migreurop. 2017. *Atlas Des Migrants En Europe. Approches Critiques Des Politiques Migratoires*. 3e ed. Paris: Armond Colin.

Mitchell, Peta. 2012. *Cartographic Strategies of Postmoderntiy: The Figure of the Map in Contemporary Theory and Fiction*. New York and London: Routledge.

Mitropoulos, Angela. 2007. Autonomy Recognition Movement. In: Stevphen Shukaitis, David Graeber, and Erika Biddle (eds.). *Constituent imagination : militant investigations, collective theorization*. Oakland, CA: AK Press: 127–137.

Montesinos Coleman, Lara. 2015. "Ethnography, Commitment, and Critique: Departing from Activist Scholarship. *International Political Sociology*. 9: 263–280.

Pezzani, Lorenzo, and Charles Heller. 2013. "A Disobedient Gaze: Strategic Interventions in the Knowledge(s) of Maritime Borders." *Postcolonial Studies* 16 (3): 289–98.

Pickerill, Jenny. 2007. "'Autonomy online': Indymedia and practices of alter-globalisation." *Environment and Planning*. 39: 268–284.

PUSH-BACK MAP. n.d. https://pushbackmap.org/.

Rosler, Martha. 2004. *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975 – 2001*. MIT Press: London.

Said, Edward W. 1995. *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Salem, Harriet. 2016. "Why Activists Are Being Blamed for the drowning of Three Refugees in Macedonia." Vice News. March 16, 2016.

Sanyal, Debarati. 2017. "Calais's '"Jungle"': Refugees, Biopolitics, and the Arts of Resistance." *Representations*. (139): 1–33.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1995. "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology." *Current Anthropology*. 36 (3): 409–440.

Sekula, Allan. 1986. *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973 - 1983*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

———. 2014. "Photography and the Limits of National Identity." *Grey Room*. 55: 28 – 33.

Shukaitis, S., Graeber, D. and Biddle, E. (eds.) 2007. *Constituent imagination : militant investigations, collective theorization* Oakland, CA, AK Press.

Specht, Doug, and Anna Feigenbaum. 2018. "From Cartographic Gaze to Contestatory Cartographies." In *Mapping and Politics in the Digital Age*, edited by Pol Bargués-Pedreny, David Chandler, and Elena Simon. London: Routledge.

Starodub, Alissa. 2019. "Horizontal participatory action research: Refugee solidarity in the border zone." *Area*. (51): 166–173.

Stewart, Haeden Eli, Ian Ostereicher, Cameron Gokee, and Jason De Leon. 2016. "Surveilling Surveillance: Countermapping Undocumented Migration in the USA-Mexico Borderlands." *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 3 (2)

Stierl, Maurice. 2019. *Migrant Resistance in Contemporary Europe.* London: Routledge.

Tagg, John. 1988. *The burden of representation : essays on photographies and histories.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.

———. 2009. *The disciplinary frame : photographic truths and the capture of meaning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tazzioli, Martina. 2019. "Counter-Mapping the Borders of Europe: Towards a Non-Cartographic Counter-Mapping Approach." In *Challenging the Political Across Borders: Migrants' and Solidarity Struggles*, edited by Tegiye Birey, Céline Cantat, Ewa Maczynska, and Eda Sevinin, 49–70. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Tazzioli, Martina, and Glenda Garelli. 2019. "Counter-Mapping, Refugees and Asylum Borders." In *Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration*, by Katharyne Mitchell, Reece Jones, and Jennifer Fluri, 397–409. Edward Elgar Publishing.

van Houtum, Henk, and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy. 2019. "The Migration Map Trap. On the Invasion Arrows in the Cartography of Migration." *Mobilities* Published Online (November): 1–24.

Vukov, Tamara. 2012. "Noborder Media: Media/Art interventions into border control by migrant justice movements in France and Germany." In: Kevin Howley (ed.). *Media Interventions*. New York: Peter Lang: 377–395.

Vukov, Tamara, and Mimi Sheller. 2013. "Border work: surveillant assemblages, virtual fences, and tactical counter-media." *Social Semiotics*. 23 (2): 225–241.

Walters, William. 2008. "Acts of Demonstration: Mapping the Territory of (Non-)Citizenship." In *Acts of Citizenship*, edited by Engin F Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, 182–206. London: Zed Books.

Weizman, Eyal. 2014. "Introduction: Forensis." In: *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*. Edited by Forensic Architecture, Eyal Weizman, and Anselm Franke. Berlin: Sternburg Press.

———. 2017. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: Zone

Wood, Denis. 2010. *Rethinking the Power of Maps*. New York and London: The Guilford Press.

About the authors

James Ellison achieved a PhD with a thesis entitled *Contested evidence: visual representations of border violence in Calais, France* that analyses the practices of evidencing used by migrant solidarity groups to document border violence. He is currently employed as an Outreach Worker with the homeless community in his hometown of Exeter. Email: jamesrrellison AT gmail.com

Travis Van Isacker recently completed a PhD thesis entitled *Counter-mapping citizenship: bordering through domicide in Calais, France* which examines the production of citizenship through the eviction and destruction of migrants' homes in Calais. His research interests include the criminalisation of migration/solidarity and border securitisation in the UK and Europe. Email: t.d.vanisacker AT brighton.ac.uk

Interview with the Cyprus Movements Archive

Interviewer: Giorgos Charalambous

Κυπριακό Κινηματικό Αρχείο/Cyprus Movements Archive/Kıbrıs Sosyal Hareket Arşivi

https://movementsarchive.org/doku.php

Introduction

In Cyprus, social movements and radical left or progressive, extra-parliamentary politics have not followed the patterns observed since the 1960s elsewhere in Europe. But by today, their absence has evolved into a multitudinous presence, not only in terms of the number of groups and their politics, but importantly also because there is now an online archive, which documents their action and discourse through time, across distinct spaces and in three languages. This is an interview with the Cyprus Movements Archive, looking into the experience of producing and promoting radical history. Under discussion are both the substantive political concerns that animate the initiative, and its practicalities, prospects and challenges. Hopefully the interview can contribute to readers situating the local and particular within the global and universal, also to informing and inspiring initiatives elsewhere that act in a counter-hegemonic fashion towards the place and inequalities of contemporary information.

Q. How was the idea and initiative for a movements archive in Cyprus born? In what historical context, political climate and activist settings?

The idea for the Cyprus Movements Archive (movementsarchive.org) began in the summer of 2016, during a casual discussion over drinks on the topic of the failure of various past Cypriot independent information projects. Having been active in the extra-parliamentary networks of Nicosia at various levels of intensity in the previous years, we considered the lack of easy access to texts and documents produced by various active political groups as a serious shortcoming in the radical politics of Cyprus. While our discussion initially focused on the need for an active independent information website, it brought to the surface the generality of this problem, as the historical texts of Cypriot radical politics remained inaccessible and therefore unknowable even within Cypriot extra-parliamentary radical circles, with their potential physical destruction being a very real possibility.

Our discussion established our common interest in preserving these texts and making them openly available. Previous attempts had of course been made for

the formation of a similar archive, as was the case of the Agrammata self-organized library in Nicosia (2008-15), but there had been no initiative for the creation of an open-access online archive, which would digitalize and thus preserve material from physical wear.

We established some first ground rules, especially in relation to inclusivity, and proceeded with the creation of a beta version of the website in the same year, initially hosted on the server of 3533 (2013-17), then still an active independent information website. We then began cataloguing, digitalizing and archiving the first set of material, primarily sourced from our own personal archives. As the project developed we began to locate, catalogue and digitize an increasing number of material, discovering a plethora of groups, initiatives and magazines that had been unknown to us prior to the formation of the archive, a process which continues until today.

Q.   What is the ideological space covered by the texts, campaigns and groups included in the archive? It is obviously the radical, extra-parliamentary terrain, but from your perspective do certain common denominators exist between all or most archived material in terms of principles, ideas, ways of doing things and political positions? More generally, this raises the question of the political criterion for selection into the archive.

As an archival group, our aim is to make accessible past and contemporary material, rather than to maintain any particular political position or ideological commitment. We therefore locate, digitalize and archive material originating from the 'broader Cypriot radical milieu', a term we use rather flexibly in order to be able to include groups, ideological tendencies and political initiatives that are often antithetical, or even opposed to each other. While most of the archived material originates from the extra-parliamentary terrain, we are not opposed to archiving material from political parties – we already have archived material from the Communist Party of Cyprus (1926-44), as well from the Trotskyist Party of Cyprus (1940s), both of which had participated in electoral politics.

Our criteria for inclusion evolve as we gather more information on past political activity. Rather than setting up strict criteria from the beginning, we evaluate, adjust and adapt our criteria in relation to the ever-increasing located material, keeping in mind the context within which the material had been originally produced. On a first level, we begin by a negative criterion, excluding material from large parliamentary political parties, such as the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) and the Republican Turkish Party (CTP). While the argument for their inclusion could certainly be made on the grounds of their historical importance, or their past commitment to a leftist ideology, we view them as an integral part of the Cypriot political system and therefore outside the scope of the archive. Additionally, we consider such institutions more than capable of preserving their own material and organizing their own archives,

while their political views and historical significance are generally known and have been documented in countless books and academic papers.

Perhaps our most straightforward key criterion is the ideological content of a group, initiative or publication. As we aim to archive material of the broader radical milieu, we maintain an extensive inclusivity in terms of political ideology, so far as that ideology is understood to be part of the various currents of anarchism or of the radical left – we have so far included material from Trotskyist, Stalinist and Maoist organizations, from groups associated with the New Left, from anarchist and anti-authoritarian collectives, from radical feminist groups and from leftist grass-roots pro-reunification initiatives. Material originating from other sources, such as squats, D.I.Y. bands, social spaces and websites, have been further included based upon this criterion.

Nonetheless, political ideology is not our only criterion, and historical context is at least as important in determining whether a particular group, publication or initiative should be included. One example is that of Drasy-Eylem (2014-16), a bi-communal coalition of various leftists that took part in the 2014 European parliamentary elections, under a programme characterized by positions we can easily associate with Social Democracy. Despite the lack of a radical programme, we have included their material on the archive, as theirs was the first bi-communal initiative to take part in an election of the Republic of Cyprus, an important development in the politics of reunification. Another example is HADE (1998-2001), the first bi-communal Cypriot magazine, published and distributed during a period in which people could still not freely move across the buffer zone dividing the island. Other examples further include Awake Within the Walls (2007-11), a citizens' group set up to oppose the commercialization of the walled city of Nicosia, and Alert (2009-10), a pressure group formed with the aim of exposing police brutality. While both of these initiatives appear at first glance as mere pressure groups within the broader Cypriot civic society, a closer examination of their activity indicates their links to the extra-parliamentary leftist and anti-authoritarian milieu of Nicosia. As we accumulate and familiarize ourselves with the ever-increasing collected material, we acquire a certain esoteric knowledge that enables us to evaluate a particular historical context, identify connections between the various groups active in the period and decide if a particular initiative falls within the scope of the archive.

Given the above, the collection is understandably heterogeneous, with the collected material expressing multiple political positions, contrasting principles, various organizational structures and often antithetical ideas. For these reasons, the commonalities that we can establish are rather general – for example, almost all groups hold an anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist position of some sort, but the moment we begin to examine these positions, significant differences emerge. More consistency can be established if we are to examine specific ideological currents such as anarchism or Trotskyism, although even in those cases, different views have been expressed in relation to key issues, such as the Cyprus Dispute, identity politics, national self-determination and political strategy.

Q.   Commentators and scholars have spoken of a 'Generation Left' during the post-2008 crisis and more broadly the political economy of youth in the setting of neoliberalism. Looking back, do you think there is a generational dimension, or rather experience, behind the archive and or some of the movements it documents?

We can certainly locate a shift in radical politicization in the Republic of Cyprus from 2008 onwards, with new initiatives increasingly being formed and disbanded, forming a continuation of succeeding political groups that concludes with the groups active today. During the period between 2009 and 2012 there had been an increasing politicization of the youth hanging out in Phaneromeni square, an area in Nicosia which maintained a vibrant youth subculture and which became a point of reference for the anti-authoritarian milieu. Some of these groups were explicitly organized by high school students, as was the case of Planodio Steki Dromou (2010-11) and Skapoula (2011-14), a trend that we can also locate, perhaps to a lesser extent, in Limassol. In relation to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the non-recognized Turkish Cypriot state claiming the northern part of the island, we simply have not located enough material yet and cannot comment, although it would not be surprising if something similar had unfolded. The Occupy Buffer Zone movement (2011-12) is perhaps another interesting case worth mentioning.

It is also during this period that we can locate the formation of an online, left-leaning independent information Cypriot sphere, initially beginning through the popularization of online blogs, followed by the Falies alternative information collective (2005-13), which reached its maturity in 2009-10. At the same period we can locate the creation of island anarchy (2009-13), an online forum dedicated to the co-ordination of the anarchist and leftist extra-parliamentary milieu, the creation of the 3533 website (2013-17) and finally, the formation of Kontrasusta (2017-18), the last attempt at creating an online independent information network. As individuals, we are certainly part of this apparent shift, growing up and becoming politicized during the post-2008 period. New technologies have certainly enabled a younger generation of politicized individuals to access previously unavailable information, come in contact with new ideas and organize themselves in ways unavailable to previous generations. Viewed from this angle, the archive is merely another example of this phenomenon.

We should point out however that we are not social scientists and it is neither our aim, nor our intent to produce an explanatory narrative or conceptual understanding of the historical development of the radical Cypriot political milieu. While we can point out shifts reflected in the archive's (incomplete) collection, we cannot here make the claim that these developments are fundamentally linked to the financial crisis of 2008, to neoliberalism, or to any other combination of factors. Such an analysis pre-supposes the utilization of conceptual tools which necessitate a commitment to a particular theoretical or ideological framework, an approach we have consciously decided to avoid. The archive's collection can certainly be utilized for the enrichment and formulation

of such an analysis; but we gladly leave this task for academics and radical political collectives.

Q.   Is there a network operating to sustain and enrich the archive? In other words, how have tasks been arranged between those contributing and the main initiators, and what kind of organisational lessons have you learnt from this experience thus far?

The archive functions on a strictly voluntary basis, with the work required being carried out during our available spare time. This structure necessarily results in periods of high activity, followed by periods of low activity or general inactivity. Given the high standards we attempt to fulfill, the process of archiving is extremely time-consuming, beginning with the locating and cataloguing of material, their further digitization and incorporation into the archive's website through the creation of new entries accompanied by the necessary category tags, followed by the transcription of the original scanned text in a digital textual format, concluding with the translation of the transcribed text. Given the tenuous nature of this process, as well as the technical knowledge required, most of the technical work is still carried out by the initiators of the archive, while various documents can remain stacked at any given stage, with most usually pending transcriptions and translations. As we have collected an enormous amount of material, we are forced to prioritize specific documents for transcription and translation, while also continuing to upload and organize new documents in order to at least make them available in an organized manner as PDF files.

The archive would however have had stagnated early on without the support of numerous volunteers, who have contributed to the archive in different ways over the years, assisting in the process of archiving at every stage. Some have provided us access to their personal archives, allowing us to locate and digitalize new material; others have contributed by transcribing already scanned documents, thus making them more accessible, while others have provided translations of transcribed texts, making them available to new audiences for the first time. We sometimes also receive donations for covering our running costs, such as the server and domain name fees, reducing the financial burden of maintaining the archive online. We also maintain guides on the archive's website for people interested in helping; often make open calls for transcriptions and translations and occasionally receive e-mails by individuals interested in helping out. While we have no formal structure when it comes to volunteering, we can point out this dynamic between a core initiator group responsible for maintaining the website, uploading the files and organizing the various entries, and a general informal network of volunteers who assist in the enlargement and enrichment of the archive.

A challenge that we have faced repeatedly is making the archive known to a general audience. We initially attempted to address this by distributing leaflets to Kaymakkin, a social space in Nicosia, by holding a public presentation of the

archive in 2017 and by encouraging various active radical Cypriot groups to include a link to the archive on their websites. We have also agreed in the past to be interviewed anonymously by one of the main Greek Cypriot newspapers circulating in the island in order to broaden the visibility of the archive; and have accepted the invitation to this interview with the same logic. We also maintain a blog on the archive's website, in which we occasionally post important updates, as well as lists of interesting texts available on the archive, written in both Greek and English. This approach has been however only partially successful, leading us to create a Facebook page, in order to establish a better link with the current and potentially interested audience. Despite our personal dislike of social media platforms, we recognize that in the present context, their use remains a necessity.

A more consistent problem has been the opening up of the project to a more collective approach. Initially we had hoped to establish a larger group of regular archivists and editors consistently partaking both in the tasks of archiving, as well as in the decision-making process. Our initial attempt did not however materialize in the formation of such an extended group and co-ordination for a second attempt has been proven difficult, as we are not living permanently in the same country and our limited spare time does not at present allow us to carefully co-ordinate a second attempt.

Q.   Self-organisation, through archives like this one, is certainly a way to render radical history present. Part of this process, as you said before, has involved ground rules for inclusivity. These can matter a lot for cohesion, sustainability, direction and so on. Practical matters as you describe them aside, what general principles on 'how far to open up' are behind the rules you initially established? And have you subsequently revised them, at any occasion?

When we began our project we had a clear set of categories, aiming to archive material originating from the ideological traditions of anarchism, anti-authoritarianism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, radical ecology and radical and/or leftist feminism. In addition, we aimed to archive material from the rapprochement movement particular to the island, so far as it was produced by left-leaning, anti-nationalist political groups (rather than NGOs or United Nations-backed initiatives), which were often characterized by a grass-roots approach to the island's reunification. Our choice of categories reflected both international radical traditions and the specificity of radical politicization that had emerged historically in Cyprus, of which we were aware of at the time. Our initial focus rested on the post-1974 period (after the island's de-facto partition), as we initially had access to more material from this period, while it was during the aftermath of the war that the extra-parliamentary milieu active in Cyprus today was originally constituted and ideologically formed. Nonetheless, we

always kept the possibility of expanding our focus to previous decades; and did so in the following years.

We soon encountered a problem of inclusivity, which was further linked to our further concern that we had also taken up the unwanted role of producing a primitive political genealogy, rather than simply acting as an archiving collective. In contrast to other cases of radical politicization, such as the United Kingdom, Greece or Italy (to name a few we are somewhat familiar with), in which radical politics have been documented and analyzed theoretically and historically, writings on Cypriot radical politics remain largely non-existent. Despite the occasional academic article or the rather enthusiastic anthropological doctoral thesis, which tend to focus on specific aspects or dimensions of the politics of later decades, there is still no extensive historical genealogy of the Cypriot extra-parliamentary milieu. This places the Movements Archive in the bizarre situation of producing a sort of genealogy every time we choose to include or exclude a particular initiative, as the archive remains the first point of reference in relation to our radical past.

Most of the time our categories correspond to the historical reality and we thus have no reservations over what to include. The material from the 1970s and 1980s however poses a special case, as it is during this period that we can observe a rapid expansion of political ideologies in the Republic of Cyprus, followed by a series of ideological contestations in the emerging extra-parliamentary milieu, with specific groups holding extreme nationalist positions but nonetheless initially being considered as part of the milieu itself. These groups have their historical origin in the rather short-lived Maoist circles of Cyprus, which drew their emphasis on anti-colonial national self-determination from the Maoist tradition, perceiving the Cyprus Dispute as a case of neo-colonialism that could only be resolved through the implementation of the right to national self-determination.

Nationalism is of course not an alien idea in Cyprus and a variety of nationalist positions have been held historically by the institutional and extra-parliamentary Left. Our concern was that in this case, the positions expressed were identical to those of the post-1974 far-right - the opposition to an independent Cypriot state in any form, supporting the annexation of the island by the Greek state instead. To make matters more complicated, these groups, which succeeded one another throughout the 1980s, expressed a diminishing commitment to radical ideological theorization, leading to their eventual deterioration into a vulgar expression of extreme nationalism; having nothing to be jealous of from local far-right ideologies and lacking any resemblance to any radical political tradition, including among others, Maoism. In addition, the extra-parliamentary milieu, be it in its anarchist, Marxist or rapprochement manifestations, ideologically formed itself in opposition to these positions throughout the 1980s, eventually isolating and expelling these groups from the milieu.

This deterioration of radical politics into vulgar nationalism has re-appeared periodically, with notable examples in the 1990s as well as during the 21st century, forming what we sometimes jokingly and informally call the 'other milieu'. Our concern then was, where do we draw the line? Do we include these groups or not? Do we include some of these groups from the 1980s but not others? Or do we exclude the original Maoist groups altogether, saving ourselves the trouble of deciding what to do with their 'descendants'? Given the lack of any satisfactory historical analysis over the historicity of Cypriot radical politics, our decision would determine the availability of information and by extension, the visibility of one set of political groups and ideologies over another, leading the archive to essentially decide what should be considered as part of the history of Cypriot radical politics, and what should not.

In the end we decided that this decision could not be taken by us alone. As part of the public presentation of the archive at the only remaining anti-authoritarian social space of Nicosia in 2017, attended by individuals belonging to different ideological traditions and political groups, we explained this problematic and discussed it with the audience, in order to reach a more collective decision. The conclusion was to include the original Maoist groups of the 1970s, despite their pro-annexation positions, due to the strong ideological commitments in their peculiar reading of Mao, but exclude their political 'descendants', due to their close ideological proximity to the Greek Cypriot far-right, rather than to left nationalist currents. This has been the most fundamental decision taken in relation to inclusivity, so far. Whether it was the right decision is of course open to question. We consider however the mechanism through which we had taken this decision a satisfactory one, as it allowed us to take a position through the reflective input of the broader extra-parliamentary milieu, a path we may well take again if we are faced with a similar situation.

Q. You also mentioned a dislike of the mainstream social media platform, which I would say is shared by many on the left, while pointing out to the necessity to 'get the message out'. Could you briefly elaborate on how you have confronted this tension? More specifically, what kind of technical 'nuts and bolts' have you chosen or avoided in operating and disseminating the archive? To what extent do you think we are close or far from an alternative (or the potential for an alternative) to current mainstream digitalities?

The decision to utilize social media platforms has been a strategic one, as Facebook usage in Cyprus is extensive. Our use of Facebook aims to act merely as a stepping stone for people to reach the archive's website. We thus do not actively engage on the platform and do not post comments or long texts. We also discourage people from contacting us through Facebook's messaging system, indicating that we prefer communication via e-mail instead. Our posts are characterized by simple updates or small informative comments on

particular texts, publications or groups, with links diverting people to our website. Long updates are always posted on the archive's blog, with the link posted later on the Facebook page, again in order to divert people to the archive's website. This has been our only compromise with mainstream social media platforms so far, a balancing act that attempts to benefit from the usage of Facebook without the platform gaining too much from our side of the 'bargain'. Beyond this compromise, we prioritize the engagement with alternative digitalities.

A fundamental principle we follow is the utilization of open source software, both in relation to the website, as well as throughout most of our digitization process. For example, we seek out and use free PDF editors and Optical Character Recognition programs. For the website we use DokuWiki; an open source wiki software that is surrounded by a vibrant community, covering most of our needs, while for our communication we use services provided by Riseup. The availability of free, open source alternatives is enormous and we take every opportunity to utilize them in our archiving efforts.

In addition, we upload backups of PDF files on the Internet Archive, a non-profit digital library aiming to make access to knowledge universally available. We also use regularly the Wayback Machine, a tool available on the Internet Archive for the archiving of the World Wide Web, both for the location of lost material, but more importantly, for the archiving of online texts. Furthermore, we have also attempted to make the archive known to circles outside of Cyprus by posting informative entries on other alternative media websites, most notably Athens Indymedia. We have also encouraged Cypriot political groups to promote the archive, with a number of them maintain links to our website on their own websites.

Our experience with alternative digitalities paints an interesting picture of a decentralized network of digital communities, non-profit services, open source software providers and alternative media collectives. Nonetheless, there are serious limitations to the establishment of a viable alternative to mainstream digitalities that can truly fundamentally challenge the existing dynamics. The first is technical. Despite these alternative options, maintaining a website strictly through the utilization of open source software still necessitates some fundamental knowledge of coding, barring access to collectives and individuals who have not acquired this knowledge. Alternatives of course do exist for simple websites, such as blogs, with espiv.net being a notable example, but for more complex endeavors; knowledge of coding remains essential.

Perhaps an even more important limitation is the lack of real alternatives for accessing alternative information from non-mainstream internet routes, as commercial websites continue to act as the connecting link between an individual internet user and the World Wide Web. While alternatives to commercial search engines, such as DuckDuckGo, do exist, their usage remains insignificant in comparison to the overreaching dominance of Google, Bing and Yahoo. Furthermore, the expansion of commercial social media platforms

during the last 10 years has further altered how individuals gain access to information through the internet, with social media users using commercial platforms alongside search engines for accessing information online. Profit-maximizing social media algorithms and active manipulation by commercial third parties in order to influence search engine results continue to place us at a disadvantage, as access to information is constantly manipulated. As long as commercial social media platforms and search engines continue to control access to information, alternative digitalities may well be destined to remain on the periphery, offering free access to information and an array of useful tools, but not a viable alternative for the average internet user.

Q.   The island's ongoing division line has always been a chief preoccupation of radical social and political forces in Cyprus, on both sides of the barbed wire. How do you assess the archive in terms of bi-communality that is the interest and magnitude of collaboration between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to facilitate the sourcing and translations of material? And also its potentials and challenges as concerns bi-communal radical struggles?

It should be pointed out that we are not a bi-communal group and that we do not follow a bi-communal organizational structure. This of course does not restrict the participation of Turkish-speaking Cypriots; and many Turkish-speaking friends have helped us throughout the years. We simply point out that since our aim is to make past and contemporary texts as accessible as possible; our task extends beyond strict bi-communality, as we attempt to make texts also accessible to people whose first language is not a variation of Greek or Turkish. In addition, our understanding of accessibility further extends beyond merely linguistic criteria. The incorporation of transcribed text as an integral part of the website's design was originally included to further assist individuals with visual impairment, as the transcribed text can be made accessible through the utilization of text-to-speech software. An unintended but welcome side-effect of our focus on accessibility is that the transcribed text can also be automatically translated using online machine translation tools.

The archive's website is structured in a way that allows its presentation in multiple linguistic versions. At present we maintain a Greek, an English and a Turkish version of the site. The Greek version remains the most developed, while the English version is functional but underdeveloped in comparison to the Greek. The Turkish version is sadly very underdeveloped, with a developed Turkish version remaining at present merely a hypothetical possibility, as we do not currently have a Turkish-speaker as part of the core group managing the archive. We have however finally managed to include a limited number of entries on the Turkish version of the site, assisted by a fellow Turkish-speaking friend who translated our entry templates, enabling us to slowly catalogue some of our collected material. These problems are not new, as they have been ever-

present in bi-communal organizations and the reunification movement, which typically use English as the preferred mode of communication.

As most of the collected material is in Greek, our capacity to translate texts directly into Turkish is restricted, since very few people on the island are fluent in both languages. We could of course reach out to people with the aim of producing indirect translations, by utilizing English translations of Greek texts, but such an approach maintains the very real danger of misrepresenting the content of the original text. Under these circumstances and given the general English proficiency in the island and in the bi-communal reunification movement in particular, we emphasize at present careful translations from Greek to English, facilitating in this way some access of the collected material to Turkish speakers, as well as to other individuals and groups that cannot read Greek, while attempting, in parallel, to organize material written in Turkish, on the Turkish version of the site. Despite these significant shortcomings, we do maintain the necessary infrastructure for the formation of a developed Turkish version of the archive's website, with the expectation that at some point we will be able to significantly enrich the archive with Turkish translations and with additional material originally written in Turkish.

Given the above, the archive's success at disseminating information across the divide has been only partially successful. However, it is worth noting that a number of key historical texts from the south have been made available to Turkish Cypriot political activists through English translations; as we are aware that numerous Turkish Cypriot activists do follow the archive's updates on social media. Additionally, the location of largely forgotten translated texts of Turkish Cypriot groups has also allowed us to make Turkish Cypriot radical politics more visible to a Greek-speaking audience. Recently, the archive has also helped in making available information across the divide, by archiving and organizing the various press releases, online articles and videos produced by the coordinating committee of the 'Os Dame' (literally 'That's Enough!') mass protests that were held in southern Nicosia in February of 2021. After organizing the material on the Greek and English versions of the site, we posted an update on both our blog and our Facebook page. This was consciously done in order to preserve and concentrate the various material scattered on social media, in parallel making them accessible to individuals living in the north who would otherwise not have had easy access to accurate information on grass-roots developments in the south of the island.

Q.   The Cypriot context itself, it seems, imposes certain constraints, which the archive has strived to overcome. How about the broader global context? Based on this organisational effort and its particularities, can you point to any challenges confronting voluntary work for radical purposes that can be generalised in today's international settings - the terrain of misinformation,

precarity, authoritarianism and the massively unequal distribution of economic, political and social resources?

While Cyprus, like other places around the globe, has experienced a shift towards a more authoritarian management of society by the state since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, the archive has not been affected so far, nor are we expecting it to be affected in the near future. Out main challenge thus remains one of resources. Given the increasingly precarious reality of the contemporary labor market, with reduced wages, flexible working hours and legally questionable employment practices, our spare time and mental capacity are increasingly reduced as we transition from being university students to wage laborers. This situation is further reflected in our limited capacity at financing qualitative improvements to the digitization effort, as we cannot collect the necessary funds ourselves and financial support from the archive's broader network has proven limited.

A recent example is perhaps indicative. In 2020 we initiated an online donation campaign in order to purchase an A3 scanner, which would enable us to reduce the time needed for the scanning of magazines, as well as allowing us to scan larger magazines which cannot be properly digitized using our current A4 scanners. Sadly, the campaign proved a failure, as it did not generate any financial support, leaving us with the limited resources we have today. As most of grass-roots political activity in Cyprus is self-managed and self-financed, either from open donations or from the resources of individuals active in the various active initiatives, prioritization tends to be given to covering the costs of the most immediate tasks at hand, such as the printing of leaflets, the publication of magazines and the payment of rent for the maintenance of social spaces.

Our limited resources are not however merely financial. We have also observed that voluntary contributions to the archive (particularly scanning and transcription) are faced with inconsistencies, as some individuals often indicate that they will carry out a specific task but never actually do so. We are concerned at times that the broader extra-parliamentary circles of the island do not view the archive as a collective project, but rather merely as a kind contribution by a handful of individuals. While the archive has benefited enormously from the support of volunteers, the lack of consistent support and reliability limits our capacity to open up specific projects within the archive, such as an organized and systematic focus on archiving, transcribing and translating materials with a key theme, of a specified period or of a specific ideology.

Q.   This is an interview intended for an international audience and with the broader ethos of internationalism, which also pervades the archive, as you have explained. Part of my duty in this sense is to ask for your signal of solidarity with people putting effort and time into the dissemination of alternative information and information

systems. Or more generally, with activists advocating and prefiguring alternative futures through an egalitarian and democratic lens. Do you have a concluding message, whether caution, hope, motivation or otherwise, for those engaged or aspiring to similar endeavours as the Cyprus Movements Archive?

We would like to express our solidarity to comrades across the globe; and hope that they will keep up the good work for the dissemination of alternative ideas during these challenging times. Despite our structural disadvantage in relation to state institutions, mainstream media organizations and dominant political parties, we believe that it is important to remain optimistic and not be discouraged from continuing to challenge the existing paradigm, whether this is done through online campaigning, direct action or the dissemination of alternative information.

As an archiving team, we would like to encourage people to make their material easily accessible for archiving by organizing them in a logical fashion and transcribing them. We also suggest setting up new archives, regardless of how small or insignificant they might appear at first, in order to secure contextual knowledge on current and past struggles; for future generations. From our experience, radical history tends to be eradicated from the historical record. The creation and expansion of the Cyprus Movements Archive thus did not simply enable us to catalogue and organize past texts, but also to provide us, as well as the Cypriot radical circles we are active in, with a clearer and deeper understanding of our radical traditions, forms of struggle and theoretical insights that would otherwise have been lost, forcing us to begin again and again from the same starting point. Despite the mere academic interest of our collected material, their content informs first and foremost the movements and political circles that have historically been produced and shaped by them, allowing for historical reflection within our contemporary historical praxis.

About the interviewer

Giorgos Charalambous is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Nicosia, co-convener of the Left Radicalism specialist group (LRsg) at the Political Studies Association, and locally active in the Cypriot peace and anti-authoritarian movements. His academic work focuses on comparative European politics and political sociology. Contact: Charalambous.gi AT unic.ac.cy

Book Reviews: *Interface*, *13*(1)
Reviews editor: Dawn M. Paley

Books reviewed in this issue:

Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka and Kiyoto Tanno eds, 2020, *Amorphous Dissent: Post-Fukushima Social Movements in Japan*. Tokyo: Transpacific Press, 230 pp., paperback, US$41.95.

Review Author: Kei Takata

Nandita Sharma, 2020, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 384pp., paperback, $29.95.

Review Author: Elise Hjalmarson

Rebecca Rose, 2019, *Before the Parade: A History of Halifax's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Communities*. Canada: Nimbus Publishing. 184 pp., paperback, $19.95.

Review Author: Lorax B. Horne

Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa and Federico Demaria, 2020, *The Case for Degrowth.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 129 pp., paperback, US$12.95.

Review author: Alexander Dunlap

Andreas Malm, 2021, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*. London & Brooklyn, NY: Verso. 200 pp., paperback, £10.99.

Review author: Sakshi

William I. Robinson (2020) *The Global Police State.* London: Pluto Press. 208 pp. e-book, £16.99.

Review Author: Dawn Marie Paley

Book Review: Horie Takashi, Tanaka Hikaru, Tanno Kiyoto eds. *Amorphous Dissent*
Review Author: Kei Takata

Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka and Kiyoto Tanno eds, 2020, *Amorphous Dissent: Post-Fukushima Social Movements in Japan.* Tokyo: Transpacific Press, US$41.95, 230 pp., paperback.

In March 2011, an earthquake-triggered tsunami hit the northeastern part of Japan, followed by nuclear plant explosions at Fukushima. This triple disaster became a catalyst to transform Japanese civil society, igniting large-scale social movements after more than 40 years of stagnation.

Naturally, the series of movements after the Fukushima incident began with protests against nuclear energy. Activists appealed to the government to abolish all 54 of Japan's nuclear power reactors. However, the movements soon evolved and began to contest other issues. In the summer of 2015, more than 100,000 people showed up in front of the National Diet building in Tokyo to protest against the National Security Legislation. They opposed the new law, which amends the pacifist spirit of the Japanese Constitution and the undemocratic and authoritarian procedure to pass the bill used by Shinzo Abe's administration.

On the other end of the spectrum, Japan experienced the rise of a new kind of right-wing movement, whose members have been expressing racist and discriminatory sentiments against Korea and Korean residents since the 2000s. Starting around 2013, activists began to form groups to confront the far right and diminish hate speech in public.

One could consider the rise of these new and large-scale movements after the Fukushima disaster a new cycle of protest. But despite its significant impact on Japanese society, English scholarship that examines post-Fukushima movements in a comprehensive manner remains limited. *Amorphous Dissent: Post Fukushima Movements in Japan*, explicitly written for the international audience, is a perfect book for readers interested in what actually happened in Japanese civil society after 2011.

Amorphous Dissent is divided into seven chapters. Editors Takashi Horie, Hikaru Tanaka, and Kiyoto Tanno, begin with a general overview of post-Fukushima activism and the development of Japanese social movements following the Second World War, explaining how significant the post-Fukushima movements were for Japanese civil society by overcoming the trauma from the radical and often violent movements of the late sixties.

The editors go on to explain their overarching concept of "amorphous dissent." "Amorphous," originally a scientific term, can be understood as 'shapeless,'

'unclassifiable,' 'lacking organization or unity' (p. 37). An opposing concept would be "crystalline" where elements are more structured and organized.

Throughout the book, different authors apply these contrasting images to social movement organizations. A typical example of crystalline movements would be labor unions, where the organizational structure is static and the memberships are relatively homogeneous, being composed of people with similar attributes.

The editors claim that people participating in amorphous movements are more diverse, and their organizational structure is generally more fluid, with a dynamic membership of people constantly joining and leaving. They argue that even though the overall volume of the crystalline type of movements remains large, amorphous movements are becoming more prevalent and playing a crucial role in Japanese civil society today.

In the text, the authors demonstrate the strength of amorphous movements. They claim amorphous movements have a greater capacity to incorporate minorities, especially as compared to crystalline movements. At the same time, their flexibility enables them to become brokers and bridge crystalline movements with different backgrounds and standpoints. To be sure, people's ties in the amorphous movements are often weak, and the sustainability of these movements can be low. Nevertheless, *Amorphous Dissent* argues that these weaknesses can also be a strength in the contemporary social movements arena (pp. 52-8).

The authors consider the fact that Japanese society itself has been moving towards an amorphous condition –a more fluid and liquid society– and following such social change, social movements with an amorphous nature are prevailing (pp.27-36).

The main section of *Amorphous Dissent* is divided among five authors, who explore various amorphous movements that emerged after the Fukushima incidents. Chigaya Kinoshita's examines how the "crisis" of the 3.11 disaster, as the nuclear plant explosions are known, became an opportunity for the movements with new amorphous characteristics to emerge. Kinoshita demonstrates in detail how post 3.11 social movements became amorphous along with the change of Japanese society.

Takashi Horie looks at social movements' influence on institutional politics in Japan during the Anti-National Security Law movements of 2015. Horie specifically discusses how the amorphous nature of the youth movements SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy) contributed to uniting opposition parties that have long been separate in Japan.

Hikaru Tanaka goes on to explore the case of the Japanese sub-cultural anarchist group Amateur Revolt, who played a crucial role in the post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movements. Amateur Revolt is taken as a representative case for understanding the strength of the amorphous social movement.

Atsushi Toriyama focuses on movements in Okinawa, an island in southern Japan where roughly 70 percent of the U.S. military bases in Japan are concentrated. Toriyama traces the historical development of fissures and contentions between the amorphous movements and local and national governments since 1995, when the extensive anti-U.S. military base movement erupted.

The final chapter, by Kiyoto Tanno, examines Japan's attempts to control hate speech. By exploring amorphous movements to ban the hate speech demonstration in Kawasaki-city, Tanno explores why and how the Kawasaki court ruling upheld foreign residents' "personal rights," despite the fact that the hate speech was aimed at ethnic groups and not individuals.

Amorphous Dissent is a well-balanced book covering many of the major protests that emerged in Japan after 2011. It will be beneficial for a wide range of social movement scholars because it successfully incorporates insider perspectives into social scientific analysis and then translates them into a text for global readers. Each chapter is informative, and includes numerous facts, figures, and narratives about Japanese social movements.

The Fukushima disasters and their aftermath had a significant impact on the Japanese public sphere, and though many books and articles on post-3.11 activisms were published in Japanese, those discourses rarely reached international audiences. It can be challenging to translate local knowledge and experience to a global audience, especially if you know too much about the cases in question. Yet, the social scientific analysis on the part of the contributors and editors allows for a clear description of each movement's characteristics.

Bringing in the scientific term "amorphous" is unique and provocative. Indeed, compared with the past large-scale movements in Japan, one of the meanings of the movements after the triple disaster in 2011 was that amorphous movements without solid institutional bases and a fluid, network-based style of activism, took the initiative. *Amorphous Dissent* ably captures the significant roles played by various amorphous movements on different political issues. While the concept of an amorphous movement remains a bit broad, by linking it to existing social theory such as publics and networks, there is a potential for it to be an analytically valuable concept to capture the characteristics of contemporary social movements beyond Japan.

There are several points that were not fully elaborated upon in *Amorphous Dissent,* but could lead to future discussion in this field of research.

First of all, the "newness" of the post-3.11 movements compared to past movements could have been discussed further. Environmental issues, peace movements, and protests against racism, which are the topics of post-3.11 movements, can all be characterized as "New Social Movements" that emerged out of the movements of the long sixties. While it is significant that amorphous type movements stood in the forefront of Japanese civil society after the 3.11

disaster, similar network-based movements have existed in Japan in the past, such as Beheiren movements of the 1960s and the 70s.

This begs the question: to what extent are the post-3.11 movements "new"? On the one hand, one could reckon that post-3.11 was a time when the seeds of the "New Social Movements" of the sixties flourished. In other words, while the "newness" that emerged from the sixties movement remained modest between the 1970s and the aughts, such "newness" thrived after 40 years in the post-3.11 movements.

On the other hand, one can also call the post-3.11 movements "*New* New Social Movements," indicating significant "newness" that differed from the movements that emerged post 1960s. This question remains unresolved in *Amorphous Dissent*, and would be worth examining in future research.

There is also the issue of situating Japanese movements within a global context. Japanese post-3.11 movements emerged simultaneously with large-scale movements across the globe. There were contemporaneous movements against global capitalism and neoliberalism, such as the U.S. Occupy protests and anti-austerity movements in Western Europe as well as remarkable democratization movements in East and Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

How do the Japanese post-3.11 movements fit into these global movements? Again, these points are not a limitation of the book but rather point to the possibility of future research in this field. I am sure that *Amorphous Dissent* will serve as a valuable and essential ground to discuss the Japanese post-3.11 movements while also examining post-2011 protests from a global and comparative perspective.

About the review author

Kei Takata is an Assistant Professor at Hosei University, Research Center for International Japanese Studies in Tokyo. He received a Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research, Department of Sociology and was a *Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter* at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Institute of East Asian Studies/Institute of Sociology prior to his current position. Overall, his research explores the intersection of politics, culture and social change with a specific focus on post-war Japanese civil society from a comparative and transnational approach. In particular, he has been working on a project to examine Japanese sixties movements from a cosmopolitan perspective. His work has appeared in *Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements*, *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, among others.

Book review: Nandita Sharma, *Home Rule*

Review Author: Elise Hjalmarson

Nandita Sharma, 2020, ***Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 384pp., paperback, $29.95.**

For those of us concerned with the violence of borders, it is difficult to imagine a bleaker moment. Worldwide, government efforts to stay the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in stringent im/migration controls, sweeping border closures, and travel bans. While arguably few lives continue undisrupted, some of the most acutely affected by pandemic restrictions are those whose mobility such regimes were designed to curtail—Migrants or 'people out of place'.

Nandita Sharma's *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* ambitiously interweaves immigration controls, liberation movements, national sovereignty, and capitalism, demonstrating their historical interdependence and racist *raisons d'être*. A vigorously researched requiem for nationalism, the book challenges taken-for-granted hierarchies and the partitioning of peoples based on national criteria of belonging. In doing so, it underscores the significance of biopolitical categorization to imperial modes of governance, migration management, and many contemporary struggles. A pertinent read for both scholars and activists, the book ultimately contests the conflation of migration with colonization and the villainization of Migrants as settler/colonizers within some decolonization movements.

Readers familiar with Sharma's work will recognize her same voice and careful discursive reflexivity from previous writings. Chapters one and two offer a rearticulation of 'postcolonialism' as a remaking of the old imperial order and the naturalization of a racist order of sovereign nation states. This Sharma calls the 'Postcolonial New World Order'—a form of governmentality which exalts the nation-state and, with it, the 'true' Natives of its territory over and above Migrants.

In prioritizing the national sovereignty of National-Natives (autochthons) over and against Migrants (allochthons), Sharma suggests that postcolonialism "substitutes demands for decolonization with demands for national sovereignty" (15). Sharma traces the division of peoples and dovetailing of movements to imperial divide and conquer tactics which sought to thwart unification, seed animosity, and promote violence among colonized peoples. In White Settler Societies, also imagined as 'homelands', whiteness was exalted to depict White European Migrants as 'original immigrants', setting them apart from racialized immigrants portrayed as not belonging.

Chapter three is devoted to the genesis of immigration controls and the creation of a new category: the Migrant-Native. Beginning with the Mauritius Ordinances in 1835, Sharma considers the shift from exit to entrance controls specifically targeting racialized coolie laborers as opposed to British—and, generally speaking, European—citizens.

Sharma contends that Migrants are a racialized, colonial category from the start, constituting "people whose mobility was controlled by the state" (75). In the years that followed, newly independent states implemented similar immigration controls designed to regulate the movement of Migrants and prohibit the entrance of 'undesirables'.

In chapter four, Sharma chronicles the collapse of empires and emergence of national liberation movements between the World Wars. She shows how once exceptional war-time mobility constraints were not abandoned with the declaration of peace, but rather intensified with the creation of passports, visas, and additional controls to block the entrance of displaced peoples deemed undesirable. It is here that we see the advent of new categories essential to contemporary migration management, including Minorities, Refugees, and the Stateless. Taken together, they constitute negatively racialized people out of place—those who do not belong in the racialized nation and have no right to membership in its community.

Chapters five and six examine the reduction of decolonization to nationalism and the emergence of 'development' as essential to self-government. The end of empires and birth of new nation-states ushered in an era of so-called 'decolonization'; in contrast to liberation or justice, however, it brought intensified, global economic exploitation. Sharma shows that, in spite of ideals of the contrary, postcolonialism did not challenge capitalist social relations. Rather, it entrenched them further. Likewise, while development was widely accepted as a way of countering—even reversing—colonialism, coordinated efforts by the so-called superpowers ensured the continuation of European dominance across the globe. It is here that we see the bifurcation of struggles, as the fight for independence and home rule, couched in the rhetoric of 'decolonization', becomes separated from broader movements to end exploitation and subjugation.

In chapter seven, Sharma returns to the historical evolution of immigration controls and categories in a context of deepening global capitalism. She shows that as capital moves more and more freely, people's movement is increasingly restricted. Racist notions about Migrants, including that they "despoil national culture" (171) burgeon. For former colonized nations and imperial powers alike, the transition to nation-state is marked by the introduction of highly racialized immigration controls and a new emphasis on autochthony. A case in point, both Britain and France mount immigration controls against former colonial subjects just as they lift barriers preventing the entrance of foreigners from the European Economic Community.

The thickest of the book's chapters, chapter eight explores the contentious relationship between anti-immigrant politics and struggles for decolonization in national liberation states across Europe and in the former White Settler colonies. In the liberated former colonies, Sharma shows how nationalism subsumed anti-colonial resistance efforts, constructing Migrants as 'colonizing' and a threat to sovereignty. Meanwhile, in Europe, a discursive shift in the far right flipped the imperial narrative formerly dividing Europeans from Natives as European nation-states sought to protect 'European Natives' against invading Migrants. Finally, in Canada and the United States, Sharma argues that identifying as autochthonous "became a refuge as well as a rampart" (242) against Migrants as immigration became associated with conquest. Her differentiation between

the three geographies is nuanced and thorough, underscoring the painstaking research that made this book possible.

In her ninth and final chapter, Sharma brings her argument to a head with calls for a "politics of post separation—the refusal to confuse categories of rulers with the people placed within them" (269). So long as we restrict our definition of colonialism to foreign rule, she contends, decolonization will continue to be defined by home rule. This, she insists, is the ultimate deception, for ""national self-determination" is a farce" (274). She closes by once again calling for the dismantling of borders as an essential step toward the eradication of racism. Her final pages are devoted to dreams of what could be achieved were the project of decolonization divorced from those of national liberation and home rule.

At once stirring and provocative, *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants* establishes Sharma as a scholar of global history from below. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this book's contribution to the ways those of us active in social movements *think* about decolonization, migrant justice, anti-racism, and inequality, as well as to *how we work* at the intersection of these too often separate(d) movements. By rendering so transparent the historical production of immigration categories—particularly those of Native and Migrant—her work challenges the nationalisms, hierarchies, and categorizations which permeate our movements. Like false walls, they crumble with a well-placed push, as do any barriers preventing collaboration across diverse movements and geographies in the struggle for decolonization, dignity, and places to dwell.

About the review author

Elise Hjalmarson is an educator, activist, and researcher. She is a PhD candidate in Anthropology and Sociology at the Graduate Institute and co-founder of Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (RAMA), a migrant justice group based in the Okanagan Valley, Syilx territory, Canada. She can be contacted at elise.hjalmarson AT graduate institute DOT ch

Book review: Rebecca Rose, *Before the Parade*
Review author: Lorax B. Horne

Rebecca Rose, 2019, *Before the Parade: A History of Halifax's Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Communities*. Canada: Nimbus Publishing (184 pp., paperback, $19.95)

With a tight focus on the period of 1972 to 1984, Rebecca Rose's new book *Before the Parade* focusses on a foundational period for the queer community in the principal city in Atlantic Canada. Rose herself was a founding member of the Halifax Dyke and Trans march which emerged as a counterpoint to corporate Pride in recent years. As a millennial member of the rainbow community, she surveys the earlier generations of lesbian, gay and bisexual people who organized structures of permanence, like housing co-operatives and commercial public spaces. *Before the Parade* asks: how did human rights for queer folk become in the space of a couple of decades a mainstream concern, while resisted by all institutions, a state broadcaster, and the military industrial complex that is also the province's largest employer?

Drawing on her background as a journalist, Rose investigates the social networks of LGB elders and recovers oral histories in a region that is often excluded from tomes claiming to be national in scope. To guide this recovery effort, *Before the Parade* opens with biographical sketches of 33 people who become central to the narrative core of the book. Rose combines interviews with access to the personal archives of key organisers, as well as familiarity with long-time publisher Daniel McKay's Halifax Rainbow online encyclopaedia, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and Dalhousie University's growing collection of elder's records. The seemingly arbitrary choice of a concluding date of 1984 is, in fact, a personal one: the historical survey ends on the year of the author's birth.

Rose's research focuses on the Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia and its predecessor, GAE. These community-based advocacy organisations gave birth to structures like a volunteer-staffed telephone hotline and a mixed gender dance hall and events space called The Turret. People who passed through the formal organizations and the social scenes fought the battles for space in the culture that came as a result, and spoke to the author about the difficulties of establishing a radical political presence in a conservative province.

Rose traces telephone and mail surveillance of activists back to the nearby military base (p.166) and the military intelligence unit (p.14). Activists faced censorship when trying to purchase ad space for the telephone helpline. When organizing a boycott of the state broadcaster, solidarity from student media became critical to the movement (p.57). Long before any other denominations opened their doors to us, the faith-based community of Unitarian Universalists

was hosting and connecting gay, lesbian and bisexual community members (p.49). Similar to how activists today hat-tip the invisible agents surveilling our social media, in 1978 they composed Christmas carols to sing to the obvious intelligence officers photographing them outside their gathering places (p.147).

As can be expected from any dissident community faced with incoming violence from multiple fronts, the history of bisexual, gay and lesbian Halifax is fractious. LGB people that exited the movement in Halifax continued into women's movements, anti-war, and struggles for racial justice, narratives which one is left to imagine as they are not included in this history.

Before the Parade leaves open questions for future investigators to undertake in order to further understand the experience of queer people in the Maritimes. One anticipates a possible start from some of the missing letters in the fuller acronym: 2STQIA+. The Dalhousie University archive in particular is a newer resource for this work, recently founding an LGBT-dedicated archive with a two year grant from the province of Nova Scotia.

Rose's research perhaps was overly dependent on oral interviews and the private collections of individuals, and too thin on topics of racism and white supremacy on which the community today desperately needs historical perspective. While an academic effort might have more systematically excavated the archival sources, and used oral history to supplement that research, this account revolves around telling the stories that often can't be confirmed or interrogated.

By 2019, the military, the media outlets and other employers and churches that created the conditions necessitating an activist underground in the first place, sent floats to rainbow-wash their brands at Pride parades, sponsoring the commercial event's glossy programme. In 2020, the last queer bar in Halifax closed at the start of the global pandemic, and community members are still organizing to reopen a joint arts and performance space at the site of the original Turret bar. *Before the Parade* is in conversation with this ongoing struggle of queer people to find and keep, records of ourselves as protagonists of history.

About the review author

Lorax B. Horne is a journalist and a member of Distributed Denial of Secrets, publishing data in the public interest.

Book review: Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa & Federico Demaria, *The Case for Degrowth*
Review author: Alexander Dunlap

The Case for Degrowth by Giorgos Kallis, Susan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa & Federico Demaria, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2020, 129 pp., plus endnotes and index. US$12.95 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1-5095-3563-7

Degrowth is the antidote to capitalist relationships, profiteering and expansion. It challenges the pervasive "more:" annual profits, energy use, consumerism and, overall, the focus on increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Getting to the core of the climate crisis, degrowth advocates for the planned transition to reducing material and energy throughput. Not to be confused with recessions or pandemics, degrowth organizes transition away from crises and, instead, is akin to an overdue corrective to military planner and development theorist Walt Rostow's *Stages of Growth*, that conceptualized development as the "age of mass consumption" (1960).

The Case for Degrowth is a short, accessible—even friendly—exhibition of degrowth history, ideas and proposals. Despite concerns discussed below, the book is another valuable contribution collectively authored by four leading degrowth scholars. Teaching in Barcelona, the US and Portugal, Giorgos Kallis, Suasan Paulson, Giacomo D'Alisa and Federico Demaria have an extensive catalogue of previously authored books spanning the disciplines of ecological economics, anthropology and political ecology.

The Case for Degrowth offers context, outlining key concerns and proposals. "The case for degrowth is a case for stopping the pursuit of growth and for reorienting lives and societies toward wellbeing" (1). Referencing Thunberg's 2019 UN Climate Action Summit statement, "fairy tales of eternal economic growth," *The Case for Degrowth* begins with a clear outline of its purpose, the problems and harms of growing economies and the importance of commoning.

The Case for Degrowth goes on to examine the costs of a capitalist economy breaking down the problem of GDP as an economic indicator, debt and financial crisis as key historical events. Continuing to explore the economic, ecological, and psychosocial harms of growth, *The Case for Degrowth* shifts into discussing existing degrowth practices, projects and survival strategies already in action. The Green New Deal; bike paths and collective housing; local food, electricity and artisanal production; yoga, the tiny house movement and, interestingly, "womanhood" since it embodies "modesty and abnegation of personal ambition in favor of commitment to family and community," are all given as examples of these practices (47).

The Case for Degrowth then turns to examining what the authors call "path-breaking reforms." This includes "universal incomes and services; policies to reclaim the commons; reductions of working hours; and public finance to support the first four" (65).

The authors celebrate the Green New Deal (GND) as an important opportunity, even though they recognize degrowth is at odds with the "green growth and prosperity" agenda (67). They argue for a universal basic income, reducing work hours, and reclaiming the commons from profit driven organizations through municipalities and cooperatives. In addition, there is a discussion of the necessity of redirecting public finance away from socio-ecologically destructive projects organized around profit instead of wellbeing.

In the chapter on strategy the authors take a Zapatista inspired approach, encouraging "the Global Tapestry of Alternatives to support conditions in which a plurality of pathways can thrive in mutual respect" (104). They distinguish between three transformational strategies: "interstitial (building alternatives in the cracks of the current system), symbiotic (working within systems for reforms), and ruptural (disruption or revolting against dominant systems)" (87). All and all, the degrowth movement is not "purist" and encourages a wide spectrum of political action, from voting to direct action(s).

The Case for Degrowth concludes with an accessible FAQ section, which discusses degrowth positions on green growth, poverty, inequality and ways to start organizing. It is short, concise and designed for a popular audience. Moreover, it does well in weaving together historical events, theory and commonalities of various political positions under the banner of degrowth. I would highly recommend this volume to anyone unfamiliar and curious about degrowth.

On the other hand, I would not recommend *The Case for Degrowth* to people with long-term engagement in political struggle, societies-in-movement and those disinterested in academic-policy debates. Aside from various one-liners like "McDonald's serve Beyond Meat Burgers" as a positive development (91), I have serious concerns with how the book engages the Green New Deal, approaches and omits local resistance struggles.

The Case for Degrowth ignores the reality of the Green New Deal. It is viewed as an opportunity to impress a degrowth agenda. This approach radically underestimates the green growth agenda already underway within the European Green Deal (EGD). The EGD is already perfecting the neoliberalization of the European energy sector, spreading infrastructural development and digitalization, which—despite acknowledging the extractive costs (5, 113, 118)—demands a much deeper critical reflection in the book.

The relatively uncritical deployment of a "fossil fuel" versus "renewable energy" dichotomy in *The Case for Degrowth* obstructs a political assessment of the Green New Deal, neglecting how everything operates on hydrocarbons. The EGD Directive, or corresponding legislation, is ignored in *The Case for*

Degrowth, instead the authors rely on reports that speak of a "Green New Deal for Europe" (Ch. 4, endnote 2). NGO proposals are presented as government directives.

Speaking in general terms about the Green New Deal avoids the uncomfortable reality of the neoliberalization schemes it "rolls out" in practice. The book's advocacy for Green New Deal policies stands in stark contradiction to its rightful criticisms of green growth.

In addition, *The Case for Degrowth* falls short in matters of social change. The political omissions in this book almost entirely betrays the approach of advocating a "plurality of pathways that can thrive in mutual respect" that the authors claim to take. While drawing extensively on anarchist (or Indigenous) inspired ideas of "mutual aid," horizontal organizing (cooperatives, etc.) and direct action, there is no mention or reference to the Indigenous or anarchist combatants or scholars.

Erasing anarchist praxis from the book, especially since two authors live in Barcelona, raises eyebrows (and in my case, provokes a frown). Is the book mining, watering down and repackaging anarchist ideas or do the authors fear alienating new readers with the "anarchist" label associated with property destruction and sabotage? It is anyone's guess, but there seems to be a quantitative concern for readership and marketability over quality of political discussion.

More glaring omissions emerge in the discussion of "common modes of production" and housing. "Worldwide, hundreds of eco-communes, transition towns, co-living and co-cohousing communities are learning together and gaining strength," the book states (57). Why is *squatting* missing here? Arguably, squatting is the preeminent commoning project, seizing private property to create common housing and anti-capitalist spaces. Squatting as a global political movement in every city—with a particularly strong history in Barcelona—or as informal settlements and *favelas* organizing political education and resistance. Squatting offers important common survival and resistance strategies.

Couched in the language of degrowth, Claudio Cattaneo (2013: 139) reminds us that the "autonomous squatting movement" has "practical effects" in "terms of reduced material and energy consumption." The link between degrowth and squatting is already established, yet the book is silent on this connection.

Furthermore, and especially given the emphasis on localizing, the spectacular and relatively recent *Can Vies* squat resistance is another missed opportunity. In May 2014 the city of Barcelona tried to evict the squatted social center, spawning weeks of rioting and protests that spread to Girona, Madrid and Valencia. People formed a human chain just under a mile long to pass rubble from the demolished part of the squat to the doorstep of the district hall (see Scorsby, 2017). Ignoring *Can Vives*, and squatting in general, is an unacceptable omission that implicitly promotes the sanitizing of commoning struggles.

While anarchism, squatting, permaculture and edible cities were ignored, the "occupy" and "plaza occupation" movement was mentioned positively (92, 107) without discussing the reality of (movement-led) political recuperation and institutionalization of the movement (e.g. SYRIZA; Podemos).

The Case for Degrowth also ignores important analysis of these movements from within these struggles (see: Crimethinc, 2011; Gelderloos, 2013; TIC, 2015). While degrowth as a political strategy remains open and plural—which is a great strength—*The Case for Degrowth* simultaneously treads lightly on political analysis, the influence of the non-profit industrial complex (100), and differentially parades struggles in the so-called global "North" and "South."

Degrowth scholars are exceptional at demonstrating the global relevance of degrowth, but combative political tactics are implicitly limited to the Zaptatistas and "Indigenous communities" fighting against extractive projects (101), while civil disobedience and "the exercise of massive non-violent protest to contest those who use violence to maintain undemocratic and untenable orders" is reserved for Europe (97).

As I have expressed elsewhere (Dunlap, 2020), the same critiques of degrowth from Latin America—"reflecting the values of a particular social group" that is "insufficiently sensitive to their realities and unable to capture the essence of the visions articulated by those who oppose extrativist projects" (Demaria et al., 2019: 439) – also resonate in committed and combative struggles in Europe, from squatting to land defense. In these passages, and especially when lacking citations—the text feels careless, rushed and contradictory.

The Case for Degrowth makes a fundamentally important case, especially in advocating a plurality of struggles. The substance of this position, however, is diminished by the authors' treatment of the GND, political ideas and struggles. I would still recommend *The Case for Degrowth,* but with the caveat of its silence regarding anarchism and squatting, the possibilities of edible cities, and pathways offered by militant struggle inside Europe.

References

Cattaneo C. (2013) Urban squatting, rural squatting and the ecological-economic perspective. In: Squatting Europe Kollective (ed) *Squatting in Europe: Radical spaces, urban struggles*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 139-160.

Crimethinc. (2011) *Fire Extinguishers and Fire Starters*. Available at: https://crimethinc.com/2011/06/08/fire-extinguishers-and-fire-starters-anarchist-interventions-in-the-spanish-revolution-an-account-from-barcelona.

Demaria F, Kallis G and Bakker K. (2019) Geographies of degrowth: Nowtopias, resurgences and the decolonization of imaginaries and places. *Environment and Planning E* 2(3): 431-450.

Dunlap A. (2020) *Recognizing the "De" in Degrowth*. Undisciplined Environments, Available at: https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-dunlap-recognizing-the-de-in-degrowth.

Gelderloos P. (2013) *The Failure of Nonviolence: From Arab Spring to Occupy,* Seattle: Left Bank Books.

Scorsby C. (2017) *Barcelona's Can Vies social center saved*. Fifth Estate, Available at: https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/398-summer-2017/barcelonas-can-vies-social-center-saved/.

Rostow W. (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TIC (The Invisible Committee). (2015) *To Our Friends,* South Pasadena: Semiotext(e).

About the review author

Alexander Dunlap is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo. He has published two books: *Renewing Destruction: Wind Energy Development, Conflict and Resistance in an American Context* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019) and, the co-authored, *The Violent Technologies of Extraction* (Palgrave, 2020). Contact: alexander.dunlap AT sum.uio.no

Book review: Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*
Review author: Sakshi

Andreas Malm, 2021, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*. London & Brooklyn, NY: Verso. 200 pp., paperback, £10.99.

In the co-authored introduction to *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others warn against 'colonial epistemic monoculture' that continues even after the end of political colonialism (Santos et al 2008, xxxiii). The authors argue that the coloniality of knowledge and power tend to reproduce Eurocentric concepts and concerns even within emancipatory discourses.

While these ideas were articulated in the context of knowledge and the postcolonial, the frameworks are highly relevant for how contemporary environmental politics and climate movements take shape. These critiques of the nature of knowledge, social emancipation, and revolutionary approaches spring back to mind upon reading Andreas Malm's *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. We cannot know how ambitious the author was when the book was conceived and written. However, the pre-publication publicity and the post-publication euphoria suggest that the book/manifesto was pitched as an essential work calling for escalating tactics in climate activism.

How To Blow Up a Pipeline asks some important, but not necessarily original, questions about the path ahead for climate activism. Malm is troubled by the apparent strategic pacifism that dominates the field. In a passionate opening salvo, he asks:

> At what point do we escalate? When do we conclude that the time has come to also try something different? When do we start physically attacking the things that consume our planet and destroy them with our own hands? Is there a good reason we have waited this long? (Malm 2021, pp. 8-9)

The book's arguments, which are surprisingly few and thin given the gravity of the topic, can be very briefly summed up. *How To Blow Up a Pipeline* is a manifesto that draws on scattered evidence from political movements and revolutions in Egypt, Iran, Libya, South Africa, Algeria, amongst others, to ask why climate movements have not yet trodden a similar path. Malm resents pacifism while grudgingly acknowledging its advantages, arguing that it is no longer possible to talk to the ruling classes about the impending crisis.

The nature of the catastrophe that awaits humanity demands an escalated strategy, such as inflicting property damage, something harsh but not violent against individuals' lives. While there are some critiques of the blind spots in *How To Blow Up a Pipeline*, they received less attention than the celebratory reviews that appeared on the mainstream platforms (See: Kuhn 2021, Molyneux 2021, Wilt 2021).

There is an apparent danger in spending time on an unapologetically Eurocentric text, which is blind to innumerable past and contemporary Black and Indigenous struggles against environmental racism and settler colonialism. In this review, I will focus on critiquing what the book embodies – the chilling whiteness that thrives on what Potawatomi scholar and activist Kyle Whyte calls 'epistemologies of crisis' (Whyte 2020).

In a recent essay, Whyte defines epistemologies of crisis as imagining the world and a certain present as something new (Whyte 2020, 53). In the context of climate change, this 'knowing' manifests itself in the ongoing conversations around 'urgency' and 'unprecedentedness' of climate catastrophe – running themes of *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*.

Nevertheless, talking about climate catastrophe as something imminent reaches out only to a limited but privileged constituency of people. Indigenous people have been subjected to a catastrophic shift in social and environmental conditions since the ongoing process of dispossession from their land by settlers began in the 15th Century. As seventeen-year-old Naelyn Pike, a Chiricahua Apache activist fighting against Resolution Copper Mine in the Oak Flats says, Indigenous people are born fighting.

A thorough reading of *How To Blow Up a Pipeline* leaves one wondering: where does Indigenous struggle fit in the white, Eurocentric narrative of climate activism? Malm's ruminations about violence and non-violence in political struggles ignores the realities of Indigenous environmental and political struggle for sovereignty.

To ask, as Malm does, why climate movements have abstained from escalating tactics is to wilfully remain ignorant of the fact that Indigenous environmental struggles have already been at the forefront of political struggle, adopting a range of strategies from setting up blockades to challenging extractive industries in courts. Further, a lack of clear understanding about what constitutes climate activism, its complex relationship with extractivism, and where it leaves the ongoing fight for environmental justice is confounding.

What is a climate movement if it fails to demonstrate its ability to understand the violent roots of planetary collapse in colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism? Settler colonialism is built on stolen land, and so the question is, how does one physically destroy that? Climate injustice is environmental injustice, and both arise from the roots of economic, social, health, and educational inequalities that disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous

people. However, *How To Blow Up a Pipeline* does not once mention the words "settler colonialism."

Through a perfunctory examination of revolutionary violence, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* appears like a trendy call to arms after waking up from a long slumber of indifference. This shows a brutal obliviousness to pre-existing Indigenous struggles for land back, environmental justice, and self-determination. The word "pipeline" in the title seems to be more of a marketing strategy than a measured engagement with Indigenous-led struggles against entrenched power forms within settler capitalism.

Of the two mentions that Indigenous people receive in How to Blow Up a Pipeline, one –which mentions Ecuadorian authorities shutting down a pipeline after Indigenous protesters 'disrupted' it (*sic*)– is not cited (p. 113). Pipelines in Ecuador are shut down for various reasons; from protests over fuel price hikes, to the removal of subsidies, to landslides and pipelines bursting. Nonetheless, Indigenous communities bear the brunt of oil spills and remain without reparations or remedies (Cabrera 2018). These communities fight for justice in courts because in these cases, blowing up pipelines is redundant. Similarly, the cherry-picked instances of political violence from the Global South mentioned by Malm, such as Naxals in India (p. 88), who have complex relationships with the idea of extractivism, Adivasis, and the state itself, appear out of place in a self-aggrandising narrative of white climate movements in the Global North.

How To Blow Up a Pipeline mentions the militarised state power that will be unleashed at the first sign of violence (p.112). However, Malm does not meaningfully engage with how the full force of state is designed to suppress and erase the plurality of voices resisting its prowess.

Since *How To Blow Up a Pipeline* was published, more Indigenous land defenders and other environmental activists have been murdered, including in Honduras ([Juan Carlos Cerros Escalante](#)), South Africa ([Fikile Ntshangase](#)), and Colombia ([Gonzalo Cardona Molina](#)), to name a few. In 2019, Global Witness reported that 212 land and environmental defenders were killed for standing up for their rights peacefully (2020). Even then, they mostly remain as aggregate numbers which appear to fan the West's anguish over the declining state of human rights in the Global South.

There is also calculated obliviousness to the role of law and courts in *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. Malm's argument for 'trying something different' in the environmental movement ignores how Indigenous communities have long diversified their tactics and engaged with the same settler state they have been resisting. The judicial politics of Indigenous environmental justice movements play on the internal contradictions of the state (as Santos et. al. term it) and emerges from a strategy that does not equate law, justice, and the state at all times.

Environmental and climate movements should aim for lasting changes that dislodge the entrenched colonial and imperial powers, not actions that

consolidate them. Hence, calling for different strategies as if they were a tasting platter and calling for breaking completely replaceable objects while failing utterly to study or understand the long-standing tradition of Black and Indigenous activism demonstrates the incompleteness of Malm's proposal.

Fossil economies do not exist in a vacuum, and extraction is not a singular, original event. It is founded on past and ongoing violence against Black and Indigenous peoples. The state would do everything to preserve the logic of settler colonialism and capitalism. An antidote to such logic would be the memory of Standing Rock water protectors building their encampment along the proposed pipeline, facing the pepper spray of the police while standing in the river, carrying their bitten and bloodied bodies to the protest sites over and again. It demands forming kinships and re-educating the individual and collective of the many worlds we inhabit. It demands the return of Indigenous sovereignty over the land.

Environmental and climate movements ought to be defined in terms of rights, constructive recognition, and justice, not entitlement or substitution of reified power structures. In writing about them, one is obliged to consider and rethink one's epistemic and racial privileges in knowledge production. As Santos and others observe, "reinvention of social emancipation is premised upon replacing the "monoculture of scientific knowledge" by an "ecology of knowledges" (Santos et al. 2008: xx).

The injustices of erasure in *How to Blow up a Pipeline* are stark and far too many to ignore. The nature of extractive and state-led violence is always mutant. Settler capitalism actively responds to all forms of resistance, and Indigenous people have fought back against and witnessed its full force over centuries, since the beginning of their dispossession and erasure. Those who write about environmental and climate movements have an obligation to know and understand these struggles, lest the work should become another conduit for epistemic erasures.

References

Cabrera, José (2018). "In Ecuador, a pipeline cuts a trail of misery through indigenous land," *Mongabay.* https://news.mongabay.com/2018/08/in-ecuador-a-pipeline-cuts-a-trail-of-misery-through-indigenous-land/ (accessed: 19 April 2021).

Global Witness (2020). "Defending Tomorrow: The Climate Crisis and the Threats Against Land and Environmental Defenders." https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defending-tomorrow/ (accessed: 27 May 2021)

Kuhn, Gabriel (2021). "Ecological Leninism: Friend or Foe?", LeftTwoThree: https://lefttwothree.org/ecological_leninism/ (accessed: 19 April 2021)

Molyneux, John (2021). "On Malm and Violence", Global Ecosocialist Network: http://www.globalecosocialistnetwork.net/2021/03/09/on-malm-and-violence/ (accessed: 19 April 2021)

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa et al. (2008). *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies.* London: Verso

Whyte, Kyle (2020). "Against Crisis Epistemology" Pp.53-64 in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Indigenous Studies*, edited by Brendan Hokowhitu, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, Chris Andersen, and Steve Larkin. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wilt, James (2021). "How to blow up a movement: Andreas Malm's new book dreams of sabotage but ignores consequences", *Canadian Dimension*: https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/how-to-blow-up-a-movement-malms-new-book-dreams-of-sabotage-but-ignores-consequences (accessed: 19 April 2021).

About the review author:

Sakshi is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, working on Indigenous Environmental Justice in Australia, Brazil, and Canada. Previously, she graduated from the University of Oxford, where she studied for the Bachelor of Civil Law (2014-15), specialising in criminal law and evidence. Her research areas include legal and indigenous geographies, comparative environmental law, multispecies justice, and political ecology.

Book Review: William I. Robinson, *The Global Police State*
Review Author: Dawn Marie Paley

William I. Robinson (2020) *The Global Police State*. London: Pluto Press. 208 pp., £16.99.

William I. Robinson's new book *The Global Police State* is a crucial reflection on power, capitalism and war globally. At the same time, it provides readers with perspective on police power in the United States, particularly in the wake of last summer's protests and demonstrations for Black lives and against white supremacy and police violence in the US and beyond.

The uprising, which carried on for months in cities and towns across the US following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis was the largest popular movement in the country's history.

Released in August of last year, as demonstrations entered their third month, The Global Police State provides an accessible and compact overview of repression and corporate expansion into policing and surveillance.

Far from offering reformist solutions to what the author describes as a "crisis of humanity," the book is effectively a treatise against capitalism and centralized power.

The concept of the global police state, according to Robinson, takes into account three aspects. First are the "omnipresent systems of mass social control, repression, and warfare promoted by ruling groups to contain the real and the potential rebellion of the global working class and surplus humanity."

Second is what Robinson calls "militarized accumulation or accumulation by repression," by which he is referring to capitalist gain to be made through participation in a "veritable global war economy." One of the strengths of the book is the author's ability to zoom in and out of unrest, police repression and militarization in different parts of the world.

Finally, there's "the increasing move towards political systems that can be characterized as 21st century fascism, or even in a broader sense, as totalitarian." Of which, of course, Trump and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro are exemplary.

Robinson's writing is concise, his examples concrete and his theoretical advances build on years of his own research. Robinson, who was politicized alongside African freedom fighters in the period after independence struggles, is a veteran of critical globalization theory with a direct connection to social movements.

The author devoted much of the 1990s to advancing a structural critique of global capitalism, marking the differences in the shift from world capitalism,

which he argued went into decline in the 1970s. The rise of transnational corporations and global corporate conglomerates has defined this shift.

Robinson's own work in Latin America, particularly in Nicaragua, informs a powerful and sophisticated synthesis of the structural constraints facing leftist parties who have come to govern in the hemisphere.

While he writes that "these governments challenged and even reversed some of the most glaring components of the neo-liberal program… leftist rhetoric aside, the Pink Tide governments based their strategy on a vast expansion of raw material production in partnership with foreign and local contingents of the [Transnational Capitalist Class]."

These reflections are, in a sense, a clear call for nuanced understandings of left rule, in Latin America and beyond. "There emerged an evident disjuncture throughout Latin America — symptomatic of the worldwide phenomenon on the Left — between mass social movements that are at this time resurgent, and the institutional party Left that has lost the ability to mediate between the masses and the state with a viable project of its own," writes Robinson.

Overall, *The Global Police State* packs a truly dystopian punch. Robinson outlines his own theory of global capitalism and globalization and then delves into the key aspects of the current crisis of capital. This theoretical work is necessary, he argues, because the global police state has emerged largely in response to uprisings led by poor and working-class people around the world.

Robinson then develops on his notion of militarized accumulation, which "coercively open up opportunities for capital accumulation worldwide."

Finally, he outlines the ongoing "threat of twenty-first century fascism and the global reform project to save capitalism from itself." His refusal to participate in feel good liberalism is a refreshing departure from much US commentary on the Trump presidency.

Marxism plays a central role in his political analysis, and he explains the current relevance of Marx's theorization of capitalism in a manner that feels at once authoritative and accessible.

Throughout *The Global Police State*, Robinson leans on official reports and statistics, never removing his theoretical considerations from actually existing capitalism.

The section on digital surveillance and the tech industry's participation in "war on immigrants" is devastating. He describes how arms manufacturers, together with tech companies including Amazon, IBM and Zoom, collaborate with ICE and DHS, and have found ways to profit from state-sanctioned racism, violence, deportation and detentions of undocumented people.

As I read, I could not resist reaching out to Robinson to ask for an update, and about what he saw in the streets last summer. "I witnessed the brutal police violence and also palpably felt young people's yearning for radical change as

they risked life and limb in the streets," he wrote back. "The anti-racist insurrection in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd was the first full-scale uprising in the United States against the global police state."

In a recent interview on *Democracy Now!*, Ash-Lee Woodard Henderson, co-executive director of the Highlander Research and Education Center, told host Amy Goodman:

> "...We'll be fighting to make sure that when we talk about — when the Movement for Black Lives talks about defunding police, that we're talking about all police, including ICE and Customs and Border Patrol; when we talk about abolishing prisons, that we're talking about all of them, including detention centers; and when we're talking about Black Lives Matter, we're talking about all Black lives, including those of our people that are in this country without papers."

The connections and struggles Woodard Henderson names point to a future horizon in which broad and powerful movements again rise up, defunding the police, abolishing prisons and destroying white supremacy.

In this context, *The Global Police State* is a valuable resource for readers to become familiar with the theoretical architecture of repression and capitalism, and better navigate (and avoid) the murky waters of reformism and empty promises.

This review was previously published in ROAR Magazine.

About the review author:

Dawn Marie Paley is a journalist and author of *Drug War Capitalism* (AK Press 2014) and *Guerra Neoliberal: Desaparición y búsqueda en el norte de México* (Libertad Bajo Palabra 2020). She is book reviews editor for *Interface* Journal.