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Open issue

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Cover art

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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.

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Open issue

Heike Schaumberg, Levi Gahman

The historical moment in which we are publishing this open issue of *Interface* is one of a deepening comprehensive global crisis of the capitalist system. The pandemic only hastened the contradictions and inequalities of the current conjuncture. 'Communities' and social movements across the world find themselves at once trying to cope with yet struggling to rectify and repair the lasting legacies, power imbalances, and worldviews of colonialism and the Cold War. Unfettered corporate power and continued militarisation flirt with fascism and imperial nostalgia. Authoritarian efforts to undo the emancipatory gains made by anticolonial liberation and civil rights movements that were fighting for freedom and equality over a half a century ago masquerade as 'development,' 'growth,' and 'national security' agendas.

For decades, the 'trickle-down' peace and prosperity promised by neoliberalism's acolytes has resulted in nothing other than more power, profit, and privilege for the ruling classes. Conversely, more acute forms of austerity, risk, deprivation, and despair have defined the neoliberal experience of the masses. The current crisis is one that in some parts of the world feels like it has been dragging on as the result perhaps related to the Covid pandemic, or a crisis that originates in the 'financial crash' of 2007/8 or Brexit in countries such as the UK and other European countries, or elsewhere, such as parts of South America and the Far East, a crisis that originates in the puncture to the neoliberal bubbles of the 1990s. Irrespective of whether these perceptions are correct, the longevity of the crisis (or the crises) is today apparent to all, while the limits to its scope and depth is anyone's reckoning.

We suggest that the crisis is one, but the experiences of it and responses to it are simultaneously multiple, diverse and alike. They are at once informed by historical and geopolitical particularities, as well as the homogenising impacts of socially and culturally brutal neoliberal remedies. As a systemic crisis it is also a crisis of institutions, structures and ideologies. The macro crisis penetrates all spheres of social, economic, political and cultural life, and threatens our very existence with alarm bells of climate emergency ringing but being ignored or silenced by the powers that be, even from corners where one would have historically expected a different response. Keir Starmer, Britain's Labour Party leader and future Prime Minister in waiting, recently proclaimed his 'hate' for 'tree huggers', which followed his earlier purges of the Labour Left preparing to rule on behalf of British capitalist interests.[1] Simultaneously, across the Global South in particular, the accelerated exploitation and destruction of the planet by the world's most powerful multinationals is fuelling hunger and

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[1] Wheeler, Caroline 'I hate tree-huggers' — Keir Starmer explodes over green policy *The Sunday Times*, 8 July 2023, see: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/i-hate-tree-huggers-keir-starmer-explodes-over-green-policy-6hhnj9r9x

inequality due in part to the G7's corporate agenda for the food system. Globally, government commitments already watered down on saving the climate are repeatedly broken and ignored. Crisis then governs our personal and collective aspirations, hopes and desires, our visions and anxieties for the future.

As war continues to devastate towns and people in the Ukraine, the inherently violent inequalities of the global 'disorder' have, after a spate of unprecedented capitalist expansion and growth in Africa prior to the Covid pandemic, ignited civil wars in countries such as Sudan and Ethiopia. Such growth in Africa was always embedded in the continent´s subjugation to the colonial and imperialist hunger for its natural and social resources. We have yet to see, whether today´s young African working-class will be able to carve out an alternative path to the logic of competition of its local ruling classes over the crumbs left behind by its imperialist masters. Geopolitically, these war zones are today's front lines of capitalism's drive to demarcate new boundaries of global competition and to preserve the hierarchy of economic and geo-political power. Israel exploited the West's aptitude for war and launched its greatest military incursions to date of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank.[2] But if it was meant to dissuade Israeli anti-government protests, then that campaign has utterly failed, with the largest protests erupting yet in Israel against Netanyahu's efforts to politicize the justice system in the government's favour.[3]

Confronted with a ruling class incapable of seeing beyond its immediate profit margins, social movements come into being (including labour movements) that task themselves with saving the world from its demise, with the defence of working-class livelihoods, working conditions, and an array of human and social rights increasingly under threat in a marketised world where such rights are translated as unwanted costs. Social movements, frequently large-scale, have been pushing back against the capitalist offensives for the best part of two decades in various countries across Latin America (continuously so in some parts and sporadically in others), led by resurgent indigenous and women's movements (including abortion rights, against feminicide, and fierce teachers' struggles).

The US's and Europe's often racialised class conflicts and protest movements have been intermittent but also intensifying. Since the Black Lives Matter movement echoed anger across the world following the extra-judicial police killing of George Floyd in 2020 (see Special Issue of *Interface* 13.1) and generated a confrontation with the Global North´s institutional legacies of colonialism, (anti-)racism continues firmly on the agenda. The recent police

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[2] McKernan, Bethan and Peter Beaumont. Israel attacks Jenin in biggest West Bank incursion in 20 years. *The Guardian*. 3/07/2023. See:
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/03/palestinians-killed-israeli-strike-west-bank-jenin?fbclid=IwAR2qVgGsK63M-JkcSlrNq-9QcF_sYTyFyloFR5Kl7otbyTsqt9uZy4ETw_A

[3] Reuters. Israeli protests reignite as PM pushes on with justice system overhaul. *The Guardian*. 8/07/2023. See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/08/israeli-protests-reignite-as-pm-pushes-on-with-justice-system-overhaul

murder of 17-year old, Nahel Merzouk, a French citizen of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was the final straw that both ignited ongoing riots by the 'dispossessed' and disenchanted with Macron's neoliberalising efforts but it also mobilised France's eager right-wing strata, in a country where institutional racism is persistently denied and rarely challenged, but continues to be a prominent part of the fabric of social and spatial stratification of its cities. The movement of '*Les Gilets Jaunes*' ('Yellow-Vests) with its night-time popular assemblies is a recent memory, but it is not clear whether the riots will generate a social movement with a clearer political perspective. In bordering countries to the East, the West and South of France, industrial action especially in transport and airport related industries have forced large cancellations of flights and tourism across Europe. In the UK, university lecturers have become an active collective voice since its trade union, UCU, launched a fight-back against the attacks on pensions in 2018, and have continued to build on its success and expanded into more comprehensive efforts against casualisation and profoundly deteriorating working conditions. Nurses and doctors have taken to industrial action for the first time in a hundred years, confronted with decades of severe underfunding and purposeful dismantling of the entire public health system, the NHS, to benefit the private sector and fill the pockets of profiteers. These conflicts intensify the rank and file struggle for collective autonomy and democracy within the trade union movement. Squatter and anti-eviction struggles for dignified housing also continue amidst the UK's 'heat or eat' cost of living crisis.

Direct action on the climate emergency has captured the imagination in various ways as communities across the Global North and South, as well as constituencies both young and old, strive to confront the uneven impacts of climate change, structural racism, exploitation and extractivism. Challenges to the exploitative and extractive practices of corporate power with state authorities as its executioners are seeing grassroots movements bring together marginalised groups to advance both environmental justice and economic alternatives. On this front, Indigenous and rural communities continue to play a vital role in resisting environmental destruction by defending their territories, asserting their ecological knowledges, and demanding rights to land and self-determination. Climate education and awareness campaigns as well as social movement and working-class solidarity are also promoting critical consciousness about the disproportionate risks faced especially by small island states and socially disadvantaged communities, which has led to more strident calls for decarbonisation, degrowth, and climate reparations. Through a diverse array of repertoires of resistance and mobilisation, justice-driven collectives and communities are actively working to address climate breakdown, redress the enduring aftermaths of Empire, and promote more equitable and sustainable futures.

Some of these aspects are reflected in this issue. Relatedly, movements responding to migrant injustice, border violence, and entrenched patriarchy are employing strategies to address human rights abuses, structural oppression, and gender inequality. Feminist and anti-racist activists alike are raising

awareness about the gendered, racial, and classed dynamics of transnationalism and patriarchal norms while advocating for policy changes through public education and media outreach. More broadly vis-a-vis borders, migrant justice activists are taking to the frontlines to provide legal support, document abuse, challenge policy-sanctioned neglect, and confront the callous decisions of political officials who are letting migrants and asylum seekers suffer the elements and even perish at sea. In turn, movements dedicated to migrant rights are offering humanitarian aid and essential services to those impacted by racist border regimes and intensifying forms of border militarisation. These sobering dynamics raise pressing questions about whose lives are grievable versus whose lives are not.

These inspiring examples do not represent a comprehensive list of social movement events. In fact, they comprise a small fraction of the social movements and protests that have developed around the globe, and only give an inkling of the intensification of class, geo-political and social conflicts while we were preparing the publication of this issue. The amplitude and complexities of the crisis are reflected in contemporary social movement articulations and demands. They are not the single-issue movements we used to know from previous decades in the last century. Instead, they interconnect a broad range of agendas and of social movement organisations. The eleven contributions and three book reviews in this *Interface* issue reflect at least partially several of these themes. They range from the defence or amplification of democracy, social movement adaptation to new challenges, transnational movements, migration, solidarity in the face of social decline and homelessness, to a general state of bewilderment or perhaps a feeling of being overwhelmed by the tasks involved to right the many wrongs. The social movements today, as several contributions in this issue echo, are embattled with the past as they strive to learn lessons to carve out a better future. Importantly, they constitute a powerful counter-tendency to the muscle-flexing of the Far Right.

In this issue

In his article, 'Can we do more experimental research with/in social movements?,' Jacob Stringer proposes that more experimentation should be conducted within social movement research. In doing so, the piece outlines the necessary conditions for expanding experimental approaches, which depart from traditional research practices.

Next, in their paper, 'Rural social movements and sustainable agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa' Ellinor Isgren et al outline a collaborative research agenda focused on the role of farmer organisations in promoting sustainable and inclusive agricultural development. After having engaged in collaborative dialogue and conducted research with small-scale farmer-led organisations, local activist groups, transnational civil society networks, and varying academic institutions, their agenda aims to address the political barriers that hinder inclusive, sustainable development.

Fernando Velasquez-Villalba, 'When the anti-System is democratising: Fujimorismo, neoliberalism and rage in the Peruvian bicentennial generation,' critically explores political and historical contexts of the mobilisations against Fujimori in 2020 and its aftermath. The paper provides crucial insights and understandings of the implicit legacies of political and ideological interpretations of 'fujimorismo' that paved the way for the subsequent regime change and backlash. Nevertheless, the author argues that the 2020 mobilisations and its inherent struggles over memory had laid the ground work for furthering the movements for democracy.

Masoud Movahed and Elizabeth Hirsh's article, 'The regional determinants of collective action in the era of American Resistance,' examines the factors influencing collective action during the 'American Resistance' period after President Donald Trump's election. Utilizing data from Count Love, a machine learning tool that records protest details, including location, timing, and attendance, their research investigates how socio-economic factors, political partisanship, and demographic composition of states impact the frequency of protests and the number of participants.

In the article, 'Death of the arena in Occupy Los Angeles', Louis Esparza offers an ethnographic analysis of the rise and breakdown of Occupy Los Angeles. In the paper, Esparza examines the use of physical space as an arena where activists generate decisions, set rules, channel contention, and ultimately, how political differences took on spatial dimensions in Occupy LA.

In the article, 'The cruel urgencies of belonging: Neoliberal individualism in progressive community organising', Briana Bivens draws on conversations facilitated in 2020 with community organisers in the southeastern U.S. about tensions and stuck places in their organising to highlight how neoliberal, individualising logics can circulate in justice-oriented organising efforts, to the detriment of movement sustainability. The paper proposes that experimenting with capacity-building practices as an anti-oppressive strategy can disrupt neoliberal logics and support more sustainable and collectivist ways of relating in organising spaces.

Jeff Victor's piece, 'Organising the anti-war movement in rural America,' offers a personal account of organising against the Vietnam War in small town America. The reflection provides insights into the challenges and opportunities of such work in the current moment.

Benjamin Duke's piece, 'UK squatters' social movement's crystal ball,' critically analyses the UK's Brexit as a socio-economic political decision that will have a profound effect upon the UK squatters' social movements throughout the 2020s. In doing so, Duke's piece offers a dire glimpse of the draconian policing, societal polarisation, intensifying division, and suppression of civil protest that are on the horizon in the UK.

In the article, 'Hacking' climate education methods within narrow policy frames to ask systemic and emancipatory questions. Practice notes from Leith, Scotland,' Justus Wachs argues that many climate educators operate within

narrow policy frames that reproduce 'externalizing' views of climate change and aim to engender behavior change instead of inquiring into root causes and underlying assumptions. By reflecting upon a climate education programme Wachs facilitated over a span of two years, the piece illustrates how climate education methodologies can be 'hacked' to ask more systemic questions while achieving individual behavior change.

In the article, 'Incubating grounded transnational advocacy networks: The making of transnational movements for marriage migrants,' Shih Hsin shows why and how transnational movements for marriage migrants have been incubated from the grassroots level and developed into regional and international levels through continuously linking grassroots empowerment to transnational networking. In doing so, the paper argues that, in the case of transnational movements for marriage migrants, domestic transnationalism is the necessary condition for transnationalism beyond nation-state boundaries

In the article, 'The path is the goal: Utopia as process,' Matt York argues that if we are to move beyond our current states of bewilderment, disorientation, and denial, we will need to establish new grounded utopias that, rather than being not-now and nowhere, are co-imagined and lived right here and right now. In examining the anarchist concept of permanent revolution, York draws on classical and contemporary anarchist theory, as well as from a recent collective visioning project involving a global cross-section of anti-capitalist, ecological, feminist and anti-racist activists.

Finally, to round out this issue of *Interface*, we have three book reviews, including David Graeber and David Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021), which is reviewed by Daniel Fischer; Darren Byler's *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* (2022), which is reviewed by Isaac K. Oommen; and Diego Castro and Huáscar Salazar's *América Latina en Tiempos Revueltos: Claves y Luchas Renovadas Frente al Giro Conservador* (2021), which is reviewed by Armando Bravo and Ricardo Miranda.

Call for papers volume 15 issue 1
(May-June 2024)
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 2024 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 2023. 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, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Spanish.

Deadline and contact details

The deadline for initial submissions to this issue, to be published in May-June 2024, is 30 November 2023. 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…

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. If you think these are valuable goals, please join us.

Thanks!

Can we do more experimental research with/in social movements?

Jacob Stringer

Abstract

While positivism in social movement research is often shunned in theory but embraced in practice, the most productive tool of enlightenment science – experimentation – is often sidelined as relevant only to physical sciences. Here it is proposed that much more experimentation could be done within social movement research, with the militant goal of improving the success of social movements, and the academic goal of improving the applicability of published research. The pitfalls of experimental methods are addressed, and an argument made that within many social movements these pitfalls can be avoided, and significant researcher-led experimentation carried out within an ethical framework. As this is a significant departure from how most researchers think about research, some necessary conditions for such a move are outlined.

Keywords: social science, social movement research, experimentation, positivism, participatory research, failure, ethics, militant research

Introduction

In 1973 Santiago Genovés, researcher with the National Autonomous University of Mexico, invited 10 people aboard an unpowered raft with him and set off to drift across the Atlantic. His aim was to put a group of diverse people under stress in an intense environment, thus forcing them to seek resolutions to conflict that might give clues to how world peace could be brought about. There was no way of steering the raft, for Genovés deliberately wanted them to be at the mercy of the wind and waves with no way out. When sufficient conflict failed to develop, Genovés set about, much like Big Brother television producers, trying to incite it. He did this by breaking the promise of confidentiality to those who had told him their troubles in interviews, with the aim of stirring up ill-feeling. All did not go according to Genovés' plan and the subjects of the experiment largely refused to fight with each other, though he was sadly unable to learn the lessons this might have offered him. Thankfully everyone on the raft did survive, more through luck than because of any safeguards in place to ensure it. This story, recently retold in 2018 documentary *The Raft*, is a good example of why experimental social science fell into disrepute in the 1970s. Genovés broke so many ethical guidelines that it's hard to imagine an ethics committee of today even having a conversation with him. They would simply send the proposal back with a big red NO written on it.

And yet…. And yet it seems to me we have lost something if we do not see social sciences as at least partly experimental in nature. Positivist social science is still with us, not least in certain Anglo and European sections of social movement literature where researchers deem it possible and useful to generate an ever larger pool of objective knowledge about social movements – see Tilly (1999) aligning himself explicitly with a conventional enlightenment project of knowledge development – even as that knowledge is apparently of little use to social movements (Bevington and Dixon, 2005). What is also with us is an obsessive re-working of categories – most visible in urban social movement studies in which the most pressing question often seems to be what is or isn't 'urban' – but visible too in, say, the ongoing battle to determine exactly what falls within collective identity (Snow, 2001). This addiction to ontology seems to have a positivist impulse behind it, acting as though we could create the 'correct' categories by which to examine social movements. But for all this frantic work to model social movements, most of this sort of social movement theory in fact ends up being merely descriptive. Even if we accept the models offered, including the more complex syntheses of models (see Opp, (2009), for example), it's difficult to know what anyone can do with the knowledge. Despite this, many scholars seem to buy into a project of adding to or tweaking this knowledge base. Many of them might reject the label of 'positivist', and yet isn't it likely that a covert belief in the building up of 'objective' knowledge is what lies behind a constant shovelling of knowledge from social movements into academia? Perhaps there are career drivers behind that urge too, but people do have a tendency to really believe the ideas that advance their material interests.

Meanwhile social science as a wider set of disciplines has not retained one of the most interesting aspects of the positivist physical sciences: experimentation in the real world. The only experimental social science one is generally likely to see (e.g the Centre for Experimental Social Science at Nuffield, Oxford) involves inviting people into a controlled lab setting to ask them to react to situations or make decisions set up by the experimenter. But often physical sciences follow up experiments in the lab with experiments in the real world – though not always, and alongside thought experiments and other methods. While I don't want to return to a positivistic point of view (or accept what never went away), the experiment – a probing of a hypothesis by setting up success and failure criteria in an intervention while *maintaining uncertainty about the outcome* – is one of the most powerful tools that physical sciences offered the world. It seems to me that experimentation is not the part of science we should be discarding when examining social problems.

Yet within my Anglo social movement corner of academic social science I feel that experimentation is viewed with high suspicion. Comparison as a form of 'natural experimentation' (Tilly, 1984) is acceptable because it does not involve intervention. But from where I view it in the Anglo-sphere the standard mode of research in social movement research is still to *observe*. This is reflected in the Anglo social movement literature, which is still dominated by *descriptions* of social movements, often with some 'explanation' offered through comparison to an ideal model, and perhaps a tweak to the model. Meanwhile interventions by

the researcher in real world social situations are considered risky – who knows what might happen once people who aren't researchers are involved in your research? Or who knows what abuse of power the academic might perpetrate by initiating social processes that didn't exist before? But with a fixation on *observation*, and a belief that this is sufficient to do analysis, significant sections of academia, including within the Anglo social movement literature, continue to construct positivist knowledge. They assume the superior knowledge of the academic research community and the ability to pile up knowledge as a way of solving the supposed problems of the field.

Now there is within these worries about intervention a worthwhile question about researchers making claims to truth. Touraine (1981), who proposed Sociological Intervention as a method, was not worried about making claims to truth, and did indeed propose that researchers could tell ordinary people the facts, but his later followers saw that an intervention needn't mean making such a claim (North, 1998). Interestingly, people worry a lot less about truth claims implicit in public policy proposals from researchers to 'democratic' governments, perhaps because of an excess of faith in the level of democracy those governing institutions have attained. The implicit belief is that the responsibility for judging both truth and consequences of the policy lies with elected leaders. Sometimes academic assessments of policies are made after the fact, and this is as close as social science comes to real world experimenting, but usually without setting up an experimental framework beforehand. There is, I suspect, a deliberate obfuscation at work here as to whether the researcher or the elected politician is running the 'experiment', probably in order to relieve the researcher of what must seem like too much responsibility.

Academics also seem worried (perhaps for funding reasons) by the fact that an experiment may not work – as though a null result isn't the most common result of experimentation in physical sciences, and as though we can't learn from failure too. Not that this reporting always happens as planned in sciences: medicine in particular has got itself in trouble over the years through its weakness at reporting failures, usually for financial motives. But where scientists fail to report failures, much energy and research time is wasted, and academics and social movements can also learn that lesson.

The power of experimentation comes not just from the testing process or intervention, it also comes from the researcher bracketing any certainty about success and being prepared for any result (Kampourakis and McCain, 2019). Again even physical scientists do not always attain this ideal of dwelling in uncertainty (Barnes and Bloor, 1982), yet the ideal has been a powerful driver within the physical sciences nonetheless. There is clearly a delicate balance to strike here: the researcher must feel the idea is genuinely good enough to be worth people's time, but without feeling so certain of it that later reassessment in the light of evidence isn't possible. Having adopted this bracketing of certainty as part of the powerful tool of moving constantly between theory and experimentation, we can then drop the post-experiment truth claims and

objectivity assumptions dominant in older physical sciences models, if challenged even there.

The best of Marxist thinking does try to perform this movement between theory and practice in the form of 'praxis', but this tends to proceed with much certainty from those making claims, with their new ideas slotted into an ideology (in the Gramscian sense) that looks very like a claim to truth. Thus the praxis mostly functions only across generations of theorists, by which it falls to a later generation to rebut (ideally with the backing of experience in social movements) the ideas of a previous generation that claimed to have cracked the problem of radical social change. What is valuable about the best experimentation is that the experimenter doesn't claim to be sure, and they themselves hold open the possibility of being wrong if their tests don't go as planned – one is testing a hypothesis rather than a claim. As we've said, real world physical science is often messier than this and individual scientists do cling to outdated models for all sorts of reasons, but I believe it is a useful ideal to carry out tests while adhering to a bracketing of certainty (or we could refer to a historically radical *uncertainty* that is held*)* about one's own ideas.

A social movement, meanwhile, is often a site of experimentation already, with experiments ranging from new tactics to organisational innovations. At the founding of London Renters Union I and several others suggested that in order to prevent an entrenched leadership group in the union we would hold elections to the Coordinating Group, the most powerful elected body of the union, every six months. Retrospectively we can conceptualise this election frequency as an experiment, since it was different even to most democratic organisations. We thought we'd hit on a way of levelling power in the union and were quite pleased with ourselves. Everyone could get a chance at leadership, no-one could stay entrenched in their position. But it turned out not to work: it took new members of the Coordinating Group several months to merely learn the role. They were barely comfortable in the role by six months. It inhibited decision-making because the elected members often didn't feel confident in their positions. The experiment failed and we switched to annual elections, allowing pragmatism to overrule our ideological wish to perturb any fixed leadership. So we can see that social movements experiment all the time, with or without academic intervention. Until now no-one ever wrote up the result of that little experiment, which means another organisation could waste some considerable effort by trying the same thing.

Existing methods

The refusal of experimentation in social science is not quite total. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the most clearly experimental method in the social sciences, but it is often accepted on the grounds of the effacement of the input of the researcher. In theory everything must be led by the co-researchers, not the initiating researchers. This may be a dishonest account of what really happens in many PAR projects, and some practitioners are more open about PAR as

conscientisation (Banks, Herrington and Carter, 2017), but much PAR literature continues to view the researcher as a blank slate. Action Research with a little less participation and a little more intervention from the researcher is in theory a permitted method. But it is notable that this is most actively practised in health and social policy settings, in which 'intervention' is already a necessity (since a professional is intervening in the life of a patient or client), and sanctioned by state institutions. It is relatively rare in the political field, with the most notable practitioners in the UK perhaps being the Autonomous Geographies Collective (2010). Even much of the research in the Anglo-sphere that is bold enough to use the title of 'militant research' seems reluctant to intervene: rather the militancy is about alignment with the subject of research rather than testing new methods of struggle.

What is the fear here? A loss of objectivity? Surely the widespread use of feminist research methods mean that even Anglo-sphere academia should have moved a little beyond that. There is a perhaps reasonable fear that an unethical researcher might be trying to establish their own 'truth' within a group, that they may in fact be *propagandising*. But this can be addressed with good epistemology and method. It would be a worthwhile project to outline which epistemologies work well with experimental social science in 'real world' situations. We might, for example, find useful the epistemological approach in Kleining's idea of a 'qualitative experiment' (Kleining and Witt, 2001, Cox, 1994). His experimentation is directed not so much at intervention as at discovering the shape of social objects or structures, but we see in his work that as soon as the researcher draws close to the subject of their research a relational approach to knowledge-building necessarily emerges. Whatever our specific epistemology, we can perhaps assert a general principle that claims to truth either before or after the experiment should be cautious and contingent (Fraser, 1989). The researcher will be simply testing whether what they offer works *for now*, and *in the circumstances* and making only cautious statements about the conditions of validity of what is learned. Furthermore, in line with the idea of bracketing certainty about one's own ideas, the researcher should not have unreasonable confidence of success prior to the experiment.

When experimenting in real-world political situations we cannot conceive of experiments being controlled or double-blinded. What we can usefully do is borrow another method from the physical sciences by picking the criteria for success beforehand and sticking to them. PAR and Action Research have a tendency to view the process itself as valuable. So whatever the outcome turns out to be, academia can claim a success because something was learned in the process, and the social movement can claim a success because some knowledge or relationships were constructed along the way. There is value to that approach sometimes, or even in dwelling between success and failure to see what emerges (Khasnabish and Haiven, 2014), but what about the value of being rigorous with ourselves? Did you, or did you not, achieve what you set out to do? The Autonomous Geographies Collective (2010) is also unusual in having admitted to more failures than successes, but that is very rare in published scholarship. In order to see our scholarship as part of a cycle of experiment and learning,

wouldn't we need a thousand, ten thousand published papers about failures? In the name of social movement success couldn't we be braver even than the physical sciences in admitting our failures? And couldn't we be more reflective than the Marxist tradition, which constantly analyses the failures of others' ideas but rarely admits that one's own claims were duff ones? From such scholarship a few beautiful successes might emerge, built upon multiple cycles of previous failures, able to move forward more quickly by dint of the uncertainty the researcher always admitted, pushing them forward rapidly to new ideas?

Social movements as sites of experimentation

Now I will argue that social movements are the perfect place to conduct real-world social science experiments. One reason for that, already mentioned above, is that it is in the nature of most social movements to be experimental anyway. This is particularly true of movements trying to create systemic change, such as ending capitalism or ending fossil fuel use. In the context of 'developed' capitalist states movements have to be experimental, for no-one has previously created the type of systemic change they see as necessary. If they were not experimental they would have to rely on sheer luck in the change of conditions making their movement more effective. Most movements become aware after a couple of failures that they do not know a magic formula for social change, and so must experiment with different methods, or produce little but dispirited and disheartened activists.

Another reason social movements can be suitable arenas for experimentation is that many of them offer a relatively democratic group environment in which transparency and group decision-making can ensure that participants are willing participants in the experiments – much more so than citizens under 'democratic' leaders. Democratically deciding which experiments to try is what many social movements and social movement organisations do, or at least try to do (Polletta, 2002). Another experiment my own organisation, London Renters Union (LRU), made recently was to try to build a mass campaign around non-payment of rent during the COVID-19 pandemic. It didn't work, for a variety of interesting reasons – including that rent debt in the UK can usually be evaded by moving house, thus removing the conflict necessary to build a campaign – but that's okay. It was a democratic decision to try, and the failure belonged to us all. It was also one of many failures we expect to rack up over the years. Social movement experiments only need to succeed occasionally for the movement itself to be successful, the frequent collective failures are simply part of the work of being in a movement. It is however worth noting that surviving this failure did require that LRU be an organisation with broader goals and strategies, not built entirely around that one campaign. The cost of failure to a single-issue, single-tactic campaign could be higher, but such campaigns are likely to be shorter-lived anyway.

So we are not so much discussing an individual experimenter here as a collective experimenter, with the individual having research funding to monitor the experiment, and with enough insider knowledge to propose it where necessary. Let's think through what we as researchers could do alongside and within social movements. Here are a few different types of experimentation a researcher could propose to a movement or organisation:

Testing concepts or new language in real political situations

The climate change movement has experimented with the term 'climate chaos' rather than 'climate change'. As far as I know this was an attempted language change that happened without academic input, but there is no reason an academic researcher couldn't propose such a change, then attempt to measure the impact. We might guess that 'climate chaos' has not become as mainstream as its users wanted, but a live research project on its propagation might have left us with not just a failure but a failure from which we could learn. Movements can (and do) learn without the help of academics of course, but often they are time-constrained or over-focused on one particular tactic. Sometimes the time and energy provided by academic institutions could help clear blockages to learning by providing a more structured learning framework for examining degrees of success or failure.

Testing ways of organising together

A researcher might propose, for example, that an annual conference of particular organisations might catalyse inventiveness or unity in a movement. While no control group can be maintained in most cases, ethnographic research or even simple interviewing could draw a picture of the experience of the experiment from the point of view of participants, and so test whether they regarded it as a success, or even probe for a possible next iteration of the experiment. Again this already happens without academics, but often unrecorded, or worse, where the failure is recorded in nothing but blame games rather than genuine reassessment of the original idea.

Testing strategies or tactics

A researcher might propose that door-knocking, for instance, would be a better way to recruit new members to a movement than relying on social media bubbles. This is, admittedly, a fairly small-scale suggestion. Many strategic decisions – which power-holders to target for instance – are more difficult for a researcher to propose, since strong opposing opinions may be held within an organisation. But political shifts have to come from somewhere. Why not include academic researchers as initiators of strategies?

Note then that the idea to be tested could come directly from the researcher, it could come from theory, it could come from other members of a social

movement. Wherever the idea originates, the experimental researcher can take it upon themselves to propose within the democratic spaces of the movement that the idea be the subject of an experiment, and volunteer to monitor the results, maintaining enough uncertainty themselves that they be prepared to admit that ideas didn't work.

Let's elaborate with strategy testing: we could say that one way to address Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is not to get into arcane arguments about whether their interpretation of Marxist theory is right, or to endlessly define and re-define the concept of left populism for years, but for researchers to either find a situation where it is being used, or to propose the idea to a movement. The critique then comes from whether or not the ideas work in practice, and the ideas can be re-worked on that basis. If a researcher can find a situation where Laclau and Mouffe are explicitly being used (by Podemos in Spain for example) then there may be no need for them to play the role of experimenter, they can simply observe it in operation in a more traditional fashion – though carefully bracketing certainty about the outcome and with a keen experimenter's eye towards whether or not it achieves what it sets out to achieve. But if they can't find that situation, or want to test it in a different situation, why not propose the strategy of left populism to a social movement and, if they agree, do a study on the results? It would admittedly be difficult for many researchers to find just the right situation for such grand interventions, or to be able to get collective agreement on it, but there are many smaller ones that could be tried. A researcher might know of a particular type of direct action or slogan used in a social movement elsewhere in the world, for example, and propose importing it within their movement as an experiment.

Thus we as researchers can, within democratic collectives, create something like Gibson-Graham's interventions ("We like to think of taking back control of the economy as one big uncontrolled and multipronged experiment" (Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy, 2013, p. 22), though notably their most experimental suggestions are directed at activists rather than researchers, and even they seem reluctant to consistently blend these roles. This proposal is for a type of participatory experimentation recognising a leadership role for the academic, but without claiming they have privileged access to truth. We might think of it as an experimental sub-type of militant research, in which the experiment is decided upon collectively. This can also fit well into a wider idea of more democratic distribution and production of knowledge within and by social movements (Wainwright, 1994).

This approach could potentially serve not only academia but also social movements. It can help address some of the problems of social movement studies: that it is not of interest to social movements, that it is merely descriptive and has no predictive power (Bevington and Dixon, 2005), and that it has little creative thinking behind it that might provide ideas to social movements (Peters, 2005). And more immediately within social movements it can help do useful work with other participants, who often get caught up in the everyday work of sustaining the movement, or in repeating the same tactics over

and over again with no sign of success. An experimental researcher working in an experimental social movement can help ensure that a movement does not ossify.

Conditions and precautions

Being an insider in a social movement is an important part of the proposal here. The internal power landscapes and histories of movements are complex. Furthermore it will take a high degree of trust for people to accept proposals for experiments. The position of insider also renders some objections to 'intervention' somewhat academic. Within London Renters Union the reality is that as an insider, I might make suggestions for what the organisation should do in any given meeting. I already 'intervene' in the organisation every week. There is still an ethical problem to be concerned about: not the loss of objectivity but the power relationship of it, and whether the academic insider researcher might push ideas that are better for their research than for the organisation. But anyone who isn't conscious enough to guard against this could also end up making egotistically driven proposals outside of a research situation. What academia can offer here, at its best, is rigorous thought and analysis about the reasons for bringing forward a particular proposal, and some analysis tools for the outcome.

Rather than merely saying insiders are *best placed* to do experimental research in social movements, I want to go further and strongly advise against outsiders doing this type of research, in part as a safeguard against a return to the bad old days of *The Raft*. As Cox (2015) explains, participants in social movements receive a training that gives them a broad array of knowledge not available to purely academic researchers. I do not believe outsiders to a social movement can truly understand the likely risks of their interventions to the participants. To be clear then, at no point am I suggesting experimenting *on* people in real world situations. The proposal is to experiment *with* and *alongside* people in real social movement situations.

An important factor to consider in planning experiments is that in each experiment we try, the failure of the experiment is more likely than success. If this sounds scary, remember it is true in both physical sciences and social movements already. We must be sure, then, to count the possible cost of failure beforehand. If the cost is merely a moment of discouragement as a campaign falls flat, well movements must face that all the time. If the cost of failure is a hundred people arrested and subjected to the trauma of policing and the court system, that is probably not a risk any researcher should be allowed to take on themselves, even if they do manage to secure consent from participants.

This would all sit within a framework of thinking in terms of cycles of experiment, concepts moving backwards and forwards between academia and real world, between theory and experiment. Subjecting ideas to testing was never the problem with positivist sciences. We see the problems of an enlightenment 'scientific' approach within social movements more in such

reductionist thought as the founder of Extinction Rebellion claiming to have worked out a formula for social change, or organisers teaching standardised trainings claimed to work in all situations. Such claims can and should be subject to theoretical, historical and if necessary experimental scrutiny. Again, claims to universal truths are not what should be kept of the 'hard' sciences in the social world, but a radically self-questioning experimentalism need not be thrown out with the truth claims.

Leaving behind strong truth claims does not preclude the researcher developing their own critical perspective (Routledge, 2017), but creates more space for a conversation between movements and academia that might produce new ideas. What is also important to recognise is that, rather than an experiment always being able to claim immediate 'success' or 'failure', the effects of a particular experiment may take decades to be fully known. This is worth noting as a potential problem for academic research timetables, but when necessary we can always report experimental processes as well as final results, even accepting that process reports may have less power. We must also consider carefully the conditions under which something worked and be wary of generalising too far. It's okay if the knowledge development feels situated (Haraway, 1988) when we know that all the knowledge underlying that development is situated. While borrowing tools from the Enlightenment we are joining many others in making an epistemological break from it.

For all this to happen we are also likely to require some pre-conditions, and it may be that we need to try to meet these conditions locally, in one university and ethics committee at a time, before trying to push further. At a minimum we will need to join those resisting the secret or not-so-secret positivism in much social movement research that sees its role as building up knowledge within university walls, and as part of doing so develop broader ideas of participatory research that needn't follow the recognised formulas and that are more open to uncertainty and failure. We will also need to persuade many ethics committees to move away from positivist assumptions and be concerned genuinely with possible harms rather than eliminating risks to the reputation of the university (Carey, 2019).

Conclusion

Much could be learned about social movement activity, and the conditions for success and failure of such, through experimental rather than merely observational research, where experimentation is characterised by intervention, bracketing certainty about the outcome, and cycles of learning through reflection on success and failure. I conclude with a summary of the conditions under which experimental social movement research could be both useful and ethically possible:

- It takes place within a group or community that already wishes to be experimental, and in most cases will already have tried experiments

- The experiment has not been conducted elsewhere or in similar conditions, and the group has attempted to find out the results of similar experiments

- It is conducted by a researcher who is enough of an insider that they are not making naive, unrealistic, dangerous or redundant proposals

- It is conducted by a researcher who is not interested in establishing universal truths but in a more pragmatic knowledge production

- It is conducted in a participatory and democratic way with full transparency among consenting adults, with good levels of trust between the organisation and the researcher

- The researcher is sufficiently self-aware about their position in the power landscape of the group that they are constantly on the look-out for any propensity in themselves to abuse their position

- The risks and potential costs of the experiment to both individuals and organisation have been carefully considered

The logic outlined for a more experimental social science may well be applicable more broadly than I have discussed here. However, reforming the length and breadth of social science is a more ambitious task than I have set myself. Rather I have sought to argue that many social movements, with their collective decision-making spaces, are suitable places to practice experimental social science in an ethical manner. There may or may not be other situations where it is also ethically possible and desirable. But in democratically organised social movements at least I have argued that if we can both strengthen pragmatic, situated and participatory ideas of knowledge production, and develop confident but self-questioning insider researchers, experimental social science could take leaps and bounds forward in not merely understanding social movements, but in shaping them. This is not the only way to create movement-relevant research, but it is one way, and a possible route out of the deadly descriptiveness of much social movement research.

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Rural social movements and sustainable agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa: towards a collaborative research agenda

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Abstract

Agriculture is key to sustainable development globally – particularly in countries where agriculture both accounts for most of the land use and provides a livelihood for most of the population. We map out a collaborative research agenda aimed at tackling the urgent but poorly understood issue of the role of farmer organisations in overcoming political barriers to sustainable and inclusive agricultural development, with particular attention to sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Building on a critical and collaborative dialogue between a diversity of small-scale farmer-led organisations, local activist groups, transnational civil society networks, and heterogeneous academic institutions, our agenda is organized around two key objectives: 1) understanding the conditions for, development of and outcomes from farmer-based political mobilisation in rural areas; and 2) strengthening participatory, action-oriented research capacity for critically engaged research on agrarian questions in SSA. The approach we advocate emphasises the scientific and societal benefits of combining theoretically informed cross-country comparison of farmer-based rural social movements, with deepening of academic-civil society collaboration.

Keywords: farmer-based organisations, peasant movements, agrarian reform, rural development, land struggles, agroecology, food sovereignty, sustainability, science-movement interface, sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

The persistence of deep social inequalities and a worsening global environmental crisis make the concept of sustainable development, long theorised in academia, more relevant to society than ever before. At the same time, many researchers and promoters of sustainability are only recently recognising social movements as a collective force for change capable of pursuing sustainable development (e.g. Bluwstein et al. 2021; Smith et al. 2020). In this article we outline a mode of collaborative interaction and a set of probing questions that can provide a foundation for further bridging the gap between sustainability, agrarian change and social movement research and practice, with a primary focus on the relatively understudied region of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The action-oriented research agenda we present is informed by an interactive, bottom-up and needs-based planning process involving partners from Ghana, Kenya, Sweden, Uganda and Zimbabwe which represent a diversity of small-scale farmer-led organisations, local activist groups, transnational civil society networks, and heterogeneous academic institutions.[1] We here present and reflect on our joint process, in hopes that others will be inspired to contribute to our dual research agenda: to advance our understanding of when, why, and how rural social movements facilitate changes conducive to sustainable development, and to support the application of these insights in the ongoing strategizing of active farmer-based movements in SSA and beyond.

Our rationale and starting point: The centrality of agriculture in sustainable development

There has long been overwhelming evidence that policies which prioritise the needs and interests of small-scale farmers[2] are crucial for broad-based poverty reduction and economic development in predominantly agriculture-based economies. As noted by Birner and Resnick (2010) over a decade ago, "there is virtually no example of mass poverty reduction in modern history that did not start with sharp increases in… productivity among small family farms". Yet, major challenges remain for implementing such policies. According to the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), fluctuating food prices and unequal trade relations 'handicap' millions of small-scale farmers, and 'business as usual' will leave an estimated 637 million people undernourished in 2050

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[1] This article is the outcome of a year-long scoping study, aimed at developing a collaborative research platform and research project, which culminated in a multi-day workshop in Nairobi, October 2019. The author team consist of workshop participants and contributors to the subsequent project proposal.

[2] "Small-scale" farmer is a generic concept which overlaps with other terms such as "smallholder", "peasant" and "family" farmer, and definitions variously focus on inter alia farm size or relative contribution to social food production. We conceptualize "small-scale" farms, following Moyo (2016, p. 2), as "small-scale family farms that mainly depend on family labour and produce a significant share of their own food. Some of the family farm labour also applies to non-farm activities and wage labour". This accurately characterizes the member base of many farmer organisations, and the majority of farmers in Africa more generally.

(Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General 2019). Women small-scale farmers face particularly strong marginalisation both materially and politically (Mukasa and Salami 2016; World Bank 2009). In addition to these socio-economic challenges, scaling up currently dominant agricultural production practices would, in the words of the GSDR, "eliminate any chance" of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals due to various environmental impacts including inefficient use of natural resources, contributions to climate change, and continued degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. There are also growing concerns about human health impacts of increasing agrochemical use, including in Africa (Isgren and Andersson 2020; Sheahan, Barrett, and Goldvale 2017).

While research-based policy recommendations have long emphasised the need to foster small-scale farmer-centred development and sustainable trajectories of agricultural change, existing policies often fall short of doing so (Moyo 2016; Yengoh, Armah, and Svensson 2010; Ellis 2006). This is particularly apparent in SSA, where abject poverty was worsening already before the COVID-19 pandemic hit (World Bank 2018). One concrete example, amongst many, is that governments have promoted types of large-scale land acquisitions that clearly marginalise local land users, create few employment opportunities, and drive environmental degradation (Davis, D'Odorico, and Rulli 2014; Borras Jr and Franco 2012). These policies directly contradict global initiatives like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018. Proponents of large-scale agricultural projects typically pose them as necessary to promote agriculture-led growth, but there are strong reasons to believe this goal is more effectively and sustainably achieved through a small-scale farmer focus (Hazell et al. 2010). Such development can be facilitated with support from the state; however, in the present era many African governments effectively cede policy decisions to the neoliberal policy prescriptions emanating from Bretton Woods institutions, which have often eroded the basic social rights of African citizens (Moyo 2005).

In the face of this, as Sam Moyo in Romdhane and Moyo (2002) has argued, "Peasant organisations are re-emerging on the continent as one of the rural responses to protect people from economic and political crises, and as a potential force in a possible endogenous movement for alternative forms of development". The major barrier presented by limited political and institutional support (both in terms of political will and shrinking civic space) indeed renders the capacity of farmers, farmer-led organisations, and various interest coalitions to affect political processes a key research area for advancing sustainable development (Bizikova et al. 2020; Birner and Resnick 2010).

Rural social movements for inclusive and sustainable agricultural development: present knowledge gaps

In many parts of the world, recent decades have seen the emergence of vibrant rural social movements challenging policies and trade regimes that propel unjust and unsustainable agricultural change (Borras Jr, Edelman, and Kay 2008; Woods 2008). These often involve novel alliances between various groups calling for protection of small-scale farmers' rights, promotion of agroecology, and safeguarding of global commons (Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the UN Secretary-General 2019; Martinez-Torres and Rosset 2010). The most prominent example is the transnational network La Vía Campesina, which today has members in several African countries.

Social movements can be powerful agents of social change by allowing "people who lack regular access to representative institutions" to collectively confront power-holders (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). They can place issues on the political agenda that currently are neglected – such as sustainable, small-scale farmer-inclusive agricultural development. The ability of citizens to do so, however, is shaped by a multitude of factors (Meyer and Minkoff 2004). In SSA, linkages are growing stronger between civil society organisations and movements like LVC, and there have been several notable campaigns for example around GMOs (Rock 2019) and instances of localised mobilisation against land acquisitions (Ossome 2021; Martiniello 2013). However, are we seeing a growth of rural social movements, understood as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations" (Diani 1992) that engage in *sustained* interaction with elites (Tarrow 2011)?

Using the Web of Science (WoS) database, representing predominantly 'mainstream' scholarship, we reviewed academic literature on the political role of farmer organisations/associations, and in the process noted that research on contemporary rural social movements and farmers' political mobilisation in Africa is scant compared to literature on the same subjects in Latin America (see Table 1; note that other regions such as Asia reflect similar tendency).[3] Beyond the slanted coverage, within the politically focused literature captured by the WoS there is an almost complete absence of social movement theory application on questions of agricultural change and the achievement of sustainable rural development in SSA. Indeed, while farmer organisations of various kinds are widely acknowledged to play numerous important roles in development

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[3] The literature review was conducted in 2019 using the search string: "farmer organi*" OR "peasant organi* OR "rural social movement*" OR "rural organi* OR "agricultural organi* OR "farmer association*" OR "farmer cooperat*" OR "farmer co-operat*", refined the results by "poli*" or "mobili*". Noting the geographical disparities, we categorised the 240 articles remaining after initial screening with attention to how the role of farmer organisations in development was conceptualised; as political (e.g. advocacy, political participation, social movement mobilization), economic (e.g. collective bargaining, market information) or technical (e.g. training, knowledge sharing, access to extension). These are of course not mutually exclusive, but table 1 designates all articles that included a political conceptualization of farmer organisations as 'political'.

(Bizikova et al. 2020), in the African context, they seem to rarely be studied through a political lens. Rather, they are more often considered for their role in knowledge dissemination and technology uptake; and/or in facilitating small-scale farmers' value chain access and economic empowerment (similar trends were observed regarding Asia, which deserves ample attention as well). Thus, contemporary African small-scale farmers' efforts to mobilise for the sake of political advocacy, voice, and influence remain relatively poorly conceptualized and understood within mainstream agrarian research.

Of course there are notable exceptions to these trends within the WoS, for example Martiniello (2017) and McKeon (2013), and more so if we expand our horizon beyond WoS, e.g. Romdhane and Moyo (2002); Moyo and Yeros (2005); Ossome (2021); Chambati and Mazwi (2022). Given the limitations of the WoS database, we followed up with an exploratory search in the two largest social movement studies journals (*Social Movement Studies* and *Mobilization*). Still, even here we identified very few studies of agrarian social movements set in SSA, and none specifically on mobilisation around inclusion and sustainability in agricultural development. Pilati (2011) noted over a decade ago that Africa is "by far the region least studied by researchers of protest dynamics" (Pilati 2011, 351), and this seems to remain the case. The most fruitful source of academic insight on this subject appears to be networks and journals based in and specialised on the region, such as *Review of African Political Economy*, *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, or the *Journal of Contemporary African Studies.* The conclusion we draw from our exploration of the literature is thus that, while certainly not wholly neglected by academics and important work is being done, the (potential) political role and nature of farmers' collective action in SSA is relatively marginal both in academic work on rural development, and in social movement studies.

Table 1 *Comparison of foci of peer-reviewed research on farmer organisations' role in development, in different regions (geographically unspecific oriented articles excluded). We noted a large contrast between the literature from Latin America, where there is a strong tradition of analysing farmer organisations' role in policy and politics, with that of Africa (and similarly Asia) where, despite our search orientation, we found a tendency to primarily study farmer organisations as market actors or as vehicles for knowledge and technology transfer. Note the methodological limitations discussed above; the main point is to demonstrate the differences between the geographic regions.*

Focal region	N	Political dimension included	Economic and/ or technical only
Africa	58	22%	78%
Asia	46	24%	76%
Europe	24	58%	43%
Latin America	79	86%	14%
Middle East	3	0%	100%
North America	6	20%	80%
Oceania	2	50%	50%
Total	218	50%	50%

We ask, is this geographic divergence due to farmer organisations in SSA being comparatively 'apolitical', or only due to differences in academic traditions? The answer likely lies somewhere in between. Undoubtedly, the rich and more visible literature on farmers' political mobilisation in Latin America in great part results from the de facto notable presence and influence of rural social movements in this region, historically and presently (Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017; Welch and Mançano Fernandes 2009). However, on the reverse, limited documentation and analysis of cases from the SSA context does not necessarily accurately reflect reality. Nor does it say much about ongoing (or even less about future) developments. We do know there are numerous complex and historically contingent barriers to farmer collective mobilisation in SSA. These are by no means homogenous across the region, but include fragmentation of peasant organisations (Martiniello 2013), lack of fora for critical engagement (Wilson and Holt-Giménez 2010), and 'NGO-isation' of civil society development (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015). There may be government silencing and/or co-optation of critical voices, and division along class, gender, ethnic and commodity lines which complicate the development of shared goals and identities (Isgren 2018). However, that these barriers should not discourage efforts to understand instances of and conditions for rural mobilisation in SSA; on the contrary, we suggest such efforts ought to be intensified through interdisciplinary, collaborative and participatory efforts.

The emergence, development and outcomes of rural social movements in SSA: collaborative constellations and key questions for comparative analysis

As noted above, the research agenda we propose here is informed by an interactive and needs-based planning process for collaborative research involving partners from Sweden, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ghana, representing a diversity of small-scale farmer-led organisations, transnational civil society networks, and diverse academic institutions. The collaboration was made possible by funding from a Swedish research council (Formas), which meant initial steps for building the constellation of partners were necessarily decided by Global North researchers, a fact reflecting the highly uneven distribution of research funding globally (Skupien and Rüffin 2020). For academics based in the Global North, identifying relevant collaborators for this type of work can be daunting. We – speaking now from the perspective of these academics – approached this issue in two main ways. First, our search for collaborators was driven by their relevance to understanding a set of fundamental questions derived from our preliminary evaluation of the state of knowledge on farmer-led rural social movements:

- Who can contribute contextual, theoretical and practical knowledge and information towards this research?

- Who stand to be affected by, and benefit from, research on rural social movements?

- What will the potential impacts of the research be, at different levels – local, national or international?

- Who have capacity to spread and implement the outcome of our research, beyond those actors who are directly involved?

- Whose voices/interests are currently not heard/adequately considered, and what organisations represent these groups?

- What coalitions might build around the research issues/questions of interest?

- Who are potential allies or opponents, and who can facilitate or impede the research outcome through their participation, non-participation or opposition?

Second, with the above in mind, we identified collaborators based on predefined categories, namely representative farmer-based organisations and NGOs, and research organisations/academic institutions in partner countries. Regarding the former, there was need for substantial contextual analysis and dialogue in order to identify the most appropriate collaborators, as any given country is likely to host a number of different farmer organisations/associations with different characteristics and agendas (as can be said for NGOs). An important criterion here was that partner farmer organisations should be explicitly engaged in agricultural policy advocacy. Further, we had to be cognizant of the phenomenon of 'NGO-isation' – that civil society organisations may have weak grassroots links and in practice speak and act more on behalf of donors (Wilson and Holt-Giménez 2010; Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015; Isgren 2018). Indeed, this was a key reason why the farmer organisations represented in our team were formed in the first place. Regarding the latter, we built on existing professional relationships and reached out to research institutions that were actively involved in studying these issues, with the intention to combine well-established, new-comer and independent research institutions with diverse, complementary knowledge competencies.

Given the specific nature of the available funding in our case, we were limited in the number of countries we could cover and the number of academic and farmer organisation partners that could participate. After organising a planning workshop in Nairobi in 2019, we collectively agreed on a research structure involving three SSA countries for comparative analysis, with Lund University as project host. Within each country, the research consortium involves funded partners from one academic institution and one farmer-based organisation. These partners are involved in all stages of the research process, from research question formulation, field data collection, analysis and cross-case comparison and write-up and dissemination of results. This ensures that the research process is transparent, truly collaborative and, importantly, useful to the farmer organisations themselves. In addition to these participating research partners, the consortium is further strengthened with three doctoral candidates,

originally from the partner countries. These doctoral candidates are hosted at Lund University and co-supervised by SSA research institutions, as part of the aim to build long-term research capacity within each country. The research process is also monitored by an advisory panel consisting of senior academics and SSA-based transnational civil society representatives.

Comparative analysis is important because it helps disentangle the consistent and contingent factors influencing farmer organisation success and failure, and can even help identify the common roots of problems experience across a variety of contexts (McMichael 1990). That said, motivating cases for comparative research is never easy, especially in a context like SSA with such a vibrant diversity in experiences. One thing to consider is that cases for comparative analysis should be strategically selected based on important similarities and differences which will facilitate fruitful comparison – of course, in combination with various practical considerations, like a shared language. These similarities/differences include for example the contextual differences around colonial, political and economic histories. Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe, for example, are all presidential republics and parliamentary democracies, English speaking, and characterized by dominance of agricultural livelihoods and predominantly rural poverty challenges. Being located in different parts of the continent, however, they simultaneously have different regional dynamics, historical experiences (e.g. colonial and post-independence political development and agrarian reforms), and agro-climatic conditions, with significant implications for the lived experiences of present-day farmers (Chambati, 2011).

Theoretically, our collaborative dialogue has been guided by the field of social movement studies. Being a consortium of practitioners and researchers with diverse backgrounds, the degree of familiarity with social movement theory was uneven and relatively limited at the outset of our collaboration. Because of this, we found the synthesis originally advanced by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (McAdam et al. 1996) to be highly useful in structuring our discussions and planning our research agenda. We found it useful in particular because it brings together aspects from resource mobilisation theory, political process approaches, and cultural perspectives on social movements, into three broad sets of factors that have been consistently shown to be important for understanding the emergence and development of social movements: framing processes, mobilising structures and political opportunity.

Framing processes are the cultural, cognitive and ideational dimensions of collective action. Drawing on McAdam et al. (1996) but also other scholars who call for more dynamic, less mechanistic understanding of these dimensions (Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Polletta and Jasper 2001), we specify framing as the complex processes through which people develop shared meanings and understandings which motivate, legitimate and communicate their joint actions (and the associated challenges). Important issues identified through our initial dialogues include:

- Social groups and identities within the wider category 'small-scale farmer' (e.g. women, youth, indigenous communities, class differentiation) and associated tensions

- Relationships between small-scale farmers and other marginalised rural groups (e.g. pastoralists, forest communities, fisher folks, farm workers)

- The role of discourse, language and symbols (e.g. the mobilising power of concepts like agroecology, food sovereignty and sustainability; the use of art, music, theatre and other cultural expressions)

Mobilising structures are "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action"(McAdam et al. 1996, 3). This concept draws attention to the context-specific "organisational infrastructure" which shapes movement emergence, and the capacity to build enduring structures to sustain action despite numerous challenges, risks and threats. Here, our dialogues highlighted the following three issues as particularly pertinent:

- Existing groups, organisations and networks which may provide a basis for mobilisation and movement building (e.g. local farmer groups, women's groups, cooperatives)

- Resource mobilization challenges and strategies, and impacts on the movement (e.g. dependence on project-based funding from foreign donors)

- Strategic alliances within and beyond the rural setting (e.g. with urban consumer and environmental groups, international NGOs, sympathetic politicians, cultural/religious institutions, legal experts)

Political opportunity, finally, calls for attention to ways that the broader political system structures the opportunities for collective action. Important aspects include 1) the relative openness of the political system, 2) stability/instability of elite alignments, 3) the presence of elite allies, and 4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression (Meyer and Minkoff 2004; McAdam et al. 1996). Our dialogues emphasized:

- The influence of the political system – e.g. regime stability, strength of the opposition – on mobilisation and outcomes

- Openness to/repression of critical voices in the context of agriculture and rural development (e.g. on land rights, GMOs and other contentious issues)

- Decentralization and autonomy of local levels of government

- Sensitivity of the political elite to outside pressure (e.g. from donors)

While the framework has been fruitfully applied to understand how, when and why collective action occurs and translates into outcomes e.g. at the state policy level (Gaventa, Hawes, and McGee 2010), there are a few necessary caveats. First, we recognize that dedicated social movements scholars with more knowledge of the field's cutting edge might find the framework somewhat outdated – thus, while we found it very useful for structuring our dialogue and research agenda, we also recognise the need to complement our analysis with other important and more recent advances in the field, for example scholarship on "contentious politics". Furthermore, we recognize that the framework is inevitably shaped by the 'Northern-centric' nature of social movement studies of past decades, and there is need for sensitivity to common characteristics of Southern movement dynamics, including the role of post-coloniality, political regime types, state-civil society relations, and links to democratisation processes (Fadaee 2017).

Bringing together our analysis of the literature and discussions among academic and civil society partners, we propose a list of research questions which we hope can inspire further research endeavours in SSA and beyond (Box 1). These questions consistently call for analysis that is sensitive to the inherently problematic and heterogeneous nature of social categories such as 'small-scale farmer', including gendered analysis and attention to relationships and intersections between farmers and other rural groups and identities. Likewise, cross-cutting attention must be given to how emerging movements relate to the question of sustainability, in their ideational and material practices alike. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic that took off only months after our dialogues began also raises an array of questions, which can be fruitfully approached through this framework. Has the pandemic brought about political opportunities for restructuring agri-food systems, and of if so, how might those be utilized? Promisingly, both civil society actors and scholars have already begun to raise and tackle such questions (Nyéléni newsletter, n.d.; Pattenden et al. 2021; Chukunzira 2020; IPES Food 2020; Loker and Francis 2020).

Box 1: Research questions for research on rural social movements in sub-Saharan Africa

To achieve understanding of the emergence, development and outcomes of farmer mobilisation for sustainable and equitable agricultural development in SSA, we developed research questions which are informed by social movement theory and reflect current academic knowledge gaps. The questions were further discussed and revised in collaboration with SSA researchers and civil society representatives, and thus simultaneously reflect knowledge needs of farmers and farmer-led organisations.

1. How do small-scale farmers develop shared identities and goals?

   a. Why do farmers see collective mobilisation as necessary in the first place, and through which processes (interactions, learning processes, risk sharing)?

   b. Which collective identities, goals and action frames are emerging, and how can differences be explained?

   c. How can challenges to formation of shared identities and goals (e.g. gender biases, ethnic differences) be overcome?

2. How do small-scale farmers build formal and informal organisational structures that can strengthen their political influence, and how do they mobilise resources to do so?

   a. When and how does resource mobilisation occur, and why?

   b. What role do formal and informal institutions play in the evolution of farmer organisations?

   c. How can mobilisation be sustained, and how do different types of resources (funding, knowledge, practices) influence its development?

3. What shapes the opening and closing of political opportunity, and how can small-scale farmer organisations build capacity to utilise openings?

   a. When has farmer organisations' mobilisation resulted in outcomes, and why? And what do successful cases have in common?

   b. What concrete measures can farmer organisations take to better anticipate changes in political opportunity?

   c. How are external conditions (beyond agriculture and agricultural policies) affecting farmers' capacity to organise and mobilise?

Finally, due to the interacting nature of the above factors, in our synthesis we also ask:

4. How can farmer organisations assess the dynamic interactions between framing processes, mobilising structures and political opportunities, and thus determine which activities to prioritise at a given time?

A call for deepened collaboration and critical engagement

We now turn to some equally important considerations regarding how to conduct collaborative research in rural social movement settings. The issue of whether and how scientific knowledge should relate to social movements remains highly contested terrain. At a time when scientists are being held up by some as oracles, exemplified by climate activists' calls to "listen to the scientists", some scientists have advocated that researchers join movements as activists, for example in acts of civil disobedience (Gardner and Wordley 2019). Others have argued that scientists should be bound by political goals, such as the SDGs, in order to preserve science's credibility (Castree 2019). Others yet, have long recognized a third option. Scientific knowledge producers (e.g. university researchers, civil society representatives, peasant intellectuals, etc.) can study, and study with, movements in an interactive yet scientifically rigorous manner, to develop knowledge that can improve movements' effectiveness in pushing for sustainability. We acknowledge that science has only a bounded role to play in social movements, just as in public policy-making. Nonetheless, we hold that scientific analysis – of problem drivers, possible solutions, and pathways for change – has an important and unique contribution to make (Drake and Henderson 2022; Bluwstein et al. 2021; Isgren et al. 2019). While we recognize that these themes have long been explored and debated in action-oriented research circles, for example the diverse approaches captured under the term "participatory action research", we here refrain from making generalised prescriptions for how individuals should realize this potential – for example, that academics should strive to be 'scholar-activists' (cf. Borras Jr 2016; Dawson and Sinwell 2012). While this is certainly a legitimate route, our heterogeneous team has found the level of appropriate 'distance' between academics and movements to be context-dependent. There are benefits and draw-backs with 'insider' and 'outsider' positionalities alike (see Edelman 2009), and our diverse characteristics and backgrounds create very different prerequisites for engagement. What is always required is careful "*recognition of our location within the broader dynamics of society*" (Gillan and Pickerill 2012).

As scientists become increasingly concerned with the social use of science, various proposals have been put forth for how to ensure scientific integrity in the process of making science 'useful'. Here we can broadly categorize attempts into two approaches. There is the more traditional end-of-pipe approach (Lowe, Phillipson, and Wilkinson 2013) and the co-production approach (Turnhout et al. 2020). The former has been criticized for its lack of social relevance. The co-production approach, while promising in many ways, has been questioned in terms of both relevance and scientific integrity. Critics argue for example that it often relies on simplistic ideas of consensus and knowledge integration (Koskinen and Mäki 2016; Klenk and Meehan 2015), and that it can become socially ineffectual by glossing over the political dimensions of knowledge production (Turnhout et al. 2020) or by producing results that are removed

from the needs of existing organisations (Polk 2014). Similar concerns to these were also echoed in our introductory dialogues between academic and civil society partners, where activists often highlighted the risks of research becoming 'extractive' (especially once the fieldwork phase ends) and the results detached from the needs of intended social groups (Box 2). There is a need for the continued development of models of collaborative research that are able to produce useful scientific knowledge while learning from the lessons of the past.

A crucial part of this is to recognise that the production of scientific knowledge is not solely an academic process conducted within the confines of research institutions. For example, social movement organisers and activists routinely engage in deep reflection over their practices, strategies, successes and failures and are often "fully capable of developing and elaborating sophisticated theory relevant to the movements in which they are engaged" (Bevington and Dixon 2005). Similarly, farmers are often scientists in themselves, conducting research throughout the process of food production, with their farms functioning as real-world labs for development of knowledge through practice, as has been done for generations. What tends to be lacking, both at the farm-level and the level of farmer organisations, is the capability to systematically document the processes and the results they get. The research agenda we propose aims to ensure that all facets of actionable scientific knowledge production are respected and included as contributions to the development of our understanding of farmer-based political mobilisation.

Box 2: Principles for effective science-civil society collaboration

Through small group discussions between academic and civil society actors, we identified criteria for desirable interactions in the research process, given the specific needs of the research and its primary non-academic partners (small-scale farmer organisations).

What to actively work to *encourage*:
- Functioning as a team with clear and legitimate leadership and terms of reference, rather than as a collection of individuals
- Equality in how needs are addressed and responsibilities divided between partners in the team – including treating all participants as *researchers*
- Respect for, and valuing of, differences (e.g. age, ethnic, gender, political, professional etc.) while striving for a common vision and collective leadership
- Transparency in how decisions are prepared, taken, and documented

What to actively work to *avoid*:
- Closed/narrowmindedness and selfishness in team interactions
- Non-transparency and inequality in decision-making
- Unrealistic expectations, empty promises and research-fatigue, especially when interacting with farmer communities
- All forms of exploitation, extractive research practices or abuse of trust, for example through unduly excluding some collaborators from participating in knowledge production processes or co-authorship

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Following from these discussions, our collaborative research process rests on the principle that participation by representatives for small-scale farmer-led organisations in all phases of research is essential for posing salient questions, including relevant perspectives in data analysis, and effectively generating and communicating findings to key agents of change. Still, notions like 'participation' can easily become black boxes (Batterbury 2018; Popa, Guillermin, and Dedeurwaerdere 2015), as has long been recognised by those reflecting on the history 'participatory research' in the global South (Rocheleau 1994). Thus, it is important to clarify what philosophy underpins our understanding of these collaborative interactions more specifically.

Inspired by discussions around politically engaged and 'useful' scholarship in social movement studies (e.g. Rucht 2019; Gillan and Pickerill 2012; Bevington and Dixon 2005) we encourage a 'critically engaged' approach (Lyons 2014). This means that academic researchers seek to contribute to sustainable development by identifying actors who have the political potential to challenge unsustainable or otherwise problematic social, political and economic structures, and then actively involve these actors in research. Rather than selectively developing and communicating research on the basis of the strategic agendas of specific organisations, all research participants stay committed to a scientific knowledge production based on objectively justifiable criteria, theoretical grounding and systematic methodology. We thereby strive for a relationship characterized by 'reflective sympathy' (Popa, Guillermin, and Dedeurwaerdere 2015; Lyons 2014) based on the shared normative goal of sustainable and small-scale farmer-inclusive development, but not unconditional support for specific framings, tactics or strategies. The latter is crucial, as rural social movements, for example, do not per definition promote sustainability or infallibly follow principles of inclusivity (Claeys and Delgado Pugley 2017). Like most social groupings, they can even turn reactionary or sectarian, become co-opted by powerful actors (Tarrow 2011) or for other reasons make poorly justified claims. At the same time, due to the lack of on-the-ground experience, some career academics may overlook or exclude crucial value-based or material concerns of movements and their members, which need to be checked and corrected in dialogue with movement participants. Thus, for the benefit of all involved parties, research must be capable of encouraging critical reflection amongst academics and civil society actors alike, through earnest dialogue between the two.

Beyond any set of research collaborators, the issues we raise above have important implications for research funders. To reduce the chasm between long-term funding available for research collaborations with public actors and the corporate sector compared to civil society, funding agencies must open up more opportunities for critical collaborations with a diversity of civil society actors, including social movements. Given the widespread tendency of 'NGO-isation', careful consideration must here be given to the choice of collaborators, as not all civil society organisations have strong grassroots links, as mentioned above. Importantly, funders ought to also recognise that identifying 'stakeholders' as end-of-pipe recipients of research findings is not necessarily

effective, and that deepened forms of academic-civil society interactions may call for critically revisiting who can and cannot qualify as fully-fledged members of research project teams. Finally, as noted previously, collaborative efforts are in our experience greatly enhanced by the availability of 'seed' or planning grants which can enable researchers to build collaborative relationships across the global North and South, facilitate broader access to unevenly distributed research funding, and truly engage in participatory problem identification and solution development.

Conclusion

Rural social movements have a central role to play for achieving sustainable and equitable development, by amplifying the voices of small-scale farmers and other marginalised groups in the contentious debate around Africa's agrarian future (see Peters 2013; Mbilinyi 2012; Shilomboleni 2017). We propose a research agenda built around two key objectives: 1) analysing the conditions for, development of and outcomes from farmer-based political mobilisation in rural areas; and 2) strengthening action-oriented research capacity for critically engaged research in SSA. Bringing together a consortium of diverse sustainability and agrarian change researchers with leaders and members of active farmer-based movements in SSA, and informed by a theoretical synthesis from social movement studies, we provide research questions and principles for collaboration that we hope can be both inspiring and useful to those interested in advancing farmer-centric sustainable development in SSA and beyond.

The research agenda we propose aims at more than academic publishing and theoretical advancement. It also serves to develop proposals and interventions that offer political potential to farmer organisations to attain different outcomes than is evident by the current situation. This requires deliberate forms of collaboration in action-oriented research which 1) recognizes the diversity of contexts where scientific knowledge is or can be rigorously produced, 2) emphasize equity, respect and transparency in the production of useful scientific knowledge, and 3) actively avoids narrowmindedness, empty promises and all forms of exploitation. Challenging discussions and thorny trade-offs inevitably still arise along the way – for example, academics, activists and organisational staff have different groups they are accountable to, and different metrics that they are assessed by (e.g. Cancian 1993). However, we argue that an explicit, agreed-upon philosophy and concrete guiding principles for collaborative engagement provide a crucial first step.

Given the virtues of comparative analysis, and the necessity to share insights and experiences between organisations and countries, there is a great need for South-South collaboration around the research agenda we have presented. Also, reflexive North-South-South collaborations like our own will continue to be necessary, particularly because global inequality in terms of availability of research funding and other knowledge resources remains considerable (Skupien and Rüffin 2020). A key task is creating deep and lasting partnerships for

critical engagement between academia-based researchers and farmer organisation-based researchers. We have promoted the idea that such collaborative research should be structured in a way that involves, as far as possible, all partners collectively engaging in all stages of the research, to ensure responsiveness to the needs of the participants and target groups. This will require greatly expanding the funding support for platforms for civil society-academia interaction, including re-defining the traditional notion of who can formally qualify as a research team member.

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Breaking history, building memory:
the Peruvian bicentennial generation and the democratisation of democracy
Fernando Velásquez Villalba

Abstract

This article analyses the social mobilisations that took place in Peru in November 2020 in the context of the political crisis generated by the presidential vacancy of Martín Vizcarra and in the context of the short-lived—and usurping-government of Manuel Merino. The article proposes to understand the social mobilisations as a movement of rupture with history and political fear—through the "defujimorisation" of Peruvian politics—but, at the same time, as a movement that represents the continuity of the battles of Peruvian memory linked to the political past of the last 40 years, marked by the political violence experienced during the internal armed conflict (1980-2000).

Keywords: Peru, social mobilisation, memory, neoliberalism, Fujimorismo, fascism

Introduction: mobilising civil society, a matter of history and memory

Peruvian recent political history is fundamentally shaped by two traumatic events: the internal armed conflict (1980-2000) and the rise of Alberto Fujimori's presidency (1990-2000). The internal armed conflict between the Peruvian State and Shining Path, among other subversive organisations, caused more deaths than all of Peru's internal and external wars in its republican history (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2003). Fujimori takes credit for the military victory over Shining Path, and Fujimorista memory has been built around this "savior" or "heroic" logic in which Fujimori is not only the victorious politician but the one who set Peru on the "path of progress" (Milton 2011, 2015). Based on a "discourse of development", a new authoritarian and neoliberal constitution, and a fundamentally extractivist and privatising economy, this idea of progress is central to understanding many of the popular demands of the various social, student, environmental, peasant and trade union organisations in Peru.

In this historical-memory scenario, Peruvian politics has been unfolding from 2000 onwards. In 2000, Fujimori's government collapsed amidst serious accusations of corruption. Besides, since 2007, Fujimori has been in prison for various crimes, including severe human rights violations. The fact that Fujimori is in prison when for many, he is the "savior of the republic" mobilises a series of

antagonistic memories: those who vindicate his legacy based on an iron-fisted leadership, repression, but also on solid macroeconomic indicators; and those who vindicate the memory of the victims of both the Shining Path and the State. These positions seem irreconcilable and whose discourses and narratives emerge in every presidential election, where the alternatives are usually *Fujimori libertad* and *Fujimori, nunca más*.

In 2016, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, a Peruvian-American banker, was elected president of Peru for the 2016-2021 term. Kuczynski defeated Keiko Fujimori, daughter of Alberto Fujimori, in a hard-fought run-off election. Peru's presidential system allowed Kuczynski, whose parliamentary force came third, to govern with an opposition congress dominated by the Fujimorista party *Fuerza Popular*.

The tensions between the Executive and the parliament began very early on. In successive clashes, Congress criticised the government's education policy, including the so-called "gender ideology", which might be "homosexualising children". Also, several congressmen—Fujimoristas, conservatives and ex-military personnel—criticised the official memory policy, accusing the official museum, the *Lugar de la Memoria, Tolerancia e Inclusión Social* (LUM), of the "internal armed conflict" of being anti-military, pro-Left and dangerous for the country's development.

To get closer to Fujimorismo and ensure an (amoral) form of governance, Kuczynski pardoned Alberto Fujimori in Christmas 2017. This generated a wave of indignation that included protests and the repudiation of several international organisations, even the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Disguised as a "humanitarian pardon for medical reasons", it was discovered what the population suspected: the pardon had been negotiated to avoid presidential vacancy in the context of the severe scandals and accusations of corruption against the Peruvian political elite. To put it in context: all the presidents elected between 1985 and 2016 are or have been in pre-trial detention, formally accused by the prosecution, fugitives from justice, and even one (Alan García) committed suicide when the police entered his home to arrest him.

When Kuczynski resigned in 2018, Vice President Martín Vizcarra took his place. Vizcarra initiated a series of judicial, political and electoral reforms to make Peruvian politics more transparent. The pro-Fujimori Congress quickly blocked his efforts. As an extension of the Executive and the Legislative branch's conflict, Vizcarra closed the Congress in 2019 and called for new parliamentary elections in early 2020. Ultimately, the new Congress declared the president vacant, accusing him of corruption.

In this context of political instability, Peru had to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. This instability can be seen in that Peru has had three presidents (in one week) and five health ministers throughout the pandemic. The presidential vacancy of Martin Vizcarra opened the door for the President of Congress, Manuel Merino, to take over the Presidency of the Republic in November 2020.

This generated a wave of protests combining diverse demands and motivations that included more and better democracy, greater transparency, better quality education, respect for human rights, economic policy reform and a new constitution. The ephemeral Merino administration ordered brutal repression, ending with at least two deaths: Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado.

After the collapse of this short-lived government, Congress appointed Francisco Sagasti to complete the 2016-2021 mandate initiated by Kuczynski. In this new "democratic transition", various artistic, social and political movements and collectives began to "memorialise" the protests and their new martyrs, Inti and Bryan. This process marks the continuity of the historical demands for a "defujimorisation" of Peruvian politics and, at the same time, inaugurates an original process in recent Peru in which the power of mobilisation and communication no longer rests exclusively with the elites and the media, but is shared with civil society.

This article pays attention to an aspect linked to the processes and battles of memory in contemporary Peru: the social mobilisations of November 2020. These demonstrations, mainly by young people, were organised under various slogans and nomenclatures, two of which stand out for this article: "The Bicentennial Generation" and *se metieron con la generación equivocada* ("you messed with the wrong generation"). What is the relationship between memory and social mobilisation? We deal with a relationship mediated by the continuity/change relationship between history and the present. Thus, on the one hand, this new cycle of protests that have turned into social mobilisation does not carry the historical memory of the internal armed conflict, so the processes of stigmatisation and criminalisation do not affect their socio-political behaviour.

On the other hand, although they are not responsible for the Peruvian political crisis, they have suffered the consequences of neoliberalisation, demoralisation and decomposition of the Peruvian political and economic system. *Se metieron con la generación equivocada* is also a memory movement in which Fujimorismo and other conservative sectors are not the heroic protagonists. On the contrary, this generation did not carry the burden of the internal armed conflict. A widespread and spontaneous mobilisation has diverse and sometimes contradictory motivations for protest. I am not suggesting that the November 2020 mobilisations are "anti-Fujimorismo". I am proposing that the critique of the political, economic and welfare state system can be read, even by Fuerza Popular, as "anti-Fujimorismo" insofar as the relationship between a market economy, neoliberalism and authoritarianism are concepts strongly linked to the historical role assigned to Alberto Fujimori.

These mobilisations occur in a context of high polarisation where political debate is constituted around the dichotomy "them versus us". The agonistic nature of democracy is, to some extent, desirable: the impossibility of reaching an agreement is what energises debate and produces new arenas of discussion (Mouffe 1992, 2019). However, this dichotomous form of memory battles and their impact on the Peruvian political debate must include certain minimum

guidelines that ensure all (or most) actors' participation, recognising both the legality and legitimacy of the diverse memories involved. Memory battles in a framework of antagonistic democracy require broad boundaries in which consensus is reached through conflict. The debates that emerge from memory battle processes are fundamentally an expression of inadequate conflict management, which affects the construction of democratic citizenships and communities.

In this scenario, it is evident that Peruvian democracy exhibits authoritarian characteristics marked not only by the authoritarian tradition (Flores Galindo 1997) of its society and institutions but also by the continuing validity of the 1993 neoliberal constitution, whose guidelines organise economic policy and are ultimately directly responsible for the current political crisis. The Peruvian "authoritarian trademark" does not require a Fujimori to be carried out, but rather the continuity of certain repressive practices which have not only been maintained but have also been strengthened since 2000 and which have manifested themselves through the deepening of social, labour, ethnic and environmental conflicts.

Before continuing, I would like to reflect on the relationship between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism. The authoritarian tradition indeed forges a political culture in which vertical intra-party leaderships are not exclusive to the conservative right-wing sectors. However, making a clear distinction between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism could imply a kind of "democratic Fujimorismo" and an "authoritarian Fujimorismo". At best, there is a liberal and a conservative Fujimorismo. The problem in making a sharp distinction between Fujimorismo and authoritarianism lies in the fact that party organisations replicate their internal verticalism in the relationship between state, government and society, creating scenarios in which authoritarian mechanisms emerge in forms as varied as the takeover of the armed forces or the intimidation of the press. Thus, once antagonistic parties end up converging in examples such as *Fujiaprismo* or *Fujicerronismo*.

As Carlos Meléndez (2019) suggests, there is a bifurcation between technocratic-liberal and authoritarian-conservative alternatives on the Peruvian Right. In recent years Fujimorismo has become involved in a conservative socio-cultural agenda, aligning itself with groups such as *Con mis hijos no te metas*. However, this cultural battle is not limited to discussions about abortion rights, the gender perspective or the teaching of comprehensive sex education in schools. These (socio)cultural battles, as seen in the 2022 presidential elections, exacerbate antagonistic discourses about the permissible and the intolerable. Fujimorismo thus complements its nature as a political movement and "economic doctrine" with popular characteristics that ensure it has a broad base for social and electoral mobilisation. Unlike other right-wing alternatives, whether liberal or conservative, Fujimorismo appeals not only to the "electorate" but to the "people" and presents itself as the last bastion of stability in the face of hyperinflation, security in the face of terrorism, and Christian values in the face of "foreign agendas" or the "new world order". In this

scenario, it could be said that Fujimorism is not just an authoritarian movement but a movement of multiple authoritarianism. Those multiple authoritarian sides emerge and compete with each other when circumstances require it. However, in the face of critical events—such as the rise of a supposedly reformist leadership like Pedro Castillo—it brings together these authoritarian discourses around a single slogan: Peruvians or *terrucos*. The success of the most authoritarian and conservative side of Fujimorismo is demonstrated in two ways: first, it needs to be more radical than alternative radicalisms; and second, it presents liberal, social democratic, progressive or leftist discourses as extremist.

Regarding social mobilisation, I understand the mobilised citizens as a process of democratic strengthening. Therefore, a mobilised civil society is a dissent factor, a democratic expression and a fundamental component in the weakening and even the collapse of authoritarian regimes (Waisman, Feinberg, & Zamosc 2006). In this understanding, civil society "operates as vehicles for the exercise of citizenship, as agencies that make demands, offer contingent supports, and audit governmental activities, there is a strong civil society, which produces a republican or civic democracy" (Waisman, Feinberg, & Zamosc 2006, 3). This does not imply that civil society is a panacea. I want to clarify that a robust civil society usually functions as a bottom-up influencer and democratises the *public sphere*.

However, how do these authoritarian characteristics affect the evolution of the processes and the memory battles in Peru? It is essential to highlight that Peruvian authoritarianism functions as social, political, and economic practices. This does not automatically make Peru a dictatorship, but not being a dictatorship does not mean that Peru is a democracy. In this sense, in this article, the relationship between memory and democracy has been drawn very categorically: it is not just a matter of the "duty to remember" but of "remembering to transform". Therefore, the transformation I am talking about can be read in several ways; one might be reconciliation and the establishment of much more transparent and ethical mechanisms to discuss the past and build an inclusive State. This inclusion is not only built around economic policies, investment or labour, but also the inclusion of diverse narratives, histories, ethnicities and, fundamentally, the inclusion within "the legal and the legitimate" of a series of social claims among which those linked to human rights in all their forms (economic, social, political, cultural and environmental) stand out.

Creating the political rivalry

One might ask, why did social mobilisations take so long to undermine the power of a State that oscillates, as will be seen below, between the authoritarian, the inefficient and the corrupt—or, for that matter, why is "electoral patience" still the most normalised form of protest? To answer this question, in this article, I will focus on two authoritarian practices of the Peruvian State's

governmentality that are very efficient in limiting socio-political protest: surveillance (Foucault 1977) and (the use of) fear (Robin 2008).

Surveillance, in this case, is understood as the disciplinary function exercised by the State through its institutions. Due to this piece's nature, I will refer primarily to the mechanisms of censorship used to delegitimise those mobilisations that question the heroic narrative of Fujimorismo. The success of these censorship mechanisms is determined by their capacity to instil fear in the population. At this point, the logical question is: fear of what? In the political context of the internal armed conflict memory processes, fear is directly associated with the possibility of being labelled a "terrorist". This process, known in Peru as *terruqueo*, is an instrument of political and social censorship that begins by delegitimising certain memory narratives focused on human rights, victims and reparations and moving on to delegitimise various claims that are associated with a Left-wing or progressive agenda. In a country like Peru, where disappearance and torture occurred based on simple accusations and without due process, *terruqueo* is a very efficient practice to keep the conflict's trauma alive and artificially construct political enemies of the State.

It is important to note that the above categories have been successfully exploited by anti-human rights memory sectors, including Fujimorismo, due to the trauma inherited from the internal armed conflict. Disciplinary practices exercised through fear imply the annulment of debate within a community. In these contexts, memory processes are not only undesirable but inconvenient. Memory initiatives can then be seen as inconvenient, as they disrupt the disciplinary practices analysed by Foucault, which instead aimed to promote the normalisation of certain discourses that are methodologically violent and ideologically authoritarian. This is the case because their goal is to eliminate the possibility of conflict. In this scenario, using terror to instil fear in the broader population appears as an anti-democratic political tool. As Robin (2008) described, political fear is an instrument to maintain the status quo. In Peru, the use of fear not only serves to discourage memory initiatives in the field of culture or to stigmatise social mobilisations but as an instrument that builds a truthful narrative around the "success" of Peruvian democracy in its function of reducing or eliminating social conflicts, usually through violent repression. In that sense, fear relates to the memory of the conflict insofar as the latter involves political violence, authoritarianism, economic crisis and administrative chaos; that according to the historical discourse proposed by Fujimorismo, Fujimori put an end to.

Fear is not a single technique; it is an instrument that must become more sophisticated to increase its efficiency and avoid losing its efficacy. Power demonstrations must accompany normalisation and discipline processes for fear to complement surveillance. It not only represses narratives of memory that contradict official versions of history but also discourages their formation. In a formally democratic context, death squads are no longer viable, legal, or legitimate and can be replaced by specialised national police or intelligence service units. Similarly, in a "pacified" society, political repression is no longer

carried out by the Armed Forces but by State institutions that regulate the legality of particular political discourses or actions. This means that the formation and continuity of political movements or collectives are strongly limited by a repressive legal-institutional structure that condemns the emergence of social or cultural organisations that contradict the narratives of development and democracy proposed by Fujimorismo.

I propose an analysis of these mobilisations by situating political-historical memory as an element of rupture with the past. It is then a question of an irruption into history from memory in which anti-elite, anti-fascist and anti-market elements stand out and are articulated as a political discourse that proposes the "democratisation of democracy" that can also be read as a "defujimorisation process".

The heterogeneous nature of anti-Fujimorismo can partially explain the apparent multiple articulations of discontent, various oppositions and varied grievances. Fujimorismo is not only a social and political movement. Fujimorismo has a robust cultural component anchored in governance based on a neoliberal development paradigm. This cultural component is strengthened by the origin and historical context of the historical Fujimorismo leadership: the combination of an economic crisis, a political crisis and a "military crisis". Fujimorismo has been culturally successful in proposing and organising a "development ideology" around the free market, the militarisation of society and the securitisation of politics. In other words, it was a mixture of an iron fist and a reduction of the State, which Peruvian society enthusiastically greeted at that moment of crisis.

Nevertheless, precisely this uneasy articulation of the various "anti-Fujimorismos", which makes it difficult to organise without fissures, gives it its strength. The challenges that anti-Fujimorismo poses to Fujimorismo are radically democratising insofar as they also expose the intra-party fractures (as in the case—which we will see later—of the murals by Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado), the support for the Merino government, or the need to install a transitional government in the face of Marta Chávez's "anti-communism". Fujimorismo emerged as an expression of the crisis of representation of political parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s; anti-Fujimorismo did it too. It expresses this crisis insofar as no party has organised an agenda that simultaneously dismantles all of Alberto Fujimori's reforms: his welfare state model, his Constitution, the structure of the executive, the relationship between the branches of government, the overvaluation of extractivism, the relationship with indigenous peoples, among other points.[1]

Many of these discussions are emerging in citizen protests, which, as the most recent general election showed, does not mean that there is a "spring of civil

[1] This idea about the relationship between Fujimorismo and anti-Fujimorismo anchored to the crisis of representation was inspired by the work of Rodrigo Gil Piedra (2021), who analyses the political-discursive confrontations of two Peruvian political collectives *No a Keiko* and the ultra-conservative *Con mis hijos no te metas* in a context of high political polarisation (2016-2019).

society". However, it might mean that specific power structures and instruments of domination are running out, specifically those that, for example, can be interpreted as memory devices or civil society organisations seeking cultural transformation.[2]

Fujimorismo has been successful in two fields: in "inventing its own necessity" and in creating a socio-political order where there is a figure of "permanent hero" in opposition to the "permanent enemy". This device responds correctly to another scenario described: Peru today still faces significant challenges in terms of social and economic development, but above all, in terms of national security.

In a permanent state of exception (Schmitt 1985, 2009), the need for a heroic figure becomes perpetual, precisely in this field where memory and trauma are connected. This means that the State's survival is above the survival of any political or social actor. This approach is beneficial for understanding the repressive nature of some State institutions and for the theoretical justification for drawing legal and legitimate boundaries. Thus, national security discourse adopts characteristics that exceed narrative limitations and encompass economic policy, territorial management, natural resources, and political-electoral participation. A permanent state of exception guarantees a new form of conflict regulation by limiting some political actors' scope and form. Peru's recent history has been a pseudo-example of the need for an iron-fisted leader (Fujimori) to order the country economically and politically. Fujimorista memory thus operates as a tool to construct the supposedly unobjectionable need for a "hero"; therefore, all his enemies are Peru's enemies.

The abuse of the State of emergency as an instrument to regulate social protest and political discourse has been one of the great successes and legacies of Fujimorismo. In this sense, attending a massive social mobilisation process in Peru is something that can only happen within the framework of the dismantling of a traditional Fujimori strategy of the period 1992-2000: the total control of the political community, whether of the elites through the National Intelligence Service; or of the popular sectors, limiting their mobilisation capacity through a clientelistic system (Meléndez & León 2010, 459).

One of the most salient traumas in Peru today is the inability to eliminate the Fujimorista structures that socially and symbolically regulate social mobilisations. This is directly linked to the idea of sovereignty based on the control of legality under the principle of authority (Schmitt 2009). Thus, sovereignty, understood as the order and the rules that define political contests, becomes a fundamental element in the political "pact" proposed by

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[2] Examples of these groups are the collective *Murales por la Memoria* (Murals for Memory), which carried out artistic performances in the streets of Lima after the November 2020 protests, or the *Frente de Organizaciones Populares para el Desarrollo de Carabayllo*, which organised "days of cultural reflection" on the political situation at the time. In addition, the *Unión de Cineastas Peruanos* and the *Asociación de Prensa Cinematográfica* strongly opposed two Fujimorista draft laws that sought to censor narratives about the internal armed conflict or about certain political leaders, in the context of the release of films such as *Hugo Blanco, Río Profundo* and *La Casa Rosada*.

Fujimorismo. Therefore, given that any anti-corruption campaign, pro-human rights or environmentalist or trade union mobilisation breaks that "pact," any form of organisation and protest outside the framework proposed by the current Peruvian order is susceptible to be considered subversive, dangerous or terrorist. In short, the continuity or rupture between violence and mobilisation is, at some point, ruled by the structures of power inherited from the 1993 Constitution. This must be added to the memory battles inaugurated with the publication of the *Informe Final* (2003), which due to its critical stance, has taken the Fujimorista sector to exacerbate the social and political discourses on Fujimori's legacy, which continues to rule today's Peru under the Fujimorismo without Fujimori.

Making the enemy and *Terruqueo*[3]

Terruquear is a Peruvian expression to label as terrorist any act or form of protest against the State's policies. Although the Fujimorista anti-terrorist legislation had many legal loopholes, Fujimorismo did succeed in building a political environment in which mere suspicion was enough to generate distrust and terror among the population (Burt 2006; 2014). Apart from being slanderous, this accusation awakens traumatic memories and deep fears in a country that suffered a bloody conflict. Besides, it undermines social organisations' attempt to create any form of opposition against the establishment and building legitimacy. In this sense, *terruquear* is, above all, an attempt to control and monopolise political legitimacy by resorting to the traumas of the recent past. The fear of repetition of the painful past is powerful enough to manipulate public opinion and criticise the various social protests.

In Peru, as in other examples of post-authoritarian experiences, such as Argentina and particularly Chile, discussions about ideological continuity and change of old authoritarian practices began first in the cultural sphere, to later move to collective action and citizen's protest (Calveiro 1998; Favoretto 2014; Pino-Ojeda 2020). Nevertheless, in Peru, fear and stigmatisation by *terruqueo* have been increasing, which has resulted in undermining political participation and debate in the framework of what I may call a privatised democracy, characterised by participation limited to a few, to those with the capacity to finance political candidacies, where militancy and ideology have lost their predominant place.

Terruqueo is one of the most complex discursive instruments affecting the democratisation and memory processes because of its historical violence and the legal architectures built around political fear and surveillance: the criminalisation of apology for terrorism. Apology for terrorism, that is, to justify any act of terrorism perpetrated during the internal conflict, is today a criminal offence. In practice, this strategy serves to regulate political, social or cultural

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[3] The Spanish infinitive is *terruquear*, the Spanish substantive is *terruqueo*. The Peruvian slang for "terrorist" is *terruco*.

behaviours that—by not adopting a direct critical stance but rather an analytical one—can be considered carrying out an apologetic or supportive position towards subversive or terrorist organisations, which includes as well subscribing to their discourse or ideological agendas. In this sense, the difficulty in defining what is and is not an apology for terrorism makes this law an instrument that could be used to coerce freedom of expression.

This crime is typified in articles 316 and 316-A of the Penal Code modified in 2017. It states that anyone who publicly exalts, justifies or glorifies a crime or a person convicted by final judgement as a perpetrator or participant during the internal armed conflict or related to ongoing narco-guerrilla activities shall be sentenced to imprisonment.[4]

Terruqueo is also a tool to instil fear built from two historical memory elements. In the first place, the fear of an already known enemy (terrorism); and the fear of repeating the past atrocities (the spiral of violence). These elements have perpetuated a relentless confrontation between "us" and "them" beyond the Shining Path's actual emergence and decline. At the base of this construct, a political culture manages the exclusion (Dagnino, 2018), which can be understood as reducing "access to citizenship".

As Aguirre (2011), Burke (1993) and Franco (2006) suggest, disqualification based on political, ethnic, or nationalistic positions tends to annihilate the reputation of the victims and produces their social destruction. The dimension and scope of the exclusion are ruled by the ability to take material actions against the excluded: censorship, detention or prosecution. Thus, accusing a person or organisation of terrorism imposes a categorisation from which it is difficult to free oneself and reduces the discursive scene to an attack-defence relationship. The focus of the discussion is missed, and the central debate disintegrates. In this context, the legal rationality is subverted; it is not the accuser who must propose the burden of proof but the accused who must prove his innocence. In this performance, the defence is no longer exercised just before the accuser but before the whole society.

Although the primary responsibility for the internal armed conflict lies with the Shining Path's declaration of war on the Peruvian State, it is also relevant to recall the *Informe Final*'s three main factors that explain the roots and extension of violence: racism, discrimination, and centralism. When taken into the public sphere, this over-stigmatisation will inevitably favour the reproduction of these stereotypes. To cite some examples, Theidon (2000) identified the military discourse in the context of the internal armed conflict, basically creating an automatic correlation between *indio* and violence. In Franco's words (2006), this military discourse is constituted as a *common-sense discourse* and organises the ideas and stereotypes constructed from "us" and "them". This problem becomes much more evident, according to Boesten (2008), when, by analysing the work of the Truth and Reconciliation

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[4] Law N°30610 (Peru)

Commission, she concludes that although the Armed Forces were more diverse in terms of ethnicity than the Andean indigenous communities, the construction of the "us-them" was fundamentally justified by the country-city dichotomy. The Andean population's perception as irrational, mysterious, violent, and savage has undoubtedly contributed to the violence with which the Armed Forces approached the population in the areas most affected by the Shining Path violence. This also made the soldiers' violence towards Andean women tolerable or acceptable (Boesten 2008, 204).

This supposed "Andean indigenous irrationality" is the perfect argument to vilify indigenous and marginalised populations' social claims. In this sense, given that there is an overlap between territory (natural resources) and population (communities), the way Peruvian political elites have found to justify the overexploitation of natural resources regardless of the people or the environment is the development discourse designed around a premise that prioritises economic growth over other development indicators (Pieterse 1991; Raftopoulos 2017). This discourse is articulated not only around the modernising rationale based on neoliberal paradigms (reduction of labour costs, weakening of unions, outsourcing of labour and privatisation of public resources) but also on authoritarian paradigms by placing the idea of development as a public good and the utilisation of violence to comply with "neoliberal legality").

Following Aníbal Quijano's theory on *coloniality* (1999), a colonial aspect is hidden in Peru's political, economic, and social practices under these modernising paradigms. Therefore, since "development", understood as "economic growth", is supposedly the perfect justification for the exercise of State violence, all forms of counter-state violence are classified as "subversive" or "terrorist". Thus, the idea of economic growth becomes an axiomatic proposal that normalises and standardises a discourse of progress that opposes the tradition expressed in the indigenous component of the country.

Terruqueo is a discursive construction of a political, economic, social, and ethnic nature based on the need to create a socio-political enemy, usually artificial, whenever an actor or group opposes the neoliberal totality of the development discourse. Under this logic, the sequence of racism/ethnicity, discrimination/rurality and centralism/urbanity constructs enemies, usually indigenous, peasant and leftist, who coincide with the *terruco* phenotype, prototype and stereotype.[5]

The dramatic consequences of *terruqueo* also manifest themselves in human rights policy, particularly in reparation plans, and more significantly in those focused on identifying bodies and the search for the disappeared. In this specific case, the connection between citizenship, reparation and symbolism is given by

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[5] I would like to highlight recent works (Arteaga 2021; Alcalde 2022; Méndez 2021) that analyses the relationship between political violence and the collapse of the democratic Left in Peru, as well as the political use of the label "terrorist" as part of the process of destroying the political, ethnic and cultural identity of political parties and social organisations.

what Robin Azevedo calls "moral panic" or "politics of grief" (Robin Azevedo 2020). Her work focuses on the "controversial" commemorations made by members of subversive organisations extrajudicially murdered in the prison massacres and their memorialisation forms through the Shining Path mausoleum. In this scenario, who has the right to remember, and what are the ethical limits of *terruqueo*? Clearly, in this context, Peruvian society faces the panic generated by the mere possibility that a memorial remembering the "victims" of the Shining Path could reignite a spiral of violence like the one experienced in the 1980s. Also at stake is the moral dimension of memory and whether it is legit to remember victims who are perpetrators to a certain extent.

I take this extreme example about the memory conflicts between the State's and Shining Path's memories to highlight how narrow (and problematic) the concept of victim can be presented to civil society. In this case, how the transition from citizen to victim or terrorist is constructed also criminalises (*terruquea*) the search for justice for crimes the State committed against innocent civilian victims. The victim begins to be a suspicious element. This is inserted into a dangerous narrative: Shining Path members are dead, if they are dead, they are guilty, and if they are guilty, they are not victims. Thus, those "truth-seekers" (victims) or those who echo that search appear marked under the stigma of terrorism.

The above leads us to briefly discuss a figure present in the history of the dirty war in Latin America. The drama of the forced disappeared persons is directly associated with the need to mourn within the right to bury, know the truth, and come to terms and accept death (Robin Azevedo 2020). This understanding of the figure of the forced disappeared person produces two effects on the victimology of the conflict: first, it accepts them as victims; and, secondly, it opens up a sphere of new victims with legitimacy to claim for the forced disappeared (the survivors, relatives) within the framework of what is considered "humanitarian" approaches (Fassin 2011; Fassin & Rechtman 2009).

However, the way the figure of the disappeared has been dealt with and processed in the Southern Cone memory tasks differs considerably from how this has taken place in Peru. In Argentina and Uruguay, the process of social discipline took as its object the modern and rational individual himself (Gatti 2008, 132). The disappeared in the Southern Cone were part of a society built around a civilising mandate (urban, white/mestizo and educated), which makes forced disappearance not only an ultraviolent technology but also implies a direct attack against the order that the very same State once created. It is as if the State regrets the society it managed to build and, at some point, considers the need to correct the process through an "inverted civilising mandate" (Gatti 2008, 133). This is how the concept of "detained-disappeared", "disappeared", or "political disappeared" is forged. The political and militant condition of its (in)existence is what allows society itself to look for it. The internal conflict demonstrated Peru's structural problems and expressed, with the lives of many Peruvians, the different ways the violence impacted. In Peru, as in Guatemala,

most fatalities, relatives, or disappeared were indigenous peasants without ties to the intellectual and professional middle classes (Basombrío 1999, 127).

I argue that the rhetorical and symbolic forms of violence to criminalise social, political and popular demands and mobilisations are a culturally exacerbated continuity (a form of repetition) of political violence. In this context, and regarding the number of memory battles and their material and symbolic representations, the rhetorical application of the victims of *terruqueo* and human rights organisations has two characteristics. First, it dehumanises the victim (Aguirre 2011, 127), removes their rights, and limits their citizenship. Second, in Peru, the people who disappeared are not necessarily classified as forced. This makes the Peruvian case complex insofar as political, institutional, and even economic violence are intimately related to coloniality and structural racism. In such a scenario with an evident lack of citizenship, indigenous people cannot disappear because they must have existed before.

For this reason, I argue that the democratisation process in Peru, both on a political and socio-cultural level, cannot be centred only on a platform of "restitution of rights". In Peru, the idea of restoring rights is almost chimerical. Following Gatti, the inverted civilising mandate was not bureaucratised but instead based on the intersection between ethnicity and class. Unlike the Southern Cone's countries, there was not even a successful colonisation-repopulation project, nor was the territory "ideologically empty". In this situation, the civilising emphasis is not placed on the "modern individual" (or on the modernisation/elimination of the individual) but the indigenous population: they need to be "civilised".

In the Southern Cone nations, a person could simultaneously be an individual and subversive. The "subversive individual" is a criminal-political categorisation that "justifies" his political disappearance through illegal means. In contrast, in Peru, the stigmatisation and violence process that, I maintain, is reproduced through discursive tools such as *terruqueo* builds an unbreakable category: *indio terruco*. Therefore, reconciliation assumes the same ups and downs as the (re)democratisation problem: it is impossible to restore what has existed only in a nominal way so far. The route passes through creating new public spheres and articulating new forms of citizenship; this is something that, from this point of view, has been happening in Peru since President Kuczynski tried to pardon Alberto Fujimori in December 2017.

All the above help us propose an interpretation of the relationship between *terruqueo*, democratisation, and memory. The traumatic memory of the internal armed conflict has been politically overexploited for many years. It has served as the "anti-heroic" mirror on which the Fujimorista memory and the entire current development model have been built. This has been possible by combining two central factors defining Peru's recent history: fear and trauma. Both are linked to Shining Path, and the subsequent social and political chaos added to the political violence: hyperinflation, state over-intervention in the economy, and even Velasco Alvarado's agrarian reform. This traumatic scaffolding shows its complexity when the elites activate the warning signs.

When social, ethnic or economic claims emerge, they are directly associated with the elite's loss of specific social, ethnic and economic privileges. Hence, the Fujimorista memory success lies precisely in creating a narrative of progress used to include those who have not historically been beneficiaries of such progress.

Consequently, this leads us to think that memory in Peru can be seen as a device that has been useful to dynamise and articulate recent social demonstrations against everything the Fujimorista memory. This does not rule out other elements. Corruption or criticism of the current political and economic system are relevant in the protests. However, it is still especially striking that the large mobilisations began precisely on Christmas 2017, in a context where the debated narrative was (and continues to be) the legality and legitimacy of the presidential pardon given to Fujimori by Kuczynski. As I will explore in the coming pages, this debate ended in the legal arena but continues being fought in the social and political spheres in the form of fights against corruption.

The bicentennial generation: structural reasons to protest

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 will probably be engraved in the global collective memory. Peru is among the countries with the most deaths per million inhabitants, and in August 2020, it became the deadliest country in the world concerning its population (Quigley 2020). The context of the pandemic is crucial because it is an additional ingredient to the constant political instability that Peruvians have been suffering since the election of Kuczynski in 2016, the pardon of Fujimori in 2017, the rise of Martín Vizcarra in 2018, the closure of parliament in 2019, and the new legislative elections in 2020 that ultimately reinitiated the cycle of instability through the presidential censure mechanism in November 2020 and provoked the most significant social mobilisation in recent history.

The year began with extraordinary parliamentary elections to restore the Congress' activities after being dissolved by ex-President Vizcarra in September 2020. These elections represented a severe setback for Fujimorismo, as *Fuerza Popular* lost 58 members of Congress compared to the 2016 elections. The other party involved in serious corruption scandals, the APRA, failed to overcome the electoral hurdle and was left without representation for the first time since 1980. *Acción Popular*, the party of Fernando Belaúnde (1963-1968 and 1980-1985) and Valentín Paniagua (2000-2001), won the first minority and with it the presidency of Congress, which fell to Manuel Merino, who would later bear the most significant political responsibility for the repression in the November 2020 demonstrations. The second minority belonged to *Podemos Perú*, a party founded by former Congressman José Luna Gálvez, who also owns a recently closed university because it did not meet minimum educational quality standards, an issue to which I will return later.

The Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating José Luna Gálvez, and the former mayor of Lima, Luis Castañeda Lossio—is in pre-trial detention for

embezzlement due to his relationship with Odebrecht, calculating the damage at S/.524 million.[6] This political party also has as its presidential candidate Daniel Urresti, a former general and former minister of the interior in the Humala administration, on trial for the murder of the journalist Hugo Bustíos, who in 1988 was investigating the accusations against the Armed Forces in Ayacucho in the context of the internal armed conflict. This highlights that what Peruvians chose in the new Congress is not necessarily "better" than what they had. Therefore, the relationship between political crisis, corruption and memory is still a very valid one: is it possible to renew the institutions with the renewal of their members or is Peru's democratisation attempts a problem of a structural nature. Furthermore, how can these structures be changed if the problem is structural?

The context in which the social mobilisations of November 2020 took place is amid a global pandemic. However, the relationship between the pandemic, society and national politics has had local specificities. In this sense, social mobilisations can be explained by a combination of historical background and the immediate precedents linked to the renewal of the legislative agenda and the relationship between the state powers.

Considering the historical background, I would like first to highlight that the relationship between party crises and crises of political representation has been endemic malice in Peru since the election of Fujimori in 1990 (Dargent & Muñoz 2012; Levitsky & Cameron 2003; Tanaka 2005). The combination of economic crisis and subversive insurgency created the conditions for the emergence of a form of authoritarianism that was a response to restoring the missing order. The Fujimorista response to the chaos created a neoliberal order applied through a mixture of shock doctrine with a military solution in the form of the State of emergency.

This "Fujimorista democracy" created the sensation that there is only one alternative: Fujimorismo, that is, a form of governance that has only worked in a context in which the same party controlled the Executive and the Congress and, given the recent investigations into corruption in Peru, this context has required not only the traditional alliance with the Armed Forces but also the intervention of the judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office. However, it is also relevant to note that although it is a limited democracy, it is still a formally competitive democracy with diverse actors and that, although under a constitution born of a dictatorship, it maintains a minimum and necessary form of guarantee of due process, separation of powers and institutionalised justice. Of course, when the presentation of a public enemy is built around "corruption", many of these characteristics (mainly the administration of justice) are weakened in the face of the lack of transparency and allegations of dishonesty or inadequacy of judges, prosecutors and other public servants. It seems that "Fujimorista democracy" only works with a Fujimorista party in power, effectively making a highly politically fragmented country ungovernable. In this context, constructing an

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[6] Nearly USD160 million.

internal social enemy, the *terruqueo*, is a valuable instrument to weaken progressive opposition political forces and organise and unite the most conservative forces behind an authoritarian, neoliberal and, in some cases, fascist discourse.

Following this line, the collapse of the Fujimori administration also triggered conservative and neoliberal memories; this is, those who, without being explicitly Fujimoristas, give continuity to their economic policy, line up behind the "discourse of development" and identify the Left, social movements or any reformist force as "enemies of the State and 'progress'". Thus, in Fujimori's absence, these narratives first maintain his politically and economically authoritarian legacy as a paradigm that impacts Peruvian politics because this paradigm benefits his political heirs, who are grouped around the *Fuerza Popular* party. Furthermore, secondly, this political-memory construction put forward by *Fuerza Popular* involves a narrative that slips into the political identity of that generation that maintains the memory of the internal armed conflict, regulates the debate, denies competition, stigmatises the opposition and holds them responsible for the chaos and terror of the 1980-1990 period. Therefore, political participation is not only inadequate but undesirable. Politics then become an extension of the war and a very unattractive sphere of participation.

A central question is how to explain from a collective memory perspective the November 2020 social mobilisations. It is prudent to situate these mobilisations in a broader framework that represents a continuity of citizens' distrust of their political parties, which is a consequence of the crisis of representation. The "Fujimorista democracy" did not solve the problems that created Fujimorismo. Therefore, the causes that facilitated the emergence of Fujimorismo are similar to the ones that mobilise citizens to find solutions to problems that the current political elite does not even ask itself about. Therefore, it can be inferred that democracy without highly institutionalised and democratic parties has built a republic without citizens (Flores Galindo 1997). Peru's republican institutions are not representative of the whole society. If the only parties that have transcended the structural crisis of representation have been highly personalist parties (*Fuerza Popular* and APRA), which are seen as paradigmatic examples of corruption, political violence and authoritarianism, it is clear that social mobilisations invigorate, question and reform Peruvian politics. Therefore, it is expected that expressions of anger and indignation are not an accident but the only valid mechanism for democratising the conflict: opening up the political arena to social actors and decentralising it from the political-economic axis in which it is located.

The second historical-structural condition covered in this section is the conflict between the Law for the Promotion of Investment in Education[7] passed in 1996

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[7] Legislative Decree N°882

by Alberto Fujimori and the University Law[8] of 2014, passed by the government of Ollanta Humala. The Law enacted during the Fujimori government legalises and encourages the creation of new and private universities. Some authors suggest that the public university crisis was aggravated by implementing Fujimori's neoliberal policies (Burga 2008; Germaná Cavero 2002). The consequence of this privatisation of higher education was expanding the number of private universities, determined by economic interests, ultimately reducing the State's investment in public universities. These measures destroyed the sense of university co-government and expanded horizontal mechanisms of joint support to groups of corporate power (Casas Sulca 2012). The promise that education as a service promoted by private management would improve education quality through the competition to attract students evolved into a higher education system that produced a substantial drop in research rates. It also increased the underemployment of university professionals, inequalities and the stigmatisation of certain universities. Finally, it reproduced a circle of marginalisation and discrimination based on the university of study and ethnicity (Cuenta & Reátegui 2016).

The 2014 University Law proposed two fundamental changes to the model that had been in force until then. It created a highly specialised agency to supervise the operating conditions of universities. This was an implicit recognition that the total self-management model inherited from the 1983 University Law and the 1996 Fujimori decree had failed. It impacted the logic of educational services of a business-oriented nature. University reform respects private initiative in higher education but recognises the right to quality education over private investment protection (Mori Valenzuela 2016, 52-53).

The reform promoted by this law led to the closure of many universities, mainly private but also publicly managed. This threatened the survival of many businesses that functioned as political-electoral platforms, patronage of some political parties, or facades for illicit businesses. Thus, César Acuña went from the owner and president of the Private University César Vallejo to Trujillo's mayor, one of the country's largest cities. Congressman and presidential candidate Virgilio Acuña, brother of César, owner of the University of Lambayeque, finances the *Union por el Perú* party, supporting Antauro Humala's release, brother of Ollanta, and leader of an armed insurrection against the Alejandro Toledo administration in 2005. Another example is José Luna Gálvez, owner and president of TELESUP University, financier of the *Solidaridad Nacional* party, founder of *Podemos Perú*, and congressman elected in 2016. Fidel and Joaquín Ramírez, Alas Peruanas University owners, are accused of drug trafficking and money laundering for *Fuerza Popular*'s benefit. Except for the César Vallejo Private University, all the universities

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[8] Law N°30220

mentioned above have been closed for not meeting minimum educational quality standards.[9]

This helps to broadly contextualise the conflicts between Congress and various ministries of education committed to university reform. For example, this explains the parliamentary censorship suffered by Minister Saavedra during the Kuczynski government's first year. In 2020, bills to roll back the reform were presented to Congress. The bill proposes to amend the University "to guarantee student participation, the suitability of its authorities, and promote the decentralisation of university education."[10] Between June 2 and October 30, seven bills were submitted to the Congressional Education Commission, which seeks to create five more universities in Ayacucho, Piura, Lima, Puno, and the Valley of the Rivers Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro. Four of these initiatives are promoted by *Alianza para el Progreso*, the party led by César Acuña (Salazar Vega 2020).

Once the moratorium that prevented new universities' creation had expired, the Executive presented a bill to extend this impediment. The Education Commission discussed the bill in May 2019, but the Budget Commission, chaired by Humberto Acuña, another brother of César Acuña, blocked its debate. At the same time, the number of new universities proposed reached twelve. Between 10 and 15 November, while Manuel Merino was ruling the country, Congress was ready to debate the Bill "which declares a national emergency in the education system of Peru and proposes its comprehensive reform", which proposed the derogation of the University Law (La República 2020).[11]

Continuing with the Peruvian State's authoritarian features, on March 27, less than two weeks after the quarantine began, Congress passed the Police Protection Act.[12] This Law makes three main changes to the current legislation. First, it prohibits preliminary judicial arrest or preventive detention against police officers who use their weapons or means of defence and cause injury or death. Secondly, it modifies the exemption grounds from criminal liability provided for National Police and Armed Forces members. Finally, it removes the explicit requirement that the Police use force only in proportion to the threat.

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[9] As a symbol of the education system, when TELESUP University failed to get accreditation for falling short of basic academic requirements, education inspectors released photos showing that the top three floors of an alleged seven-level building, were just a façade supported by metal struts (Collyns, 2019). This is an iconic example that shows the continuity of problems inherited from specific public policies designed during Fujimorismo. University policy, along with others (internal security, public health and economic recovery, among others) is central to understanding the mobilisations of 2020.

[10] Draft Law N°6341 (Peru)

[11] Draft Law N°5581 (Peru)

[12] Law N°31012 (Peru)

During the November 2020 demonstrations, videos were circulated with police pointing the demonstrators' bodies at the "kill him, kill him" group, and the use of lead bullets and glass marbles were reported. It was also shown that the National Police used custody and riot control units and specialised ones, intelligence and task forces, and its undercover police agents to make arrests. After the protests in which the national police murdered two citizens, Human Rights Watch (2020) called for repealing laws protecting abusive police practices. With Francisco Sagasti as interim president, and a new congressional board, the possibility of revising or repealing the Police Protection Law was raised, a debate that continues (La República 2020).

However, it is notable that the possibility of initiating a democratic police reform also has political consequences. From Fujimorismo, the attempt to change the law has been criticised, proposing a narrative in which any change to these regulations would imply that the "mobs take to the streets and impose their will" (Correo 2020). When President Sagasti removed the senior officers from the police force, the retired officers tried to dispute the president's decision in the judicial organs. They invited the Executive to reflect and show political humility to end this painful event that transcends personal aspects since it weakens the very foundations of the democratic system (RPP 2020). Retired officers expressed concern about the changes since "it affected the morale and police 'institutionality'" (Gestión 2020). It is striking that they were police officers and officers of the Armed Forces, including General Francisco Morales-Bermúdez, Peru's last military dictator. *Acción Popular*, Merino's party, politically supported both demands in an attitude bordered on sedition (Gestión 2020).

Within the pandemic context, it became evident that the economic model has profound limitations for guaranteeing the population's health, food, and social security. In principle, and like in other countries, public hospitals collapsed, which led to many patients going to private clinics, which requested an advance of approximately S/.25,000 to S/.70,000 to guarantee medical care (Ojo Público 2020).[13] This was a problem that many countries had to face, but in Peru, due to the constitutional rank of "entrepreneurial and market freedoms," the only thing the State could do was to include them in the sphere of coordination of the Ministry of Health, but without the capacity of decision making in their operation (Salazar Vega 2020). It reached an agreement with the private institutions for the State to assume responsibility for the patients' expenses almost four months after the crisis, and only under the threat of nationalising them as a public necessity in a context of risk to national security (BBC 2020).

Simultaneously, since the market regulated the value of oxygen cylinders, private producers increased the price exponentially, with a couple of media-famous exceptions. The State's response was to finance oxygen plants through research funds so that some university laboratories could produce and market

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[13] Between USD7,500 and USD20,000

oxygen at a "fair price" (Cabezas Medina 2020). Again, the 1993 Constitution prohibited the State from having any entrepreneurial initiative where a private party could carry it out.

Almost three-quarters of the Peruvian economy is informal. However, informality does not only mean underemployment, unregistered work, or tax evasion. Informality is also visible in economic activities relevant to Peru's GDP, such as mining and agriculture. This clarifies that the State is more interested in regulating those activities where the "informal economy" competes "unfairly" with big capital. Even though large corporations still limit the right to unionise, many of which have tax debts judged in international courts. However, the State's regulatory duty is unclear in situations where informality makes work easier: food markets. A possible reason is that effective regulation of food markets would increase maintenance and surveillance costs, which would cause prices to rise and consequently generate discontent in the population.

The problem is that having little or no control over Peru's wholesale, retail, and neighbourhood markets, they became infection centres (GRADE 2020). This shows a severe disconnection between the government and the governed. The State has shown itself to be unaware of the conditions in which society lives. Nevertheless, this is not only an error of omission but also an error of action. In 2010, Alan Garcia's government changed the oxygen purity requirements from 99% to 100%. The acceptable range was 93% to 100%, while in Chile, the minimum limit is 93% (Quintanilla Chacón 2020).[14] After this requirement, many small and local producers could not continue operating, ultimately impacting oxygen supply and price during the pandemic.

Despite a high degree of formal employment, this does not imply existing labour stability. Most people work as self-employed or in covert labour relationships; therefore, they were economically obliged to continue working without a plan of subsidies or direct money transfers, which increased the contagion rate. Not to mention that social benefits, such as unemployment insurance or access to social security, are suspended when a self-employed worker stops paying social security. Besides, although markets were one of the primary sources of contagion, the government did not implement a door-to-door food distribution programme. That would not have been successful either because almost 50% of households in Peru do not have a refrigerator, which is exacerbated in the most disadvantaged sectors (Perú - Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática 2017, 379).

To avoid a total collapse of the economy, on April 6, ex-President Vizcarra's government prepared an ambitious plan called the *Programa de Garantías' Reactiva Perú'* ("Programme of Guarantees 'Reactiva Perú'").[15] This plan sought to ensure continuity in the chain of payments by providing guarantees to micro, small, medium and large enterprises to access working capital loans and thus

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[14] Regulation on Medicinal Gases for Human Use - 30 December 2013 (Chile)

[15] Legislative Decree N°1455

meet their short-term obligations to their workers and suppliers of goods and services (Perú - Ministerio de Economía 2020). However, the aid fund was absorbed by large companies by 71%, with small and micro enterprises receiving 23% of the fund, while medium-sized enterprises received 4%. The country's large banks managed to transfer funds since the *Banco de la Nación*—Peru's only public bank—is also prevented from offering financial products to anyone who is not a government retiree or public employee. Consequently, the large Peruvian banks used *Reactiva Peru* to transfer funds to their parent companies or other group subsidiaries (Salazar et al. 2020).

At the same time, on April 14, the government issued a protocol of "perfect suspension of work."[16] This means that the employment contract is "perfectly suspended" when the worker's obligation to provide the service and the employer's obligation to pay the remuneration ceases temporarily, without the employment bond disappearing. In other words, there is no work or salary payment, but the employment contract remains in force. The law does not exclude companies that have distributed profits in the last year or part of economic groups with headquarters in tax havens. Initially, it also did not prevent the participation of companies that had taken advantage of the subsidy to cover 35% of their workers' salary receiving less than S/1,500.[17] The rule also clarifies that social security and health contributions are suspended, leaving the worker unprotected. However, the worker can withdraw part of his capitalisation fund as compensation. This, in effect, implies not only a decapitalisation of the worker, in addition to the loss of work and social protection but also a transfer of responsibilities from the State to the individual. The worker's fund should not have been considered as "compensation" since, by definition, it is one of the labour rights.

This is the context in which the mobilisations emerged. Firstly, an attempt at a presidential vacancy in which Manuel Merino consults the Armed Forces if he has their support. Secondly, a successful vacancy due to accusations of corruption by ex-President Vizcarra was used as an excuse to prevent university, electoral and political reform. Thirdly, Peru has had three presidents and four health ministers in this pandemic. Fourth, the corruption scandals and the economic model made it clear to the population that embezzlement of funds, influence peddling, vote-buying, illegitimate use of privileged information, fraud and tax evasion were not only media scandals but caused damage in the form of deaths.

The COVID-19 Pandemic did not generate protests. It did make it clear that citizens are invisible to the State; that the State does not know the nation, and that Peruvian democracy is a testament to this, strongly corporatist, where there are not too many ideological boundaries between parties but a modus operandi that is functional to shared economic interests that cut across most political

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[16] Emergency Decree N°038-2020

[17] Nearly USD400

parties. The political crisis of 2020 is not an exception but the continuity and the consequence of the intimate relationship between corruption and private enterprise in its attempt to besiege and colonise the *res publica*.

Understanding recent mobilisations in a larger picture

In light of the 2021 general elections, especially the presidential run-off, it would seem evident that the November 2020 protest cycle, as characterised in this article, has failed to "defujimorise" Peru. One of the aspects I would like to highlight is that the condition of "anti-Fujimorista" does not function exclusively as a political label but rather, according to my reading of memory battles between Fujimorismo and human rights, as a disjointed ideological construct that emerges in critical contexts. These contexts are especially visible in the presidential elections, where the Fujimorista machine constructs a narrative of development based on the idea of social pacification and economic growth, assuming that Peru is, in effect, a post-conflict society. However, I propose that since Fujimorismo—both in its historical aspect and in the political and truth narratives used today—is an actor in the internal armed conflict, the persistence of its political strength calls into question whether the current political scenario can be seen as post-conflict.

Thus, although the military dimension of the internal armed conflict has been partially settled, I argue that violence—no longer armed and no longer entirely political—takes the form of labour, economic, or environmental politics. Although the protests may seem circumstantial in that they emerge in the form of peasant, trade union or anti-mining struggles, the common and unorganised denominator is the criticism of an economic model that has failed to resolve the population's fundamental problems. Therein lies the subtle anti-Fujimorismo component: criticism of the neoliberal model is seen by Fujimorismo as a criticism of its political ontology.

The social mobilisation explained above must be understood as a process that goes from rage to outrage. I would like to be particularly careful with the use of the concept of *social rage* in this reading; I do not use it in a sense where rage is associated with hate speech directed at policies that tend to narrow the ethnic, gender or citizenship gap (Berry 1999; Mills 1997). As explained in the previous lines, social rage operates fundamentally as a mechanism that seeks to tolerate intolerance, which is an integral part of what I define in this article as the artificial construction of socio-political enemies. Therefore, this analysis's starting point conceives anger as a trigger for protest in the form of outrage by indignation.

Anger works as a political emotion that motivates and continues conflict (Holmes 2004; Lyman 1981). It is, therefore, a social rage against the political elites generated by reasons that are both materials (corruption trials) and objectives (presidential pardon), as well as immaterial (perception of corruption) and subjective (the various traumatic memories). In this connection, the line of analysis I follow assumes that these protests' genealogy

should be partially traced back to a structural injustice that was aggravated by deepening inequalities in access to essential services such as health, retirement and public education, the minimum pillars of a welfare state that was critically dismantled during Fujimorismo. In this sense, the memory of protest—when linked to the form adopted by the State to solve citizens' problems—is strongly connected to the symbolic value of Fujimorismo as an expression of the memory of political and market authoritarianism. The interpretation I propose is that anti-Fujimorismo is a common thread that is (no longer) only activated in electoral contexts but operates as a "memory element" that serves as an explanation and is strongly associated with political crises, corruption scandals—including the 2017 presidential pardon—or Peru's regulatory weaknesses in terms of the education mentioned above, social, environmental or health policy.

The stigmatisation of social dissent, the criminalisation of social protest, or the disdain against some leftist political groups use similar elements previously deployed throughout the Latin American region. The dominant elites, allied with the media, present the political Left as a threat to democracy. It is characterised as an extension of the alleged authoritarianism and corruption of the Venezuelan or Cuban regime or linked to guerrilla activities (Martínez & Goenaga, 2017). In this respect, the 2021 Peruvian presidential election showed how *terruqueo* polarised the electoral campaign, presenting Keiko Fujimori as the standard-bearer of democracy, economic stability and respect for private property and Pedro Castillo as the candidate. He represented the "communist threat" due to his allegedly "ideological links" not only with Nicolás Maduro but also, in what in any typical election campaign would be considered slanderous, with the Shining Path. *Perú Libre* ("Free Peru") was thus presented during the election period as a party that, by moving away from the Fujimorista neoliberal model, would bring back the resurgence of the Shining Path by reproducing in Peru the Venezuelan economic and humanitarian crisis.

The candidate, Pedro Castillo of the *Perú Libre* party, defeated Keiko Fujimori of *Fuerza Popular* after obtaining 50.12% of the votes, fewer than 45,000 votes. However, when paying attention to geographical and social factors, it becomes clear that Castillo won in Peru's most unequal and most impoverished regions; those in the mining industry dominate the economy. He also won in the indigenous and Andean regions, while Keiko Fujimori won in Lima and, to a lesser extent, in the agro-exporting regions of the Peruvian coast. It is also important to note that Castillo won almost 80% of the vote in regions where the internal armed conflict was particularly violent (Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurímac) and regions with still narco-terrorist activity. *Terruqueo* does not explain Peru's socio-economic, political and ethnic fragmentation. However, it is another expression of how racism, social discrimination and administrative centralism, three main factors responsible for exacerbating the violence according to the *Informe Final*, become a political discourse that poses irreconcilable antagonisms between the rural and the urban, between the indigenous and the mestizo, and, in short, between at least two different projects of democracy and economic models.

This "electoral" *terruqueo* is not an exception but one of the forms and moments in which these campaigns of fear and stigmatisation appear. *Terruqueo* is a latent phenomenon that becomes more visible in times of crisis, mainly because these crises tend to be expressed in social mobilisations or citizens' protests, or at times when, from within society, narratives emerge that challenge the heroic Fujimorista narrative. This contributes to delegitimising social, political, and environmental demands amongst the general population, creating enemies presented to the larger society as irrational and lacking any form of legitimacy.[18] To a great extent, this explains the appearance of *terruqueo* in the pro-Keiko Fujimori media, the defence of the economic model supported by the corporations, and the success of these discourses in being replicated in popular sectors. These sectors fear that candidate Pedro Castillo, a rural teacher and trade union leader in the education sector, could represent both a new Hugo Chávez and the emergence of a new armed conflict. That is how *terruqueo* becomes more evident at times of high polarisation, such as elections when discourses emerge that link ethnicity with terrorism (*Indio terruco*), when places of origin are equated with levels of institutional education (the ignorant countryman), or professional training with ideology (communist teacher). In Peru, the presidential elections of 2011 onwards are the most massive and democratic form of social mobilisation and citizen protest.

Therefore, given that any campaign for anti-corruption, pro-human rights, pro-environment, or in favour of trade union mobilisation is presented as breaking that "contract", thus, any form of dissent outside the framework proposed by the current Peruvian order is susceptible to being considered subversive, dangerous, and subject to being *terruqueado*. In this sense, attending a massive social mobilisation process in Peru is a civil act radically opposed to what Fujimori's strategy normalised in the period 1992-2000: the total control of the political community, whether of the elites through the National Intelligence Service; or of the popular sectors, limiting their mobilisation capacity through a clientelist system (Meléndez & León, 2010, p. 459).

Has the mobilisation of the bicentennial generation been genuinely transformative? One could say that the exacerbation of racist and classist discourses manifested in the last presidential election demonstrates that the limits of political change lie in respect for the Constitution and the neoliberal model. However, I would like to stress that the mobilisations of November 2020 should not be categorised as "re-founding", and the citizenry did not find itself behind a solid, homogenous and structured proposal to change the Constitution; and if it had been, it is not clear what kind of change was being sought. However, it is also true that public opinion and the politico-economic elites could witness broad sectors of the population, albeit loosely organised,

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[18] There are almost "picturesque" examples such as those in which Pedro Castillo was linked to an Indigenous-millenarist-Islamic movement, *Inkarri Islam*, which allegedly sympathised with *Hezbollah* and, at the same time, with MOVADEF and Shining Path (Saldarriaga, 2021). However, the most common practice is to turn the anti-mining protest into an anti-development protest and, consequently, into a form of terrorist action (El Comercio, 2015).

demanding some change. Faced with such events, the alternatives are usually not many: one can either try to change or repress any attempt at change. It cannot be said that Pedro Castillo's victory was the result of the mobilisations of the bicentenary generation. However, there is reason to believe that the failure of the same technologies of fear and surveillance (*terruqueo*, media control and attempts to take over electoral institutions) historically used by Fujimorismo may begin to show that the election of Pedro Castillo created a tiny rupture with "Fujimorista democracy". This fracture has minimally allowed for the democratisation of the elections, making competitive a rural teacher of Andean origin who, not long ago, would have been prevented from taking office through a military *pronunciamiento* or a market coup.

Recent studies on indignation and mobilisation generally propose that the "Arab Spring," especially the demonstrations that took place in Tunisia in 2011, signified a change in modern political culture that made visible the fact that mass protest, public and in the streets, could function as a mechanism of transformation of both the political system and the State (Cameron 2014; Rovira Sancho 2014; Tejerina, Perugorría, Benski, & Langman 2013). Making the protest visible has also been a widely used strategy of struggle over the last few years, especially in crisis contexts where some civil society organisations identify the political elite as responsible for the socio-economic collapse.

The November 2020 protests can be inserted into a combination of two elements: first, a regional paradigm shift, in which the Chilean *Estallido Social* of 2019 or the Colombian *Paro Nacional* of 2021 are also comprised; and second, the continuation of the protest-vote that Humala's election in 2011 represented (as well as the disappointment he was), but by other means: the occupation of the public space. In this sense, the common denominator of Colombians, Peruvians and Chileans is weariness towards a set of policies and repressive political structures inherited from dictatorial governments, which abuse the prerogative of the State of emergency to regulate protest and socio-political dissent and maintain the status quo of neoliberal totality (Pino-Ojeda 2011; 2020).

However, the Peruvian demonstrations differ from the previous examples in one fundamental respect. Unlike Chile or Spain, where movements of rage and social indignation were institutionalised in the form of political parties, the protests in Peru have not yet served to craft leaderships that can build new political, electoral and institutional power. I propose that this may be due to the crisis mentioned above of representation (no party has the legitimacy to represent or attract the mobilised sectors of civil society) and to the discredit (due to the terrain and the latent memory of economic chaos) that the parties of more progressive lines have.

However, they have one point in common: the use of public, urban space as a field of struggle. This is not particularly surprising, but it does mark a counterpoint to other forms of protest, especially the continuous cycles of agrarian protests, which do not achieve notoriety, massiveness, or manage to mobilise all public opinion. What may be evident in other national contexts in

Peru represents one more expression of State centralism and racism. In 1992, during the internal conflict, a group of students and a professor at the Enrique Guzmán y Valle National University were kidnapped, disappeared and killed by a paramilitary group. The case was known in the media as *La Cantuta*. It received and still receives a great deal of attention not only because of the brutality of the crime but also because it was one of the pillars on which Alberto Fujimori was sentenced, as will be noted later. However, this was neither the only nor the first case of forced disappearance in the internal armed conflict context. Considering this, I propose that criminal violence against a citizen in Peru is "only" illegitimate (it is always illegal) when that citizen, besides having political and civil rights, also exercises economic and social ones. In Peru, access to citizenship is mediated by access to goods and services, not just testimonial rights written into the Constitution. These economic and social rights typically exist in contexts where the State is present, to put it crudely: where the mass grave where the bodies of students "disappear" is near a road, where national newspapers have correspondents, where there are courts and prosecutors' offices specialising in human rights.[19]

I cannot say where the indignation was born, but I would like to situate, following della Porta (2015), the emergence of these social movements in a context of crisis and austerity that justifies the politicisation of indignation. In this regard, I suggest that Peru had a successful political protest following the cycle of global protests of 2010-2012 (Southern Europe, Maghreb, Middle East) or the so-called "Left turn" in Latin America. In 2011, the presidential elections were decided between Keiko Fujimori and Ollanta Humala. The campaign was centred on the debate between continuity and change in the Fujimori government's economic policy and was continued by the Toledo and García administrations. Humala, who won the elections, came to the government promising a "great transformation" that included the nationalisation of some strategic resources, greater State participation, expansion of social programmes, and multilateralism, especially "Latin Americanism," in its international relations. However, his government was characterised by the formation of the *Alianza del Pacífico* (Pacific Alliance), which weakened the *Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas* (Union of South American Nations, UNASUR by its Spanish acronym), led by Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina. It was the only country in the region to allow a British Navy ship to use its ports on a supply route to the Malvinas;[20] it maintained the economic policy inherited from previous administrations. Finally, it continued with the policy of militarising domestic security.

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[19] For example, the memorials to Inti Sotelo and Bryan Pintado can be found in various places in the city. However, in the recent agrarian protests, this time extended to the La Libertad region in the north of the country, the press captured the moment when a policeman murdered a worker named Jorge Muñoz Jimenez. The worker's name became known on social networks, while most of the press media labelled him a "young worker," a "striker," or simply a "dead citizen."

[20] Some may call them "Falklands"

I maintain that this was the beginning of the disenchantment with the year 2000 "democratic promise", then ratified electorally with the election of Pedro Castillo. The recent protests are a sum of both individual wills and social exhaustion. The mobilisations against Fujimori in the 1990s had a specific objective: to prevent a third Fujimori government. Once the objective had been achieved, logic indicated that the democratic promise "would do the rest." Once again, the limited representation and political participation, encouraged by electoral commodification (remember that one of the conflicts between Vizcarra, Congress and other political leaders was the reform of party financing),[21] literally prevented many civil society groups and organisations from participating in political-electoral life. The transitional government led by President Valentín Paniagua (2000-2001) and the government of Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) followed the "post-conflict/authoritarianism democratisation manual": they formed a truth commission, reformed the Constitution to prohibit immediate re-election, attempted police reform by placing the Ministry of the Interior under civilian control, reorganised the National Intelligence Service, among other reforms (Caistor & Villarán 2006, 86-89).

The period 2016-2021 has shown as never before that, with a high share of power, Fujimorismo as an ideology and practice represents a danger to Peru's democratic stability. In addition, in its historical dimension, Fujimorismo also represents the emergence of poor-quality universities, cultural censorship, political-legislative obstructionism, the attack on university reform, the radicalisation of police repression, and the historical-symbolic legacy of being the founding movement of neoliberalism in Peru (Degregori & Sandoval, 2009; Laurie & Bonnett, 2002; Merino Acuña, 2015; Radcliffe & Westwood, 2005).

The November 2020 mobilisations had a new political identity: they were not (only) against Fujimori but (also) against Fujimorismo. This means that they combine memory and the need for reparations based on a process of *historical justice*. Fujimorismo is not only *Fuerza Popular* but mainly a political practice that deepens Peru's structural problems, such as corruption and the use of state violence to settle social conflicts of any nature. It is not a conflict of memory; it

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[21] By this I mean that, although there is a diversity of political nomenclatures, they are born out of a similar political culture, in which "innovation" over neoliberalism is perceived as "too radical". Successful management experiences are not abundant at the regional or national level, as evidenced by the short-lived nature of many regional movements, but above all by the fact that no party that has won a presidential election from 2001 onwards has been able to present a competitive candidate (or any candidate at all) for the presidency in the following election. What might seem to encourage diversity and competitiveness, in reality—as Pedro Castillo's government is demonstrating—ends up mimicking an institutional structure that is inflexible in terms of the paragons of development, citizen participation and representation, and the organisation of a democratic state. It is true that institutional reforms and balances of power are being discussed in Peru (including a bicameral system, questions of confidence and congressional re-election), but these discussions are being led by *Fuerza Popular* and are not in line with some of the demands that emerged from the November 2020 marches, especially the more radical ones that *Perú Libre* and Pedro Castillo made their own: a new constitution.

is a conflict *reactivated* by a specific memory, but one that transcends towards the search for reparation of the social and political fabric.

In this sense, historical justice and memory are mediated by the State's responsibility to repair the damage caused, regardless of when or by whom the damage was committed (Neumann & Thompson 2015, 4). "Even in cases where injustices have vanished from public memory or where governments have long discouraged reference to the past, memories of injustice often continue to fester among victims and their families and resurface in the public realm" (Neumann & Thompson 2015, 6). The problem with this relationship between history, memory and justice is that the legal and the memorial is thought of in terms of specific harm, a specific perpetrator or a specific period, as is the case of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (National Reorganization Process) in Argentina, Nazi Germany or British colonialism in Kenya.

In contrast to these cases, where a relationship between State violence with a dictatorial face for a specific time can be identified, different administrations have exercised violence in Peru, both formally democratic and authoritarian. This makes it difficult to apportion blame and responsibility since there is "competition" for "innocence." This competition is determined by achieving, at least before a sector of society, to be identified as a hero or victim. Justice, therefore, must deal with the legal aspects of human rights violations and be politically exposed to a wide range of political parties, all of which have the capacity for electoral mobilisation. For this reason, the memories of the victims and the "innocence construction" is an uncomfortable phenomenon for Fujimorismo and other conservative sectors since memory is a necessary condition for the narrative of human rights, not in its normative-legal character, but for its ethical and historical one (Huyssen 2015, 33). Memory is an instrument to keep political, moral, social, economic or criminal responsibility for various crimes against society.

In January 2020, less than ten months before the political crisis that led to the social protests, the Peruvians elected a new congress. Although it was possible to reverse the strength of Fujimorismo, this did not mean a renewal of the elites. The problem is not a purely circumstantial aspect solved by a change of authorities but by designing new institutions that democratise and guarantee full citizenship access. This intersection between the economic and structural makes the demands for transformation vehement and the State response violent.

How to democratise a society that does not consider all its members equal? How to democratise a society where political positions in any democracy would be reasonable in Peru are seen as undemocratic? I suggest that the most recent social mobilisations against the political-parliamentary elites represent a continuity of memory with the marches against the Fujimori government. However, the mobilisations represent a break with a history that allows us to identify Fujimorismo as a historical subject and analyse it critically in its neo-colonial, extractive, corrupt, authoritarian and neoliberal character (Neyra 2018). That is why the demands, although not articulated around a political-

institutional platform, are not directly oriented towards Fujimorismo but the entire political and economic elite and structures born out of the 1993 Constitution.

Recalling the concept of agonistic and radical democracy referred to earlier, my interpretation of the November 2020 movement is that it recognises itself as legal and seeks to build new forms of legitimacy. In that sense, a popular mobilisation is a form of dissent that has proven to be effective in channelling political demands, at least in the urban context, and throughout 2020 it has realised that one of the ways to reform political-economic structures is through a new constitution. After the political crisis of November 2020, and with the reorganisation of Congress forces, a new bench was formed called "New Constitution". Although it does not have a defined program and the congressional mandate ended in July 2021, it showed that the discussion about a new constitution began to resonate through marketing or political opportunism that was, indeed, included in the political proposal made by Pedro Castillo and *Perú Libre*.

So how can we understand that after a mobilisation capable of bringing down a government, Fujimorismo achieved a more than outstanding performance in the last elections? I would like to propose three preliminary and tentative explanations. First, Far-Right political movements (Renovación Nacional or La Resistencia) tend to appear as reactions to intolerable social scenarios because they threaten the values on which a supposed idea of nationhood is founded. In the Peruvian case: the free market as a paradigm of development, religion as a regulator of public morality, and the rigidity of the socio-economic pyramid. In other words, the strengthening of conservative-neoliberal political discourses may be a consequence of the mobilisations of November 2020, a sort of Haitian political fear. Second, the new Right-Wing alternatives are not politically solid enough, nor do they have the historical relevance that Fujimorismo has, which could explain why, despite being weakened electorally, this weakness is not so profound as to make it lose political-electoral competitiveness. In this sense, the construction of an ambiguous enemy "from below", such as "corruption", means that the entire political elite is permeated by this characterisation, which in a good way benefits Fujimorismo since *Fuerza Popular* becomes "one among many other" criminal organisations. Finally, it should not be underestimated that terruqueo continues to be a formidable tool for controlling the filtering of tolerable proposals from intolerable ones on a cultural-socio-political level. In that regard, the most progressive alternatives in the last election (Verónica Mendoza, Pedro Castillo and Yonhy Lescano) continue to embody many of the fears of the coastal and urban populations: Left/economic chaos and provincial/terrorist. Not to mention the programmatic and pragmatic limitations of *Peru Libre*'s technical teams and the problems of Pedro Castillo's communications strategy.

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The regional determinants of collective action in the era of American Resistance

Masoud Movahed and Elizabeth Hirsh

Abstract

This study investigates the regional determinants of collective action in the era of "American Resistance." Drawing on a new dataset from "Count Love"—a machine learning tool that collects data on protest events, timing, location, and number of attendees—we explore the regional determinants of collective action in the first three years following President Trump's election. In particular, we investigate how socio-economic factors, political partisanship and demographic composition of states affect the rate of protest events and protest participants. We also examine the regional determinants of mass mobilization for specific causes, such as civil rights, anti-gun violence, compassionate immigration policies, and climate change. Negative binomial regression results demonstrate that states with higher economic growth, more democratic political partisanship, and greater organizational capacity to police and contain mobilization witnessed more protest events.

Keywords: collective action, event analysis, economic sociology, social movements

In the years following President Donald Trump's election to office, movements challenging his administration, his policies and actions persist. Americans have marched for a variety of progressive causes, including racial justice, women's rights, climate change, gun violence, and compassionate immigration policies, among others. Just a day after Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2017, over 5 million Americans participated in the Women's March (Chenoweth and Pressman, 2017). More recently, though sparked by police brutality, waves of massive protests against racial violence swelled in American streets, indicting the Trump administration for stoking white nationalism and racism. These unprecedented waives of collective action leave little doubt that the Trump administration has ushered in an era of contentious politics, which has acquired the sobriquet of "American Resistance" (Fisher, 2019). The post-Trump election era, as Tarrow and Meyer argue, is reminiscent of the mass mobilizations that Americans experienced during the period of the Civil Rights and the movement against Vietnam War (Meyer and Tarrow, 2018). While the scale of protests may be comparable, there is arguably a difference in the nature of the mass mobilizations of the current era, as compared to those of the Civil Rights and the Vietnam anti-war era of the 1960s (Fisher 2019; Fisher, Dow & Ray, 2017). The Civil Rights and anti-war movements came after many years of organizing, starting small and growing over time (Hall, 2005), whereas the resistance to

President Trump, was launched with protests on a vast scale and relatively spontaneously.[1]

While the overall turnout for marches, rallies, protests, and vigils since the 2016 presidential inauguration falls somewhere between 10 and 15 million, there is considerable variation in both the number of protest events and the number of participants across U.S. states. Net of population effects, some states have witnessed substantially more frequent protests, with more participants, than others. What accounts for this variation in the number of both protest events and participants across the United States? In other words, what are the *regional* determinants of collective action since the Trump presidency and what might such regional variation suggest about the geo-politics of resistance in the post-Trump era?

Drawing on a novel protest-event dataset, constructed by using machine learning tools, we examine the regional determinants of protest events related to civil rights, anti-gun violence, immigration, and climate change in the first three years following Donald Trump's election in the United States.[2] In so doing, we provide extensive descriptive analysis of the protest events with explications of their underlying causes and motivations. We explore competing explanations for both event mobilization and participation at the state-level, paying close attention to how socio-economic, political, and demographic variables affect protest activity across the U.S. states. Importantly, we also incorporate a measure of states' organizational capacity to police, contain and sometimes, repress collective action, given that the state's capacity to defuse mobilizing forces is crucial in understanding variation in the number of protest events and their participants. By systematically exploring protest events in the era of right-wing populism culminated by President Trump's election in 2016, we assess competing explanations for the American resistance.

Given our interest in regional contexts, states as units of analysis provide us with a significant degree of comparative leverage. But while state-level analysis is informative on the regional dynamics of collective action, it limits an examination of intra-state heterogeneity. Due to data limitations, we are not able to disaggregate to lower levels, such as counties or metropolitan areas. A county-level analysis would capture more local nuances about the social-structural factors that explain variation in the number of protest events and protest participants. Nevertheless, focusing on state as a unit of analysis still allows us to investigate regional variation in the "structuring of social relations" that individuals are embedded (McVeigh et al., 2014, p. 636). Afterall, state-level characteristics do influence shared perceptions and collective outcomes. There is also another reason as to why a state-level analysis is particularly

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[1] To be sure, there are other large-scale, spontaneous movements that have emerged over the past few years such as the Tea Party (2009-10), the Occupy Movement (2011-12), the Black Lives Matter (2014-16), but the "American resistance" too shares some of the characteristics of those movements.

[2] Since the socioeconomic variables that we use as independent variables are only available until 2018, we are unable to extent are analysis for the entire 4 years of Trump's four-year tenure.

informative. Many of the participants in protests since Trump took office actually travel from surrounding smaller towns in the state to larger central cities, where events take place. Thus, state-level analysis is appropriate in order capture the characteristics of the population resident in a given state. Finally, as we are interested in how political environments and partisan politics affect protest activity, aggregating to the state level allows us to incorporate state-level measures of partisanship.

Event analysis and determinants of collective action

This project engages a line of research in collective action that is commonly referred to as "event analysis," which investigates the duration, number of participants, presence of violence, and outcome of collective action. Though its origin can be traced to Sorokin's (1937) early compilation and collection of protest events, systematic studies employing event analysis as both a methodological and analytical strategy emerged in the 1960s to document the mass mobilization and activism of the era. For example, the Dynamics of Collective Action dataset, which comprises 22,280 protest events that occurred between 1960 and 1995 as reported by the *New York Times,* has enabled researchers to document variation in movements for a variety of issues, such as anti-war and pro-environment collective action, among others (Wang et al., 2012; Olzak & Soule, 2009; Earl, Soule & McCarthy, 2003; Fisher et al., 2019).

The event analysis tradition has examined many determinants to collective action or variation therein. Economic performance is one factor long thought to trigger anti-government collective action (Buechler, 2004; Burt, 1980). This was reflected in the works of early scholars of social movements, such as Neil Smelser (1968), Ted Gurr (1970), Francis Piven and Richard Cloward (1977). They viewed economic conditions, expressed in grievances, as a precondition for mobilization. However, more recent paradigms, including resource mobilization (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), political processes (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978), and new social movement theory (Kriesi et al., 1995; Melucci, 1980) view economic performance crucial only to the degree that actors involved in the social movement can construct or frame the problems (i.e., the grievances) as relevant for collective action. As McVeigh shows, states that fail to deliver economic growth may see demonstrations, riots, or strikes, as individuals struggle with economic decline (2009).

Recently, led most notably by Neal Caren's research, there has been a renewed interest in investigating the role of social-structural issues (i.e., economic decline, demographic composition, etc.) as components that lead to collective action (Caren, Gaby & Herrold, 2017). In this paper, therefore, we test whether regional economic, political, and demographic factors explain variation in the number of protest events and participants across the United States. We also examine issue-specific protest events separately—including those directly related to civil rights, compassionate immigration policies, anti-gun violence, as

well as climate change and environment—to explore how the regional determinants of protests may vary by issue.

Economic factors

Research on event analysis in social movement studies has used socio-economic variables at the state-level to examine variation in the number of protest events across space and in different contexts. Koopmans and Olzak (2004), for instance, use state-level gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as well as unemployment rate in Germany as measures of socioeconomic deprivation to examine variation in radical right violent events. Lue and Tao (2017) have used fiscal transfer from government as an economic factor to predict collective resistance in rural China. Hence, depending on the context of the research, state-level socio-economic variables have been taken as measures of both relative economic deprivation and overall socio-economic conditions.

In this study, we incorporate two socio-economic measures, namely GDP growth and poverty rates at state level in the US. On the one hand, theories of relative deprivation would predict that protest events would emerge in areas where economic conditions are on the decline, poverty rates are high, and states are unable to deliver on economic growth. A conspicuous example of this is the recent riots in Iran as the result of economic downturn, which was caused by the Trump administration's tightening of economic sanctions (Movahed, 2018, 2020). However, resource mobilization perspectives draw attention to the need for economic resources to frame, organize, and engage in collective action, suggesting that street protests would be more common in economically opportune areas, where resources are more readily available. Our analysis tests these competing perspectives.

Threats to minority groups and collective action

Social movement theory has recognized that minority groups may opt for collective action as a response to real or perceived threats (Almeida, 2003; Andrews & Seguin, 2015; Einwohner & Maher, 2011; Millán, 2016), particularly when such groups experience a decline in their social, economic, and political status. Construed in this way, threats can be an opportunity for mobilization by creating a sense of urgency, particularly for groups that have the capacity to organize and carry out protests as political opportunity theory predicts (Andrews, Caren & Lu, 2020; Almeida, 2018). While threats can create opportunities for collective action, they can also be limiting toward that end, because minority and marginalized groups become ever-more vulnerable as they are targeted by authorities (Oliver, 2017).

Collective action during Trump's presidency provides an ideal scenario for testing this hypothesis (Andrews, Caren, & Lu, 2020). Throughout his presidential election campaign, President Trump targeted various social groups: women, immigrants, Muslims, and other ethnic, racial, and religious minorities.

Our demographic variables allow us to capture whether the presence of targeted minority groups (i.e., percent population of African Americans and foreign-born at state level) predict both the overall number of protests and participants generally, but also those that are specifically related to compassionate immigration policies. Given the progressive nature of anti-Trump resistance, we expect resistance protests to be more common in areas with larger populations of targeted minority groups, and more so for protest events that pertain to compassionate immigration policies and civil rights.

Intersectional interests

A careful analysis of mass mobilization in the era of American resistance cannot ignore the *intersectional interventions* that influence collective action and participation in protest events. Here, we stress the role that intersectionality plays in motivating participants who are characterized by shared grievances. Indeed, a recent body of research presents significant evidence for the intersectional dimension of choices and motivations when individuals opt to participate in protest events (Fisher, Dow & Ray, 2017; Fisher, Jasny & Dow, 2018). Intersectionality has been used both as a theory and an analytical framework (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991) in order to investigate how a combination—*an intersection*—of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other sociological categories are linked to social structures that produce inequality and generate advantage and disadvantage (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2015).

The categories of protest events in our dataset certainly demonstrate strong intersectional dimensions in individuals' motivations to participate in mass mobilization. For instance, the civil rights category encompasses the Women's March to racial justice riots for minority groups, among others. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the intersectionality of participants' motivations in our dataset. There are at least three major protest events which exhibit intersectionality in a more pronounced way, as compared to others, that are worth highlighting. First, the Women's March, which has been an intersectional coalition of veteran activists that mobilized "the largest single-day demonstration in recorded U.S. history" (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2017). Second, the March for Science, which was aimed at defending "the role of science in policy and society" (Winking, Struminger and Wedemeyer-Strombel 2018). Third, the March for Racial Justice is a large African American and indigenous-led movement demanding racial equity (Fisher, 2018a). While these three events are grouped under the civil rights category in our dataset, survey data of individuals from other research indicate that participants in those protest events come with variegated grievances, interests, and motivations (Fisher, Dow & Ray 2017).

Data

We draw on data from "Count Love," which crawls local newspaper and television sites on a daily basis in order to collect information on protest events using machine learning techniques (Leung & Perkins, 2019). Quantitative social scientists have long been seeking to apply the computational power of information technology to the task of generating protest events data. Count Love uses machine learning tools to collect data on protest event, timing, place, and number of attendees. Drawing on this unique dataset on protest events in the United States since Trump's inauguration, we identify the regional determinants of collective action in the first three years of Trump presidency across the US states. Since Count Love data project only collects information on the number of protests and attendees, locations, as well as the underlying causes of those protests, we supplement the Count Love dataset with information on economic, political, and socio-demographic data drawn from a number of sources. As discussed below, we construct a dataset for researchers (present and future) that includes a variety of socio-economic, political, and demographic variables, as well as information on protest participants across states in the United States.

We analyze a total of 11812 protest events with at least 11 million participants. Our analysis focuses on protest events in the Count Love dataset that are reported to have at least 15 participants. Count Love takes the most conservative attendance number from news articles in an attempt to generate unbiased data on protest events. For instance, "a dozen" is interpreted as 10, "dozens" as 20, "hundreds" as 100, and so forth. If an article mentions a protest event but does not include the number of participants, Count Love notes the event but leaves the participants' number empty (Leung & Perkins, 2019). For a protest event to bear conceptual meaning, we impose a restriction of a minimal number of participants of 15 individuals because having a sizeable number of attendees is a crucial component of the concept of 'protest event.' Thus, we dropped 810 protests that were recorded in the Count Love data yet had fewer than 15 participants.

Variables

Dependent variables

We examine the impact of socio-economic, political, and demographic variables on two outcome measures: the count number of recorded protest events and the number of participants at all protest events per state in 2017, 2018, 2019. Both dependent variables are drawn from the Count Love data. We could also include the protest event and protest participants data for 2020, but since our independent variables are drawn from the U.S. Census data, there is a two-year lag for the data reported and thus data from 2020 is not yet available.

Independent variables

Socio-economic. The socio-economic variables are drawn from multiple sources, including the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), and American National Election Studies (ANES). GDP growth and poverty rates are drawn from the Bureau of Economic Statistics. GDP growth rates capture the degree of economic dynamism and vitality at state level. Poverty rates measure the degree of economic disadvantage. In states with high poverty rates, more people are likely to suffer from relative economic deprivation compared to those with lower rates of poverty. It is important to note that poverty is (by definition) a function of inadequate income relative to the size of family or household. The inability to generate sufficient income—hence, poverty—is an important indicator of economic deprivation (Brady, Regina & Ryan, 2013).

Demographics. To assess how the presence of groups targeted by the Trump administration influences collective action at the state level, we include variables that measure racial and ethnic demographics. The demographic variables include African American and foreign-born populations (in percent) as well as the total population of the state, which are drawn from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Political Partisanship. To measure the effect of democratic political partisanship and ideology on the number of protest events and their participants, we gathered data on voting patterns in the 2016 presidential election from the MIT Election Lab. Specifically, we incorporated a variable that contains the proportion of votes casted for the democratic candidate (Hilary Clinton) in the 2016 presidential election at state level.

State's Organizational Capacity. In order to assess whether the repressive capacity of the state bears on the number of protests or the number of protest participants, we incorporate a variable, "police officers per 1000 individuals" that is a proxy for the state's organizational wherewithal to police, contain, and potentially repress unrests. Prior research has shown that depending on how disruptive the protest events are and the degree to which they threaten the interests of political elites, local law enforcement agencies often take repressive actions against the protestors (Earl & Soule, 2006; Reynolds-Stenson, 2018). Hence, we believe that incorporating a variable that captures the organizational capacity of the state to curtail protest events is crucial when examining the politics of activism in the United States. We hypothesize that the greater organizational capacity on part of the state limits the capacity of the people to organize around a political or social cause, depending on the degree of its sensitivity to the interests of the elite. Hence, when examining competing explanations for observed variation in the number of protest events and participants, it behooves us to adjust for the state's organizational capacity to contain protest events.[3]

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[3] The data for the number of police officers are drawn from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) website. Since the law enforcement officers carry a firearm and a badge, have full arrest

Methods

We use negative binomial regression models since the outcome variables for this study are observed counts of both protest events and participants. Negative binomial regression is a generalization of Poisson model that loosens the assumption that the variance is equal to the mean (Long, 1997). Negative binomial regression can be formally written as:

$$Y_i = exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + .. + \beta_9 X_{9i} + \varepsilon_{it}) \ (1)$$

where Y_i is the outcome variable namely the count number of protest events and protest participants, and X_i denotes the independent variables that predict the outcome variables as well as their variations. Coefficients in negative binomial models can be interpreted such that a one-unit increase in X_{ij} multiplies the expected outcome variable by a factor of $exp\ (B_j)$. Our dataset contains protest events only for the first three years after President Trump was elected. In auxiliary analysis, we added a dummy variable for each year in the study to measure the effect of time, but the results were consistent with models that did not contain a dummy variable. In our final models presented in the paper, we do not add a dummy variable for year.

The patterns of protests: descriptive analysis

Figures 1 and 2 below show the number of issue-specific protest events and protest participants. Figure 1 demonstrates the distribution of protests events amongst issue-specific categories. While events related to the civil rights issues have the highest number (more than 2500), those related to the compassionate immigration policies (more than 2000) and anti-gun violence (about 2000) are quite sizable. Events related to the environmental issues constitute the lowest number compared to other categories (about 600). Figure 2 demonstrates the distribution of protest participants amongst issue-specific events. Civil rights events have the largest number of participants, while events related to the environmental issues have the lowest (see Figure 2 below). Of the total 11,812 protest events that have been counted in our data for the first three years of Trump presidency, 2690 (22 percent) are related to civil rights issues. There are 2149 and 1688 protests related to compassionate immigration policies and anti-gun violence, respectively. These two categories constitute 20 and 16 percent of the total protest events in the first three years of the Trump presidency.

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powers, and are paid from governmental funds set aside specifically for sworn law enforcement representatives, a measure of police officers per 1000 of the population at states is useful as a proxy of organizational capacity to defuse protests. It must not go unnoticed that while police forces are local, a per 1000 individuals measure of law enforcement officers can still be taken as a proxy for organizational capacity.

Figure 1.   The Total Number of Issue-Specific Protest Events, 2017-2019
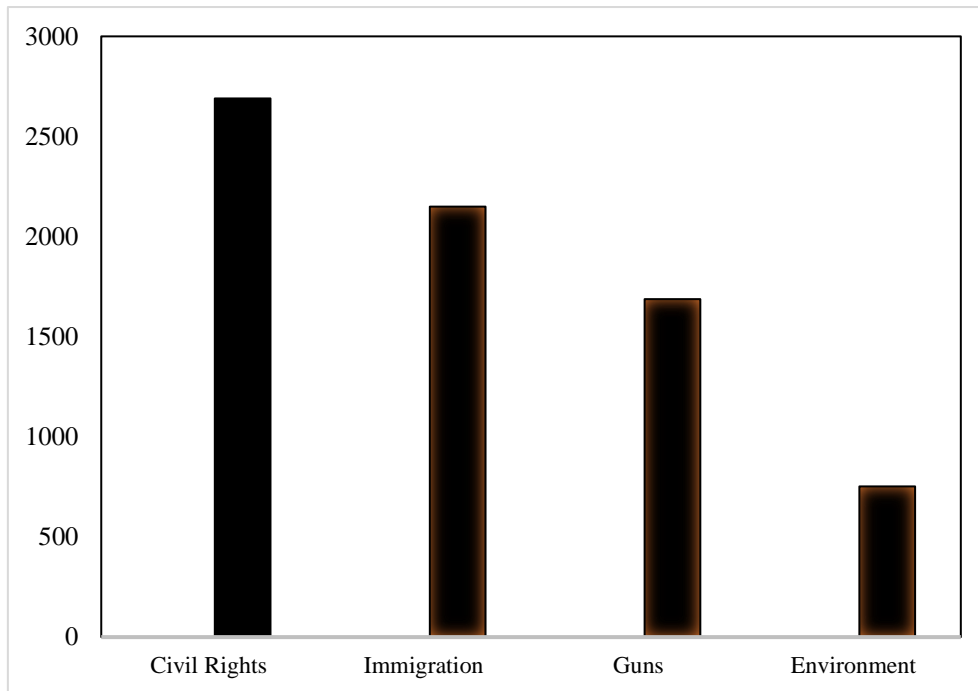

Figure 2.   The Total Number of Issue-Specific Protest Participants, 2017-2019
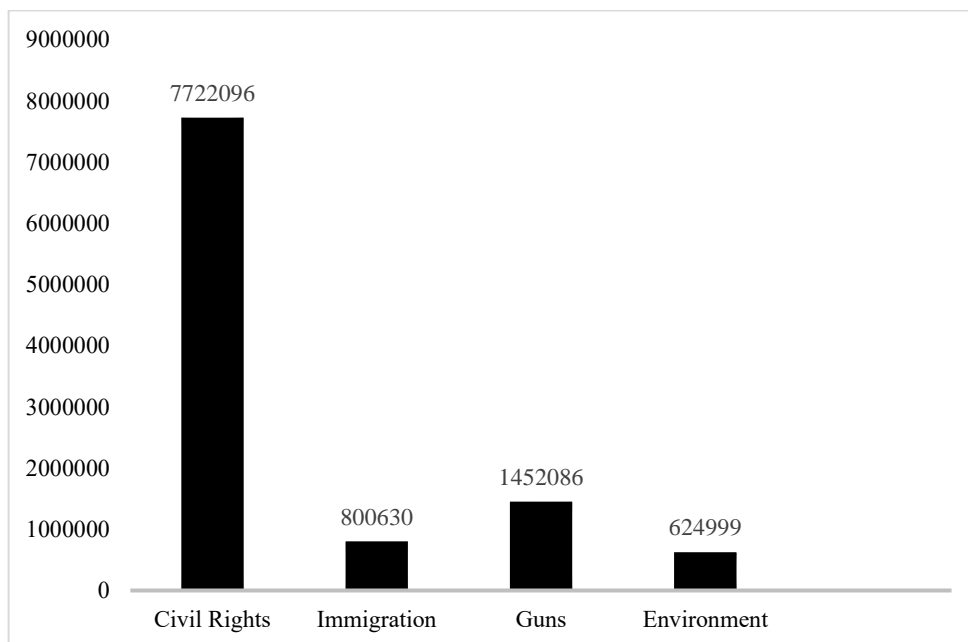
Figure 3 below demonstrates the distribution of the average rate of protest events across US states. In order to control for the population of the state in a robust way, we generated a rate of per 1000 individuals for protest events in Figure 3 below. Thus, Figure 3 three maps the *spatial* distribution of protest events while controlling for the population. Net of population, the Midwest, Northwest, and Northeast areas have higher rates of protest events compared to other regions. Alaska, surprisingly, has one of the highest rates of protest events. According to our dataset, almost 11 million participants attended protest events between 2017-2019, The salience of immigration-related protest events is not surprising considering President Trump' anti-immigration campaigns, rhetoric and actions, which culminated in the Muslim travel ban executive order in early 2017.

Figure 3. The Rate of Protest Events Across American States (Per 1000 Individuals), 2017-2019
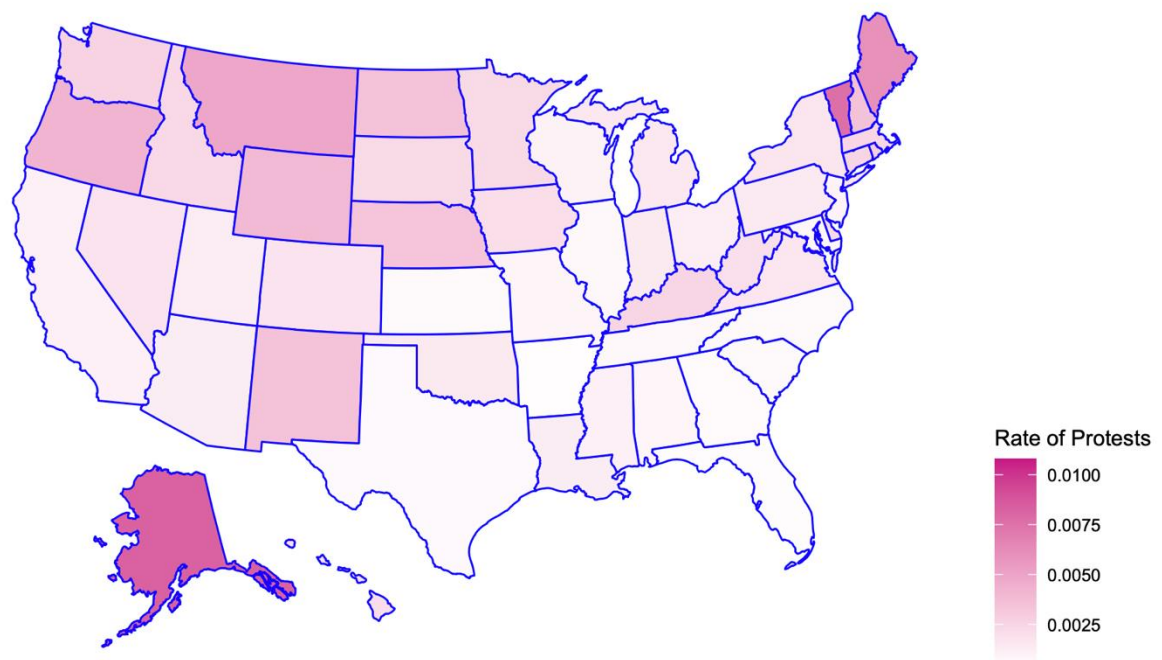
Regression results

The negative binomial regression coefficients (with confidence intervals at 95 percent) are displayed below in Figures 5 and 6. Figure 5 displays the results for the aggregate models with the outcome variables as the total number of protest participants as well as the total number of protest events. In the model predicting the number of protest events shown in Figure 5, union density, percentage of foreign-born population, and proportion of democratic votes are positively associated with the number of protest events. The percentage of

African American population is the only independent variable that negatively predicts the number of protest events. This suggests that protest events are more likely in areas with larger foreign-born populations, strong unions, and democratic politics. In the model predicting the number of protest participants in Figure 5, GDP growth rate, percentage of foreign born population, proportion of democratic vote, and the rate of police officers per 1000 individuals are positively associated with the number of participants. Just as the model with protest events as an outcome variable, the percentage of African Americans population is negatively associated with the number of protest participants. Thus, states with larger African American populations (mostly the southern states) have witnessed fewer number protest events and participants. This is not surprising given that the southern states have a higher percentage of African American population and are dominated by the Republicans.

Figure 5. Aggregate Model for the Total Number of Protest Events and Participants
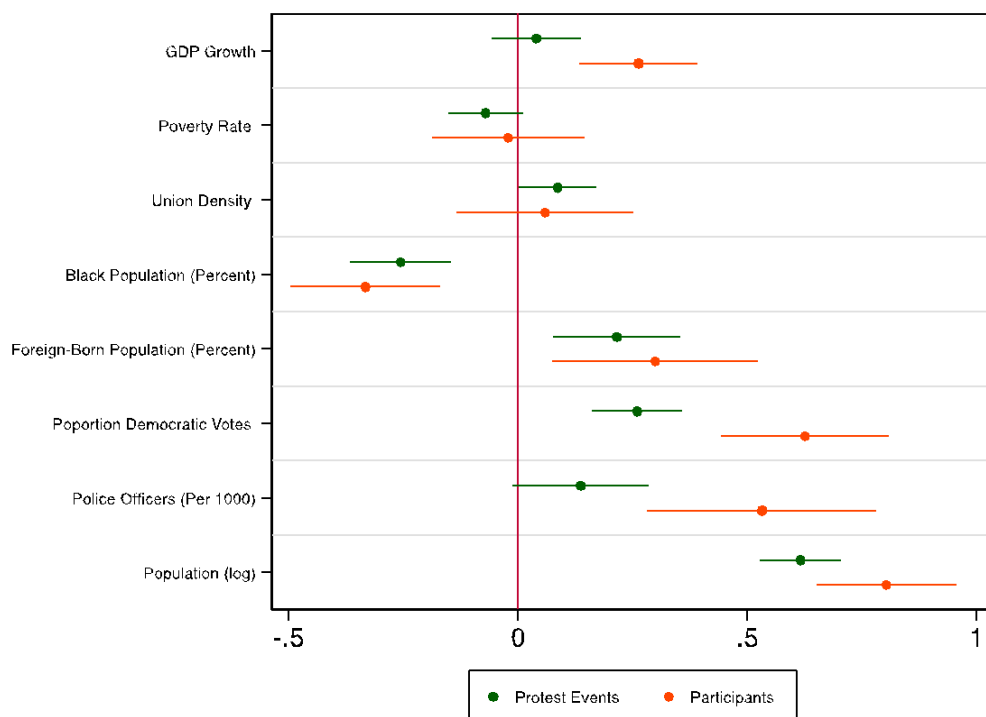
Coefficients with confidence intervals at 95% for aggregate models, with N=152 state-year observations from 2017-2019. The total number of protest events and participants are 7865 and 8918022 respectively.

Figure 6 below demonstrates the results for the issue-specific models. The outcome variables in these models are the total number of protest events related to four underlying issues: civil rights, compassionate immigration policies, anti-gun violence, and the environment. For the number of protests related to compassionate immigration policies, democratic political partisanship, police

presence, and total population are positive and significant predictors. As expected, the percent of the population that is foreign born is also positively associated with protests that pertain to compassionate immigration policies, though its significance is only marginal. Just as in the aggregate models, the size African American population is negatively related to compassionate immigration protest events. The results for protest events related to civil rights issues follow a similar pattern; the percent of African American population is negatively related to civil rights protests while the percentage of democratic votes in 2016 presidential election, police capacity, and the state population are positively related to the number of civil rights protest events.

For protest events related to anti-gun violence, the percent of the state population that is foreign born and police capacity are positive predictors while the percent African American is negatively related to the number of anti-dun protests. Interestingly, the democratic political partisanship positively predicts all issue-specific events except anti-gun violence. This perhaps suggests that frustration with gun violence may no longer be a partisan issue.

Figure 6. Models for the Total Number of Protest Events for Specific Causes
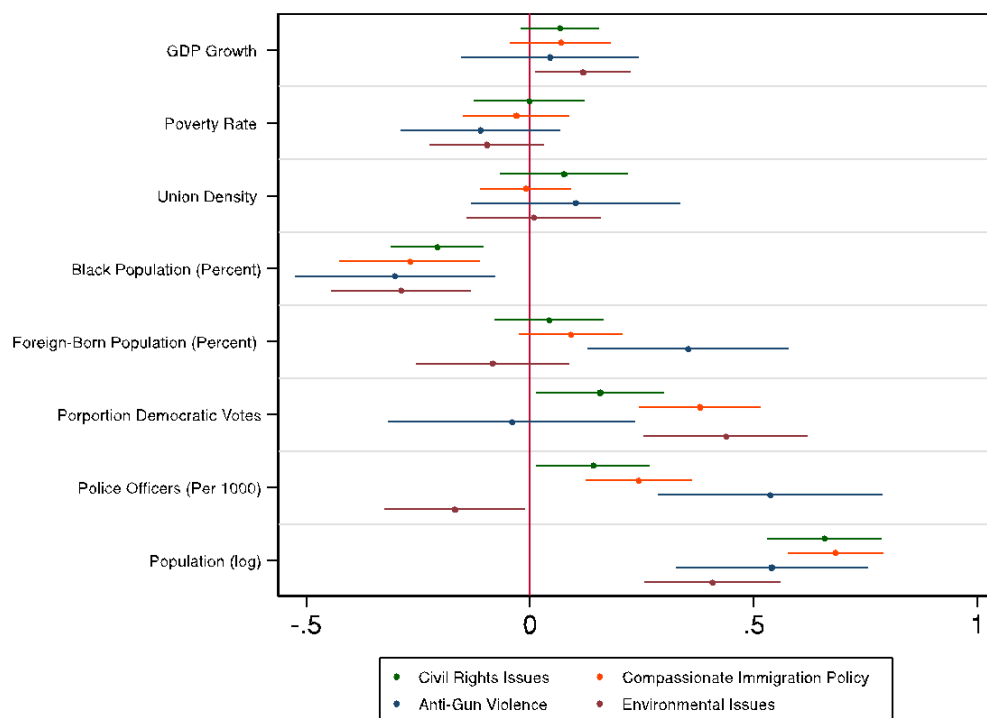
Coefficients with confidence intervals at 95% for issue-specific (i.e., immigration, anti-gun violence, etc.) models, N=546 with state-year observations for 2017-2019.

The results for protest events connected to the environment and climate change are particularly informative. Unlike the results for other issue-specific protests, where no statistical association was found between the economic growth and protest events, states with high economic growth tend to have more protests related to the environment and climate change. But just as protest events related to civil rights and compassionate immigration policies, the proportion of democratic votes positively predicts the environmentally concerned collective action across U.S. states.

Importantly, states that are endowed with more resources and wherewithal to contain protests events, as measured by police officers per 1000 residents, witnessed more protest events related to civil rights, compassionate immigration policies, and anti-gun violence. The only time that the state's repressive capacity reduced protest events is for events related to the environmental issues.

The results of the negative binomial regression for the number of *participants* for issue-specific protest events as the outcome variables are demonstrated in Appendix (A).[4] The results are more or less consistent with the models predicting the number of protest events. High growth states in terms of economic performance tend to have more protest participants related to civil rights, compassionate immigration policies, and environmental issues. The proportion of democratic votes is positively associated with the number of protest participants in civil rights issues, compassionate immigration policy, and environmental issues. The percent of African American population is negatively associated to the number of participations for protest events related to civil rights and compassionate immigration policies. Taken together, these results suggest that poorer states with a higher percentage of African American tend to have fewer protest participants for all issue-specific protest participants.

Discussion and conclusion

Collective action and activism are the twin engines that challenge social domination, exclusion, and inequality. In this study, we identified the regional determinants of collective action across the United States. We believe that it is crucial for both the general public and activists/organizers to have an understanding of the regional determinants of collective action and protest participants. In other words, understanding how social-structural factors influence collective action can help organizers focus on social groups and social contexts that are less politically active in order to increase civic engagement and movement participation.

Drawing on a novel dataset on protest events, the findings of this research demonstrate that states with higher union density, larger foreign-born populations, and democratic political partisanship witnessed more protest

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[4] Due to limitation of space, we present the regression results for the number of participants as an outcome variable in issue-specific events only in Appendix (A).

events, whereas those with a greater proportion of African Americans among the population witnessed fewer protest events. It is worth noting that in both the aggregate models and the issue-specific models predicting civil rights and compassionate immigration protest events, we find that states with greater African American population are less likely to have protest events and participants. This is largely due to the higher percentages of African American population in the southern states that are dominated by Republicans. Given that we consistently reproduce this finding in our analysis, activists who seek to organize collective action for equality and justice should therefore try mobilizing people of color in the South who feel marginalized and racialized.

The aggregate model predicting protest participants reveals similar findings, though economic performance and the rate of police officers both positively predict the number of protests participants. The positive association between economic performance and more participants may be explained by the fact that where people have higher standards of living, they may have more resources (i.e., educational attainment, political consciousness, time, etc.) to be politically engaged. States that have greater organizational capacity to contain and defuse collective action, measured by police repressive capacity, tend to have more protest participants.

We also find strong support for the proposition that greater immigrant populations in the demographic configuration of the state induces more collective action. This is most clearly demonstrated in the positive association between the proportion of foreign-born population and both the number of protest events and protest participants. The literature on the role of threat in collective action posits that minority groups are likely to resist perceived or real threats by embarking on collective action. President Trump's victory provides us with an opportunity to systematically test this hypothesis. Given Trump's hostile rhetoric on lenient and open immigration policies, it is reasonable to expect states with higher percentage of foreign-born population witness more protest events related to compassionate immigration policies. Our results bear this out. The positive association between the percentage of foreign-born population and the number of protest events suggests that areas with relatively large foreign-born populations respond to Trump-era threats on immigration by voicing grievances through collective action. *Vulnerability*, therefore, induces more collective action.

Additionally, there has been a growing body of research geared toward understanding why gun control advocacy often fails to persuade the American public to support stricter gun laws. A recent study shows that pro-gun control arguments are ineffective at increasing support for stricter laws (Kantack and Paschall 2019). In this study, we examined what the state characteristics are associated with anti-gun violence protest events. We find that states with larger foreign-born populations and greater organizational capacity in law enforcement tend to have more protest events related to gun violence. Surprisingly, in the model for anti-gun violence events, unlike other issue-specific events, we find democratic partisanship to be statistically insignificant,

which suggests that frustration with gun violence may be a bipartisan issue, at least in terms of collection action.

Our results for protest events related to the environmental issues are particularly informative. The level of economic growth measured by GDP is positively associated with environmental activism. In an in important study, the sociologist Ronald Inglehart observed an intriguing pattern in public support for environmental activism cross-nationally (1995). Drawing on a public opinion survey conducted across 43 nations, people that supported strong environmental policies shared two characteristics: they were struggling with serious environmental challenges, and they were wealthy (Inglehart 1995; Gross 2018). We tested a similar relationship at the aggregate level within the U.S. context, and our results are congruent with the broader cross-national literature on environmental activism (Inglehart 1995). However, the question that remains is why do wealthier states tend to witness more protest events? It is likely that in the more affluent states—where economic growth is more opportune—people tend to have higher income, which itself is a function of higher educational attainment. We anticipate that because affluent states tend to have a more highly educated adult population, there is greater awareness of environmental hazards and more collective will, time, and resources to do something about them. The upshot is, perhaps, more protest events related to the environmental issues.

To sum, affluent states tend to have more protest participants net of population, and the driving force that motivates collective action at the state level, regardless of the underlying causes and issues, are party-based democratic partisanship, the proportion of foreign-born population, and the state's organizational capacity to contain and defuse protest events. The proportion of votes casted for the democratic candidate in the 2016 presidential election is consistently and positively associated with both number of protest events and participants across nearly all model specifications, with gun control being the notable exception.

By identifying the structural variables, including economic performance, political partisanship, and the demographic composition of states, that lead to collective action, this study confirms that regional political and economic factors explain variation in the number of protest events and participants across the U.S. following the rise of right-wing populism in 2016. Our dataset allowed us to examine not just the total number of protest events and participants, but also those that pertain to specific causes, such as civil rights, compassionate immigration policies, anti-gun violence and environment, teasing out important differences in the drivers of collection action across contemporary political issues. The results drawn from this research enrich our understanding of the dynamics of collective action during the Trump presidency and motivate future research on the conditions under which protest activities may ensue in the post-Trump era for a variety of contentious issues.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix (A)

Figure (A1). Models for the Total Number of Protest Participants for Specific Causes (2017-2019).
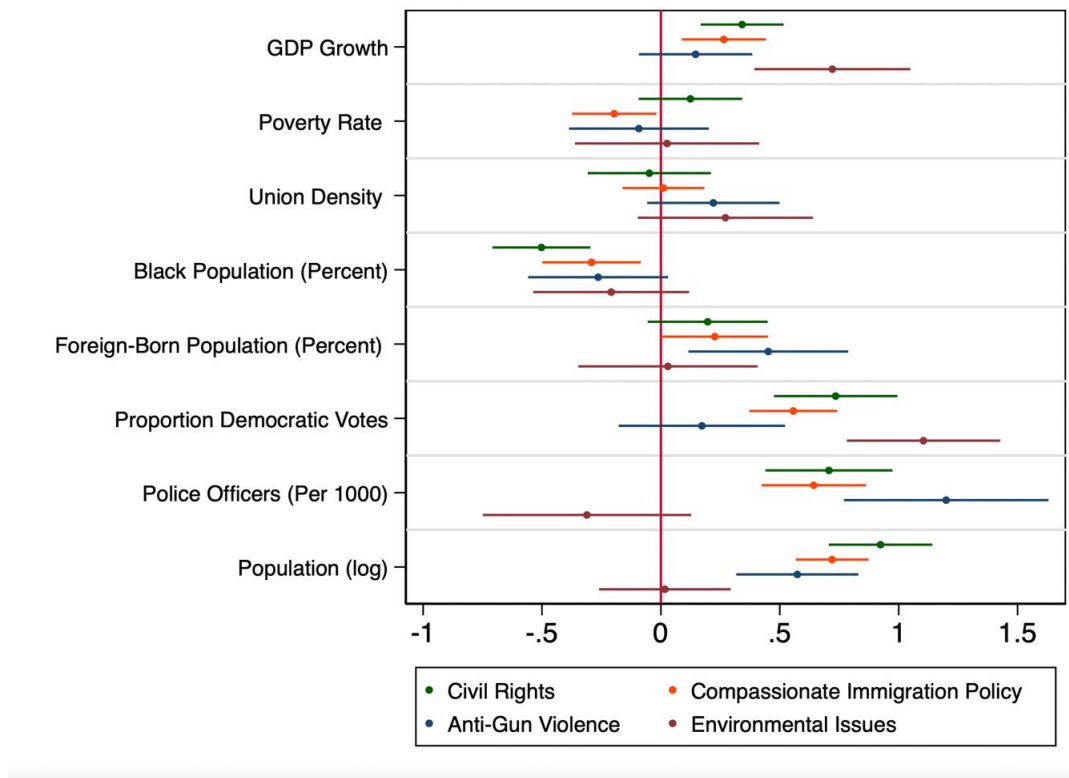
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Occupy Los Angeles:
democracy, space and loss at City Hall Park
Louis Edgar Esparza

Abstract

Taking place in just two months, scholars have understood the "Occupy Los Angeles" cycle of protest in at least three ways. It has firstly been understood as a solidarity movement with Occupy Wall Street, protesting economic inequality and global financial institutions. (Calhoun 2013) Secondly, the movement has been understood as one event in a global wave of post-Cold War prefigurative protest going back to at least the 1994 Zapatista uprising. Lastly, the occupation has been understood as an illustration of a movement driven by social media. (Juris 2012) While all three are true, central to the movement narrative was the continued occupation of City Hall Park. This article examines unique ethnographic data collected during the occupation of Los Angeles City Hall Park in October and November of 2011 to demonstrate the centrality of geographic space in prefigurative movements. The social movements literatures on arenas (Jasper 2004), cycles (Tarrow 1993), and waves (Almeida 2003) educe three seasons of protest: movement rise, crest, and decline.

Keywords: social movements; occupy; ethnography; Los Angeles; arenas; solidarity.

On October 1, 2011, about a thousand people marched from Pershing Square to City Hall Park in downtown Los Angeles. Inspired by the encampment at Zucotti Park in New York City which began two weeks prior, Southern California activists established a tent city in Los Angeles City Hall Park[1] where they stayed until their eviction nine weeks later. City Hall Park is one square block surrounding Los Angeles City Hall. The group marched along sidewalks, carrying tents and banners from Pershing Square to City Hall Park, chanting familiar slogans about the 99% and their ownership of the streets. Orderly and in single file, in order to avoid arrest, activists grew somewhat less methodical once they arrived in the open park.

Occupy Los Angeles (OLA) during this period in the Fall of 2011 has been understood in at least three ways. It has firstly been understood as a solidarity movement with Occupy Wall Street (OWS).[2] The demands and tactics used by OWS activists, bringing attention to issues related to income inequality by

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[1] Once popular with tourists, the park has since been landscaped to remove any areas for camping or assembly.

[2] Sometimes pejoratively called a "copycat" movement.

occupying a park, were nearly identical in the OLA encampment some two weeks later. OWS leveraged its geographic proximity to Wall Street's global finance capital firms. In contrast, the Los Angeles movement chose City Hall to facilitate popular expression against income inequality, while still weaving in resistance to finance capital through its support of the Zuccotti Park encampment.

Secondly, OLA has been understood as one event in a global wave of post-Cold War prefigurative protest going back to at least the 1994 Zapatista uprising. The occupy tactic has been used since at least the nineteen century, notably at the Paris Commune of 1871. The latest resurgence of the tactic may be placed, however, with the Zapatistas and the alter-globalization and Urban Zapatismo movements that have followed. The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), quickly turned away from a strategy of attempting to usurp state power and instead has focused on building autonomous structures at home and through its solidarity movements elsewhere. Soon after in 1999, what is now known as the alter-globalization movement began protesting international finance institutions beginning with the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference. Activists converged from a variety of global anti-capitalist movements to this singular location. The strategy was repeated on April 16, 2000 in Washington, DC to protest the joint meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The movement has since gone on to protest such varied targets as the Republican and Democratic National Conventions and the Vancouver Winter Olympics (c.f. Esparza & Price 2015). This time period has also seen prefigurative strategies in the World Social Forum (de Sousa Santos 2006), horizontalist movements during the Argentine economic crisis (Sitrin 2006), the M15 movement in Madrid (Castañeda 2012), as well as civil society uprisings in London, Greece, Santiago and Montreal.

OLA has lastly been understood as an illustration of a movement driven by social media. (Juris 2012) Social media has been credited for changing the speed and character of contemporary movements. Social media websites and smartphone applications have made it possible to communicate and mobilize thousands of activists far faster than phone trees or email chains. It has also made it possible for anyone with a smartphone to publicly share video and images with thousands of people in real time. The Occupy Los Angeles Facebook group was the largest geographical Occupy group behind New York and Boston. (Caren & Gaby 2011) The Occupy Los Angeles livestream was viewed by thousands of people and was a recruitment tool as well as a way to frame their message for the public. Social media has had similar effects on movements in the Arab Spring, in student movements in Chile, and in the proliferation of the "flash mob" repertoire in youth movements in places such as Belarus and elsewhere, in which activists flood a space to do a coordinated musical and/or dance routine. (Shukan 2008)

While OLA was all three of these, central to the movement narrative was the continued occupation of City Hall Park. Activists renamed the park "Solidarity Park," to reflect the desired relationship among different kinds of activists

present in the movement and also to express solidarity with the occupation in New York. This repertoire of reclaiming public space through the symbolic name change travels through the same channels that the diffusion of the occupation tactic itself travelled, from the Zuccotti Park encampment to its satellite and support movements throughout the country and abroad. The space was opened up to community groups and local activist groups to set up tables and booths for a wide range of issues including advocates for the homeless, mental health services, environmental groups, communist and socialist organizations, food distribution booths, a library, a concert space, and child care services.

This article illustrates the centrality of geographic space throughout the OLA movement cycle by applying the social movements literatures on arenas (Jasper 2004), cycles (Tarrow 1993), and waves (Almeida 2003) to unique ethnographic data collected during the occupation of Los Angeles City Hall Park in October and November of 2011. Three seasons of protest are apparent: movement rise, crest, and decline, consistent with similar treatments of social movements.

I outline the dominant cycles of protest schema, illustrating both spatial and philosophical social imaginaries[3] at each stage that drive utopian possibility at the inception, cement success at the crest, and drive destructive tactics amidst demise. The movement's initial deployment in the first weeks of October 2011 contained broad, idealistic social themes. Once the movement's resonance with the broader public reached its crest in late October and early November, these ideas approached a crisis as competing visions vied for influence at General Assembly and constituent committee[4] meetings. Nearing the end of the physical occupation of City Hall Park on November 30, a scripted conclusion excluded all but those social imaginaries consistent with a prefigurative narrative of the occupied space. Central to my conclusions is the methodological focus on spatially and temporally bounded movement cycles.

Arenas

Physical space is a precondition for contention of any sort. (Haug 2013; Jasper 2015) Jasper's (2004; 2021) concept of the arena is instructive in demarcating the rise, crest, and fall of the physical space in which contention took place. Jasper has variously defined the arena as "*physical places where players interact to generate decisions and other outcomes*" (emphasis in original, 2021) and "sets of resources and rules that channel contention into certain kinds of actions and offer rewards and outcomes." (2004) In both the literal and metaphoric sense of the arena, Los Angeles at City Hall Park served as both

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[3] Borrowing from the anti-modernist concept outlined by Charles Taylor (2002), which can also be thought of a type of "non-relational diffusion" in contentious politics terms (c.f. Tarrow & McAdam 2005).

[4] One of the more prominent of these committees later became the "anti social media" committee.

office space and public space, allowing the movement to incubate ideas and carry out actions.

Intramodal movement cycles, or the life cycle of a particular tactic, action or strategy within the larger series of these constituting the movement, are animated endogenously by individuals. The bounded time and space containing the physical occupation of City Hall Park constrained resonant repertoires and narratives to the occupation repertoire.

Cycles & waves

Social movement cycles and waves are usually understood as a rise and fall in the number of movement events, victories, participants, or the number of media articles about the movement over some period of time. (Alemeida 2008; Tarrow 1993) This becomes consequential when considering the kinds of effects these waves and cycles might have on related movement characteristics. Cycles and tactics may be structurally linked, Tarrow argues, with a movement's most populist tactics being performed at the peak and more radical ones at the beginning and end. (Tarrow 1993)

Tarrow (1993) discusses the peak of protest waves as creative moments, where new and old forms of contention combine with each other to form new ideas. The peaks of the cycles have increased contention, more diffusion of ideas across space and across protest sectors, more organizations, an expanded vocabulary of rhetoric, a wider diversity of tactics. Tarrow and McAdam (2005) distinguish between two processes, relational and non-relational diffusion, both of which involve certain mechanisms for them to function: attribution of similarity; emulation; and coordinated action. Vasi reviews the literature on non-relational diffusion to explain that many actors arrive to a protest site after consuming media.[5] (2011)

Political opportunities, such as institutional access and competitive elections, can initiate a protest wave, as measured by the number of political organizations. The number of civic groups, the number of their events, and attendees may all increase during these time periods. Political threat, such as economic decline, the erosion of rights, and repression, can also lead to protest wave decline.[6] Already-existing activist groups may feel threatened and become politically or ideologically more radical. (Almeida 2003) Social movements rise and fall as states respond to movement challenges and alter the opportunities available to contemporary and subsequent movements. (Meyer 1993)

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[5] For a review of relational diffusion, see McAdam, Doug, and Dieter Rucht. 1993. "The Cross-National Diffusion of Movement Ideas." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 528(1):56-74.

[6] Repression has paradoxically been found to both motivate movements and to precipitate their decline. See for example, Chang, Paul Y. 2008. "Unintended Consequences of Repression: Alliance Formation in South Korea's Democracy Movement (1970–1979)." *Social Forces* 87(2):651-77.

Movements rise and fall in numbers and their tactics tend to fluctuate somewhat as well – both have been fodder for theorizing. Rising movements can spin-off ancillaries, perhaps explaining movement rise. (McAdam 1995; Meyer & Whittier 1994)

The study of radical action is split among the social movements, terrorism,[7] and revolutions research fields. Political threat and its resulting radicalization are thought to increase waves of activity within each of these. Radical flanks (Haines 1984) in particular have been observed to arise after the demobilization of large mass movements. However, radicalization can also lead to certain destabilizing dynamics within those organizations, leading to decline. (McCormick 2003; Deutsch & Shichman 1986; Gurr 1990; Crenshaw 1992; Braungart & Braungart 1992)

Even while movement activities ebb, they engage in activities that hold them in abeyance during low periods in the movement cycle. (Taylor 1989). Movements continue to be active, regardless of their relationship to or effect on the state. (Morris & Herring 1984). Relationships and spill-overs from one movement to another illustrate dynamic processes that occur, and that movements are social processes that move for meso-theoretical reasons, and that these reasons are even more important than those contained in macro cycles or political opportunities. (Meyer & Whittier 1994) It is not so much that cycles do not exist, but rather, they are not sufficient to explain.

Indeed, Tarrow conceded that,

> Students of history recognize cycles in various forms: reform cycles, electoral cycles, generational cycles, economic cycles. Yet empirical studies of political cycles rarely go beyond these generic classifications and seldom escape their putative dependence on economic fluctuations. (1993, p.284)

This is particularly true since the scale of the cycles literature tends to focus on event-count data over multiple movements (Rasler & Thompson 2009) but also appear in more nuanced arguments. (c.f. Alemeida 2008)

Methods

This article is based on two months of ethnographic fieldwork in downtown Los Angeles taking place in October and November of 2011 and the analysis of declassified FBI reports, Los Angeles Times coverage, and primary source materials produced by activists themselves such as leaflets and websites. City Hall Park is conveniently equidistant from my university campus and my neighborhood, allowing me to visit the location twice daily during my weekday

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[7] Waves are used extensively in the study of terrorism as well. Rapoport argues for distinct time periods, each with their own set of tactics and ideologies, that define separate terrorist cycles. (Rapoport 2001; Rasler & Thompson 2009)

bus commute. I also visited the field site at least once each weekend. While I spent dozens of hours at the field site and attended several meetings, I did not speak in any of these meetings except to identify myself as a researcher. The analysis is based primarily on my longform handwritten fieldnotes. I did not conduct any formal interviews. I did have dozens of short, informal conversations throughout my time there. I do not identify any activist here by name. Elected officials and other public figures are identified. I was deliberate about walking around the entire park with each visit to identify changes in participant demographics and other visible changes to the environment. While many participants spent the nights in tents at City Hall Park, I chose to sleep at home. The conclusions I reach here are based on direct observation of activist events as they took place. I had lived in Los Angeles for two months before the occupation began and have lived in Los Angeles ever since.

In coding my fieldnotes, I identified this two-month time period into three components typical in the social movement literature on "waves" or "cycles" of protest – emergence, crest, and decline (Robnett, et. al. 2015). Rather than treat the occupation solely in movement terms, I treat it also as a "vivid political event" for participants in street protest. (Fillieule 2012), I want to treat Occupy as a space where people, previously and otherwise socialized, expressed those already-formed dreams.

Here I focus rather narrowly on the rise and fall of an occupation of a physical space, interpreting these three stages within this timeframe. The conclusions I reach here are based on direct observation of activist events as they took place. I have lived in the City of Los Angeles for over 10 years, providing me with contextual information.

I gathered ethnographic field notes taken from the initial rally at Pershing Square on 1 October 2001, the march to City Hall Park, and the occupation of the park lasting through the end of the month. I observed General Assembly and committee meetings located at the park. I present here the endogenous factors leading to the emergence, peak, and decline of the occupation of the park. As a city affected by gentrification during the intervening ten years, I contextualize this short-lived eruption within contemporary dynamics.

In addition to understanding the fluctuation in movement numbers and activity, the study takes an inductive approach to identify the texture of this movement cycle. I document the movement, its activities, and grievances across the movement cycle. Movement activities and attitudes change over the course of a movement cycle. Further, these activities and attitudes propel and constrain movement dynamics, tactics, and outcomes.

I have taken care not to identify any individuals by name, except for elected public officials. The OLA movement did not begin on October 1 and did not end on November 30, 2011. I have chosen to begin and end the analysis where I have in order to highlight the life cycle of the physical occupation of City Hall Park. The broader Occupy Movement included cities across the United States as well as several online activities. I focus primarily on the activities of Occupy Los

Angeles. Some activists occupied Pershing Square prior to the start of the occupation of City Hall Park. I have also chosen to focus primarily on the main occupation located in Los Angeles, making only a few sojourns to related activities in Bunker Hill, the LA Metro, and elsewhere. These results should be interpreted accordingly. I have not considered economic factors leading to this emergence. (Goodwin 2012) I have not done so because although we do see efflorecences of movements during times of economic crisis, neither does this explanation account for variability within this pattern. Neither have I considered the election cycle (Goldstone 2004), the occupation having taken place between the 2010 midterm election and the 2012 re-election of US President Barak Obama.

Occupy Los Angeles

The OLA encampment practiced a culture of direct democracy and individual autonomy. The encampment was managed by a General Assembly, which met each night of the occupation. This General Assembly operated using modified forms of the classic consensus decision-making process that has become the norm for many youth movements since the protest waves of the 1960's. [8] Some movement participants had been gathering during evening meetings in Pershing Square prior to the occupation of City Hall Park.

The movement published documents in print and online on how to conduct business at their "People's Assemblies." One of the central documents, "The Principles of Solidarity," was adopted directly from OWS. It begins,

On September 17, 2011, people from all across the United States of America and the world came to protest the blatant injustices of our times perpetuated by the economic and political elites. On the 17th we as individuals rose up against political disenfranchisement and social and economic injustice.

These tenets came to define a major faction of OLA. OLA also held workshops for incoming members to train them on consensus procedures and on other matters pertaining to the committee structure and governance of the liberated space. Many of these policies and structures were imported wholesale and translated from the original Puerta del Sol Protest Camp in Madrid, central to the Spanish M15 Movement, also known as Los Indignados. Physical copies of these and other primary source materials were available in stacks at a Welcome tent that had been set up, or at other locations in the encampment. The document illustrates the specific prefigurative discourse under which it operates.

Describing the deliberative process in people's assemblies, the document promotes "Collective Thinking," stating that "Collective Thinking is diametrically opposed to the kind of thinking propounded by the present

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[8] For a much more detailed description of the specific language and gestures used at the OLA General Assembly see Lila Steinberg, R. 2014. "The Occupy Assembly." *Journal of Language & Politics* 13(4):702-31.

system." It suggests a libertarian socialist[9] ideology of democratic governance, stating that people who do not agree with decisions "are not obligated to carry it out." This position both created the possibility and the measured success of this movement and also set the stage for later fissures which I will describe here.

Setting up camp

On the first night of the tent city encampment, the OLA General Assembly meeting was consumed by a debate as to whether to sleep in the park or to sleep on the sidewalks surrounding the park. Many activists had already set up their tents on the lawn, but many were concerned about the legality of their encampment since the park closed each night at 10:30 PM. Anyone remaining in the park could be at risk for arrest after the requisite warnings that the police must issue before doing so.

Camping on the sidewalks of Los Angeles is, on the other hand, legal. Many activists advocated that the group camp on the sidewalk for the night until they could obtain a permit or other permission from the city or police department to stay in the park. Most activists chose to sleep on the sidewalk, although some did sleep in the park. The police did not make any arrests at the site. This continued for a few days until City Council members Richard Alarcon and Bill Rosendahl introduced a resolution in support of the occupation on October 5. The resolution passed unopposed, granting the movement some temporary reprieve from the enforcement of park hours. This resolution read, in part,

> the City of Los Angeles hereby stands in SUPPORT for the continuation of the peaceful and vibrant exercise in First Amendment Rights carried out by 'Occupy Los Angeles[10]

Many movement activists advocated for a conciliatory relationship with the city and the police department. These activists wanted to avoid breaking any laws. At General Assembly meetings, these activists made persistent impassioned interventions to keep the group from taking on more radical tactics. The city council was permitting activists to occupy space legally and most wanted to maintain this status. Not everyone valued maintaining a positive relationship with the police, some having experienced police repression in their communities or in previous movement participation in Los Angeles. These varied experiences splintered into competing social imaginaries, which later manifested themselves into spatial divisions between activists. During a committee meeting on October 2nd, one activist that chose to camp in the park expressed to the group that she had been harassed and threatened by members of the movement who disagreed

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[9] For a review, see Dolgoff's (1980) compilation of Bakunin's works.

[10] Los Angeles City Council. 2011. "File No. 09-0234-S1: First Amendment Rights / Occupy Los Angeles / Responsible Banking Measure." 5 Oct 2011.

with her choice. This occupier felt that this was not conducive to solidarity and that, evoking the philosophy of the Puerta del Sol statement, we should agree to disagree about tactics.

Those who were able and willing to sleep in the park seemed to express more knowledge about and commitment to global movements and radical ideologies in general. This created an environment that placed mostly young whites at the center of movement governance structures.[11] There was pressure expressed at General Assembly and committee meetings that emphasized the importance for activists to stay overnight in the park and to attend regular General Assembly meetings. This orientation is an outgrowth of ideologies of radical democracy,[12] but had the effect of alienating and excluding those that did not share or were otherwise unaware of this ideology.

In contrast, one principle of General Assembly meetings at OWS, OLA and other occupations was the "progressive stack." The queue to speak was managed in such a way that it privileged voices that had not yet spoken, women, and people of color. This form of affirmative action illustrates the willingness, at least in principle, to support the principles of diversity. In practice, however, the space itself was structured in such a way that more whites ended up participating, despite the progressive stack.

The idea of a progressive stack came from criticisms in the 1999/2000 alter-globalization movements in Seattle and Washington, DC. People of color criticized the whiteness of these movements and questioned the sincerity of activists who seemed to prioritize tourist activism over local organizing in their communities, (Esparza & Price 2015; Martinez 2000) and later critiqued the intentional targeting of minority populations to mobilize them for mostly white protest actions. (Rajah 2000) These activists instead advocated a return to local, grassroots empowerment that remains independent from national mobilizations or even NGOs. (Tang 2007)

There was also a significant number of religious groups and other older white cohorts during this first phase of the movement. These included Catholic groups, inter-faith organizations, and religious groups involved in homelessness and anti-war work. Secular older whites included 9/11 truth organizations, environmental groups, and those seeking to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. Activists who were initially present in this phase are those who seemed to already be engaged citizens that weaved their own local and national issues into the occupy narrative. This was apparent from the density of leaflets

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[11] This is consistent with the literature on biographical availability. See, for example Wiltfang, Gregory and Doug McAdam. 1991. "The Costs and Risks of Social Activism: A Study of Sanctuary Movement Activism. " *Social Forces* (69) 4 : 987–1010. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/69.4.987.

[12] Of the kind typically observed in prefigurative movements throughout the world. For a review, see Esparza, Louis Edgar. 2013. "Power and Authority in Social Movements : a Political Philosophy of Prefigurative Politics." Pp. 40-67 in *Partecipazione e conflitto*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

many of them carried, from their use of ironing boards as light-weight portable tables, and from t-shirts and buttons championing pet causes. The range of activists was enormous, including banners present from local Christian churches, tables set up by alternative political parties, single-issue groups from the environmental, anti-war, police brutality, and animal rights movements, those from the 9/11 Truth Movement, and others.

Government tolerance of this social experiment created a brief flash of expression that allowed activists to reconcile their prefigurative politics and their movement actions. The city yielded governance of park activities to the OLA General Assembly, giving activists a moment of control over public space. It also shifted some forms of conflict from the boardroom to the garden paths. Activists themselves had to work through issues related to the governance of the park in their own meetings. These discussions, along with the tactical disagreements more normally the "stuff" of movements, led to frequent conflict.

Occupy activists had a difficult time making meaningful links with long-time activists and community organizers that do not share the prefigurative ideology. Unions, urban housing organizers, homeless people's rights organizers, and others with long-term links to surrounding LA communities were at odds with the young, mostly-white anarchists at the core of Occupy governance.[13] Occupy organizers also had difficulty bridging the gap with organized ethnic communities less than a mile to the east, just across the Los Angeles River, or even just a few blocks to the south in Skid Row. Containing the largest stable homeless population in the United States, Skid Row, or the Central City East neighborhood of Los Angeles, then had a homeless population of between 4,000 and 5,000 people, a result of city policies that sought to centralize the large homeless population in the city.[14]

This philosophical difference became readily visible as activists divided themselves across different areas of the park. Older activists would typically distribute leaflets for various causes, especially alongside the sidewalk and walkways of the park. As I discuss in the following section, Occupy the Hood would eventually separate themselves to occupy the northern section of the park. The younger activists at the core of decision making generally resided in tents near the main entrance to City Hall on the southern end of the park. Activists used space as symbolic social imaginaries which articulated their own interests and also articulated the fissures forming in the movement.

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[13] Anarchist movements in the US are not always mostly-white. See, for example Williams, Dana M. 2015. "Black Panther Radical Factionalization and the Development of Black Anarchism." *Journal of Black Studies* 46(7): 678–703. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934715593053.

[14] While ethnographic approaches to the study of protest is appropriate to capturing the development of a movement, some of the broader observations about racial, tactical, and ideological differences between activists could have benefited from follow-up interviews with specific individuals. For thoughtful discussions about the barriers to transracial politics in Los Angeles, see Weide, Robert D. 2022. *Divide & Conquer: Race, Gangs, Identity, and Conflict*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Homelessness and police brutality departed somewhat from the Occupy issues that the movement promoted to the broader public, which revolve around homeowners' issues, student loan forgiveness, and economic inequality. However, because direct democracy allows for several issues to be represented, it was difficult to exclude issues and maintain any focus on externalized principles.

While the movement promoted its open structure, during my fieldwork activists at the encampment were unwilling to offer how the website was created, its management, or much information about funding. While available from resources outside of the encampment, some activists expressed frustration and became suspicious that there was certain information that did not leave the media tent except through privileged channels. Clear answers to these questions seemed lacking whether these requests came from individuals in committee meetings seeking transparency or from me directly asking individuals at the core of the movement. This secrecy parallels the paranoia present among other radical activists in the US and other developed nations. (Zwerman 1994; Zwerman, et. al. 2000)

The presence of drugs became a problem at the encampment and increasingly became a source of mainstream media attention. At least one incident of sexual assault was also reported to police. This increased the tension between activist factions under the occupy rubric who disagreed about how to handle these and other issues.

People come to the movement for their own reasons. Describing the Amsterdam squatter movement of the nineteen-sixties and seventies, Lynn Owens (2009) argues that "[p]eople invested in particular stories because they were invested in particular images of themselves and the movement." People come to occupation encampments with their own ideas about what should occur. The occupation of City Hall Park created a geographical space that allowed activists to express their personal and social imaginaries in a prefigurative space.

The crest

After the City Council resolution on Oct 5th in support of the occupation and public statements of support from Mayor Villarigosa, public sentiment and distinguished individuals began to engage and accept the occupy narrative in Los Angeles. One of the councilmembers seconding the resolution, Eric Garcetti, went on to become Mayor two years later in 2013. Some of the whereas clauses in the City Council resolution borrowed directly from movement language:

> WHEREAS, the causes and consequences of the economic crisis are eroding the very social contract upon which the Constitution that the United States of America was founded [...]; and

> WHEREAS, today corporations hold undue influence and power in our country, and the key to this power is the corporate claim to "personhood," [...]; and

> WHEREAS, our economic system can only be called broken […][15]

Nationally, the movement for the "ninety-nine percent," OWS and its satellite support movements seemed to have fulfilled its ambitions by opening the national dialogue and influencing its vernacular and some of its values. The strength of this public legitimacy in the nation and locally in the city of Los Angeles created a safety bubble around the encampment. The encampment became a tourist attraction with visitors milling through from out of town on the weekends and occupiers created a jubilant atmosphere with live music, silk screening, clothing swaps, dancing and activities. Booths and tents began to "dig in," creating a sense of permanence. The food kitchen, nurses' station, media tent, welcome station, and child care areas moved and expanded to meet the demand and the changing pressures. The fixed homeless population at the encampment increased as people saw a safe space being created for them just a few blocks north of Skid Row. New stations offering mental health, housing, and other services sprang up to accommodate the need at this location. Existing ad-hoc facilities became professionalized. The changed demographic from young and old whites to an encampment now including more Blacks and Latinos also changed the nature of discussions in committee meetings and at the General Assembly.

Disruptive tactics were not necessary at this stage in order to gain movement traction in the public discourse.[16] Activists insisting on the use of disruptive tactics found other targets. Some of these activists marched on large banking establishments around the city and engaged in cultural disruption on public transit.

Debates about taking the OLA movement to Bunker Hill, a district where many financial banks are located, led some OLA activists to march and protest at the downtown branch of Bank of America (BoA) and at other branches in and around downtown. OLA activists staged a number of actions at BoA branches, most notably the October 6 and November 17 protests and sit-in at the Bunker Hill BoA main branch where thousands participated. Activists attempted a number of tactics, including a sit-in at the branch and also an attempt to occupy a lawn with a tent city. In both cases, police promptly cleared activists out of those areas and arrested several.

OLA activists also "occupied" the city Metro system in early October. On October 2nd, hundreds of activists made their way to Union Station where activists were careful to follow the LA Metro Code of Conduct that prohibits excessive noise, loitering, and regulates solicitations and leafleting. They engaged in a collective action in stages, silently assembling on a platform, boarding a train, fanning out to distribute leaflets, and then only speaking when

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Tilly explains that movement claims and performances change across both time and space. These repertoires of contention change as the movement wave moves along. (Tilly 2008)

spoken to. TransitTV, which produces news that is aired on televisions mounted onto the busses and other areas of the system, covered the event and included the action on its programming. On October 3, OLA activists engaged in a more traditional rally outside of the gates of a Metro station.

These subway protests continued into late October as documented by an agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in a declassified intelligence report obtained by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund through a Freedom of Information Act request[17]:

> On 10-19-2011 a peaceful protest by the "Occupy Wall Street" movement occurred on a Blue Line train. [redacted] stated the protesters had all purchased tickets and were all cooperative. [redacted] is concerned however about what may happen if the "Occupy Wall Street" protesters mix with the more violent individuals upset about the alleged mistreatment of prisoners in the LASD [Los Angeles Sherriff's Department] jails.[18]

Those that left were quickly being replaced by new activists who were attracted to a more stable and safer environment that was sanctioned by the city. University professors began to send their students to the encampment for extra credit or on assignment to deliver surveys to occupiers. Some local professors also gave a series of free lectures on the weekends. Once the environment became more stable, newly arriving Black and Latino populations who had been exposed to police abuse began to question the movement's relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). White activists who were interested in more disruptive tactics also began to return and speak out against police brutality.

Some also felt that the movement goals were not the most important goals for Black and Latino groups. Occupy the Hood, originating in New York, spread to the Los Angeles encampment and began holding their own General Assembly meetings and established their own committee structure. They began to decentralize the occupation, sending occupiers to other parts of the city, arguing that, "This movement is called Occupy Los Angeles not Occupy City Hall Park." This process accelerated when the main organizers of OLA, and eventually the most vocal within the General Assembly, effectively excluded concerns about police brutality in their communities,[19] feeling that the issue distracted from the message of economic justice.[20] (See also Ehrlich and Johnston 2012)

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[17] See Partnership for Civil Justice Fund. 2012. "FBI Documents Reveal Secret Nationwide Occupy Monitoring." Retrieved from: https://www.justiceonline.org/fbi_files_ows.

[18] Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2011. Intelligence Briefing. Retrieved from: https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/549516/fbi-spy-files-on-the-occupy-movement.pdf

[19] Dellacioppa, et. al. argue that members of OLA took up some of these issues in the months after they were forced out of City Hall Park. (2013)

[20] Economic justice messaging was a primary concern for many Occupy activists. (Juris 2012)

The Occupy the Hood movement in New York (OHNY) developed from a critique of the whiteness of the movement.[21] Occupy Harlem met first on October 28, mostly minority according to most accounts. They brought people from 'uptown,' most visibly a march in which NY City Council member Ydanis Rodriguez was arrested during an eviction of OWS on November 15. The People of Color caucus at OWS organized an event of Elders. Occupy the Hood Los Angeles (OHLA) broke off from OLA and began to hold their own General Assembly meetings. Working with local community action networks, OHLA brought OLA activists to minority neighborhoods around the city and encouraged the civic engagement of minority populations in the ideas of the occupy movement in their own neighborhoods in the city.

General Assembly meetings for OHLA were held earlier in the day, typically on the north end of City Hall Park. Organizers of OHLA were much more populated by Latinos and African Americans but was also much smaller, meetings consisted of generally between 30 and 100 people. Activists were also older and seemed to be involved in various other organizations. While there were people in OHLA who wanted to maintain friendly relationships with the police, attitudes toward police and police brutality were much more diverse than they were at OLA meetings.

One of the central motivating concerns for OHLA was police brutality in the city. Because the OLA GA had collaborated so closely with LAPD from the inception, many OLA activists wanted to maintain cordial relationships. This kept the issue of police brutality sidelined. OHLA was a way of addressing this among the other concerns about the centralization of the movement.

The stability of a legal platform from which to organize allowed for the movement to grow. At its crest, OLA was able to branch out into other parts of Los Angeles, organizing protests in the metro system and at nearby banks. OLA enjoyed popular press and visits from tourists, professors, and celebrities. This success gave way, however, as politicians and police grew weary of the occupiers, internal factions began to solidify, and press coverage began to sour.

Decline

These political threats led to political and ideological radicalization. The social imaginary also shifted from a politics of possibilities to an atmosphere of factionalism and conflict. While the crest of the movement saw a growth in the number of ideas, ideologies, and individuals, once these congealed into political factions, they constrained the range of possibilities[22] for movement actors.

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[21] For a broader discussion of the whiteness of the Occupy movement in general, see Campbell, Emahunn Raheem Ali. 2011. "A Critique of the Occupy Movement from a Black Occupier." *The Black Scholar* 41(4):42-51.

[22] For more on the constrains of movement repertoires, see Tilly, Charles. 2008. *Contentious performances*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

As the movement gained in popularity at the crest, competing narratives draw the movement's resources and energy in different directions, thus consuming the movement. The libertarian socialist philosophy at the center of the movement, lacking the authority of a central committee or charismatic leader, allowed the movement to break up from within as actors followed their own preferred interests. This manifested itself in the various issue-based committees that formed during this period focusing on issues of education, diversity, gender, police brutality, and homelessness. This bricolage is a facet of prefigurative movements and a consequence of holding a static primary platform of economic justice and static primary tactic of land seizure. Held in balance with democratic governance practices, the movement's focus became increasingly indistinct. This occasionally functions well, as with, for instance, holding the values of education and gender diversity in tandem in OLA. It also, on occasion, does not work, as with OHLA breaking off from the main movement over issues of police brutality.

Demobilization is a decline in movement membership participation that is primarily a result of internal factionalism and external political pressure. (Lapegna 2013) Both of these threatened the stability and legality of the movement's occupation of City Hall Park.[23] Demobilization often sets in once a movement frame no longer resonates with the public and tactical repertoires are no longer effective. With the threat of police encroachment and a decline in positive press coverage, several activists picked up their tents and went home.

As the mayor became impatient with the movement and as occupations in other cities began to be removed by local authorities, Mayor Villarigosa offered the General Assembly an alternative space for them to be situated at in an attempt to move the encampment away from City Hall Park. That the Mayor offered the movement another location in which to encamp signals that he and others observed how important the occupation of space was to the movement. The General Assembly could not come to a consensus about the offer and eventually the offer was rescinded and the encampment was threatened with arrest.

Factionalism was the result of a focus on disruptive tactics, grievances against police and prisons, and aggression against activists perceived to be less committed to the movement or who articulate alternative movement narratives. The movement became desperate at the threat of eviction because their narrative had been tightly coupled with the park. To not have the space meant to face a crisis of rhetoric and a breaking of the preexisting social imaginary and the acting out of that vision.

The encampment was removed in the early hours of November 30th after a threat and delay of eviction on the previous night. A surge of activists more than doubled the numbers of people that had been in the park on previous nights to confront the police in an attempt to prevent or delay eviction. Although many people picked up their tents and left, over two-hundred were arrested in this

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[23] OLA movement activity declined precipitously after their eviction from the park. Some members attempted to keep the movement active for a few years. (Dellacioppa, et. al 2013)

struggle with the police. During these last two nights, many of the new-comers seemed to be highly seasoned activists with previous experience confronting police. Medical clinics using anti-tear gas equipment and fluids seemed to spring up and some activists climbed into the trees of the park, which I had not previously seen or heard reports of in the two months of the encampment. This repertoire is most commonly used in the environmental movement in the Pacific Northwest, perhaps most famously in Eugene, Oregon in the summer of 1997 when hundreds of activists attempted to defend the logging of 39 downtown trees. The severe repression of these activists by the use of pepper spray and arrests helped to radicalize this movement.

These repertoires in the late stage of the movement are more consistent with what is observed in "convergence cultures" that surround actions against meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions, the G8 Summits, the political party conventions, and the Olympics. (Esparza 2009; Esparza & Price 2015) This next change in the demographics brought an additional change in the social imaginary from one of celebrating a prefigurative space to another that engages in protecting it at a cost. While it may have been more strategic to pivot the movement's focus elsewhere, it became imperative for the core of the OLA movement to maintain the occupied space at City Hall Park. The cost of this decision was a significant diminution of the numbers of persons involved in the OLA movement since occupation.

The movement ended, for the most part, after police forcibly removed activists from City Hall Park in the early hours of 30 November 2011. Lawsuits about police treatment of activists under arrest lingered in the following months and years.[24] Some occupy activists continued to work in committees and formed smaller marches and events, especially in the Spring of 2012. (Dellacioppa, et. al. 2013)

Conclusion

In this article I have examined the two-month occupation of Los Angeles City Hall Park by activists of the OLA movement in October and November of 2011. I have examined the use of physical space as an arena where activists generate decisions, set rules, and channel contention. I presented the factors that led to movement emergence, peak, and decline – a pattern consistent throughout the movement literature.

The narrative illustrates how movement repertoires change over time, in part defining shifts in the movement cycles of emergence, crest, and decline. This cycle drives possibilities at the inception of a movement (or repertoire availability, in Tillian language), cements its success at the crest, and drive its tactics as it attempts to thwart demise during its decline. The political identities of activists involved can change over this period as well, driving debate and

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[24] As late as 2019, the California Second Court of Appeals handled such a case. (Heder v. City of L.A. 2019)

factionalism around tactics and movement aims. That the movement depended on the occupation of space seemed to constrain the movement and magnify both the internal and external political threats it faced.

The set of public seizures constituting the Occupy movement in late 2011 followed a movement wave with similarities to other prefigurative movements of the political left and right. The Zapatista uprising of 1994[25] (Bob 2005), Argentine protests of 2001 (Sitrin 2006), and Ottawa trucker encampment of 2022[26] all followed the same pattern of movement rise, crest, and decline and all of them initiated spin-off movements. (McAdam 1995) The differences between the movements are also vast, necessitating further research into their dynamics.

Spanning the life cycle of the occupation of the park, OLA as an arena follows a familiar pattern, encouraged by ideas generated internally by activists themselves. Setting up space as an important organizing tactic from the outset, the split between OLA and OHLA also illustrates how political differences can take on spatial dimensions. As players began to disagree about the rules of the arena, this necessitated OHLA to set up its own arena from which to develop their own rules, decisions, and outcomes. As with OLA, this new arena also manifested itself in the occupation of physical space, a democratic process, and asserting autonomy, consistent with Puerta del Sol and other documents influencing the movement. Ethnographic material allows for scholars to understand how activist ideas motivate movements to move from one point in a cycle to another. As movement activity moves increasingly into online activism and as researchers rely on online data collection, geographic space continues to play a role in the generation of movement ideas and in their actions.

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[25] While many recognize the Zapatista uprising of 1994 as part of a protest wave, their movement continues to be strong, even decades later.

[26] Hum, Peter. February 11, 2022. "Enough is enough, Overbrook community says of convoy encampment in stadium lot." in *Postmedia News*. Toronto: Postmedia Network.

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The cruel urgencies of belonging: neoliberal individualism in progressive community organizing

Briana M. Bivens

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how entangled we are with one another while, at the same time, illustrated how unsuitable individualism is as an operative philosophy for the sustainability of our institutions and ways of being. The individualist assumptions undergirding neoliberalism are mobile and sticky, and organizing communities formed around justice-oriented values are not immune from their reach. To wrestle with how neoliberal logics can creep into and threaten the sustainability of organizing spaces mobilized toward progressive values, I draw on conversations with justice-oriented activists and organizers in my own organizing community in the southeastern U.S. during late summer and fall of 2020 – just months after COVID-19 shocked the world and uprisings against anti-Black racism demanded both a collective reckoning with state violence and the political will to construct life-affirming alternatives. I frame the impulses toward urgency and the challenges securing engaged mentorship as neoliberal productions that can contribute to organizers withdrawing from the organizing work entirely. I conclude by introducing the promise of "micro-utopic practices" through which we can work within and against the confines of neoliberal individualism to prefigure the anti-oppressive worlds many organizers strive to shape. By aligning our practices with relational ontologies – or philosophies of being that recognize and care for our entanglements – we can promote sustainability and disrupt the reproduction of harmful neoliberal rationalities in our movement spaces.

Keywords: community organizing; neoliberalism; ontology; relationality; sustainability; burnout; social movements

Introduction

"There's a season for everything," Stephanie said. When I finally developed the courage to resign from my leadership position in the organization where I was doing most of my political organizing work in 2019, I remember getting lots of advice to take care of myself: get a massage, go on a walk, take a bath. It was this piece of wisdom, though – that there's a season for everything – that really stuck with me. Not only did it remind me that there would surely be things to look forward to after I took this necessary step to disengage, but it also disrupted the notion of this move as some sort of permanent severing. It challenged the very paralyzing and linear teleology of organizing, then burning out, then moving on to other life activities in permanent abandon from

political work. It held, too, the promise of return, of moving through instead of burning out.

The much more common attempts at solace and support from friends and colleagues, though, rested firmly in the self-care current. Self-care discourse commonly focuses on the individual, the self, and obscures and fails to adequately hold accountable the social and political arrangements (i.e., capitalism, neoliberalism, racism) that produce and exacerbate the conditions that give rise to the need for organized mobilization and self-care in the first place. It's also commonly constructed as an activity outside of or separate from the practices of everyday life – a luxury, a worthy indulgence. It highlights, too, just how wholly unsustainable the conditions of everyday life are for so many that we're to find creative ways to cope so we can keep trudging along. By assigning responsibility to the individual to figure out how to maintain their capacity to labor, to produce, to compete, self-care discourse invokes neoliberal ideas about personal responsibility that threaten so much about social and political life, including the power of transformative organizing.

In this article, I draw on conversations I facilitated in 2020 with community organizers in the southeastern U.S. – on the heels of the COVID-19 outbreak and nationwide uprisings against anti-Black racism and state violence – about tensions and stuck places in their organizing to highlight how neoliberal, individualizing logics can circulate in justice-oriented organizing efforts, to the detriment of movement sustainability. I suggest experimenting with capacity-building practices as an anti-oppressive strategy that can disrupt neoliberal logics and support more sustainable and collectivist ways of relating in organizing spaces. I begin by outlining my theoretical approach to neoliberalism as a "governing rationality" (Brown, 2015, p. 9) that territorializes conceptions of the subject and of responsibility. In the second section, I offer a brief overview of the process and context that shaped my collaboration with organizers in my own circle of community, whose insights animate this piece. In the third section, I weave in comments from the organizers I spoke with to consider how neoliberal individualism can condition ways of engaging in justice-oriented organizing efforts, perpetuating a sense of urgency and productivist pressure that jeopardize engaged mentorship and belonging. I conclude by offering *micro-utopic practices* as a conceptual entry point for rejecting the pull of neoliberal individualism and more strategically and collaboratively aligning our organizing practices with the kind of relational, anti-oppressive worlds we're struggling to create.

Conceptualizing neoliberalism as governmentality

Neoliberalism has become such a ubiquitous analytical approach that it's not always clear what people mean when they invoke it. Brenner, Peck, and Theodore (2010) described neoliberalism as a "rascal concept" that is "promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested" (p. 1). I agree with Hall (2011) that despite the

many critiques of neoliberalism as too amorphous a concept to have any utility, "there are enough common features to warrant giving it a provisional conceptual identity" (p. 706). With Foucault (1979/2008), I conceptualize neoliberalism as a governing discourse that circulates through all aspects of life and is capable of attaching to already-existing norms, practices, and concepts. This definition lends itself to analyzing the myriad ways neoliberalizing technologies infiltrate seemingly discrete parts of our lives. In other words, neoliberalism isn't a single, totalizing force; it is a set of assumptions about the self, the economy, and the social world that can seep into and reshape already-existing programs, policies, and practices. It is also beneficial for understanding the paradox of neoliberal discourses circulating in progressive movements and organizations working for justice who, at times, perpetuate neoliberalizing logics in their policies, practices, and ideologies.

In describing neoliberal governmentality, Foucault (1979/2008) alluded to the way that *government* not only entails the administration of state-based programs, but also functions as a subjectifying tool wherein, as Lemke (2001) explained, the "modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence" (p. 191). This relationship is not unlike Foucault's (1975/1995) revamped theory of the Panopticon wherein prisoners who, believing themselves to be under constant surveillance by prison guards, begin to discipline and surveil themselves according to the established rules and expectations. In the case of the Panopticon and of neoliberal governance, the aims and interests of the state are redistributed onto individuals themselves to facilitate their control.

Foucault (1979/2008) also articulated a related component of neoliberal governance that enables this redistributionary move: He described neoliberalism as comprising "a sort of economic analysis of the non-economic" (p. 243) such that relationships in the social world are governed by market logic whose purview once rested solely in the economic domain. Brown (2015) clarified Foucault's position, describing neoliberalism as "an order of normative reason that, when it becomes ascendant, takes shape as a governing rationality extending a specific formulation of economic values, practices, and metrics to every dimension of human life" (p. 30). This figuration is unique in that it positions neoliberalism as a discourse that circulates, mutates, and attaches to existing concepts to the effect of transforming "every human domain and endeavor, along with humans themselves, according to a specific image of the economic" (Brown, 2015, p. 10). Discourse, in this sense, isn't purely a linguistic phenomenon; instead, it is productive and entangled with the material, such that Foucault (1972/2010) described discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 49). These two aspects – neoliberalism as a subjectifying, governing discourse and as the application of economic logic to the social world – clarify how neoliberalism is capable of mutating and co-opting progressive efforts at political change.

Neoliberalism's foundational ontology: the responsibilized, individual subject

The discursive analysis that governmentality offers also explains how neoliberalism reshapes the *subject* in economic terms, giving rise to notions of human capital that demand investment and care for the sake of ongoing production, reifying capitalist notions of profit, production, and efficiency. Foucault (1979/2008) described this as a transition from a subject of exchange in classical liberalism – wherein individuals participate as barterers in economic transactions – to a "subject of interest" (p. 273) who makes choices to maximize their self-interests. Brown (2015) extended and complicated this analysis, situating neoliberalism in the current times and proffering as core to the modern neoliberal project the *responsibilized subject*, a "responsible self-investor and self-provider" who is "forced to engage in a particular form of self-sustenance that meshes with the morality of the state and health of the economy" (p. 84). In other words, the ontological assumption at work – the philosophy of *being* underlying neoliberal logic – is that we are each singular individuals vested with the personal responsibility and accountability to craft our way. This emphasis on the individual, in turn, significantly unburdens state-based programs and institutions of the provision of welfare and the common good.

Generally, Foucauldian conceptions of governmentality explain how "neo-liberal strategies of rule […] encourage people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their own wellbeing" (Larner, 2000, p. 13). In this way, neoliberal governmentality explains the set of decentralized relationships, discourses, and processes seemingly outside of but deeply entangled with the state apparatus that reassign responsibility for wellbeing from the welfare state to the crafty, resilient individual subject. In the case of community organizing spaces, as I soon describe, this engrained individualizing paradigm can threaten the community care and infrastructure needed to actualize and sustain the scale of social change many organizers seek to create.

Individual choice and cruel attachments

Lemke (2001) and Brown (2015) related the strategy of neoliberal governance to Enlightenment-era notions of free will and rational actors. Enlightenment thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries (i.e., Hume, Locke, Descartes) crafted theories about what it means to be and to know, specifically rooting *being* in our capacity to *know* ("I think, therefore I am"), to rationalize, to individuate, to *choose*. The Enlightenment-era "subject of individual choices" (Foucault, 1979/2008, p. 272), which neoliberal rationality exploits, becomes the site of responsibility for the outcomes of the choices they make. Relatedly, Lemke (2001) described neoliberalism's construction of

prudent subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts. As the choice of options for action is, or so the neo-liberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them. (p. 201; emphasis added)

These Cartesian theories of the rational humanist subject with free will, which "we've repeated […] again and again so it seems normal, natural, and real" (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 2), persist in our current times and constitute a sort of naturalized order, permeating the most ordinary things. On the one hand, it's understandable how this could feel empowering and thus a difficult principle to abandon; if rationality rules, then we are each ostensibly *in control* of what happens to us. But on the other hand, in a world where the contours of our "rational choices" and "free will" are circumscribed by legacies of harm, systematic subjugation, and evasive promises that we can be anything we want to be as long as we work hard enough, "free will can become a heavy burden" (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 43).

Neoliberal rationality cleverly fashions this burden as obligatory, if not desirable, such that the lure of "choice" becomes a cruel attachment, "a muse into which we place our most dearly-held fantasies for the life we want" (Bivens, 2023, p. 5). a choice to choose "choice." Berlant (2011) described "optimistic attachment[s]" as involving a "sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way" (p. 2). The cruelty lies in how inaccessible the fantasy is and how the constant striving toward it "contributes to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place" (Berlant, 2011, p. 25). In other words, as I've described elsewhere (Bivens, 2023),"cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1) is a "paradoxical relation, one in which the object of our desire is, at the same time, a debilitating, precarity-inducing, or incapacitating force" (Bivens, 2023, p. 6). We might think about "individual choice" as a cruel attachment, a neoliberal discursive construction that reassigns responsibility for wellbeing from the state to the individual, legitimizing public underinvestment and contributing to precarity and inequality. At the same time, "individual choice" conjures a spirit of personal industriousness, the ultimate exercise of freedom typified by a romanticized American nationalism. It elicits, too, an idealized vision of a future that, though always deferred, hovers on the horizon as an imagined possibility. Only certain individual choices will help us approximate this mythic state, generating a sense of optimism that – because it is continually deferred – Berlant (2011) called "cruel" (p. 1).

Individual choice remains a powerful governing desire even as it "contributes to the attrition" (Berlant, 2011, p. 25) of social wellbeing and justifies institutional neglect of transformative social and political action. Neoliberal

strategies of governance are so inconspicuous precisely because responsibility for their maintenance and renewal *circulates across* seemingly discrete components of our social world, from entire industries shaped around personal branding and self-improvement to discourses about meritocracy that are deeply connected to American national identity. In this way, neoliberal strategies of governance occupy the delicate, paradoxical nexus of positioning the individual as the sole author of their plight while deputizing individuals to take up the economic and political interests of the state. As Tomlinson (2013) noted, "[n]eoliberalism works to reshape arguments about identity and structural power: rather than making the personal political, it makes the political personal" (p. 999). This move maintains proximity between the state and the individual for surveillance and control purposes while, at the same time, absolving the state from investing in the enabling conditions for economic and social security.

Collaborative inquiries: contemplating tensions and stuck places in community organizing

To explore how neoliberal discourses and practices threaten the sustainability of justice-oriented community organizing engagements, I draw on conversations I facilitated over a four-month period in 2020 with community organizers and activists I know and worked alongside to advance social, economic, and racial justice in our small city in the southeastern U.S. I facilitated one-on-one conversations and roundtable dialogues with nine organizers whose identities span various lines of race, language, nationality, education, gender, and class difference and whose work covers a range of issue areas, from immigrants' rights to educational justice.[1] We discussed the tensions and stuck places in our organizing and our visions for what we'd need to sustain and nourish our engagement. Specifically, in our roundtable dialogues, we explored turning points in our work, contemplated what we need to thrive in our organizing settings, and brainstormed key themes for sustainability in community organizing. In our one-on-one conversations, we discussed how we decide where to direct our energy; reflected on successful and troublesome collaborations; grappled with times when we felt stuck, overwhelmed, or uncertain; and named organizing moments that were particularly joyful or pleasurable. Through these engagements emerged insights into the pressures and discourses that contribute to tensions in organizing, as well as wisdom as to what supports are necessary to promote sustainable and nourishing organizing efforts. While my focus here is on the

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[1] The conversations I describe in this article occurred as part of my dissertation research on burnout and sustainability in justice-oriented community organizing and education (Bivens, 2021). In that larger study informed by post qualitative and scholar-activist methodologies, I drew on post-foundational and Black feminist theories to deconstruct burnout and self-care discourses, with a particular focus on what ontology can teach us about the challenges and possibilities of aligning organizing practice with collectivist, relational, and anti-oppressive principles.

former, I should note that our conversations were also full of joyful recollections, laughter, and vignettes about the pleasures and victories of organizing that keep many of us engaged, a powerful reminder that organizing work can be ambivalent, complex, and delightfully messy.

The small city in the southeastern United States where all the organizers I spoke with are based is replete with both nonprofit organizations (there are over 400 of them!) that strive to meet various direct service needs and grassroots political organizing arrangements that are not necessarily ensnared in the nonprofit industrial complex. Many people describe the town as a "blue dot in a red state" for its left-leaning political orientation as compared to the surrounding counties and to the state as a whole, which had long been decidedly conservative until organizations led by Black organizers and Organizers of Color facilitated an impressive Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate in 2020. Given this, there's a fair amount of progressive energy in the community that ballooned following the 2016 presidential election, after which hundreds of people in the city came together for the largest march in its history. Many people got involved in politics for the first time then, new justice-oriented organizations were formed, and existing political organizations fighting for social and economic justice saw their membership increase exponentially.

The folks I collaborated with for this inquiry had been engaged in organizing efforts specifically focused on racial, social, and economic justice of some sort, some of them for decades and others only since Donald Trump's election. Some organizers were also elected officials and have a long history of community-based advocacy, while others saw their political advocacy work as emerging or just beginning. The organizers I spoke with have been involved in efforts to influence local policy, pressure major institutions, elect progressive state and/or local candidates, and/or orchestrate (and win!) their own bids for public office. These collaborators have worked with organizations that are loose networks or coalitions of organizers without formal nonprofit status, issue-based nonprofits with access to grants and other funding sources, and volunteer-run political advocacy organizations that rely on member donations. I believe their insights into the tensions in community organizing – the neoliberal threads of which I explore in this article – and their imaginings for organizing sustainability will resonate with current and future organizers working to create anti-oppressive change.

Neoliberal discourses in community organizing

The cruel urgencies of belonging

I spoke with one organizer, Carmen[2], who attributed tensions and stuck places in her organizing largely to a sense of urgency and a lack of mentorship that

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[2] All names herein are pseudonyms that the organizer-collaborators selected for themselves to protect their anonymity.

threatened feelings of belonging and contributed to her decision to disengage. Carmen considered herself relatively new to organizing and, during her senior year of college, she volunteered heavily in a coalitional effort to hold the local university accountable for its legacy of racism and history of relying on enslaved labor. We are close friends and have collaborated on organizing projects, and yet, before sitting down for an outdoor, distanced pizza and beer in late 2020, we hadn't talked at length about some of our shared perceptions on the challenges and possibilities of organizing. Carmen told me about the prevalence of conflict and the sense of urgency in the coalitional effort where she located most of her organizing experience. The coalition was a loose network of newer organizers like Carmen and veteran organizer-elders, an intergenerational collaboration that isn't common in the city's progressive organizing settings. Its trajectory was driven mostly by young organizers, and Carmen reflected on how this shaped the culture of urgency:

> Especially in western culture or with young people [...] there's this need for instant gratification. [...] For most questions that we have, we can just look 'em up, and we're used to our needs being met rather quickly. So when I'm in a space of a bunch of young people who want instant results, there's just naturally going to be burnout.

This expectation to move quickly was exacerbated given the role of technology in the organizing; much of the planning occurred on social media and messaging platforms, which, designed to be accessible from anywhere, anytime, can function as another mechanism by which to track production and participation.

The expectation to ceaselessly participate in the organizing and planning conversations created a dynamic wherein, as Carmen put it, "people [felt] like they don't have time to restore personal intimacies or personal relationships because they have to focus on the work." Carmen went on to reflect on how this expectation to be all-in for "the work" contributed, too, to a lack of a sense of belonging:

> I also didn't feel as accepted in [the] organizing space as I had hoped. I felt like there was a requirement to have a personality that meant that I move very quickly, I had to sacrifice my other interests, and I had to devote everything to this cause all day, every day. Need to be in the messages, need to reply, need to be available, and if I'm not, it's a testament to my commitment.

The sense of urgency that Carmen described is common in organizing communities. Gorski (2015), for example, connected it to a "culture of martyrdom" (p. 707). Relatedly, Rodgers (2010) described a "ubiquitous discourse of selflessness" (p. 279) that produced similar pressures for continuous and fast-paced engagement and connected those expectations to

perceptions about one's dedication to the work. Carmen's connections between the sacrificial expectation to "devote everything" and the pace at which this ongoing investment was expected to proceed suggest a neoliberalized discourse at work. Not only was Carmen expected to narrow the scope of her engagements, in large part, to those ostensibly related to organizing, but this expectation also functioned as an efficiency-making tool. It was an importation of the same speed-up logic that capitalists used to control factory workers, a mode of hastening and increasing the production of a desired outcome.

Berlant's (2011) notion of "cruel optimism" (p. 1) is a useful analytic for thinking about how speed, desired futures, and one's perceived sense of belonging in organizing spaces can converge as neoliberalized reinforcements. Returning to Berlant (2011),

> optimism is cruel when it takes shape as an affectively stunning double bind: a binding to fantasies that block the satisfactions they offer, and a binding to the promise of optimism as such that the fantasies have come to represent. (p. 51)

In other words, the idea is that a specific outcome is going to bring happiness or satisfaction once-and-for-all, but social, economic, and political forces make that outcome remarkably difficult to achieve, inducing a sort of constant striving. Optimism that is attached to an outcome or process that, paradoxically, inhibits that which it promises is cruel in that it entices without ever fully and finally satisfying. Carmen spoke about how she "didn't feel as accepted" in the coalitional organizing and that she "didn't think that [she was] someone who had enough clout or respect or authority to have a good opinion," attributing these perceptions, in large part, to the urgency and total devotion that circulated as unspoken expectations. We might consider the pressure to participate in a particular way and to a particular extent in order to experience acceptance or belonging as a "relation of cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). For Carmen to approximate the scope of change she aimed to impact through organizing, she often confronted pressure to perform a certain kind of engagement and intensity, in turn making it difficult to meaningfully and sustainably participate in the justice-oriented efforts in which she was invested. The sense of belonging Carmen desired in and through organizing was constantly deferred, made inaccessible by the neoliberalized expectations surrounding what constituted valid and dedicated modes of contributing to the work. The neoliberal notion at work here invites the following "cruel" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1) logic: If only Carmen had chosen to be active in one more thread, or attended one more meeting, perhaps then she would have, once-and-for-all, gained the sense of trust and community she needed to feel affirmed and comfortable sharing her ideas and opinions.

Montgomery and bergman (2017), relatedly, described how "radicalism becomes an ideal, and everyone is deficient in comparison" (p. 20). For them, "rigid radicalism" (p. 169) can induce burnout and is an enactment of what

they called Empire, or "the web of control that exploits and administers life – ranging from the most brutal forms of domination to the subtlest inculcation of anxiety and isolation" (p. 48). This idealization "imports Empire's tendencies of fixing, governing, disciplining, and controlling, while presenting these as a means of liberation or revolution" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, pp. 173-4). This kind of romanticized relation, wherein the discourse in the organizing community is one in which one's dedication to the work or fitness as an organizer is attached to a specific, hyper-present, hyper-invested form of engagement, replicates a neoliberal logic that valorizes individual choice and productivity while contributing to the "attrition or the wearing out of the subject" (Berlant, 2011, p. 28).

The urgent and sacrificial expectations that Carmen connected to her sense of belonging underscore how an individualist ontological orientation that is attached to a sense of urgency to produce and participate in a purist, singular way can paradoxically manifest through suggestions to get out of the way (i.e., sideline other components of life not seemingly directly related to the work) while simultaneously remaining hyper-present, hyper-invested in a singular type of engagement. Carmen's insights are so illuminating because they draw attention to how individualist, productivist discourses can create the conditions for unhealthy, unsustainable organizing that, ironically, threaten the very aims of the work in the first place. In other words, a looming expectation to prioritize the demands of organizing over the health of the relationships that make it possible can generate conflicts or feelings of organizer dissatisfaction that jeopardize the collective capacity to do the work at all.

"It is difficult to mentor someone else when you are so burned out": On the challenges of capacity-building

The individualism underlying neoliberal discourse contributes not only to a state of social precarity that makes dedicating time to organizing (particularly for unpaid organizers) difficult but also to an individualist work ethic that can circulate in community organizing settings themselves. During our conversations, the organizer-collaborators and I talked at length about mentorship in community organizing, specifically in relation to conflicts or stuck places in our work and to the relationships in organizing we need to thrive. In this section, I draw on the organizers' comments about the need for mentors before tracing the challenges of mentorship and capacity-building in largely volunteer-based organizing settings. Specifically, I suggest that the widespread social and economic precarity wrought by neoliberal capitalism creates a context that positions organizers to replicate its logics by working individually to meet the urgency of the moment rather than investing in collective capacity-building or relational networks of support. This contributes to a cruel cycle wherein organizers personally take on additional labor to more quickly approximate a desired outcome which serves to further enhance their

overwork and threaten capacity for future, more distributed and sustainable organizing.

Mentorship: The challenges of intergenerational knowledge sharing

Many of the organizers I spoke with reflected on the paucity of organizing and political mentors. Taylor's political work has spanned grassroots and electoral settings. He credited the Occupy Wall Street movement with his growing involvement, and, since then, he founded a local progressive political organization and ran for – and won! – local elected office. I consider Taylor one of my political mentors and a close friend. We've collaborated on several organizing projects, so hearing him talk so candidly about his own views on mentorship was especially insightful. While he named a handful of folks he considers mentors, he noted that "mentors are hard to come by" and sometimes when he tried "to build relationships with others, elders in the community" he was met with "disinterest." For Taylor, this contributed to a sort of improvisational ethos in his work. They were making mistakes, learning, and growing along the way: "There's not a school for this," Taylor said.

In our one-on-one conversation, Anna echoed Taylor's sentiment, also commenting that mentors "are hard to come by." Anna, a longtime local resident, joined the large community of people who became more politically engaged after Donald Trump was elected President in 2016. She grew increasingly passionate about electoral politics as a lever for progressive change and led the local Democratic Party's candidate development committee for two years. Anna talked about how she perceived the local political landscape as quite new and minimally active, so there was a dearth of mentors because it seemed like no one had really done the work before. For Anna, this called for a similar spirit of improvisation that Taylor invoked:

> So we really had to invent it, just like, picking up tidbits here and there from different people. And on one hand […] that's kind of empowering to feel like, "Okay, nobody seems to know what we should do, we're just gonna have to figure it out on our own." On the other hand, there's not much devoting to an effort like that, you know, when you're working on volunteers, like me, who will invest stuff and work hard on it *and then disappear and leave hardly a trace of what they've done.* (emphasis added)

In other words, Anna connected the scarcity of mentor and organizational support to an ambivalent process wherein it was both exciting to be able to invent an approach to candidate development and exhausting because of the immense amount of work that creation entails. So, for Anna, creating a sort of archive that could support future organizers (so they don't also have to start from scratch and then grow overworked) is an important strategy for long-

term sustainability. She mentioned that she had wanted to create a candidate development handbook for future organizers to use, but this is one of the projects that fell through the cracks compared to the other, more immediate demands of organizing like conducting electoral research and identifying and training Democratic candidates to run against Republicans in upcoming local and statewide elections.

Carmen, the labor and racial justice organizer I introduced in the previous section, described how mentor support might have helped mitigate the lack of acceptance and sense of urgency that permeated her organizing experience. When I asked about relationships she would need to nourish her organizing engagement, Carmen talked about the need for "more older Black people involved in the organizing" who share a similar radical politic who could serve as mentors to the younger Black organizers like herself. Carmen connected the guidance of mentors and elders who share her politics and racial identity to the sustainability of the work, drawing on her perceptions of organizing efforts in the nearby large, metropolitan city where she found progressive organizing communities that were more intergenerational. She noted that in these settings, older folks help set the tone by "sharing their experience and say[ing], 'this is the pace, this is what will work.'" For Carmen, relationships with mentors and elders held the promise for more healthy and sustainable practices in movement settings.

Sharing responsibilities: The trouble of making time

In the roundtable discussions, the group also talked about how difficult it can be to mentor someone else when there are so many other demands on time. Taylor, the grassroots organizer who's now an elected official, spoke about the immense amount of work it can take to mentor and delegate. He mentioned how in his work with the social and economic justice organization he co-founded (prior to winning his election as a local legislator), the work relied on volunteers, so he collaborated with "whoever walked in the god damn door." He felt like he had to display an almost excessive enthusiasm to retain people. He disclosed the challenges of relying on volunteerism, noting that he often took on additional work himself because "it's hard to find people." He described his thought process as: "I know I can do it [the task/project], and I'm just gonna do it. That way I don't have to worry about it." In many ways, this is analogous to Taylor's challenges in getting the support he needed in his role as a local elected official, a position that does not come with staff. He similarly had to personally arrange a process to bring on an intern to support his government work. He spoke specifically about the challenges of mentoring an intern:

> It takes so much work and so much structure for me to do that. I really found myself feeling like I either had to choose to […] get something productive done, like get it done, as I knew it needed to be done, or […] teach somebody through

this and maybe not get it done and maybe have to do it myself anyways at the
end, and really just not having [...] time or ability to do both things.

For Taylor, taking the time to mentor or educate someone else, while
important, can mean risking the careful completion of the task or foregoing
some of the more immediate projects that beckon.

Lydia also spoke about the difficulty of getting volunteer support, which
contributed to her personal overwork. Lydia is a local artist who coordinated
volunteers, designed graphics, strategized legislative action, and contributed to
myriad other efforts in a volunteer-run, grassroots social and economic justice
advocacy organization. Lydia described how hard it was to get volunteers to
sign up for specific tasks:

> I spent a lot of time trying to get people to fill roles that [...] needed to be filled,
> and that almost never worked. It almost never worked to like, have a role then
> try to reach out to people to fill it. [...] People would show up and kinda do what
> they wanted to do.

Lydia shared how this labor-intensive effort to find and train volunteers for
pre-existing tasks or projects sometimes just wasn't worth it:

> It seemed like delegating took more work than just doing the thing myself. [...]
> So a lot of the time I was doing the stuff that I shoulda been getting volunteers
> to do the stuff for me because I couldn't get a volunteer to do it or it was too
> much trouble to get somebody else.

In other words, Lydia struggled to find the volunteer support she needed and
so was cast into a position of laboring individually.

Anna contextualized a similar concern, noting how her role as candidate
development chair was unpaid. As a volunteer organizer, she felt especially
frustrated and resentful about the lack of support from others:

> So recruiting volunteers is tough, and hanging on to volunteers, and finding
> people who will actually do what they say is tough because people are not
> getting paid for this usually. It made me kind of resentful in a leadership role, of,
> "So why does it have to be *me* doing all of this work? I'm not getting paid
> anything. Why am I kind of left high and dry and people come through and
> they're not stepping up to really help and do the work?"

Anna wasn't compensated to lead the candidate development committee for
the local Democratic Party even though she invested nearly 20 hours a week in

the role. This problem contributed to her resentment and uncertainty about whether other people actually cared about the work, despite what they may have said. Here, neoliberalism enables conditions in which social action and civic engagement are so socially devalued that political organizing is typically unpaid work. And when it is compensated, it's often molded by the pressures of what James (2013) called the "corporate Left" (p. 58) that latches on to nonprofit organizations and awards massive grants for very particular types of tame and acceptable projects, bolstering the nonprofit industrial complex and "nurturing a particular ideological and structural *allegiance* to state authority that preempts political radicalisms" (Rodriguez, 2017/2007, p. 29). The difficulty of finding volunteer labor for progressive change efforts in a neoliberalized social world that incentivizes personal economic growth and self-sufficiency over collectivism is not entirely surprising. Neoliberal discourse also impacts participation in civic life. Participation in civic institutions is declining (Denton & Voth, 2016) alongside Americans' trust of government and of one another (Rainie & Perrin, 2019). This tendency toward individualism, aided by neoliberal discourses, increases fragmentation and diminishes trust in collective processes and notions of the collective good.

This neoliberal trend of divestment in social change organizations (particularly those suspicious of attaching themselves to the state-endorsed nonprofit industrial complex) such that organizers don't have the infrastructural support or capacity they need to transition to the next project can create scenarios where they truly get stuck in a role they didn't necessarily want in the first place or no longer wished to be in. Anna, the candidate development organizer, emphasized how a lack of people to do the work contributed to her decision to assume a leadership role in the first place. Anna described being "thrust into" her role leading candidate development efforts for the local chapter of the Democratic Party: "I didn't really want to be the person in charge but it just seemed like there was nobody else [...] stepping forward to do it."

V described a similar sentiment. V is a long-time organizer and elected official who describes her advocacy as "organic." She participated in local educational advocacy efforts in the 1980s aimed at electing more Black school board members and has since worked with a variety of labor and economic justice organizations in addition to serving on the school board and as a local legislator. She spoke about how difficult it was to step back from a particular project despite feeling like it was the time:

> The only reason why I think I've drug it out this long, [...] longer than it should be is because one lady had convinced me that I needed to [...] stay involved. And then another gentleman, [...] he was like, "What are we gonna do when you leave?"

Both Anna and V expressed an attachment to this notion that no one else can or will step up, which made it difficult for each of them to contribute in a

sustainable and desirable way. The sense of feeling overwhelmed, as if the whole project might just crumble if one person leaves, is familiar to me, as well. I stayed in my role as coordinator of the social and economic justice organization months longer than I otherwise would have because I feared no one would replace me and the organization I cared about would collapse. However, had there been a sustained and coordinated effort to archive and communicate institutional knowledge while also building up future leaders, I imagine I would have felt more confident stepping back.

Harriett had a similar take, attributing the difficulty of mentoring to what she described as "burnout" and the demoralizing exhaustion that can come from years of the kind of political advocacy many people – particularly political conservatives – are antagonistic toward. Harriett is the director of a local nonprofit organization that focuses on civic engagement and economic justice. She spoke of her many years leading voter engagement efforts and how immovable, resistant, and even sometimes downright insulting people could be:

> And so I think after […] sixteen years of those "no's", you don't let it affect you, but at some point it does affect you. That interferes with your ability to try to mentor someone. You don't have any energy to mentor anyone. Like right now I got some young folks working with me but I'm pretty much hopin' that – I'm trying to give them stuff to read and that kinda stuff because I kinda just can't go through it again. I said I was gonna write a book but I didn't. […] Maybe I might still do it but I feel like it's late. […] So, I just don't have the energy to go through those experiences again and try to explain it to someone again. You just get tired of asking, tired of talkin' about it, and it just gets to be, you know, too much after a while. […] And you know you need to get someone to take your place because, you know, it needs to go on, but after a while you just saying, "well they'll get it, the world will go on with or without what I know." […] It is difficult to mentor someone else when you are so burned out.

As director of a nonprofit, Harriett does receive a salary for her work and yet the scope of the injustices she's advocating against – low wages, poor working conditions, voter suppression, lack of community engagement, and more – coupled with the demoralizing impacts of all the "no's" over the years, has contributed to what Harriett described as "burnout." She touched on how the lack of energy to mentor, in turn, reinforces a sense of isolation, creating a frustrating loop. She offered a marching band as a metaphor for this experience:

> And you are just marching and you are so proud of what you're doing and you're just marching, marching, marching, and then you decide to look back, and you notice that your band has all sit down on the sidewalks and you're out there just marching by yourself.

The years of exhaustion and overwork have led Harriett to struggle with building the kind of organizational capacity that could revitalize and collectivize the work and facilitate her comfort stepping back after her decades of leadership. In turn, Harriett has put the book she wants to write – which could facilitate the work of younger generations and contribute to intergenerational collaboration – on the backburner to respond to seemingly more immediate organizational demands.

Neoliberal antagonism toward capacity-building

The comments of these organizers offer a glimpse at how organizing and building collective power in the context of neoliberalism is difficult, especially given neoliberalism's historical antagonism toward social movements. Hong (2015) described how neoliberalism took hold in the wake of the 1960s liberation movements as a "brutal crackdown by the forces of the state as well as the incorporation and affirmation of those aspects of these movements that were appropriable" (p. 11). Anti-colonial, racial justice, and anti-capitalist movements pose a direct threat to neoliberalism's precarity-inducing logic of individualism and privatization. Butler (2015) described precarity as "that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (p. 33). The precarity wrought by neoliberal capitalism – like low wages, long working days, unaffordable housing, and expensive, privatized healthcare – coerces organizers into replicating its logics by working individually to meet the urgency of the moment rather than slowing down to invest in collective capacity-building or relational networks of support. Put another way, neoliberalism is crafty. It justifies the dismantling of community and public support while making us believe we are primarily responsible for our struggles, inviting a sort of desperate personal effort to persevere. Anna didn't make the candidate development handbook she had planned before she left her candidate development role and Harriett hasn't written her book; these infrastructure-building projects were sidelined in favor of producing the quick, visible results that neoliberal capitalism demands.

Ultimately, the paucity of mentorship support that some of the organizers expressed and the challenges of mentoring and capacity-building that others discussed reflect a paradoxical relation: On the one hand, newer organizers want mentors to help set the pace, bring in resources and wisdom, and provide guidance. On the other hand, taking the time to recruit and educate volunteer laborers or to archive prior efforts – particularly in a precarity-inducing economy where overwork and underpay is the norm – creates additional labor for experienced organizers that doesn't necessarily have an immediate payoff. In this way, neoliberal conditions and the related search for more immediate returns produce scenarios in organizing spaces where organizers are positioned as deputies for neoliberal logic. Specifically, they are made into "*responsibilized individuals* [...] required to provide for themselves in the

context of powers and contingencies radically limiting their ability to do so"
(Brown, 2015, p. 134; emphasis added). In the excerpts shared above,
organizers were driven to labor individually because the work of building
capacity was just too difficult in a context where there's just *so much that
needs to be done* and finding volunteer labor or providing mentor support
would supplant another, seemingly more pressing need.

Toward relational, emergent ontologies for sustainable community organizing

In focusing on how neoliberal discourse can shape experiences with urgency,
belonging, and mentoring in community organizing, I don't wish to suggest
that the aim is to somehow create a space completely insulated from forces like
neoliberalism. In fact, the governmentality conception of neoliberalism
shaping my analysis doesn't tolerate binary inside/outside reductions, and part
of what makes neoliberal discourse so sinister is precisely its capacity for
mobility and mutation. My aim, instead, is to elevate the discourse and its
operative individualist ontology so that we might be better prepared to name
it, respond to it, and ponder practices that are rooted in relational, collectivist
assumptions about knowledge and being. When we consult other, more
relational theoretical foundations, what creative possibilities for moving
through stuck places and tensions in our organizing might emerge that can
support collective sustainability?

Relational entanglements

One of the dangers of neoliberal logic's construction and romanticization of the
individual is how it obscures the much more complex set of relationships that
condition the perceived set of choices we believe ourselves to have and thus
our perceived avenues for thought and action. Yet, there are many compelling
theoretical traditions that challenge individualism and the self/other divide.
Societies spanning time and geographies do live and have lived ontologies
other than that described by Cartesian humanism. Indigenous and decolonial
feminisms have forwarded relational ethics and ways of being (i.e., Anzaldúa,
2015; TallBear, 2014; Watts, 2013). Black studies and Black feminist scholars
have offered a critique of Western liberal humanism in the context of
enslavement and enduring, racialized systems of domination (i.e., Gumbs,
2020; Hartman, 1997; McKittrick, 2006 & 2021; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter,
2003). And posthumanist and new materialist thinkers (i.e., Barad, 2007;
Bennett, 2010; Chen, 2012; Coole & Frost, 2010) have posited an entangled
relationship between self/other, past/present, and cause/effect, assigning
vitality and agency more expansively. Barad (2010) suggested "the co-
constitution of determinately bounded and propertied entities" (p. 253) and
posited the *entangled relation* as the onto-epistemological unit (rather than
the singular atom, for example, or the spoken/written word). Relational
ontologies and critiques of Enlightenment-era humanism from across

disciplines and theoretical traditions offer powerful reminders of the possibility of departing from the individualist subject, "which is so tangled in separation and domination" (Gumbs, 2020, p. 9), and of rethinking the ontological unit and its bounds.

When we take the relation as the cluster of interest, as opposed to the individuated self of Cartesian humanism, another conception of responsibility emerges that renders the neoliberalized notion of personal responsibility unthinkable, or, at least, unconvincing. Brown (2015) noted how neoliberal discourse and its underlying ontological assumptions construct "responsibilized individuals [who] are required to provide for themselves in the context of powers and contingencies radically limiting their ability to do so" (p. 134). Put another way, it's exceedingly difficult to secure essential economic and social supports, especially given a diminishing welfare state, a paucity of social and leisure infrastructure, and a capitalistic economy that relies on worker exploitation to operate. But an ontological orientation that takes the relation as the unit of analysis challenges the idea of an atomized self who is fully deputized for their independent wellbeing and rationally enacts free-will to craft their lives. This, in turn, makes appeals to and solutions rooted in meritocracy and self-made-ness far less convincing, because it exposes all the connections and contingencies upon which this idea of the individual self relies. In an interview with the *Proud Flesh* journal, Sylvia Wynter shared, "It is this issue of the 'genre' of 'Man' that causes all the 'isms'" (Thomas, 2006, p. 20). So, we might better attend to the harms of neoliberalism when we situate it within the particular ontological universe in which it is thinkable. This isn't to say that we can think our way out of neoliberal-induced precarity, or that simply naming an aspirational relational ontology solves the material and resource disinvestment that neoliberalism promotes. Yet, starting with theory can help us recalibrate our habits and priorities and carve out a space in our daily lives and movement practice to work within and against neoliberal individualism.

Micro-utopic practices

While the individualist, Cartesian ontologies exploited by neoliberalism are normative and dominant in the U.S., they are not totalizing. Progressive political organizing sites are especially ripe for experimenting with practices that align with, or prefigure, the kind of world(s) we strive to create through organizing in the first place. Community organizing spaces are, largely, already engaged in the political work of reforming/transforming/abolishing harmful systems and institutions. Organizers – despite the tensions, conflicts, frustrations, and stuck places they've experienced along the way – also, at times, have lived and organized in accordance with a relational, emergent ontology. I offer *micro-utopic practices* as a concept through which to enter into the project of deterritorializing neoliberal norms and aligning practice with relational theories and ontologies. Utopia, in this sense, isn't a static and determined future but rather "dynamic spaces committed to relational ways of

being, spaces that are never done, never finalized, always in process and becoming" (Jones & Woglom, 2016, p. 159). For The Care Collective (2020), creating these spaces involves building up "care infrastructure" (p. 60) through collectivizing resources, creating flourishing public spaces, and embracing shorter working hours, just to name a few.

For organizing efforts like those described above, I conceptualize *micro-utopic practices* as those that strive to align our habits, discourses, and working norms with the ethical and political frameworks guiding our advocacy by, in part, supporting and provisioning care infrastructure for our movement spaces. To dislodge from the neoliberally inflected challenges that impact mentoring, pacing, and capacity-building in justice-oriented movement spaces, we might consider co-mentoring and archiving as two micro-utopic practices that can support an infrastructure aligned with collectivist, relational ontologies.

Co-mentoring commitments

Co-mentoring has a rich theoretical lineage in feminist and critical scholarship and forwards a non-hierarchical conception of mentoring, challenging one-way mentoring approaches and acknowledging the multiple and varied sites of knowledge production (Godbee & Novotny, 2013; Moss et. al., 1999). Co-mentoring assumes a certain relationality by suggesting we are shaped and reshaped in community. Top-down mentoring reinforces individual ontologies and oppressive power hierarchies by assuming a one-way flow of power and knowledge. Naming a co-mentoring commitment, creating new spaces, and building in opportunities to already-existing activities for the collaborative exchange and development of knowledge can horizontalize the organizing structure and support a collectivist ethos. This discursive shift can also help take some of the pressure off any one person to "be" a mentor; instead, mentoring becomes a collaborative and emergent practice, a fixture of the day-to-day doings rather than a separate obligation.

Archival practices

Archiving offers another promising avenue through which to realign practice with relational ontologies. Naming and embracing relationality as a theoretical commitment can reshape how we treat the work of archiving – from a luxury side project to entertain when outside demands slow down (like Harriett and Anna described) to a priority integral to the collectivity and sustainability of the work. Curating and prioritizing archival practices in our movement spaces can help us organize and pass on knowledges and resources so organizers like Harriett and Taylor don't have to experience the immense and unfair pressure of bearing the weight of the work largely independently. It can also relieve the sense of starting-from-scratch that Anna shared and complexify ahistoricized approaches to community action steeped in a misguided sense of novelty about the work we are doing. Before resigning from my leadership role in the

community organization to which I devoted so much time, I helped draft a proposal for us to add an archivist position to the Board of Directors and connected with archivists at the local university library, who proposed an agreement to archive our organizational work since its early days and into the future. Thankfully, a dear comrade followed through on this partnership long after I left, so the library is developing a collection with our digital files, campaign posters, educational materials, and more that will eventually become available to researchers and community members.

While I'm pleased that our relationship with the university libraries eventually took shape, archival documentation need not be so formal to be impactful. There are multiple spaces and methods of archival practice, including artistic productions, notetaking and storytelling, and policymaking that might be documented and organized on social media, in public writings, in cloud folders, and more. Making intentional choices in collectivity about where and how to archive the work can prevent inaccessibility and organizational memory loss.

Relational ontologies invite us to move beyond individualist thinking and disrupt linear, dualistic approaches. Elsa Barkley Brown's analysis is particularly instructive when it comes to how archiving our movement work can support an expansive and relational view of history. Brown (1992) wrote, "History is also everybody talking at once" (p. 297) and invited historians to contemplate how to situate isolated historical narratives in a much broader context. This enables, Brown (1992) offered, a more coalitional and intersectional politics suited to our "asymmetrical world" (p. 307). We might think of archival practices in movement spaces, then, as historical tellings that can facilitate dialogue and coalition-building with an extensive movement landscape and history. Crafting, communicating, and organizing policies, norms, and the educational principles and resources that guide our work can become a sort of living library, a place for movement workers across space and time to turn for guidance, inspiration, and even critique.

I briefly explore these micro-utopic practices not to suggest that they are enough to overcome systemic oppressions, to imply that prefigurative practices will always be tidy and rigid undertakings, or to prescribe fixed solutions for already overburdened organizers, educators, and advocates. Instead, I offer these reorientations in thought and practice as experiments to facilitate collaboration and capacity-building, creating a bit more space between our own ways of being and engaging in political advocacy and the grip of neoliberal individualism. In the context of heightened engagement with burnout and the internal cultures of social justice movement spaces (i.e., Mitchell, 2022), I should emphasize that I'm not suggesting that these micro-utopic, process-oriented practices need supplant the more outward-facing campaign work and social actions in which organizing spaces are invested or that the work should pause until such practices are "perfected." In a necessary refusal of a reductive internal/external binary, I offer micro-utopic practices like those I shared above as adaptive and emergent capacity-building actions that are deeply

integral to facilitating collaboration and implementing the large-scale work in real-time.

Conclusion

The tensions and stuck places in organizing that neoliberalism and Cartesian humanism enable – from lack of support to frustration with overwork – are neither final nor are they individual productions. What I've suggested here is that neoliberalism and the precarities it induces rely on a particular "description of the human" (Wynter, 2003, p. 310) as a rational, individual self. In this ontology, self-care and individual hard work can emerge as feasible solutions for stresses in organizing. I believe it is possible to practice organizing in a relational, emergent way even as neoliberal individualism structures so many parts of our material-discursive world. While I've focused in this article on outlining a theoretical basis for analyzing neoliberalism and its ontological assumptions in organizing, with emerging thoughts on micro-utopic practices, this line of inquiry would benefit from a more robust exploration of what it might look like to organize in alignment with relational ontologies.

One of Cartesian humanism's projects is to simplify ambiguity and institute hierarchies as a mode of congealing power and circumscribing the realm of possibility. Yet, ambiguity still exists, and Cartesian humanism is not totalizing. One such route for navigating this ambiguity and opening the "as-yet-unthought" (Manning, 2016, p. 7) possibilities for being together, I believe, is through focusing our attention on the entanglements of which we are a part, prompting us to attend to capacity-building infrastructure and to dislodge from an ordering and hierarchizing logic that constrains movement and adaptability. This reorientation is a small shift that might support us in finding spaces to exercise the prefigurative project of *living* in the world as we wish it to be and in caring for our entangled pasts-presents-futures in all their capaciousness. "Striped dolphins eat fish with luminous organs that live in the deep scattering layer of the sea. What nourishes them is literally what lights them up inside! Could we be like that?" (Gumbs, 2020, p. 56). Could we, too, nourish our collective capacities for ecstatic, expansive organizing?

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Acknowledgments

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Organizing the anti-war movement in rural America: lessons learned, 50 years later

Jeff Victor

Abstract

This article documents anti-Vietnam War activities in a small city in rural Western New York State, from a first-hand account. The article also documents harassment activities used against anti-war activists, as a form of social control. The conclusion offers an analysis of what can be learned about social movements in rural areas, from the perspective of 50 years later, in light of Trump's white nationalist movement.

Keywords: social movements, anti-Vietnam war movement, informal social control, formal social control, political harassment, political minorities, rural political activism, rural-urban political division.

Abstrait

Cet article documente les activités pacifistes contre la guerre du Vietnam dans une petite ville en zone rurale dans l'ouest de l'état de NewYork. C'est une récollection personnelle. Cet article documente également les activités de harcèlement utilisées contre les pacifistes comme forme de contrôle social de déviance contre les normes majoritaires. La conclusion de cet article offre une analyse des leçons a tirer sur les mouvements sociaux en régions rurales 50 ans plus tard. Il compare également le mouvement pacifiste avec le mouvement des nationalistes blancs de Trump.

Mots-clés: Mouvements sociaux, mouvement contre la guerre du Vietnam, contrôle social informel , contrôle social formel, minorités politiques, activisme politique rural, division politique rural-urbain.

Introduction

Social historians have very little information about the anti-Vietnam War movement in small towns and rural areas. Almost all information about the emergence of the anti-Vietnam War movement comes from large cities. It is more difficult in a small town to come out against prevailing majority support for a war, and to freely express publicly anti-war opinions. Small towns have powerful conformity pressures in face-to-face relations that do not exist in large cities, where people are anonymous to each other. In small towns, there is an easy familiarity and sense of community that does not exist in large cities. The other side of the same coin is that there exists strong pressure to conform, and

to get along by going along with the perceived majority (Gimpel et al., 2020a)..
People who live in small towns find it difficult to be anonymous and can become
targets for local harassment.

This article documents anti-Vietnam War organizing activities in a small town
in rural Western New York from 1967 to 1972, with a first-hand account. The
article also documents harassment activities used against anti-war activists, as a
form of social control of deviance from majority norms. The conclusion of this
article offers an analysis of what can be learned about social movements in rural
areas of the United States, in the perspective of 50 years later. It also compares
the anti-war movement with Trump's white nationalist movement, when rural-
urban political polarization has increased greatly by the 2020 presidential
election(Gimpel et al., 2020b).

The socio-cultural context

Jamestown is in Chautauqua County, the most western county in New York
State. A large rural region of farmland and small villages surrounds it. The
nearest big city is Buffalo, a drive from Jamestown of one and a half hours away,
via The New York State Thruway. The population of Jamestown in 1970 was
39,795, according to the U.S Census (Wikipedia 2021)**.** Jamestown was once a
thriving and vibrant manufacturing center for furniture and tools. By the late
1960s, it was undergoing rapid deindustrialization. Most of the large factories
had closed. The wages of factory workers had not kept up with prices. The bulk
of the population had changed from being prosperous blue-collar and lower-
middle class people, to poor working class and just plain poor. At that time,
shopping was limited. There were no shopping malls, but there were
Woolworth, Murphy's and Grant's -- five-and-dime stores that were once the
mainstays of rural America.

Most local people were conventionally conservative, although not ideologically
so. There remained lingering remnants of 1950s McCarthyism. People worried
about being thought to have a "different" opinion. Many people expressed
racism and homophobia, without the least embarrassment. In terms of political
views, people constantly complained about taxes, of course. Yet, any criticism of
the nation's military or foreign policy was regarded as suspicious and potentially
sympathetic to Communism. A few wealthy families, mostly factory owners,
dominated politics. Workers who tried to organize unions were blacklisted and
would never find jobs in town. Most of the local people had gone to the one city
high school, stayed in town and knew each other, at least indirectly.

My wife and I were both "outsiders", in the sense of coming to the town from
quite different cultures. I came to Jamestown in 1965, to take a position as a
Professor of sociology at the local community college. I was raised in the
suburbs of New York City. My wife was (and still is) a French citizen. We had
married in her village in France, shortly before we arrived. I was the main
organizer of anti-war activities, along with a few friends. I was also the main

target of harassment. That circumstance enabled me to keep records of the details of what happened.

The goal of small-town anti-war protest groups was to influence prevailing public opinion, by showing that opposition exists where none could be imagined. In the limited technology of the 60s, the communication media that reached small towns was primarily mainstream radio and television. The Internet did not exist as a tool for organizing. The problem was that mainstream television and radio was permeated by implicit pro-war "news". Attempting to be non-critical ("objective") about the government during the war meant that the mainstream media constantly reported messages such as: "the American military says that we are on the verge of defeating the Viet Cong". (Such was the accurate, non-critical reporting of the times.)

Most people in rural areas, such as Jamestown, could only imagine from scenes on television news that opposition to the war existed only among weird "hippies" and "leftists" in big cities. Therefore, the goal of anti-Vietnam War protestors in rural areas was to show local people that opposition did exist on the grass roots. We did so by "creating events", such as petition drives, teach-ins, marches, and ecumenical peace services in churches, that might get attention in local newspapers and radio. We tried to create local events in conjunction with national events, to attract more attention in the local newspaper. However, only local people did the organizing work, and there was no direct connection with any national organization.

Chronology of local anti-Vietnam War events

Date	<u>Local</u>	National
Spring 1967	Debate at Unitarian Universalist church on Vietnam War	
April 15 1967	Author's speech criticizing Vietnam War at Veterans Memorial Park, Jamestown – 8 attend (*Jamestown Post-Journal*, April 15, 1967)	NYC Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam – 400,000 attend
March 15 1968	Petition signed by 53 professors, called for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and starting negotiations toward ending the war. (Jamestown Post-Journal, March 15,1968)	*National Anti-War sentiment grows* *March 12 --- Anti-War Senator Eugene McCarthy gains more votes in the New Hampshire presidential primary than widely expected.*

March 29-30 1968	Two-day teach-in at Jamestown Community College (*Jamestown Post-Journal*, March 29, 1968).	
Spring 1968	Formation of New Democratic Coalition. The 14 members announced support for Senator Eugene McCarthy for President, and a young lawyer, Stanley Lundine, for mayor of Jamestown, because he supported the anti-war effort. Lundine was elected.	
Nov 1968		*President Nixon elected*
Oct 15 1969	Organized all day teach-in at the Jamestown Community College for Vietnam Moratorium Day. Speakers included several Vietnam War veterans and the father of a Jamestown graduate killed in Vietnam. Jamestown native Senator Goodell sends telegram, commending my efforts to stop the war in Vietnam (*Jamestown Post-Journal* 14 Oct. 1969).	*Millions of Americans take the day off from work and school to demonstrate against the war. Organized by the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam.*
Nov 15 1969	I worked on an organizing committee with two Catholic priests and a Presbyterian minister to hold an ecumenical religious peace service at the largest church in town. About 250 people attended. The event received considerable attention in the local newspaper (*Jamestown Post-Journal*, Nov. 16, 1969)	*Anti-war demonstrations took place across the country in large cities, organized by the New Mobilization Committee.*
	As a follow-up, we organized sending two bus-loads of people from Jamestown to attend the March on Washington, in conjunction with the National Student Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam. Some of Jamestown people who went to Washington got tear-gassed. After	

	that, they became more strongly opposed to the war.	
May 1970	All-day community-wide meeting at Jamestown Community College, broadcast on local radio and attended by 400 people. Read telegram from Senator Goodell which he encouraged our efforts to stop the war (*Jamestown Post-Journal,* May 7, 1970; May 8 1970).	*Students shot at Kent State University by Ohio National Guard, four dead and nine seriously wounded.* *In response, anti-war protests break out across the country among university, college and high school students. More than 4 million students protested on a national strike.*
May 9, 1970	200 people marched from Jamestown Community College to the federal building downtown, to present an anti-war petition to State Sen. James F. Hastings. Mayor Lundine spoke to our anti-war gathering in front of Jamestown City Hall, lending public support to the anti-war movement in Jamestown. Lundine went on to be elected Congressman and Lieutenant Governor of New York State (*Jamestown Post-Journal,* May 9, 1970) (See attached photo.)	
July 12, 1972		*Senator George McGovern won the nomination of the Democratic Party for President.*
Fall 1972	Local group fundraises and elects Democratic Presidential candidate Sen. George McGovern.	
Aug 9, 1974		*President Nixon resigns in disgrace after*

		revelations of political corruption.
April 29, 1975		*Final American withdrawal from Vietnam.*

Harassment in a small town

After Nixon was elected President in 1968, repression of the anti-war movement intensified, became more systematic and sometimes involved illegal government activities. Such repression involved illegal break-ins of offices and homes (even before the Watergate break-in was revealed), widespread tapping of telephones, funding of local police counter-intelligence efforts, and placing false information in newspapers about antiwar activists. The Nixon government also sought to use the mass media to arouse public anger against antiwar protestors. These national efforts to repress dissent precipitated down into small town America.

In small towns, local harassment of unpopular minorities takes two different forms: 1) informal, face-to-face harassment by local people and 2) organized harassment by various government authorities. In a sociological perspective, these social processes can be understood as the social control of "deviant behavior". In other words, these are punishments for disapproved non-conformity to the informal norms in small towns. For example, gossip and rumors are classical ways in which small communities everywhere attempt to control behavior. They are not simply expressions of particular personalities.

Informal social control in personal relationships

Threats to employment

One of the most common forms of informal social control in small towns and rural areas consists of threats to one's employment. In the region of Jamestown, such informal punishments for unpopular identities were used against Afro-Americans, homosexuals and labor union organizers. It can also be used against people who hold unpopular religious, or political beliefs.

At one point, a local newspaper editorial vilified me as a "Communist sympathizer". There were also letters to the editor, labeling me a "Communist", called upon my college to fire me. A local radio talk show, hosted by a popular, politically conservative woman, presented a discussion and call-in program about what should be done about the "Communist" professor at college. Later, I learned that she was a member of the local branch of the John Birch Society.

Another example occurred when a member of the college Board of Trustees, a prominent person in the community, took my wife aside at a social event, and advised her to divorce me. She even offered to have her lawyer husband handle the case. My wife was not about to consider that idea, but the threat was understood. Soon afterwards, the President of the College met with me and

suggested that I "might be happier elsewhere". Fortunately, I was protected by tenure at the time, and could not be easily forced to leave my job.

A fellow professor, another anti-war activist, was not so fortunate. He did not have tenure. He was the target of a false accusation of making sexual advances against a female student (who was failing his course and was from a prominent local family). Most of the faculty knew that he was innocent of the charges, because he was homosexual. A faculty trial was held and he was cleared. But, because of the scandal, he left the town and teaching forever.

Harassment by local vigilantes

Another kind of informal harassment involves local vigilantes. The local John Birch Society group spied on my activities. (The John Birch Society was an extreme right wing, secretive anti-Communist organization. It was organized into "chapters," much like secret cells in the Communist Party.) My car was followed at times by one of their amateur subversive hunters. This was confirmed years later by one of my more adventurous students who did a class project (field work) for one of my sociology courses. He joined the local John Birch Society, which was glad to attract a young member. He wrote an interesting report about his experience.

In a related incident, I received anonymous letters containing vague threats such as: "We know where you live." I discovered the author of one such letter, when he made the mistake of enclosing it in an envelope with his business logo. He was a prominent businessman, an extreme conservative and a regular participant in the local radio talk show that had discussed having me fired from the college. I learned later that he was also a member of the local John Birch Society. In historical context, these efforts of local vigilantes can be understood as a vestige of 1950s paranoid McCarthyism.

Gossip and rumors

One basic means of social control in small communities is to apply derogatory stereotypes to people who deviate from majority norms. Everyday examples are slut, queer, hippie, and lowlife (Victor 2004). I was labeled a "radical" in local gossip, according to good friends. Even a few of my sympathetic colleagues took to greeting me as "Mr. Radical". It was a friendly epithet I am sure. However, it was not how I thought of myself, or wanted to be stereotyped. A few of my conservative colleagues began to ridicule me to my face. One frequently greeted me, when I passed him in a hallway, with the sarcastic salutation, "Ho Ho Chi Min".

Formal social control by government authorities

Surveillance by local police

I was not involved with any anti-war organizations from big cities or large universities, but a few local police detectives were convinced, from rumors, that I must have been working with some national radical group. I was alerted to this one day, when a friend who was experienced in anti-war activities in Buffalo, asked to use my telephone. He heard a click on it when he began to make a call. My friend told me that the click indicated that some amateur authority, probably the local police, was tapping my phone. He told me that if the FBI had made the phone tap, I would hear nothing. I had often heard the clicking sound, but had assumed that something was wrong with the telephone line. The FBI encouraged local police to keep an eye on suspected local "subversives", as part of the COINTELPRO program (Churchill and Vanderwall 1990).

I eventually learned that one particular police detective had been spying on me. I learned his identity after the detective had assigned a policeman to sign up for one of my courses. (many local officers enrolled in my criminology courses). He told me that he was asked to report if I preached the violent overthrow of the American government and. advised me never to go to any party where illegal drugs were being used. At the time, it was a well-known police practice to arrest anti-war activists on drug charges, because they could not be arrested for their speaking or marching. I was well aware of this police practice, so I did not use any illegal drugs in the 1960's.

Many years later, I met the then-retired detective. He had become a bus driver who drove my son to high school. I told him in a friendly way, that I knew he had spied on me in the 1960's. He confirmed that I had been watched and spied upon. He tried to console me a bit by saying that it "wasn't anything personal." He was just doing his job.

Sometimes in a small town, it is easier to find out who is doing what, than it might be in a big city. It is comparable to learning which garage or medical doctor does a better or worse job.

Surveillance by the FBI

The 1960s and `70s were still a time when FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's suspicions of Communist influences in the anti-war movement affected the FBI. His Counterintelligence Program's (COINTELPRO) methods included infiltration, burglaries, illegal wiretaps, planting forged documents, spreading false rumors about key members of target organizations and using agents provocateurs (Churchill and Vanderwall 1990).

The FBI field office in nearby Buffalo had about 100 agents covering Western New York, because the nearby University at Buffalo was a center of anti-war activity and housed many leftist students (ibid). (The university was frequently referred to as "Berkeley East"). One of those FBI agents spied on my anti-war activities. I learned about his spying from his wife after she divorced him. We

met at church and became friends. She told me that she would go with him to anti-war demonstrations, so he could seem to be on a family outing.

Government agents provocateurs

During the fall semester of 1969, I met a rather strange visitor to our college campus. He was neatly dressed in a suit jacket and tie, unusual for the time, and probably in his late 20's. He told me about wanting to start "the revolution now" by "killing the pigs". I thought that he must be either a crazy fanatic, or a police undercover agent. I said little and walked away as fast as possible. Later that day, I learned that he had offered to obtain guns and bombs for some naïve students. I did not know at the time that I had fortunately avoided entrapment by a government agent provocateur.

Months later, during June 1970, I saw a picture of the same man on a national television news report about a student riot at nearby Hobart College. Someone firebombed the ROTC building. Afterwards, students saw this man with police, leading a narcotics raid on campus, when several students were arrested. They learned that this man, who had urged them to make bombs and destroy buildings was an undercover agent. Several hundred angry students surrounded and shook two the police carwith the stranger inside. The agent was Thomas Tongyai, dubbed "Tommy the Traveler" by students (Farrell 1971; Rosenbaum 1971). He was reported to be a narcotics agent, supposedly hired by the local Genesee County sheriff's department.

It was later reported that Tongyai had been traveling for more than two years across rural Western New York State, visiting many college campuses while acting as an undercover agent for an unidentified "government agency." Tongyai traveled as a salesman selling veterinary drugs from 1967 until mid-1969, when he was fired. The FBI sometimes hired traveling salesmen to conceal their undercover work. New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller ordered a grand jury investigation of Tongyai, because of his dangerous and illegal activities. However, he was never convicted of committing any crime even though he provided students with arms and bombs. Most likely, the FBI paid Tongyai, as part of their COINTELPRO program (Churchill and Vanderwall 1990; Farrell 1971; Rosenbaum 1971).

8 May 1970: The next day, about 200 people marched from Jamestown Community College to the federal building downtown. (Photo by Jeffrey S. Victor.)

Fifty years later: lessons for small town organizing

Fifty years after the events recorded here, what can be learned about social movements in rural-small town areas, particularly in small towns? The time of this writing is at the end of the Trump presidency, when a right-wing mob invaded the Capitol building. This event was the expression of a white nationalist social movement. There are vast differences between the Trump-supported, white nationalist social movement, and the anti-Vietnam war movement (Collins 2020). However, there are also some similarities in how these social movements get organized on the local level.

In terms of organizing social movements in rural areas, there does not need to be any direction from outside organizations. There is, however, a top-down influence by events at the national level. In the 1960's, local organizers took inspiration from distant events happening on the national level, such as large-scale demonstrations in Washington, D.C. and New York City. In addition, the newer technology for organizing has make it much easier for people in isolated rural and small-town areas to get organized. In the 1960's, the telephone, and its telephone trees, was the main organizing tool. Today, the Internet has made it much easier to set up communication networks, as Trump's white nationalist supporters have done. Much larger numbers of people can be quickly activated for events.

In American culture, unlike in the more secular cultures of Western Europe, religion plays a major role in organizing social movements. Some religious groups and individual clergy support progressive causes and others support conservative and even extreme right-wing causes. The anti-alcohol temperance movement was led by Protestant churches. Black churches led the American civil rights movement. Trump's white nationalist movement is strongly influenced by evangelical Protestant organizers, as can be confirmed by a view of the signs and flags of mob that invaded the Capitol Building on January 6, 2021. Similarly, anti-war and pacifist clergy, Catholic and Protestant, were crucial in organizing the anti-Vietnam War movement, especially in rural America. Organizers for progressive causes in rural areas need to be more attentive to liberal religious leadership, and sincerely respectful of any help.

The rural-urban divide polarization plays an increasingly central role in American politics, as it did during the Vietnam War (Gimpel et al., 2020). The anti-war movement arose primarily in larger American cities. People living in rural America were much more supportive of the war, as an expression of their patriotism, and only slowly changed their opinions as reported in this study. Today, the majority of Trump's white nationalist support comes from the rural areas (Rakich & Mehta 2020; Kanik & Scott 2020). The 2020 presidential election from the small town of Jamestown, in contrast with the surrounding rural county provides an example. In Jamestown, Joe Biden received a clear majority (67%) of the votes over Donald Trump (33%). (Chautauqua County Board of Elections, 2020) In sharp contrast, the overall vote count in rural Chautauqua County was 60% for Trump vs. 40% for Biden.

One similarity between the anti-Vietnam war movement and Trump's white nationalist movement is that both were aimed at changing the national government. However, the similarity ends there. The anti-war movement desired to change one government program: the war in Vietnam and it ended with the end of the war. Trump's right wing nationalist movement is aimed at total takeover of the national government, under an authoritarian, anti-democratic leader. It is likely to continue for a long time, just as McCarthy's paranoid anti-Communism lingered for a long time in rural America, as reported in this study.

The targets of harassment and stereotyping are different in different social movements. In response to Trump's white nationalist movement, the targets were not political minorities, but ethnic minorities. Inspired by President Trump's hate filled rhetoric, there has been an increase of hate crimes targeting Muslim-Americans, Arab-Americas, Latino-Americans, and Jews, some of whom were victimized in violent attacks (Hassan 2019). Most of this increase took place in large cities, where, logically, ethnic minorities are much more common.

According to public opinion research, few Americans, less than 10 percent, ever participate in anti-government protests. During wartime, most Americans disapprove of anti-war protests. Even long after unpopular wars have ended, many Americans disapprove of past anti-war protests. A Gallup opinion poll in 2003 found Americans still divided in their opinions of the Vietnam anti-war protests, with 39 percent approving and an equal 39 percent disapproving, with the remainder unsure (Lyons, 2003). At the time of this writing, the residue of the Vietnam War continues to influence American politics. Conservative white nationalists look back at the Vietnam anti-war protests as a betrayal of loyal Americans who risked their lives in Vietnam. On the other hand, civil libertarians regard the American government's attempts to repress dissent as one more example of American society of repressing dissent (Goldstein 2001).

Social protest movements in rural and small-town areas must adapt flexibly to specific issues. Some guidelines apply: create events that appear to serve the larger community, collaborate with diverse groups, especially with religious groups and seek support from prominent local people. Don't get involved in tangential issues that might discourage potential allies. Finally, a few personal words: have patience and don't expect immediate results from your efforts. It is easy to become discouraged. I always kept in mind the advice of folksinger Pete Seeger. At the Newport Folk Festival in 1964, when I asked him: "Isn't it useless for one person to try to stop a war?" He replied that: "every drop is needed to fill up the bucket."

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UK squatters' social movement's crystal ball: the future of UK squatting during the post-UK Brexit and post-COVID19 recovery period

Benjamin Duke

Abstract

It's not about UK Brexit or the virus per se. It's about the large body of homeless people, subsisting during the challenging economic crisis, post-UK Brexit and post-COVID19. United Kingdom (UK) squatters are living in fear, deep poverty and hunger. For the purpose of this text: UK Brexit is the decision by a very narrow majority of the UK population; to sever all formal economic, political and social ties with the remaining 27 European Union (EU) member states. UK Brexit is a socio-economic political decision, which will have a profound effect upon the UK squatters' social movements throughout the 2020s. Living as a squatter in the UK is an act of surviving adversities in a country with a panoply of human paradoxes. The UK squatters' social movement simultaneously inhales and exudes human tragedies, alongside demonstrating heroic acts of solidarity. This is because how UK Brexit actually works, enabling increased financial capitalisation of domestic and commercial property, will be laid bare. Societal polarisation, radicalisation and social division will intensify, with civil protests being supressed by ever more draconian UK policing legislation. Suppression from increasingly vicious policing starkly evidenced by people's lived experiences. There will be a demographic transformation of UK squatters in the 2020s, with people now living in neo-poverty caused by the global post-COVID19 cost of living crisis. There will be a neo-homeless: a body of typically low-middle income people who were previously just about managing; now literally being evicted due to UK Brexit, long COVID or both.

Keywords: UK housing policy failure; neoliberal financialisation; UK Policing Bill 2021; neo-homeless; neo-social centres; UK squatter's mental health and well-being

Structural flaws in UK housing policy perpetuating the need for UK squatters' social movements

The neoliberal financialisation in the housing market which exploded in the 1980s continued apace into the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period. As in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007-8, the UK post recovery period will experience an upsurge in squatting (Martinez, 2019, p191; see also Tornberg, 2021, p91).[1]

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[1] Tornberg (2021) identifies a 'fiscal crisis' as a causal factor resulting in social change. Tornberg (2021, p100) indicates that squatter communities are delivery agents which help effect social change.

Globally, financialisation of the housing market has acted to monetise residential housing as an asset, without constructing new houses. This is a structural flaw in the housing market, enabling the value of accommodation and subsequently mortgages to grow, without increasing housing supply (Kohl, 2020, p1). A shrinking state signalling the end of priority needs critical resource allocation, alongside less building of social housing has reduced housing supply. Privatisation of the housing market has acted to increase house prices and rents, baking in a profit motive to reduce housing supply. Globally, the additional finance which has been made available for housing capital investment distorts the housing market (European Network for Housing Research, March 2021, p24). Globally this is housing policy failure, manifest in the manner housing financialisation acts to incentivise the non-supply of housing. These structural flaws of a neoliberal housing market will produce a perfect storm in the 2020s; manifesting as an increased number of UK squatters during the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period.

UK policy drivers effecting UK squatters' social movements

The Conservative Party UK General Election victory December 2019 massively shifted the balance of political power towards capital investment and policing in the UK. The former issue perpetuated the perfect storm driving the neoliberal financialisation of the UK housing market (Nowicki, 2021, p843). Capital investment provided finances for land banking, urban regeneration and property speculation. Land banking is the worst manifestation of capital investment as the practice often distort housing markets, leading to an increase in UK squatting (Kohl, 2020, p20). During capital investment a property developer buys land not to build residential housing, but to inflate the value of existing housing investments elsewhere. In practice land often with planning permission attached stands empty and undeveloped, with no housing or accommodation being built that people can live in. Capital investments assets increase in value whilst no physical housing construction takes place, the rental value of existing residential is artificially kept high (Jimes, The Guardian, 30 May 2021; Dingle, Blandy and Blandy, 21 June 2021).[2] Meanwhile UK homelessness and squatting rates increase, mainly for many single people unable to secure accommodation due to the shrinking state. The private sector simply won't be able to cope with the clearly foreseeable increase in housing demand, post-UK Brexit post-COVID19. Qualifying criteria for private sector rental accommodation will be ever more stringent, most people not in stable employment won't be able to apply (See Crisis, March 2021, 18). For those people who are accepted, private sector rents will have continued to rise at the market rate, matching the costs of a mortgage. Many people from privately renting, will also be unable to access social housing: now an even scarcer resource in the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 recession.

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[2] This Dingle (2021) reference item is dated 1 January 1970, which is clearly an error. The article makes reference to a policy review led by Sir Oliver Letwin in 2017. The article access date is 21 June 2021, so I have referenced this Dingle source as 2021.

A new post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 normal:
UK squatters' social movements' neo-social centres

In the 2020s globally there will be a growing body of people living in neo-poverty, caused by the global post-COVID19 cost of living crisis (See Ndhlovu, 2022, p10). A likely development of post-COVID-19 neo-poverty, will be the formation of social centres set up by both global and UK squatters' social movements. Essentially the provision will be neo-social centres delivered either on their own or in association with other community groups (see Tornberg, 2021, p83). UK squatters' social movements will also be involved, in raising public awareness on environmental issues such as a proposed return to fracking. There will be ongoing protests and campaigns concerning, airport expansions, #Black Lives Matter, clean air, Extinction Rebellion and high-speed rail (HS2). UK squatters will also take part in protests on issues such as post Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021 implementation. The Policing Bill 2021 as it's known proved to be particularly contentious with UK squatters' social movements and associated campaign protest groups. The Policing Bill 2021 eroded people's civil liberties substantially, compared to UK legislation in force pre-UK Brexit and pre-COVID19. The Policing Bill legislation gave UK Police Forces the right to set the noise limit, start and finish times of authorised protests (UK Government, 13 May 2021; Casciani, BBC News, 22 March 2021). The Policing Bill 2021 severely limited grassroots activism's ability to peacefully protest in an effective manner, preventing raising of awareness of social justice issues. One effect of the UK Policing Bill in its various forms through the 2020s, was that locally based social centres became easier to establish, whereas public protest became harder.

In the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 recovery period, the Policing Bill 2021 had an unintended societally beneficial effect, the proliferation of UK squatters' associated social centres. I argue these will be neo-social centres, not based on the beneficial anti-capitalist latter day 20th century model of a squatted social centre (Martinez, 2019, p189). Instead, UK neo-social centres in the 21st century post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period, will focus on providing the social infrastructure for neo-homeless transition. In the post-recovery period, the neo-homeless will be much more fluid and transient in nature, spending quite short periods of time as a UK squatter. The neo-homeless can assist with and will require help from neo-social centres. New advice, community and support groups will be formulated, with existing groups reinforced by an army of very capable vocational workers on hand (see Wong, 2020, p231).[3] This was due to the mini economic depression in the UK, as UK Brexit had not worked out as planned. Sufficient international trade deals continually proved elusive, difficult to negotiate, unexpected tariffs and adverse UK Supreme Court decisions acted to impede UK Brexit. The UK economy took longer than expected to recover post-COVID19, intermittently, wearing face masks and varying social distancing measures remained. The result of these circumstances was the UK economy flat-lined, stagnated, unemployment

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[3] Wong's (2020) study indicate how the ranks of social activist groups, can contain very able people. Wong (2020) explains how an asbestos removal campaign group, were able to challenge information belatedly supplied by corporate asbestos manufacturers to regulatory authorities.

increased and vacancies fell. More people (often with high levels of non-mortgage personal debt) were poorer, living in neo-poverty caused by the global post-COVID19 cost of living crisis.

Neo-social centre housing movements similar to PAH (Platform for people affected by mortgages) assisted in fundraising and/or supplying rent bonds (Martinez, 2019, p191). (Private sector landlords often ask for 4 weeks rent and another 4 weeks rent as a deposit in advance. This is before a person is offered a rental agreement to sign, along with the keys to the accommodation) (see also Crisis, 2021, p3).[4] The army of unemployed workers contain highly qualified very able people, a human capital resource which can be redeployed into neo-social centres. They will be able to deliver legal, employment and welfare tribunal representation, helping people to avoid eviction, remain employed and access their benefit entitlements. These neo-social centres will be vital grassroots schemes, providing key services to UK squatters and others in the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period. There will be UK squatters home re-start initiatives, projects that liaise with private and social landlords to re-house squatters. The work of this type of housing neo-social centre would include, getting the accommodation offered, cleaned and furnished. UK squatters re-house re-start neo-social centre schemes, would coordinate ensuring the property is re-connected to gas, electricity and water services. Day-to-day advocacy work would include, providing grants or loans for private landlord bond schemes, alongside assisting UK squatters with their welfare benefit claims. In this sense, neo-social centres have been through a process of *'…co-optation and being tuned into service-providers'* (Bluhdorn and Deflorian, 2021, p267). I argue such a transformation of the UK squatters' social movements', in providing essential social infrastructure to UK squatters is societally beneficial. The neo-social centres we will see in the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 recovery period, will be quite different to the squatted settlements model of the 1960s onwards (Nowicki, 2021, p844).

UK squatters' social movements' activism, engagement and issues they address

There will be a process of repoliticisation and depoliticisation by many within the UK squatters' social movements, concordant with a reduction in organising resistance (Bluhdorn and Deflorian, 2021, p267). This reflects the global North direction of travel regarding squatters' social movements, who will continue to routinely face housing policy failure, caused by neoliberal financialisation (Martinez Alonso, 2022, p487). There is similar harmonisation with squatters facing increasingly vicious policing in both global North authoritarian and liberal states. There will be varying levels of acceptance and reconciliation from the UK

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[4] Crisis (March 2021, p91) identify the need to 'stem a potential tidal wave of 'new' homeless, expected as the COVID-19 induced recession takes hold'; also, that UK Brexit will cause 'disruption to trade and various temporary labour markets'. Welfare and housing protections will be scaled back or ended.

squatters' social movements, with collaborative working with non-squatters' movement community groups and state actors (de Moor et al., 2021, p313). The post-UK Brexit post COVID19 recovery period will demonstrate resistance for resistance's sake is counterproductive, throughout all genres of social movements. Whilst there will always be a need for direct action, there is little benefit in contentious confrontation with political opponents (Bluhdorn and Deflorian, 2021, p267). The UK squatters' social movements, post recovery, will be more about service-delivery and raise awareness campaigns. Politicisation of social action including squatting will be observed and understood through differing economic and pragmatic lenses, as appropriate in post-UK Brexit post COVID19 times. UK squatters and others will see that the benefit of transformation to a Fabian gradualist approach, will reap societal buy-in rewards in the long-term (See de Moor et al., 2021, p315). The UK has witnessed a neoliberalisation of local housing administration, engendered by compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) and the introduction of arms-length management organisations (ALMOs). Public welfare provision has been similarly ravaged by capitalism, manifest in the privatisation of energy, water and public transport (Bayliss et al., 2020, p4). The neoliberalisation of environmental politics is more mixed, the political impetus to reduce the use of plastic faded quickly. The quest for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) and clean air is much more tangible in the long-term. International, national and local engagement continues to take place, with non-state groups including UK squatters working collaboratively devising practical solutions to environmental concerns. In this sense global squatters' social movement activists have agency; able to act strategically regarding the future context of their work.

Continuous fundraising

UK squatters' social movements, alongside numerous other mutual aid and community associations, will join forces to organise fundraising for many disadvantaged marginalised people (Rutherford, Antipode Online, 1 April 2021). Sums raised will be redistributed by the newly formed community coalitions, mainly in the form of food banks. UK Squatters social movements will be assisting in distributing food to people, who otherwise would go hungry. Fundraising will be a continuous pursuit, the social message no one should be hungry, food is a basic human right, falls on deaf ears. The UK left the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights in the early 2020s (Saunt, MAILONLINE, 20 June 2021). There will be high unemployment, as the UK economy won't have fully recovered in the initial stages of the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period. The economic downturn will produce a relatively new phenomenon, destitute households being given additional money towards food, utility bills and public transport use (Hansard, 8 February 2022, column 841). Low to middle income now unemployed households will need to address period poverty. This is a social issue which many global North squatters' movements have faced since their inception in the 1960s.

UK squatters' mental health and general wellbeing

The incidence of mental health disability reached worryingly high levels during the COVID19 pandemic in the UK (Centre for Social Justice, February 2021, p44). Although it won't be acknowledged by the UK government during the post-UK Brexit post-COVID period: UK Brexit will be proved to be a contributory factor in the UK's deteriorating mental health. There is a high prevalence of UK squatters with mental health problems who very often due to being homeless, are unable to access treatments. UK squatters were not able to obtain the medication they need, participate in therapy sessions, analyse their self-meaning to see a positive side. More UK squatters did not have the physical or social space, to express or reflect on everything in their daily living experiences. The UK had not fully recovered from the austerity measures cuts to public services, in response to the global financial crisis 2007-8 (Bailey et al., 2021, p159). The UK was thrown into economically turmoil again in 2021 when in quick succession; both the UK Brexit transition period and the bulk of Government financial support in response to the COVID crisis ended. This led to a significant spike in UK people needing mental health care. UK squatters were particularly hardest hit as they are homeless people, living in often insanitary, insecure, uncomfortable, unheated, very stressful conditions. The trends described here also apply to squatters based elsewhere in the global North.

Conclusion

The transformation of the UK squatter's movement, in the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period towards service–provision, presents a dichotomy (Malamidis, 2021, p34). On the one hand it represents a sting in the tail. To a degree engagement with a broader non-squatter's movement base, hollowed out the UK squatter's movement in the post-recovery period. There was a resulting loss of identity, due to the financial dependence on state actors from broader engagement. The likelihood of transgressive actions, marches, resistance and protests from UK squatters reduced (Bluhdorn and Deflorian, 2021, p267). The other side of the dichotomy, is the UK squatter's movement will be seen as a collaborative working body. This would result in UK squatters being recognised during the post-UK Brexit post-COVID19 period, as a societal force for good. Structural changes in the global social landscape: manifest as continuing housing capital investment neoliberal financialisation; increasing levels of vicious anti-protests policing legislation, the global post-COVID-19 cost of living crisis; are all social policy drivers, which will influence the possibilities and limits of global North squatters' movements.

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'Hacking' climate education methods within narrow policy frames to ask systemic and emancipatory questions. Practice notes from Leith, Scotland
Justus Wachs

Abstract

Tackling climate change requires transformative learning processes that uncover the assumptions underlying the framing of problems and solutions, invite ontological pluralism, and build action-oriented agency (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013). However, many climate educators operate within narrow policy frames that reproduce an 'externalizing' view of climate change and aim to engender behavior change instead of inquiring into root causes and underlying assumptions (Clifford & Travis, 2018). In these practice notes, I reflect on a seven-week climate education program I conducted over two years in Leith, Scotland. I argue that climate education methodologies can be 'hacked' to ask more systemic questions while still achieving individual behavior change. I outline several techniques that helped hack methods in this context: beginning with the value position of the group; creating a space where information is dissected and owned by participants; experimenting with participatory creative methodologies (e.g. storytelling); asking open questions and contextualizing behaviors; and seeing the whole endeavor as a process. These methods are context-specific and are intended as a provocation for educators to explore whether climate education programs they are involved in can be similarly hacked.

Keywords: climate change, climate education, transformative education, transformative learning, sustainability education, climate justice, environmental justice, social movements

Introduction

Sustainability crises, including climate change, are often characterized as 'wicked' problems; their complexity, ambiguity and unpredictability defy easy solutions (Lotz-Sisitka et al., 2015). Several authors (e.g. Lotz-Sisitka et al, 2015; Nightingale et al., 2021) argue that science-policy interfaces have accumulated much knowledge about climate change, yet this knowledge alone has failed to motivate the drastic action needed to halt the crises. Nightingale et al. (2021) argue that science-driven climate knowledge is underpinned by a colonially-inherited, technocratic ontology that analytically separates the environment and society and understands climate change as an external threat. This framing excludes diverse and indigenous ontologies, prevents the critical examination of capitalist political economies that give rise to climate change in the first place, and leads to technological and managerial solutions.

This presents a particular set of challenges for climate educators in formal and non-formal settings. There are no ready-made solutions that can be learned, and it is questionable whether solutions born out of these externalizing values and framings can catalyze the necessary systemic transformations to overcome climate change. Research and learning processes should develop disruptive action-oriented capacities, which need to entail a questioning of values and definitions of problems and solutions (O'Brien et al., 2013). However, many climate research and education programs exist within narrow policy and funding frames that dictate to what extent processes can be aimed at systemic transformation (STEPSCentre, 2021). Education initiatives frequently follow a 'climate literacy' paradigm, which endeavors to increase scientifically accurate knowledge of climate change (Clifford & Travis, 2018). I contend that this partly results from the framing described above – if climate change is viewed as an external problem that can be solved with technical and managerial solutions, and this view dictates policy agendas and education funding as well as the mindset of educators, the resulting education programs will reflect this externalizing perspective. Many climate educators with transformative aspirations (including myself, as I will explain below) operate within these narrow policy frames, trying to subvert and extend what perspective shifts are possible within their courses.

Fortunately, educators can find guidance in transgressive and liberatory practices, such as the idea of 'hacking', or creatively subverting, methods. This concept originated within pedagogy in museums and grew out of the recognition that museums emphasize some knowledge and practices over others, thereby legitimizing 'a prevailing order of social, cultural and political power (Clover & Stanford, 2016, p.127). Hacking emerged as a way of critically engaging these exclusionary discourses and shaping different meanings in pedagogical practice (Clover, 2017).

I will use the present practice notes to describe a climate education program within a narrow policy frame which I facilitated through my work at the grassroots charity *Earth in Common* (hereafter EiC) in Leith, Scotland. I argue that climate education methods can be similarly hacked to highlight problematic framings, open new views on climate change, and ask more systemic and emancipatory questions. I will outline five practical suggestions that might be useful for educators in similar settings: beginning with the value position of the group; creating a space where information is dissected and owned by participants; experimenting with participatory creative methodologies (e.g. storytelling); asking open questions and contextualizing behaviors; seeing the whole endeavor as a process; and seeing the learning site as a system. These methods are context-specific and are intended as a provocation for educators to explore whether climate education programs they are involved in can be similarly hacked.

Context

The course I draw upon for these practice notes was called *7 Easy Steps to a Greener You* (hereafter 7 Steps). I facilitated the course through my employment at EiC in Leith, Scotland, which was funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund (CCF). I will briefly introduce the Scottish context, the organization and the course below.

Climate education in Scotland

The Scottish government is eager to distinguish itself as a climate leader (e.g. Climate Change Act, 2019), and public money is channeled into various initiatives to meet Scotland's climate targets. One government fund was called the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF), which supports community-led projects to achieve local emissions reductions (Aiken, 2016; Dinnie & Holstead, 2017).

This fund is an example of the framing of climate change described above put into action. The understanding of climate change (as an external threat instead of one arising from within neoliberal political economies) has been established *a priori* and translated into legislation in the form of emissions reduction targets. The funded activities then focus on implementing this legislation by organizing climate education initiatives that encourage individual behavior change to reduce carbon output.

Earth in Common

I was employed at the grassroots charity EiC between 2019 and 2021. EiC came to life when the local community, spearheaded by Evie Murray, identified a derelict tennis court of about two acres on common good land and dreamed of what else it could present for the community. Through negotiations with various public bodies and determined campaigns of seed-bombing, community engagement and consultation, Leithers eventually established Scotland's first modern 'Urban Croft' (more on crofting traditions at Busby & Macleod, 2010 or MacKinnon, 2017). The site is now known as Leith Community Croft, where 120+ crofters grow food communally on shared, collectively managed plots. Over the past eight years, the charity has further established a market garden cultivated with the help of volunteers, a farmer's market and café, and several environmental education activities.

7 Easy Steps to a Greener You

EiC received several stages of CCF funding for educational activities. Amongst many other engagements, this led to the development of the 7 Steps, a free climate education course. This course directly followed the logic of climate change as an external problem prescribed by CCF, aiming to engender individual behavior change for emission reduction. The course took the CCF's focus on *active travel (e.g. commuting by bike, walking, or taking the train),*

food, waste and energy as a starting point and added an *intro* and *outro* session and a session on *water*. The outline of the course can be seen in Figure 1.
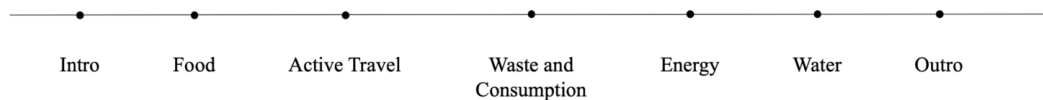

Figure 1. Outline of the 7 Steps course

The *intro* session gives an overview of central climate science concepts and creates a space for the group to get to know each other and find out what climate-related knowledge and opinions participants already hold. Each subsequent session investigates an area of individual and household activity and imparts what actions people could take to reduce emissions. For example, in the waste session, people would learn statistics about food waste in the UK and which foods are most commonly wasted (e.g. bread, milk and potatoes). They would then learn some practical tips to avoid wasting these items.

I was constrained by the narrow policy frame in two crucial ways. Firstly, CCF dictated and approved the content of course materials and monitoring of its progress (see also Aiken, 2016). Secondly, the Scottish government organized CCF, which entailed limitations to what political angle projects could take in their public presentation and their events (see also Aiken, 2014).

Despite these limitations, EiC promotes the idea that individual behavior change is not enough to tackle climate change. My impetus to weave in these more systemic considerations was welcomed when I took over the responsibility of facilitating the 7 Steps program. Gradually, I began asking myself how I could facilitate the course so that it still delivered on its targets of individual and household carbon emission reductions while also opening spaces for inquiring into the systems and power structures that co-produce climate change. In the next part of this article, I will describe the process of hacking the 7 Steps.

Hacking the 7 Steps

Beginning with the value position of the group

One tool that helped create a space of open inquiry into potentially contentious topics was to center the value positions of each participant. I began by creating a welcoming atmosphere at the beginning by reaching out to participants via email before the course started, welcoming people by name, offering teas, coffees and food to share, and more. The *intro* session created moments for

people to get to know each other beyond their interest in climate change and share what they care about and value in life. We explored what people already know about climate change, what they still wanted to learn, and what they were unsure about. Throughout the course, I iterated between presenting information (in the form of facts, concepts or statistics) and discussion. Whenever I introduced a new idea, I also created space for people to dissect the piece of information, ask their own questions, and bring their own concerns.

I believe that this practice of valuing everyone's ideas across different experiences presents an essential fundament to what Mouffe (2013) calls agonism, a form of dialogue where conflict is seen as a positive driving force for transformation. Some elements of climate change are easily acceptable (i.e. recycling), while others often conjure up strong emotions and contestations (i.e. food practices, eating meat, the extent to which society will have to change to overcome climate change). While the open format means that not every question gets solved, the agonistic nature of the dialogue and continuity of interaction has the power to create a feeling of a shared purpose beyond different positions. This welcoming atmosphere was reflected in people's experiences; most participants commented on how conducive the welcoming atmosphere was to expressing opinions and learning from others.

Dissecting and reclaiming information

Beyond engendering a sense of feeling valued, the iteration of presenting information and creating space for deconstructing, questioning, comparing and evaluating in a group has several other benefits. My experience corroborates insights from Freirian liberation pedagogy (Freire, 2018), which holds that working with knowledge in such a way can have empowering effects on individual and collective levels. Individually, this process can help people make abstract information concrete by relating it to their own life circumstances and experiences. This can engender a sense of ownership of the knowledge, which in turn can make people feel more confident in talking about climate change in their families and communities. Increased confidence was the most common feedback on the course. This confidence often naturally translated into a form of agency for participants to become active in their communities. Four participants used the material to present climate-related talks or workshops in their communities (which led to tangible community outcomes, including a walk-to-work rewards incentivization scheme in a rural location and a takeover of a community green for food growing). Two participants became active members of EiC and are still involved in the NGO to this date.

On a collective level, the process of co-evaluating knowledge enhanced the sense of togetherness within the group and enabled peer learning. Most participants, including myself, learned something new whenever people shared their perspectives and knowledge on sustainability.

Experimenting with creative and participatory methods

A wide range of creative and participatory methods, including group discussions and tasks, can be used to make climate knowledge relatable and relevant. For example, in the food session, we selected one common item of food, such as chocolate, potatoes, or oats. We then looked at the lifecycle of the food, as depicted in Figure 2 (adapted from E. Gordes, personal communication, September 17, 2019). We went over the six core factors involved in food's environmental and carbon footprint (greenhouse gas emissions, water use, energy use, chemical use, land use and waste products), worked in small groups on specific factors, and presented our thoughts in a group discussion. The power in this exercise lies less in creating an accurate picture of the footprint of the food but more in the process of collectively looking at an issue from various angles and building up a holistic picture. Participants frequently commented on how individual knowledge and perspectives would tangibly merge into a representation of the collective knowledge present within the group.
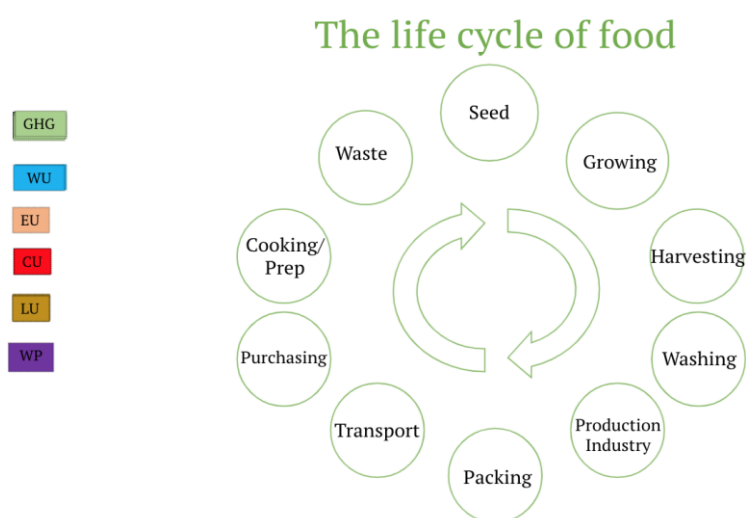

Figure 2. The life cycle of food exercise

Furthermore, creative methods hold the power to create a connection to climate change beyond the cognitive – through emotions, experiences, practical knowledge, expression and embodiment. This can include simple energizers that incorporate movement, taking walks, growing food, and telling stories. Storytelling, in particular, is a powerful way of presenting voices from the Global South or marginalized local voices that might not otherwise be heard within climate conversations. For example, in the water session, we started by sharing what we can value about water. A colleague from Bolivia often joined, who had experienced water scarcity through the Cochabamba Water Wars in 1999 (Bustamante, 2004). Her telling of her experiences made the issue created a sense of resonance that was more powerful than an abstract presentation of the facts.

Open questions and contextualizing behaviors

If facilitators are limited in how 'political' the information on the course materials can be, asking open questions and contextualizing behaviors in their broader socio-economic context can help raise contentious topics from within the group. For example, regarding energy, materials from CCF do not commonly mention big fossil fuel companies, such as Shell, BP or Exxon, or their role in causing climate change. Opening up the conversation and asking participants whom they think the big polluters are will often raise these companies. From there, the group can discuss how to effectively curb the power of these giants, what role governments and multilateral organizations can play in this, and how communities can mobilize to hold these actors accountable.

Another way in which individual behaviors can be contextualized in their wider social, economic and political context is by using heuristic devices such as the following graphic:
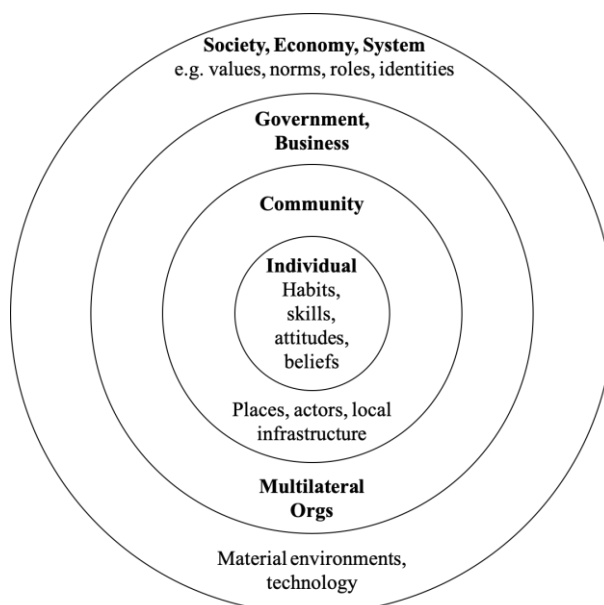
Figure 3. Heuristic to show different levels a behaviour 'operates' on

Such graphics can prompt a discussion around the different levels an issue operates on. Taking waste as an example, on the individual level, habits, skills and attitudes are pertinent – individuals may be in the habit of throwing all their waste into the same bin instead of recycling, or they may lack the skills to repair an item they own. On the community level, facilitators can ask whether there is a local infrastructure to promote waste processing, such as community recycling or composting facilities. At the level of government, business and multilateral organizations, the government's role in providing waste processing facilities, as well as political topics such as the shipping of waste from the UK to

countries in the Global South and the waste generation of businesses, can be interrogated. Lastly, on the societal, economic and systems-wide level, one can ask how material environments, including shopping apps, ads, technological devices or super-market or city layouts, reinforce consumption patterns, and what value structures, norms and identities underlie current waste behavior (which then relates to how individuals internalize these norms). Thus, using such models helps to go beyond a sole focus on the individual to examine any behavior from a wider variety of angles.

Viewing climate education as a process

I viewed the entire engagement through the course as a *process* rather than a means to a fixed destination (Lange, O'Neil and Ross, 2021). When discussing ways to combat climate change, people with different backgrounds and opinions will be present. Often, no definite agreement on solutions or ways forward emerges. Still, it is vital to have conversations about climate change across value positions (i.e. to encourage a robust civil society to hold governments accountable for their targets, electoral support for climate legislation). I have found that detaching myself from aiming to convince people of a singular way to think about climate change, but giving them space to explain where they come from and what matters to them, has the power to change the dynamic of a conversation or a workshop.

Combining this non-dogmatic attitude with the creation of a positive, welcoming atmosphere and the exploration of climate change through stories, embodied and practical activities, I have witnessed the opening of deliberative spaces that engender a sense of unity and shared purpose beyond individuals' different opinions – the essence of solidarity. I see the power of these spaces beyond a linear knowledge to action trajectory – I believe that the dialectical movement of doing, being and acting can lead to fundamentally changed ways of thinking about and being in the world, which are needed to tackle climate change on a profound level.

Conclusion

Above, I analyzed how I hacked the 7 Steps course – by beginning with the value position of the group; opening spaces to dissect climate knowledge; experimenting with creative and participatory methods; asking open questions and contextualizing behaviors; and viewing climate education as a process. It is vital to emphasize that methods are always context-dependent. To further explore the use of hacking for climate education methods, future research could investigate hacking processes, the resulting learning, and the effectiveness of different methods with more rigor.

To conclude, I echo O'Brien et al.'s (2013) call for "unconventional and daring" (p. 10) revolutions in climate education. In the age of intersecting environmental and social justice crises, educators are called upon to cultivate

methodological rebelliousness. This rebelliousness can be loud in its instigation of action-oriented capacities to challenge power, build agency within organizations, communities and movements, and mobilize people for social transformation. It can also be quiet in its uncovering of blind spots and hidden assumptions and its weaving of shifts in consciousness and ways of being in the world, highlighting interconnectedness, multiplicity, conflict and difference. Hacking methods may be one of the many ways of being rebellious. May educators everywhere find many more ways to pedagogically transgress existing norms and modalities to meet the complex and unknowable challenges of the present intersecting crises.

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Incubating grounded transnational advocacy networks: the making of transnational movements for marriage migrants

Hsiao-Chuan Hsia

Abstract

Women in the global phenomenon of marriage migration are known by different labels, including 'foreign brides' and 'mail-order brides.' Though perceived as unlikely subjects of social movements, marriage migrants have developed transnational activism from the ground up to successfully change policies and laws regarding their rights and welfare. This paper shows why and how transnational movements for marriage migrants have been incubated from the grassroots level and developed into regional and international levels through continuously linking grassroots empowerment to transnational networking. Two types of transnational activism are identified: domestic transnationalism, and cross-border transnationalism. While recognizing the importance of the latter, this paper argues that in the case of transnational movements for marriage migrants, domestic transnationalism is the necessary condition for transnationalism beyond nation-state boundaries, and efforts need to be made to balance and strengthen these two types of transnationalism.

Keywords: transnationalism, transnational advocacy network, marriage migrants, migrant movements, immigrant movements, grassroots

Introduction

In parallel to the trend of labor migration, marriage migration has become another significant form of forced migration whereby women from poorer countries migrate to richer countries through cross-border marriages. Elsewhere, I (Hsia 2015b) argued that the phenomenon of marriage migration results from a reproduction crisis of capitalism, wherein migrant women from less developed countries cross borders to provide reproductive labor for the 'maintenance' and 'renewal' of productive labor (Burawoy 1976) in the more developed countries.

As capitalist globalization intensifies, the welfare state is in crisis and many social services are being eliminated. Rising living costs, combined with the lack of a comprehensive social welfare system, have led women in more developed countries to seek cheaper surrogates from less developed countries for the care of household needs while they work to provide income for their families. However, the importing of migrant domestic workers serves only as a 'Band-Aid' solution to the reproduction crisis, especially as fertility rates in more

developed countries continue to drop due to rapid increases in the costs of childrearing. Moreover, while middle-class families can resort to hiring migrant domestic workers, working-class families cannot afford to hire this type of labor. Consequently, working-class and rural men in more developed countries follow the flight of capital to neighboring, less developed countries in search of brides, who could perform reproductive labor for both the 'maintenance' and 'renewal' of productive labor (Hsia 2015b).

Many women migrate through marriage to escape poverty and turbulence in their home countries. Yet, they often end up under economic stress because their husbands are primarily from disadvantaged classes (Hsia 2004). Other precarious conditions of marriage migrant women include the lack social networks and support, social discrimination, and obstacles to obtaining formal and substantive citizenship. The women in these transnational marriages are often called 'foreign brides' or 'mail-order brides,' terms which reflect discrimination against women from peripheral countries in the World System (Hsia 2010).

While marriage migration trends parallel those of labor migration, issues of marriage migrants have not been as recognized as those of migrant workers, particularly their collective activism. Their precarious conditions have led to the assumption that they are unlikely subjects of social movements. One of the dominant discourses has perceived marriage migrants as victims of trafficking. For example, in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports on Taiwan of the U.S. Department of State, the number of marriage migrants is treated as one of the indicators of the prevalence of sex trafficking (U.S. Department of State 2007).

Though feminists have paid attention to the 'foreign brides' phenomenon, ironically, their portrayals of 'foreign brides' have not often been much different from the mainstream media's construction of marriage migrants as social problems and passive victims (Hsia 2008b). Some feminist writings have challenged the prevailing victimization discourse and shifted the focus to women's agency in these cross-border marriages: the courageous pursuit of marriage as an escape from political, economic and cultural constraints to achieve a better future (e.g. Constable 2005). However, we should not perceive agency as merely individual escape from structural constraints. Marriage migrants can go further to form a 'collective agency' to transform, not simply escape, these constraints and become subjects of social movements.

However, marriage migrants have not received attention from studies on social movements. Even the more salient collective activism of migrant workers in recent years has only occasionally received public and academic reflection. As Steinhilper (2018) points out, the fact that there are relatively scarce analyses from a social movement perspective on migrant workers' activism despite proliferation of their political protest by migrants in recent years is theoretically grounded. According to the lens of dominant movement theories, including resource mobilization and political opportunity structures, it is unlikely for migrants to become contentious actors due to legal obstacles, scarce resources, and closed political and discursive opportunities.

Compared to migrant workers, marriage migrant women are even less likely to be imagined as subjects of mobilization since, in addition to the legal, political and social obstacles commonly faced by migrant workers, they are dependent wives of disadvantaged citizens in the recipient countries, mostly isolated in their households, and lacking experience in any kind of activism before their cross-border marriages. Therefore, cases of their emerging transnational activism against all odds deserves reflection from the perspectives of social movement studies.

AMMORE, the Alliance of Marriage Migrants Organizations for Rights and Empowerment, is such case of interest as the first international alliance for marriage migrant issues. AMMORE was formalized in Bangkok in 2017 as an international alliance advocating for marriage migrants' rights and welfare after years of transnational networking in the Asia Pacific region beginning in 2008. The origin of AMMORE dates back to the 2007 International conference held in Taipei, in which one of the resolutions was to establish a transnational network. This was realized in 2008 when the Action Network for Marriage Migrants' Rights & Empowerment (AMM♀RE[1]) was formed in Manila. As will be illustrated in the following discussion, the international conference contributing to the formation of AMMORE resulted from a vibrant movement for marriage migrants in Taiwan spearheaded by the AHILRIM, the Alliance of Human Rights Legislation for Immigrants and Migrants, which was composed of both local and migrant activists.

The focus of this paper is to examine the case of marriage migrant women's transnational activism that originated in Taiwan and later expanded to regional and international levels. Taiwan is arguably the site of the earliest activism in the world specifically for marriage migrants, who have been transformed from isolated 'foreign brides' to active migrant activists. With the support of local activists through the formation of the AHRLIM, marriage migrant women in Taiwan have succeeded in reforming several laws and policies to better protect their rights and welfare. They have also been engaged in transnational networking and establishment of the AMMORE to spearhead campaigns for marriage migrants on regional and international platforms.

Unlike many transnational movements triggered by big events such as WTO Summits (Brecher et al. 2000) or facilitated by international laws and legal mechanisms (Kay 2011), transnational activism for marriage migrants has been developed from the ground up without any big events or international legal mechanisms. Additionally, as previously noted, most marriage migrant women are isolated and lack activism experience; therefore, incubating transnationalism from the ground up is a long process. This paper analyses how transnational movements for marriage migrants first took off at the grassroots

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[1] The gender symbol was inserted in the acronym to stress the fact that a great majority of marriage migrants was women and this transnational network has clear feminist orientation. AMM♀RE is the acronym when it was a loose network, while AMMORE is the acronym since it became a formal alliance. To avoid confusion, AMMORE in the following refers to both informal network and formal alliance.

level in Taiwan and later expanded as a result of activists' transnational networking.

By analysing the development of AMMORE and illustrating the crucial factor of its precedent, the AHRLIM, this paper demonstrates that this transnational activism for marriage migrants has been developed not only beyond but also within nation-state boundaries, and that the latter is the necessary basis for the former. This paper is based on my long-term action research from 1994 to the present time that has contributed to the empowerment of marriage migrants and movements for marriage migrants' rights and welfare in Taiwan and at regional and international levels (for details, see Hsia 2015a, 2019). This long empowerment process for marriage migrants started in 1995 when I initiated the Chinese classes which resulted in the establishment of TransAsia Sisters Association of Taiwan (TASAT), the first grassroots marriage migrants' organization in Taiwan, in 2003. With the backdrop of my deep involvement in the empowerment of marriage migrants and the development of marriage migrants' movement in Taiwan and transnational networking in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, the data collected for this study include: interviews with key activists (5 marriage migrant activists and 2 native activists in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea, and 5 NGO advocates supporting transnational networking); participant observation of campaigns in Taiwan and at regional and international events; and documents of the movements, including internal discussion and public statements of the two alliances. This paper concludes by assessing the achievements of the movements, including their impacts on immigration policies, and raising recommendations regarding transnational activism for marriage migrants' rights and welfare.

Transnational activism under globalization

As globalization intensifies, research on the internationalization of social movements and activism has consequently gained significance. Transnational collective action or contentious politics may take different forms. Three major types identified by Khagram et al (2002) include: transnational advocacy networks, transnational coalitions, and transnational social movements, all of which involve non-governmental organizations interacting with international norms to restructure world politics.

As Khagram et al (2002) argued, transnational advocacy networks (TAN) are the most common forms of transnational collective action; they involve sets of actors linked across country boundaries, bound together by shared values, dense exchanges of information and services, and common discourses (Keck and Sikkink 1999). Formalized or not, the essence of network activity is the exchange and use of information. Networks do not involve either sustained coordination of tactics, as with coalitions, or mobilizing large numbers of people in the kind of activity we associate with social movements.

This typology needs to be understood as an 'ideal type' since in reality, the structures of transnational collective action may not be fixed and the boundaries

between types are fluid. Moreover, the development of transnational action is not linear. Depending on various conditions affecting the level of vitality of the transnational action, it may take different forms. As the following analysis will illustrate, AMMORE started as an informal TAN exchanging information, gradually became a transnational coalition with coordinated action when collective activism was vibrant with the objective of establishing a transnational social movement in mind, and later returned to a TAN as some of the core member organizations faced internal challenges and lacked energy to be involved in transnational action.

Politics of simultaneity for migrants

According to Caouette (2007), while transnational activism is not a new phenomenon, its intensification and geographic spread has been so unprecedented that some analysts even declared an era of transnational coalitions moving away from state-centric movements. While not all analysts claim that state-centric movements have lost primacy to transnational activism, most scholars on transnational activism tend to perceive domestic activism and transnational activism as separate spheres, while recognizing the interaction of the two (e.g. Porta and Tarrow 2005; Evans 2000).

However, as Smith (1994) suggests, the types of grassroots political practice that have emerged among transnational migrants and refugees do not fit well into the restrictive boundaries of local politics conventionally used in connecting the local to the global. Since migrants' struggles must simultaneously encounter the states of their origins, the states of their workplaces and settlement, and supranational institutions, they are engaged in the 'politics of simultaneity,' or a politics that brings together multiple actors from multiple places. Therefore, Law (2002) considers Hong Kong as one 'site' of transnational activism within a broader 'social space' where new alliances between migrants, feminists, and workers' organizations take place, rather than merely contextualizing the transnational advocacy of migrant NGOs in Hong Kong as a contemporary form of local politics.

Similar to struggles of migrant workers, marriage migrants' struggles also involve in the 'politics of simultaneity,' since their rights and welfare are simultaneously affected by the states of their origins and settlement, as well as by supranational institutions. Moreover, even when marriage migrants' activism is located within the nation-state and the goal is to change policies of the nation-state, it is in essence a *domestic* type of transnational activism since participants are from different nationalities, including both marriage migrants originally from various nation-states and native citizens concerned with issues of marriage migrants, as illustrated by the formation of AHRLIM.

AHRLIM was formed when several organizations joined together in response to Taiwanese government's hasty plan to establish the National Immigration Agency without comprehensive immigration policies. Spearheading the movement in Taiwan since 2003, AHRLIM is composed of actors with diverse

backgrounds, including marriage migrant and migrant worker organizations, and domestic movement organizations of women, labor, and human rights sectors.

According to Hsia (2008b), the reasons why AHRLIM has obtained such diverse membership include the following. Firstly, since the immigrant movement was not yet developed, it was necessary to bring together different organizations interested in marriage migrant issues. Secondly, unlike in the U.S., Canada, and other countries with long histories of immigration and established immigrant communities, marriage migrants in Taiwan were socially, economically, and politically disadvantaged without strong immigrant networks. It was therefore necessary for local activists to provide assistance. Thirdly, while local activists need to participate, the legitimacy of the movement for marriage migrants would be questioned had marriage migrants themselves not been active. Fortunately, long before AHRLIM was established, efforts had been underway since 1995 to develop the subjectivity of marriage migrant women when the Chinese Literacy Program was initiated to empower marriage migrants from different nationalities to break away isolation, build networks to help each other, and eventually form TASAT to advocate for their own rights and welfare (Hsia, 2006).

Since the very first protest initiated by AHRLIM, marriage migrants organized by TASAT have always been active, including participating in internal discussions and speaking at protests and press conferences (2008b). In other words, while the *'domestic transnationalism'* started since the establishment of AHRLIM to launch campaigns, this transnationalism had already been incubating since the initiation of the Chinese program where marriage migrants from diverse nationalities and local volunteers collaborated and developed networks.

As Steinhilper (2018) emphasized, while social movements of all kinds require safe spaces in which trust and empathetic strong ties can be built up in preparation for and during protests, such spaces with particular emotional, relational, and material qualities are especially important for the protection and empowerment of marginalized migrants. Therefore, Steinhilper maintained that a transnational migrant activism, especially for precarious migrants, requires a firm grounding at the local level of the destination where migrants can gain access to safe space and resources. Once local resources can be tapped, migrant activists can reconnect to networks of precarious migrants in different locations, which are rooted in transnational life-worlds and specific grievances inscribed in biographies of forced migration. Such transnational spaces inhabited by these migrants can then be politicized and transformed into what Steinhilper termed 'transnational contentious space.'

Migrant workers and refugees in Steinhilper's study had built networks of other precarious migrants as they migrated from one country to another, which could be reconnected once they tapped local resources. In comparison, however, most marriage migrants do not have migration experience prior to their cross-border marriages and consequently lack networks with other migrants. Therefore, a

transnational contentious space at the locality of their destination is even more crucial for marriage migrants to develop their transnational activism. As Ms. Chuan-ping Wang, an experienced labor activist and the founding Chairperson of the New Immigrants' Labor Rights Association, a member organization of AHRLIM, stated (Hsia 2008b):

> It takes a process for the local activists to empower the new immigrants and help them behind their back. Without this process, I think it would be impossible for the new immigrants to succeed in demanding their rights, because they come to a foreign environment where they don't know much about the laws. The local activists had helped them familiarize with the laws, social atmosphere and come up with strategy to change laws and policies.

As will be illustrated in the following, AHRLIM has served as the transnational contentious space in Taiwan, the '*domestic transnationalism*,' for marriage migrants to develop transnational activism at regional and international levels, the 'cross-border transnationalism.'

Politicizing transnational space for marginalized migrants

Since most migrants are inherently transnational as their life-worlds and social practices are not bound to one nation-state, migrant transnationalism, particularly migrants' political transnationalism, has been common among migrant communities (Basch et al. 1994; Bloemraad et al. 2008). Studies on migrants' transnationalism focus more on hometown activism (Steinhilper 2018). However, as Rodriguez (2013) and Rother (2018) point out, hometown associations and activism are not automatically counter-hegemonic, critical of the current neo-liberal national and international policies. The process of politicization for marriage migrants therefore deserves further investigation.

Elsewhere I (Hsia 2016) pointed out that though many marriage migrants are active in social activities and even openly express their grievances against prejudices and discrimination in Taiwan, they are not automatically united to counter the injustice systems. Rather, it is in the process of subjectivation which continuously transforms them by broadening their perspectives and worldviews that they can gradually perceive their activism as not only relevant for their own immediate needs but also for the justice for other marginalized people and the betterment of the world. Moreover, in this process of transformative subjectivation, the ability to be linked to migrant organizations in other countries has been considered crucial by marriage migrants organized by TASAT to see themselves as part of the global migrant movement against systematic exploitation and oppression.

In her study on migrants' transnationalism, Rodriguez (2013) highlighted how IMA as a counter-hegemonic global alliance opens up space for new kinds of political subjectivities among migrants. She argued that through IMA's

contentious political engagement and transnational networking, which involve cross-border inter-ethnic and interracial connectivity, migrant organizations cultivate class-based collective identification that transcends homeland-oriented, citizenship-based, and state-supportive forms of migrant political transnationalism, and further develops a new form of political subjectivity, 'migrant labor transnationalism.' Such political subjectivity is based on counter-hegemonic nationalisms through which migrants contest their home states' complicity with globalizing neoliberal agendas.

Similarly, in the following, this paper will show how the AMMORE has served as the transnational contentious space to help marriage migrants cultivate a counter-hegemonic framework critical of policies of both receiving and sending countries, as well as of the dominant policies of neo-liberal globalization. The analysis will also show that such counter-hegemonic TAN first requires a transnational contentious space critical of the policies of the receiving state and within the nation-state, the AHRLIM, to incubate marriage migrants' transnational activism at the locality of destination.

To analyse the emergence and development of AMMORE, this paper benefits from the insights of Tilly (2004). Accordingly, to understand the significance of transnational networks and social movement organizations, especially those challenging the international capitalist financial architecture, four questions had to be addressed. Based on the developments of TANs for marriage migrants, I restructure Tilly's concerns into three primary questions: 1. Why does transnational activism emerge? ----What circumstances, processes, and connections promote coordinated transnational action among marriage migrants and their advocates? (Tilly's first question) 2. How is transnational activism developed? ----Under what conditions and how do marriage migrants and their advocates participate democratically in coordinated transnational action? (Tilly's second question) 3. What are the assessments for the present and future of transnational activism? ----Under what conditions and how does that sort of coordination produce (or fail to produce) significant benefits for marriage migrants? What are the challenges to maintain and expand the TAN and transnational activism? What processes produce or would produce the equivalent of durable effective democratic consultation on a world scale? (Tilly's third and fourth questions)

Why does marriage migrants' transnational activism emerge?

According to Porta and Tarrow (2005), the reasons why transnational activism emerges include the emergence of complex internationalization, the resulting multilevel opportunity structure, and the formation of a new stratum of activists. These three elements also apply to the emergence of transnational activism beyond the nation-state boundaries for marriage migrants.

Emergence of complex internationalization

Three aspects of complex internationalization for marriage migrants are identified: cross-referencing of laws and policies among states of settlement, simultaneous impacts of the states of origins and settlement on marriage migrants' well-being, and increasing supra-national mechanisms and platforms related to marriage migrants' rights and welfare. These factors explain how AHRLIM was transformed from leading a domestic movement to becoming part of the TAN for marriage migrants.

Cross-referencing of laws and policies among states of settlement

As marriage migration gradually became a global phenomenon, many nation-states began to implement new laws and policies. To learn from others or to legitimate their own policies, governmental agencies often borrow from laws and policies in other countries. This is especially prevalent for those states whose tradition of citizenship is based on *jus sanguinis*, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan (Iwabuchi et al, 2016), since they were not prepared to deal with the influx of immigrants of different nationalities when the phenomenon of marriage migration emerged. Accordingly, activists concerned with marriage migrants' rights and welfare were urged to learn about laws, policies, and experiences of advocacy in other countries. For instance, in the Asia-Pacific Women NGO Forum on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)+10 in Thailand in 2004, a Korean activist visited the Taiwanese delegation and requested to meet delegates who had done work with marriage migrant women. She was introduced to me and was very eager to learn from our experiences in Taiwan because the Korean government had planned to implement laws and policies modified from those of Taiwan. Since this initial contact, this Korean activist and I served as the bridge between Korean and Taiwanese activists for marriage migrant issues and campaigns.

As the first state in Asia to confront the challenges of marriage migration, Taiwanese governments rushed to implements laws and policies to regulate marriage migrants. Since its establishment, AHRLIM has continuously campaigned against the Taiwan government's discriminatory immigration policies and laws (Hsia, 2008b). As AHRLIM's campaigns expanded, the need to reach out to organizations in other countries also emerged.

For instance, increasing barriers for marriage migrants to obtain citizenship had long been criticized by AHRLIM. To defend its reluctance to scrap financial requirements for marriage migrants' applications for naturalization, Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior (MOI) persistently argued that the financial requirement was a 'universal norm.' MOI even purchased a significant advertisement in one major newspaper citing regulations from other countries, including the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Singapore. Since AHRLIM's members had developed contacts with organizations or individuals in different countries, we were able to collect and verify information from these countries whose policies and regulations were

distorted by MOI for its own defence. In September 2007, to maximize the
resources and impacts of the International Conference on Border Control and
Empowerment of Immigrant Brides held in Taipei, AHRILM organized a press
conference and a dialogue with the Deputy Minister of MOI where the
international delegates invited to attend the international conference
confronted MOI's distortion of immigration policies in their respective
countries. Moreover, in the discussion of the resolutions for this conference, the
consensus was to develop an international network to share information
regarding marriage migrant issues. This call was realized when AMMORE was
formed in the following year.

Simultaneous impacts of the states of origins and settlement

Compared to migrant worker movements which have been constantly
challenging the policies of their home countries, particularly labor-export
policies, marriage migrant movements have not focused on challenging the
states of origin since there are no specific 'bride-export' policies and marriage
migrants are assumed to be settled in the receiving countries, while migrant
workers are assumed to be abroad only temporarily. Though policies and laws in
receiving countries have greater impacts on marriage migrants, their well-being
is also affected by those of their home countries. Consequently, the TAN for
marriage migrants has also begun to challenge laws and policies of states of
origin. For instance, since Philippine law does not allow divorces and only
allows legal separation, annulment, and marriage 'voids,' it complicates
marriages of Filipinos with foreign spouses. To deal with issues arising from
marriages outside of the Philippines, the Family Code was revised in 1987 with
the provisions of Article 26 seeming to favor those who wish to get rid of a 'bad
marriage' and remarry without needing to file for an annulment. However,
Article 26 only applies to foreign divorces initiated by the foreign spouse. If it is
the Filipino spouse who initiates or files the divorce, such divorce will not be
recognized in the Philippines. For Filipinos who initiate divorce to remarry, they
must file an annulment petition in a Philippine court. In the absence of a
Supreme Court ruling on implementing guidelines for judicial recognition of
foreign divorce decrees, actual court practice of the law varies. Some courts in
the Philippines require the personal appearance of the applicant while others do
not. According to member organizations of AMMORE in Japan, this puts great
strain on Filipino spouses, especially those who are over-stayers or whose visas
are about to expire, in addition to the amount of time and money that one must
invest to complete the procedure. To amend Article 26 of the Philippine Family
Code, Filipino marriage migrant organizations in Japan and South Korea
initiated a campaign with the help of AMMORE to lobby members of Congress
in the Philippines.

Increasing supra-national mechanisms and platforms

Though no specific supranational platforms and mechanisms are devoted exclusively to the rights and welfare of marriage migrants, there are still international conventions and agreements that should provide protection to the rights of marriage migrants, including provisions under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women. Among these international conventions, the CEDW has been the most commonly used international convention for marriage migrant advocates. By collaborating with women's organizations in their respective states, many marriage migrant organizations and advocates, including AMMORE members, have made efforts to incorporate their observations and recommendations in the shadow reports of CEDAW so that international experts can make recommendations to various governments for better policies and laws.

Opportunity structure to add external pressure on states

Complex internationalization offers resources and opportunities for non-state actors to challenge elites (Porta and Tarrow 2005). The structures of internationalization analyzed above altogether provide resources and opportunities for activists and organizations concerned with marriage migrant issues to form TANs and challenge states. For example, since Taiwan is not a U.N. member state, the Taiwanese government is eager to demonstrate that Taiwan is a 'good model' that complies with international human rights norms and should be accepted as the member of the United Nations. This moral appeal creates leverage for activists to add external pressure on Taiwan's domestic policies (Cheng and Momesson 2017). In addition to using international conventions, international petitions and simultaneous protests in different countries can also be effective means of adding pressure on governments to respond to activists' demands in certain cases. Keck and Sikkink (1999, 93) term this tactic 'boomerang pattern,' 'where governments are unresponsive to groups whose claims may none the less resonate elsewhere, the international contacts can "amplify" the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo these demands back into the domestic arena.'

The case of a Filipina 'run-away' migrant worker in Taiwan illustrates why a TAN can help change state behaviors and strengthened AHRLIM's belief in the power of transnationalism beyond nation-state borders. In addition to marriage migrant issues, AHLRIM also took up issues of migrant workers. In August 2012, AHRLIM was requested to help a Filipino migrant, Helen, who had run away from an abusive employer and was arrested by the NIA. Helen was charged for falsifying documents, and was detained at a NIA's detention center for 4 months. While detained, Helen's case was heard, and the court handed down a 10-month sentence which could be converted into fine. Helen expected

to be repatriated home after she paid the money equivalent to the fine of 6 months, because she was informed by the detention officer that her 4-month detainment would have been accorded towards the 4 months of sentenced imprisonment. Surprisingly, Helen was transferred to a women's prison because she failed to pay the penalty equivalent to 10-month imprisonment. After a series of inquiries with government officials, it was found that the reason Helen needed to pay the fine equivalent to 10-month imprisonment was that the prosecutor did not officially request the NIA to detain Helen for investigation, which the court could have considered in the sentence given to Helen. The NIA could supposedly only detain Helen for the mere purpose of deportation, since the prosecutor never requested Helen's detainment. However, the unspoken rule had been that prosecutors would not officially request the detention of 'run-away' migrants (the most common migrant worker legal violation) to evade official procedures, while, for the sake of convenience, detention centers would detain migrants as long as possible so that prosecutors could call on migrants for investigation when necessary. It was only until the 2011 Amendment of Immigration Act, after AHRLIM's campaigns, that a maximal duration of detention was regulated and set at 120 days.

AHRLIM had made many efforts, including calling the NIA Director directly, for more than a month to push the NIA to repatriate Helen without paying the extra 4-month penalty. However, while NIA officers, including the Director himself, agreed with AHRLIM's demands, Helen remained imprisoned without any concrete promise of repatriation. To add more pressure, AHRLIM called for an international petition openly addressed to the President of Taiwan and staged simultaneous protests in front of the NIA in Taiwan and the de facto Consulates of Taiwan in the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong. The petition was circulated via IMA, of which TASAT and AHRLIM's members are also member organizations, endorsed by nearly 60 organizations from Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America, and presented at the protest in front of NIA and sent directly to the President's office.

Eleven days after the coordinated actions, I received a call from an NIA officer to inform me that the decision was made after the meeting of all 'higher-ups' of governmental agencies related to Helen's case. To resolve the common problems underlined by Helen's case, they would amend some guidelines so that detainees would be deported as soon as all requirements were met (e.g. airfare and travel documents) if the detention centers did not receive formal requests for detention from prosecutors. In regard to Helen's case specifically, the NIA promised to speed up the process and Helen would be repatriated ten days after the call. The release date was set based on a certain technicality they came up with to justify Helen's early repatriation.

In short, the transnational pressure as detailed above effectively overturned the government's decision. Eleven days after the international pressure, government agencies quickly developed a legal technicality to release Helen without an extra penalty; previously, AHRLIM had tried in vain for more than one month to push the government using all available means. Moreover, this

transnational action not only succeeded in changing the behavior of the government of the receiving country, but also that of the sending country. The Manila Economic and Culture Office (MECO, the de facto Philippine embassy in Taiwan) had been indifferent to Helen's case until the simultaneous protests were held, after which the MECO officials contacted Migrante-Taiwan (the grassroots Filipino migrant organization in Taiwan and a member of AHRLIM) and offered to speed up the processing of Helen's travel document and pay for Helen's airfare.

Formation of transnational activists

According to Porta and Tarrow (2005, 237), the new stratum of activists is needed for the emergence of transnational social movements, which they term as '*rooted cosmopolitans*,' the 'people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in regular activities that require their involvement in transnational networks of contacts and conflict.' Many rooted cosmopolitans have been involved in TANs for marriage migrants, including the feminists who attended the aforementioned Asia-Pacific Women NGO Forum in Thailand.

As the first elected chairperson of AMMORE, I can be identified as the 'rooted cosmopolitan' based in Taiwan and engaged in regular activities required for the formation and operation of TANs for migrants in general, and for marriage migrants specifically. Though I am not the only rooted cosmopolitan, my personal experience can illustrate why the formation of rooted cosmopolitans is needed for the emergence of TANs.[2]

The primary source of the beginning of my transnational activism is the transnational network for the Filipino migrant movement. I was one of the Taiwanese activists contacted by the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrant Filipinos (APMMF) in the late 1990s when they tried to develop a network to support Filipino migrants in Taiwan. APMMF was established in 1984 as a regional research, advocacy, and movement building organization for Filipino migrants in the Asia Pacific and Middle East regions, and Taiwan was one of their focus states. APMMF's establishment was the result of Filipino migrant movements that began in the early 1980s as an extension of the anti-Marcos movement in the Philippines from the 1970s. As labor migration intensified, Filipino migrant activists became aware that they needed to extend their support to non-Filipino migrants, so in 2002 APMMF was renamed as APMM, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, to expand their work to all migrants from different nationalities in the region. Filipino migrant activists recognize the need to simultaneously deal with both sending and receiving countries, as well as the importance of transnational networking, as the Managing Director of APMM explained (Hsia 2009, 129):

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[2] As a long-term action researcher, I have played several roles in the making of this transnational movement, including knowledge production, networking and movement building. For details, see (Hsia 2019).

> Not only Filipinos are exploited. Other states also exporting people, so we need to share experiences of organizing migrant workers…. To protect migrants' rights and welfare, we need to deal with both sending and receiving countries…. It is much better to come together with different nationalities, so we can be more powerful.

After the initial contact by APMMF in late 1990s, I was requested for consultation or assistance when there were cases of migrants in need of help. Additionally, I also helped organize activities, including film showings, forums, and conferences, to enrich mutual understanding of Taiwanese and Filipino activists. Subsequently, APMM became the only non-Taiwan-based member organization of AHRLIM. All this effort building contacts, exchanges, and collaboration have contributed to the formation of AMMORE.

How is marriage migrants' transnational activism developed?

The TAN for marriage migrants originated from the 2005 International Workshop for Asian NGOs on Female Immigrants and Migrants held in Taipei and initiated by Awakening Foundation, one of the leading feminist organizations in Taiwan. I was invited to join the Board of the Awakening Foundation to help develop programs for migrant women, and this international workshop was one of those activities. To organize this workshop, I requested that APMM recommend speakers from other Asian countries. APMM was very interested in the themes and became the co-organizer of this international workshop.

After this international workshop, APMM decided to work on issues with 'foreign brides' and invited me to serve as a Board member. To establish a new program, APMM conducted several studies on 'foreign brides' in 2007. To follow up the 2005 international workshop, APMM organized the International Conference on Border Control & Empowerment of Immigrant Brides in September 2007, with the collaboration of TASAT, Awakening Foundation, and AHRLIM. One of the conference's resolutions was to establish a transnational network, with 16 organizations from 9 countries pledging to join. In October 2008, several participants from the 2007 conference held a meeting when the IMA, the first global alliance of grassroots migrant organizations, organized the first International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees (IAMR) in Manila. To implement the resolution of the 2007 conference, those delegates attending the meeting decided to form the Action Network for Marriage Migrants' Rights & Empowerment (AMM♀RE) on October 31, 2008. After a series of consultations, exchange programs, trainings and conferences, AMM♀RE transformed itself from a loose network to a formal alliance with a constitution and elected officers. After the founding assembly in March 2017 held in Bangkok, AMM♀RE was renamed as the Alliance of Marriage Migrants Organizations for Rights and Empowerment (AMMORE), which includes members in Taiwan, South Korea,

Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Canada, and the U.S.

To analyze how this TAN developed, two issues need to be addressed: organizational strategies to maintain the effective functioning of the network, and framing strategies to legitimate and motivate collective action.

Organizational strategies

As Fraser (2014) argues, to contribute effectively to the public spheres, TAN need to be both 'normatively legitimate' and 'politically efficacious;' that is, to operate in an open and inclusive process and to have the ability to exert significant influence over political authority. Since TANs are voluntary and horizontal, the extent of participation depends on the degree to which the actors perceive mutual learning, respect, and benefits within the networks, which makes democratic participation crucial to the lasting of the transnational advocacy (Keck and Sikkink 1999).

In addition to democratic participation, in an alliance composed of those directly affected by the issues and advocates whose rights and welfare are not directly affected, 'cause affirmation' is another aspect that affects the durability of the alliance (Beamish and Lubebbers 2008). Studies have shown that the key to develop trust necessary for successful and lasting alliance-building is for the groups directly affected to own the primacy and take the lead in the campaigns (ibid.; Stephen 2008).

Five organizational strategies are identified to ensure both normative legitimacy and political efficacy of AMMORE. The primary principle is to find ways to link local concerns of member organizations to regional and global concerns so that all members can feel that they own the causes of AMMORE. As Caoette (2007, 149) points out, there is nothing automatic or simple in globalizing local concerns and echoing local resistance. AMMORE has made the following efforts to 'weave local expression of resistance into regional and global campaigns.'

Coordinating body with representatives from each country

As Pieck (2013) points out, for a TAN to sustain itself, it is crucial to balance the emotional elements of mobilization and the bureaucratic demands of transnational coordination. As the result of the successful 2007 International Conference as previously mentioned, the emotion and energy of marriage migrants and advocates were highly mobilized and consequently led to passing the resolution to form a transnational network. While recognizing the importance of members' emotive level, having such a loose network ensured its effective function by forming a core group of representatives from each country with APMM as the secretariat. This core group was responsible for implementing the plans the network decided to pursue, such as research, exchange visits, conferences, and coordinated campaigns. When an activity or

project was planned, the representatives from each country were responsible for coordinating with organizations in their respective countries for input, comments, and mobilization. In the core group meetings, usually via Internet, country representatives would bring up concerns and suggestions from organizations in their respective countries for discussion and decision-making.

While APMM served as the secretariat responsible for administrative work, each country representative also took shares of work to implement activities and projects. For example, to better understand the situations of marriage migrants in the major receiving countries of the network, AMMORE decided to conduct a comparative study on marriage migrants in the Asia Pacific region, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and Australia. APMM first came up with the concept paper for the research, which was discussed and finalized in the core group meetings. The guided questions for interviews and focus groups were drafted by the representative from Australia, and each country representative was responsible for collaborating with local organizations to conduct interviews, focus groups, compilations of related policies and laws, and analyses of the data collected. After the draft reports were collected from all countries, I, as the representative of Taiwan, went to Hong Kong, where APMM is based, to talk with APMM staff and migrant organizations in Hong Kong about these country reports, and subsequently came up with the overall analyses and framework, which was later published as a book titled 'For Better or For Worse: Comparative Research on Equity and Access for Marriage Migrants' (Hsia 2010).

Collective learning emphasizing empowerment of marriage migrants

From the beginning of AMMORE as a loose network, empowerment of marriage migrants had been highlighted as the priority objective. When formalized in 2017, the Constitution makes it clear that marriage migrant organizations should take the lead. AMMORE as a formal alliance defines two types of membership, regular and associate. Regular membership is given to 'grassroots mass organization or alliance of marriage migrants organizations and their families, or grassroots migrant organization with marriage migrants' programs or policies,' while associate membership is given to 'any institution, network or institutional program that deals on providing services to marriage migrants.' To ensure that grassroots marriage migrant organizations maintain leadership of the alliance, only regular members can vote and be voted in any position of the alliance. This emphasis on the leadership of grassroots marriage migrant organizations as specifically stipulated in the constitution is inspired by IMA as a counter-hegemonic alliance that upholds the values of migrants' rights to 'speak for themselves' (Rodriguez 2013).

However, since the movement for marriage migrants is still relatively new and marriage migrants are not yet fully familiar with transnational advocacy networking, AMMORE made every effort to help its members learn collectively with a special emphasis on empowering marriage migrants. Before

formalization, AMMORE had conducted several exchange visits where marriage migrants visited other countries and participated in various activities, including visiting organizations and legislators, and holding public forums and trainings. Through these activities, marriage migrants not only learned about issues and struggles of marriage migrants in different countries, but also developed personal interactions with marriage migrants in other countries. A sense of empowerment is strongly felt by all marriage migrants participating in these exchange visits, as Manchi, a Vietnamese marriage migrant who has been TASAT's elected officer, explained:

> By listening to sharing of marriage migrants in other countries, I realized that the problems are not only faced by us in Taiwan and we need to be united internationally. I felt very empowered.

Moreover, when possible, AMMORE invited marriage migrants to attend and speak at international activities and ensured that advocates familiar with transnational networking could help marriage migrants navigate these international activities, including interpretation, so that marriage migrants could gradually become more familiar with the transnational work and more active in transnational activism.

Supporting each other's campaigns

Even when AMMORE was still a loose network, it was very conscious of advancing its "political efficacy." As previously mentioned, international pressure can be helpful to push governments to respond to demands of movements, so AMMORE developed comradeship within the network to help each other's campaigns. In addition to signature campaigns, AMMORE arranged visits to representatives of Congress during exchange visits in different countries. When visiting Congress members, the international delegates helped the local organizations convince legislators of the urgency of issues and gain support from them. For instance, during the exchange visit in Japan in July 2009, AMMORE members visited a Congresswoman and explained to her the urgency of domestic violence against marriage migrant women in Japan, with a specific case of a Filipina marriage migrant who had not gained any assistance from governmental agencies.[3] A few hours after the visit, the staff of the Congresswoman informed an AMMORE member in Japan that they had successfully convinced government agencies to provide assistance to this Filipina marriage migrant. Through this successful lobby of Congress, marriage

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[3] She was set fire and burned by her abusive husband. The social workers did not allow her to meet her children because they believed that her burned face resulted from the fire would be harmful to children's psychological health. The Filipino migrant organizations had tried all means to protest such cruel decision from the social workers but in vein, until AMMORE visited and lobbied at the Congress.

migrants witnessed the strength of TAN, which encouraged them to increase their commitment to participating in AMMORE. This, in turn, helped further empower marriage migrants.

Coordinated action

To publicize the formation of AMMORE and amplify marriage migrants' issues, AMMORE launched its first international campaign 'unVEIL' to reveal state repression to marriage migrants on Nov. 25, 2008, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. To weave local concerns with the international campaign, the unVEIL campaign served as an umbrella theme on state violence against marriage migrants to which member organizations could link their specific campaigns in their respective countries so that they could 'own' the international campaign. For example, AHRLIM linked this international campaign to its on-going campaign against the financial requirement for naturalization in Taiwan by organizing a protest with AMMORE's statement to demonstrate the international support it had achieved. In countries without specific campaigns for marriage migrants yet, like Japan and Canada, community activities and public forums were organized to raise public awareness of marriage migrant women's issues. In countries where there were existent protest and activities on that International Day, such as the Philippines and Australia, issues of marriage migrants were incorporated and the unVEIL campaign was highlighted so that the women's movements would begin to pay attention to issues of marriage migrant women.

Coalesce-create tactic

Since AMMORE is relatively new and the transnational movement for marriage migrants has only recently developed, it is important to maximize resources to strengthen and expand the network. One strategy is to link AMMORE to other TANs not only to promote marriage migrant issues but also gain opportunities for AMMORE members to meet face-to-face. For example, most AMMORE members also join IMA and bring marriage migrant issues to IMA and its activities, such as IAMR. Even when AMMORE was still a loose network, it organized panels as part of the IAMR programs back-to-back with its own activities so that its members could have face-to-face meetings and consultations. In attending these events organized by other TANs, marriage migrants are further empowered by learning about forced migration and strategies and tactics adopted by other migrant organizations. For instance, Pei-hsiang, a marriage migrant from Cambodia representing TASAT in these events described how she was inspired by attending IAMRs:

> I was so excited to know many migrant activists from all over the world. I have learnt not only the knowledge about why people migrate but also the creative methods, such as music and theater, they use to organize migrants and campaign for migrant's rights.

By coalescing with other TANs, AMMORE is able to create space to project marriage migrants' agendas and strengthen its transnational activism. For instance, some AMMORE members are also members of transnational network for women's issues, such as the Asia Pacific Women, Law and Development (APWLD), through which AMMORE also promotes and incorporates marriage migrant women's issues in the global campaigns for women, including campaigns for Sustainable Development Justice.

Even when the energy is low among its core members due to internal challenges within their organizations or some personal difficulties, such as health and finances, AMMORE still managed to stay alive by coalescing with other TANs. Between 2018 and 2021, AMMORE could not maintain active momentum of the alliance because many of the core members encountered difficulties. While the alliance could not afford to hold coordinated action or initiate campaigns, marriage migrants' issues remain present in the transnational contentious space because APMM, as both AMMORE's and IMA's secretariate, manages to incorporate these issues to all possible international mechanisms that IMA is involved in, such as being invited to speak at the Fifth Stakeholder Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in 2021.

Framing strategies

To attract attention and encourage action, and to 'fit' favorable institutional venues,' TAN has to 'frame issues to make them comprehensible to target audiences' (Keck and Sikkink 1999, 90). This framing of issues is not only important to convince people outside of the advocacy network, but also necessary to those within the network because to legitimate and motivate collective action, the framing must involve conscious effort by stakeholders to fashion shared understandings of the world as well as of participant groups themselves (McAdam et al 1996). That is, differently situated actors in the TAN that serves as political space negotiate the social, cultural and political meanings of their joint enterprises, or the causes of their transnational activism (Keck & Sikkink 1999).

Naming

As mentioned above, issues of marriage migrants suffered lack of recognition even within social movement communities. It took years to convince activists in migrant worker movements that marriage migration is part of the global phenomenon of forced migration and that marriage migrants and migrant workers have both common and distinctive issues. One crucial effort was the naming of this 'foreign bride phenomenon' in the global context.

In the aforementioned 2007 International Conference, I raised the issue of naming in the action planning and resolution session, and shared TASAT's

experiences of naming campaigns as follows. Since severe discrimination against marriage migrant women was crystallized in the derogatory label of 'foreign brides,' to make their issues comprehensible to the public, one important tactic involves the politics of naming, in which the subjects themselves should be directly involved. To this end, we organized the 'Let New Immigrant Women Speak for Themselves Writing Contest,' where marriage migrants were requested to express how they felt when called 'foreign brides,' and how they would name themselves alternatively if they disapproved of this term. Marriage migrants were later requested to vote on names suggested by the entries of the writing contest, and the term 'New Immigrant Women' (in Mandarin Chinese) received the most votes. Since then, TASAT and other member organizations of AHLRLIM have used all means to publicize this new term. Consequently, the term of 'foreign bride' became seriously criticized and has gradually faded from public use ever since.

In addition to sharing the naming campaign in Taiwan, as the co-organizer of the conference, I explained that the conference title used 'immigrant brides' knowing that the word 'bride' was problematic and planning to raise it as an issue for discussion and debates at the conference. After heated discussion and debates, my proposal of the term 'marriage migrant' was accepted. Since then, according to the 2014 evaluation of AMMORE's development, this term has been promoted by AMMORE at all possible venues and engagements, including U.N. processes. Eventually, the UN also started using the term 'marriage migrants' in some official documents.

Frame alignment

One essential component of TAN's political strategy is the 'construction of cognitive frame' (Keck and Sikkink 1999). TAN's most crucial strategic framing for marriage migrants is to link it to the global issues of forced migration. Since this 'frame alignment' (Snow et al 1986) of marriage migration as part of forced migration under neo-liberal globalization has been accepted, issues of marriage migrants have been gradually incorporated into the global movement for migrants, especially IMA and its networks, and thus the TAN for marriage migrants has been developed and expanded.

One vivid example of how 'frame alignment' helps is the activities held in Berlin, 2017. Many migrant activists and advocates in the activities organized by the Churches Witnessing with Migrants, a TAN affiliated with IMA to counter the inter-governmental conference on Global Forum on Migration and Development, were unaware of marriage migrant issues. At the rally held at the end of the activities, I spoke as the Chairperson of AMMORE about marriage migrant issues and how marriage migration is part of forced migration. After my speech, several migrant activists told me that they did not realize that they were marriage migrants themselves until they listened to my speech and that they

were eager to be part of AMMORE and would try to organize marriage migrants in Europe.

What are the assessments of marriage migrants' transnational activism?

While the investigation of this paper focuses on AMMORE, the first TAN specifically dedicated to marriage migrant issues at the international level, it is important to emphasize that AMMORE grew out of a vibrant movement spearheaded by AHRLIM for marriage migrants' rights and welfare in Taiwan. It took a long incubating process of creating space for marriage migrants from different nationalities to work collectively at the grassroots level, and later it required linkages with domestic movement organizations to develop marriage migrants' contentious politics that led to 'domestic transnationalism,' a domestic movement evolving into transnational activism within the nation-state because of activists' diverse origins. This domestic transnationalism later develops into 'cross-border transnationalism' as transnational advocacy grows out of activists' purposeful pursuit of collaborating with like-minded activists in other countries. The following analyses will further examine the impacts of transnational activism for marriage migrants, the relationship between these types of transnationalism, and the challenges they face.

International awareness of marriage migrants' issues

In regard to its political efficacy, it is obvious that AMMORE as a TAN has helped the promotion of public awareness of marriage migrant issues. One concrete achievement is that some U.N. institutions and mechanisms started using the term 'marriage migrant' in their official documents. Moreover, cross-border transnational activism also has impacts on policies by adding external pressures on governments to respond to the demands of the movements within nation-states, as illustrated by AHRLIM's success in changing policies of financial requirements for naturalization and detainment of irregular migrants.

Politicizing marriage migrants

As a grassroots-oriented movement for marriage migrants, it is crucial to understand how marriage migrants have made sense of transnational activism. Manchi, originally from Vietnam, was the first marriage migrant to attend the first IAMR that AMMORE joined IMA in 2008, which included a protest action with large mobilization where she spoke as the representative of TASAT. I asked if she was afraid. She commented:

> At first, I was a bit worried when I saw such big mobilization. But I soon felt
> inspired because there were so many people from all over the world united. I

was so impressed and inspired by their passion and commitment. Their bravery made me brave too.

In addition to feeling empowered, Manchi highlighted the new perspectives she gained.

> I learned that only unity can make changes. I also had a fresh understanding of the world, realizing that we are not only affected by our own governments and we should not just mind our own business. I realize that our lives are dominated by other powerful countries, like the U.S., and people in other countries are all affected by the superpower.

Participating in transnational activism organized by AMMORE helps broaden marriage migrants' perspectives from perceiving their experiences of marriage migration as a merely personal issue to understanding that it is affected not only by nation-state policies but also by global superpowers. Pei-hsiang, a marriage migrant from Cambodia, who attended activities organized by AMMORE and IMA in New York representing TASAT, pointed to the fact that she has clearly learned the counter-hegemonic framework of understanding the root causes of forced migration.

> Via listening to the sharing and presentation of migrant activists from other countries, it helped me to break through from my confined perspectives and see the bigger picture of why people migrate, like globalization. I have learned that people are forced to migrate as the result of a long term and historical problems, such as wars and colonization... There is unequal development among countries. The reason why these countries, like in Southeast Asia where we are from, are underdeveloped is that the super powerful countries invaded us and exploited our rich resources, which resulted in wars and colonization. Even after independence, our countries have been struggling to be rebuilt from the ruins.

Necessary conditions: domestic transnationalism

A sense of empowerment is commonly felt by all marriage migrants attending the transnational activities organized by AMMORE. All of them expressed how they were inspired to participate more AMMORE activities, as a marriage migrant from Mexico to Japan told me several times while attending forums and rallies organized by AMMORE and IMA in Mexico City IN 2018:

> I am so happy and honored to be part of AMMORE. I want to attend more AMMORE activities in the future.

However, these inspired marriage migrants all became inactive, except those organized by TASAT, shortly after they attended the transnational events due to

personal or organizational challenges. Although they became inactive in transnational networking, they remain active in their hometown associations.

For instance, a Vietnamese marriage migrant leader living in South Korea was much inspired when she first attended AMMORE's training held in Taipei and was linked to the migrant activist network in Seoul after I introduced her to my Korean activist friends. She was elected as an officer at AMMORE's founding assembly but became inactive shortly afterwards. When I asked her in 2018 why she did not attend AMMORE's meeting, her explanation was that she had been too exhausted and needed to reduce her activity level. However, according to local Korean activists, she no longer participated in the migrant activist network while still remaining active in her Vietnamese association.

Since it is common and understandable that marriage migrants' activism is affected by family matters and interpersonal conflicts within organizations due to their precarious conditions, the question that needs further investigation is why these exceptional marriage migrants organized by TASAT have remained active rather than why the majority of marriage migrants attending AMMORE's activities became inactive.

One factor common among marriage migrants who became inactive is that their activism had been primarily linked with hometown associations that mainly provide social activities and services. They have not been involved in campaigns for their own rights and welfare in the countries of settlement, including Japan and Korea, where movements for marriage migrants' rights and welfare are mainly spearheaded by native activists, with marriage migrants as mostly the beneficiaries.

To analyze if their prior experiences in protest action and campaigns have made a difference for marriage migrants organized by TASAT, I asked them in 2021 if AMMORE's impacts on them would be the same had they not been involved in AHRLIM. Both Manchi and Pei-hsiang believe that their prior experiences in contentious politics in Taiwan have made significant differences. When reflecting on her first experiences in speaking at the large demonstration in Manlia, Manchi explained,

> Without prior experiences with TASAT and AHRLIM, I would not dare to join protests and even understand why it was necessary to have rallies. In Manila, though there were many armed policemen when we had the big demonstration, I was not afraid. Because I represented TASAT, a member organization of AMMORE and IMA, and I knew if anything happened, they would protect me. I was not alone.

According to Pei-hsiang, there would be two scenarios for marriage migrants without prior experience in protest action after they attended transnational activism.

> One possibility is that they are inspired for the first time, but later on they lost it because they do not have their own experiences of activism to share with others. It would be a feeling of emptiness or even ashamed when you can only listen to others' experiences and not being able to share your own in return. The other possibility is that after attending transnational events, they would try to find something to do, like campaigns, so that their organizations can do more than just socializing. But this will not happen automatically. It would need empowerment process.

Pei-hsiang emphasized the importance of empowerment:

> Without empowerment, marriage migrants may still be able to stand up to demand rights since they are directly affected. For example, many Cambodians stood up to attend rallies when the government did not give them Taiwanese citizenship. But without being empowered in the process, they would not have a broader understanding of the systematic problems and therefore would not be able to sustain and expand their activism. Their action would only be temporary and issue-based, rather than developing it into movements because they cannot see structural problems, like policies or social environments. They lack analyses of the root causes of the problems.

Manchi also believes in the importance of empowerment and further points out that the roles of native activists are crucial in this empowerment process.

> It is simply impossible for marriage migrants alone to become activists daring to initiate campaigns for our rights and welfare. In our home countries, we were not educated at schools or in societies that it's our civil right to protest and to demand to the governments, not to mention language and cultural barriers.

Historically, AHRLIM as a domestic transnationalism was the basis for the emergence of AMMORE, the cross-border transnationalism. The experience of being involved in a form of domestic transnationalism is considered crucial by marriage migrants in Taiwan who have been able to sustain their activism.   By comparing marriage migrants' involvement in different countries, it is suggested that a domestic transnationalism is the necessary condition for cross-border transnationalism. While marriage migrants in Japan and Korea still felt empowered by joining AMMORE's cross-border transnationalism, it is necessary to sustain and strengthen such empowerment them through involving them in activism and campaigns, not just social activities. This requires collaboration with native activists and therefore development of a form of domestic transnationalism.

As mentioned, it is common for marriage migrants' activism to be affected by personal and organizational challenges. Manchi and Pei-hsiang have also encountered these challenges. In fact, in additional to personal issues, Manchi

and Pei-hsiang have been exposed to severe organizational challenges since 2018 that almost resulted in the dissolution of TASAT. It is important to understand why Manchi and Pei-hsiang are still determined to continue their involvement in both domestic and cross-border transnationalism despite of these personal and organizational difficulties. For them, it is important to continue the struggle because they have witnessed the values of collective activism that have improved lives of many marriage migrants, and these lessons they have learned need to be passed on to others to create a better world. As Pei-hsiang concluded,

> It's like a circle. Everyone in the planet is connected. Even if these issues do not affect me, they could affect my families or friends. To help each other, we need to make best efforts at places where we are located..... Even when TASAT is facing serious problems and it's been frustrating, we still want to continue, because we had experienced success in campaigning and organizing in the past. From our past experiences, we learned the values of organizing and campaigning, and it's important to pass on the heritage of the movements. Just like we learned from senior activists, we have responsibilities to pass on our experiences and lessons to other marriage migrants and future generation.

Moreover, since cross-border transnational activism for marriage migrants has been developed without any big events or international legal mechanism which can be a strong leverage to sustain and expand it, a form of domestic transnationalism is especially important for marriage migrant movements. Unlike migrant worker movements, which have been significantly expanded by several international campaigns, including the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and adoption of the ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, marriage migrant organizations can at present only incorporate their issues into existent international platforms, such as CEDAW, that are related to but not specifically made for marriage migrants. In short, in the case of the movements for marriage migrant rights and welfare, domestic transnationalism is the necessary condition to sustain cross-border transnationalism.

Balance between domestic and cross-border transnationalism

It is debatable whether all the effort and energy needed for developing and expanding transnationalism across the borders is worth it, given that marriage migrant rights and welfare are mostly affected by policies and laws within nation-states and that, after all, international conventions and instruments are often not implemented at the national level. While cross-border TANs do help campaigns within the nation-state, their impact cannot be overstated. In fact, many activists find that local and national struggles are more important than transnational activism when it comes to the concrete impacts on the lives of

marriage migrants, and consequently they do not invest much time and energy in participating in the TAN. Without active participation of activists rooted at the local and national levels, TANs run the risk of being dominated by 'professional advocates' whose activism is not grounded and who only project themselves as 'spokespersons' of the movement. These ungrounded professional advocates would not only harm the normative legitimacy of transnational movements (Norman 2017) but also the well-being of marriage migrants because the policy recommendations they make to supra-national institutions would be detached from the realities of marriage migrants. Therefore, while recognizing the importance of transnational activism for marriage migrants, this paper argues that cross-border transnationalism should not take primacy over domestic transnationalism. Activists concerned with the well-being of marriage migrants should be constantly reflective of their involvement in transnational activism both within and beyond nation-states and make a conscious effort to balance these two types of transnational activism.

Members of AMMORE have been continuously linking the two types of transnational activism. For instance, inspired by transnationalism within the nation-state developed by TASAT and ARHLIM, members of AMMORE in South Korea and Japan also endeavored to develop and strengthen domestic transnationalism in their respective countries. In both countries, Filipino migrant organizations have been actively reaching out to marriage migrants from different nationalities. In South Korea, AMMORE members and Filipino associations recruited the Vietnamese organization mentioned previously. In Japan, efforts have been made to establish AMMORE-Japan, a grassroots organization composed of marriage migrants from eight nationalities founded in March 2018. One of the goals for AMMORE-Japan is to transform itself from an association to an alliance of marriage migrant organizations with different countries of origin. While efforts have been made in Japan and Korea to reach out to marriage migrants from different nationalities, transnational networking has not been able to sustain itself. Compared to the experience in Taiwan, what is lacking in other countries is that they have not been able to establish domestic transnationalism to campaign for policy and law changes by uniting native activists and marriage migrants of different origins.

In sum, in order to be both 'normatively legitimate' and 'politically efficacious' (Fraser 2014), a grounded TAN needs to be developed. To this end, AMMORE must simultaneously develop both domestic transnationalism and cross-border transnationalism. On the one hand, marriage migrant issues can be amplified at the regional and international levels via transationalism across borders, which in turn the national movements can use as 'boomerang pattern' tactic to add more pressure on their respective governments to change policies and laws. On the other hand, national movements for marriage migrants must be transnational to be legitimate and effective in affecting policies and laws because the actors need to include marriage migrants themselves who are from

different countries of origin as well as native activists who can assist marriage migrants in developing the movements.

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The path is the goal: utopia as process
Matt York

Abstract

As part of a renewed interest in prefigurative politics evident in contemporary activism, important critical work is being undertaken that focuses on the temporal structure of such prefigurative action. The central problem this article therefore takes as its starting point is the nature of our current political utopias – that they are transcendent rather than grounded, or put another way – rather than here-and-now they are nowhere – in an ever-receding future/past, or otherwise in an alternate reality altogether. They are impossible. The paper will argue that if we are to move beyond our current states of bewilderment, disorientation and denial, we will need to establish new (and learn from existing) grounded utopias which rather than being not-now and nowhere, are co-imagined and lived right here and right now. Drawing on classical and contemporary anarchist theory, and from a recent collective visioning project involving a global cross-section of anti-capitalist, ecological, feminist and anti-racist activists, the anarchist concept of permanent revolution will be examined as a way to confront such concerns. The temporal gap between current struggles and imagined futures will be problematised, prefigurative praxes critiqued, and a politics of immanence explored in remedy.

Keywords: Prefigurative politics, permanent revolution, utopia, immanence, collective visioning.

> 'We do not have to sketch in advance the picture of the future society: It is the spontaneous action of all free men that is to create it and give it its shape, moreover incessantly changing like all the phenomena of life'.
>
> – Élisée Reclus (1889)

> 'Nothing pre-exists the relations that constitute it'.
>
> – Arturo Escobar (2016, 18)

Introduction

We are living in the midst of an unprecedented planetary emergency. By far the greatest challenge that humanity has faced in its brief history. And one of our own making. The ferocity with which human beings are consuming and fighting over resources is literally destroying our web of life, constructed over billions of

years, upon which all of us, human and non-human, depend for survival. As we hurtle ever closer to this proverbial cliff edge, the deferral of free ecological society to some imagined post-revolutionary moment has become an increasingly untenable position. Encouragingly, we have observed a clear prefigurative turn within contemporary activism, with the co-creation of living, vibrant, material alternatives to the current system which tangibly express the utopian potentiality that exists as an immanent feature of the present. Such spaces exist inside and outside of contemporary society simultaneously. They both configure/prefigure alternative ways of living and being and act as exemplars for wider society to see that such alternatives are actually possible. As part of this renewed interest in prefigurative politics, important critical work is being undertaken that focuses on the temporal structure of such prefigurative action. What are the consequences of concretising a fixed future image of society to be prefigured? How do we navigate the gap between *here* and *there*, and at what cost?

By way of an offering to these debates, this article will examine the anarchist concept of permanent revolution as a way to confront such concerns. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's original formulation of permanent revolution, unlike the Marxist-Trotskyist use of the term that maintained the need for a vanguard party seizing state control (Marx and Engels 1850; Trotsky 1931), involved 'the people alone, acting upon themselves without intermediary' (Proudhon 1848) in order to break the cycle of partial revolutions examined later in the paper. The central problem this enquiry will therefore take as its starting point is the nature of our current political utopias – that they are transcendent rather than grounded, or put another way – rather than here-and-now they are nowhere – in an ever-receding future/past, or otherwise in an alternate reality altogether. They are impossible. The article will argue that if we are to move beyond our current states of bewilderment, disorientation and denial, we will need to establish new (and learn from existing) grounded utopias which rather than being *not-now* and *nowhere*, are co-imagined and lived right *here* and right *now*. Drawing on classical and contemporary anarchist theory, and from a recent collective visioning project involving a global cross-section of anti-capitalist, ecological, feminist and anti-racist activists, the temporal gap between current struggles and imagined futures will be problematised, prefigurative praxes critiqued, and a politics of immanence explored in remedy.

Collective visions

A recent study conducted with activists across Europe found that although the utopian imagination was considered to be a central aspect of their struggles, processes which harnessed this collective imaginary are rarely used as a method for designing strategy and tactics (Pötz 2019, 138). And so, by way of response to this apparent deficit, a process of Collective Visioning has been used to inform and develop the theory in the second part of this article. This approach has been adapted from participatory methods used within the global Occupy movement as a tool for collaboration and collective action. It involves a group

process of intentionally generating a vision that is unapologetically utopian while remaining grounded in grassroots struggle – to be enacted in the here-and-now. Such collective visioning acts to reveal 'glimpses of a future world' (Shukaitis and Graeber 2007, 37) and of the seeds of liberation already existing in the present. For Ernst Bloch, such imagination is 'productive of the revolution', and revolution is 'the changing of the world' (cited in Brown 2003) – positioning imagination not as mere fantasising, but as a *process* inherently attuned to 'objectively real possibility' (Bloch 1986, 145) and therefore to the 'properties of reality which are themselves utopian' (which already contain future). Similarly, Katarzyna Balug positions imagination as the central driver of cognition and perception, concluding that society can therefore 'only create that which its members can imagine' (Balug 2017, 284). Without engaging in such future-oriented discussion on values, goals and visions it will never be possible to 'take over' that very future (Mannermaa 2006, 4). Utopian political imaginaries have largely been rejected by conventional politics since the end of the Second World War on the grounds that such thought is 'abstract' and 'metaphysical', and that a utopian desire for justice and perfection might well rupture the ordered fragility of the international status quo (Brincat 2009, 585). From this perspective, to be utopian is to be 'hopelessly impractical, or dangerously idealistic, or both' (Davis 2009, 73). And such a negation of imagination has led many political theorists to narrow their focus exclusively to the empirical *now* – thus constraining contemporary political imagination to a fixed (neoliberal) present. Tom, one of the collective visioning participants, reflects on this situation:

> There are a lot of people who say that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism and I think that means that their world-view has been so thoroughly dominated by capitalism that this really is the case. For some reason idealism and utopianism are framed as a bad thing. The declaration that we cannot think an end to capitalism is not just defeatist – it shows that a lot of the leftist tradition has failed and it's done.

The argument here does not aim to negate the importance of a political praxis which is responsive to the present and rooted in everyday experience, or as the Zapatistas put it: '*preguntando caminamos'* ('walking we ask questions') – but simply to acknowledge that without visions of how the world might be different, struggles will stagnate and decline. Might it therefore be possible to develop a mode of praxis which imagines futures that realign movement trajectory while simultaneously grounding itself in present moment realities – an imaginative/responsive ongoing process? Ruth Levitas suggests reframing Utopia as method, an 'imaginary reconstitution of society' which addresses both the new society and the transition to it - thus maintaining a 'double standpoint' between present and future and, she suggests, 're-reading the present from the standpoint of the future' (Levitas 2013, 218). Taking this logic even further, Laurence Davis (2012, 136) draws a clear distinction between *transcendent*

utopias which imagine and strive for perfection in an impossible future, and what he terms *grounded utopias* which imagine qualitatively better forms of living latent in the present – transforming the restrictions of the 'here and now' into an 'open horizon of possibilities'. Davis believes that we may well be witnessing a paradigm shift in utopian thinking in this early part of the twenty-first century, with a new conception of utopia as an 'empirically grounded, dynamic, and open-ended' feature of the 'real world' of history and politics (Ibid, 127). He builds upon Friedrich Kümmel's idea of time as a temporal coexistence between past, future and present, with the relation of these temporal components not merely conceived as one of succession but also as one of conjoint existence (Kümmel, 1968). And he presents a concept of time in which 'the future represents the possibility, and the past a basis, of a free life in the present' (Davis 2012, 131). From this perspective such grounded utopias both emerge out of, and support the further development of, historical movements for social change – and thus are not 'fantasised visions of perfection to be imposed on an imperfect world' (Ibid, 136) but rather provide the space for a utopian re-imagining of current (and therefore future) social relations which are firmly grounded in contemporary grassroots struggle.

This particular Collective Visioning process involved the thoughts, feelings, ideas and imaginings of a global cross section of ecological, anti-capitalist, feminist and anti-racist activists from South Africa, Mexico, *Trouwunna* (Tasmania, Australia), Ireland, UK, Syria, Uganda, Germany, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Turkey, USA and Jordan. A specific and sustained effort was made to maintain a diverse representation of participants from both the global South and North in order to encourage a 'cosmopolitan ecology of knowledges' (Santos, Nunes and Meneses 2008, xiv). We have therefore striven for an epistemic diversity in the (co)production of new theory, with full cognizance of the long history of oppression/suppression against so much of the knowledge(s) produced in the South – on which the Western academy has built its current hegemony of imperial knowledge and consequently the systems driving our current socio-ecological crises. The latter part of this article will bring the voices of some of these activists into a dialogue with both classical and contemporary theory, illuminating a vibrant politics of utopia, immanence, and permanent revolution.

Unfinished business

For over three centuries, efforts to animate radical social change have been largely focused on the state, with the main debates concerning how to win state power, whether by parliamentary or by extra-parliamentary means (Holloway 2002, 1-6). Throughout this period, it has been possible to observe how one-by-one the mass movements of the time have been co-opted by political parties in order to gain power for their own self-interest rather than completing the task of dismantling the institutions of domination. And as a result, all such parties have grown to resemble the very state systems they have claimed to oppose, both in their organisational structures and in the limitation of their imagination.

Ekrem describes his sense of disappointment and missed opportunity in relation to the authoritarian counter-revolutions that have occurred in recent years across the Arab world:

> This is not why we spent so many hours and days in Tahrir Square. It is history repeating itself – there was military rule, [Mubarak] went, and now there is military rule again! And this has happened right across the Arab spring. It's a concrete living example – people came together, social movements came together, and it ends up all the same. People come together to face a challenge as a community, as a society, and then later on when they have attained their goals the revolution is stolen from them.

Thus, the new 'revolutionary' party arises in the name of free society, but actually causes its demise. As new state institutions are created there might well be a newfound sense of hope and optimism among the newly liberated populace. But in most cases the very tyrants who the revolutionaries sought to replace rapidly return to power, or they are replaced by new and often more refined systems of domination as the hierarchies inevitably re-emerge within the stasis of the institution. In 1898, twenty years prior to the October Revolution, Élisée Reclus prophetically warned his 'revolutionary friends' in Russia of the dangers of conquering state power and in turn adopting the very tools of domination that their revolution was seeking to displace:

> If the socialists become our masters, they will certainly proceed in the same manner as their predecessors, the republicans. The laws of history will not bend in their favor. Once they have power, they will not fail to use it, if only under the illusion or pretense that this force will be rendered useless as all obstacles are swept away and all hostile elements destroyed. The world is full of such ambitious and naïve persons who live with the illusory hope of transforming society through their exceptional capacity to command (Reclus 2013, 145).

These words of Reclus are as pertinent now as they were then, perhaps even more so. For as Murray Bookchin similarly reminded us: 'political parties are *products* of the nation-state itself, whether they profess to be revolutionary, liberal, or reactionary' (Bookchin 1996, 7). Thus, the fundamental difference that distinguishes one party from another is merely the kind of nation-state it wishes to establish. Yet in spite of this, conventional political histories examining revolutions have focused exclusively on the rivalries between liberal, radical, and revolutionary parties for control of the state, ignoring this far more important political battle which takes place between the state-centric revolutionary party and the new, usually directly democratic institutions co-created by the people on the ground. In fact, it has been possible to observe such a pattern in most, if not all, modern classical revolutions. The English

revolution saw the communalism of the Levellers and Diggers subverted by Cromwell's state-centric parliamentarians resulting in the mass enclosure of common land and greatly assisting the eventual rise of industrial capitalism (Ibid, 128). Similarly in the French revolution, when the previously centrist Jacobins were locked in a power struggle with their rival Girondins, a revolutionary rhetoric was adopted as an attempt to gain mass support. And in Russia the Bolsheviks, who were highly authoritarian, adopted an almost anarchist rhetoric in their own power struggles with the Mensheviks, the Social Revolutionaries, and their liberal rivals. Of course, once power was in their hands the Jacobins decimated the sections, and the Bolsheviks the soviets, transforming France and Russia into increasingly authoritarian nation-states and effectively ending their revolutionary processes (Ibid, 9).

The Spanish Revolution again followed a similar path. In January 1933, following a wave of uprisings across Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia, the residents of the small Andalusian town of Casas Viejas took to the streets and declared *comunismo libertario* (libertarian communism). In order to supress the uprising, the local civil guards set fire to a building shielding some of the revolutionaries, killing eight women and men. They then rounded up and shot a further twelve men in the town square. The tragedy reverberated throughout the country, energising resistance to the state, and becoming one of the catalysts leading to the social revolution in the subsequent years (Mintz 1982, 1-9).   In fact, by 1936, millions of ordinary Spanish people applying the organisational forms of the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* – Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalist Labour Unions (CNT) and the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* – Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) had taken large sections of the economy into their own hands. These new free areas, cooperatives, and village communes were collectivised and self-administered, with the efficiency of their collective enterprises far exceeding that of comparable ones in the nationalised or private sectors (Bookchin 1990, xi-xxxix). As an example, in Barcelona all healthcare was organised via the Medical Syndicate which managed 18 hospitals (6 of which were created anew in this period), 17 sanatoria, 22 clinics, 6 psychiatric establishments, 3 nurseries, and one maternity hospital – an incredible achievement given the wartime context (Leval 2018, 270). In his *Homage to Catalonia* George Orwell describes the 'special atmosphere' of liberation and hope he witnessed on arriving in Barcelona in 1936: 'There was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine' (Orwell 1938, 7).

From mid-1936 however a broad alliance of parties was formed aiming to reconstruct the state, including the Marxist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), the Communist party, Republicans, and Catalan nationalists. Subsequently a new national government was declared and the UGT leader Fransisco Largo Cabellero was made prime minister. In a much-criticised move senior figures of the CNT then began negotiations to enter this government claiming to do so in the 'spirit of anti-fascist unity' (Yeoman 2019, 438). Alarmed, the FAI argued that this was not only a violation of their core

principles but also a strategically poor decision that essentially 'disarmed the movement' (Ibid, 439). And in a combined policy document between the CNT and UGT the scale of compromise was made starkly apparent. Relinquishing its central anti-statist position, the CNT objected only to 'a totalitarian form of government', instead opting for a 'true social democracy' – a 'Social Democratic and Federalist Republic' (Peirats 1998, 286). They then further agreed to open a 'new constitutional period' during which they would go so far as to participate in the state elections. The Peninsular Committee of the FAI were astonished by this reversal of ideological position and immediately responded to the declaration: 'There is no doubt that the proposal is consonant with the desires long harboured by the current government to render void whatever revolutionary transformation has been made in Spain' (Ibid, 292). However, these concerns were quickly dismissed in a circular from the National Committee of the CNT: '[W]e shut the mouths of the defeatists, pessimists, those who will not listen to reason and those who take advantage of the circumstances to speak of revolutionary losses, cave-ins, treasons and liquidations' (Ibid, 290). Tragically, yet unsurprisingly, in the following months the Republican army proceeded to dismantle hundreds of collectives and dissolve the regional council, arresting hundreds and with many being tortured and killed. By the summer of 1937 most urban and rural collectives had been legalised and brought under state control, and the CNT-FAI members of the national government and Generalitat removed from their positions. The social revolution was effectively over. The CNT-FAI, although retaining a considerable membership, had little power to act as republican Spain collapsed, with Nationalist troops finally entering Barcelona in January 1939 (Yeoman 2019, 437-442). Vernon Richards argued that the CNT were guilty of falling victim to the very illusions they had so frequently criticised in the socialists – believing that power was only a danger when in the 'wrong hands' and for a 'wrong cause' (Richards 2019, 225). If we are to judge the results of the decisions made by the CNT in the Spanish civil war, he concluded, we can draw only one conclusion: 'Where the means are authoritarian, the ends, the real or dreamed of future society, is authoritarian and never results in the free society… [G]overnment – even with the collaboration of socialists and anarchists – breeds more government' (Ibid, 232).

And this pattern has continued into our present era. As Ekrem previously mentioned, a striking contemporary example of this phenomena can be observed in the *Arab Spring* wave of revolutions. On January 4th 2011, 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi died from self-immolation in response to ongoing police harassment – leading to massive protests across the country. By January 14th Tunisian dictator Ben Ali had been forced from power and had fled the country. Inspired by this spontaneous uprising, and similarly animated by the death of a young man Khaled Said who had been beaten to death by police just weeks previously, Tahrir Square in Cairo was occupied by Egyptian protestors on January 25th who once again ousted the dictator (this time Mubarak) just 18 days later. Over the course of the following months a wave of leaderless, horizontal, decentralised and anti-hierarchical

uprisings spread throughout the region to countries including Libya, Syria, Yemen, Kuwait, Sudan, Omar and Morocco. Across the world we held our breath as this seemingly unstoppable series of movements emerged as a multiplicity in accordance with local conditions. Not all the revolutions succeeded in overthrowing their governments, but for the ones who managed to displace the old regime a familiar and tragic pattern could then be observed as one by one the power of these mass movements was once again co-opted by political parties and the revolutions effectively stolen. The Muslim Brotherhood and Nour parties in Egypt, An-Nahda in Tunisia, the Parti du Justice et Développement in Morroco, all effectively ending the revolutionary process. In a similar way, the so called 'Second Spring' of 2019 in Sudan and Algeria that adopted similar organising strategies successfully brought down the long-term dictators Omar al Bashir and Bouteflika respectively. Unfortunately, the second spring has followed much the same pattern as the first, with the new governing parties maintaining a continuity of core state policies.

This is not to say that change does not occur, for how else would we account for such momentous events as the fall of feudalism, the abolition of slavery, or the end of the divine right of kings? Without doubt significant social and economic societal progress has been achieved by this movement of movements throughout history. It is rather to say that the actually-existing free society constituted in the revolutionary moment is rapidly dismantled and replaced by default forms of social organisation, and thus the full potential of the moment is lost. And so, this repeated pattern of stolen revolutions has left us all – every one of us – living a poor imitation of what might have been. Rather than revolution becoming a 'permanent condition of life' (Bookchin 1996, 9) these struggles have been abstracted as historical footnotes and their truth subverted by state powers. As each of these revolutions attempted compromise with the state, a space was immediately opened for counterrevolution and defeat. This principle, argues Bookchin (1998, 118), can be taken as absolutely fixed: 'The vacuum that an unfinished revolution leaves behind is quickly filled by its enemies, who, sometimes presenting themselves as "compromisers", "realists", and "reasonable men" try to harness the revolution and steer the energy it has churned up towards its own destruction'. For the parties, the direct action that drives the revolution is seen as transitory, a means to an end – no more no less. And thus, the party system must eventually supress this power from below in order to sustain itself, squandering the promise of 'government of the people by the people' by imposing a 'government of the people by *an elite sprung from the people'* (Duverger, cited in Arendt 2016, 281). It was witnessing at first hand the French revolution of 1848 being subverted in this way by the provisional government that confirmed for Proudhon that 'all parties, without exception, as they affect power, are varieties of absolutism', leading him to conclude: 'the political revolution, the abolition of authority among men is the goal; the social revolution is the means' (Proudhon 1849, 3). And it was this realisation that led him to call for the 'permanent revolution' this article pursues. And so, for contemporary activists, if truly resolved to imagine, co-constitute and then

sustain free ecological society, our revolution must become similarly permanent. It must become an ongoing process without end.

For anarchists such as Reclus, Gustav Landauer, and Peter Kropotkin, revolution and evolution were two sides of the same coin – each leading to the other in a perpetual cycle of alternation. As Kropotkin (2010, 360-361) describes: 'If we represent the slow progress of a period of evolution by a line drawn on paper, we shall see this line gradually though slowly, rising. Then there comes a revolution, and the line makes a sudden leap upwards'. He concludes however that once this height has been achieved 'progress cannot be maintained'. As can be witnessed through history the line sharply drops, and 'reaction follows' (Ibid, 361). After this point, although the line of progress is often at a permanently higher level than before, it remains only a partial revolution, and the next stage of evolution proceeds from this point. Kropotkin argues that these moments of revolution, where a sudden leap toward freedom is achieved, are arrived at through a 'wave of brotherly love' that acts to 'wash the earth clean… [and] sweep away the shards of refuse accumulated by centuries of slavery and oppression' (Kroptkin 2014, 531). But he then very quickly (and perhaps prematurely) concludes that 'we cannot hope that our daily life will be continuously inspired by such exalted enthusiasms', nor the free society be founded on 'such noble passions' (Ibid). If we follow Kropotkin's logic – that it is in fact a wave of love that results in the moment of revolution – then would not the extension of such a wave in turn extend this free society as a process of permanent revolution? Surely it is exactly such 'noble passions' that a free society *must* be founded on? Landauer appeared to believe so, arguing that the ultimate destiny of revolution – to awaken '*le contr'État*: the state that is no state' – will be arrived at through one connecting quality: 'love as force' (Landauer 2010, 168-170). And so, it might be argued, grounding social reproduction in such relations might then offer a stream of continuation from the old to the new – and thus work to avert the usual post-revolutionary vacuum in which the counterrevolution occurs.

If, however, a free society is to be founded on such relations, and without 'assistance' from a vanguard revolutionary party, then what of a manifesto? What of strategy and planning? In a famous attack on the revolutionary ideas of Marx, Michael Bakunin addressed this question by setting himself in opposition to what he saw as the foolishness of rigidly aligning to a preconceived idea of how revolutionary change should occur: 'We do not, therefore, intend to draw up a blueprint for the future revolutionary campaign; we leave this childish task to those who believe in the possibility of the efficacy of achieving the emancipation of humanity through personal dictatorship' (Dolgoff 1973, 357). From this perspective then, and without a clear map to guide us, the question of how to get from the *here* of struggle to the *there* of free society continues to present us with a perplexing dilemma, because as Paul Raekstad and Sofa Saio Gradin explain in their book *Prefigurative Politics*, it is not a question of whether political means and ends *should* be linked, because 'they *already are*' (Raekstad and Gradin 2020, 36). Namazzi argues that the reason why so many revolutionary movements have failed is because 'the people were clear about

what they wanted to move from, but they were not clear on where they were heading', and thus those in power have been able to 'take advantage of this gap in strategy'. But this very sense of trajectory from here to there/somewhere, as expressed by Namazzi perhaps illuminates a more central problem – that as long as freedom is deferred while in transit between a past we aim to escape and an imagined utopian future, there indeed remains such a gap to be enclosed and colonised by oppressive forces. But as we are now beginning to discern, it is this very sense of trajectory from here to there, and the resultant gap between the two temporalities which obscures what might be the ground upon which free society can finally be constituted – in the immanence and accessibility of the now.

As discussed previously, in his work on *grounded utopias* Davis (2012, 130-132) builds on Kümmel's idea of time as a temporal coexistence between past, future and present, with the relation of these temporal components not merely conceived as one of succession but also as one of conjoint existence – with both past and future intertwined with the present. From a movement perspective this state of profound contingency calls on us to open many more spaces for radical imaginaries focused on building political projects in the here-and-now, grounded in historical praxis and extending toward an ever changing yet hopeful future. But this relocation to the present is by no means a rejection of utopian thinking – far from it – for visions of future worlds animate struggle in the present. The real danger lies in clinging to and concretising any one fixed vision of the future (or indeed the past) as it will implicitly trap us within what David Abram calls 'the oblivion of linear time' (Abram 2017, 272). It will trap us, that is, within the same 'illusory dimension' that has already enabled us to lose connection with and fragment apart from the natural world. Temporally speaking then, the most strategic and efficacious location for constructing free society is in this moment, and then the next, and the next – in perpetuity. And so, as Anna explains: 'Acting from the here and now is revolutionary… Rather than having a fixed vision that the future will look like xyz – it is rather left open – really trusting in where we are coming from and what our intentions and motivations are. More humane, more relational, more caring'. From this perspective any truly inhabitable utopia can therefore only be arrived at, or lived, as a dynamic process in the here-and-now. Kurdish revolutionary Bager Nûjiyan (2019) described his own struggle in Rojava as such a grounded utopia firmly rooted in the present. For him and his comrades free society was not just an abstract idea, but their 'concrete way of living', and their 'way of connecting with struggle and utopia on a daily basis'. Thus, from Nûjiyan's perspective the temporal gap between that which we struggle to escape and our imagined destination had been closed, and the free society relocated to the immanence of the here-and-now where it can finally be reclaimed and occupied.

There are of course a number of well-argued critiques of such a politics of immanence which deserve further engagement. In her classic *Political Protest & Cultural Revolution* Barbara Epstein contends that the U.S. non-violent direct-action movements of the 1970's and 1980's were weakened by an emphasis on prefigurative politics and community building (Epstein 1991, 192).

By conceiving of community building as politics, she argues, the movements undermined their strategy. She believes very strongly in the efficacy of utopian politics and that it must 'hold out a vision of a non-violent and egalitarian society' which must then 'build the new society in the shell of the old by creating a space within which these values can be realised as far as possible' (Ibid, 269). Ultimately however she concludes that for a movement to achieve real political impact it must be willing to 'sacrifice community' (Ibid, 192). Raising related concerns, Uri Gordon has argued that a politics of the here-and-now leads to our struggles becoming trapped in a 'recursive prefiguration' similar to that which can be found in Christianity, in which a future 'radiates backwards on its past' (Gordon 2017, 521) – an 'absorption of the revolutionary/utopian horizon into the present tense' (Gordon 2009, 261). Such a temporal framing, he argues, works to 'undermine a generative disposition towards the future', allowing a collective denial of both the 'absent promise' of revolutionary transformation in the near future, and the very real prospect of imminent ecological and societal collapse (Gordon 2017, 522). Prefiguration from this perspective is little more than a way of modelling an imagined future in the present moment as a way of dissociating from the very real and immediate ecological and social crises that cascade around us – 'fiddling while Rome burns' so to speak. Gordon thus argues that adherents to such 'presentism' sidestep these crises by 'avoiding any disposition towards the future altogether' (Ibid, 532).

Darren Webb similarly critiques what he describes as attempts to 'reconfigure utopia' and to 'rid it of its totalistic and prescriptive dimensions' in order to avoid the risk of 'closure and control', claiming that such an approach merely succeeds in nullifying its utopian potential (Webb 2009, 757). He believes that much of the 'vitality, power and direction' that a utopian approach might offer is lost when attempting to circumvent its perceived 'bad' connotations. He repeatedly rejects what he refers to as 'the standard liberal critique' of blueprint utopianism (Webb 2013, 280-290), one assumes in order to ridicule similar arguments made by those on the left, without acknowledging that such critique has a long and established history in anarchist thought. Moreover, the many anarchist revolutionaries and theorists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who were clear in their opposition to such vanguardist concretised visions of a future society were making their observations within living memory (and often through direct experience) of the devastating consequences of such an approach. He is right however in his assertion that without visions of the future, utopian praxis risks becoming 'an empty and endless project that romanticises the process while losing sight of the goal' (Ibid, 287). And in his critical case study of Occupy Wall Street he makes a similar argument: 'Movements heralding themselves as cracks in capitalist space-time through which transformed social relations are emerging here-and-now might just end up becoming dead spaces in which the inchoate utopian desires that originally gave them life wither away through neglect' (Webb 2019, 358).

And of course, he is once again correct – they 'might'. But must they? Are a politics of immanence and a generative praxis, as these scholars claim, really so

mutually exclusive? The dangers are certainly real and must be taken seriously
– a politics of immanence could well be (and at times is) subverted to provide
reassurance and denial in the face of ecological and social systemic collapse.
But such an impatience with our collective lack of revolutionary progress in the
present, while entirely understandable, might just as easily lead us yet again
into a blinkered march towards a frozen future-image conceived of in the past,
the abandonment of the now, and the repetition of previous mistakes. Any
future utopia we might imagine through the limitations of our current
conceptual frameworks will inevitably at some point be found lacking as our
capacity to imagine better worlds evolves beyond our original starting point,
condemning us to a future 'caught within the paradigms of the present'
(Newman 2009, 211). As Katie explains:

> I think it's often hard to know what the best course of action is – or at
> least it's hard to know five years in advance! I think the best one can
> tell is often just in that moment. To the extent that the impact of
> one's actions in the world can be unclear, I think a commitment to
> having those actions be loving – that the intention is that they be
> loving – is a powerful thing. So, for me that's the place I want to start
> from. It's about the large choices but also about the tiny choices right
> in front of us – two inches from our own nose – those choices as well.

And so, although it might be possible to identify the impacts and successes of
previous struggles with the benefit of hindsight, it is never possible to envisage
the whole process in advance. In fact, rather than inevitably undermining a
generative disposition towards the future as suggested by Gordon, or merely
leading to the kind of 'dead space' described by Webb, such a politics of
immanence might alternatively provide the agency to transform our multiple
entangled relations in the here-and-now, and consequently the extent to which
they will lead to social relations of domination or liberation in the future we aim
to affect. Interestingly, such a process was reported to be a common experience
among the activists contributing to this enquiry, manifested as a radical
solidarity, as political direct action, and as long-term methods of struggle.
Strategically developing political praxes grounded in these immanent processes
might therefore provide the basis upon which to co-constitute free society here-
and-now – as an imaginative/responsive ongoing process rather than reverting
to default capitalistic, patriarchal, racist or anthropocentric modes of
reproduction, and provide a means for sustaining such a system in the absence
of domination. Of course, critics of grounded utopianism might still
legitimately ask how realistic such a profound reconfiguration can actually be.
But the answer, somewhat unsurprisingly given the sheer scale of struggle
visible today, is that it is entirely possible to find living, vibrant examples of
such societal formations across the world right now that might inspire us.
Perhaps, as Ariel Salleh (2017, 269) suggests, political theorists have simply
been 'too culturally blinkered to see it'. For instance, the indigenous onto-
epistemology that so radically transformed the original Marxist insurgents and

consequently the entire trajectory of the Zapatista experiment to date has been the indigenous Tsotsil concept of *O'on* or 'collective heart' – a concept masterfully translated for a non-Tsotsil audience in Dylan Eldredge Fitzwater's book *Autonomy is in Our Hearts* (2019). In the Tsotsil language thoughts and feelings are considered to be one and the same, thus better framed as *thought-feeling*, and are understood to manifest in this collective heart as the realisation of its 'inherent potentialities'. This underlying potentiality is called *ch'ulel* - a means of describing the 'inherent or immanent potentialities' that are always present and ready to shape and form the 'dynamic relationships that compose reality' (Ibid, 32-33). Xuno López Intzin, a contemporary Tsotsil scholar and activist explains how ch'ulel thus potentiates the kind of profound interrelationality that resonates with the politics of immanence we are discussing:

> From this understanding of the ch'ulel in everything, the human being establishes relations with all that exists, in other words the human being interacts with their environment and the environment with the human being on a material and immaterial plane. From this plane or universe of ch'ulel existence is ordered, and social relations are ordered with all that exists (cited in Fitzwater 2019, 33).

And similarly, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as *Rojava* – an extraordinary experiment in horizontal participatory democracy involving a multicultural population of around 3 million people – offers another contemporary example of such an approach. Once again this is a utopia of the here-and-now – a politics of immanence firmly grounded in (and generative of) the day-to-day life and struggles of the communes. It is a process of free society continually creating and recreating itself. As Abdullah Öcalan (2017, 140) explains:

> On this voyage, the question of when the construction of the democratic nation will be completed is a redundant one. This is a construction that will never be finished: it is an ongoing process. The construction of a democratic nation has the freedom to recreate itself at every instant. In societal terms, there can be no utopia or reality that is more ambitious than this.

Utopia as process

For Bookchin, the real issue for activists in modern times was no longer a question of 'reason, power, or technê,' but this 'function of imagination' in giving us direction, hope, and a sense of place in nature and society (Bookchin 2005, 421). But of course, as we have just established – we must simultaneously resist the temptation of then freeze-framing this radical imagination into one (impossible) future. And as Tom makes clear: 'any utopia that we are going to

have is going to be built grounded in what we already know'. A free ecological society must be (can only be) co-constituted right-here and right now, in a multiplicity of practices and forms, and from the ground up. And as we are now discovering somewhat encouragingly, this open, responsive, unfolding of utopia as a process in the here-and-now has played an increasingly central role in movement strategy over previous decades. On the praxis of the alterglobalisation movement for instance Marianne Maeckelbergh (2011, 2) reflects: 'What [made] the alterglobalisation movement different from previous movements is that the "alternative" world is not predetermined; it is developed through practice and it is different everywhere'. And a similar reclamation of the present could be observed in the US Student Occupation Movement that began in New York in 2008 and peaked in California in 2009 – which can be traced as one of the factors that led to the emergence of the Occupy movement in 2011. The pamphlet *Communiqué from an Absent Future* articulates how the student activists saw their tactic of occupation as potentiating a radical imagination which moved the struggle way beyond simply making demands to those in power towards a complete reimagining of the current system: '[T]he point of occupation [is] the creation of a momentary opening in capitalist time and space, a rearrangement that sketches the contours of a new society…' (Clover 2012, 98). And the sheer range and diversity of such praxes that are observable today, rather than indicating a 'confusion or incoherence', provides clear evidence that such an approach offers a unique flexibility and applicability across multiple diverging contexts (Franks 2018, 34).

Such anarchistic approaches are not aimed at 'vertical transcendence' but are rather brought back down to earth in a grounding exercise of 'radical immanence' – an act of 'unfolding the self onto the world, while enfolding the world within' (Braidotti 2013, 193). And it is through the co-creation of such living, vibrant, material alternatives that we can tangibly express the utopian potentiality always within grasp – as an immanent feature of the present moment. Such approaches are of central importance, Simon Springer asserts, because they remind us of the latent agency present in the here and now: 'all we have is immanence, this precise moment of space-time in which we live and breathe, and because we are *it*, we can change, reshape, and ultimately transform *it*' (Springer 2014, 161). And therefore, as Jack explains: 'what we are bringing into perception in this moment, that is the world we are living in, and that is the relationship.' And so, for him also the idea of an abstracted yet concrete utopia is clearly 'a bit silly.' Our struggles must remain dynamic or else they end up being 'in opposition to life and the dynamism of who we are.' He continues: 'We are infinite beings with infinite dimensions. It needs to be in movement. It needs to be an ongoing dance – grounded in the moment… How we embody the world can be different for everyone – a multiplicity of connecting fantasies that we keep re-visioning.' A politics of immanence thus bridges the gap between theory and practice, between utopia and the now. For a utopian politics to truly act as the foundation for free society it cannot remain but an idea – it must become a lived experience. Alisha describes such a practice as *alchemy*:

> I decided to go out into nature and purposefully try to engage in some
> way. And what happened over time was the immersion allowed me to
> start to see the world as animate – everything animate – stones and
> mountains – looking at it as a kaleidoscope of changing sensations.
> And then there was more love for the natural world, and more grief...
> And now my commitment is towards the birds and the animals, and
> to the earth itself – to keep engaging. And the activism is like an
> alchemy – somehow through the reflection and the artistry in it
> something is formed in my soul... And what drives me on is
> threading that into my life on a daily basis.

It is in this dynamism that we can see examples of political praxes which are far
less constrained by the ideological purity that existed in many previous
historical movements. Saul Newman describes these contemporary movements
as founded in 'contingency, open-endedness, and freedom of thought and
action'. Without a requisite adherence to a concretised ideological 'shape',
Newman argues that such activism has more freedom and flexibility to think
and act autonomously, to work on multiple fronts, and in different contexts and
settings (Newman 2019, 298). And this fluid, responsive nature makes them
difficult to enclose in the usual theoretical classifications. As Marina Sitrin
enquires: 'What is the name of this revolutionary process: Horizontalidad?
Autogestion? Socialism? Anarchism? Autonomy? None of these? All of them? It
is a process that does not have one name. It is a process of continuous creation,
constant growth and development of new relations, with ideas flowing from
these changing practices' (Sitrin 2019, 674). Thus, an engagement with the
world which frames it as 'solid and confined', argues Alisha, will cause your
activism to 'get shut down pretty quick'. In remedy, she recommends forms of
activism that are 'relational to others, to ideas, to the sensual world, to
everything' – containing an energy which can act to 'propel you forward' into
further action and further creation. More often than not, direct-action tactics
are framed as preventative or disruptive, aiming to stop or hinder a project we
might be in struggle against – and this is of course an effective and necessary
use of direct action. But an alternative and complementary way of framing
direct action can also be as a constructive tactic – as the creation of alternative
social spaces and relations beyond hierarchy and domination. Thus, our
struggles can be seen as communal processes through which 'subjects emerge' –
with the apparent dichotomy between individual and community destabilised
(Eisenstadt 2016, 36). Such an approach can therefore be politically
transformative both subjectively and inter-subjectively.

Benjamin Franks (2006, 114) asserts that such a political praxis will act to
'collapse the problematic distinction between means and ends' which we have
seen as leading to tragic consequences for multiple failed revolutionary
movements. And Landauer goes so far as to claim that there is ultimately no
separation between cause and effect. He conceives of cause and effect flowing
from one to another in an 'eternal' process that he terms 'reciprocal effect'

(Landauer 2010, 100). He even proceeds to suggest getting rid of the word 'cause' entirely, exclaiming: 'The cause is dead, long live the living effect!' Inverting Schopenhauer's claim that all reality is effectiveness, Landauer instead asserts that 'effectiveness is reality' – and therefore all that can be actual and existing is 'also present and in the moment' (Ibid, 103). But a politics of immanence need not (indeed must not) displace the future, on the contrary it should recognise it as an entangled aspect of what we term the present. Thus, what is generative must also be processual – with imagined future(s) and an ever-changing present in a constant dialogical process. And so rather than prefiguration, perhaps a more useful frame might be that of an imagined future being constantly *reconfigured* in a process of entangled relationality with the continually shifting present, which in turn reconfigures itself in relation to this new trajectory, and so on and so forth. Such a reframing might then ensure that the 'anxious and catastrophic forms of hope' that Gordon and CrimethInc (2018, 14) rightly argue will be necessary to create the urgently needed radical alternatives to our current dystopian conditions remain firmly grounded in the possible, while generative of the (what for some might seem) impossible. From this perspective then, we might consider reframing the sequencing of means and ends from a linear to a non-linear temporal form. And so rather than prefiguring a path which leads to a particular goal, we frame the path *as the goal*. Therefore, if our goal is freedom, then praxes must be established that realise freedom in the present – not as a distant promise but as the liberation of the here-and-now. If, as Proudhon suggested, revolution is ever to become a permanent process, it will be in this dynamic space between the *no longer* and the *not yet* that we must locate our shared political projects, and the new world(s) we co-imagine.

Acknowledgements

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Books reviewed in this issue:

David Graeber and David Wengrow, 2021, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (750 pp., hardcover, $35).

Review Author: Daniel Fischer

Darren Byler. *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City*. Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press. (Paperback, 296 pp. US $26.95).

Review author: Isaac K. Oommen

Diego Castro and Huáscar Salazar. América Latina en tiempos revueltos: Claves y luchas renovadas frente al giro conservador. Montevideo, Cochabamba and Morelos, México, ZUR, Excepción y Libertad bajo palabra. (Paperback, 264 pp.)

Review authors: Armando Bravo and Ricardo Miranda

Book Review: *The Dawn of Everything:*
A New History of Humanity
Review Author: Dan Fischer

David Graeber and David Wengrow, 2021, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (750 pp., hardcover, $35).

In *The Dawn of Everything*, the late anthropologist David Graeber and archaeologist David Wengrow reexamine societies of the deep past and revisit unjustly neglected theories of feminist scholars to produce a riveting account of human societies from the Paleolithic to the Enlightenment.

The book's main contentions are that "human societies before the advent of farming were not confined to small, egalitarian bands" and that agriculture didn't "mark an irreversible step towards inequality" (4). The authors remind us that it's only been within the last two percent or so of our existence as *homo sapiens* that we became *stuck* in year-round hierarchy. The implication, of course, is that we can become unstuck. Graeber and Wengrow revel in examples of part-time, seasonal, and temporary leveling of social relations.

However, they infuse the volume with needless pessimism regarding the possibility of a truly egalitarian future. Although Graeber used to defend horizontal organizing as a way of treating each other as responsible adults, this volume conflates egalitarianism with childishness. While Graeber previously emphasized the necessity of human mobility for freedom, he and Wengrow now make this linkage unnecessarily vague.

By not delving deep enough into the past, *The Dawn of Everything* unnecessarily dismisses anthropological understandings of humanity's egalitarian origins, and portrays ancient cities and civilizations as more hierarchical than they may have actually been. Despite their intentions to write a "new history of humanity," the authors disappointingly gloss over humanity's African origins in order to center foragers who lived in Europe well after humanity's dawn.

Graeber used to describe his politics as a logical outcome of hearing his father recount serving in the International Brigades in Anarchist-run Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War:

> "[A]lmost anyone who believes that anarchism is a viable political philosophy—that it would actually be possible to have a society without states or classes, based on principles of voluntary association, self-organization, and mutual aid—is likely to feel that wouldn't be a bad idea. If most people have a problem with anarchism (That is, those who actually have a clear idea what anarchism is) it's not because

they don't think it is an appealing vision, but because they have been taught to assume that such a society would not be possible" (Graeber 2007, 6).

The trajectory from believing egalitarian anarchy is possible to believing it's desirable is central to prevailing accounts of humanity's origins. Consider the explanation given by Christopher Boehm, in a study cited by Graeber and Wengrow:

> "Once one band, somewhere, invented an egalitarian order, this radical change in social ways of doing things would have become visible to its neighbors [...] One would expect a gradual cultural diffusion to take place, with attractive egalitarian traditions replacing despotic ones locally" (1999, 195).

The Dawn of Everything's bibliography is rife with references to works that theorize Paleolithic egalitarianism by writers including Chris Knight, Sarah Hrdy, and Pierre Clastres. Hrdy notes that "[v]irtually all African peoples who were living by gathering and hunting when first encountered by Europeans stand out for how hard they strive to maintain the egalitarian character of their group" (2009, 204). Furthermore, the archaeological record shows a decreasing size difference between male and female hominids and a decreased sharpness of teeth, suggesting a turn from domination to persuasion as we became human (Shultziner et al 2010).

The latest evidence for a transition toward equality includes early red ochre traces corroborating a "female cosmetics coalitions" hypothesis, in which women collectively used mock menstrual blood to conceal ovulation patterns and therefore thwart male attempts to maintain chimpanzee-like harems and dominance hierarchies. Anthropologist Camilla Power explains that it was women who spearheaded the "revolutionary" transformation to egalitarianism that "made us human" (2019).

One might expect Graeber and Wengrow to welcome the understanding that most of our species's history involved treating each other like equals. Instead, they assert that egalitarian-origins theorists believe in a "childhood of man" (118).

It's not clear why they equate egalitarianism with childhood, since warding off hierarchy requires significant political sophistication. In his earlier work, Graeber described horizontal relations as the antithesis of immaturity. "Insisting on treating everyone like responsible adults may not always guarantee mature behavior, but in my own experience it does prove surprisingly effective," Graeber wrote of New York City's horizontally-structured organizing (2009, 331).

In constructing their argument against an egalitarian Paleolithic, Graeber and Wengrow make two contradictory claims in a single page. They state they'll only focus on the last 40,000 years because "for the most part, we don't have the

slightest idea" what earlier humans were like, adding "[t]here's only so much you can reconstruct from cranial remains and the occasional piece of knapped flint" (81). From there, they point to different skeleton sizes between communities and make the sweeping assertion that the "presence or absence of social hierarchies [...] must have varied at least as much as physical types and probably far more" (81).

It's unclear why the authors think physical differences *between* regions, which they describe as resembling a world of "hobbits, giants and elves," would have affected social structure *within* a given region. Even when size disparities were stark in a given area, the larger individuals' ability to dominate would have been mitigated by the leveling effect of wooden spearsgoing back at least half a million years (Boehm 1999, 181).

The Dawn of Everything pays special attention to North America's hierarchical coastal forager societies such as the semi-sedentary Kwakwa̱ka̱ʼwakw and Calusa people. Although the authors speculate that vertical social structures were typical throughout human existence, it's commonly understood that humans were entirely nomadic in the Middle Paleolithic, and the Upper Paleolithic's unstable climate would have made sedentism a rarity (Shultziner et al. 2010).

In contrast to the Kwakwa̱ka̱ʼwakw and Calusa, who launched raids with war canoes (151, 174), the overwhelming majority of Paleolithic foragers seem to have been peaceful (506). A survey of skeletons and cave art at 400 Paleolithic sites across Africa, Asia and Europe found only one site had evidence of warfare and 395 had no signs of violence at all (Haas and Piscitelli 2013).

The Dawn of Everything also brings up certain peoples' seasonal transitions between egalitarianism and hierarchy, arguing that these fluctuations were likely typical throughout human existence. The authors cite accounts of the Inuit living as equals during winter and dispersing into patriarchal families during summer to follow migrating animals (106-114). Although they describe such variation as "playing" with hierarchy, they fail to consider how their notion of play contrasts with the lived experiences of Inuit women who reported being subjugated for months at a time (Bitton 2022).

The authors' other examples of seasonal transitions—including Great Plains warriors' comparatively benign enforcement of buffalo meat sharing and a contested account of Nambikwara transitions in the Amazon—involve farming societies which are of limited relevance to theorizing humanity's forager origins. The Paleolithic's most common social fluctuations probably involved alternating men's and women's rituals. This alternation can still be observed in African foraging societies which remain "egalitarian all year around" (114-5).[1]

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[1] Although Graeber and Wengrow cite Chris Knight, the correct attribution should have been to his former student: Morna Finnegan's "The politics of Eros: ritual dialogue and egalitarianism in three Central African hunter-gatherer societies," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013): 697-715.

Graeber and Wengrow don't remark on the fact that seasonal hierarchies are related to hunting patterns, nor that their evidence of lavish burials in western Eurasia (87) come from the Upper Paleolithic when, aided by the spread of spear-throwers and bows, humans expanded hunting and largely abandoned scavenging (Knight, 320). Mary Stiner and Steven Kuhn (2009) argue the Upper Paleolithic first occasioned a division of labor by gender, when men became specialized handlers of hunting weaponry. This would help explain humanity's population rise, since it became easier for women to carry and raise a baby when she's not stalking mammoths or warding off hyenas. This period's costly practice of raising hunting dogs suggests another association between increased hunting and incipient hierarchy (Mietje Germonpré et al. 2020). What was likely going on was men's gradual transformation of hunting weapons into weapons of domination, corroborated by the fact that societies mostly reliant on hunting (or animal husbandry) are far more likely to be male-dominated than societies mostly reliant on gathering (Sanday 1981, 170).

In a different context, that of Anatolia's Çayönü Tepesi region, Graeber and Wengrow mention this trend: "hunting as predation, shifting subtly from a mode of subsistence to a way of modelling and enacting dominance over other human beings" (244). As Power (2019) spoke of humanity's "revolutionary" emergence, the rise of patriarchy could be considered a counter-revolutionary corollary, one unfortunately largely overlooked by the authors.

Pointing to the near universality of women's gathering among forager societies, Graeber and Wengrow argue that women should almost certainly be credited with inventing farming (237). The authors clarify that farming developed through a millennia-long process of playful experimentation often involving relaxed flood-retreat techniques and avoiding easy-to-tax cereal crops. Such "play farming," they posit, explains the 3,000 year gap between the domestication of plants and the adoption of full-time agriculture (242-8).

While *The Dawn of Everything* does not characterize this prolonged experimentation as a Neolithic "revolution," I do think it's appropriate to describe women's creation of farming as revolutionary. Several of the book's middle chapters introduce readers to egalitarian cultures throughout Eurasia during Neolithic and ancient times, but the survey is not comprehensive. For example, China's ancient Peiligang culture is omitted. An endnote clarifies that the authors intended in a future volume to discuss Africa's egalitarian cities such as Jenne-Jenno (571; McIntosh 2009).

Signs of egalitarianism in the Neolithic include a rough equality in burial goods, house sizes, and skeletal conditions, as well as an absence of palaces and grand temples. Graeber and Wengrow point to such indications of equality throughout the Southern Levant, Anatolia's Çatalhöyük, and, moving into the Bronze Age, the Indus Valley's cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, and the pre-state Sumerians.

I do not agree with all of the authors' interpretations, least of all their flimsy evidence that Mohenjo-daro's Great Bath was used by a "priestly caste" (317).

Given that there was no concentration of wealth or aristocratic burials in Mohenjo-daro, it seems odd for the authors to postulate the existence of caste, a term that didn't enter the region's written record until 1,000 years later (316-7). Nor am I convinced that Minoan Crete was as hierarchical as they suggest. In fact, the decentralized economy and rapid circulation of luxury goods convinced some scholars that Minoan Crete was "an egalitarian matriarchal society based on consensus" (Mann and Goettner-Abendroth 2019).

Graeber and Wengrow courageously defend the scholarship of Marija Gimbutas, a prominent archaeologist who taught at Harvard and UCLA, and fell out of favor among fellow academics for her writing about the egalitarian and goddess-worshiping culture of Old Europe. To the delight of ecofeminists and matriarchalists everywhere, recent DNA studies have validated core parts of Gimbutas's analysis (216-220).

The Dawn of Everything further supports Gimbutas' assertions by providing evidence of egalitarianism among Old Europe's Cucuteni–Trypillia cities by the Black Sea, where the circular arrangement of houses ensured that no family was at the head and that there was plenty of room in the middle for communal assemblies and celebrations. Although the houses looked roughly the same on the outside, the varied insides suggests the culture strongly valued creativity and innovation (293-5).

The Dawn of Everything posits an analogy between the shift from playful farming to full-time agriculture and the transition from "play" states to real ones (429). But the authors could have gone further and made explicit the material connection between these two processes. Such an explanation would have echoed James Scott's account of the first state, Uruk, forming due to increased aridity around 3500 to 2500 BCE. By making irrigation more laborious and forcing people into more concentrated areas, this climatic change "diminished many of the alternative form[s] of subsistence, such as foraging and hunting" (Scott 2017, 120-121). In other words, people became stuck in these societies when it no longer became feasible to leave and become foragers again.

Fortunately, there are plenty of examples of farmers who managed to reverse hierarchy. Graeber and Wengrow point to the city of Taosi, where commoners razed the city walls around 2000 BCE. They turned the palace into a trash pit, and buried their dead in the elite cemeteries. For two to three hundred years, commoners appear to have enjoyed prosperity in a self-governed city.

But when Graeber and Wengrow call Taosi's transformation "the world's first documented social revolution" (326), they omit, for example, a similar process that apparently occurred at Çayönü around 7200 BCE: mansions and temples burnt down, the temple turned into a municipal dump, the slums replaced with comfortable houses (Brosius 2004). Similar signs in 300 CE show Teotihuacanxs in present-day Mexico City desecrating the temple, halting pyramid construction, and shifting resources toward building massive public housing accompanied by egalitarian symbolism in artwork (341-2).

The most dramatic and durable reversals of hierarchy occurred in societies such as the Haudenosaunee confederacy, formed in 1142 CE, and the Wendat confederacy which was established afterwards. Farmers remained relatively mobile, while low population densities made it possible "to shift back to a mode of subsistence more oriented to hunting, fishing and foraging; or simply to relocate entirely" (472).

Iroquoian societies are also important for Graeber and Wengrow's contention that the "Indigenous critique" of Europe contributed to the Enlightenment. *The Dawn of Everything* notes how French and English settlers in North America marveled at the freedom of Indigenous societies and on many occasions even sought to join them, it was less common for natives to choose assimilation among settlers (19).

From the perspective of Wendat spokesperson Kandiaronk, who apparently visited France, it was Europeans who seemed to live in a Hobbesian condition of permanent conflict. Kandiaronk reportedly expressed incredulity at Christianity's belief in damnation: "I find it hard to see how you could be much more miserable than you already are. What kind of human, what species of creature, must Europeans be, that they have to be forced to do good, and only refrain from evil because of fear of punishment?" (53). Sharply criticizing France's social hierarchies, he defended Wendat's "leveling equality" which proved conducive to "the qualities that we Wendat believe ought to define humanity – wisdom, reason, equity" (56).

Kandiaronk's ideas, as recorded and embellished by Baron de Lahontan, influenced the French Enlightenment's notion of social equality. Rousseau almost certainly read Lahontan's writings, and he definitely cited Lebeau's summary of them (536). When discussing Kandiaronk, Graeber and Wengrow draw on the scholarship of Seneca historian Barbara Alice Mann (aside from being a skilled scholar, Mann is an intellectual renegade who has collaborated with Ward Churchill and Heide Göttner-Abendroth).

Graeber and Wengrow seem unaware that by highlighting the influence of Indigenous thinkers on the Enlightenment, they are adding to an existing discourse of "Enlightenment from below." Historians of Latin America—such as Bianca Premo, S. Elizabeth Penry, and Nick Nesbitt—emphasize how eighteenth-century subjects in Spanish America and Haitian revolutionaries advocated for natural rights, secularization, free elections, and equality.[2] This is an exciting field, potentially adding everyday expressions of the desire for decolonization, equality, and abolition of slavery to the radical Enlightenment canon.

Graeber and Wengrow understate the influence of European commoners, asserting that social equality "did not exist as a concept" among the continent's "medieval thinkers" (32). I wonder how Graeber and Wengrow would interpret

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[2] See Bianco Premo's *The Enlightenment on Trial*, S. Elizabeth Penry's *The People are King*, Nick Nesbitt's *Universal Emancipation*.

fourteenth-century chronicler Jean Froissart's account of John Ball's sermon: "And if we are all descended from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve, how can the lords say or prove that they are more lords than we are—save that they make us dig and till the ground so that they can squander what we produce" (Cohn 1970, 199). I'm also curious what they'd make of Cosmas of Prague's portrayal of egalitarian Taborites: "Nor did anyone know how to say 'Mine' […] there existed neither thief nor robber nor poor man" (Cohn 1970, 214).

Moreover, unless an elitist definition of "thinker" is used, medieval thought surely includes common Europeans articulating "folk egalitarianism" through carnivals, festivals and rebellions (34). Since Graeber repeatedly cited and recommended Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, including in *Dawn of Everything*, he was surely familiar with her assessment that from the thirteenth century onward, "vast communalistic social movements and rebellions against feudalism had offered the promise of a new egalitarian society built on social equality and cooperation" (Federici 2004, 61). From the thirteenth century onward these movements articulating radical alternatives to religious and economic hierarchy, were disproportionately led by women, not unlike previous transformations of human society.

World-transforming events, each advancing egalitarian ideals and initiated at least equally if not disproportionately by women, were what made us human, farmers, and Enlightened. Each revolution was followed by a counter-revolution: the Paleolithic counter-revolution transformed hunting weapons into weapons of domination, the Neolithic counter-revolution turned agricultural surpluses into the tools of statecraft, and the radical Enlightenment was largely superseded by a conservative tendency that my friend Laura Schleifer calls the "En-white-man-ment."

Disappointingly, *The Dawn of Everything* has its own conservative tendencies. For instance, there's the bizarre claim that private property is as old as "humanity itself" (163). There's also a strange comparison of history's egalitarian cities to Ursula Le Guin's highly dystopian city of Omelas (290). Given the horror revealed at the end of Le Guin's story, I can only read this comparison as a suggestion that Graeber watered down his anarchist aspirations in his final years. Had Graeber and Wengrow wished to make their point about imperfections persisting in egalitarian societies, they could have done so without expressing extreme pessimism about the possibility of equality, by citing Le Guin's nuanced anarchistic utopias of Anarres and the Kesh, or the matriarchal Athshe.[3]

It's odd that Graeber and Wengrow position "How did we get stuck?" as the "real question" (112) but go on to provide only a highly impressionistic answer. They argue the origins of domination involved the "connection–or better perhaps, confusion–between care and domination" (514). As evidence of the transformation from care into control, they point to Sumerian temples offering

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[3]   See Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, *Always Coming Home*, and *The Word for World is Forest*.

a home to orphans and widows while demanding their subservience and labor (308). Though their hypothesis is intriguing, the authors might have offered a simpler answer involving mobility.

The anthropology of egalitarian foragers emphasizes that becoming and remaining unstuck requires, perhaps above all else, the ability to leave a hierarchical relationship.[4] Leaving—even just threatening to leave—is the greatest protection people have against would-be rulers. The fact that sizable segments of the population could pack up and become foragers again ensured the first millennia of farmers remained stateless. It also explains how some farmers in pre-colonial North America, who in many regions had a low population density and higher mobility, were able to get unstuck from hierarchical relations.

In his earlier writings, Graeber often emphasized the importance of mobility for combating hierarchy. Describing border control as part of capitalism's long sequence of attacks on worker mobility, he predicted in 2004 that "if the system ever really came close to its own fantasy version of itself, in which workers were free to hire on and quit their work wherever and whenever they wanted, the entire system would collapse" (Graeber 2004, 61). Graeber employed similar logic to critique so-called "anarcho-capitalism." He imagined an island with an anarcho-capitalist society on one side and an egalitarian society on the other: "What possible reason would those slated to be the night watchmen, nurses, and bauxite miners on the anarcho-capitalist side of the island have to stay there? The capitalists would be bereft of their labor force in a matter of weeks" (Graeber 2013, 297).

In *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow's pessimism tarnishes their monumental effort to show that other worlds are (and were) possible. Dismissing hopeful implications of accounts of foragers' egalitarianism they lament, "At best, we could perhaps imagine (with the invention of Star Trek replicators or other immediate- gratification devices) that it might be possible, at some point in the distant future, to create something like a society of equals once more" (129).

We don't need to wait for Star Trek technology to replicate the mobility and abundance of immediate-return societies. The technology for decentralized production of needs has been available for some time. As Graeber famously pointed out, today's machines are so obscenely productive that more than half of our workweeks are devoted to "bullshit" work (2018).

Getting unstuck involves the creation of alternatives for those who wish to leave an exploitative relationship, be it with a boss, a landlord, a husband, or whomever else. Grassroots institutions—from MakerSpaces and community gardens to communal living arrangements and worker cooperatives, through such projects as the Global Ecovillage Network, and Right to the City Alliance—

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[4]   James Woodburn, "Egalitarian Societies," *Man* 17, no. 3 (1982): 435. Boehm, *Hierarchy*, 74. Power, "Gender Egalitarianism."

provide paths for people seeking to live, as Paleolithic humans did for millennia, outside exploitative relations of (re)production.[5]

As in the past, women and egalitarians are at the forefront of social transformation. A longtime Wobbly, Graeber would have recognized the future being built in the old world's shell.[6]

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[5] For an overview of such projects in theory and practice, see Kevin Carson, *Exodus: General Idea of the Revolution in the XXI Century* (Tulsa: Center for a Stateless Society, 2021).

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Book Review: *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City*
Review author: Isaac K. Oommen

***Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* by Darren Byler, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press. (Paperback, 296 pp. US $26.95).**

In Vancouver's Joyce-Collingwood area is an Uyghur eatery—Beijiang Restaurant—that sports a signboard in English, Chinese and Arabic. Walking in, you get a waft of cumin that punctuates particularly the meat dishes, a warm and wholesome flavor that sets the tone of Uyghur cuisine and hospitality. Other Uyghur restaurants around the Vancouver area, found in similarly East Asian areas such as Richmond and Metrotown, provide muted (they usually just advertise themselves as Chinese Halal restaurants) but warm welcomes.

In 2017, when I told my colleague from mainland China that I was going to Beijiang Restaurant (a visit that led to many more), I mentioned that it featured Uyghur cuisine. Since he didn't know who Uyghurs were, I mentioned the protests I had seen regarding their status as a persecuted minority in China. He seemed quite confused until I told him about the province from which they came – Xinjiang. He texted on WeChat for a few minutes before looking up at me.

"Ah, these people are not a minority," he said. "They are criminals."

Darren Byler's *Terror Capitalism: Uyghur Dispossession and Masculinity in a Chinese City* is a deep examination of this dual perspective – the state narrative that casts Uyghur people as a suspicious population that can produce terrorists; and that of Uyghur individuals caught in a state mechanism bent on controlling every aspect of their existence, from language to movement.

Chinese state rhetoric around its actions toward the Uyghur population is mirrored across the world, from Kenya to Israel-Palestine to India: denial.

Byler notes the distinctiveness of Chinese state philosophy. "Because China was partially colonized in the past, it is impossible for China to colonize others in the future. Instead, in a manner similar to Japanese justifications for their colonization of parts of China and Taiwan, the colonization of Uyghurs is presented as an act of rescue," he writes (10). This rhetoric has been parroted across social media platforms by supporters of China who appear unable to discern the difference between socialism and authoritarianism.

What is happening in Xinjiang is clearly colonization. As decried in protests around the world, and as discussed by Byler, Muslims in Xinjiang (who are mostly Uyghur but of other ethnicities as well) are subject to ethnocide that seeks to not wipe out the population but rather control and manipulate it to

Beijing's specifications (11). These controls include forced labour (14), re-education camps (32) and police roundups (128).

The point of these exercises in control are to terrorize the Uyghur population into coercion within the state project of colonization. Just as in Tibet, China is bringing in Han ethnic majority settlers to change the landscape of Xinjiang, while controlling the Indigenous population, including attempts to control religion and language.

Mandarin is enforced as the language one must learn to move ahead and Uyghur language and Islamic expression is monitored on social media such as WeChat, while halal food is disrespected. Byler recounts how he saw six-foot tall Chinese characters advertising pork in a major Uyghur town that was "an anti-Islamic political and economic statement; it told everyone in the neighbourhood that Han migrant settlers had arrived and that they would not respect the Native knowledge and values of the Muslims who called this space their homeland" (61).

As much as terror makes up one part of the equation, it goes hand-in-hand with capitalism (a combination that would shock and cause denial amongst the aforementioned supporters of China). The state dispossess and controls Uyghurs to direct them into various factories set up by entrepreneurs and Han businesspeople in Xinjiang.

"Uyghurs were seen as not yet disciplined enough, and thus not deserving to even be included in the wage labour market where their work could be exploited for its surplus value. Instead, the majority of them were only worth using in devalued forms of social reproduction work such as food service and waste management," notes Byler (14). Within this capitalist frame, the state ushers an entire population towards work in factories and elsewhere, all of which are private companies. Byler explain that "terror capitalism works explicitly to reeducate the population as industrial workers and implement a forced labour regime" (33).

Alongside government-business partnerships, data serves as another ongoing link between the state and private enterprise. The Chinese state has given large contracts to firms that are able to gather and analyze vast amounts of data that are taken from social media and physical checkpoints, all in an effort to control Uyghur culture and movement.

Byler summarizes how "the digital enclosure worked to convert Turkic Muslim populations into parsed data streams, making them available for assessment, subtraction and further dependency" (54). *Terror Capitalism* notes state investment into this sort of technology is so vast and deep that "the Chinese technology industry is shaped via state capital used in surveillance projects" (43).

Terror Capitalism is worth the read just to fully understand the depth of the linkages between state and private enterprise in Xinjiang.

In the face of this surveillance, control and incarceration, Byler finds two modes in which his interviewees are fighting back: via friendship (among Uyghurs) and solidarity (by Han allies).

Byler looks at friendship between Uyghur men (who are the ones often migrating to large cities for work) who are subject to surveillance and labour control, and sees how strong platonic bonds helped them cope. He notes that "friendship was something that prevented them from panicking. It helped them to remember to keep breathing. Without it, life in the city seemed impossible" (156).

In terms of solidarity, Byler introduces the idea of "minor politics" (168) that is being practiced by Han allies in the form of witnessing the experiences of Uyghurs in the face of state repression – validating and voicing what is happening to them in the face of state denial about ethnocide.

Terror Capital is a book that looks deeply at the level of terror unleashed on a minority group by the state and private enterprise, all for control and capital gain. By representing the voices and experiences of Uyghur people, it not only helps combat state narrative but also shows the impact of <u>Chinese state attempts to control Uyghur populations and dissent outside of the mainland</u>.

About the review author

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Book Review: Diego Castro & Huáscar Salazar, América Latina en tiempos revueltos: Claves y luchas renovadas frente al giro conservador

Review authors: Armando Bravo and Ricardo Miranda

Diego Castro and Huáscar Salazar. América Latina en tiempos revueltos: Claves y luchas renovadas frente al giro conservador. Montevideo, Cochabamba and Morelos, México, ZUR, Excepción y Libertad bajo palabra. (Paperback, 264 pp.)

Uno de los movimientos más importantes de los procesos políticos latinoamericanos de las últimas décadas ha sido la emergencia, auge y agotamiento de diversas propuestas políticas que conforman una izquierda progresista que se opone, en su discurso, a las formas de depredación neoliberal, pero que en la práctica reproducen y, en varios sentidos, amplían, las lógicas extractivistas y excluyentes del modelo del que pretenden distanciarse.

América Latina en tiempos revueltos: Claves y luchas renovadas frente al giro conservador es un libro con un abordaje crítico desde la sociología, con aportes de analistas de Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador y México que será de interés para los lectores de estudios feministas, antropológicos, ciencia política, derecho, economía, sociología, entre otros.

El libro nos ofrece interesantes reflexiones sobre lo que se ha dado en llamar la "crisis de los progresismos" latinoamericanos, a pesar de los más recientes triunfos electorales de ciertas izquierdas en la región. Asimismo, aborda la "recomposición de las derechas" en la región, dentro del marco del neoliberalismo latinoamericano. En este sentido, nos ofrece un campo fértil para profundizar líneas de investigación en ciencias sociales y humanidades sobre el fracaso o extravío de los mencionados progresismos a partir de ciertos conceptos clave tales como la *gestión de política estadocéntrica*, el *patriarcalismo de izquierda*, la *subjetividad desarrollista*, entre otros,.,, que nos permiten entrever cómo, a pesar de las diferencias aparentes, la izquierda electoral latinoamericana comparte un mismo inconsciente político con las derechas.

Así pues, el libro abre la interrogante sobre las incompletudes que llevan a cierta imaginación de izquierda a este impasse, así como sobre las vías y herramientas para hacer frente a esta crisis con miras a construir alternativas que nos permitan poner, en primer lugar, a la reproducción de la vida, frente a la depredación capitalista. América Latina es quizá la región del mundo donde los efectos del neoliberalismo capitalista han sido los más profundos y desastrosos.

No sorprende que Latinoamérica sea, a la vez, la región que más gobiernos progresistas ha generado y que buscaron el fin del neoliberalismo: Hugo Chávez en Venezuela, Evo Morales en Bolivia, José Mújica en Uruguay, Luiz Inácio Lula

da Silva en Brasil, son los nombres más recordados de la llamada primera ola de gobiernos progresistas de la región, a los cuales, en los tiempos actuales, se suman Andrés Manuel López Obrador en México, Luis Arce en Bolivia, Gabriel Boric en Chile y Gustavo Petro en Colombia, en lo que es considera la segunda ola de este tipo de gobiernos.

La clave más general para adentrarse a *América Latina en tiempos revueltos,* editado por Diego Castro y Huáscar Salazar, es comprender lo que, siguiendo el artículo de Horacio Machado, podemos llamar el extravío de cierta izquierda (70). Para Machado, antes que hablar de fracaso, debemos hablar de extravío debido a que los progresismos latinoamericanos terminaron promoviendo, más bien, un "neoliberalismo progresista", en donde se confunde *crecimiento* con *emancipación* con lo que se reactivó *fantasía colonial desarrollista* –la creencia de que la eliminación de la pobreza, la superación de la dependencia y la construcción de sociedades más igualitarias y democráticas pasa por la redistribución estatista de la renta primario-exportadora– y, en consecuencia, se profundizó el extractivismo neoliberal (71-72). En este sentido, podemos afirmar que los gobiernos progresistas latinoamericanos, que se presentaron a sí mismos como antineoliberales, han dejado estructuralmente intocado el modelo neoliberal, así como sus dinámicas de extractivismo y despojo, las cuales siguen dominando en América Latina y en todo el mundo.

Ninguno de estos gobiernos ha sido capaz de construir una salida al modelo neoliberal y, antes bien, han confirmado la crisis del neoliberalismo como modelo económico, político y social e, igualmente, han dejado al descubierto la crisis del propio progresismo lo que, en última instancia, refleja, como señalan María Noel Sosa, Mariana Menéndez y Diego Castro en su aportación a *América Latina en tiempos revueltos.* Los autores subrayan que la crisis de la izquierda misma pues "la crisis del progresismo es también la de la izquierda toda" (20), por lo que se vuelve urgente deconstruir a la izquierda misma. Sus prácticas, discursos y presupuestos hegemónicos, pareciera, están agotados.

Ante este agotamiento de la izquierda hegemónica, la derecha no ha perdido el tiempo y rápidamente se ha reposicionado como una opción atractiva para ciertos sectores de los pueblos de Nuestra América, reciclando sus viejos discursos de sexismo, xenofobia, racismo, clasismo y elitismo, en una nueva cruzada a favor de los "tiempos idílicos" y en contra de la "pérdida de valores" por culpa del "marxismo cultural" de los tiempos actuales.

Las condiciones materiales, que sirven de apoyo a los discursos populistas del neoconservadurismo, son las consecuencias que nos ha heredado el neoliberalismo: mayor desigualdad, concentración de la riqueza, desempleo, trabajos mal remunerados, pérdida de prácticamente todo sistema de seguridad social, falta de acceso a educación y servicios básicos, sobreexplotación del trabajo de mujeres y niños.

El nuevo impulso del movimiento feminista contra la debacle neoliberal y patriarcal ha sido uno de los factores fundamentales que han mostrado el agotamiento de la izquierda hegemónica. El aporte principal de *América Latina*

en tiempos revueltos en torno al feminismo antineoliberal es que éste nos propone abandonar, de una vez por todas, la creencia de que la izquierda, por el simple hecho de ser izquierda, es aliada del feminismo. Antes bien, existe un "patriarcalismo de izquierda" que, a pesar de declararse en contra del estatus quo, no hace sino negar la vida a través de la violencia. Así, el feminismo ha traído al frente del debate lo que, siguiendo a Nancy Fraser, podemos llamar *condiciones primordiales de posibilidad* de las relaciones de producción capitalistas (2020: 20). Esto es, lo que está "detrás" de las condiciones de producción sin lo cual éstas no serían posibles.

De esta forma, en su capítulo, Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar nota que "Feminismo es Revolución", y hace enfasis en los efectos del movimiento feminista al interior del "patriarcalismo de izquierda" (39). No es posible lucha guerrillera alguna si, previamente, no se han dado ciertas tareas de cuidado, reproductivas y afectivas.

Las luchas feministas nos recuerdan que hace falta deconstruir de la izquierda sus modelos e imágenes patriarcales. Es increíble cómo la izquierda hegemónica sigue sin comprender en absoluto las luchas feministas, un botón de muestra es Andrés Manuel López Obrador, el presidente de México quien señaló, en una de sus conferencias matutinas, desconocer a qué se refieren las feministas con la consigna de "romper el pacto":

> "Ahora con la simulación del feminismo empiezo a escuchar 'rompe el pacto, rompe el pacto', les digo, sinceramente, me enteré de lo que era eso hace 5 días porque mi esposa me dijo; 'oye, ¿qué es eso de rompe el pacto?' y ya me dijo 'rompe el pacto patriarcal, deja de estar apoyando a los hombres' [...] ¿Saben qué sucede? Son expresiones exportadas, importadas, copias. ¿Qué tenemos nosotros que ver con eso si nosotros somos respetuosos de las mujeres, de todos los seres humanos?".

Esta izquierda parece pensar la lucha feminista en la forma de "guerra de sexos", muestra de su carácter aún patriarcal, por ello es necesario insistir, nos recuerda Gutiérrez, en que "esto no es una guerra de sexos", siendo necesario, a la vez, "reconocer que los mandataos patriarcales de control del tiempo y trabajo, de silenciamiento del agravio y la agresión hacia las mujeres son mayoritariamente ejercidos por seres humanos que habitan cuerpos de varón" (45).

Si la izquierda sigue atrapada en esa forma de ver las luchas feministas, no sorprende que la derecha, en alianza con la iglesia, emprenda una nueva embestida familista y patriarcal en nuestra región que busca demonizar lo que es una de las nuevas expresiones reaccionarias en nuestra región: la ideología de género (46).

El texto de Cristina Vega, Lorena Castellanos y Joseph Salazar muestran cómo la retórica de la ideología de género ha logrado avanzar su agenda en el Ecuador a partir de "una alianza (antes impensable) entre evangélicos y católicos movilizados contra los desórdenes de género" (110), alianza que no sólo ha pasado a la acción en la calle sino también a diversos frentes político-institucionales con lo que el activismo religioso fundamentalista ecuatoriano, a través de la judicialización de sus demandas, "ha convertido a las cortes y a los juzgados en los principales escenarios de batalla" (135).

Igualmente, este movimiento reaccionario en América Latina ha avanzado en el poder legislativo, por ejemplo, la destitución de la presidenta Dilma Rousseff en Brasil se dio "con una mayoría de votos proclamados públicamente 'en nombre de Dios' o 'Jesús' y por el 'bien de la familia' (Segato, 2020:26). En suma, asistimos a la aparición y consolidación de un activismo político religioso, fundamentalista y reaccionario basado en una "guerra espiritual" que cuestiona, cada vez con mayor fuerza, la separación entre la esfera estatal y la religiosa.

Otra de las claves de inteligibilidad y lucha que nos ha heredado el feminismo es comprender que "uno de los nudos más profundos del orden patriarcal" es "el que construye para sí el poder de excluir, pues sobre ese poder se ha levantado siempre la prerrogativa de ungir y jerarquizar otras diferencias para imponer su legitimación" (48).

Es aquí donde encontramos una conexión entre el Estado y el patriarcado dejada intacta por los progresismos latinoamericanos, el Estado procede, en tanto que patriarcal, precisamente de esa manera excluyente. Los progresismos latinoamericanos han caído de lleno en el estadocentrismo, con lo que terminan por reproducir la exclusión entre los movimientos sociales o lucha social y el Estado o la lucha político-institucional. Desde la perspectiva estadocéntrica, las luchas sociales sólo cumplen una función de desgaste y deben estar subordinadas a la lucha por el poder político-institucional como recuerdan Sosa, Menéndez y Castro (29).

Si bien las autoras y autores del libro no son explícitos en este aspecto, a partir de sus reflexiones podemos ver que sus puntos de vista presuponen que los gobiernos progresistas latinoamericanos, a pesar de sus pretensiones, no han hecho sino reproducir la separación radical entre gobernantes y gobernados típica del liberalismo y neoliberalismo.

Todo sucede como si una vez "tomado" el Estado, se acaba la historia, y la lucha social y los movimientos populares, feministas, estudiantiles, no tuvieran más razón de ser. Es más, cuando estos movimientos protestan contra los progresismos estatales son acallados por éstos, en lugar de tratar de dialogar con ellos, con una de las consignas favoritas de la vieja izquierda: "le están haciendo el juego a la derecha".

En este sentido Gaya Makaran nos habla de cómo los gobernantes de los progresismos siguen atrapados en una relación paternalista con sus bases con lo que se refuerza el culto a la personalidad del líder y la representación monopólica de la nación de parte del partido en el poder (223). Así, como nos

recuerda Luis Tapia, en periodos breves de tiempo los integrantes de los partidos progresistas gobernantes pasan a ser una nueva burocracia (238), aceptando por completo todos los privilegios inherentes a dicha posición de poder.

De esta forma, el Estado se convierte en un aparato de captura que aspira a atrapar las líneas de deseo y resistencia que recorren el espacio social, pretende desarticular el disenso mediante la inclusión de ciertas consignas populares en el discurso oficial pero, en la práctica, el límite de sus concesiones está en aquello que los grupos conservadores de la sociedad están dispuestos a aceptar como concesión transicional de la reconfiguración del neoliberalismo. Por ello, siguiendo a Machado, habría que radicalizar nuestra noción de democracia en el sentido de que un orden social no es democrático sólo por el hecho de seguir cierta forma institucional-procecimental de elección y regulación de gobernantes sino, más bien, un orden social será más o menos democrático en la medida en que permita la reproducción social de la vida o no (96).

En efecto, la izquierda de los gobiernos progresistas es una vieja izquierda, sus presupuestos ontológicos, "antropocéntricos, productivistas, cientificistas y tecnocráticos, estadocéntricos" (72) pueden ser firmados sin problema alguno por cualquier neoliberal, pero a las aparentes diferencias que puedan decir unos y otros que existan entre sus planteamientos. Estos presupuestos son de larga data y pueden ser rastreados hasta la revolución bolchevique (Del Barco, 1980) o el propio Marx. El efecto más devastador de estos presupuestos que forman parte integral de la práctica de los gobiernos progresistas es "la profundización y la ampliación del extractivismo en América Latina" (72).

Estos presupuestos productivistas, tecnocráticos y cientificistas de la vieja izquierda quedaron de manifiesto, quizá como en ningún otro lado, en el caso boliviano como demuestra Huáscar Salazar. El gobierno del MAS ha cumplido a cabalidad una función desorganizadora de las luchas no estadocéntricas con lo que es posible "dar cuenta no solo del agotamiento del progresismo como un modelo de gobierno con un fin determinado, sino, principalmente, entender la articulación y continuidades que existen entre el momento progresista y el momento conservador, en los cuales [...] se hacen cosas muy parecidas" (149-150).

Desde el análisis presentado por Salazar podemos entender que el Estado boliviano, con el MAS, ha servido como un dispositivo de disciplinamiento de la lucha popular para debilitarla y reencauzarla dentro del terreno de la política estatal a la vez que ha adoptado el papel de mediador para las clases dominantes con el resultado final del afianzamiento del modelo de extractivismo primario exportador. De tal suerte, el caso boliviano nos muestra, con toda claridad, una de las características estructurales de los progresismos latinoamericanos pues "se modifica la relación Estado-sociedad de una manera tal en la que se instala una inercia política que impulsa la ampliación de un capitalismo depredador" (150) con lo que se crean las condiciones para que el aparato estatal "requiera cada vez menos quedar encadenado a una forma específica de gobierno -de izquierda o de derecha-, lo que importa es que la inercia se sostenga" (150).

Algo similar al caso boliviano parece estar sucediendo en México pues, más allá de toda la retórica antineoliberal del primer gobierno de izquierda en más de 80 años, no existe en el discurso del oficialismo, como bien apuntan Mina Lorena Navarro y Lucia Linsalata, "una problematización de corte estructural, ni mucho menos una orientación rupturista con el modelo económico capitalista y, en particular, con el patrón extractivista primario exportador" (170). En particular, para estas autoras, los megaproyectos de la autodenominada cuarta transformación deben entenderse dentro de la "actual ofensiva extractivista" en América Latina que tiene un pasado largo en tanto que, como modalidad de la acumulación capitalista, se remonta hasta la conquista y el saqueo de nuestros pueblos (171). Y ello es así en tanto que el discurso que acompaña a tales proyecto cae también, como mencionamos antes, en la confusión entre crecimiento y emancipación pues no sólo parten de una narrativa, típica del desarrollismo, que busca convencer de los beneficios y bondades de aquellos sino, además, comparte la premisa desarrollista de que los procesos modernizadores capitalistas generan abundancia (190).

Desde este abordaje, nosotros agregaríamos que los megaproyectos de López Obrador están destinados a someter a un mayor control estatal nuevos territorios alcanzar un nuevo pacto regional de estabilidad con el capital, ello debido, precisamente, a que se ve a estos territorios periféricos, desde la lógica del desarrollismo extractivista, como atrasados o poco productivos. La imposición de los megaproyectos de la cuarta transformación, y del horizonte de sentido desarrollista que implican, se ha dado con una total violencia contra los procesos y formas de autonomía que resisten el embate del despojo neoliberal, así, incluso desde un punto de vista jurídico estatalista, podemos sostener que se ha violado sistemáticamente el derecho a la consulta de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas, y se ha cerrado la posibilidad de cualquier mecanismo en que la perspectiva de estos actores pueda ser tomada en cuenta en la construcción de la realidad social.

En el mismo sentido, el partido oficialista, MORENA, y el mismo presidente, no han creado nuevos mecanismos para apoyar y ampliar el poder popular y no estadocéntrico sino, antes bien, han reproducido una y otra vez las viejas maneras de hacer política del viejo partido de Estado, el PRI, con lo que terminan por invertir el principio ético zapatista de "mandar obedeciendo" al desprestigiar y hostigar cualquier lucha social que no se subordine a los objetivos políticos estatales. Ante estos embates de los progresismos estatales, es siempre necesario insistir en las formas de acción política colectiva articulada por sectores populares y de movimientos comunitarios e indígenas que son las que crearon las condiciones de posibilidad de los propios progresismos (229).

El pensar una nueva izquierda, más allá de las contradicciones inherentes al modelo de izquierda progresista estatocentrista, requiere recuperar "la tradición antiestatal tanto como horizonte de deseo, pero sobre todo como una estrategia política de aquí y ahora" como escribe Gaya Marakram (ibídem: 226-227). Lo anterior implica pensar a la política desde abajo asumiendo un antiestatalismo activo que se articule a través de procesos de "confrontación-negociación,

rechazo-uso alternativo, resistencia-ofensiva, autonomía-interpelación; tácticas tan conocidas y practicadas por los pueblos indígenas" (226-227).

En síntesis, *América Latina en tiempos revueltos* apunta a la deconstrucción de los mitos desarrollistas, patriarcales, republicanos y nacionalistas que han cooptado el discurso de las izquierdas latinoamericanas, y se han configurado como una nueva máscara de la producción de las nuevas formas de dominación capitalista, a la vez que se precisa la necesidad de inventar nuevas alternativas de organización social que se pongan del lado de la reproducción y la procuración de la vida.

Los artículos que componen el libro se centran en los mecanismos mediante los cuales la política estadocéntrica, tanto de izquierda como de derecha, opera como un aparato de captura. Pretende totalizar la imaginación política, pero no proporciona elementos suficientes para la configuración mínima de nuevas utópicas y para la construcción de un inconsciente revolucionario que trastoque las lógicas mediante las que el capitalismo mundial actual se ha apropiado de la subjetivación y el deseo como instancias reproductoras del poder y de la monolítica visión del mundo y la vida que sostiene la dinámica existente de la lucha política, en lo que parece hasta el momento un callejón sin salida.

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