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Movements in post/socialisms

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Photo credit: Jiři Navrátil. Prague Pride 2012 (GLBT / queer parade, 18 August 2012).

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 (marked "P") have been subject to double-blind review by one researcher and one movement practitioner.

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

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Movements in Post/Socialisms

Jiří Navrátil, Kevin Lin, Laurence Cox

The 20th century saw the establishment of, and experimentation within, socialist states across the globe. These efforts were variously praised, critiqued, condemned and their 'socialist' nature disputed. This issue aims to ask about the movements that have come in the wake of the collapse and transformation of these diverse regimes, i.e. in the period and space of post-socialisms.At the same time it introduces different discourses on collective action that are widespread here.

A quarter of century ago, a massive wave of political protest shook state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and Asia. In many countries these events paved the way for far-reaching societal transformation, embedding Western-style hyper-capitalist economies and representative democracy. In some locations the existing regimes succeeded in taming the efforts around economic and political liberalisation, in other locations they did not. Social movements were central in these processes and followed different paths: they led the transformative events and became part of new elites/regimes/states; they drew back to the realm of civil society after they initiated regime change; they resisted efforts for regime change; and they were repressed and demobilised when the regime succeeded in maintaining the status quo.

Not only did movements participate in and resist 'eventful protests' in 1989/1990, but they were also influenced by these events in the following decades. Again, different trajectories were observed in different locations. Eastern Europe has soon become populated by "post-communist" governmentalities combining anti-utopian ideologies, open anti-communism aiming to discredit the political Left and restricted visions of civil society and citizen participation. These effectively paralysed attempts for transgressive critique of the newly established political-economic order.

There were several conditions that enabled this. First, formerly repressed dissident cultures that came to the forefront after 1989/1990 and new political elites brought out and authorised the development of conceptions of democracy, political participation and civil society that were often fundamentally ethical in character, averse to the state and institutionalized politics and suspicious towards any form of popular collective action, pre-1989 mass organizations or progressive political critique (Ost 1990; Celichowski 2004).

Second, the spread of 'development aid' for 'underdeveloped' post-communist civil societies — provided by the United States, the European Union and various private foundations — contributed to the NGO-isation of civil society organisations and the import and emulation of new forms and agendas of activism. This 'new' or 'proper' civil society activism - often duplicating the liberal agenda and the NGO successors to the Western European movements of the 1980s - started to gain political relevance at the expense of grassroots, radical and other dissident movements (Aksartova 2006; Jacobsson 2012).

This development has resulted in an increasing gap between citizens and civil society organisations in many Eastern European societies, and contributed to the massive rise of new channels of popular discontent that began to be driven by xenophobic, nationalist or conservative actors. Alienation between 'good' civil society organizations and citizens who were losing ground during the processes of political, economic and cultural transformations has become apparent in the sphere of politics and civic advocacy, paralleling some of Sen's arguments about 'incivil' and 'uncivil' society (2007).

On the other hand, and despite the massive patience of the citizens during times of major socioeconomic transitions (Greskovits 1998), some of the recent economic and political upheavals have led to a certain politicization of the established civic sphere and provoked at least episodic grassroot solidarity mobilisations — from rather isolated global justice activism and anti-war movement, to labour protests against the austerity measures during the Great Recession. At the same time, new types of grassroots urban activism aiming at building social and political ties from below started to pop up (Jacobsson 2015).

Although all can be called post-socialist societies, some very different trajectories of political activism and protest may be identified in Eastern Europe today - not only because of different cultural settings, societal discourses or politics of memory (e.g. Ishchenko 2011; Gagyi 2013), but also because of the connstellation of their political conflicts and elites that represent them (e.g. Císař and Navrátil 2015), or more generally because of different political layouts which generate different interactions between economic and political crises (Kriesi 2015). As in Western Europe, different countries have very different 'social movement landscapes' (Cox 2016).

For Chinese state socialism, the year 1989 was similarly of historical significance, mirroring changes in the Soviet Union. After Mao's death in 1976, the Community Party leadership had had already transitioned away from state socialism in the 1980s, tentatively carrying out de-collectivisation of both rural and urban economies and opening up some political space for the growth of "civil society" and social and political movements. Formerly repressed as well as a new generation of intellectuals began to more forcefully voice political critiques, and social organisations increasingly more autonomous and independent of the state also slowly emerged.

It was with this sense of democratic aspiration that the mostly young protesters took to the street in 1989 against the lack of political reform. Led by college students but participated by millions of workers and urban residents in multiple cities across China, the short-lived movement nevertheless posed a critical challenge to the ruling Communist Party, and remained the most organised and sustained movement from below in post-socialist China (Calhoun 1994). The repression that followed not only paved the way for more market reforms but also further led to further constraining of the already limited political space for any movement from below.

Since the 1990s, the Communist Party has presided over the deepening of China's capitalist economy albeit with a significant degree of state control, and maintained a tight political grip over society and politically excluded any organised opposition. This strategy has been successful in forestalling significant challenges in the 1990s. Yet the capitalist transition has produced sharper social inequality, heightened labour exploitation, brutal land dispossession and rapid environmental degradation, all of which have engendered diverse forms of activism and social movement.

In particular, the rural land grab and abuse of power in China's vast countryside has led to the "rightful" resistance by peasants (O'Brian and Li, 2006). The exploitation of rural migrant workers in Chinese factories and construction sites alike has led to an insurgent labour movement with thousands of strikes and protest each year (Friedman 2014). More recently, episodic environmental mass street protests against chemical plants and incinerators has given hope to an environmental movement amid serious environmental deterioration. However, the repressive conditions in which China's social movements have to operate have forced them to adopt a clandestine organising model. As a result, these social movements have been highly localised, cellular and informally organised.

Apart from the specific regions where the events of 1989 took place, their effects spread well beyond. The fall of the Eastern bloc both directly and indirectly affected western intellectual landscapes: while most West European communist parties had declared independence from Moscow following the events of 1968 in particular, and subsequent movements were predominantly 'New Left' in orientation, the Soviet model had remained significant for the French and Greek parties in particular, while the old orthodoxy retained significance in some trade union and intellectual contexts. Conversely, anti-communism as a tool of power lost credibility, to be replaced by a search for new threats. Different kinds of impact were felt in majority world countries, from India to South Africa, where pro-Moscow, and in some cases pro-Beijing, parties remained powerful realities in some movement contexts (and in some cases in power).

A wide range of consequences can be seen in Latin America, where Cuban state socialism found itself faced with the transformation of their former Eastern bloc allies as well as with internal movements to transform the national political economy — including the repression of those movements. As we go to press, the related 'Bolivarian process' of socialist reform implemented by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in alliance with mass social and political movements is in crisis.

Elsewhere in Latin America, 'pink tide' governments have drawn on traditions long distinct from both Soviet-style and Chinese models of socialism, whether those of Argentina, Brazil and Chile or the more radical Ecuadorian and Bolivian approaches. Many have called this the socialism of the 21st century, while others - including movement participants - have criticised such regimes as authoritarian or 'neo-extractivist'. Finally, the now 21-year-old Zapatista uprising represents an approach whose self-definition - 'below and to the left' - is intended above all to mark them off from any form of *state* socialism.

On a wider scale still, the experience of social movements those once-socialist countries born in revolution or where social movements had a key role in the making of the state - 'movements-become-state' (Cox and Nilsen 2014) - has important parallels (and overlaps) with the anti-colonial experience. In much of the majority world, states born out of national independence struggles (some of course overtly socialist) have often been at best partially successful in fulfilling their national-developmentalist goals. The experience of state instrumentalisation of the memory of popular struggle, the conversion of movement organisations into part of the new framework of power - but also the desire to defend the legacy of independence - shapes the forms available to new generations of activists, in a generational arc stretching from Ireland via India to South Africa (see *Interface* 6/1 on 'anticolonial and postcolonial movements').

Returning to movements in post/socialisms, this issue forms part of an increasing development of research and theory in, on and from social movements in post/socialist contexts. Such work has a long history, reaching back to work from and on the movements that took power in those countries and the sociology of revolutions; research on unofficial workers' movements under socialism, and on the dissident movements of the postwar years; and critical reflections on and from the movements of 1989. As this potted history suggests, such work has often been deeply politicised, in many different ways.

Today too, research on movements in post/socialisms is often a highly political space. It is not only in China and Vietnam that such research is deeply suspect, or in the authoritarian circumstances of Russia and some Central Asian states. In Eastern Europe, the situation sketched out above means that social movements research is a fragile flower, with many East European researchers based outside their home countries. Western liberal and geopolitical agendas play a role too, in presenting a very particular model of movement as normative. Despite this, recent years are seeing if not a flowering of movement research then certainly a new generation of researchers: often closer to today's progressive movements than to the circumstances of 1989; more distant from national power politics than their predecessors but more aware of those dynamics than their colleagues in the one-time 'First World"; involved in global conversations but insisting on the need to understand national and regional specificities in their own terms. This special issue is a small contribution to this ongoing development.

In this issue

The three themed pieces in this issue all basically reflect on three important weak spots of contemporary post-socialist movement landscapes: these are a lack of radical imagination and knowledge, the pacification of protest cultures after regime change, and the de-politicization of new economic inequalities.

Gagyi's article deals with the relationship between social movements, knowledge and political contexts in contemporary CEE. She argues that post-

socialist societies often fail to understand their situation apart from an imposed, westernized or essentializing understanding. Therefore, Gagyi continues, they are not able to nurture and give rise to the kind of activism that would reflect and raise particular local grievances as part and product of a "real" history, not of ancient, biased or artificial dichotomies.

Szulecki, Borewicz and Waluszko in their article reconstruct the emergence of environmental issues within the Polish opposition during the socialist regime, describe its strategies, and highlight the main protest activities. The emphasis here is especially on the anti-nuclear mobilization against the Żarnowiec power plant. Through this the authors attempt to show why the decline of the broad environmental movement coalition was so sharp after its mostly spectacular moments of mobilization and why it seems to have left such a weak legacy after the fall of socialism. Co-author and activist Tomasz Borewicz died just after this article's completion, and the article is dedicated to his memory.

Uhlerová focuses on the analysis of trade unions and their position in post-socialist Slovakia. More specifically the article offers an excursion into the development and reconstruction of the relations and strategies of trade unions towards the sphere of institutionalized politics and established political actors. The article demonstrates the reasons and consequences of "political neutrality" and the weakness of post-socialist trade unions and brings in important insights into the weaknesses of contemporary labour movements in CEE countries.

The non-themed section opens with three pieces around the organisation of movement power. Andrea Rigon's critique of the "tyranny of structurelessness" in the World Social Forum, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at the 2007 Nairobi Forum. Rigon argues that WSF claims to consensual and horizontal methodologies cover power inequalities and oppressive practices, and calls for a more democratic form of politics. Alessandra Renzi's article on info-capitalism and resistance explores the inter-relation between activist communication practices and modes of collective action on the one hand and the information infrastructures they rely on. She argues that coding, network structures and movements are entwined in ways that shape and constrain collective activism, and that activists should treat technology as a powerful agent rather than a neutral tool in this respect. Sandra Smeltzer and Daniel Paré's article explores how the "embodied politics" of Malaysia's pro-democracy Bersih movement has challenged the state's electoral authoritarianism. Drawing on qualitative interviews with key actors, they find that the movements' presence in public space, despite official attempts at delegitimation, has been effective in encouraging wider political participation.

We follow this with two articles on the relationship between movements and researchers. Valeria Pecorelli's thought-provoking article explores the challenges she faced as an engaged academic researching Ya Basta's Casaloca social centre in Milan. Working her way towards an appropriate methodology, negotiating her dual role as activist and researcher and reflecting on emotions and activism, the piece highlights how the personal is political and vice versa. Alissa Starodub's article asks about the epistemological and methodological

challenges of speaking from within autonomous social movements. She calls for an epistemological rebellion on the borderline between "nomad science" and "royal science" (Deleuze and Guattari) and taking the "homeplaces" of resistance as a focus for processes of relational knowledge creation.

Three pieces discuss key problems in movement strategy and ethics. Peter Waterman's comments on the life of Third International communist organiser and communicator Willi Münzenberg highlights both the ways in which subsequent movements have largely gone beyond the manipulative notion of politics he embodied – but also the need to watch for the "little Willi" in us. Brian Martin's action note explores the challenges faced by activists challenging the double standards of the powerful, listing five ways in which the powerful try to minimise outrage about their actions and possible movement responses. Beyond this, accentuating the double standard may be helpful: movement violence, for example, may be entirely justified but avoiding it might well be more effective in highlighting state violence. Claudia Saba's article, finally, asks why global Palestine activism outside the Fatah - Hamas framework has largely avoided critique of the latter's armed resistance strategy, drawing on her research on Palestine advocacy groups and their statements around Israel's 2014 war on Gaza. She argues that the international movement with and by Palestinians could play a more constructive role in reviving political discussions around strategy.

Lastly, this issue has a wide-ranging selection of reviews. Chris Gunderson reviews Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen's *We Make Our Own History: Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism* and Lesley Wood reviews Chris Dixon's *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements*. We have reviews by Annette Behrens of Theresa O'Keefe's *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements* and by Bob Eastman of Betsy Leondar-Wright's *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*. Gino Canella reviews Todd Wolfson's *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* while Nick Sciullo reviews Steve Martinot's , *The Need to Abolish the Prison System: An Ethical Indictment*. Finally, Tomás MacSheoin reviews Temitope Oriola's *Criminal resistance: the politics of kidnapping oil workers*.

Welcome to new editors

In this issue of *Interface* we welcome three new editors. For China, Hong Kong and Taiwan Kevin Lin has kindly agreed to join us; Bjarke Skærlund Risager has joined Mandisi Majavu as reviews editor; and David Landy joins Peter Waterman and Laurence Cox for international / transnational movements. We look forward to working with them and to deepening our connections with movements and researchers through them.

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Call for papers volume 8 issue 2 (November 2016) Social movement auto/biographies

Cal Andrews, Laurence Cox, Bjarke Skærlund Risager, Peter Waterman, Lesley Wood

The November 2016 issue of the open-access, online, copyleft academic/activist journal *Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements* (http://www.interfacejournal.net/) will focus on the theme of social movement auto/biographies. Contributions on other themes, as always, are also welcome.

Social movement auto/biographies

> [Walter]Benjamin called upon historians to be cognisant of debts and danger, debts owed to the dead who had struggled and sacrificed and danger in the present. This historian realises that *even the dead* will not be safe without historians' active intervention, that memory of losses and sacrifices will be lost or distorted in the interests of the presently powerful, and most importantly, that memories of past struggles, the flashes seized, can become inspiration for political movements in the present and future. (Kelly 1998)

Any humane, diverse, sustainable, democratic idea of civil society that we can imagine will depend on specific human actors, as well as its own cultural traditions and wider structures and processes. As Christian Smith conveys in his study of the US-Central America peace movement of the 1980s:

> social movements do not consist simply of abstract structures and contexts, of impersonal forces and events. Social movements are, at bottom, real, flesh-and-blood human beings acting together to confront and disrupt. They are the collective expressions of specific people, of concrete men and women struggling together for a cause. Bringing our focus down to real, concrete human beings in this way raises a set of questions. Namely, exactly what kinds of people participated? Why did *they* tend to join or become recruited into the movement: What personal characteristics or circumstances may have predisposed them to become activists? (Smith 1996:168)

We might ask other questions, too. For example, what lessons can we draw in order to increase the active membership and effective leadership in such movements? What are lives shaped around movements like? How do the experiences of a lifetime feed into activists' practice at any given point in time? How do we see the relationship between movement participants' theoretical and

political writings and their biography (Mulhern 2011)? How do activist lives differ – across generations, across movements, across countries and continents – and how are they similar?

There are good reasons for writing about our movements auto/biographically. The genre is not an art or skill confined to the academy or professional writers. Neither is reading about them: in fact, biographies and autobiographies are almost certainly more widely read and written by movement participants than formal social movement research. There is no surprise here: one of the key problems for activists is often that of keeping going, in hard times and lonely times, and auto/biography is a powerful tool for seeing one's own life in perspective.

Furthermore, auto/biography can make the work of activists accessible to publics that academic, political or even journalistic writing on social movements can hardly touch. It should be remembered - including by activists themselves - that movement activity can seem exotic *and even suspect* to the public they hope to reach or claim to speak for. The popularisation of social movement politics remains a permanent challenge, but the success (and problems) of movement auto/biography in forms ranging from books and films to graphic novels and exhibitions reminds us how powerful a tool individual figures are for introducing others to movement realities.

Those who are entering movements, or thinking of doing so, may have little sense of what this will actually mean in their lives, without access to movement auto/biography; conversely, much practical knowledge is transmitted informally, even unconsciously, by reflection on past activists' lives (their mistakes and failures as much as their successes and good judgements). Many movement participants come back time and time again to the lives of one or two other activists to think through their own problems: or, as EP Thompson put it, to "reach back into history and endow it with our own meanings: we shake Swift by the hand. We endorse in our present the values of Winstanley…" (1978: 57).

Disrupting the form

Of course the reverse is also true: rightly sceptical of Heroes and Martyrs today, movement auto/biography has often sought to disrupt the idea of the individual as a symbol for the wider movement, and so experimented with new forms. Thus we have forms of "then and now" writing (eg Hedin's 2015 present-day encounters with the near-mythical figures of the Civil Rights Movement). We have biographies focussed on the gender and financial politics of the Marx family with all its private tragedies (Gabriel 2012), on the Gramsci women (Quercioli 2007) or for that matter an imagined life of Lizzie Burns (McCrea 2015).

No activist herself, Ada Lovelace comes to life in an alternate history graphic novel for contemporary feminist tastes (Padua 2015), while Starhawk's *Walking to Mercury* (1997) goes one further to imagine the biography of her fictional

revolutionary heroine, but based in the milieux of her own movement histories. The US movements of the later 20th century gave rise not only to predictable stories but to those which sought to highlight the movements' many contradictions, whether at the time (Mungo 1991, orig. 1970) or in retrospect (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, orig. 2001).

The disruptive approach is not new, but needs to be continually recovered as a possibility: Thompson himself began with a biography of William Morris (2011, orig. 1955) that sought to bring together the romantic and revolutionary in a single trajectory (itself greatly revised after his break with the Communist Party), while his final work (1994) was an attempt to reread the life of William Blake through a juxtaposition with its possible roots in the obscure religious traditions of Muggletonianism. Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks' (1977) parallel lives of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, too, neatly subverts the traditional unities. In this context we might also mention *New Left Review*'s *Politics and Letters* (2015, orig. 1979), a sort of autobiography of Raymond Williams told through interviews.

Movement auto/biography today

In a number of countries, auto/biography has experienced a boom as a genre. This might be theorised as responding to a crisis of identity or a generalised loss of social meaning, in the world of neo-liberalised, globalised and networked capitalism, and its undermining of such (now-traditional) structures, aspirations, life-cycles or relationships as lifetime wage-work, social welfare, the family (nuclear or not), the national community, an authoritative state, life-advancing science, and empowering education.

The auto/biographical genre, with its traditionally chronological and narrative form, its varied possible combinations of the public and private (and questionings of such), its ethical messages or dilemmas, therefore, meets a real social need. It can provide vital feedback and raw material for interested activists and researchers. In literary form it can deliver raw materials for further processing by artists and academics. Conversely, in some communities, non-literary or cross-disciplinary (and often visual) forms can also constitute independent possibilities *for* auto/biography. These can, in turn, feed back to mass audiences unreachable by written work - as well, of course, to the activists, organisers and educators themselves.

There is also a necessary and constructive dialectic between the actor/witness and the historian/researcher (who today can increasingly be the same person). In many countries, history from below, oral history, women's history, local history, indigenous history, queer history, working-class history, black history – the history of struggle, in other words – proceeds through auto/biography to a great extent and has become a very democratic form of writing, feeding into other kinds of popular, movement-linked intellectual production from bottom-up forms of commemoration and celebration to plays, novels and films. In this

way too, auto/biography is a key part of how movements think about themselves.

Auto/biographical submissions

Even more than in most issues of *Interface*, auto/biography lends itself to creative formats and we encourage authors to explore formats that will best bring out the strengths of their contribution and encourage readers. Activist auto/biography is documented in very concrete specifics, but aims to show that the experience and practice involved matters beyond its particular time and place. In particular, we ask authors to reflect on how best to do this for an audience most of whom will come from different countries, be involved in different movements and use different political vocabularies. Obviously, in the space of a journal, many forms of auto/biography will simply be too long, and we encourage authors to use this constraint as a way to think about form.

We are also, of course, interested in submissions *about* movement auto/biography. Here we are interested in questions such as:

- Why do people become (life-long or intensely involved) activists?
- How do aging, changing family situation, caring responsibilities and other aspects of social reproduction affect "biographical availability" and different periods of activist lives?
- How do movements shape the lives of their participants (and vice versa?)
- How do life experience and biography shape practice and theory?
- How do activist lives differ, and how are they similar?
- What can we learn from a particular life that will be helpful in other times, places and struggles?
- How can we understand the "politics of memory" as they relate to individual lives?
- How have different or alternative media played a role in constructing and transmitting auto/biography?
- How have mainstream representations contributed to distorting images of activist lives – or damaging the individuals concerned?
- … and more!

All contributions should go to the appropriate regional editors – see the editorial contacts page (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/) - and use the appropriate template. Please see the guidelines for contributors (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/) for more indications on content and style. The deadline is May 1st, 2016.

General contributions

As always, this issue will also include non-theme related pieces. We are happy to consider submissions on any aspect of social movement research and practice that fit within the journal's mission statement (http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/). Pieces for *Interface* should contribute to the journal's mission as a tool to help our movements learn from each other's struggles, by developing analyses from specific movement processes and experiences that can be translated into a form useful for other movements.

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

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

We can accept material in Afrikaans, Arabic, Catalan, Croatian, Danish, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Maltese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Zulu. Please see our editorial contacts page (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/) for details of who to send submissions to.

Deadline and contact details

The deadline for initial submissions to this issue, to be published November 2016, is May 1st 2016. For details of how to submit pieces to *Interface*, please see the "Guidelines for contributors" on our website. All manuscripts should be sent to the appropriate regional editor, listed on our contacts page.

Submission templates are available online via the guidelines page (http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/) and should be used to ensure correct formatting. *Interface* is a completely voluntary effort, without the resources of commercial journals, so we have to do all the layout and typesetting ourselves. The only way we can manage this is to ask authors to use these templates when preparing submissions. Thanks!

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Why don't East European movements address inequalities the way Western European movements do? A review essay on the availability of movement-relevant research

Ágnes Gagyi

Abstract

The paper addresses the question of available movement-relevant research for contemporary East European movements. It asks how much existing research on post-socialist societies and social movements helps contemporary activists to make sense of their own situations and their relationship to other movements, the repertoires of which they often emulate. Building on the examples of two research fields with high movement-relevance potential, the anthropology of post-socialisms and social movement research on Eastern Europe, the paper demonstrates the hardship and necessity of social research to conceptualize local social and political relations beyond core-biased research frameworks, Cold War and modernizationist essentializations, in order to provide a relevant comparative perspective on local movements to make sense of their own struggles as part of global history.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, social movements, movement-relevant research, anthropology of post-socialism, social movement studies, hierarchies of knowledge

One evening in July, 2013, I was sitting in the middle of Tsar Osvoboditel Boulevard in central Sofia, speaking to a group of protesters, participants in a long row of ongoing demonstrations. I came to Sofia for a conference organized by a group called Working Group on Postsocialist Neoliberalism and Social Movements. Each night after the discussions, we would participate in the protests. Demonstrators demanded the resignation of the Socialist government headed by Plamen Oresharski – a technocrat leading the government after the former cabinet of Boyko Borisov resigned due to previous massive protests which, that time, demanded his resignation (the cause being austerity measures during the recession, encouraged by the European Union and the IMF). The summer protests were blamed by many commentators for not going far enough in their analysis and claims, and a lack of sophisticated discussions of instrumental politics. Indeed, the practice of the protests was dominated by a rejection of speakers who could turn public presence into verbalized political arguments. Slogans were also toned down; the ones remaining comprised general demands about corruption, resignation of the government, and the interests of the nation.

That night was the 40th night of peaceful protests in a row. In a couple of hours, some violence was to follow, as police cleared way for a coach bringing out lawmakers, ministers and journalists who had barricaded themselves within the Parliament. My conversation partners and I did not know about this yet. We spoke of their motivations for continued participation in the protests. They told me about hardships of sustaining households through juggling incomes and bills. They spoke of politicians not caring about this. Young members told me about their sense of a lack of a future. A 19-year student, the most zealous of my conversation partners, concluded our discussion telling me she just started her BA year in political science, to "understand why it is so, that people become poorer and poorer, and still vote for politicians who don't help them." She said she wanted to understand that so that she could help changing it.

Indeed: is there a pool of social scientific knowledge available for activists in new demonstrations, which might help them make sense of their situation? As they already employ slogans and organizing techniques seen in other movements, inspire and exchange messages of support with each other, do they have tools at hand to relevantly compare their own case to the situations other movements are born from? This essay argues that in terms of such comparative knowledge available, there is an impasse in the case of Eastern European movements, linked to broader processes of hierarchical knowledge production.

Among the social scientific fields dealing with Eastern European and post-socialist development, including politics and social movements, it addresses two disciplines which can be considered specifically relevant to that matter. The first is the anthropology of post-socialism, a branch of social scientific investigation which, due to its disciplinary background, was the first to criticize both direct applications of Western concepts and the essentializations of East/West or capitalist/socialist differences. It did so with the public sociological ambition of contributing to the reintegration of Eastern European social reflection into the wider circulation of reflections on various social situations across the globe, surpassing the essentializing effect of Cold War production of knowledge and ideologies. The second field is that of social movement studies (SMS), a relatively young member of the social scientific disciplines which, due to the new wave of mobilizations in response to the global crisis, is going through a disciplinary boom both in Western and Eastern European science.

Instead of monographic overviews, the essay addresses both fields only to the extent of an argument over the logic of disjuncture between social scientific reflection and movement-relevant reflection. It does not pertain that these two fields, not to mention the cumulative results of other social disciplines, have not produced pieces of knowledge that would be useful for local movements at all. The present argument will be limited to illustrating the logic of disjuncture, and leave both the assembling of relevant pieces of knowledge, and the closer investigation of the actual and possible mechanisms of transmission, for other occasions.

Anthropology of post-socialism: a challenge to universal categories

Decolonial studies provide enough material for the theoretical argument that the universalization of social forms developed at the commanding heights of global capitalism goes together with an epistemic suppression of the social experience at the subordinate side of the same system. Decolonial authors also pointed out that for local actors, to be able to think of their societies in emancipatory terms, a supersession of universalized core categories is necessary. Contributions by authors like Alexander Kiossev (1995), Maria Todorova (1997), Manuela Boatcă (2003) or Ovidiu Țichindeleanu (2010) analyzed knowledge on Eastern European societies from this perspective. To pick just one example, József Böröcz (1997) demonstrated in a depressingly brilliant piece what the usage of Anthony Giddens' *Introduction to Sociology* means in Hungarian sociological training. While it successfully creates a sociological imaginary fit for conceptualizing contemporary British social forms and problems as universal sociological problems, it solidifies the gap between these 'normal' forms and local 'pathological/exotic' forms, and pushes existing knowledge on local social historical formations into the background as secondary details.

Anthropology, due to its attention to the complex dimensions of social aspects, including the interaction of local and global developments, has had a specific place in this respect in the process of knowledge production on the region. The rich heritage of anthropology of socialism and post-socialism provides many of the viewpoints and insights that might help go beyond the epistemic domination of core-centric social knowledge. The anthropology of post-socialism has been among the first scholarly discourses to emphasize the complexity of post-socialist transformations against linear-normative conceptions of transition.

In contrast to normative discourses which played on post-socialist people's "laziness" against the requirements of their new freedom on the free market, anthropological descriptions of the transformation of work, property relations, and morals, brought to the fore the creative and active agency of local people among transnationally defined environments (Lampland 1995, Verdery 2003, Dunn 2004, Creed 2010). In understanding ethnic conflict, it broke down essentialist and territorialist notions into analyses of transnational symbolic and power processes, elite politics, everyday interactions, and economic factors in social group formation (Woodward 1995, Ost 2006, Brubaker et al. 2006, Petrovici 2011). Anthropologists were among the first to criticize the continuation of Cold War categories in post-socialist essentializations of the "socialist past" and its "heritage" as corruption, backwardness, or nostalgia (Ledeneva 1998, Yurchak 2013, Todorova and Gille 2010), pointing out new and changing functions of the social forms labeled as "heritage".

Outside the sphere of anthropological circles, however, in many spheres of social, scholarly and political discussions, social and political concepts of the region continued to be defined in hierarchical binaries (East and West,

regression and modernity). They were connected to frames of global hierarchy (West-East-South/First-Second-Third World) and development normatives ("catching up" in time with the developed West). Internal political positions and mutual evaluations of social positions were understood and worded within those frames. Abstract concepts of social and political relations, such as "democracy", "work", or "minorities", were defined within the same relations. Corresponding essentializations of 'Communism', 'nation', 'East vs. West' or the 'people' as the locus of backwardness have been subject to anthropological analysis (Gille 2010, Melegh 2006, Poenaru 2014).

Drawing on Steven Sampson's (2003) criticism of the gap between issues represented in Western-funded NGO 'project societies' and issues locally seen as significant, Zsuzsa Gille speaks of an epistemological "decapitation of society" on a more general level in post-socialist contexts. She claims that through the massive implementation of core-centric politics of knowledge and representation, post-socialist society was "left without its own, one might say, organic intellectuals, who could represent it in international circles. We can already see" – warns Gille, "how the extreme right wing fills the vacuum resulting from this 'decapitation of society' with emotional and symbolic politics".

Universal categories in situated movements – the case of the "Eastern Enlargement" of a "global" case

In my understanding, Gille's notion of "decapitation" refers to the macro-institutional context which hindered the development of local societies' own capacities to produce a knowledge fit to communicate between local experience and global context. This level of macro institutions is one where the influence of anthropology can be least expected. It is the level of knowledge as power, defined by the interest struggles of those in power. The post-socialist integration of East European states into the structures of global capitalism in its neoliberalization phase happened in a position of dependence, with little room for maneuver for local elites. All of them accepted the necessity of integration and the hierarchies that came with it. No wonder those elites and their institutions who fulfilled the positions of local mediators of that integration continued to speak the language of essentialized global hierarchies – and of essentialized "small differences" of those within the struggle of "catching up".

But what about social movements? Aren't they organic developments from inside the body of local societies, which in their conceptualizations, produce vocabularies to name the circumstances which breed them? Are movements, too, part of the "decapitation" phenomenon? The graver side of Gille's argument is that the new extreme right is itself a product of the transnational process of "decapitation". This is an argument similar to Franz Fanon's, who argues that colonial cultural forms, which substitute an essentialized notion of race for structural domination, breed fundamentalist counter-concepts of black superiority (Fanon 1968).

Movements, too, are defined by the macro-dynamics of knowledge production. Much good analysis is already available on the transformation of late socialist dissident debates into mainstream legitimation discourses of post-socialist marketization, leaving behind earlier notes of local specificity and popular interest for the sake of universal ideas of NGO-ized civil society (Eyal 2003, Sampson 2003, Vetta 2009, Valiavicharska 2014).

My own first experience was with 5 years' fieldwork in Romanian and Hungarian activist groups of the alterglobalization movement, between 2004 and 2009. Since the alterglobalization movement was one deeply influenced by, and influential on, anthropological understandings of new movements – take David Graeber's role in connecting anarchist and alterglobalizationist traditions to the new Occupy wave –, the case of postsocialist alterglobalist groups may be of interest here. For me, as for many participants and sympathetic commentators, East European alterglobalism featured the hope of linking post-socialist grievances to global processes, and building a bottom-up democratic organization in post-socialist countries where first impressions of an active civil society were decreasing after the regime change. Hopes notwithstanding, my field experience taught me that there is a discontinuity between the local reality of the movements, and the practice of Western movements which they took as their model – and which the majority of scholarly (including anthropological) descriptions of the movement celebrated as the 'global' movement reality. That discontinuity pointed my attention to the situated nature of the Western movement ideology itself, which I described later as born at a turning point in the coalition processes of Western intellectuals and activists, a point of divergence between political liberals and market liberals.

In the "Eastern Enlargement process" of the European alterglobalization movement, Eastern European movement groups were incorporated in that ideology without an acknowledgement of the specificities of post-socialist contexts. Even the case of using red flags as symbols did not make it to the agenda of serious discussions on significant forums of the movement. Eastern European activists, laden with post-socialist inferiority complex, struggled to "catch up" with the position of a "global activist" through taking over the frames and practices of their Western peers. They interpreted the resulting gap between their practice and their actual context as coming from Eastern Europe's "backwardness". The idea of autonomy, so central to the movement, became in the practice of Eastern European activists an ideological tool to legitimate and protect their own positions as unrelated to their post-socialist contexts. This effect I identified as linked (also in terms of concrete historical continuity) to the anti-political idea of "autonomy" in the dissident movement of late socialism. At that time, too, it was a notion of freedom and equality which worked as a tool of downplaying local reality, at the price of bringing recognition to its activists as full value subjects in core actors' terms.

Alterglobalist activists mostly came from the ranks of educated youth. They put significant effort in making use of the knowledge they accessed through readings or university classes to make sense of their social environment. The

concept of "autonomy" as reality-barrier was crystallized simultaneously with the deployment of these efforts, and the series of small defeats when the ideas that gave them hope clashed with their actual circumstances. "They don't understand that (...) we live in a NETWORK SOCIETY, where networks have become the new logic of human interaction everywhere" – a Romanian organizer complained, quoting Manuel Castells, when Romanian journalists and police were reluctant to behave according to theory. In the end, old essentializations came to fill in the gap. "In the Balkans, everything is possible" – the title of a Hungarian Indymedia article remarked bitterly, after a sit-in action to save a monument building from real estate speculation failed.

Geopolitical categories in contemporary movements

Since 2008, in Eastern Europe, as elsewhere, we are witnessing a massive revival of movement activity. In North America, movements in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath have been conceptualized in terms of "capitalism" (as North American capitalism). In Europe they were linked to the crisis of the European project. Both diagnoses generalize core countries' stories of postwar welfare turning into financialization and later, neoliberal austerity, as the story of a general decline of democratic capitalism. That story does not cover the historical path of other positions in the same global process, including that of Eastern Europe. To point out only one element, the massive austerity wave coupled with neoliberalization in Eastern Europe came together with the last decade and/or implosion of socialist economies. For East Europeans, present news of debt, austerity and unemployment in Western and Southern Europe sound more like their own past than a hitherto unseen injustice of history.

In Eastern Europe, debates around post-2008 movements are framed in terms of post-socialist transition, and its promise of European integration. While North American and European debates are in a position to generalize their organic vocabularies as "the" questions of "capitalism" and "democracy" (a position of power rather than of analytical relevance, breeding many misconceptions), in Eastern Europe discontent vis-à-vis present forms of "democracy" or "capitalism" cannot be expressed on a universal level. In North America and Europe, the generalization of core experience makes possible an analytically mistaken, but practically efficient identification with "universal" causes. In Eastern Europe the same effect of core-centric concepts comes down as a problem of placing oneself in that "universal" problematic.

When middle class groups here, as elsewhere, lose their previous positions, and mobilize against that loss, they move in a contradictory framework of knowledge, in which democracy and welfare as structural relations are transformed into normative tropes of evolution in time (away from backwardness), space (away from the East), and politics (away from Communist authoritarianism). Their claims are for a normality only the promise of which has ever been theirs. Emancipatory ideas of welfare and democracy are bundled

up with the promise of "catching up". In the real process of post-socialist development, the fulfillment of that promise could become the subjective experience of a small amount of the population, while the rest suffered from a decay in their living standards. Old essentializing notions of transition discourses (Europe, Western life standards, democracy) are charged with the stakes and tensions of different trajectories through post-socialist neoliberalization and crisis.

New geopolitical tensions between Western powers and Russia, and the "New Cold War" discourse deployed in that, work to further shift away the thematic edge of Eastern European mobilizations from the "general" problems raised by movements in core countries. While police clashes with anti-austerity protesters in Brussels, Hungarian protests against the government, voicing similar claims against austerity, are reported on as claims for "democracy" in the Cold War sense of belonging to the right-wing bloc. As think tanks and news site editorials assess the chances of Hungary "hollowing out democracy on the edge of Europe" (Traynor 2014), there seems to be no question where anti-austerity claims belong in the picture. To give an example, an *International Business Times* article, with the telling title "Is Hungary the Next Ukraine? Protests Show Country Ripe for Conflict between Russia and Europe", explains: "While Hungary was never as close to Russia as Ukraine, an astounding 72 percent of Hungarians said in 2010 most Hungarians are worse off than they were under communist rule when they were intrinsically linked to Russia and the rest of the Eastern Bloc" (Lynch 2014).

Tensions born from divergent class trajectories through cycles of post-socialist austerity and debt-ridden development are translated into a vocabulary of tensions between geopolitical power centers. Such translations follow the line of local elite blocs' coalitions with either of those power centers. Through the communicative power of both local elite blocs and their transnational allies, the formulation of a vocabulary that could address the interest of local social groups versus both elite blocs and their transnational allies is systematically blocked. Tensions following from that blockage seem to continue to be channeled into the competition between elite blocs.

Inadequacy of movements in Eastern Europe?

Activist and scholarly commentators of recent East European demonstrations often express their shock over the effects of that blockage, including phenomena such as recurrent demonstrations claiming the resignation of governments, while the governments of the same elite blocs circulate in power seats (Tsoneva and Medarov 2013); the geopolitical or ethnic formulations of local problems, the most extreme case manifesting in Ukraine (Ischchenko 2014); or the proliferation of various non-political channels of popular diagnostics of the situation, such as esotericism and conspiracy theories (Dunn 2014). At the first cross-regional conference on social movements in Eastern Europe, held in Bucharest in May 2015, a series of panels addressed explicitly "The

disconnection between socio-economic issues and politics in contemporary social movements in Russia and other post-Soviet countries".

The difference between Western and Eastern European movement politics has often been addressed in terms of an inadequacy on the part of Eastern movements, lacking both the conceptual and infrastructural tools of Western movements. As many have argued (e.g. Tilly 1999), social movement studies itself is so much tied to its genealogy within the political-economic contexts of postwar Western welfare democracies that its paradigms are hard to apply in different contexts. In research on Eastern European socialisms and postsocialisms, the problem of identifying "movements" as similar to those defined in Western environments has been part of debates and canonizing processes on the role of civil society and social movements in postsocialist transitions. Are local opposition movements examples of the same phenomena as Western movements (Kaldor 2003)? Are they signs/agents of CEE societies' transition to Western structures? Or are they rather examples of these societies' backwardness relative to Western models, both in the sense of less activity of the similar kind (Císař 2013), and in the sense of too much activity of an "uncivil" kind (Kopecky and Mudde 2003)? Such questions have not been merely referential. They were part of politically loaded diagnoses and projections within the transnational relations of the Cold War and postsocialist transformation.

Among the processes surrounded by such expectations was the contradiction within the democracy-cum-capitalism package introduced by the regime change – namely, that democratization presupposed the deskilling and precarization of previously proletarized social groups, without their democratic participation becoming a threat to the marketization process. This contradiction came to be reflected somewhat one-sidedly by scholarly attention to civil society and social movements which tried to address local popular politics based on Western literature.

Within scholarly commentators, SMS's reception in Eastern Europe started with descriptions of late socialist dissident movements (Máté, 1993), and post-socialist movements after the regime change (Císař, 2008, Piotrowski, 2011). Incorporating the bias of SMS paradigms on affluent Western postwar democratic contexts, the reception of SMS in Eastern Europe tended to look for movement phenomena similar to paradigmatic cases treated by Western literatures. This practice often had the effect of emphasizing instances that matched Western movement models, and obscuring features of postsocialist popular politics in Eastern Europe that fell outside of paradigmatic definitions. When movement instances matching Western models were few, statements of a lack of movement/civil activism in Eastern Europe tended to dismiss the long-term history of social movements in Eastern Europe (Gagyi 2015).

Looking at the present wave of demonstrations, and surrounding political debates, there seems to be a deficit in forms of knowledge on the post-socialist condition that would make it possible to understand local grievances as part of a

simultaneous global history, beyond Cold War and transitological essentializations, or direct applications of Western movements' frames. It could be argued that top-down framing by international and national media coverage, affiliated to respective elite blocs, distorts information on the 'organic' frames of activists. Yet the most visible activism by highly educated people, who make a strong use of social network sites, does not seem to be able to deal with the inherent contradiction in post-socialist narratives and core narratives of 'the crisis of democracy' either. New demonstration slogans pitting Europe vs. Russia, democracy vs. communism, the middle class against lower social strata, civilization vs. backwardness, resonate further in Western oriented activists' attempts to correct local demonstrators' political mindsets and substitute them with those of Western movements. In the recent years, making use of European and German political funds, green, feminist, social-democratic and post-Marxist frameworks have traveled throughout Eastern European activist forums without their basic assumptions, set on a Western background, being significantly questioned from the perspective of Eastern European experience. Instead, internalizing such frameworks worked rather as a type of capital that Eastern activists can deploy to gain some of the recognition and assets available in Western movement infrastructures.

In anthropology, post-socialist studies aimed to make post-socialism a critical standpoint, rather than an area studies problem, and situate the lived realities of post-socialisms vis-à-vis new capitalisms across the globe. While that aim has been served by various scholarly works on post-socialist complexities, the tradition of anthropological studies of post-socialism has not been in the position to influence local understandings of the same situations. The recent boom of SMS in both Western and Eastern European contexts might promise to put new resources at work in order to conceive of local and global movements in a relevant comparative framework. Both traditions might do a lot to help local movements' orientation across the complex geographies of the present global crisis.

If I was to make a comment on what the survival of essentializing notions might suggest for the study of post-socialist movements, it would be the following. Broader ambitions to place socialist and post-socialist development within global history beyond the Cold War framework, as voiced by Chari and Verdery (2009), or Gille (2010), have not been sufficiently addressed. Many case studies on East European movements establish transnational links through analogy, or by the application of theoretical notions which have been developed in other contexts. The wide use of notions such as "democracy", "social movement" or "neoliberalism", with no differentiation between the actual form and function of similar political-ideological elements at different points of the global system stands out as one such case. It seems to me that the systematic problems of self-recognition in post-socialist societies, as they appear in present mobilizations, could benefit largely from available knowledge addressing the former ambition: to situate socialist and post-socialist development in global history, and place lived realities within that. Assessing the impact of 25 years of post-socialist

studies amidst a new geopolitical situation, as social movements and their studies face a long unseen upsurge, bringing that question back to the fore seems one of the tasks ahead for movement-oriented research.

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A brief green moment: the emergence and decline of the Polish anti-nuclear and environmental movement

Kacper Szulecki, Tomasz Borewicz, Janusz Walusko

This article is dedicated to the memory of its co-author Tomasz Borewicz, who died just after its completion.

Tomasz Borewicz (formerly Burek), born 8 December 1963 in Gdansk, died 7 November 2015, was an activist, journalist, traveler and ethnographer of indigenous cultures. He studied history in the 1980s, first in Słupsk and later at the Gdansk University, but was relegated from the university twice for dissident activities. Tomek later received a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Wroclaw where he was also working on a dissertation on his passion – anthropology of medicine and shamanism.

He established first contacts with the anti-communist, democratic opposition in 1979. During the martial law years he was involved in the underground opposition, first as a samizdat distributor for "Solidarity", later as an organizer of the Independent Student Association (NZS) at the Słupsk Pedagogical School, where he edited the samizdat magazine "Akademik". In 1986 he was arrested for possession of illegal publications and printing equipment. Incarcerated with hard criminal convicts in a maximum security cell for almost a month, he held a two week hunger strike in demanding political prisoner status. He was released due to deteriorating health and later subject to a general amnesty.

Since 1986 Tomek worked as a history teacher at elementary school, earning the popular nickname "Belfer" which he was known by in the activist community. He initiated the non-violent youth movement "Twe-Twa". Co-organizer of the 1988 strikes at the Gdansk University and Lenin Shipyard. "Belfer" became a member of the "Freedom and Peace" (WiP) movement, focusing on environmental and cultural issues. He was one of the organizers of the "Peace festival" in 1988 and 1989, and an outspoken critic of obligatory "Defense Preparedness" classes in schools, due to their militarist and ideological content.

Tomasz was one of the leaders of the protests against the Żarnowiec nuclear power plant, organizing the societal referendum on nuclear energy and establishing contacts with Western activists. He recently co-authored an in depth manuscript of a chronicle of the anti-nuclear struggles, containing both the voices of the protesters and the authorities and nuclear scientists. He remained an environmental activist in the 1990s, was one of the co-authors of the report "Poland's Eco-development 2020" written for the new democratic Parliament, and an organizer of environmental events such as the Rainbow Family Gathering, Earth Days in Warsaw and the Gdansk Environmental Study. During his struggle with cancer he was also an active advocate of legalizing medical cannabis-based pain relief. In March 2014 he received the Freedom and Solidarity Cross for his opposition activity.

Abstract

The Polish environmental movement is generally perceived as relatively weak, and mass mobilization on environmental issues is scarce. While this can arguably describe today's Polish NGO scene, subjected to professionalization and grant-dependency, it is surely not the whole story. The second half of the 1980s and the brief period after the negotiated transition from socialism in 1989 saw examples of mass protest focused on different environmental issues such as nuclear energy or air pollution. This article reconstructs the emergence of environmental issues within the opposition, describes its strategies, and highlights the main protest actions, with an emphasis on the anti-nuclear mobilization against the Żarnowiec power plant. Finally, it tries to account for the collapse of the environmental movement in the 1990s. Since the anti-nuclear protests in Poland extended beyond 1989 they provide a unique case allowing us to observe the nature of transition from socialism to post-socialism in Poland and more broadly in Central Europe, today constituting an important point of contention between different ideological camps.

Keywords: Poland, environmental protest, anti-nuclear protest, Chernobyl, Żarnowiec, Solidarity, Freedom and Peace, civil society, post-socialism

Introduction

The Chernobyl meltdown is widely acknowledged as a "catalyst" of civil mobilization in Eastern Europe, especially of those protest movements that focused on environmental issues (cf. Kenney 2002). To speak of a "Chernobyl effect" might be something of an oversimplification, since environmental protest existed in the region before 1986. The second half of the 1980s, coinciding with the time after the catastrophe, has, however, been a period marked by a change in protest methods and the issues taken up.

One crucial shift was the emergence of environmental protection as an issue that mobilized vast parts of the society – far beyond the traditional opposition in the various countries of the region. In Poland, the environment provided a new integrating platform of dissent, and encouraged open opposition in the second half of the 1980s, after a period of communist backlash and the decline of the "Solidarity" trade union, forced to operate as a clandestine network and losing societal appeal. Environmental mobilization, despite its seemingly non-political nature, constituted an important field of political activity for old and new activists, combining a tangible issue with an opportunity to protest the communist regime as a whole.

Open protests after the Chernobyl catastrophe focused on different topics such as nuclear energy or air pollution. Among these, Poland's emerging domestic nuclear program constituted the most visible focus of local and nation-wide

contestation. Nuclear waste storage facilities in Międzyrzecz, as well as planned nuclear facilities in Klempicz, Darłowo and most importantly Żarnowiec, were targeted.

It is sometimes argued that the successful campaign against the Żarnowiec Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), sealing the entire Polish nuclear "adventure" of the 1980s, is the "foundational act" of the Polish environmental movement (Ostolski 2008). This is in many ways true, as the campaign helped the movement to crystalize and distinguish itself from the broader anti-communist opposition. At the same time, it was the last major success of the movement, which soon fell into a state of decline, and it already showed early signs of the movement's weaknesses. After the communist regime was ousted in 1989, some very desperate measures and a large dose of transnational campaigning were needed to actually force the new "Solidarity" government to resign from the idea of developing domestic nuclear capacity. Furthermore, while the construction of Żarnowiec was stopped and the nuclear program abandoned, this did not have a direct societal impact on the perception of nuclear power.

The Żarnowiec NPP case shows that the "magic of 1989" does not seem to work in environmental politics. This leads to a present day paradox, where former colleagues from the opposition stand at two different sides of the barricade as the idea of launching the Żarnowiec NPP is again pushed through by the Polish government.

This article reconstructs the emergence of environmental issues within the Polish opposition (not just the "Solidarity" movement), describes its strategies, and highlights the main protest actions, with an emphasis on the anti-nuclear mobilization against the Żarnowiec power plant. Finally, it asks why the decline of the broad environmental movement coalition after its mostly spectacular moments of mobilization was so drastic and why it seems to have left such a weak legacy. The research draws on archival material (samizdat as well as secret police archives), interviews with former activists, as well as secondary literature.

Sidney Tarrow's (2011) concept of 'cycles of contention' is used to organize the analysis. Tarrow draws on a number of historical examples (with European 1848 at the heart of his analysis) to argue that when seen from a wider, historical perspectives, individual protest events and social movements appear to display cyclical dynamics. Put in simple terms – they emerge, set the scene for wider protest, grow, and then inevitably decline. The initial phases – protest emergence – have attracted far more attention than protest movements decay and disappearance (Goodwin and Jasper 2009, 373). Tarrow emphasizes the role of initial opportunities for "early risers" in the initial phase of the cycle, where vulnerabilities of the authorities are exposed (2011, 197-201). The next step is linked to the innovation in protest repertoire. Broadening the base and increasing the scale of protest. This is followed by the formation of a wider coalition, leading to "widespread contention [that] produces externalities, which give[s] challengers at least a temporary advantage and allow them to overcome the weaknesses in their resource base" (2011, 199). After the protest heyday

comes "exhaustion" and decline, and Tarrow provides four distinct (though not mutually exclusive) trajectories or scenarios: *institutionalization*, *commercialization*, *involution* and *radicalization*.

In our analysis, we suggest that the decline of the Polish environmental movement was conditioned by its relationship to both the Communist authorities, the broader "Solidarity" movement (and the first quasi-democratic government that it formed) as well as the society as a whole, and that its initial *radicalization* within the broader "Solidarity" coalition has at the same time allowed for reaching its most ambitious goal (the closure of Żarnowiec) and conditioned its later demise along the three other paths: institutionalization and commercialization (which we group under the joint label of professionalization) and involution.

Background: Dissent and the environment before Chernobyl

While the 26 April 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster had a very significant impact on the societies and opposition movements in the Eastern Bloc, environmental issues were becoming visible on the societal agenda already in the early 1980s. It was the result of the clearly visible degradation of the environment but also, partly, inspired by the example of Western green movements. A student activist in the Independent Student Association (NZS) and later one of the leading figures of the "Freedom and Peace" (WiP) movement, Leszek Budrewicz, explains:

> Environmentalism entered the scene . . . because it was an obvious idea, popular among the young, close to the heart of many, who formed WiP. It was broadcast on television . . . those great big Western protests, where everyone came with their kids. It all simply looked like a picnic and here, in this weary, gray communist reality, we longed for something so great.[1]

Environmental issues, because of their seemingly non-political character, were a domain of semi-official and official organizations. Apart from the long-established League for Nature Conservation (LOP), the independent but official Polish Ecological Club (PKE) was established during the open "Solidarity" period. There was also the youth network, linked with official scouting, under the murky name "I prefer to be" (*Wolę być*) (Topiński 1983; Gliński and Koziarek 2007). All these played an ambiguous role – on the one hand, providing a forum for some critique of the regime, but on the other – a safety vent for political tensions (cf. Kenney, 2002; Snajdr 2008). The attitudes of WiP affiliates towards the latter were therefore also ambivalent. Some, like the eco-activist from Wroclaw Radosław Gawlik, saw the network as an extension of

[1] Interview with L. Budrewicz in Kenney 2007, 122.

"Freedom and Peace" to towns and villages where open opposition could never occur, and so he attended its gatherings. Others, more radical, saw it as a façade and a "communist society for those interested in the environment".[2]

It is impossible to clearly separate the emergent environmental protest movement from the wider opposition, which in the first half of the 1980s was still united under the banner of "Solidarity" – the trade union that shook Poland in 1980-81, and was forced to go underground by the violent backlash of the Martial law in December 1981. The still fresh memory of a 10-million-strong social movement, as well as the institutions of the underground trade union and its vast transnational support network created a foundation on which new structures could emerge – and eventually dissent from the trade-union mainstream.

Environmental issues also seemed to constitute a dividing line, separating two generations of the democratic opposition. The older generation, often born in the 1930s and 1940s, veterans of the student protests of 1968 and the early dissident activity of the 1970s, did not consider environment a priority issue. "Are you crazy? You wanna protest in the name of bloody white mice, is that what you want?" – the prominent opposition leader Jacek Kuroń was to exclaim in 1981, when approached by some young activists with the idea of the "Solidarity" trade union actions for environmental protection. One of the youngsters, since then and until today an activist in Warsaw, Jarosław "Jarema" Dubiel, explains that "it was not yet the time for environmental concerns".[3]

The older opposition and those following in their footsteps were in the mid-1980s concerned with keeping the underground trade union alive after the harsh repressions of the Martial Law (1981-83). The younger activists, on the other hand, were looking for new topics and points of reference. In many cases they were more radical than their older colleagues, and displayed new, counter-systemic attitudes, contesting not only the militarized Polish communist regime, but also the system that they perceived, in a similar ways as the Czech dissident Václav Havel, as an incarnation of the late industrial consumerist society (albeit with fewer goods to consume).

That is why the earliest examples of environmental protest came from the Alternative Society Movement (RSA), a punk-anarchist milieu that emerged in the birthplace of "Solidarity" – Gdansk. Early green activism was based on local issues.[4] One of them, for the opposition community in Gdansk and neighbouring Gdynia, was the planned construction of the Żarnowiec NPP (first steps were made already in the 1970s). Initial modest protest actions were conducted in 1984. RSA quickly made a link between Chernobyl and the

[2] Interview with W. Jaroń in FA, „Rozmowa z Wojtkiem Jaroniem." *FA - Kwartalnik Ruchu Wolność i Pokój, Region Śląski,* Nr. 1 (1988): 48–51.

[3] Interview with J. Dubiel, 11 June 2010, Szczecin.

[4] It would actually remain locally-focused, which made nation-wide mobilization more difficult and would later prove a major obstacle for the emerging environmental movement.

potential threat of Żarnowiec, and discussed these questions in a special issue of their samizdat magazine *Homek* soon after the accident. They were not the ones, however, who coined the brilliantly appealing term *Żarnobyl*. Whoever the author was, the word immediately gained nation-wide fame.

The "Freedom and Peace" (WiP) was not at first envisaged as an environmental movement – as the name indicates its focus was on human rights and demilitarization (see Szulecki 2011; 2013). It emerged in 1985 as a loose network of predominantly young activists protesting against the text of the People's Army military oath as well as the military service in general. WiP later grew in size and scope, so that it encompassed a wide range of issues – demilitarization of the society, peace in broader terms, human rights, minority rights and environmentalism. It developed lively contacts with the Western social movements, such as the peace movement or the German "Greens". The movement was ideologically varied, different municipal branches displayed different shades – from the conservative-national centers in Krakow and Gorzów, through "centrist" but politically active Warsaw, to largely alternative Wroclaw and Szczecin and anarchist-dominated Gdańsk. On the whole, it was the largest East European peace initiative, an opposition movement of a new type (an a *new social movement* in theoretical terms), which managed to accomplish most of its goals. As the prominent dissident intellectual Adam Michnik once remarked – it was the most successful phenomenon in the history of Polish opposition, comparable only with the legendary Workers Defense Committee (KOR) (see also Davies 1988; Wylie 2001; Kenney 2001; Smółka 2012).

Already at WiP's foundational "hunger seminar" (a hunger strike in a church outside Warsaw combined with discussions with invited guests) in March 1985 some initiators of the movement raised the idea of including environmental issues, and this was widely accepted – also because of their subversive potential. But environmentalism was not mentioned in the "Founding Declaration" (April 1985), and appeared only in the later "Declaration of Principles" (November 1985). Why only then? Apart from pragmatic reasons it can be argued that this was due to the influx of new affiliates, especially from Gdansk (former RSA members) and Wrocław (it was Leszek Budrewicz, Marek Krukowski and Małgorzata Krukowska who drafted the Declaration). Additionally, Maciej Śliwa (1992, 57) notes that on 30 March 1985 the cornerstone for the first reactor was ceremonially laid at Żarnowiec, and nuclear threat became more tangible. While those issues were clearly signaled, nuclear power was not yet seen as a pressing problem at the time: "Poland is not threatened by a dynamic development of nuclear energy, although the attempts to transplant it into the Polish context – in the light of the experiences of other countries – cause suspicion."[5]

[5] „Declaration of principles", available at http://tezeusz.pl/cms/tz/index.php?id=2086, last accessed 23.04.2015.

That was the backdrop against which the new current of protest in Poland could emerge. Despite its clandestine character, "Solidarity" paved the way for other, newer social movements. After 1984, in the aftermath of the kidnapping and murder of father Jerzy Popiełuszko, the Warsaw "Solidarity" chaplain, repressions on the opposition eased. That new phase of state-opposition struggle opened a field of opportunities for a new type of movements – open in their tactics and with a narrower focus on concrete issues. Tarrow notes that single issue protest cycles, like the environmental protest cycle in Poland, "do not overlap perfectly with the society-wide cycles of contention, but aggregate to form them" (2011, 199). The Chernobyl catastrophe, and the early protests that followed, made the mobilizing potential of environmental protests obvious – and showed how awkward the situation of the police and the authorities was to suppress such activity. Budrewicz remarks jokingly: "If I am an anti-communist and I want to overthrow the government, then they beat me up. Perhaps that is unsound, but everyone will say: he had it coming. But when I start taking care of a neighboring park, leaves etc. then they ask 'Damn, why are they beating him, isn't it just about the leaves?' . . . we would get to a point where the subliminal limits of absurdity are surpassed."[6]

Seizing a political opportunity: the Chernobyl catastrophe and its aftermath

It was only on the April 28. 1986, two days after the catastrophe, that the Poles were first officially informed about a "problem" on the evening news. The next day newspapers finally mentioned the "accident in Czernobylsk" [spelling in the original] which was apparently "already discussed in the press".[7] The readers were also informed that a special commission, furnished with cutting-edge equipment, is monitoring the situation and that although a radioactive cloud is in fact moving over north-eastern Poland, it is already almost gone, and was never a threat to human health.[8]

Aware of the fact that the society might not be inclined to trust its own experts, the paper also quoted "Swedish scientists" who claimed, that the radiation is so low, that no special measures need to be taken.[9] Over the next few weeks the topic was widely discussed, but voices of reassurance ("the radiation is absolutely not harmful for pregnant women and children"), expert panels (one of which finally admitted when the accident occurred and when the cloud reached Poland), bashing the Western governments and the United States for spreading "ridiculous information", informing about seventeen historic nuclear accidents (in the US, West German, Japan, UK and Canada).

[6] Interview with L. Budrewicz in Kenney 2007, 122.

[7] „Awaria elektrowni atomowej na Ukrainie", *Trybuna Ludu* 30. 04 – 1.05. 1986, 1.

[8] „Komunikat Polskiej Komisji Rządowej" *Trybuna Ludu* 30. 04 – 1.05. 1986, 1-2.

[9] „Opinie ekspertów skandynawskich" *Trybuna Ludu* 30. 04 – 1.05. 1986, 2.

Finally, on May 15, major Polish papers reprinted (in full) the text of the fatherly television address by Mikhail Gorbachev, who assured that the Soviet (and allied) citizens were informed "as soon as we got the full picture of the situation", sniped on the US and NATO for their "unworthy lies" and claimed that "the worst is already behind us".[10] He was gravely mistaken, as for the leadership of the Soviet bloc states the worst was still to come.

One of the "Freedom and Peace" participant recalls that the scariest part of the entire situation was the disinformation. "People were wondering what they should really do, what they should give to their children . . . Should they give them milk, or not? Or powdered milk? Feed them lettuce, or not? For political reasons we were cut off from sincere information."[11] That is why the situation had both an environmental and a directly political edge. And indeed, the anger at the authorities was most visible among women, especially mothers. "They loudly spat out phrases no worse than those on [underground] leaflets: a boycott of the communist parade [May 1], and refusing to support a regime which takes care only of itself and its militia. . . They sounded like a threat. Little groups of women – strangers to one another – in front of stores, on the sidewalks, all talking about one thing" (Kenney 2002, 72).

That spontaneous anger was quickly channeled through some early opposition actions. The first took place on May Day in Krakow, organized by the WiP affiliates there. The next day, on May 2, a more thought-through event was organized in Wroclaw. A dozen or so people from the city's WiP "core", reinforced by some guests from Warsaw, gathered on the stairs of a restaurant in the busy pedestrian Świdnicka street during the afternoon rush hours. They organized a sit-in,[12] with placards saying for example "Is nuclear death from the East any different?", "We demand full access to information" and "Żarnowiec will be next" (Podsiadło 2010, 31). This protest was a novelty in terms of its form and, perhaps more importantly, its course. It was non-violent, building on a rich tradition of civil disobedience previously known in Poland mostly from television. It was open, spontaneous and bold – street actions were rarely taken up by the opposition after the Martial Law, and if they were, more often than not ended in riots. Although the protesters were joined by some passersby, and were surrounded by several hundred mostly sympathetic or indifferent onlookers, the police did not intervene. No one was arrested, no one was beaten up. Although the authorities rejected the claims of protesters in the official rhetoric and the media, they did not suppress the growing dissent. One of the organizers, Marek Krukowski, recalls:

> It was amazing that nothing happened. It was the first public independent action. Before that everything was organized through informal channels –

[10] *Życie Warszawy*, 15. 05. 1986, 1-passim.

[11] Interview with A. Koczut in Kenney 2007, 154.

[12] Usually called a *sitting* by the Polish oppositionists.

> someone can be told and invited, or someone can't. What we [WiP] were doing prior to that was only echoed by the mass media, you could hear something about it on Radio Free Europe. This was the first brawl (*zadyma*), where people could touch us.[13]

A week later, on May 9, also on Świdnicka Street, the movement held another, larger protest. This time, understanding the moral power of the message that it is the health of the children that is at stake, the WiP-ists gathered several dozen people, among them many mothers with strollers. The crowd, joined by onlookers, walked down the street to the city's historic marketplace and back, holding placards such as "Why were we informed so late?" and "We demand powdered milk for all the children". Numerous policemen watched the demo, but no one was detained. This gave a totally new meaning to the opposition's slogan "Come with us, they are not beating today" (Kenney 2002). WiP adopted the chant as one of its trademarks, because, in the case of the movement, this was indeed true. Budrewicz, described the movement as benefiting from the "luxury of small disobediences" (Konstantin 1987).

This new situation – a tangible and resonant, seemingly non-political issue that caught societal attention, and the hesitant reaction of the authorities, exposing their vulnerabilities (Tarrow 2011, 197), marked the opening of a new, wide window of opportunity for the opposition, allowing for protest to diffuse. The visibly positive and impressive results of the protest popularized the movement in Wroclaw and opened many doors within the "older" opposition. Before establishing its own samizdat network, WiP used the union's channels, and just days after the sit-in issued an appeal for "gathering all possible information on the Chernobyl threat" through the high-circulation "Solidarity" weekly *Tygodnik Mazowsze*.

Using the momentum and the occasion of Children's Day (June 1), the branch of WiP in Krakow (much more conservative in its overall profile), held a mass in the city's historic main church – intended to the health of the children growing up in a polluted environment. Outside the church the participants formed a large circle, while other WiP activists distributed informative leaflets. Finally, the entire group marched through the Old Town to the Wawel hill, chanting slogans like "We do not want iodine from the East" and holding much more provocative posters (i.e. "I'll swap a 3 bedroom Krakow flat for a sleeping bag in New York" or "We demand that USSR pay us damages"). The protest, which according to some sources gathered several thousand people, was again uninterrupted (Smółka 1994, 53).

These experiences had an impact of the actions organized by the movement from then on, gradually changing the protest portfolio of the entire Polish

[13] Quoted in Smółka 1994, 52. The term "zadyma" normally indicates a brawl or a riot, but in the case of the opposition it is used to describe any street action. It does, however, carry the meaning of a revolt and a confrontation.

opposition and, as Kenney argues, through different kinds of transnational diffusion, on the entire Central European independent scene (Kenney 2004). That was indeed the "Chernobyl effect" in terms of protest methods.

Think locally, act mockingly: innovation in the green protest repertoire 1987-1989

Green activism became an example of the best and most spectacular non-violent actions that Polish dissent had to offer in the second half of the 1980s. To give a hint of the direction the protests took – in October 1987, in a manner as unbelievable as the spelling of the town where it took place – Wrzeszcz, a district of Gdansk – four followers of the "Freedom and Peace" movement, climbed the rooftop of a local pharmacy dressed up as animals (a fox, a hare, a hedgehog and a fish). They remained atop the pharmacy for some time, displaying their banners and scattering fliers. Their colleagues on the same day in different points of the city distributed some ten thousand leaflets altogether. The human-animals were arrested eventually, but only once they stumbled down from the roof after peaceful negotiations and a long "performance" for quite a large audience of sympathetic bystanders.

That was the style of the young Polish opposition movements, which Padraic Kenney, drawing at the same time one of the famous oppositionists Władysław Frasyniuk and the literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin, terms the "carnival of revolution" (Kenney 2002). Innovation in the repertoire of the new opposition movements, and most visibly in the growing environmental protest movement, marks a new phase in that cycle of contention (Tarrow 2011, 203). In the following we discuss some most spectacular successes on the environmental arena, protest actions conducted by the "Freedom and Peace" movement as well as a growing coalition of environmental activists that took over the baton after WiP's visible decline in 1989. We look at the case of the planned nuclear waste storage facility at Międzyrzecz, the air pollution issue in Siechnice and the Żarnowiec NPP – emphasizing in particular the evolution of tactics, changing levels of repression and the degree of public support.

After the success of the Chernobyl demonstrations, "Freedom and Peace" searched for different local environmental "cases" around which protest could be organized. These were not hard to find. The most spectacular examples of largely successful environmental advocacy include the nuclear waste storage facility in the Nazi-built bunker complex near Międzyrzecz (western Poland), the pollutant industrial complexes in Siechnice (metal works near Wroclaw), Police (chemical works near Szczecin) and Nowa Huta (steelworks in Krakow), Klempicz (a proposed NPP location near Poznan) as well as Żarnowiec – the only real nation-wide green protest campaign. The growing portfolio of WiP's samizdat periodicals was used to spread the information on local actions across the country, as well as raising the awareness of environmental problems and the risks of nuclear energy.

Międzyrzecz

The protests against the proposed nuclear waste storage facility in Międzyrzecz began in May 1987, after the local WiP branch in nearby Gorzów learned about the plans (Kossakowski 1987). They were able to quickly gather independent expert reports, which suggested that the site (bunkers) absolutely unfit and the project is highly dangerous for the local population, as well as a very important bat habitat (Śliwa 1992, 60). The first actions were taken in Gorzów, where five WiP affiliates climbed onto the ledge of the city's major department store, displayed large sheets informing about the danger of nuclear waste, scattered leaflets and pasted posters on the building's windows.

This novel method – dubbed *ruszting* (from the Polish word for scaffold and the "-ing" as in "sitting"). The idea was to climb a scaffold or a roof, and sit there – for increased visibility of the activists and extended the length of the protest, as the police needed equipment and reinforcements to take the protester off their "nest". This followed one of the key principles of the movement's non-violent strategy: "it takes only a single cop to arrest a standing protester, but up to four to arrest a sitting one" (and a whole platoon if you climb a rooftop and pull the ladder up).

In the case of the Gorzów *ruszting*, the firefighters called to the protest location were not able to convince the activists to get down; the riot police was summoned and dragged them down by force. The *ruszting* technique was soon mastered by WiP, as the already given example of the demo with animals atop a pharmacy shows. But actions in Gorzów, although easier to organize and perhaps safer, were not enough. The movement needed to go local, and mobilize the populace in the town of Międzyrzecz itself. After a *ruszting* held there, several informative actions, the level of mobilization achieved was very impressive. The final protest march held on October 4, concluding a hunger strike in the local church, gathered four thousand people – *twenty percent* (!) of the town's entire population (Smółka 1994, 58).

But that came at a cost now. The police was already prepared to detain, arrest, and at least heavily fine the movement's affiliates. Very high fines became a weapon much more painful, even despite international financial assistance, than short arrests. And about the time the Międzyrzecz protests were launched, WiP-ists protesting against the Police chemical works in Szczecin were also severely beaten. "Freedom and Peace" was noticed, and greater repression was evidence of the fact that the regime also understood the subversive power of environmentalism. The protests in Międzyrzecz were, all in all, WiP's first major success – the local campaign worked, and the municipal council (communist!) voted against the nuclear waste storage.

In the years 1987-1989 anti-systemic protest was spreading widely in the Polish society. Environmental protests clearly played a role, helping to diffuse contentious activism, and constituting new, previously unseen coalitions, cutting across societal groups and geographic scales (from national to local community level).

Siechnice

Budrewicz learned about the issue of the Siechnice metal works (producing waste that polluted Wroclaw's water sources with heavy metals) from the official trade unions (OPZZ) weekly *Związkowiec* (The Teamster) – and was appalled.

> I had no idea there was such a plant. . . I checked on the map . . . the site was just 10km away from Wroclaw, the water coming from there was for our city. Of course there was the problem of the workers, what happens to them if we close the place down. . . But the idea turned out to be great for two reasons – firstly, that it was so obvious, and secondly, that it touched the entire city.[14]

Krukowski further explained: "The opinion of independent scientists was unison: shut [Siechnice] down. It leads to such a degree of heavy metal pollution that in some time the water will be completely unfit for drinking, it will not be cleaned by any filter (Quoted in Smółka 1994, 54).

The protest actions that followed deserve attention because of their intensity, scale and the successful finale. They began in November 1986 with an information sit-in in the opposition's favorite spot – at Świdnicka Street. Two dozen activists sat by posters and sheets informing about the chromium danger, others distributed fliers informing about a protest march to be held in some weeks later. No one was arrested (Podsiadło 2010, 35). In the spirit of micro-local activity seen already in Międzyrzecz, the movement approached the workers of Siechnice with a letter, suggesting universal medical tests for all employees, which could become the basis of a large trial over financial compensation. The march itself (postponed for January), was widely publicized and gained the vocal support of prominent oppositionists. However, due to large scale preventive action on the part of the secret police (SB) it gathered only some 30 WiP-ists, but since they managed to convince an American TV crew to come down and film it, they were doing their best to look impressive ("broader, broader" – shouted some when the group holding signs was turning the corner from a side-alley and emerging into the open space of the marketplace).[15] That shows a high degree of PR awareness that the movement displayed – aware of their limited resources they used the Western media and RFE rather cunningly. This time, however, the presence of Western journalists did not have a protective effect (especially since they were warming up in a nearby eatery and missed all the action). The activists were surrounded by tens of riot-policemen, and despite an improvised sit-in, dragged one by one to police vans and driven

[14] Interview with L. Budrewicz in Kenney 2007, 123.

[15] The major banner read: "Article 71 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland – the citizens of the People's Republic have the right to benefit from the values of the natural environment and the duty to protect it". This indicates the legalistic edge of the protest that was known already from human rights advocacy.

to a local police station (where the merry protest continued, with songs and jokes that almost drove the police insane).

Throughout the police intervention the protesters were shouting "the police is drinking the same water" – an important element of all environmental protests including that after Chernobyl, was that the security apparatus and the regime bureaucracy were usually as much harmed by the pollution as were the protesters and bystanders. This added to the awkwardness of the situation in which the intervening police were – and influenced the (on the whole) light treatment of the green opposition.

The participants received high fines, but – and that was a novelty – openly refused to pay them, arguing that they are demonstrating against a problem of societal importance. When pressured on the telephone by a WiP-ist from Warsaw, the minister of the environment claimed, however, that the January march was not an environmental protest, but an attempt to "create unhealthy noise around Poland internationally" (Smółka 1994, 55). That was indeed the case, although it was more of a consequence than the organizers sole intention. And despite the police crackdown, the protest seemed to have had initial effects – some weeks later the regional authorities decided to shut Siechnice down (or rather – to stop its expansion and shut it down until 1992). This, however, did not eliminate the problem of the pollution.

Further protests were limited by the severe backlash against "Freedom and Peace" that occurred in the second half of 1987, when many activists received long prison sentences – for different crimes and offences. Both in its anti-militarist, environmental and transnational activities the movement was becoming visibly dangerous for the regime.[16] But the actions against Siechnice continued, for a time in a smaller scale. The new "survival" protest technique were the "human sandwiches" – pairs of activists wearing cardboard placards with slogans on their front and back, appearing in different public places and distributing fliers. For weeks they played hide-and-seek with the police, who arrested them whenever they were spotted – although on several occasions the sympathetic crowd of onlookers gathered around the "sandwiches" would not allow the police to detain the protesters.

Protests went massive again in 1988, when the first Black March was held – several hundred people (invited by WiP) showed up in the city center dressed in black and holding mourning flags. These marches were held regularly, and gradually grew in size, so that the final one on September 17 1988 gathered ten thousand protesters, and became the largest street demonstration in Wroclaw since the "Solidarity" May Day demo and riots in 1982. This one was, however, peaceful. The authorities gave in to the societal pressure and decided that the plant would be closed down – however, little was done apart from that, and Siechnice continued to pollute Wroclaw's water. The controversy was resolved

[16] Compare some analyses submitted in secret police academies at the time, as well as a synthetic article by one of WiP's key figures in Warsaw, Jacek Czaputowicz (2009).

only after the democratic transition, when the WiP activist Radosław Gawlik, then already a member of parliament, pressured the Mazowiecki government to monitor the closure and clean-up of the site (Śliwa 1992, 63). By contrast, another WiP environmental issue in Wroclaw – the protests against asbestos thermal isolation of housing estates – gathered little momentum and the toxic substance continues to haunt large parts of the city's populace.[17]

Protesting "Żarnobyl": anti-nuclear mobilization beyond 1989

The protests against the Żarnowiec NPP began earlier, had a wider scale, but even despite those factors – the road to the final (or not entirely so) success was longer and more dramatic. A major point raised against Żarnowiec was the low engineering culture of Polish construction, and thus lack of any safety guarantees. Jacek Czaputowicz asked: "Can we believe that a system incapable of producing a decent car or even a decent bolt, a country where everyday trains, buses, and trams collide, will have a nuclear industry that is safe?" (Kossakowski, 1987). Other points the opposition raised against Żarnowiec were its costs, the risk of further economic dependency on the USSR, which was the sole provider of fuel, the inadequate plans for nuclear waste storage (especially that a second NPP was already planned in Klempicz, western Poland); and finally – the threat of a nuclear meltdown, all the more horrific in a plant located only 40km from the Tri-city (Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot) with over 700 thousand inhabitants.

The campaign against Żarnowiec intensified in 1987, when in July a petition against the NPP began to circulate in Gdansk, and when the four local WiP activists protested on the Wrzeszcz pharmacy. The protests, however, had a rather low intensity despite the nation-wide support from the movement.

Despite large public events, such as the WiP ecological seminars in Gliwice (February 1988), attended by over two hundred guests from different organizations (including Czechoslovak independents) and Darłowo (May 1989), with a thousand participants, and in spite of the foundational declaration of the "Federation of Greens" (*Federacja Zielonych*) from December 1988, the environmental movement was losing momentum in Poland.

The climax of the campaign occurred in the years 1989-90, when "Freedom and Peace" – torn apart by internal ideational and political differences – was in its state of agony. Although at the turn of 1988 and 1989 the final steps of regime transition were still ahead, the nation-wide protest cycle was already entering the phase of exhaustion. This phase, according to Tarrow, is driven mostly by a complimentary pair of mechanisms: *radicalization* and *institutionalization* (2011, 206-7). The entire "Solidarity" constellation was cracking, and the division between the radicalizing young activists and the conciliatory union core, as well as between the anti-communist right and the pro-democratic left

[17] Interview with R. Gawlik in: Kenney 2007, 165.

and center, were more apparent than ever. Same was true for the union's "offshoot" movements, like "Freedom and Peace". As the regime began collapsing, many WiP affiliates looked to continue their public engagement in politics, civil service or in private business. A new generation of radical activists took over what was left of WiP and the wider environmental protest movement – and the activities of environmental protest movement in its 1989-90 climax phase are clearly driven by radicalization. This path, however, and the relationship to both the trembling communist regime and the institutionalizing "Solidarity" core (which would soon form the new, quasi-democratic government) conditioned the later demise of the movement.

The key figure in the climax of the Żarnowiec campaign was Tomasz Burek (vel. Borewicz), formerly a WiP-ist, but, as the movement lost interest in the issue, dissolved and failed to mobilize even for the most important demos he was "a private individual", although his affiliation with the movement was still a reference point.[18]

Chernobyl was a catalyst in his case too, but in a peculiar way, as when the meltdown occurred, Burek was doing time in a Gdansk jail, locked up with three murderers in an isolated blockhouse where no TV or press was allowed. He learned about the catastrophe only after he left prison. This explained why at the beginning of May 1986 the inmates suddenly began to receive much better and more diverse food. Food products that were taken off the market as too contaminated were simply fed to the criminals (and prisoners of conscience alike). "It pissed me off that I was not informed, that something was hidden from me" – says Burek, adding that at the time his partner was pregnant. That was his private path to anti-nuclear protests – he learned more about the threat of Żarnobyl at WiP's "peace festival" (a large anarchist gathering in Białogóra near Żarnowiec) in August 1988. He made an internal pledge that he would protest against the plant until its construction is stopped. And that was what he did over the next two years.

Large scale protests started in February 1989, using a similar pattern as in Wroclaw some months earlier – weekly marches proposed by WiP's Wojciech "Jacob" Jankowski would take place on Gdansk's main street Długi Targ, led by several dozen (seventy or so) activists, and joined by 200-1000 sympathizers. Then, following the tradition of "politics of irony" mastered by WiP and the performance-opposition group "Orange Alternative", the protesters started organizing events such as "mutant football match" or the construction of a cardboard nuclear reactor by a group of people wearing Lenin's masks, singing Stalinist songs ("Atom thundered amongst rocks…") (Waluszko 2012).

After some negotiations with the authorities, they were granted their own "agora" – a public space in the city center the official and semi-official environmental groups could use for their gatherings. The various groups involved in the protest included the youth movements "I prefer to be" and the

[18] Interview with T. Burek in Waluszko 2010. Other quotes from same source.

newly formed "Twe-Twa" as well as the League for Nature Conservation, the Federation of Greens, Franciscan Ecological Club, Polish Ecological Club, Federation of Militant Youth (FMW), Movement for an Engaged Society, RSA and WiP.

In the meantime, nuclear energy was discussed at the Round Table, the symbolic negotiation process between the Communist Party and the post-"Solidarity" opposition. It was, however, the single one out of 28 environmental issues that could not be agreed upon. Regime change did not change the situation – the plans for constructing the NPP were upheld, and while police surveillance lessened, the scale and radical edge of the protests strengthened.

The protesters used a wide range of methods to advocate their cause. They interrupted local "Solidarity" meetings, marched to the Gdansk city hall, blocked the main streets. Burek along with several other activists went to Warsaw, set up a tent in front of the Government's building, and picketed it for over a week in early November 1989. Later on, however, the protests acquired a more dramatic turn. In November the activists held a first, ten-day-long hunger strike, and tried to influence the press by taking over the Press House in Gdansk. In December, the protesters embarked on an open ended hunger strike (it lasted for 44 days), and began a "siege" of the port terminal in Gdynia where the elements of the first reactor were shipped. When the elements were moved towards Żarnowiec, the protesters were throwing themselves under the wheels of the 300 tonne transporter, and were attacked by the Żarnowiec staff (Waluszko 2012).

The environmental opposition pressured for a referendum to be held on the issue, using the opportunity created by first democratic local elections in May 1990. The government, trying to avoid a public confrontation, declined. But a referendum was held nevertheless – a "social referendum" in the Gdansk administrative region, perhaps the largest independently organized popular vote in the world (over one million people cast their vote). Improvised ballot offices were set up in schools, on busses and even in private car trunks. A quick grassroots campaign was organized, involving the visits of activists and scouts in every small village of the region, with the help of the Gdansk University Psychology Department staff, who designed the public relations message of the anti-Żarnowiec campaign (Waluszko 2012). The result was telling: 86% of those who turned up (44% of those eligible, despite a large scale officially inspired campaign of disinformation) voted against the construction of the nuclear plant. The vote was organized in one week, through a loose and informal network of sympathizers and local NGOs (also non-environmental ones, such as the representation of the local ethnic minority, the Kashubians). But the government pointed out that the results of the vote were not binding, as the 50% turn-out threshold was not met.

That is when Tomasz Burek threw the metaphorical boomerang – decided to call upon the international environmental community to pressure the

government from the outside.[19] Burek explained: "The petitions, the protests, the referendum – all that had rocked Poland a bit, made Żarnowiec a public issue. But this did not cause a qualitative change. The relationship was still 'us' and 'them' – the government, be it red or Mazowiecki's."[20]

Domestic protest reached its limit. Burek contacted a "Federation of Greens" activist from Krakow, who provided him with a reference letter and some links to Western environmental groups.[21] And so, in July he hitch-hiked all the way from Gdansk to Vienna, "speaking no foreign language, having no other contacts and only five dollars in my pocket" he knocked on the door of the Austrian Green Party. He brought two backpacks – one with bootleg rock music he intended to sell to gather some funds, and the other – with materials on Żarnowiec. He got the materials translated to English, emphasizing the case of the referendum, as its scale and grassroots organization was unprecedented not only in the still Eastern Europe. He underlined the nexus of nuclear energy and undemocratic governmental practices.

Vienna turned out to be a good place for such a message. "These guys were professionals, they organized many campaigns" – he admitted. Through their transnational network, the Austrian Greens approached other European green parties as well as Greenpeace and agreed that a coordinated action would be held on the same day against Żarnowiec.

Polish embassies and consulates in different European capitals were picketed, but occupations also occurred. Most importantly, in Stockholm the local Greenpeace entered the Polish embassy and thus prevented the ambassador from leaving for Ronneby, where he was expected by premier Mazowiecki at the summit discussing the Baltic See Declaration. When approached by foreign diplomats about Poland's policy towards nuclear energy and the Żarnowiec question, Mazowiecki replied that the plant would be closed down. The statement was not something that could easily be denied, and indeed on September 4 1990 the construction of the plant was stopped, and a 15 year memorandum was introduced.

Conclusions: From Chernobyl to Żarnobyl

The Chernobyl catastrophe and the way it was handled by the communist authorities was an additional element of the regime's de-legitimization in the eyes of the society. It had a certain "othering" component – as the regime and its security apparatus (informed and protected from the radioactive danger)

[19] The idea of the metaphorical 'boomerang throw' comes from Keck and Sikkink 1998.

[20] Interview with T. Burek in Waluszko 2010.

[21] „Freedom and Peace" remained in contact with the West German *Die Grünen*, however, those transnational contacts were part of the network on peace and human rights. See: WiP/Die Grünen, „The Common Declaration of the Freedom and Peace Movement and die Grünen from West Germany". http://www.tezeusz.pl/cms/tz/index.php?id=2088 (last accessed 24.04.2015).

became "them" even more clearly than before. When on the first anniversary of the catastrophe the Wrocław WiP blocked one of the main streets with a 14-meter-long banner that read simply "Chernobyl" the real message was clear: *They knew, but didn't tell you*. Even being a loyal and conforming citizen did not guarantee anything anymore. Additionally, non-violent, often funny and colorful street protests helped the harassed society overcome fear of police repression – as evidenced by the growing scale of protests, with the 10 000 strong Black March as its culminating point. Kenney (2002) also observes that the "carnival of revolution" helped to mobilize the people, bring them out to the streets and demand change. That was indeed something of a "Chernobyl effect", and it can be argued that the environmental mobilization that followed after 1986, culminating in the greatest success of the Polish green movement – the closure of Żarnowiec NPP construction site – was related to it.

But the momentum soon faded away. The environmental protest actions initiated by the young opposition movements in Poland in the aftermath of the Chernobyl catastrophe were colorful, often large scale, bold, visible and involved a high degree of public participation and support. Much of that support, however, was short-term, not well rooted and to a great extent aimed at "the reds" rather than resulting from actual environmental awareness. "Chernobyl" became a symbol of risk but it was from the start associated with the communist regime. In other words, the conclusion was rather that "the Commies and the Russians can't do anything right" than "nuclear power – no thanks". When former WiP affiliates recently tried to gather up support for a new anti-Żarnowiec protest (see below), they were often confronted with the statement: "sorry, we were against nuclear energy *then*, under communism, but now that is a totally different thing."

After the regime transition many people concluded that in an open society functioning along the prescriptions of liberal democracy environmental issues will somehow fix themselves automatically and rationally. However, as the cases of Siechnice, where specific pressure by the then parliamentarian Gawlik was needed, and Żarnowiec, where a dramatic domestic campaign by Burek and numerous other devoted activists, reinforced by a transnational advocacy network was required – that was not as straightforward as many expected.

From 1989 onwards, the environmental protest movement (with the anti-nuclear theme at its heart), was driven by growing radicalization. This mechanism set it in stark opposition towards the communist authorities – a fact that for most of the late 1980s allowed the movement to form different coalitions with both the anti-communist right and the anti-systemic, counter-cultural left. More importantly for the Żarnowiec campaign, however, it set it in stark opposition to the institutionalizing core of the "Solidarity" political milieu and the Civic Committee government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki. That radicalization allowed the anti-nuclear campaign to maintain its momentum through the time of political transition (1989-90) which saw the re-stabilization of society and the suppression of most other areas of contention (like union activity). It also shaped the character of protest, marked by unseen degrees of

desperation and surprising violence which occurred already after the shoft towards a new, democratic regime.

After the Żarnowiec campaign ended, however, the legacy of radicalization cursed the remaining environmental protesters. Exhausted, with little resources and a shrinking societal base, they found little anchoring in the new political system, which was being shaped by the institutionalized post-"Solidarity" elite and reform communists. The movement split again – with some of the former radicals retreating into counter-culture or pockets of anti-systemic contention (*involution* in Tarrow's typology), while many others seeking to keep the environmentalist ship afloat with late attempts of *institutionalization* combined with *commercialization* – two mechanisms that in the Polish (and wider Central European context) led to the visible professionalization of the green movement (cf. Gliński and Koziarek 2007), which became growingly dependent on external funding (moving from *bottom-up* to *outside-in*) (Waller 2010).

Political institutionalization has proven to be very weak, although two green parties (*Partia Zielonych* and *Zieloni 2004,* later *Partia Zieloni*) remained in the background for some time (both noted some limited successes in local level elections). One could risk saying that on the whole environmentalism did not take root in the Polish society. Once the translation of anti-systemic environmental postulates into anti-communist language was no longer possible, the thin diffusion of environmental awareness became evident. This is evidenced by spectacular failures of different green campaigns throughout the 1990s (e.g. the protests against the dam in Czorsztyn). The first major success was the nation-wide campaign in defense of the Rospuda river valley in 2006-2007 (Szulecka and Szulecki 2013). Unlike the earlier, unsuccessful protests, it combined the local, national and transnational components, with the unprecedented involvement of international NGOs and European Union representatives, as well as the continued support of the country's major newspaper, "Gazeta Wyborcza". That kind of mobilization is, however, unlikely to occur in most other environmental campaigns, and the Polish green movement remains in the background. The ongoing anti-nuclear campaign could turn out to be a new catalyst of protest, taking the entire movement to a new level.

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Tomasz Borewicz (formerly Burek), born 8 December 1963 in Gdansk, died 7 November 2015, was an activist, journalist, traveler and ethnographer of indigenous cultures. He studied history in the 1980s, first in Słupsk and later at the Gdansk University, but was relegated from the university twice for dissident activities. Tomek later received a master's degree in anthropology from the University of Wroclaw where he was also working on a dissertation on his passion – anthropology of medicine and shamanism.

He established first contacts with the anti-communist, democratic opposition in 1979. During the martial law years he was involved in the underground opposition, first as a samizdat distributor for "Solidarity", later as an organizer of the Independent Student Association (NZS) at the Słupsk Pedagogical School, where he edited the samizdat magazine "Akademik". In 1986 he was arrested for possession of illegal publications and printing equipment. Incarcerated with hard criminal convicts in a maximum security cell for almost a month, he held a two week hunger strike in demanding political prisoner status. He was released due to deteriorating health and later subject to a general amnesty.

Since 1986 Tomek worked as a history teacher at elementary school, earning the popular nickname "Belfer" which he was known by in the activist community. He initiated the non-violent youth movement "Twe-Twa". Co-organizer of the 1988 strikes at the Gdansk University and Lenin Shipyard. "Belfer" became a member of the "Freedom and Peace" (WiP) movement, focusing on environmental and cultural issues. He was one of the organizers of the "Peace festival" in 1988 and 1989, and an outspoken critic of obligatory "Defense Preparedness" classes in schools, due to their militarist and ideological content.

Tomasz was one of the leaders of the protests against the Żarnowiec nuclear power plant, organizing the societal referendum on nuclear energy and establishing contacts with Western activists. He recently co-authored an in depth manuscript of a chronicle of the anti-nuclear struggles, containing both the voices of the protesters and the authorities and nuclear scientists. He remained an environmental activist in the 1990s, was one of the co-authors of the report "Poland's Eco-development 2020" written for the new democratic Parliament, and an organizer of environmental events such as the Rainbow Family Gathering, Earth Days in Warsaw and the Gdansk Environmental Study. During his struggle with cancer he was also an active advocate of legalizing medical cannabis-based pain relief. In March 2014 he received the Freedom and Solidarity Cross for his opposition activity.

Janusz "Jany" Waluszko is an activist and independent publicist, one of the organizers of the Alternative Society Movement (RSA) and the Anarchist Federation (FA), and a trailblazer of modern Polish anarchism. In the 1980s he was an active participant in many anti-communist and independent organizations, edited numerous samizdat periodicals, organized underground art performances and supported conscientious objectors to military service, for which he was arrested. An elementary school teacher for some years, in 1988-89 he co-organized street protests against the Round Table negotiations as well as the construction of the Żarnoweic nuclear power plant. Jany currently works at the Library of the Gdansk University of Technology.

From political neutrality to strategic alliance: the trade union movement as a political actor after the post-socialist transformation in Slovakia

Monika Uhlerová

Abstract

Interest groups and political parties have created a variety of relations and methods of mutual cooperation whereby they follow an easier way of interest representation and enforcement. These relations may include different informal practices through silent or open declaration of support up to formal agreements on mutual cooperation. This paper represents a case study on relations between political actors - trade unions and political parties - in the specific period of post-communist transformation in Slovakia. The article offers detailed excursion into the trade union movement's political relations formation and development in Slovakia after 1989 to the present. At the beginning it offers explanations of relative weakness of the trade union movement in post-communist countries. This part represents an argument base for defining the position of trade unions among other political actors – political parties – in the Slovak political system and society transformation and stabilization, and explain the reasons and consequences of political neutrality as well as affiliation in the specific period of post-socialist transformation. The analyses has been based on internal trade unions documents and materials, newspaper articles, interviews with trade unions representatives and the author's own observations and experience with an active 15-year volunteer work within trade unions.

Keywords: Slovakia, trade union movement, Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic, political parties, CEEC

Trade unions in CEEC as a victim of legacy of communism: weak or strong political and social actor?

There are several explanations regarding the relative weakness or strength of the trade union movement in post-communist countries (Crowley 2004) and one of them is based on evolutionary theory and highlights the legacy of communism, especially the institutional legacy of the trade unions of the communist era and ideological legacy of the regime as well as looking for identity in post-communist period. Probably, there was no any other area where a more significant impact of the communist heritage was noted as much as in the trade unions. The impact of this heritage is twofold: institutional and ideological. Under institutional we mean that the trade unions were built as a completely different organisation to operate in a very different economy. Trade

unions were considered to be the allies of management and often functioned as social agencies providing "welfare" for their members, granting them various benefits, which often seemed to be the only benefit of membership. In a market economy, trade unions should ensure benefits like higher wages, job security, better working conditions and necessary restrictions of managerial authority. The post-communist trade unions had to face the challenge of shifting to a market economy under the conditions of capitalism just at the time of economic decline, but also under the pressure of globalisation. Union members faced this problem for the first time and simultaneously responded to the legacy of the communist era left in trade unions.

At least for the last three decades, we can talk about the crisis of the trade union movement, not only in Central and Eastern Europe, although many studies focus just on the post-communist region and functioning of trade unions in new, qualitatively different political, social and economic conditions. Keller (2011) identifies several causes of the crisis of the trade union movement in "post-industrial" society.[1] According to him, the crisis of the trade union movement lies primarily in companies undergoing organisational changes for the new economy; further, the crisis of trade unions is the result of a new wave of economic globalisation; which also has a psychological impact on employees' behaviour; and last but not least the trade unions are influenced by the change in the strategy of investing capital in the de-industrialisation process.

There are several possible explanations why trade unions in Eastern Europe have not become influential social and political actors at the time when the various reforms with negative impacts on living standards which, especially in the first years of economic transformation, decreased significantly in most countries, were and are still ongoing. Although the impact of the ideological heritage on trade unions in the past decade changed considerably, during that time the unions began to consolidate institutionally as much weaker organisations. Even though the majority of new studies on work and industrial relations in the post-communist countries try to point out that the position of trade unions in these countries is weak, some argue that, in some countries of Eastern Europe, the position of trade unions is stronger than in other countries. Poland, where a sharp collective protest and wave of strikes affecting all sectors of the economy were recorded in the early post-communist period, might be an example. Regarding the corporatist institutions (in the form of tripartite institutions), which essentially all post-communist societies sought to establish, Ianková (1998) speaks of the so-called transformative corporatism, which maintained social peace in the region despite the painful transformation of the economy; Ost (2000) argues that the post-communist corporatism is only illusory, false and misleading.

[1] According to Keller (2011), the decrease in the rate of profit from investments directed to the industry in the 70s and 80s of the last century led investors to explore new ways of applying their funds. They found different ways, all of which converged in the process of de-industrialisation.

Could we then say that trade unions are weak political actors in Central and Eastern Europe? According to Crowley (2004), there are several explanations regarding the relative weakness or strength of the trade union movement in post-communist countries. The first explanation focuses on the aforementioned *corporatist institutions*, which were established according to the functioning model of the so-called Western democracies in the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, mainly from government initiatives, as the preventive measures to eliminate expected social unrest during implementation of economic and social reforms. Another explanation is based on the *theory of competition* between trade unions, arguing that a more fragmented trade union movement will be more active in its activities and in order to obtain potential members. The third cause of weakness of the trade union movement in the post-communist region is seen in the fact that *individuals prefer to leak into the informal economy* before using the option of collective action. Another argument to explain the weaknesses of the trade union movement in that region is based on the *theory of exchange, economic theory of strikes and evolutionary theory*.

Post-communist society sought opportunities to build corporatist institutions. The quick establishing of a tripartite corporatism is quite an unexpected result of post-communist transformations. In Western Europe, similar structures were created as a result of strong pressure from the socialist and social democratic parties, which sought official representation of trade unions in the political process for decades. Many changes and decisions in the post-communist transformation can be called a "transformation by replica", i.e. the transplantation of democratic institutions and organisations that have proven themselves in Western Europe. The post-communist countries that have some historical tradition in social partnership and organisation of corporate structures have (and had) also the greater tendency towards re-creation of corporate mechanisms at the present.

Corporatist tendencies in association, representation and mediation of interests are the result of the interplay of historical, international, institutional and cultural factors that accompanied the transformation of the former regime (Malová 1997). Models of tripartite negotiations between government, employers and employees have been successful in maintaining social peace, thus acceptable and desirable for the post-communist reformers. Tripartism, as institutionalised mediation of interests of labour, capital and the state, is becoming a common feature of the social environment in the whole of Eastern Europe. The question of corporatism is crucial not only because the newly entered EU countries needed to acquire European institutions, but also because of "the future of social Europe", which lies largely in the quality of the representation of interests among the new EU member states. A number of authors argue that tripartism does indeed contributes to social reconciliation in the region and that they have been and are successful in their pursuit of social peace through compromise, on the basis of consensus among all actors involved. Some authors state that tripartism is strong corporatism, while others argue

that it is a second government or enemy of parliament (Crowley 2004). A number of studies of post-communist corporatism, however, consider these institutions to be quite weak and ineffective.

Historical development in Western Europe suggests that the governments supported the creation of a corporate arrangement of the relations between the state and the representatives of labour and capital with the expectations that the involvement of different actors in the policy making would minimise the social and political conflicts, and that the organisational discipline especially of trade unions, as well as employers' organisations, would mitigate any potential negative reaction of dissatisfied groups in enforcing unpopular measures. The corporatism in this region is often described as paternalistic, misleading and a sham, as fragile tripartism subject to the dictates of neo-liberalism or the political armor of neoliberal economic strategy (ibid).

In their empirical study of protests in the post-communist countries, Ekiert and Kubik (1998) posed the question of why there were more strike activities in Poland than in Hungary in the 1990s. They argued that protest is a rational response to the lack of access, the lack of corporatist inclusion and hypothesise that fewer strikes could be expected where an institutionalised system of tripartism exists (Ekiert, Kubik 1998). They also state that the difference between the Poland in strike and a "peaceful" Hungary is the social democratic party and an institutionalised approach to policy making. Moreover, the number of strikes in Poland decreased dramatically after the establishment of the tripartite and after the leftist social democratic party entered the government. By contrast, in Hungary in 1995, the government abandoned talks whose goal was to provide a social pact, where agreement seemed unattainable, and various austerity measures in the spirit of neoliberal policies were imposed unilaterally[2]. It follows that, on the one hand, if corporatism is able to explain social peace, on the other hand, it is not a guarantee for inducing social unrest, strikes and protests if the institution of tripartite fails (the similar example is Slovakia). Corporatism is therefore not able to explain the cause of the low rate of mobilisation in Eastern Europe in relation to Western Europe. Corporatism in Eastern Europe played an important role in the post-communist transformation process and is simply different from the same kind of corporatism in Western Europe.

Another explanation of the weakness of trade unions in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe is based on the laws of competitive struggle that we could call *"competition between unions"*, which means that unions would be more

[2] This was followed by widespread railway strikes, which subsided once a tripartite institution was established again, but negotiations in the tripartite context were reduced only to consultations and mutual informing even before 1998 when the right-wing government, openly declaring its hostility to the trade union movement, was established. In addition, the establishment of tripartite corporatism in Poland in 1994 may have contributed to the decline in strikes, but paradoxically, the later failure of bargaining and the disagreement of trade union headquarters did not lead to a rebound in strikes or other major protest responses in this area.

radical on the assumption of the existence of large amounts of trade unions (headquarters) fighting (contesting) for members and potential sources, it thus implies a competition between trade unions or headquarters. According to Ekiert and Kubik (1998), more strikes would be expected where many trade unions *"compete for the same audience"* and a larger number of unions would predict a greater likelihood of strikes. They explain this referring to the case of Poland which had the most pluralistic and competitive trade unions in Eastern Europe. While, in their opinion, fragmentation leads to competitiveness and consequently to mobilisation, standard views on labour relations suggest that fragmentation leads to weakening and competition undermines solidarity and central sources. Another reverse hypothesis is that fragmentation leads to a significant decline in membership thus depriving some trade unions (headquarters) of a critical mass of members required for mobilisation and pressure through sectoral and national measures. Ekiert and Kubik argue that where there are numerous trade unions seeking supporters within the same sector, these unions represent a real threat to one another and therefore will compete for the support of potential members. Hence, it remains questionable, whether the plurality of unions represents both their strength and ability to mobilise and recruit members, or vice versa, which means a splitting of force and threatening the solidarity, a decline in membership and inability of mobilisation. The Slovak case suggests that both the method of transforming the former communist trade unions and the quality of their management contributed most to the gradual weakening of not only the national, but also the enterprise level (Malová, Rybář 2004).

As demonstrated in the case of strike activity in some post-communist countries of the region, the economic and social transformation, the conditions of economic crisis, the decline in real wages and high unemployment did not provoke such a quantity of labour unrest as would be expected. The economic theory of strikes argues that employees tend to act collectively not when unemployment is high, but when it is low, when employees are strong and it is easier to pressure the employer. (Crowley 2004). In the aforementioned *economic theory of strikes,* Crowley demonstrates a further explanation for the relative weakness of the trade union movement in Central and Eastern Europe.

During the implementation of painful economic changes in the region one would intuitively expect a significant amount of labour unrest and intense strike activity, at least in some countries or industries, if not universally. The relative robustness, or the number of workers involved in labour disputes compared with the total number of employees, respectively, is a good indicator for national comparisons of strike alert and activity statistics. The results of these comparisons in Eastern and Western European countries are surprising. The rate of strike activity in Western Europe is 100 days not worked for every 1,000 employees per year. A comparable value for the countries of Eastern Europe is 25 days not worked for every 1,000 employees per year (ibid). Certainly, a significant difference can be seen between the strike activity in Eastern and Western Europe. Thus we can see that the scale of protests in Central and

Eastern Europe is much lower than in many recognised democracies of Western Europe (Ekiert, Kubik 1998).[3]

Another reason, which Crowley highlights in researching the status of trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe, is the phenomenon of the so-called individual leakage, i.e. *the individual leakage of individuals into the grey (informal) economy*. Individuals prefer such individual escape to the collective voice, or collective action, respectively, to achieve their economic and social interests. According to Crowley it is this leakage, rather than a common voice, which is the dominant model of social response to the economic pressure on the east. And the most frequent response to economic difficulties is not involvement in a strike, but to move into the informal economy. (Crowley, 2004, p. 415). For example, he mentioned Russia or Ukraine, where the level of the informal economy is high, but despite the harsh economic conditions there were relatively few protests reported. Another argument explaining the weakness of the trade union movement in Central and Eastern Europe is based on the theory of *political exchange*, which implies that the trade unions mobilise and protest only if they do not have political partners in government. Conversely, when the ruling parties are politically close to trade unions, those, in exchange for political concessions, do not organise collective protests.

A final clarification of the weakness of the trade union and labour movement in post-communist countries is based on evolutionary theory and highlights *the legacy of communism*, especially the institutional legacy of the trade unions of the communist era and ideological legacy of the regime as well as looking for identity in post-communist period. Probably, there was not any other area where a more significant impact of the communist heritage was noted than in the trade unions. The impact of this heritage is twofold: institutional and ideological. By institutional we mean that the trade unions were built as a completely different organisation to operate in a very different economy. Trade unions were considered to be the allies of management and often functioned as social agencies providing "welfare" for their members, granting them various benefits, which often seemed to be the only benefit of membership. In a market economy, trade unions should ensure benefits like higher wages, job security, better working conditions and necessary restrictions of managerial authority.

The post-communist trade unions had to face the challenge of shifting to a market economy under the conditions of capitalism just at the time of economic decline, but also under the pressure of globalisation. Union members faced this

[3] Theoretically, a high rate of strike activity could rather be an indication of desparation of trade unions than their force and, on the other hand, strong trade unions would not need to strike if they could get privileges without protest activities. Nevertheless, it would be necessary to obtain evidence for the claims that unions in Eastern Europe are strong, despite (or because of or thanks to) the low level of strike activity. However, the available evidence shows rather the opposite. During the 90s, a sharp decline in real wages throughout the region was recorded, and while wages kept increasing in many countries, they are still relatively low in the new EU member states compared to the "old" members of the European Union.

problem for the first time and simultaneously responded to the legacy of the communist era left in trade unions. After the departure of communist parties, trade unions became the largest institution that survived the previous regime, and thus faced significant challenges to their legitimacy. The problem was not only that union members were suddenly not sure what trade unions should do in new conditions, but the trade-unionist "leaders" and activists remained uncertain what position to adopt towards capitalism, whether to defend workers against capitalism or to assist in its implementation. It is the legacy of the former regime which best explains the relative lack of trust in trade unions, as well as the general weakness of trade unions in post-communist societies. And this legacy is the least permissible for change - economic conditions, unemployment, the extent of the informal economy can change over time, corporatist institutions can be rebuilt or expanded, but the impact of the heritage of the communist period is much more durable and less accessible to policy changes. This impact shaped (and apparently, is still shaping) the approach of employees towards trade unions, their perception of the trade union leaders and their role in a market economy.

In Western Europe, where trade unions met with the global post-Fordist economy from an institutional position of strength, thanks to the heritage of the communist period the trade unions in Eastern and Central Europe faced the introduction of capitalism and global pressure from the beginning in the weak position. Indeed, some authors believe that the post-communist countries follow more trends of "Americanisation" in the field of industrial relations and social policy. In many cases (privatisation, pensions, tax policy, working time, the welfare state, wage disparities, etc.) post-communist countries follow the North American way rather than the European social market economy. (Meardi 2002). In terms of the size of membership, structure and quality of collective bargaining and industrial relations in general, working arrangements in post-communist societies did not reach the practices of the European Union, but radically transformed the rigid control of the Communist era to a dramatically more flexible system, similar to that in the United States of America. (Crowley, 2004)[4].

The Slovak trade union movement as a new political and social actor after 1989: old trade unions with a new face

The events of November 1989 in Slovakia initiated a political system transformation which led to a pluralist and representative democracy as well as to the change from a centrally planned economy to a market economy.

[4] Here it could be argued that whether Western Europe is the best case for comparison with post-communist societies. Not only do labour relations in the latter appear very similar to those in the United States, but the level of economic development is more similar to developing countries than to the developed capitalist countries. Some theorists equate the trade union (labour) policy in Eastern Europe to the countries of Latin America.

April 10th 1990 is believed to be the day of the establishment of the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as KOZ SR). The changes after November 17th 1989 affected the functioning of the then-trade union Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (hereinafter referred to as ROH) and influenced the shaping of the character of the present-day KOZ SR, with some of the current problems of the Confederation having originated precisely in that period. The Czech and Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions replaced the centralised ROH on the federal level. It became an umbrella organisation for the newly created Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions regarding the Czech Republic, and the Confederation of Trade Unions regarding the Slovak Republic. The Slovak congress considering both the First Slovak Congress of Trade Unions and the founding congress of the Confederation of Trade Unions, continued on the 9th and 10th of April, 1990.

Referring to an almost quarter of a century long existence of KOZ SR shaped by its constitutional documents (programme, statutes, resolutions, messages, etc.) it may be said that, in general, based on its programme, that the Confederation focused mainly on three issues: defining its attitude to political parties and movements (or other elements of the political system); defining its position in the tripartite; and encouraging the membership. In the first years of its existence, the Confederation focused mainly on building its structures in the new conditions of democracy and its own transformation, transferring of assets from the former ROH as well as engagement in a tripartite body, the Economic and Social Treaty Council (RHSD).

Thanks to the negative "legacy" of the former regime, the Confederation focused on its political neutrality for a long time, regardless of the definition of the meaning and the content of this concept. As early as the period before the 1998 election, the Confederation participated, for the first time, in an election campaign aimed at mobilising its members to engage in election, thus contributing to the effort to change the mode of governance in Slovakia. After the "good" outcome of the election, the Confederation focused on putting forward a legislative anchoring of tripartite, in which it succeeded. Nonetheless, the gradual deterioration of relations with the government, which had even enshrined the removing of corporatist elements in the representation of interests in the economic and social spheres of its Government Policy Statement, the activities of the Confederation were aimed at shortening the electoral period of Dzurinda's cabinet by co-organising the petition and subsequent referendum. That situation forced trade unions in Slovakia to seek their political allies among the relevant political parties, which launched a debate within the union on whether to cooperate with political parties or not and, if so, to what extent. It seemed that the unions had found this political ally, resulting in a multiple signing of a cooperation agreement between the KOZ SR and SMER-SD. After the 2006 election, when party SMER-SD won, and again after the 2012 election, it seemed that this "partnership" could provide trade unions with some benefits, though this issue also causes the fragmentation of a common opinion within the unions and among their representatives. These

external effects on the activity of the Confederacy seem to "divert" its attention from the need to solve internal problems, its own reorganisation, qualitative analysis and the internal audit for the purpose of naming the causes of problems and finding new and modern forms of appropriate solutions.

In the first years of its existence, the Confederation focused mainly on building its structures in the new conditions of democracy and its own transformation, the transfer of assets from the former ROH as well as engagement in a tripartite body, the Economic and Social Treaty Council (hereinafter referred to as RHSD). After 1989, the problem and one of the key tasks and challenges of the Slovak trade union movement was to find its place in the political system and to build relations with other elements of the political system, especially with political parties and movements. Thanks to the negative "legacy" of the former regime, the Confederation focused on its political neutrality for a long time, regardless of the definition of the meaning and the content of this concept.

"Nonpartisanism": the key political goal

The KOZ SR tried to overcome the negative legacy of the past and gain legitimacy in the public eye. The non-partisan nature of trade unions has thus become their goal. An unstable political environment, especially fragmentation and splitting of political parties, was reflected in the low support for government bills in Parliament. Therefore, trade unions had to focus on pursuing their interests in Parliament through caucuses and MPs. The KOZ SR could not pursue their goals in isolation, in conditions of multiparty Parliamentary democracy. During the struggle for social justice, it had to find allies within a reasonable extent in political parties and movements that have programme objectives related to that of KOZ SR.

Before the 1994 election, the KOZ SR Convention had not approved the system of nomination of trade union officials and had recommended the representatives of trade unions to stand as the candidates individually. They found themselves on the lists of candidates with the different political parties. Most of them did not succeed and trade unions were not able to promote their interests in Parliament through those who made it to the National Council. Nevertheless, the situation changed after the 1994 election. A majority understanding of politics and the rise of autocratic tendencies were also reflected in the functioning of social dialogue which became considerably complicated and was interrupted by KOZ SR representatives in 1997. Given the prevailing party voting patterns in Parliament, the possibility of trade unions to achieve their objectives through caucuses and individual MPs was reduced. According to D. Malová, this method would be suitable only if the government had not clear majority support in Parliament. The disciplined vote of MPs in the ruling coalition, however, limited significantly the activities of trade unions in Parliament in the years 1994 - 1998 (Malová 1999).

Breaking point: trade unions' involvement in election campaigns

Before the 1998 Parliamentary election, neither the KOZ SR nor individual unions engaged directly in the election campaign, but some union representatives tried to establish themselves individually as independent candidates on candidate lists of political parties. Some later experience and an overview of each vote suggest that after the election to Parliament they became members or officials of political parties without feeling commitment and efforts to promote the interests of trade unions. The behaviours of union representatives in Parliament did not bring significant benefits and achievements in promoting the interests of trade unions. Placing trade unionists on candidate lists of political parties is fraught with more risks than benefits for trade unions, and thus promoting the interests of trade unions through its members operating in Parliament is not efficient and beneficial for them.

Since 1998, the trade unions (unions covered by KOZ SR) have begun to actively participate in election campaigns. In 1998 this was done on the basis of the document "The 1998 Parliamentary Election and the KOZ SR attitude" which was discussed by the KOZ SR Convention in December 1997. The latter reflected and analysed the experience of involvement in the election of many European trade union headquarters.[5] It turned out that all of the trade union headquarters take a proactive approach to elections, trying to be non-partisan - not passive - in the pre-election period, affecting its members by giving them information to enable an independent and responsible decision of who to vote for, use the election campaign to promote their programmes that confront the programmes of political parties and movements, and cooperate with those of them which share the most common programming points in social and economic areas.

The pre-election concept of trade unions in Slovakia in 1998 was aimed at mobilising their members and voters. Its purpose was to encourage people to participate in the election and to accomplish a composition of Parliament which would allow the trade unions to better promote the interests of their members and other employees. The Confederation representatives considered four options of participation in the election campaign, through which it would be possible to influence the election results and thus, to considerable extent, the opportunities to promote their interests in Parliament - to maintain complete neutrality and passivity; or actively promote pluralistic and socially sensitive enough outcome of the election; or publish their own electoral preferences; or create their own political party.

The first possibility is excluded due to the practical impossibility of maintaining neutrality in the conduct of major social changes, resulting in the trade unions' being heavily involved. Such a position was also accepted by the Confederation and it was nothing but a natural reaction to the battle with government

[5]The German DGB, the Austrian OGB, the British TUC, the French CGT and CFTC, the Danish LO, the Hungarian MSZOSZ, the Czech ČMKOS.

concerning maintaining the position of the tripartite partners. The third variant comes with a number of risks to the members and general public, especially the possible dissatisfaction of those union members who sympathise with the non-preferred parties; increase of tensions within the trade unions due to polarisation of views which could lead to the fragmentation and weakening; denial of the principle of nonpartisanship and the consequent loss of credibility of trade unions as an independent force; escalation of attacks on unions as a hidden political power. All risks are greater than the possible profit on the preferences.

The fourth solution can be regarded as a short term solution in emergency situations. It also contains the aforementioned number of risks, including the financial one. In that case, the existing political parties having intersections with the Confederation programme could even face a withdrawal of votes, but on the other hand, the new party would fail to meet the anticipated expectations. Possible failure could jeopardize the very existence of the Confederation.[6] Furthermore, it would alter the nature of trade unions, as these, as an interest group, seek not to obtain but to influence power. Having considered all the risks, the representatives of the Confederation adopted the second option, which was in terms of trade unions identified as optimal, and with regard to their programme, as the most natural. The union members were advised to reconsider a selected number of issues in the programmes of candidate parties. On the basis of objective information provided by different pathways by the trade union headquarters, each member was to decide to whom s/he would give his/her voice; hence the Confederation did not demonstrate what political entity to vote or not to vote for, and thus did not declare open support for a particular political party. By this 1998 decision, trade unions decided to involve actively in the election campaign and in the efforts to influence political development in Slovakia, on the other hand, by distancing themselves from the expression of support for a particular political party, they shrugged off responsibility to bear the risks of possible election failure of the political entity supported.

In terms of trade unionists' candidacy, the Confederation adopted a recommendation to stand as candidates for the political entities which guaranteed in their programme that they would promote common objectives under the various programmes to ensure that when the candidates from trade unions on the candidate lists of political parties would be supported, the functional classification of union leaders would be preserved, and that union officials, who get into Parliament, provide regular reports about fulfilment of their tasks.[7] On the other hand, the Confederation has not set the possible

[6] For more details see the KOZ SR document entitled The 1998 Parliamentary Elections: the KOZ SR attitude as discussed by the KOZ SR Convention on 9 December 1997. Bratislava: KOZ SR

[7] The KOZ SR held an international conference related to these topics entitled "Trade unions - Elections - Policy" in April 1998. In the same month, the KOZ published "Evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of the Government of the Slovak Republic" approved by the government in January 1995 which showed that, contrary to this programme, during the

mechanisms penalising the union representatives, who would, in case of operating in Parliament or in a political party, violate such defined criteria.

In accordance with an approved procedure, the Confederation leaders approached political parties which were likely to get to the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NR SR) after the election, to comment on the questions and issues that trade unions considered key issues in their mission and programme.[8] An analysis of the responses and comparison of electoral programmes showed that the Party of the Democratic Left (SDĽ), Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), and the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) were closest to the KOZ SR's requirements. The Confederation also developed the material which analysed the previous voting of individual MPs on issues deemed important in terms of its programme objectives. The results of the votes showed that the then ruling coalition Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Union of the Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) did not vote in favour of employees, but MPs of Democratic Union (DU), Cristian Democratic Movement (KDH), SDĽ and the Hungarian Coalition (MK) supported employees.[9]

Activities of trade unions and the regional KOZ SR structures in the regions aimed at meeting the information campaign and mobilising the union members to participate in elections. Along with the mobilisation, the primary effort of KOZ SR was to achieve such a composition in Parliament, which would allow the best promotion of the objectives of trade unions. We can say that, by its activities, KOZ SR significantly affected the final results of the 1998 Slovak Parliamentary election. The Confederation reached at least the first part of its objective, which was formulated as a pluralistic and socially sensitive outcome of the election. Thus, the Confederation actually became significantly involved in the political arena outside its usual activities for the first time during its existence (Malová, 1999).

In assessing the KOZ SR involvement in the election campaign, it is necessary to mention the specificity of the then political situation in Slovakia. The electoral period 1994 - 1998, in which the Parliamentary majority lay in the governing coalition of HZDS, SNS and ZRS, was considered a period of illiberal democracy (Sopóci 2002). A typical feature of the government was the significant

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reporting period unemployment increased, the situation in health, education, culture deteriorated, there was delay in entry into the EU and NATO, in other words, that the government was not fulfilling its programme at all, or only to a very limited, declarative rate.

[8] E.g. protection of trade union rights, social dialogue, labor law, social security, collective bargaining, housing, integration of the Slovak Republic into NATO and the EU, industrial policy, etc.

[9] The KOZ informed all Parliamentary parties, Gremium of the Third Sector, Roman Catholic and Evangelical Church and the media about this fact. The KOZ representatives also attended the negotiations of a "democratic round table" which helped to coordinate the actions of the then opposition, the Union of Towns and Communities, Youth Council of Slovakia and Gremium of the Third Sector. They also discussed with the representatives of churches.

application of undemocratic elements in the political life of Slovak society, for example the enforcement of acts that allowed more efficient control of representation of interests, creation of new interest groups, the number, identity and action (Malová and Čambáliková 1998), the strengthening of the partisan and the state-partisan corporatism (Malová 1997), which largely limited their autonomous status.

During this period, the KOZ SR engaged itself by its campaign in efforts for fundamental political change and democratisation of society in Slovakia. Despite the fact that one of the ruling subjects, HZDS, won the 1998 elections, there was a political regrouping and a change in the executive. A very broad and, as it turned out later, unprepared and incoherent coalition unwilling to agree on fundamental issues in the concept of economic policy and socio-economic development was established then. The new government "thanked" the trade unions for their position in the campaign by adopting the Tripartite Act and the Act on Guarantee Fund. The government began to take measures to stabilise the economy, which were not very popular among the citizens, and from the point of view of trade unions, affected adversely their social situation. Likewise, from the perspective of trade unions, the government did not fulfil its policy statement on key objectives, failed to meet the essential obligations of the 2000 General Agreement and the social dialogue from the government was regarded as formal and non-constructive by trade unions. The Confederation declared the government an untrustworthy social partner and the situation in the social dialogue began to be strained, which resulted in his suspension.

The fundamental principles of trade unions before the 2002 Parliamentary elections were characterised in the same way. The entities, that had already been in government in the period 1994-2002, were a disappointment, as they failed to meet their election promises, in particular in the social field, the growth of real wages and salaries, in addressing the issue of unemployment. The political scene missed the left-wing body, which could guarantee the enforcement of the needs of employees and trade union members. Trade unions participated in the election campaign again in 2002 in an effort to persuade as many voters as possible to participate in the elections, without any obligation towards the Confederation[10]. Similar to the pre-election period in 1998, the representatives of the Confederation approached all relevant political parties to comment on the substantive issues of trade union rights and social policy.[11] By the involvement in the election campaign, trade unions sought to fully inform

[10]Under the central motto "Who votes, affects their own destiny!!!" The Confederation representatives again discussed the possibility of involvement of KOZ SR in the election campaign with the resulting material "The KOZ SR attitude to the Parliamentary elections in 2002" (KOZ SR, 2002) which reworked the need to: 1. maintain complete neutrality, 2. promote actively pluralistic and socially sensitive enough outcome of the election, 3. declare own electoral preferences and 4. create own political party.

[11] The Confederation published an analysis regarding the responses of individual political parties and also the evaluation of the performance of selected parts of the Government policy statement, and the analysis of MPs voted to selected problems.

citizens - voters about the mode of governance and Parliamentary activity (based on their own analyses); to mobilise all eligible voters to participate in elections; to accomplish the composition of Parliament which would allow the trade unions to better promote the interests of their members and other employees; and to influence the election results so as to obtain a composition of government that would recognise the social dialogue, social partnership and would focus on solving the existential problems of citizens (the KOZ SR, 2002). The union members - voters were to decide on which political entity they would elect accordingly.

The result of pre-election activities of trade unions was a bit ambiguous. There was an impression among the trade unionists that the unions did not find any political partner among political parties. Based on the results of the Parliamentary elections, the right-wing centrist government was established. If over time initially non-existent tensions cropped up between the trade unions and the broad government coalition that emerged from the 1998 elections, it was more than likely that after the 2002 elections there would be a further widening. On the basis of the Confederation offer to negotiate with the political subjects addressed in the post-election developments in Slovakia, seven political parties declared a willingness to communicate and cooperate, four of which entered Parliament and only one entity was part of the ruling coalition (SMK).[12]

The election results confirmed the concerns and expectations of a possible government of right-wing coalition. The expressed views and opinions as well as the pre-election programmes of parties of the ruling coalition were quite distinct from the programme objectives of trade unions. The Government policy statement itself enshrined the aim to remove the elements of corporatism in Slovakia, hence the trade unions could be worried about the loss of exclusive access to the Government on matters of negotiation of the measures in the economic and social field. The very results of Parliamentary elections suggested that the trade unions would have a difficult position. Nevertheless, the Confederation continued in its efforts to find, through mutual communication and cooperation, possible joint penetrations with relevant political parties and their Parliamentary caucuses, through which they would seek to promote their interests particularly in the social field; however, the coalition parties clearly showed no interest in this kind of cooperation, only the opposition political groups ĽS-HZDS[13], Communist Party of the Slovakia (KSS) and SMER responded positively and they also offered cooperation in the National Council.

[12] HZDS-ĽS: 19.5 %, SMER: 13.46 %, SMK: 11.16 %, KSS: 6.32 %, HZD: 3.28 %, SDA: 1.79 %, SDĽ: 1.36 %, the following partied entered the National Council: HZDS-ĽS, SMER, SMK, KSS

[13] On the Republic Transformation Convention of HZDS in Trnava in March 2000, the Movement for Democratic Slovakia was transformed into a standard people's political party. Accordingly, the delegates of the Republic Convention voted for a change in June 2003, or addition to the name, respectively, to The People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS-HZDS).

From political neutrality to the quest for allies

As a result of growing tensions between the trade unions and the government coalition, the protests and rallies were organised by the trade union headquarters, or by individual trade unions, which also promoted a certain convergence with the opposition, namely the political party SMER[14]. It is understandable that if negotiation mechanisms fail and the partners are unable to proceed with the willingness to look for (and receive) compromise solutions, interest groups extend their activities to coercive ones, through which they'd want to achieve fulfilment of their objectives. The protests, however, missed their effect as the government refused to accept the social demands of trade unions. The Confederation reached the conclusion that the change in social conditions can be brought about only by early elections. Therefore, they committed to an unusual step and, based on the resolution of the extraordinary meeting of the KOZ SR Convention (October 2003), decided to support the proposal to organise a petition calling for a referendum on snap elections. The political party SMER wanted to achieve the same objective; hence the very active cooperation between the two entities began. The parties KSS and SDĽ were also involved in this action. The governing coalition declared the KOZ SR an ally and party companion of SMER (Hospodárske noviny, 20 October, 2003). According to some political scientists (e.g. D. Malová), organising of petitions does not fall within the traditional instruments of trade union headquarters to defend their interests and, due to the share of political parties, the petition became not only a political but also a party action, which is a significant risk for trade unions (Hospodárske noviny, 11 November, 2003).[15]

The referendum was attended by 35.86%[16] of eligible voters which, given the failure to meet the condition of absolute majority participation, meant its annulment[17]. Despite the invalidity of the referendum, the trade unionists and opposition regarded the result as a success claiming that nearly 36% of eligible voters came to express their opinion in the referendum, among which 87% of votes were for the termination of the then governing coalition; also the

[14] There were also considerations that the unions were going to participate in the formation of a new political party, which essentially confirmed the then Vice President Peter Gajdoš in an interview with Hospodárske noviny, when denied that the new left-wing party could arise by transforming the trade unions, but said that unions could initiate its formation (Hospodárske noviny, 17 October, 2003). The reason for these issues was in the absence of a non-communist left-wing political party in the National Council as a natural partner and ally of trade unions.

[15] The petition ran from mid-November 2003 to mid-January 2004, the organisers managed to gather 606,352 signatures. President Rudolf Schuster announced the referendum on 3 April 2004 to shorten the third election period of NR SR, the first round of presidential elections took place on the same day.

[16] As stated by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

[17] Of those, who voted in the referendum, the question "Do you want the MPs to adopt a constitutional law on the shortening of III. Slovak Parliament election period so that the elections to Parliament would be held in 2004?", 86.78% replied in the affirmative, 11.93% in the negative.

governing coalition also assessed the outcome of the referendum as successful. The trade union representatives think that the causes of failure (meaning the invalidity of referendum conditional to absolute majority of eligible voters) might be seen in a massive anti-campaign and challenging the legitimacy of the referendum, the call of the governing coalition to boycott it, in certain corrections of social restrictions that government made under a pressure of a referendum, and in apathy and lethargy of the public and citizens.

In the situation after the rejected 2004 referendum, trade unions were forced to take further steps to seek their political allies. The opinion of the KOZ SR raised two basic questions or tasks: either actively contribute to the integration of existing left-wing social democratic entities or to promote the emergence of one strong left-wing social democratic entity programmatically and clearly oriented towards common objectives of trade unions. The KOZ SR organised four discussion events with the participation of representatives of Parliamentary and non-Parliamentary entities "Trade unions and political parties"[18], which were designed for trade union officials to initiate a discussion within the union on a new form of relations of trade unions to political parties. The discussions resulted in the need to talk about the subject of the cooperation of trade unions with political parties and to seek opportunities for cooperation with political entities that have common programmatic goals with the unions. Following the KOZ SR initiative of the, further discussions on the so-called Social roundtable were held, which all center-left political parties were invited to in order for them to discuss the possibility of integration with the Left, or creation of a new strong left-wing party, respectively.

Trade unions were thus supposed to actively participate in the integration with the Left in Slovakia. Nonetheless, the aforementioned initiative and the steps taken give the new dimension to the cooperation of trade unions with political parties. They were slowly blurring the myths and fears regarding trade union cooperation with political parties. This fear, or rather caution, was caused mainly by the experience and the historic legacy of the former regime, where trade unions were considered a "gear lever" of the ruling party policy. Trade unions in Slovakia became a part of the post-communist image: the left-wing spectrum (orientation towards the east and the past) versus the right-wing party (guarantor of democracy and the orientation towards the Euro-American society). The social issue presented as obscurantism and the hostility of the majority of the political spectrum to the trade unions prevailed. Trade unions were also burdened by the legacy of distrust, distrust of trade unions to political parties. Therefore, the post-1989 trade union movement declared their "nonpartisanism and political neutrality" (regardless of clarifying the content of those terms) for many years.

Discussions on cooperation with political parties culminated at the turn of 2004 and 2005. The KOZ SR began to direct their efforts to seek and establish a

[18] Discussion events were organised in the period 2002 - 2004.

strategic partnership with one political party of a social democratic type. More than ten years of experience allowed trade unions to reconsider their opposition to cooperation and promotion of a left-wing political entity as a strategic partner which they would support in the Parliamentary elections. The open interest in strategic partnership with KOZ SR was demonstrated by the political party SMER.

The Fifth KOZ SR Congress clearly declared that the unions would be independent of any political party (Materials of the Fifth KOZ SR Congress of, 2004). Nevertheless, they did not exclude cooperation with any Parliamentary entity. The Congress Delegates adopted a resolution that commits the KOZ SR to the establishment of cooperation and partnership with political entities, bearing in mind the political diversity of union members. The Confederation expressed its preparedness to cooperate with all political parties whose programmes were consistent with its programme objectives and which showed an interest in such cooperation. Furthermore, the message states that it is necessary to seek such forms of cooperation that minimises the disparity of promises and actions. The requirements of trade unions will therefore seek to strengthen their position in employment relations, to strengthen social dialogue and tripartism and to accept a social nature in the reform process.

In accordance with the approved message of the congress delegates, in a letter dated 15 December 2004, all Parliamentary political parties were addressed with a request to express whether their programme objectives are close or identical to the KOZ SR programme to the end of February 2005. Responses of the addressed political parties were to become the basis for determining the scope and form of possible future cooperation with the Confederation and the relevant political entities. Parliamentary political parties were to comment on the KOZ SR substantive agenda items in the area of tripartism, economic policy, social policy and social justice, employment, the Labour Code, collective bargaining, Occupational Health and Safety, environmental and working environment, protection of wages, pension, health, sickness, supplementary pension insurance, child benefits and social protection and inclusion. The first of all Parliamentary parties which responded to the invitation of the KOZ SR was SMER-SD (social democracy), which invited the KOZ SR representatives to negotiations on 26 January 2005. The main goals of the negotiations were the proximity of programmes of the KOZ SR and SMER-SD, the requirements of trade unions to strengthen their position in employment relations, strengthening of the social dialogue and tripartism, maintaining of the social nature in the reform process and standardisation of the relations between SMER-SD and the KOZ SR. Another political party, which responded to the call of the Confederation of Trade Unions, was the Communist Party (KSS) which declared the proximity of the KOZ SR programme with that of KSS and its main tasks in its written statement. Here it states that the trade unions can count on the support and active participation in fulfilment of the programme approved by the Fifth KOZ SR Congress if it is necessary. Given the proximity of programmes, the cooperation with SMER-SD became a priority. In addition,

trade unions expressed their interest in contributing to the integration of left-wing entities into one strong left-wing party.

From quest for allies up to the strategic partnership

On 21 December 2005, a cooperation agreement between the KOZ SR and political party SMER-SD was signed. The object of the agreement was mutual assistance and cooperation in the implementation of tasks arising from the scope of the tasks of the contracting parties. The aim of this agreement was to implement mutually beneficial cooperation between the contracting parties. In this agreement, KOZ SR and SMER-SD also pledged to choose such forms of cooperation that would be mutually beneficial and create optimal conditions for the fulfilment of programme objectives of KOZ SR, trade unions and SMER-SD (Agreement on cooperation between the KOZ SR and SMER-SD, 2005).

The agreement also contained the general content related to the cooperation between the contracting parties after the election. Some parts of the agreed points were also reflected in the Government policy statement as written by the coalition consisting of the parties SMER-SD, SNS and ĽS-HZDS after the 2006 elections. Moreover, signing of the cooperation agreement was nothing but a written declaration of the "sympathy" expressed between the trade union representatives and social democracy, existing since 2004. The agreement sparked contradictions and heated debates even within the trade unions, because not all trade unions or their representatives and leaders, covered by KOZ SR identified with such an agreement and supported it. Many blamed the KOZ SR leaders and trade unions for having political ambitions and for ensuring the high positions in politics through such agreement. On the other hand, it is true that trade unions cannot guarantee their members' participation in elections and voting for the selected political party. An interest group cannot guarantee that its members will vote for the political party which it has concluded a cooperation agreement with since it can gather members with different electoral preferences, i.e. belonging to some interest group does not automatically mean the uniformity in electoral preferences. Thus, even within the trade unions there were different views on declaring active support for one political party in the election campaign. It evoked associations connected with the pre-1989 period, when trade unions supported one political party more or less on a "mandatory" basis. Moreover, they continued to declare their "nonpartisanism", which is only a buck-passing attitude of the trade union representatives towards their members, but also away from them.

On the other hand, there were arguments supporting the effort of trade unions to demonstrate openly an "affection" to a chosen political party that is programmatically close to their mission. In most cases, trade union representatives in Slovakia share the view that it is necessary for trade unions to cooperate with political parties. Their opinions are divided on whether to cooperate with all relevant political parties equally, or to prefer one of them as a "strategic partner". The issue of cooperation of trade unions with political

parties (whether all relevant ones or only a narrow range of selected political parties) has not been solved and has produced differences of opinion between their representatives as well as between the members within trade unions. While some representatives of the trade union advocate for a close cooperation with the selected political party (parties)[19], some representatives, however, see in such cooperation only the possibility to exploit the potential of trade unions before the election, or they are concerned about the possible "dependence" of trade unions regarding such cooperation.

The discussion with the divergent views on the cooperation of trade unions with political parties, or with one political party respectively, was steered inside the membership base but also in the media and the wider public. The announcement of the President of KOZ SR, I. Saktor, to run for mayor of Banská Bystrica in the upcoming 2006 municipal elections also contributed to the overall "pre-election" tensions within trade unions. That tension was reflected in the Board of KOZ SR meeting on 17 May 2006 after the speech of I. Saktor on the 1st May Day celebration in Banská Bystrica where he left the floor to the Chairman of SMER-SD and indirectly urged the participants to vote specifically for this political party despite the fact that the representatives of other opposition political parties were also invited and were present at the meeting. The right-wing political parties perceived the behaviour of KOZ SR as strongly negative and regarded the KOZ SR presence as that of a political organisation (SME, 2 May 2006). Several trade unions, especially non-productive ones, (Hospodárske noviny, 11 May, 2006) expressed dissatisfaction with the course of the meeting, considering the trade unions as being drawn into the political ambitions of their leader. This dissatisfaction was labelled by some as the split in the trade unions or the opinion inconsistency (SME, 12 May 2006).

As trade unions represent their members with different political views and preferences of political parties, only a small percentage of them will be governed by the recommendations of the trade union headquarters, and those who disagree with the exclusive cooperation with one party, better recognise the

[19] E. Machyna, President of the OZ KOVO, one of the unions which signed an agreement with SMER, said in an interview from 30 October 2007 in Banská Bystrica that he considered the relationship with politicians and political parties essential in promoting the interests of trade unions. According to him, it is necessary to have partners who share the same values as trade unions and who understand them. In his opinion, the trade unions should cooperate with political parties, which is quite common throughout Europe.

J. Blahák, former chairman of the OZ Chemistry (now ECHOZ), in an interview from 12 March 2005 in Bratislava noted that he is not in favor of cooperation with only one political party, but promotes the same closeness - distance to the relevant political parties, while the mutual cooperation should be very informal.

M. Gatciová, former President of the SLOVES (Slovak Trade Union of Public Service), in an interview from 25 October 2005 in Bratislava confirmed the opinion that trade unions should cooperate with political parties, but not to cooperate exclusively with one in order not to get into the "bondage". Cooperation should be based on a serious partnership and the effort of its establishment should not be shown only shortly before the elections with the aim to obtain some potential voters.

distribution of political risks. Cooperation with only one political party, in the opinion of the then-president of SLOVES, M. Gatciová, was unacceptable, threatening the existence of employees working in government administration (Hospodárske noviny, 11 May 2006). The Bureau of the Trade Union of Workers in Education and Science in Slovakia declared on behalf of its membership a distance from the arbitrary practices of the President of the Confederation of Trade Unions, which have a negative impact on the attitudes of their members, and stressed that it sought to cooperate with each political entity whose programme corresponded to the programme of trade union and KOZ SR (TASR, 9 May 2006). Management Board of the KOZ SR finally demonstrated the unity of trade unions and the President of KOZ SR announced his intention to resign as president in November - even before the municipal elections.

Trade unions were actively involved in the election campaign and they urged members to participate in elections but also recommended voting for political party SMER-SD. Five trade unions which signed the cooperation agreement with SMER-SD together with KOZ SR held the meetings with their members where they urged them to vote for SMER-SD. Extensive material produced by KOZ SR which examined the votes of MPs on bills of a social nature, the evaluation of fulfilment of the 2002 Government policy statement and the KOZ SR attitude to the snap 2006 Parliamentary elections in June was also a part of the election campaign.

The active participation of trade unions in the election campaign and declaration of support for SMER-SD was apparently worth the effort. The June snap election proved SMER-SD to be the outright winner and its leader Robert Fico was commissioned to form a new government by the President of the Slovak Republic. Trade unions claimed satisfaction with the results of the elections as, citing the President of KOZ SR, I. Saktor, they bet on the winner (Hospodárske noviny, 22 June 2006). The government was formed on the basis of three political parties: SMER-SD, SNS, ĽS-HZDS. In July 2006, after the appointment of the government, the trade union representatives were invited to the negotiations concerning the Government policy statement, where they summarised their demands in six priority points: raising the minimum wage to 60% of the average wage in the national economy, progressive taxation of individuals, a reduction in VAT on selected goods, restoration of tripartite institutions and the Labour Code, the membership contribution of the trade union members as a deduction. Most of these requirements were actually reflected in the Government policy statement; the Government committed itself to reestablish the tripartite arrangement and its functioning as a body of consultations on the principle of equal social partnership of governments, trade unions and employers' organisations.

Despite the seemingly affiliate and positive relation between KOZ SR and SMER-SD[20] after the 2006 Parliamentary election, which was enhanced by

[20] From 1 September 2007, the amendment of the Labour Code came into force, which appeared to be favorable to trade union demands, as it strengthened their legislative and

creating a center-right coalition government after the June 2010 Parliamentary election and the transition of up to then ruling party SMER-SD into opposition, the debate and difference of opinion over the signed agreement between trade unionists persisted. Before the March 2012 Parliamentary election, KOZ SR and SMER-SD signed another cooperation agreement, while KOZ SR declared open support for SMER-SD during the election campaign. Despite the mentioned fact, the President of KOZ SR stressed that cooperation and recommendation by the Confederacy was not contradictory to its nonpartisanism. (SME, 20 March 2010). Trade unions were also actively involved in the election campaign for the 2012 snap Parliamentary election when the Cooperation agreement with SMER-SD was re-signed. While the union representatives argued that the information campaign was designed for the voter's deciding who to vote for[21], their attitude could be seen as a buck-passing concealment of the fact that unions have their political ally with no possibility to talk about their "nonpartisanism". This is also contradictory to both the union members and public because on the one hand, the relation between trade unions and the political party is formalised for several years in the form of cooperation agreements with declaring mutual support, on the other hand, the unions present their involvement in election campaign only by providing information (e.g. in 1998 or 2002). Such behavior can be explained in particular by aiming to satisfy both "warring" opinion groups and trying to maintain the image of the "nonpartisanism" without the label of a particular political party.

Trade union cooperation with left-wing political entities operates in several Western European countries, and promotion of a certain political party during the pre-election battle by an interest group belongs to the activities of pressure and interest groups, through which they achieve their objectives. But the operation, the influence and the work of trade unions in post-communist countries is very specific, unlike the case of the so-called stable democratic countries in Western Europe. The influence of trade unions is based mainly on economic and political principles and depends on specific conditions, expectations of a particular government policy, context and ad hoc agreements. It is not possible to talk about a precisely profiled model yet, as the political context and environment are not so stable as to define such a long-term model (Uhlerová, 2010). Nevertheless at this point it is important to note that the

institutional position in the workplace. Nevertheless, union members were not completely satisfied with some provisions of the Labour Code applied in practice (e.g. restrictions on overtime in healthcare), the government resumed negotiations at tripartite level in the Council of Economic Partnership, trade unions have been consulted on the proposal of the Act on the Minimum Wage.

[21] Representatives of trade union headquarters stressed that trade unions were not commanding who to vote for, just provided information to the members and the public about things promoted in Parliament and in the government by individual representatives, who was, by his/her views and acts, closer to employees and citizens (KOZ SR press conference, 27 February 2012). However, from the pre-election activities (e.g. publishing the information leaflets, magazines, etc.) it was obvious that the SMER-SD got an ample scope to present their programme.

nonpartisanism of any organisation ends when it chooses a political party for cooperation and, in addition, gives advice on how to behave at the election. The use of and emphasis on the concept of "nonpartisanism" by the trade unions after the selection of a particular political party for their partner can be regarded as the declaration of a desirable condition and an avoidance of associations notoriously linked to the pre-1989 period. According to some "defendants" of the sealed partnership among the trade union representatives, the signing of the cooperation agreement was an ill-considered step of unions without the strategic/forecastable analysis, which may have adverse effects on the KOZ SR relations with political parties and the government in the future, when the political party SMER-SD is not in the government. At the same time, such a relation between trade unions and a political party may have a negative impact on the relations with employers built up over a long period of time and also with other political partners of KOZ SR.

Conclusion

We can summarise the brief digression presented into the genesis of the relations of trade unions in Slovakia with political parties as follows: during the first years of its democratic existence, trade unions in Slovakia took a neutral stance towards political parties and movements in order to overcome the negative legacy of the former regime and to eliminate the public perception of trade unions as the extended arm of the Communist Party. They tried to promote their interests in Parliament through the individual MPs or caucuses. In the period 1990-2005, trade unions did not find a natural ally and "reliable" partner in the political arena. There was not such a political entity in the spectrum of the political scene that would trade unions clearly like to support. Those political parties that were closer to trade unions or would cooperate with trade unions and assist in enforcing their demands often carried out steps that can be regarded as the right-wing ones. Another problem may be that, in the past years, there was no clear differentiation of political parties on the left and right. Even the left-oriented ones were in tow in coalition with right-wing parties and basically could not clearly and principally enforce their policy. There was no right-wing or left-wing government until 2002. The fact that the left-wing parties failed in the 2002 Parliamentary election was the result of their wrong policies as they were drawn into cooperation within the coalition with right-wing parties (SDĽ).

Trade unions began actively participating in election campaigns only in 1998. Before the 1998 Parliamentary election, the active participation of trade unions in an election campaign was aroused by the effort to change the mode of governance and the expected change in the attitude of the new government towards the tripartite and the trade unions themselves. After this period, and after the deterioration of relations first with M. Dzurinda's cabinet, trade unions launched efforts to seek and find a political ally among the political parties. That effort persisted and became one of the most debated topics within the trade

unions until 2005, when they found a strategic partner in the political party SMER-SD. The discussion about the form and scope of cooperation with the political parties is still ongoing and the opinions of individual trade union representatives differ. Support for cooperation (despite the signed agreement) with SMER-SD is not clear as there is a risk of worsening the long-term relation built with employers and the concerns of some trade union representatives. As for the political party, when cooperation changes to loyalty and obedience by the trade unions to the government, there may be nothing but exploitation.

Having a political ally comes with certain advantages and risks to trade unions. A requested (and expected) advantage may be an easier promotion of interests in the tripartite, if the partner political party is in government, and strengthening corporatist tendencies in the development and implementation of government policies, especially in social and economic areas. This was the strongest motivation for KOZ SR to find a strategic partner among political parties. However, if the partner party is in opposition, trade unions may face deterioration in relations with the government, in which the supported or supporting political entity is not represented. If a political party partner can, based on the results of the elections, form a government for several election periods in a row, it will allow the partners to create a sort of model of communication and cooperation, and to stabilise and standardise the negotiation environment.[22]

Seeking a natural ally of trade unions in Slovakia among the political parties distracted trade unions from the need of internal reform and transformation of the structures, resulting in a weakening of their own position within the political system and social partners - government and employers. On the one hand, trade unions seek to strengthen their position towards the exterior, on the other hand, it is weakened inwards (structure, internal communication, membership, financial resources, fragmentation, etc.), which is reflected by a relation to the external environment. The opinion concerning cooperation with a political party inside the membership and the trade union representatives is not entirely uniform and clear either, which may result, for example, in the outflow of membership or other fragmentation (dissenting departure) of trade unions, and thus not only worsen the bargaining power of trade unions in enterprises and industries, but also weaken their ability to act in organising various protest actions, if negotiations fail.

If the power of trade unions and their position in the workplace and the society-wide level is measured by the effectiveness of collective bargaining (Crowley 2004, Lawrence and Ishikawa 2005) the relation with the government does not affect and determine strengthening or weakening of their position directly. Government, as one of the social partners at the tripartite level, affects the social dialogue at the national level, which is only partially transferred into the results

[22] An example of this may be the Scandinavian countries, but it is very difficult to compare it and to seek the parallels with those countries whose historical, social and political development determining the content and level of political culture is so different.

of collective bargaining at the sectoral level and, at the same time, may affect relations between trade unions and employers. Relations between the trade unions and the government do not determine directly the degree, efficiency and results of collective bargaining at sectoral level and the industrial relations, as the relations between trade unions and employers are important for the degree of material benefits from collective agreements and the collective bargaining culture, but these relations could be negatively affected merely by the positive relation of government to only one of the social partners. The legal relations between employers and trade unions are important for collective bargaining to work properly. Moreover there is a risk of worsening of relations with employers due to close relations with the government (political party in government, respectively), which is reflected in the bipartite social dialogue.

The existing institutional structure of social dialogue brings the trade unions affiliated in KOZ SR an exclusive access to the government with the possibility to comment on the important economic and social problems but for the purposes of collective bargaining this is not strictly necessary. At the tripartite level, legislative and political intentions of the government in economic and social sphere are discussed; in the sphere of wages, the subject of negotiations usually concerns determining the minimum wage or remuneration of public sector employees in relation to the state budget. Tripartite, however, does not affect the setting of wages in each sector. One might also assume that if the left-wing party is in the government, wages will grow faster than in a situation when there is the right-wing government in power. But the aforementioned Western European model does not apply to Slovakia, as the minimum wage rates during R. Fico's (left-wing) cabinet, influenced by collective bargaining, grew at a slower pace than during M. Dzurinda's (right-wing) cabinet (Uhlerová, 2012). Focusing on strengthening their own position in society by strengthening the position towards the government, the trade union representatives overlooked the need to reorganise and streamline the decision-making mechanisms, which would, also help to streamline the collective bargaining itself.

In Slovakia, the situation of the trade unions was difficult after 1989 as they became a part of the national and economic transformation process whereas the process implied their internal reform as well as the transformation into an individual organisation based on democratic principles. During the first years of its existence, the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic, the biggest organisation representing Slovak trade unions, focused on looking for its position in the political system and the international environment, its own transformation process and the creation of new structures as well as the transfer of the property from the former ROH. Later, the Confederation concentrated on three basic problem types; the definition and the search for its position within the tripartism as well as the relationship towards the government and the social partners, the definition of its attitudes towards the political parties and movements that led to looking for a political ally, and the activation of the membership base which had been showing a decreasing trend. The trade unions focused on the above mentioned problems as they wanted to strengthen their

position in society as well as towards the social partners. Moreover, they also wanted to promote their interests, especially through an alliance with the relevant left-wing political party.

In Slovakia, the trade unions have been trying to find a certain compromise among their own requirements, the expectations of citizens and their members, the current political and social situations as well as the measures of a particular government for a long time. The trade union functioning, influence and work in post-communist countries is very specific. Their influence is based especially on economic and politic principles but it also depends on actual conditions, the particular government's expectations, current political actors, a political context and ad hoc agreements.

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Unequal power relations in the governance of the World Social Forum process: an analysis of the practices of the Nairobi Forum

Andrea Rigon

Abstract

Through an ethnographic account of the decision-making process of the World Social Forum (WSF) and its governance structures, specifically the International Council and the Local Organising Committee, the micro-politics of the alter-globalisation movements will be explored. Looking at the debates around whether the WSF should be an open arena or become an actor, the paradox of the "tyranny of structurelessness" will be presented. More accurately, this paper exposes the asymmetry between the values and the practices of the WSF process by analysing the role of "social movement entrepreneurs" and the complex constellations of conflicting interests. Theoretical claims of horizontal consensual and open decision-making are used to eliminate any democratic procedure, paving the way to highly unequal oppressive power relations that dominate the deliberative space of encounter between different movements. The paper questions the capacity of the World Social Forum to articulate alternatives to neoliberalism, and to present different and more democratic ways of doing politics.

After having unmasked the oppressive power structures within a social movement claiming to fight against them, this paper advocates for moving beyond the WSF discursive dichotomy of "neoliberal/anti-neoliberal", and calls for a Gramscian resistance to the hegemonic neoliberal discourse played through direct transformative engagement with the institutions of our society. This paper offers a detailed view inside the black box of decision-making processes within social movements contributing to the academic as well as the activists' debate on their governance. This analysis is particularly relevant in the light of the global occupy and anti-austerity movements, which have been making similar claims to those of the WSF of being a leaderless initiative, without any political affiliation, and using consensual methodologies, thus facing some of the same shortcomings and challenges.

Key words: Social movements governance, anti-neoliberal movements, consensual methodologies, World Social Forum

There is another world, but it is in this one
Paul Éluard

Introduction

After the struggle of Seattle (1999), the movements opposing neoliberal policies gathered to discuss alternatives at the World Social Forum (WSF). According to its Charter, the WSF is "an open meeting space for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action" for all those who are opposed "to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism" (WSF, 2001).

Despite the WSF's attempt to formulate this opposition in positive terms by borrowing the Zapatista's formula of "One big no and many yesses" (Kingsnorth, 2003 cited in Glasius & Timms, 2005, p. 223) – where the no refers to neoliberalism – what unifies the actors is their fight against the common neoliberal 'enemy'. In other words, the WSF is largely defined by what it stands against rather than by what it stands for. Diversity is claimed to be "one of the distinguishing features of the WSF" (Glasius & Timms, 2005, p. 193), but in order to enrol a wide range of actors in an open space, the forum avoided clear political statements and the support of any specific issue.

The WSF also adopted the Zapatista claim of *changing the world without taking power*. Rather than leading to a deeper reflection about the management of power, this has left the issue of power implicit and unclearly defined, particularly regarding internal organization, the consequences of which will be analysed in this paper. Naomi Klein argues that the new WSF framework "encourages, celebrates and fiercely protects the right to diversity: cultural diversity, ecological diversity, agricultural diversity–and yes, political diversity as well: different ways of doing politics" (2001). But how is it possible to do politics differently, ignoring power and having as the only common denominator the opposition to neoliberalism? Since the very beginning of the WSF process, this question raised a substantive debate between those who wanted the WSF to remain an open arena and those who wanted it to become a political actor.[1] Both models require some sort of governance, even though it is more complex with the latter. The governance of a process that claims to include everyone opposing neoliberalism and imperialism, and to refuse traditional democratic methodologies inspired by liberal-democratic processes, is highly problematic. The debate around internal social movements structures is linked to the tension between "fluidity and structure", that is to say between a

[1] The question "arena or actor?" has been one of the crucial debates in the WSF literature and in the WSF process (e.g. Whitaker, 2004). The debate has seen some people arguing for the "open space" (Sen 2004), while others supporting the concept of "movement of movements" (Teivainen, 2004), later reconceptualised in "network of networks" (Houtart 2007) or "World Social Movement Network" (Escobar, 2004), with the idea of the WSF as a political actor. In this paper "open meeting space", "open space", or "open arena" are used interchangeably.

supposedly "more informal and horizontal logic" and a focus on "efficiency and delegation" (Pleyers, 2010, p. 212).

Della Porta (2009) has problematised the issue of internal democracy within the WSF, emphasising the auto-critical and self-reflexive character of the actors involved. Teivainen (2007, 2012) emphasised how lack of structures generate some ambiguity and can have a depoliticising effect, leading to undemocratic governance and leadership. This paper contributes to this body of works reflecting on the WSF internal governance practices by exploring what Caruso (2013) calls the tension between "aspirations and practices (vision and methods)" (81). The article analyses the internal decision-making process and other practices of the WSF to expose some of its contradictions, and try to understand whether or not the WSF has been able to articulate in practice the alternatives that it seeks to express, and also whether or not it is presenting different more democratic ways of doing politics. The article analyses the WSF process at a significant point in its development; despite its choice to remain an open space, the WSF 2007 tried to develop concrete proposals through a methodology that saw one full day dedicated to thematic meetings to draw up action plans.

This argument is based on the critical work of some scholars and activists, and on my reflexive autoethnography in the attempt to deconstruct the mainstream discourses around the WSF. This paper offers a critical insider perspective on the process, and is the outcome of years of involvement at different levels in the World Social Forum process with a growing reflexive approach.[2]

The WSF 2007

The most widely known aspect of the WSF are the global events that have taken place since 2001, always involving between 20,000 and 155,000 participants from more than 100 countries. The initial three forums were held in Porto Alegre, then the forum moved to India in 2004, came back to Brazil in 2005 and, after a year of three continental events, the 2007 edition took place in Nairobi (Kenya). The following year, the forum was substituted by a decentralised day of global action. In 2009, the forum was held again in Brazil. Subsequently, it was held in Senegal (2011), Brazil (2012), and Tunisia (2013 and 2015). Apart from the global events, there are local, national, regional and thematic forums. While global events are organised by a local organising committee, an International Council (IC) has steered the direction of the process and took decisions on forums' locations. The 2007 WSF event in Nairobi was the first one to take place on the African continent and it has been described by some as the most progressive gathering that has ever taken place

[2] More specifically, I have participated in various European Social Forums (2002, 2003, 2004, 2008), the WSF International Council meetings (March 2006, October 2006, January 2007), the work of the Local Organising Committee of the WSF 2007 in Nairobi and in many networks connected to the WSF process. I was also sent to represent a workers organisation at the WSF 2009 in the Amazon.

in the African continent. According to the organising committee 57,000 people registered, 60% from Africa and of these 70% from Kenya. It has also been considered to be the baptism of an emerging Pan-African civil society and offered a space to new movements, previously largely invisible. For instance, a very important achievement was the presence of an LGBTQ space within the forum, giving visibility to a strongly repressed movement in the continent (Conway, 2013).

However, many activists and scholars have made strong criticisms. A major difference from other forums was due to the diverse nature of African civil society. Churches and development NGOs were the most prominent presence at the forum, reflecting a reality in which the Church is often the (only) major mass movement at the grassroots level and the remaining work with the most marginalised people is often conducted by mostly foreign-funded professional NGOs working in development. Other criticisms I further explore below regard the sponsorships, the choice of catering services, the 'militarisation' of the forum space and the social exclusion due to entry fees. These issues are by no means unique to the 2007 edition but were particularly evident in Nairobi, pushing key activist Walden Bello to argue that the WSF had achieved its historical function and should be dissolved.[3]

While this article critically explores the practices around the 2007 WSF, it is important to acknowledge that the WSF and its governing body, the IC, acknowledged the need for change and engaged in an open debate and experimented with different commissions' models with mixed results (whose discussion is beyond the scope of this paper). There has also been a working group on the future of the IC, established in 2012, and in 2013 a discussion around the radical proposal to dissolve the IC in order to create a more active political movement.

Governance, leadership and internal democracy

The organisational structure of social movements has been part of the reflection of activists and scholars for a long time. Such discussion is inevitably intertwined with the issue of leadership and the role it plays in processes of social change. Despite a growing interest, social movements' leadership is still considered a 'black box' and more scholarship is needed to understand movements' internal governance. Morriss and Staggenbord (2007) call for more grounded investigations of how leadership affects the emergence, internal dynamics and successes of social movements. A number of contributions (e.g. Barker, Johnson, & Lavalette, 2001; Gitlin, 2003) have stimulated further explorations and looked at the importance of individual leaders, their personality and trajectories. These contributions also examine whether the process of selecting leadership and the internal decision-making are consistent

[3] Bello, W. The World Social Forum at the Crossroad, 5/5/2007, available online: http://www.commondreams.org/views/2007/05/05/world-social-forum-crossroads

with the democratic values that are at the core of some movements' identity. This conversation links very well with another important and related set of debates about democracy in social movements.

On the one hand, the global process of the WSF has facilitated the exploration of internal governance and leadership of movements by enabling comparison between the movements which meet at WSF events. On the other hand, it has extended the reflection about what the governance of a global meeting space for a variety of movements may look like, particularly considering its reluctance to call itself a movement. It is this latter reflection that is of relevance for this paper. Movements' leadership and governance are already complex in themselves, but they become increasingly so at a global scale where the tension between consensual deliberation and representational decision-making play out more strongly (Teivainen & Caruso, 2014). On this regard, Della Porta (2013) provides a comprehensive overview of different conceptualisations of democracy and their relevance for internal movement organisation. In particular, she stresses the difference between a liberal democratic model and a participatory deliberative one. In the first, what matters is the democratic selection of the leadership, which represents pre-existing identities of members. In the second model, through a consensual and participatory process, members directly contribute to decision-making while at the same time forming their own identities and opinions.

The discussion over different conceptualisations of movements' democracy is strongly related with another older and important debate within social movement studies about the tension between 'spontaneity' and 'bureaucratisation'. This tension is somehow exacerbated in the complexity of the WSF, making it a privileged viewpoint. I am particularly interested in how 'ideologies of spontaneity' (Barker et al., 2001) affect the practice of a global process of coordination between hundreds of organisations.

Various authors, looking at many different contexts, have argued that social movements are not necessarily democratic. Nanda and Sinha (1999; 2003) describe populist undemocratic agrarian Indian movements, while Harvey – referring to democratic struggles in Mexico – writes that "internal practices may reproduce hierarchical rules and discrimination, [...] popular movements are not inherently democratic" (Harvey, 1998, p. 29). The WSF also struggles to be in practice the open democratic process that it aspires to be. This problematic aspect has also been extensively highlighted by Pleyers (2010) who argues that there is a structural problem in the movements and organisations converging in the WSF in that committed leaders ignore issues of internal democracy, claiming that it is a secondary issue compared to current struggles and campaigns. This apparent incoherence between values and practices has often been justified by some leaders of social movements in terms of a need for "efficiency" (Pleyers, 2010). From a feminist perspective, Conway presents a strong critique of the WSF governance arguing that "systemic sexism extend[s] from the events themselves, to the organising processes, to the governance bodies of the forum" (2011, p. 56). She also points out that the substantial

presence of feminist grassroots events is "systematically ignored intellectually and politically in the non-feminist spaces of the forum" (p. 56).

The practices of the WSF 2007

This section analyses the contradictions between the WSF discourse of open space and democratic debate, and its hegemonic practices. These contradictions have been underlined already by Albert, Sen and Teivainen (2004; 2004; 2004) in relation to Brazilian WSFs, Caruso (2004) in relation to the Indian WSF; and Conway (2011, 2013) about the entire process. I only focus on the WSF 2007 in Nairobi. It is important to notice that such critical engagement has been a constant feature of the WSF as a process of reflexive learning in which scholar-activists have used critique as a way to advance the debate on the nature and direction of the WSF.

The heterogeneity and diversity of its participants transform the WSF into an arena of conflicting interests with poor structures to deal with them (Caruso, 2004). The initiators established the International Council that would steer the process and nominate a Local Organizing Committee to organise specific WSF events. Six years after the beginning of the process, the International Council was a group of self-appointed friends who were deciding who could or could not join the Council; there was no change in the core organisations leading the process. Moreover, apart from key Brazilian actors, the committee was disproportionally composed of European actors. In order to participate, organisations were supposed to be able to pay for travel and related expenses for their representative to attend meetings in different parts of the world at least four times a year. Consensus methodologies were strongly shaped by pre-formed alliances and the charisma of certain established members. Moreover, the organisation of the forum events should normally be carried out by a coalition of local actors, but in the case of the WSF 2007 this was contracted to one NGO.

Hegemonic and excluding practices in the preparation of the WSF 2007

> The first and essentially the only meeting of the Social Mobilisation Committee has been held in the headquarters of SODNET, the NGO that won the tender for the WSF and hosted the secretariat. The office is in Lavington, one of the most exclusive areas of Nairobi in front of one UN agency. To enter, there is a checkpoint with guards, and another kilometre ahead, you find another check point where you are asked your name. The guards then call the main office, and if they get a positive answer you are allowed to enter. It is the most inaccessible place I have ever been since I moved to Nairobi.

This extract from my own anthropological diary of the WSF shows how – eight months before the event – the possibility of a WSF as an open space was already compromised. The headquarters of the organising committee were absolutely inaccessible, and adequate only for formal meetings with a limited number of participants, who had to come by car or else by walking long distances. The Social Mobilisation Committee – in theory the most important committee in making a forum in a new country a success – had met once, and had two failed meetings with less than 5 people attending. This emerging contradiction is well expressed in the report of the Kenya Social Forum coordinator, who describes one of the key organisers, a world-famous activist, as being "as intolerant inside the board room as she was 'revolutionary' and 'inclusive' on public rostrums" (Oloo, 2007). The Kenya Social Forum coordinator was chosen to provide legitimacy to the process; during its preparation he felt excluded, and strongly denounced the practices of the Organising Committee. In his reflections after the forum, he describes his experience in these terms.

> I have never encountered a bunch of such intolerant, arrogant and vindictive colleagues as the ones I had to endure during the planning and execution of WSF Nairobi 2007. First of all, the working environment at the Nairobi-based WSF 2007 Secretariat is the very antithesis of the WSF concept of an open space. Authoritarian decisions are made, often without consultation, by people who insist on imperiously chairing every single meeting – a far cry from the rotating chairs I was accustomed to. They draw up the agenda, decide on who can speak and for how long and will not hesitate to cut off, shout down and lecture anyone who appears to be challenging them (Oloo, 2007).

In October 2006, during the WSF International Council in Parma, while speakers as confident as they were ignorant about what was going on in Nairobi were talking about the inclusive and effective preparation of the forthcoming forum, I asked to speak to some IC members to express my critical points. (I was there as an observer who requires authorisation to speak). I was told that they knew my criticisms were well founded, but they could not raise those points because it would have meant criticising the Local Organising Committee, and be accused of colonialism (i.e. where the whites challenge the blacks). It was no surprise when just a few months later, I read the following in the above-mentioned report of the Kenya Social Forum coordinator: "Another dastardly thing was the abuse of the race card when it came to dealing with criticism from North American, European and even Indian comrades. [...] Some of my colleagues would resort to the most cynical emotional blackmail by dismissing their white-skin critics in race-loaded terms calculated to silence and stifle debate" (Oloo, 2007). This attitude prevented any request for accountability in what was supposed to be an open process.

The type of decision-making process established in the WSF was particularly vulnerable to the domination of "social movement entrepreneurs": charismatic figures who can confidently address different audiences, and who are often

more well-known on global stages than in the country where they claim to do grassroots work. They often represent only themselves, but through the legitimacy they gain from international fame can speak on behalf of others. For instance, in my work I invited a prominent activist to tour Europe in a series of high-profile meetings where she enchanted all her audiences, claiming to speak for poor African women. She got useful contacts for future funding, and even higher profile invitations to address global UN meetings. "Social movement entrepreneurs" are professional activists working for their own organisation (often more than one). One of these organisations – presenting a façade of a coalition – won the tender for the WSF, emphasising the need for a forum in East Africa. With no logistical capacity and with a coalition that was made of "a handful of people who decided to privatise a very public and of course very global process" (Oloo, 2007), they embarked in the preparation of the WSF 2007 – an activist, her best friend, and her son were managing the entire process.

The hegemonic use of consensual methodology and the failure of technology

The WSF event was divided into different thematic areas; one of the objectives was to create new connections and collaborations among different organisations and movements working on the same struggles, and possibly come up with common strategies. The forum was structured with opening and closing events and four working days in the middle; three days were dedicated to the various activities proposed by different actors, while the last day was supposed to be used to get the actors working on the same thematic area to elaborate proposals, and draw up a *global action plan*.

The three days of activities were supposed to interlink organisations working on the same topic through an online platform. Organisations could express their interest and propose activities; others would see an interesting proposal, get in touch, and prepare common activities. The idea was that the neutrality and horizontality of a software program would be able to put together actors who did not know each other. Rather than solving the issue of power and hierarchy, not having a trusted facilitator resulted in many activities turning into poorly attended presentations of one organisation's activities. In those activities where different organisations worked together, the organisations usually knew each other before the forum and were often meetings between local NGOs and their European/Northern funders. Organisations generally refused to cancel their own activities and merge them with others proposed by unknown actors from another corner of the globe.

The fourth day of thematic meetings set to build global action plans – which was supposed to be the major methodological innovation of the WSF 2007 to make the WSF more action-oriented – did not work out as expected. A telling example was the thematic meeting of the movements working on the issue of foreign debt in developing countries. The idea was that all global organisations working

on debt would meet and discuss proposals. The organisation Jubilee USA imposed itself as the facilitator of the discussion process through consensus methodology; they immediately presented their previously prepared draft declaration and asked for input in amending it. There were two major problems with this; first, the person making the main proposal was also the person facilitating the discussion. The overlapping of these two roles is what turns a potentially participatory methodology into one actor dominating the entire discussion. Normally, if the facilitator wants to intervene, they should give the role of facilitator to someone else, but this did not happen.[4] The second issue was that Jubilee USA came with its own draft ready. Consensus methodology cannot be used to simply ratify the proposal of one particular organisation, especially when this declaration is meant to represent all global movements working on debt.

The result was an inadequate declaration very similar to previous ones, entirely focused on the perspective of 'Northern' activists. The document did not mention the co-responsibility of the governments of the 'South', which was a central issue for those who work on debt relief/cancellation/repudiation in the 'South'. The proposed actions were the same that characterised the debt movement in previous years, most of which were not particularly meaningful in Africa, such as fasting against debt and collecting signatures. In their dual role of facilitators and main proponents, they succeeded in dominating the process and making people agree on their draft without any constructive debate. No relevant amendments were made apart from two minor cosmetic changes on adjectives. But that problematic declaration was launched with many organisations signing it as the global declaration on debt.

This attitude reflects the partnership model on which some 'Northern' organisations base their relationship with their 'Southern' counterparts; without engaging in any deep reciprocal knowledge, they fund local organisations which are often empty boxes, that maintain big offices and are very professional in managing PR with funders during events such as the WSF. Organisations that often thrive on debt, and have little interest in its cancellation.

Access to the Forum

A serious issue of access was totally ignored by the organisers: the entry fee to the Forum set for Africans was US$7, in a country where 56% of the population was living on less than a dollar a day. This meant that people could come only if an NGO would sponsor them; they therefore needed to be part of a network with sufficient financial resources. For local people, attendance was already very costly in terms of loss of income for the time away from work, and also implied transportation costs.

[4] Consensus methodologies put a strong emphasis on the role of facilitation. One key rule is that the facilitator plays a sort of neutral role. If the facilitator wants to make a point in the discussion, he/she should give his/her role to someone else.

The only positive note presented in the previously-mentioned report by the Kenyan Social Forum coordinator was "the presence of 4,000 slum dwellers facilitated by an inter-faith network" (Oloo, 2007). However, he did not mention how that actually came about in practice. After strenuous negotiation, a network of slum dwellers agreed to accept 500 entry passes at a subsidised rate. When they went to collect them, the Organising Committee had no personnel and told the network members to go in their storage area and stamp the passes by themselves. Instead of stamping and taking 500 passes, the network took 5,000 passes which were distributed through partner organisations and local churches to the Nairobi slum dwellers. Without this "theft", the private guards patrolling the WSF fortress would have prevented people from entering. This action saved the image of the Forum, which remained poorly attended but at least had visible local participation.[5]

When the contradiction of the high entry fee was exposed, under strong pressure the Organising Committee decided to keep a policy of openaccess to the Forum, but it was not clearly communicated to the private guards, who continued to enforce pass control. However, this decision was a last-minute initiative; there had been proposals to establish a solidarity fund to facilitate the access of local people; and the International Council approved the idea but it never became a reality because no one put money into it, and the local committee did not implement it.

It was not only a problem of individual access; many organisations were equally excluded since a venue for a two-hour event could cost up to 500 euros. This was an affordable rate for internationally-funded development NGOs, but not for local social movements. It is not surprising that some local organisations, unhappy with the process of the WSF, organised an *Alternative Social Forum,* which was free and in the city centre (the WSF was located about 10 kilometres away).

The IC enthusiastically replied positively to the proposal of holding the forum in Africa, but there was a lack of consistent economic support. In theory, the Local Organising Committee should fundraise for the event. But if for the Latin American Forums (Brazil and Venezuela) both central and local government provided a substantial financial contribution, the same could not be expected from a government with little interest in social movements and anti-neoliberal struggles. Therefore, the Local Organising Committee attempted to raise funds through fees, licences for commercial stalls, and advertisement, compromising the nature of the open space.

[5] There is an unrealistic claim that over 40,000 participants from Africa attended the Forum. However, this is a ridiculous estimation based on the fact that the open policy they applied forced them to count people and make estimations, rather than looking at actual registration. The figure was achieved by counting the same people several times, and adding an estimation of the people attending related events inside the UN compounds and so forth. The reality is that without those 5,000 passes distributed in the slums through church-related networks – which also helped people with their transportation costs – local participation would have been barely visible.

The privatisation of the Forum space

As Glasius and Timms remarked, "Every Forum consumes goods and services – otherwise it could not take place" (2005, p. 232). However, there are different ways to deal with provision aspects. While it is normal that local governments fund the WSF events and lobby to host them expecting economic returns – and that prices are inflated "to exploit participants" (Glasius & Timms, 2005, p. 232) – the WSF should preserve its anti-neoliberal soul at least within the WSF space. In 2006, Glasius and Timms warned against the risk that the Forum could become "a sales floor with a discussion area" (p. 233); that is what happened with the Nairobi Forum: it became a forum of tenders and subcontracting, i.e. an NGO fair.[6]

While WSF scholars (e.g. Santos, 2007) emphasise the important creation of the Africa Water Network during the WSF 2007, bottles of privatised water were sold at the price of a half day's local salary. Food provision was subcontracted to private companies, among them a company owned by the family of a member of the Kenya Social Forum, and the 5-star catering service of the hotel owned by the then Kenyan Minister of Internal Security – one of the richest men in the country, as well as the person accused of tortures and extra-judicial murders committed by the police during the previous regime. Prices were high even by European standards (Oloo, 2007).

Funds for the WSF events are received without thought to the contradictions connected with the first article in the WSF charter, i.e. opposition to neoliberalism. Funds derive from the core of the neoliberal supporters: the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and in the case of the WSF 2003, even the oil company BR Petrobras.[7] Governments also fund the WSF, threatening the non-governmental and non-party nature of the Forum. Among the sponsors, there were also several international NGOs that receive funds from USAID, and therefore the US government indirectly funds the Forum. The fact that such pro-neoliberal actors are willing to fund the Forum is very telling. If opposition to neoliberal globalisation remains confined to a yearly folkloristic festival led by neoliberal NGOs, why not fund such an innocuous gathering and by so doing legitimise the neoliberal democratic discourse? In this regard, Michel Chossudovsky (2010) tries to understand why organisations such as the Ford Foundation fund actors involved in anti-capitalist struggles. He argues that neoliberal organisations are "funding dissent" in order to oversee and shape their various activities; and he concludes that alongside the process described by Chomsky in his book *Manufacturing Consent*, there is a parallel and equally important process of "manufacturing dissent" in a way that does not threaten the establishment.

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[6] See for instance the article, 'World Social Forum: just another NGO fair?' by Firoze Manji (2007), *Pambazuka News,* Issue 288. Available online: http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/39464

[7] For a list of the funders, see "Financial sponsors of the WSF" in Timms and Glasius (2005, p. 230).

The Nairobi Forum constituted an embarrassing precedent for the extent to which private sponsors were used. A telling example was the contract with Celtel, a large multinational telecommunications company that associated its logo with the WSF; not having money for advertisement banners in the city, the Local Organising Committee in Nairobi signed a contract with one of the main mobile service providers that became the official WSF sponsor, and offered around 150,000 euros of communication services. Around the city, the WSF was advertised with the logo of this big multinational telecommunication company. The employees of the multinational also managed the registration desks where people could register to the Forum using mobile credit bought on the spot, and getting their SIM cards activated.

Analysis

In this section, I would like to make sense of some of the questions raised by the challenges described above. Let me start by looking at an ontological and methodological problem. Some years after the WSF's inception, criticisms of the open arena became very strong because the WSF could not set a clear agenda with defined objectives, and therefore it was considered ineffective in resisting the neoliberal project. According to Whitaker, some people saw the WSF "as an obstacle to gaining efficacy in the struggle to overcome neoliberalism" (2008), but he claims that this criticism came from the people who *think* about the WSF rather than from the people who *do* the WSF. As an activist who *does* and *thinks* about the WSF, I argue that the *ontological* debate on the nature of the WSF – whether the WSF should be just an open space (the arena model) for discussion, or should become a political actor – has never been solved. In 2007, the will to preserve the openness of the WSF space was coupled with the need for an action plan. The choice has been to keep the WSF as an open space, but at the same time to prepare shared global action plans; however, no appropriate governance structure was created. This created a relevant *methodological* issue.

The unwillingness to acknowledge the need for a different organisational structure with an explicit and transparent decision-making process generated implicit and hidden struggles that served the interests of some better-organised groups. As Whitaker recognised, "self-nominated social movements [...] seek to put the forum inside their own mobilising dynamics, to serve their own objectives" (Whitaker, 2004). According to Teivainen, until the WSF establishes "internal procedures for democratic collective will-formation" (2004, p. 126), it is not possible to express its interests as a collective movement. However, the supporters of the 'arena' claim that the forum has to remain an open space, refusing institutionalisation and bureaucratisation. Without structures and procedures in place, power relations among the organising actors played out in a way that their influence reflected their capacity to raise economic resources, rather than their representativeness in terms of the size of their grassroots

support.[8] The choice of a 'light structure' to facilitate the process has led to a lack of defined procedures to deal explicitly with internal conflicts; the open space has become a chaotic arena, and powerful interests exploit the situation to promote their own interests.[9]

A useful theoretical framework for making sense of this process comes from the concept of the "tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman, 1972). Jo Freeman, a feminist scholar who has been writing about social movements since the 1960s, examined feminist movements in the 1970s and the effects of their claim of being leaderless and structureless. Although she looks at the organisation of smaller movements, her analysis is relevant for making sense of some of the processes that have been happening in the WSF.

She claims that while the idea of structureless movements in reaction to the hyper-structured and hierarchical existing social organisation was a powerful political stance, in the feminist movement, the adoption of the idea of structurelessness became "a goddess in its own right". She argues that there is no such a thing as a structureless group: "Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion" (p. 152). She argues that the problem of structurelessness did not emerge immediately when the movement wanted to raise consciousness, but rather when the movements finally decided to do something specific. Similarly, at its inception the WSF wanted to gather people opposing neoliberalism, and start a process from there. The problem became stronger when the WSF wanted to draw action plans. According to Freeman, the problem is that the lack of an explicit and agreed procedure helps some people – generally the strong – to "establish unquestioned hegemony over others". According to Freeman, such hegemony imposes itself easily, because "the idea of 'structurelessness' does not prevent the formation of informal structures". Structurelessness becomes "a way of masking power [...] most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful" (p. 154). Consequently, she explains the importance of having a formal structure and procedures in place.

> The rules of decision-making must be open and available to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalised. This is not to say that formalisation of a structure of a group will destroy the informal structure. It usually doesn't. But it does hinder the informal structure from having predominant control and make available some means of attacking it if the people involved are not at least responsible to the needs of the group at large. "Structurelessness" is organisationally impossible. We cannot decide whether to have a structured or

[8] Teivainen argues that NGOs based in capital cities may have better economic resources, and ultimately play a more influential role in the WSF process than vast popular movements with much wider support at a grassroots level (2004).

[9] An interesting example can be found in the work of Caruso (2004) on conflict management and hegemonic practices in the World Social Forum 2004, where he suggests that "clearer norms need to be discussed and agreed" as well as "procedures to ensure inclusion".

> structureless group, only whether or not to have a formally structured one (Freeman, 1972, p. 155).

She argues that maintaining the informal structure, especially in unstructured groups, forms the base of elite power. She describes how friendship groups work as "networks of communications outside any regular channels", and if there are no formal channels, such friendship networks function as the only communication tool. This is very similar to what has happened with the original leadership of the International Council. Freeman warns, "When informal elites are combined with a myth of 'structurelessness,' there can be no attempt to put limits on the use of power" (p. 158). As I will show, the myth of the 'open space' worked similarly to the 1970s feminist claim of structurelessness, and coupled to the dominant informal elite of the International Council at global level and the NGO organising the forum in Nairobi, this led to virtually unchallengeable and strong power relations. As Caruso explains in relation to the Indian WSF 2004, "The concept of the 'open space' was used differently by different actors: to silence criticism, to impose authority [...], to explain inevitable failures [...] to placate controversy and to win arguments" (Caruso, 2005, p. 203).

Moreover, Freeman reminds how contrarily to formal structures, informal structures have no obligation to be responsible or accountable to the group at large. She concludes, arguing that, "The more unstructured a movement is, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages" (p. 162). A telling example of losing control over a movement's direction was the entering of powerful neoliberal NGOs into the International Council, without creating any relevant debate covered by the chaotic arrangements and the high need for money. Another example related to the local organisation of the WSF 2007 was the choice of entering a big contract with Celtel for the sponsoring of the Forum, which was taken by only a couple of people and without any public debate.

Another important point of Freeman's argument that is highly relevant to the WSF process is what she calls the "star" system. Similarly to the 1970s women's movement, the WSF charter states that no one represents it, nor can speak in its name. However, media and members need someone to make public statements about the group position. Without an official spokesperson, media would generally look for the movement's "stars" to get authoritative statements about the group, choosing the most famous activists or scholars who may not necessarily be those that other members feel to be more representative. A similar argument was put forward by Gitlin (2003) who looks at how, in the absence of officials representatives, media could shape movements of the US New Left by choosing the activists to transform into celebrities unaccountable to their base. In the previous section of this paper, I have shown how not-so-representative 'social movement entrepreneurs' end up talking on behalf of large categories of people. Freeman thinks that this process is very destructive, because the movement has no control in the selection of its representatives to the public, and the "stars" find themselves attacked by their comrades. She

concludes that, "This achieves nothing for the movement and is painfully destructive to the individuals involved" (p. 159).

The refusal of methodologies perceived to be linked to liberal democracies led to the full adoption of *consensual methodologies*, and the elimination of 'traditional' democratic practices, such as voting. However, this choice – especially with the excessive idealisation of the method – led to undemocratic practices whereby the entire discussion was dominated by a well-consolidated group in the IC, self-nominated at the beginning of the process in 2001 and irremovable since there was no formal channel to renovate the leadership. As we have shown, the supposedly open space of the IC was highly influenced by the economic and social resources of the participants, and by the unquestioned membership of the founding group, exercising a feudal-type authority by working through implicit but consolidated alliances, intelligible to newcomers, and therefore more difficult to challenge, as suggested by Freeman (1972). The original core membership was enlarged to include new actors admitted at the discretion of existing IC members, creating in this way a sort of patronage relationship. The process contributed to create what Pleyers calls "an international alter-globalisation elite" (2010, p. 145).

Even Whitaker, a founder and important intellectual of the forum and strong supporter of consensus in decision-making, acknowledged that "certain types of consensus [...] are a beautiful façade of systems of domination allegedly democratic" and that "openness and horizontality do not mean absence of rules" (2012, p. 3). As Teivainen (2012, p. 191) put it, "As long as there are no clear procedures for resolving disputes within the governance bodies of the WSF, the workings of power will continue to take place mostly through mechanisms that have not been collectively agreed on". He argues that the strongly held idea that an open space cannot become an institution or organisation depoliticises the WSF. He and others acknowledge the role of the "depoliticised structurelessness" (p. 191) as an attractive novelty at the beginning of the process. However, Teivainen claims that as the WSF became an important global platform for democratic transformations, it should take the political seriously by "recognising relations of power in order to democratise them" (2012, p. 191).

The economic aspect was also important; the IC was quite open to accept new members, but new members had to fund their participation, and possibly financially contribute to the WSF process. 'Southern' organisations had to fly their members across the globe at least four times a year – a commitment of well over 10,000 euros, just to be present at the meetings.[10] One outcome of this IC arrangement was that while the social movements landscape changed very rapidly, the governance structure of their privileged meeting space – the WSF –

[10] These tickets are particularly expensive; while a connection from Europe or Northern America to any developing country is generally direct and relatively inexpensive as the major hubs are located in these continents, South-to-South flights, for instance from Latin America to Asia, pass through Europe and are very expensive.

did not, remaining every year more distant from the social reality of the movements.

In Nairobi, the use of a 'neutral' technology (i.e. the online software) to promote new partnerships and encounters – without passing through a formally structured system – largely failed, and the participatory consensual methodologies led to the tyranny of the few 'facilitators with the knowledge'. Expert knowledge in facilitation became a key asset, whose owners abused it by using their facilitation role to impose their views, as shown in the thematic meeting on debt. To the "tyranny of structurelessness", the "tyranny of the method" was added (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). On this point, Cooke and Kothari showed the tendency of participatory approaches to conceal alternative views that might have emerged using other methods (2001).

The WSF is an open space that keeps people together united by their being against neoliberalism, and, in order to maintain its openness and diversity, it has refused to take seriously into account the issue of power. At the same time, this open space decided to build concrete alternatives and to move into action, but without rethinking its governance structures. In such a process, decisions need to be taken, and someone will take them even without adequate decision-making structures. At the Kenya Forum, the result was the domination of those who had been able to exploit their advantaged position and had the social capital and the resources to fight for their proposal without any mediating structure, rules or constraints that would limit their exercise of power. However, I would argue that even if the WSF 2007 had not aimed at preparing a global action plan and had remained just an open space, the issue of power would have needed some serious rethinking anyway. An open space that gathers all global movements together is a political actor that needs governance, and therefore structures and methodologies have to be thought out seriously, even if it had decided to avoid speaking on behalf of its members. This governance issue has been explored by other authors, particularly Teivainen (2004, 2012), and the reform of the IC has been a hotly debated argument in the subsequent years, giving the rise to a working group on the IC future in 2012, including Whitaker's proposal (2013) for its dissolution and reconstitution as a global movement.

The WSF 2007 organisational mess has contributed to the process of privatisation of the open space. In Nairobi, it was a double privatisation. On one side, the WSF contracted the organisation of the Forum to one NGO without the structures to render this organisation accountable or ensure that it would put in place an inclusive and open process. On the other, not having an operational working structure, the NGO that won the WSF tender subcontracted – often to private firms and multinationals – the provision of the services needed to make the Forum possible.

Another process facilitated by the lack of transparent and clear governance procedures and structures and connected with the "privatisation" of the Forum was the funding from big foundations belonging to the corporate elites, or from NGOs largely funded by the US government that reinforced the influence of

those more institutionalised organisations within the process, thus co-opting the forum (Chossudovsky, 2010).

The other point is the one of access; the open space had serious barriers of access against those people whose interests it claimed to defend. The system favours those people who are affiliated with bigger organisations, often development NGOs. The poor, unorganised citizens, and the more grassroots organisations could barely make it to the Forum without submitting their independence to larger networks, and often to depoliticised foreign (or at least foreign-funded) development NGOs, reproducing quasi-colonial power relations instead of the horizontal space that the Forum claims to be.

Another critical reflection concerns the discursive construction of the WSF against something,[11] namely neoliberalism, domination of the world by capital, and any form of imperialism (WSF, 2001). This has defined the WSF in opposition and in antithesis to neoliberalism, creating a rigid dichotomy. If the WSF celebrates diversity, its 'enemy' – neoliberal globalisation – is conceived as a homogeneous domain, and the WSF exercises the monopoly of diversity against the 'One Truth' (Whitaker, 2004). This view fails to consider that WSF practices are hybrids, and that the fight is not between two monolithic blocs, i.e. neoliberal as homogenous and anti-neoliberal as diverse and open. This conception is paradoxically reinforcing an old political practice of framing the political struggle within dichotomies. Neoliberalism, including existing institutions and political practices of current society is presented as a homogeneous domain with no spaces for engaging with it. This construction is used by WSF activists from the so-called "traditional left" (Santos, 2007) who conceive the struggle as a choice between neoliberal capital and socialism, weakening the wide range of diverse options that the WSF represents. For example, Eric Toussant[12] quotes Chávez and agrees with him on socialism as the only alternative to neoliberalism. Some radical grassroots' groups argue that this dichotomous construction enabled "forces of the traditional left, including leftist political parties, trade unions, and large non-governmental organisations, to establish an hegemony over a new kind of movement that had largely escaped their control" (Juris, 2005, p. 2008).

This Manichean view is also connected with a very limited understanding of power, and prevents any transformative engagement with neoliberal institutions, excluding the possibility of conducting the struggle within these existing institutions of the society (e.g. international financial institutions, governments, etc.) as advocated by Gramsci. These places should be the field of struggle, and as many scholars, especially anthropologists (e.g. Lewis & Mosse, 2006), have shown, there is space for agency. The WSF rhetoric and the dichotomy it constructs with its monopoly of diversity and resistance prevents

[11] Glasius and Timms underline the "logical contradiction in the idea of an open space against something" (2005, p. 224).

[12] Member of the WSF IC and founder of the CADTM (Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt).

people from viewing the entire world as a battlefield of daily resistance practices. This rhetoric also prevents WSF activists from critically analysing their own behaviours and discover how neoliberal and undemocratic practices are embedded in their daily lives and activities of their movements.

This dichotomous view of the world reinforces a misleading representation of the reality that enforces the interests of the powerful both within the neoliberal and the anti-neoliberal arrays. It transforms the struggle into 'us' (anti-neoliberal) against 'them' (neoliberal), without challenging the power structure and the practices within 'us' at the advantage of 'social movement entrepreneurs' and other dominant leaders. As shown above, the practices of WSF activists, especially in their relationships with other people or in decision-making processes, often reproduce the same mechanisms of domination on which neoliberalism is founded. Similarly, feminists' analyses have observed an ungendered and deracialised discourse in the antiglobalisation movement, underpinned by an "implicit masculinisation" (Mohanty, 2003) which paradoxically reflects the dominant discourse of neoliberal globalisation. According to Conway (2011), the radicalism of the WSF exempts its (male) leaders from "examining their own gendered, raced and classed positionalities, from acknowledging their own privilege, and recognising how their everyday practices in the movement and in the forum can reproduce dynamics of oppression or marginalisation" (p. 57).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to unpack the idealised view of the WSF and some of its myths surrounding a process that is inevitably and inherently messy. Many of the activists and academics who criticise 'the neoliberal project' have been looking at the WSF as the solution (e.g. Klein, 2001; Wallerstein, 2007), or as the "counter-hegemonic globalisation" (Santos, 2007, p. 4) opposed to the all-encompassing neoliberal discourse. The WSF discourse has quickly become idealised by the romanticised reporting of western academics, who manifested an oriental, exotic attitude towards the WSF in which they looked for evidence for their global revolutionary theories (e.g. Arrighi, Santos), rather than providing critical input to the movement. In this paper, I have sought to challenge the dominant narratives of the WSF by looking at the "asymmetry between the values and the practices of the WSF process" (Caruso, 2004, p. 577), at the gap between the discourses of democratic and open process, and the reality of hegemonic practices, and I have problematised some methodological and organisational choices. The focus of the analysis is the practices of the WSF 2007, widely recognised to have been one of the most problematic forums. As acknowledged in the article, the WSF processes has reflected upon many of these critical issues, leading to some organisational changes. However, it is still relevant to bring an in-depth reflection of the empirical experience and use it to make a wider argument.

The attempt of large inclusion and the focus on diversity conceptualised in the

framework of the open space have led to a lack of clear structure, which resulted in the "tyranny of structurelessness". Moreover, the dichotomous construction of the struggle against neoliberalism can lead to a disengagement with the institutions of the society that, in my view, should become the field of struggle, and it has also paradoxically reinforced the position of the 'traditional left' rather than promoting a diverse range of alternatives.[13]

While the inclusive diversity discourse attracted a wide range of actors, the WSF diversity pillar presented some side effects that were not properly dealt with. To maintain diversity, the WSF defined itself against something – neoliberalism – so that everyone could agree and be part of it, and became quickly labelled as anti-globalisation (although many activists challenged this label identifying themselves with the term alter-globalisation). The identity of the WSF became based on strengthening the dichotomy between the WSF movements and neoliberal institutions. The movement identity was defined as an inverted mirror of neoliberalism. The enemy was defined as the supreme evil, eliminating spaces for dialogue and – to a certain extent – internal criticism. The WSF discourse, arrogating to itself the "monopoly of diversity" against the "one truth" of neoliberalism, also led to a failure to recognise the evolution and the complexity of the current mainstream neoliberal discourse, especially in its new institutional "post-Washington Consensus" form. Literature that looks at the interaction between grassroots movements and the state (e.g. Corbridge, Williams, Srivastava, & Véron, 2005) have revealed the hybridity and multi-faceted presence of the state in the life of citizens, and how movements have adopted mainstream development discourses productively to frame their struggles and make their claims to the state (Sinha, 2003). These forms of resistance produced political subjects, engaging the state and demanding rights in the language of the neoliberal state, challenging rigid approaches that over-emphasise the domination/resistance dichotomy.

My criticism of the WSF process – and particularly of its internal hegemonic practices– has been often viewed as destructive pessimism concerning the possibility of social change. I am positive about the possibility of social change, but the situation is far more complex than the neoliberal/anti-neoliberal dichotomy. On the contrary, I strongly believe in engaging and struggling against the neoliberal discourse in any available domain where there is space for agency, multiplying the battlefields, and starting with the fight against hegemonic practices within our daily lives.

The current attitude has helped to maintain despotic power relations and hegemonic practices within a process that claims "to be more participatory and democratic" (Glasius & Timms, 2005, p. 190) and thus "practising politics in a different way" (2005, p. 191). I do not believe that the WSF is only acting in the interests of "a handful of people who decided to privatise a very public and, of course, very global process" (Oloo, 2007), however, in the WSF process, there

[13] See for instance Juris (2005).

are complex constellations of conflicting interests which need to be further analysed, made explicit, fully acknowledged and openly discussed.

An important point to make is around what happens or should happen in the "open space" of the WSF. Even from supporters of the WSF as an arena, there is recognition that the encounters between movements should be more than merely presenting each other respective agendas. The WSF can be described as a transformative encounter in which participants may change their preferences. Della Porta (2013) emphasises the difference between a view of a democratic process which simply aims at counting which view is majoritarian and one which contributes to constructing such views. For the latter, drawing upon Habermas' work, Della Porta reminds the importance of *how* opinions are formed: "As preferences and/or identities are always in flux, the conditions under which they are formed are of vital importance for democracy" (p. 187). This explains my focus on the *how* which, in my view, entails taking decision-making rules and structures seriously.

Della Porta (2015) argues that, by experimenting with forms of deliberative and participatory democracy, these movements have demonstrated the importance of democracy for collective deliberation. This paper warns about the limitations and challenges of such methods, particularly the "tyranny of the structurelessness" combined with the "tyranny of the method", with the hope that reflexive attitudes amongst activists may lead to further thinking about the relationship between power and global movements' organisational structures and decision-making practices. This analysis based on 2007 materials is particularly relevant today in the light of the global Occupy as well as anti-austerity movements in Europe, which make similar claims to those of the WSF of being leaderless initiatives, without any political affiliation, and using consensual methodologies, thus facing some of the same shortcomings and challenges.

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Info-capitalism and resistance: how information shapes social movements

Alessandra Renzi

Abstract

This article uses the lenses of information theory and critical software studies to examine how socio-technical forces like digital encoding and information circulation affect social movement struggles. Focusing on certain information designs and coding features of social media networks, the article analyzes ***how activist communication practices and modes of collective action evolve alongside available information infrastructure****. In particular, I look at the technical features of social media networks—their nodalities and protocols—and at three key elements of social media platforms—the platform itself, the interface, and the algorithms determining interface functionality—in order to reveal their impact on organizing practices. Emerging from this analysis are insights into how the mutual entanglements of code, network structures, and social struggles in information capitalism are literally "encoding," and in some cases limiting, different modes of collective action. Understanding the role that information architectures play in communication, I argue, opens up new potential for resistance and subversion by "recoding" activist practices.*

Keywords: Social movements; social media communication; platform politics; information theory; information capitalism; platform activism; software studies.

Control "matters" through information—and information is never immaterial.
Galloway & Thacker

Introduction: moving away from information as semiotic content

The sounds of a modem connecting to the internet through a dial-up system is a reminder that information, in its technical definition beyond semiotics, does not refer to the meaning of a transmitted message but to a series of signals unintelligible to the human hear in their basic forms. In fact, the message transmitted by a modem is abstracted from content and mathematically encoded by applying a value to it of 0 or 1. Information theory pioneer Claude Shannon—who was concerned with making bits of data travel effectively through phone communication channels—defined information mathematically as the ratio of signal to noise (1948). This means that information can be thought of as a statistical pattern of redundancy and frequency—a modulation of signal to noise. It describes bits of data that are abstracted from content but

recognizable by a channel as relevant, preventing those that are not relevant (noise) from reaching a target. Following Shannon, then, we can think of the modem—a *mod*ulator-*dem*odulator—as a device that modulates, or encodes, the data from a computer to transmit it over the telephone before this data is demodulated, or decoded, on the other side of the transmission channel. Here, the bits of data travelling do not only consist of the encoded message—the text of an email for instance—but also include other commands to the hardware and software necessary to make the content of the email reach its destination. The possibility to turn information into bits of data—phone calls, images, music, text, and so on—and to circulate them in large quantities, at high speed and long distances thanks to technologies like compression, error-correction coding, modulation and networking has revolutionized society (Gere 2002).

Today, our lives unfold in a data-heavy environment, where new modes of production and new forms of power thrive on information circulation in such an abstracted form. Marketplaces rely heavily on production and distribution within this world of information where they capture the value of the signs and symbols of consumer culture and communicate across borders but also extract profit from information in a variety of formats: information infrastructure and technology; high frequency trading in the stock markets; apps, servers and data systems; big data—to mention a few. Information is not just produced and circulated through channels; it also chaotically moves around and across them, creating noise. Many economic sectors depend on the circulation of information through cleared channels (e.g. advertising). In other words, they have to tap into informational dynamics—into the relation between noise and signals, with all its chaotic processes, entropy and variations (Terranova 2004b, 7). Let us call this type of economic system information capitalism, or *info-capitalism*. This article examines how digital encoding and information dynamics affect social movements struggling within info-capitalism. In particular, given the almost totalizing role social media and social networks now play in connecting citizens, it analyses their information designs and coding features to show how activist communication practices and modes of collective action are evolving alongside the information infrastructure that sustains info-capitalism.

The concept of info-capitalism does not denote a fit-all classification for a new kind of society but is offered in order to draw attention to the features of the data-heavy environment and dominant economic processes that form the context of contemporary social movements struggles in highly industrialized societies.[1] In info-capitalist formations, a sustained engagement with

[1] The term is used to underscore certain characteristics of what has also been defined elsewhere as communicative capitalism (Dean 2009) cognitive capitalism (Vercellone 2006) and semiocapitalism (Berardi 2009). Ignatow describes information capitalism as marked by the increasing importance of information under conditions of globalization and fast technological advancement and relates it closely to concepts such as Drucker's knowledge economy, Touraine's and Bell's post-industrial society, Webster's information society, and Castell's network society (2012). Fuchs has discussed at length labour in informational capitalism (Fuchs 2010, 2014), stressing how technology and networks have restructured society and radically changed modes of production. I use the term info-capitalism not to replace but to

informational dynamics is key to accumulating surplus value by breaking through overcrowded environments with noisy channels, controlling and recoding the overload from a variety of interconnected media, and reaching bodies that extend into appended communication technologies like smartphones. In other words, processes of capital accumulation unfold in an environment where "the dynamics of information take precedence over those of signification" (Terranova 54). The mining of data on social media, for instance, illustrates this: social media platforms on different devices promote the effortless circulation of information in the form of messages, while the metadata (i.e. data about data) accompanying and organizing it is collected into large pools to be analyzed by algorithms that will only afterward assign it any meaning for marketing purposes. Thus, when it comes to social media, we could argue that the act of communicating by circulating any kind of information, rather than the exchange of specific messages is what counts in info-capitalism.

Social struggle in info-capitalism often addresses the social, economic, political and cultural repercussions of competing for control over information as a resource: movements have emerged against the flexibilization and precarization of work in the service and creative sectors, against e-waste, against resource extraction and the military industrial complex's involvement in the production of technology, against new consumption habits, against surveillance, against the "virtualization" of capital (financial speculation, debt, etc.) and against the monopoly of knowledge controlled by information giants (copyrights and patents, the abolition of net-neutrality, etc.). Other forms of activism that engage information on multiple levels are more subterranean and less recognizable: they oppose the powers that control the informational environment, for instance, through the production of free software that can be modified and shared through Free and Open Source Software (F/OSS) projects. In other cases, we are dealing with clashing forces, which have not reached the level of explicit struggles but have the potential to escalate—those of users resisting against the capture of data and violation of privacy on social media through creative interventions like the Facebook suicide machine (Les Liens Invisible 2009). The latter erases all data from Facebook accounts against the company attempts to retain information even when users have terminated their membership.

All these different forms of conflict offer important insights into how the direct and indirect engagement with information has consequences for movements' modes of resistance. While it is critical to investigate emergent social formations, looking at their composition (Borio, Pozzi, and Roggero 2002), their resource mobilization and dynamics of contention (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), the discourses and framing of their struggles (Gitlin 1980), the communicative practices of activists (Castells 2012), and even the impact of activism in general (McAdam 1999), it is also no longer possible to ignore the co-constituting relationship between information technology and organizing

build on these theories and to foreground the role of informational dynamics and the materiality of the production and infrastructure that are required to sustain it.

practices in social movements because so much organizing is now mediated. Contemporary and emerging information architectures affect the potential for action as well as its very meaning. In the context of activism, social media platforms face the paradox of enabling social struggles that are often, simultaneously emancipatory and feeding info-capitalism. More precisely, they facilitate organizing while promoting data mining, free labour, and closed, proprietary interfaces, and, importantly, they normalize or exclude specific forms of collective expression. Whether it is participation, organizing or other mediated practices like sharing and collaborating, the changes to activist practices become visible when we examine the information-rich environment in which action unfolds, the ways in which movements come together, but also how individual and collective subjectivities are engendered as information circulates through its infrastructures and systems.

We can better grasp these changes in organizing practices if we look at how the structures through which information is circulated and organized—e.g. networks and platform architectures—*encode* the actions of users. This relationship between information and action has not yet received sufficient attention in the context of social movement practices. Scholars seldom ask what happens as information circulates through channels and is recoded beyond them, because traditional models of communication conceptualize information as content that is simply exchanged between a sender and a receiver over channels whose form or structure is merely incidental. This basic model ignores the indirect impact of informational structures and diffusion on cultural or political expression. Yet, the patterns and structures that organize and extract profit from these flows of information foster specific *communication* habits that critically affect our capacity to *act*.

In what follows, after a brief historical contextualization of my study, I will examine the topology of social media networks and three key features of social media platforms: the platform itself, the interface and the algorithms that determine the interface's functions. By considering the layers through which information and interaction are organized we identify less obvious practices of resistance and see how actors can engage power. In particular, the organization of information through code, interfaces, and networks impacts political organizing as much as it affects practices of knowledge production, processes of meaning and value-making, and the constitution of being because this environment conditions our lives, our agency, and how we relate to ourselves and others. What emerges from my analysis are insights into how the mutual entanglements of code, network structures, and social struggle in info-capitalism are literally "encoding" different and in some cases limiting modes of collective action. At the same time, I argue that understanding the impact of information and recognising the hidden sites of struggle in info-capitalism—as many groups are doing—opens up new potential for resistance and subversion precisely by "recoding" how movements can act and imagine future action.

A focus on information and info-capitalism is not meant to provide a totalizing narrative but to offer a lens for viewing contemporary modes of struggle in the

light of subtle yet pervasive forms of power. Such forms of power cannot be separated from the force that information itself has to materially structure socio-technical formations. My discussion of activism in the context of info-capitalism draws on information theories applied to the social realm (Terranova 2004a) and critical software studies (Fuller 2008, Kitchin 2011), a field that investigates the co-constitution of social practices and information systems. These approaches offer a perspective of the role of information in activism by identifying practices of resistance that engage information to disrupt dynamic systems, be they technical or social.

A brief history of information activism and its challenges

The notion of info-capitalism helps us locate activist practices in a sociotechnical context, their viability and success requiring a constant engagement with information. For decades, scholars from a variety of disciplines have stressed the importance of communication practices and tools within social movements; they have looked at radical media projects (Downing et al. 2001), networked activism (van de Donk et al. 2004) and how social movements use technology (Della Porta 2006). Sociologist Manuel Castells was one of the first to systematically study the political impact of the internet on social movements with a case study of the transnational campaigns in support of the Zapatista in Mexico (Castells 1996, 2004). Anthropologist Jeffrey Juris (2008) has discussed how networked structures promote alternative accountability and organising models that are based on horizontality and autonomy. With the development of visualization tools, media scholars have also been able to visualize and analyse the shape and connections among different nodes in these networks (Lusher and Ackland 2011). Finally, activists themselves have discussed the impact of information on movements, especially information overload (Wright 2005, Cleaver 1999).

Already in the late eighties, before the birth of the World Wide Web, activists were quick to adopt networked communication technologies starting with the Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) that offered public message boards, emails and direct chatting. Between 1997 and 2000, the expansion of small Silicon Valley e-businesses led to the growth of a so-called dot-com economy, fusing libertarian neoliberal ideas about self-regulating markets and anti-authoritarian countercultures of the 70s, touting free information, human connection, and shared knowledge as fundamental values (Turner 2006). These ideas created a long-lasting connection between Silicon Valley and activism not only through F/OSS and hacker cultures, but also through various commercial start-ups that offered services for networking and collaboration to the non-tech-savvy (e.g. easy to set up websites through services like GeoCities, blogging sites, and social bookmarking sites like del.icio.us).

Many activist interventions at the turn of the millennium were developed building on this DIY and commercial infrastructure in an attempt to deal with information flows (Meikle 2002, Raley 2009). During the 90s, creative

information-based practices established themselves alongside the marches, rallies, and counter-information projects. As information increasingly took on a key function in the capitalist system, movements across the globe attempted to sabotage the capitalist communication machine through culture jamming, tactical media interventions, anti-branding campaigns, "subvertising," and sweatshop boycotts that heavily used networked communication (Klein 2000). Repetition, short slogans, and spoofs of ubiquitous logos became part of a diversity of tactics to reach out in an informational environment where capital competes for niches to sell products and services, together with the lifestyles that require them and the political discourses that legitimate them. At the same time, production software and diffusion platforms facilitated projects that thrive on capitalist info-dynamics, anticipating the model of so-called "prosumption" (production/consumption) typical of Web 2.0 (Toffler 1980). The information overload of images and messages circulating on the net was folded back into a field of experimentation through blogs and vlogs, viral video mash-ups and websites to convey political messages that subvert the language of consumption and of institutional politics (Meikle 2002, Renzi 2008). In these unstable informational environments where information tends to escape its circulation channels to be coded and recoded, activists are not only confronted with the challenges of co-option, distortion, and dispersion of meaning, but also with an information overload that weakened their messages (Garcia 2006, Wright 2005).

With the dot-com crash around 2000, many of the rapidly growing Silicon Valley start-ups folded, leaving surviving companies like YouTube, Yahoo, and Google to dominate the web, increasing their control over the gateways to and channels for information (Vaidhyanathan 2011). The financial success of these giants is heavily dependent on the management of information flows through the use of algorithms in recommendation software, the collection of metadata for effective searches, ranking, and network building that are now a fundamental aspect of so-called Web 2.0 in general, and of social media platforms in particular. Moreover, modes of accumulation that thrive on mining and controlling data also underlie the increasing black boxing, interface simplification, network gatekeeping that distribute power on the net. While generating profit, the mostly free services that new communication giants offer facilitate access to user-generated content through multi-platformativity and interoperability; they organize information, promote networked interaction, and allow data mobility and ubiquity by storing content and software on the cloud. These mechanisms shape the very structure of networks, platforms, and interfaces that activists have adopted as their new communication infrastructure.

Governments supporting the free market often legitimize these monopolistic tendencies, in many cases reaping the benefit of easy access to information for surveillance purposes, especially after 9-11. Surveillance, however, is only one outcome of these challenges for social movements using these technologies. The forms of information control that characterise Web 2.0 have given rise to topological structures and protocols that indirectly shape and modulate activist

practices at the level of the network, the platforms and the interface. Web 2.0 facilitates organizing through social media outreach, the rapid circulation of viral content and the diversification of advocacy campaigns at little or no cost. At the same time, anti-capitalist campaigns feed profit to those who own proprietary interfaces. Most importantly, the use of social media platforms, can be said to enable and normalize only specific actions, shape specific forms of sociality and collective expression, and constrain the capacity to imagine what is possible outside of the boundaries they set.

Contemporary network topologies

Despite their seemingly horizontal structures, contemporary IT networks are structured by what could be described as "data containers" designed for compatibility among nodes and devices, as well as by gates that open, close, or channel access to services and sites for communication, knowledge production, and interaction, through sign-in interfaces and preferential networks, for instance. Economic logics and market structure play a key role in the design of information architectures that place corporations in powerful positions to define emergent models of social organization—what Ulises Mejias dubs "the technologizing of society through social networking services" (2010, 604). Mejias' work on the limits of networks in organizing sociality reminds us that the models of participation that social media afford are mostly shaped by the agenda of the (commercial) institutions that provide the technology and normalize specific forms of social participation from which they extract value (605-6). In this context, social networks come to be characterized by a so-called "dual processuality" with corresponding, contradictory effects: increased user freedom to form groups and create content *and* corporations deciding on new communication features, on expulsion of members, or even on the future of the network; increased opportunities and tools for content production *and* the transfer of property rights to the corporation; proliferating user-generated content *and* commodification of collaboration through the embedding of ads in the content shared among users; diversity of voices *and* the homogenization of platforms that are increasingly layered and interoperable; the level playing field of voices having the same chance of being heard *and* the reproduction of social inequalities through the modulation of access to certain positions within the network, not just access to it (Mejias 2010, 608). This dual processuality clearly frustrates our ability to conceive of social movements' ability to struggle against the forces of info-capitalism as emboldened by technology.

Moreover, Mejias' discussion of "nodocentrism" and "paranodality" provides us with conceptual tools to inquire into the consequences of thinking about struggle exclusively in terms of networks. Nodocentrism refers to the tendency to perceive of something as real or valuable only if it functions as a node in a network. Conversely, paranodality is "the conceptual space that lies beyond the borders of the node [...] that do[es] not conform to the organizing logic of the network" (Mejias 2010, 612). The first generation of networked activism during the 90s and early 2000s facilitated the connection of people and organizations

through mailing-lists and similar technologies that delimit the scope of the network (Juris 2008); the form of the network today is one that is open and more heterogeneous and is often facilitated by commercial social media platforms. While more and more research is produced that attends to both online and offline practices of social movements, a nodocentric bias is becoming entrenched as movements themselves take the social media network to be their structure for organizing, absorbing or else ignoring paranodal sites of resistance. Importantly, nodocentrism as it is structured by the networks of today, alerts us to important changes to the ways in which movements grow. These changes take place along technologically constructed notions of sociality that are seldom acknowledged as communities and groups engage in struggle.

First, since social media are overwhelmingly what make networks visible, nodocentrism disqualifies the connections that are not managed and legitimized by their information architectures. In social movements we especially see how the topology of networks as it has developed more recently affects inclusivity, rendering in/visible and predetermining who can form coalitions. For instance, groups mobilizing against poverty or homelessness who have little access or time to spend on social media but have highly developed on-the-ground knowledge of social problems are not invited to collaborate on campaigns for social equality because they are not on other activists' radars. Similarly, other groups who prefer to keep their online visibility low because of their vulnerability (e.g. sex workers and groups fighting racial profiling or police brutality in specific communities) are excluded from movement building events or are not easily reached by calls for participation. Finally, networks can exist in parallel spaces hardly crossing: the problematic homogeneity in age, class, and especially race that we encounter in a movement like Occupy can certainly not attributed to the structure of social media but we can see the existence of parallel and isolated activist networks of people of color as a relay of racial segregation. Ultimately, the bias of considering only what is part of an increasingly homogeneous network shapes the form of alliances and coalitions, it cuts off activists from exposure to different kinds of practices and knowledge, and obfuscates issues of online access and visibility.[2]

Second, the nodocentric bias has an impact on the potential to strategize for the long term. Social movement scholars Lance Bennett's and Alexandra Segerberg create a typology of movements that differentiates between a logic of collective action—sustained by established issue-advocacy organizations who step back from their group branding to reach wider audiences; and connective action. This new pattern is typified by the *indignadas* and Occupy protests; it substitutes established political organizations with technology platforms and applications that organize networks (2012, 742). For Bennett and Segerberg, connective action brings "the action dynamics of recombinant networks into focus" (2012, 760) and the formative element of sharing—"the personalization that leads

[2] Without having to opt out of networks, it may be good for organizers to be aware of the impact of the nodocentric bias on their practices and expressly reach out to groups outside of their network.

actions and content to be distributed widely across social networks" (2012, 760)—accounts for the circulation of personal expression across networks, facilitating action. Their work helps us explore digitally networked action (DNA) characterized by varying degrees of technology-mediated spontaneity, self-organization without central or "lead" organizational actors, and easy-to-personalize action themes spread over personal networks (2012, 742). Their study attends to both movement practices and technology, and generates important questions about how connective action works.

Unfortunately, a focus on content circulation and networked communicative practices alone—one that often conceives of social movements as "publics" whose practices are mostly communicative—cannot provide answers to the questions about stability, scalability, and agency in movements that Bennett and Segerberg pose. In order to discuss stability, scalability, and agency it is necessary to understand the coexisting and contrasting notions of participation that drive the use of technology in both connective and collective action. While both modes of action may rely on the use of social media, the drive towards participation and agency comes respectively from notions of individuality and collectivity. More precisely, as Jeffrey Juris notes in his study of #Occupyeverywhere, collective actors are already constituted in organizations, networks and coalitions, while connective actors (who function along a logics of aggregation) come together qua individuals and

> these individuals may subsequently forge a collective subjectivity through the process of struggle, but it is a subjectivity that is under the constant pressure of disaggregation into its individual components, hence, the importance of interaction and community building within physical spaces. Whereas networks are also given to fragmentation, the collective actors that compose them are more lasting (Juris 2012, 266).

Groups that tap into connective action in most cases strive for growth and endurance. They attempt to appeal to a wider network of individuals through mediated, networked communication tools. Yet, when reaching out to broader audiences too fast they may only temporarily grow, unless they are able to forge stronger ties that outlast the intensity of the initial mobilization (Tufekci 2014). Scaling up and enduring become even more complicated if practices like sharing, participating and committing are shaped by the commercial functions that are embedded in information architectures, and that tie users to predominantly online interaction (one can go from reading an article to liking a comment, to watching a video to posting on a blog, to following events on twitter, and so on). From this perspective, tending to strong ties and paying attention to paranodality are not only necessary to investigate how information architectures are organizing agents, but also to understand the ways in which we discuss and conceive of action within and among networks.

The topology of networks is not only made up by the shape and location of its nodes: it is also influenced by the very principles of information organization—

i.e. the protocols—embedded in the computers that form networks. Protocols like the one defined in Request For Comments documents (RFC) outline the technical standards that govern much of today's internet (Galloway 2004). Protocols are based on a voluntary principle of standardization of code that is necessary for packets of information to be successfully encoded, transported, or for different devices to communicate with each other. This is the case, for example, with the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP), which is the basic communication language for the transmission of data among computers, and with the Domain Name System (DNS), the large database that connects IP addresses to websites names. While exclusively located in the realm of technology and operating at the level of code, these rules and regulation exercise indirect and unprecedented control over what is possible on the internet. Protocols are not an explicit form of censorship, since they are only interested in the packaging of the information, and are indifferent to content (Galloway 2004, 52). But they do stratify, layer, and hierarchically organize the structure of the internet, managing its nodes.

Needless to say, the process of standardizing certain information structures and behaviours automatically excludes others, giving the internet its "shape." This is a particularly important issue today, when powerful economic actors, regulatory agencies, and legislators can make decisions that have profound social and cultural implications. From this perspective we can say that protocol is indeed political because it subtly controls or, better, it modulates how information is circulated. If, following Eugene Thacker's take on protocological control, we consider the status of individual and collective action in participatory networks, we will see how protocols engender networks in which participatory practices are hollowed out, coded into secure servers, e-surveilled, and embedded into "predatory locales and a new kind of gated community" (in Galloway 2004, xvii). We are all familiar with the ways in which information has been handed over from servers to surveillance agencies and how internet services for activist groups have been shut down for violations of the terms of service. The revelations of Edward Snowden are only the latest example of how surveillance agencies like the NSA capture data from all layers of the network, in some cases despite encryption.

Protocols have at least two important implications for movements: 1) they are agents of info-capitalism that structure the development of activist networks; and thus 2) they require modes of resistance that engage protocological control. With regard to the first implication, protocols are fundamental principles organizing and shaping the realm of possibility for information circulation—its control, production, reproduction, and distribution, processes of accumulation and financialization. Therefore, protocols have a stronger impact on activist practices than we may think: they are principles of control that bring a network together. As a technology they regulate flow, direct netspace, code relationships, and connect life-forms (Galloway and Thacker 2007, 30), and, as a key component of the technological realm that makes up so much of our daily lives, protocols directly govern the relationships within networks and indirectly affect those outside of them (Galloway and Thacker 2007, 28). When protocols

prescribe how algorithms should be used, they are also implicated in more benign forms of compliance by constantly enforcing on users the request to relinquish information in exchange for accessing parts of a network. As mentioned earlier, the role of protocols (prescribing the rules of possibility for the circulation of information), and their relationship to algorithms (the commands allowing information to circulate) provoke new questions about our ability to conceptualize movement's communication outside of info-capitalism.

Regarding the second implication of protocols for movements: resistance to protocol unfolds at the level of protocol itself through hacking, coding, contesting, or subverting the rules of protocol. Examples of counter-protocological resistance are the struggle over net neutrality, anonymizing systems like the Tor Project, or different kinds of interventions into the flows of info-capitalism, such as swarming and DDoSsing financial sites.[3] Information architectures, here, amount to more than tools for organizing; they also become a terrain over which contrasting visions of justice and freedom confront each other by resisting certain forms of standardization and channelling. Beyond technological fixes, we also find the counter-protocological translated into non-technological practices of resistance. This is the case, for instance with the Strike Debt Campaign, which challenges the power of financial capital by questioning the legitimacy of debt itself. Under the motto "You are not a loan," the initiative draws attention to the ability of info-capitalism to isolate and reduce individuals to data and numbers (Strike Debt 2012). The Strike Debt Campaign devises strategies that work from within the system to divert and capture the flow of capital by, for instance, buying back debt, and then releasing debtors (Rolling Jubilee). When taken as a broader set of subtle mechanisms of control that also code relationships and connect humans and machines, different forms of resistance to info-capitalism can be understood as protocological. The continuity between protocological sites of struggle over communication and life under info-capital presents a rich field of potential for reinvigorating activist practices.

Platform architectures

In addition to the forces of control and information management at the level of the network, activists comply with structures that regiment their actions whenever they use social media platforms. For less than a decade Web 2.0, and now smartphones with their social media apps, have been delivering on the promise of a mobility that plugs us into endless and overpowering flows of data, whether it is our Facebook friends sharing links, or the tweeps (Twitter people) from the politically engaged scene, or the on-going video streaming at the Occupy encampments. Yet, if we were to briefly explore the meaning beyond the term *social* of social media or social networks, through the lens of information, we would find very little of the heterogeneity that characterizes sociality

[3] These are Denial of Service (DoS) attacks where systems are usually infected with a Trojan and are used to target a system causing its service to break down.

conventionally understood. Rather, what defines social media is a common, and increasingly more homogeneous (interoperable), standard of communication that centralises services and organises information. The standard of communication that has emerged since technologies have enabled the commercial exploitation of user data and of social relationships are what Geert Lovink dubs the "algorithmic exploitation of human-machine interaction" (2013, 13). For Lovink, the culture of users who produce and share is one that requires a reduction in complexity and user freedom in order to access easy-to-use interfaces, free services without subscription, and large databases with free content and user profiles to browse through (2013, 13). It is a trade-off.

The term "platform" is also one that hides more than it reveals. Technically, it refers to the pre-existing environment where a piece of software runs while using this environment's facilities and obeying its constraints. A platform is the backend environment where code performs operations that are requested by users through the interface. At the same time, the platforms that support social media can be seen as important agents in shaping our perception of emerging technologies and their potential for social engagement. In fact, the meaning of social media platforms has gone beyond one referring to code to a metaphorical platform on which individuals can interact (democratically). The notion that these technologies empower users is promoted not only by industry, but also within mainstream culture. Their meaning is constructed so as to influence how the technology will be understood and judged; the accepted meaning of social media platforms therefore has consequences for the ways in which users relate to social media (Gillespie 2010, 23-25). The assumption is that, beyond problems of institutional censorship, surveillance, and data mining, social media platforms are neutral and democratic tools, whose in-built features do not impact content, availability, organization, and participation. Still, while granting seemingly endless freedom to experiment, social media platforms impose a series of structural limits to social exchange and to movement building. This is not to deny the utility of many platforms but to underline the complex forces that subtend the relationship between information and movements, even when there is some leeway for manipulation. To make visible the forms of control that affect the relationship between social movements and social media platforms, I will focus on three aspects of the information infrastructure: the platform itself, the interface, and the algorithm.

The platform

Let us use the example of media activism to discuss the role of platforms in emerging activist practices. Beyond relying on popular social networks like Twitter and Facebook, activists have been quick to adopt new platforms to communicate and to report on protests and social justice events. Movement media centres have gone from using simple open publishing like that of indymedia (IMC), which allowed for un-moderated posting of text, images, and video and hosted discussions, to embedding a variety of tools that connect across platforms. New platforms can integrate the traditional features from IMC

with feeds from various social media and live streaming. For example, the one used during the anti-G20 convergence in Pittsburgh and Toronto, and during the protests against the Vancouver Olympics automatically published YouTube videos, tweets, text, and a map to locate events as they were happening (G-infinity media is a project of the Pittsburgh Independent Media Centre).

Live streaming has become ubiquitous during the wave of protests that followed the financial crisis in Europe and North America especially—and it has nearly become a mass medium following the social unrest in Ferguson, MO. Sites like Global Revolution and Occupy Streams provided 24-hour coverage of protest camps around the world, while chats and direct connection to sites like Twitter and Facebook offered an interactive experience (Costanza Chock 2012; Juris 2012). Streaming to such sites is supported by newer, for-profit platforms like Livestream and Ustream, raising once again the issue of dual processuality discussed earlier in the context of networks. But streaming technologies have also radically changed the content and the reporting practices that make up media activism in many countries from reports and analysis to embedded journalism and live correspondence.

What is also changing is the role of grassroots media from one of simply informing audiences about events to facilitating participation. More precisely, the availability and transferability of standardized platforms and media activist toolkits is creating a sort of media centre franchising that brings new actors who were previously not involved in movements to protests and other kinds of political events as reporters. Platforms embedding commercial social media connect new actors who feel at ease with their familiar features to protests and other kinds of political events as reporters, participants, makers and voyeurs. Thus, media platforms like Occupy Streams are impacting the relationship between movements and their audiences, denouncing violence, giving insights into experiments in direct democracy and overall redefining participation, allegiance, and group boundaries.

Media activist platforms extend and connect life at protests and camps to their outside. In this context, platforms, both autonomous and corporate, are not only the means or tools to connect individuals but active agents in shaping activist social formations. While their buttons and log-in functions that connect different platforms enable the extraction of value from data, standardized platform elements like the chat boxes, twitter rolls and related live channels that frame the main feed of sites like Occupy Streams harness feelings of familiarity, participation and interactivity. The platforms' technical elements resonate with each other and mediate our interaction with others. For this reason, streaming platforms that seemingly leave very little space to do more than create a voyeuristic experience, yield insights into the continuum between communication and action. The individual's engagement with a platform's different elements produces connections to others that are dependent on presence and action. Action here is clearly not limited to the "communicative action" often ascribed to social media public spheres but exists alongside and in connection with *direct* action. For instance, the live feed of CUTV during the

2012 Quebec student protests was a fundamental tool to update and draw to the streets a viewership of students who followed this established university channel and became involved in five months of intense mobilizations against tuition hikes. At the same time, the streaming of the Occupy Toronto channel functioned as a monitoring system to quickly gather critical mass at the encampment to prevent impending evictions. Whether the ties fostered can be made to endure is a question for activists to consider.

Finally, social media platforms allow for the collection, storing and distribution of digitized content, from video to comments and manage this content by classifying it through metadata. Metadata is data that provides a piece of information about other data (e.g. the time a video was uploaded). In so doing, social media platforms constitute an archive of social change: they allow for the recording, sharing and transmission of texts, videos and images. Platforms transform media into data that can be managed, stored, and correlated with other kinds of data in quasi real-time. While this information can prove very useful for surveillance and policing purposes, it also presents new opportunities for movements. In fact, both data and metadata can be used for data analysis that is carried out by activists, yielding new insights into patterns of mobilization, as well as to create flexible and remixable archives that can be used for documentation, analysis and creative interventions. This aspect of media activist platforms needs to be further explored to better understand the potential to collect histories and foster movement building.

The interface

Unlike HTML-based linking, features such as liking buttons and recommendations characterize the closed systems of platforms that introduce new layers of interaction and connection among users (Lovink and Rasch 2013, 13). These layers have consequences that are far-reaching in the social field. Ascribing participatory or community involvement to users of social media platforms neglects the role that interfaces play in steering users and their communities: "in the emergent participatory culture, 'participation' is [...] an ambiguous concept" and the assumption that these tools promote active citizenship is a generalization (van Dijck 2009, 45). It is well known that community engagement and participation often translate into clicking on default buttons for sharing and liking content that conceal users' very limited agency. What is less discussed is how the layout of an interface structures human-to-human exchanges because it encodes particular kinds of interaction among users.

Many platforms automatically perform tasks like pooling information from address books and interconnected platforms (e.g. Google), or they create "affinities" among profiles to visualize friend lists, groups, or even networks. These so-called semio-technologies partake in processes of meaning making and form the basis for emerging social relationships. For Ganaele Langlois, aggregation processes that create pools on for-profit platforms must always take

place in the absence of disruption, where we can have friends but no enemies (2011). Semio-technologies, with their modes of meaning production and circulation, create homogeneous communicative worlds that are visualised through interfaces that agglomerate and measure, that build prestige and connect communities. In these platform worlds—supposedly devoid of privacy violations, surveillance, or control—technology is a tool for democratic interaction, and an individual's social status is judged according to the size of their circle of "comrades," or social issues they post on. Many studies have discussed the ways in which interface features like "friending" affect daily relations among users, especially youth (Boyd 2006; Ellison et al. 2007). Features like friending, liking, and sharing that institute a social system—in which people gain status and visibility through a quantitative accumulation of online relations—may have consequences for organizing that range from surveillance to favouring weak over strong ties.

Moreover, research on movements' adoption of social media interfaces has shown how the latter may impact the collective creativity of certain groups. A recent study of a labour movement organization in the UK draws attention to the troubles that groups face when using platforms life Facebook and YouTube for the collective construction of meanings and messages. As the study shows, activists complained about how interfaces on sites like Facebook support individual posts and flatten, instead of prioritize, content within the group's page (Fenton and Barassi 2011). This is because different kinds of political and less political content are all given the same level of importance on the interface. Fenton and Barassi cite at length from interviews with organizers frustrated by the fact that in a Web 2.0 environment that favours individualism and self-representation through blogs, individual websites, and social networks, the messages of a person have the same social value, and are encoded and distributed in the same way as those that are carefully crafted through the negotiation among collective actors (2011: 187). Facebook is a particularly interesting example of how the information architecture that we only perceive as interface affects the possibilities for political communication. The latter is quickly overshadowed by new information that fleetingly appears on an interface that prioritizes real time over permanency, for instance in the timeline. In the case of YouTube, the pressure to retain constant visibility and to support interaction by moderating discussion in the post sections requires constant effort on the part of activists, even when the energy drain outweighs the benefits and contributes to an information overload. Ultimately, the features introduced and normalized by social media interfaces play out in the context of activism and normalize practices that are not always vetted on the basis of their effects.

Algorithms

The normalization of rules of behaviour on platforms is literally programmed into code by determining the possible behaviour that regulates interaction. These rules are directed toward specific people or content through algorithms that promote and rank according to criteria that rarely match the priorities of

those who are using the platforms. Nevertheless, algorithms manage our interactions on social networking sites and other platforms, foregrounding or excluding information, deciding what is "trending," and providing "a means to know what there is to know and how to know it, to participate in social and political discourse, and to familiarize ourselves with the publics in which we might participate. They are now a key logic governing the flows of information on which we depend" (Gillespie, Boczkowski Pablo J., and Foot 2014, 167). Crucially, as Tarleton Gillespie rightly emphasises, behind algorithms lies a logic that is not purely machinic but involves the warm human choices of their developers (2014, 168).

A case in point for this logic are e-petition platforms. While e-petition services seem to simply offer a hosting site for petitions, they are actually implicated in complex information dynamics where algorithms and data analytics feed activism back to petitions' signers while the creators of the platform harvest data for other uses. The work of David Karpf on petition platforms (Karpf 2012, Elmer, Langlois, and Redden 2015) shows us how the same technologies, metrics, and marketing strategies used to develop other commercial platforms are employed to develop new tools to engage civil society. Petition sites combine a mix of algorithmic ranking and employees skills to craft user experience. Their "organizational logics" is driven by data analytics that influence the kind of petitions that are launched, publicized and even how they go viral (Elmer, Langlois, and Redden 2015). These tools for civic engagement enable new campaign tactics that reach wide audiences while extracting value from social engagement.

In fact, although some platforms like Moveon.org are not for-profit enterprises, others like Change.org are commercial enterprises—so-called benefit corporations—with a certain degree of social responsibility. And while Moveon.org collects data to make its own campaigns more efficient by looking for trending issues, Change.org seeks to grow. In both cases the choices of the issues that will be prioritized is not left to the creators of petitions but to the organizations. The protocols and algorithms implicated in driving these platforms are organized according to an accumulation logic driven by numbers when not outright by profit. In Thacker and Galloway's words, "information surveillance and the extensive data-basing of the social promote a notion of social activity that can be tracked through records of transactions, registrations and communications" (Galloway and Thacker 2007, 79). In addition to this, the data gathered is turned into metrics used to shape future campaign practices and platforms. For example, the platform *Upworthy*—a MoveOn splinter that makes "important stuff" go viral—was inspired by the work and algorithms used during move-on campaigns (Upworthy 2012). Both in the cases of the petitions and the platforms, the architecture of the platform (including the interface) structure not only what political issue is prioritized but also the language and approach to such issue. Of course, it cannot be denied that e-petitions have been useful in many cases. In particular, their ability to reach wide audiences without having to mobilize on the streets has helped understaffed organization's campaigns. At the same time, they do away with the face-to-face interaction

that, in many cases, makes movements grows and, because of how they engage the information dynamics and accumulation mechanisms characteristic of info-capitalism, should not be considered neutral tools with no structuring effects on social movements' campaigns.

Conclusions

This article used information theory, software studies and the concept of info-capitalism to foreground the dynamics of information circulation and the mechanisms of financialization shaping contemporary modes of social movement struggle, as they develop campaigns and coalitions that tackle the forms of oppression typical of info-capitalism (surveillance, information monopoly, precarious labour conditions, etc.). The lens of information and software studies—as opposed to that of communication, which is mostly focussed on the transmission of meanings—helps us foreground how technical solutions like the use of a specific code or interface feature impact organizing. Critical software studies has also drawn attention to how the backend of platforms shaping the interface is structured by economic forces and by the need to meet technical standards for networked information exchange (Galloway and Thacker 2007, Zimmer 2008). Yet, until recently, hardly any attention was paid to how Web 2.0 architectures increasingly play a key role in mediating the relationship between individuals and their social world during struggles.

Building on these theories and concepts, we were able to see how information is organised into different architectural layers that make up the contemporary environment for activist communication practices against info-capitalism (i.e. networks, platforms, interfaces and algorithms), showing how the encoding of practices, the normalisation of habits, and the shaping of sociality take place across these different layers. Indeed, Web 2.0 architectures, especially social media, can be said to shape specific forms of sociality and collective expression, and constrain the capacity to imagine what is possible outside of the boundaries they set. This impact became visible when we examined how information structures activist networks and practices while they conform to network protocols, attempt to do outreach and circulate messages effectively through available platforms, and use the interfaces and features of social media platforms to interact. Among the effects we discussed are the paradoxical logic of simultaneous emancipation and enslavement on networks and platforms (what we called dual processuality), the totalizing focus on online networks that excludes non-nodes, the protocol-based forms of control on networks, forms of connective action enabled by platforms that scale-up mobilizations quickly but then leave no organizational depth, as well as a variety of interface features and algorithms that directly organize interaction.

In this context, the organization of information through code, interfaces, and networks impacts political organizing as much as it affects practices of knowledge production, processes of meaning and value-making, and the

constitution of formations. This is because the environment through which information circulates requires that we develop habits that condition our lives, how we relate to ourselves and others, and therefore they set boundaries to our agency. In other words, the links between nodes, the functions of interfaces, the buttons we can click, the feeds that reach us mobilize people and populations by making them feel good, bad, angry and so on. That is, they function as circulation and organization channels with effects on the senses before, and autonomously of any rationalization of the users (Grusin 2010). We can think here about the circulation of viral content on networks but also about the strong connection created between viewers and protesters through live feeds like the ones in Egypt during the uprisings. The ability to mobilize and indirectly control emotions is an important element of these socio-technical forces that shape movements more and more. For instance, it leads to rapid and large mobilizations on the streets but it also causes cycles of struggles to easily peter out.

Through the insights provided, this analysis aimed to trouble common assumptions about the neutrality and horizontality of technology in social movements. Still, this article does not deny the value of networked and social media for activism. Rather it aims to expand and update existing scholarship and debates on the use of technology within social movements. Ultimately, the reliance on rigid, black-boxed and often for-profit platforms affects a movement's potential to communicate and organize, yet movements can also device tactics and strategies to subvert, hack and recode the forces of information. This dynamic relationship of co-constitution between technology and movement practices needs to receive more attention from scholars and activists alike. In the context of scholarship, there is a need to include more studies of the sociotechnical composition of the forces shaping social struggle and its practices. In the context of activism, it is worth including discussions about the power of technology and information to encode struggle in the debates about the value of information technology for activism. These debates started already in the nineties with discussions about the risks posed by information overload and over-communication (Wright 2005) and now focus overwhelmingly on surveillance (Lovink and Rasch 2013). In this sense, the article should be read as a call for more studies and organizing practices that treat technology as an agent that opens up, makes obsolete, or precludes certain modes of struggle, rather than as a tool that is neutral. Understanding the impact of information in info-capitalism can indeed garner new potential for resistance by reprogramming (socially and technologically) how movements communicate and imagine future action.

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Challenging electoral authoritarianism in Malaysia: the embodied politics of the Bersih movement

Sandra Smeltzer and Daniel J. Paré

Abstract

On April 28th, 2012, Malaysia's Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, commonly known as Bersih ('clean' in Malay), organized a large-scale rally in Kuala Lumpur calling for electoral reform, catalyzing a public feud between the rally organizers and the government/police over the use of Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square). The third rally of its kind in recent years, Bersih 3.0 drew tens of thousands of citizens to the streets, eliciting a physical, legal, and financial backlash from the government and local police. Government representatives and pro-government media outlets accused organizers of trying to incite racial riots, politically destabilize the country, and oust the government. In this article we focus attention on the antecedents and consequences of the 3.0 rally to investigate the principal actors' contending perspectives about the appropriate uses for public spaces and what this tells us about the future of democratization in Malaysia. As a country controlled by a regime intent on maintaining electoral authoritarianism to ensure its longevity, we interrogate whether such on the ground activities have helped to subvert the political status quo or pushed the ruling coalition into further entrenching its imperious rule.

Keywords: Malaysia, Bersih, Socio-political movement, democratization, space/place

Contemporary scholarly literature about space/place in Malaysia is largely dominated by work emanating from critical urban geographers. Much of this literature focuses on the design, implementation, and economic antecedents of urban infrastructure within Kuala Lumpur (KL) (e.g. Bunnell and Das 2010; Bunnell 1999; Yeoh 2005), the administrative capital Putrajaya, and the Multimedia Super Corridor (now called MSC Malaysia) (e.g. Bunnell 2004; Evers and Nordin 2012; King 2008; Lepawsky 2005, 2009; Moser 2012). Complementary, but limited, research also has examined the relationship between politically oriented art and Malaysia's urban landscape, investigating the ways in which space/place is controlled by the authorities and re-appropriated by citizens (e.g. Hoffstaedter 2009; Khoo 2008; Rajendran and Wee 2008). Others have considered the political obstacles facing specific demographic segments of Malaysia's urban landscape in their struggles for ownership of public and private space (e.g. Baxstrom 2008; Bunnell 2002; Nonini 1998); the socio-economic implications of rapid urbanization (e.g. Sioong 2008); and land rights, especially for indigenous peoples in non-urban

regions (e.g. Doolittle 2010; Wong 2007). The relationship between what Malaysian citizens think about public spaces and how they actually use these spaces for embodied political engagement remains relatively uncharted territory.[1]

Mass protests and rallies against ruling authorities are not new to the Malaysian political landscape, spanning back to the 1946 union protests against British rule.[2] Since the late 1990s, however, the presence of large-scale protest movements promoting an agenda of political reform (i.e., accountable institutions, fairness, and anti-corruption) has become a key distinguishing feature of the country's political environment.[3] The most renowned of the present-day Malaysian protest movements is the Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections, commonly known as Bersih ('clean' in Malay). Rooted in the *reformasi* movement of the late 1990s, Bersih has played a prominent role in both reinvigorating opposition forces in Malaysia and in renewing the prominence of calls for political reform in national dialogue (Welsh 2011). This movement has two distinguishing features. The first is its success in leveraging social media platforms to distribute information, counter government-controlled media, and to mobilize and organize its supporters.[4] Second, the extent to which its support cuts across the country's diverse ethnic, racial, and religious demographics. This has impeded the government's capacity to equate curtailing of civil liberties with a need to quell ethnic/racial divisions (Welsh 2011).

On 28 April 2012, Bersih organized a large-scale rally, Bersih 3.0, in KL to lobby for electoral reform. The third gathering of its kind in recent years, this event drew tens of thousands of citizens to KL's Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square), eliciting a physical, legal, and financial backlash from the authorities. Government representatives and pro-government media outlets accused the organizers of trying to incite racial riots, politically destabilize the country, and oust the government.

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[1] A notable exception is Garry Rodan (2013).

[2] Of particular note are the rallies associated with Operation Lalang (or Weeding Operation). In October 1987, the government arrested over 100 people under the Internal Security Act (ISA), including some prominent political figures, and revoked the licenses of four domestic newspapers.

[3] Some well-known examples include: protests organized by environmental groups against the Bakun Dam Project and the Australian rare earths mining company, Lynas Corporation Ltd., which now operates a refining plant in Kuantan; protests calling for the protection of minority rights such as the 2007 Hindu Rights Action Force (HINDRAF) rally mounted by a coalition of 62 NGOs; the 2007 Walk for Justice in Putrajaya initiated by the Malaysian Bar Council to promote judicial reforms; the 2008 Protes Harga Minyak, organized by a group of NGOs against gasoline price hikes and the rising costs of basic standard living items; and the 2009 Anti-ISA protest. See, as examples, S. Nair (2007) and Postill (2014).

[4] Postill (2014) chronicles changes in the Malaysian online environment, noting that although blogs were important to the *reformasi* movement, Facebook and Twitter, along with Internet-enabled mobile devices, have reached a wider swathe of the domestic population.

In this article we focus attention on the antecedents and consequences of the Bersih 3.0 rally to investigate principal actors' contending perspectives about 'appropriate' uses of public spaces and what this reveals about processes of democratization in Malaysia. Our interest rests in the tensions between government efforts to control public spaces when and where politically expedient, and the counter actions of those struggling for electoral reform. Examining these contrasting views offers a valuable vantage point for assessing how the Bersih movement's occupation of public spaces in the pursuit of its political objectives is challenging the established political order. We posit that using public places for mass protests and rallies is a manifestation of a form of embodied political participation that associates democracy and democratization with participatory and dialogical processes transcending the act of voting; a form of Habermasian communicative action (Habermas 1984). Seen in this light, democracy is both a means and an end insomuch as it involves agency at the level of individuals and the creation of institutional structures to guide and protect relations between a citizenry and its governors.

Our discussion opens with a brief overview of Malaysia's political landscape, the goals and composition of the Bersih movement, and of the events surrounding the three Bersih rallies prior to the 2013 general election. In the second section we consider what the embodied political participation advanced by the Bersih movement tells us about democracy and democratization in Malaysia. In the third and final section, we discuss the influence of these activities on the governing regime.

For this study purposeful qualitative sampling was used to identify 'information rich' individuals possessing considerable in-depth knowledge about Bersih and its objectives, and of resistance efforts taking place at ground level. Our analysis draws upon information gathered from 37 key informant interviews with representatives of various Malaysia-based human rights NGOs, academics, alternative/critical media practitioners, members of opposition parties, and Bersih's Steering Committee. Given our desire to obtain qualitative data about the interviewees' opinions, views, and reactions to various issues relating to the electoral reform coalition and the future of democracy in the country, a semi-structured exploratory interview approach was used for these face-to-face encounters. This technique enabled interviewees to explain more complex ideas and issues, and to offer insights into the kinds of questions they believed researchers should be asking.

The majority of interviews were coordinated via email prior to fieldwork, relying upon the researchers' existing professional contacts in the region. Before conducting the interviews, we identified key themes to be addressed in our discussions based on the interviewees' area(s) of authority: the composition, actions, and goals of Bersih; the history of, and potential for, embodied resistance in Malaysia; the role of social media vis-à-vis political resistance in the country; and the historical and future trajectory of democratization in Malaysia and how it intersects with 'Asian values'. Many of the interviewees straddled more than one of the above categories (e.g. an academic who is also a

member of an opposition party and writes for an alternative media outlet). In such instances, we customized our interview protocol accordingly.

Since the fieldwork undergirding our study was based, in part, on a flexible emergent design, in which elements of the research project emerged as the study proceeded and as new information came to light via the interviewees, some individuals were identified and contacted once we were in the field. All interviews were conducted between August 2010 and August 2012 in KL and in the state of Penang. The information presented below from these interviews is supplemented with published domestic and international media reports, and relevant scholarly works.

Background to the Bersih movement

Malaysia's political system is based on a multi-party, bicameral, federal parliamentary structure, with the King (Yang di-Pertuan Agong in Malay)[5] as the constitutional head of state. The 222 representatives comprising the lower house – Dewan Rakyat, House of Representatives – are elected via a first-past-the-post system. The country has been governed by the Barisan Nasional (BN, National Front) coalition, and its predecessor, the Alliance (Perikatan), since gaining its independence from British rule in 1957. The BN coalition is comprised of 13 national political parties with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) at the helm. The current Prime Minister, Najib Razak, was appointed in 2009 after his predecessor, Abdullah Badawi, failed to secure a two-thirds majority for the BN in the 2008 general election. Despite repeated government guarantees to ensure democratic elections, a wide range of NGOs, civil society activists, and opposition politicians maintain that Malaysia's electoral process is neither free nor fair and that it unduly benefits the BN.[6] Long standing concerns are regularly expressed about a host of issues, including gerrymandering, unequal access to government-controlled broadcast and print media, postal voting, the failure to use indelible ink to impede fraud during voting, irregularities with the registered voters' roll, and the impartiality of the Electoral Commission (EC).

These and other related concerns about the need for electoral reform in Malaysia hastened the establishment of the Bersih movement in November 2006.[7] Its first rally, Bersih 1.0, took place on 10 November 2007, and drew tens

[5] The current king is Sultan Abdul Halim of Kedah.

[6] For a historically grounded critique of changes to Malaysia's electoral processes, see Wong, Chin and Othman (2010).

[7] In July 2005, a Joint Action Committee for Electoral Reform was created by a number of opposition politicians and NGO representatives. An 'Electoral Reform Workshop' was held a few months later in KL, which produced a Joint Communiqué endorsed by 25 NGOS and five political parties that defined 'the long-term objectives and the immediate working goals of the coalition (Bersih 2006). Today, the Steering Committee 'comprises members from the political parties, as well as representatives from the following NGOs: Suara Rakyat Malaysia (Suaram),

of thousands of citizens[8] to four public places in downtown KL: a local department store, two mosques, and a light rail transit station. During the rally, participants from each location attempted to make their way to the King's palace to petition royal support for electoral reform. Citing the failure of rally organizers to obtain the requisite permits, the government deemed the gathering illegal. This decision was subsequently used to justify the erection of police barricades blocking rally participants from gathering in public places, as well as the use of tear gas and chemically laced water cannons to disperse the crowds.

In the general election which took place four months later, on 8 March 2008, the BN was denied a two-thirds majority for the first time in its history. The primary opposition parties – the People's Justice Party (PKR), Democratic Action Party (DAP), and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) – won 82 of the 222 seats in the federal parliament. After the election, these three parties formed the Pakatan Rakyat (PR, People's Pact or People's Alliance) coalition, with Anwar Ibrahim, one of the three leaders of the PR coalition, assuming the position of Leader of the Opposition of Malaysia.[9] While navigating the secular-religious divide among coalition members has since proven to be challenging, the members of the coalition share a common "interest in improving governance, controlling corruption, strengthening the rule of law, and bringing about more equitable development" (Welsh 2013, 138).

In the immediate aftermath of what many observers dubbed a 'political tsunami', the BN appeared willing to address the demands of the Bersih movement, mandating the EC, which falls under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office, to examine potential electoral reforms (Subramaniam 2012). Coinciding with these developments, Bersih disassociated itself from formal affiliations with any political party, defining itself as a civil society movement advocating for changes in the Malaysian political system writ large (Bersih 2013).

In early 2011, Bersih chided the government and the EC for continued inaction on electoral reform, and scheduled a second rally, Bersih 2.0, for July 9. It also added another four demands to its original petition for electoral change: "A minimum 21-days campaign period", "Strengthening public institutions", "Stop corruption", and "Stop dirty politics" (Bersih 2011). Organizers of this event wanted to coordinate a large-scale Walk for Democracy through the streets of KL. They were denied a permit for the rally, meaning that any such activity

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Women's Development Collective (WDC) and Writers Alliance for Media Independence (WAMI)', and the coalition as a whole includes 84 NGOs (Bersih 2014a, 2014b).

[8] Various government and mainstream media sources place the number at 4,000, while some Bersih supporters suggest the number to be as high as 100,000.

[9] In the five years preceding his expulsion from UMNO, and subsequent arrest in 1998, Anwar served as Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. In 1999, he was imprisoned for corruption and sodomy, charges that most observers consider to be politically motivated and spurious.

would be deemed illegal and forcibly shut down. Bersih accepted, as an alternative, the government's offer to use of Merdeka Stadium as a venue for the event.[10] Shortly before the rally was scheduled to take place, the government reneged on its offer, authorized the arrest of hundreds of politically influential individuals, and declared the wearing and distribution of yellow T-shirts worn by Bersih supporters illegal (Teoh 2011b). On the day of the rally, those seeking entry into the grounds had to contend with a sizable, intimidating police presence along with police-enforced road and public transportation closures in and around the stadium.[11] More than 1,600 people were arrested, most of whom were released by end of day. The government's news agency, *Bernama*, described the event as an illegal rally "meant to serve the political agenda of the opposition parties" in which the demonstrators defied "warnings to disperse and instead charged at the police", thereby forcing them "to take the necessary action under the law, including using tear gas and water cannons" (*Utusan* 2011). The government then claimed that the distribution of photographic and video evidence of excessive police force was little more than "a ploy to raise the ire of the people against the police" (Gooch 2011b). In the aftermath of Bersih 2.0, the government established a Parliamentary Select Committee to further examine the issue of electoral reform. In April 2012, the committee released a report setting out 22 recommendations proposing modest changes to the electoral system.[12] The Bersih movement dismissed the document as failing to adequately address its concerns and called upon the EC to resign and for international observers to be invited to oversee the upcoming 2013 general election (Bersih 2012a). It also began preparing for a third rally, scheduled to take place on 28 April 2012.

The organizers of Bersih 3.0 opted to hold a peaceful 'sit-in' at Dataran Merdeka, the iconic square of independence, with simultaneous rallies taking place in ten cities throughout Malaysia and in 35 other countries (Bersih 2012b). Three days before the scheduled sit-in, the government once again offered Merdeka Stadium as an alternative venue. Rally organizers declined this overture, citing logistical difficulties and concerns that moving to the stadium would situate the rally out of the public eye and, thus, impede fellow citizens from fully appreciating the movement's size, passion, and diversity (Chooi 2012a). Government officials retorted that Bersih's stance was "irrational" and "stubbornly". The mayor of KL warned, "We will do whatever necessary to carry out our duties. We are guardians of Dataran Merdeka even though it is public property" (Yunus 2012) and further stated, "Generally we permit sports and cultural (entertainment) events as these events are beneficial to the public, but we reject events of a political nature" (Nie 2012). Other government officials asserted that the countrywide rally was not a "national event" and that it posed

[10] The stadium is located in downtown KL and has a seating capacity of 25,000 people.
[11] Government estimates put the number of participants at 10,000, whereas some Bersih members cite closer to 50,000 (e.g. *Al Jazeera* 2011).
[12] For a critique of the committee and its report, see Rodan (2013, p. 30). For a summary of the recommendations, see Chooi (2012b).

serious "safety" concerns which called for enhanced policing (*Human Rights Watch* 2012, Palani 2012).

This gathering also was declared illegal, with the police given orders to shut down all major transportation routes in and out of Dataran Merdeka and to bar Bersih supporters from entering the square. Nonetheless, the rally attracted the largest crowd to date. Estimates of the total number of participants vary wildly, with the government claiming only 22,000 people, Bersih suggesting upwards of 300,000 people, and some domestic media sources citing between 80,000 and 100,000 (Alibeyoglu 2012; *New Straits Times* 2012a; Pathmawathy 2012). Although it focused predominantly on electoral reform, the Bersih 3.0 rally also included participants voicing concerns about other issues such as environmental protection, religious rights, a new health insurance scheme, and educational reform (Welsh 2012). As the rally drew to a close, skirmishes broke out between a small group of participants and the police. Rally organizers insisted that the aggressive actions (e.g. breaking through barricades, throwing objects at the police, overturning a police car) of a select few were clearly unacceptable, but that the violent retaliation of the authorities was disproportionate and unwarranted (Alibeyoglu 2012; Ambiga 2012). Shortly after the rally, Bersih co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan and steering committee member, Maria Chin Abdullah, were invoiced by KL City Hall for RM 351,203.45 ($115,632 USD) for the chaos and destruction of public property that had resulted from the illegal use of a public space.[13]

A key struggle for Bersih, and one that it shares with other social movements around the world (e.g., the Arab Spring and Occupy movements), is to transform public places like Dataran Merdeka into spaces where citizens can engage in diverse political activities, including those that challenge the established political order. The focus here then is twofold. First, to counter "*publicity without democracy*", a concept David J. Madden advances to describe the phenomenon of "the public that speaks of access, expression, inclusion, and creativity but which nonetheless is centered upon surveillance, order, and the bolstering of corporate capitalism" (Madden 2010, 189, emphasis in original). Second, to strive for "a further reassembling of the *res publica* so that it can actually function as a source of democratic transformation" (Madden 2010, 189). To this end, the political contestations surrounding Bersih's use of public spaces for political rallies offers valuable insight into competing understandings of, and struggles for, greater democratization in Malaysia.

[13] Some of the line items of the bill include food and beverage costs for the police, their transport expenses, and the cost to erect barricades. At the time of writing, the bill has not been paid and the government has not pursued follow-up measures. See Kamal (2012).

What do the Bersih rallies tell us about democratization in Malaysia?

One recent initiative from the Najib government directly impacting upon the relationship between space/place and democratization in Malaysia is the *Peaceful Assembly Act* 2012. This law, which came into effect only a few days before the Bersih 3.0 rally, replaced Section 27 of the *Police Act* 1967 that dealt with the powers and duties of the police in regulating public assemblies, meetings, and processions. The government promotes the *Act* as enhancing political freedom and democracy for Malaysians, and as being fully compliant with Article 10 of the Federal Constitution, which guarantees citizens' freedom of speech, assembly, and association. Yet, this legislation forbids, on the basis of protecting the national interest, all gatherings within 50m of prohibited places including, "dams, reservoirs, water catchment areas, water treatment plants, electricity generating stations, petrol stations, hospitals, fire stations, airports, railways, public transport terminals, ports, canals, docks, wharves, piers, bridges marinas, places of worship, kindergartens and schools" (*The Malaysian Bar* 2011a). Street protests are likewise banned, with gatherings restricted to designated areas such as public halls and stadiums (*BBC News*; Gooch 2011a). While police permits are no longer needed for mass assemblies, organizers are now required to give ten days' notice to the leading police district official who is meant to respond within five days with the specified restrictions and conditions to be followed (Teoh 2011a). Equally noteworthy is the fact that non-citizens and youth under the age of 15 are not allowed to participate in assemblies, and nobody under the age of 21 is permitted to organize such gatherings (*The Malaysian Bar* 2011a).

In a densely populated, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic environment like KL, these restrictions essentially negate the possibility of legally organizing an assembly of any significant size. Additionally, Section 21(1) of the *Act* gives the police a wide berth of control, empowering officers to arrest "any person at the assembly [who] does any act or makes any statement which has a tendency to promote feelings of ill-will, discontent or hostility amongst the public at large or does anything which will disturb public tranquility" (*The Malaysian Bar* 2011b). Human rights and freedom of expression experts from the United Nations have strongly denounced the *Act*, arguing that many of its restrictions are "not justifiable under international law" and contravene basic democratic principles (*UN News Centre* 2011).[14] Among our interview sample, individuals concurred. They repeatedly commented on the importance of peaceful public assembly in Malaysia; however, the majority of respondents also noted that they had not given much thought to the relationship between space/place and democracy. Most interviewees, including those directly associated with Bersih, focused their attention more on pragmatic considerations such as the accessibility, size, and visibility of rally locales. It seems plausible that this finding is influenced, in

[14] A landmark judgement by the Court of Appeals in late April 2014, upheld this view by ruling that criminalizing organizers of peaceful assemblies for failing to provide prior notice to the police is unconstitutional. See Palani (2104).

part, by the prominence of contemporary narratives averring the democratizing power of emergent digital media.

As is well-documented, Malaysians endure a wide range of direct and indirect constraints on their media access and use.[15] In this environment, social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube* serve as effective tools for providing citizens with hitherto unprecedented capabilities for producing and consuming content. Over the past several years, social media-based commentary both inside and outside of the country has exalted the power of digital platforms to transform Malaysia's political environment. The 1999 launch of *Malaysiakini*, along with key listservs such as *Sangkancil*, is often described as the catalyst that pried open the government's stranglehold over domestic media and, in the process, helped the opposition to perform well in that year's general election. Much of the discussions surrounding the 2008 general election also focused heavily on the role of social media in contributing to the opposition's success.[16] Likewise, before, during, and after the Bersih rallies, citizens used a range of social media platforms to coordinate the event, disseminate information, facilitate discussion, and to counter government and mainstream media claims about the movement. Not surprisingly then, the government has actively sought to control and monitor online political activities, as demonstrated by recent amendments to Malaysia's *Evidence Act* 1950 removing the presumption of innocence for many online activities, thus rendering website owners and publishers responsible for any and all content hosted on their sites (*Centre for Independent Journalism* 2012).

With attention focused, quite understandably, on the political benefits accruing from access to online space, thinking and talking about access to and usage of material public space does not seem to have been prioritized.[17] And yet, the majority of our interviewees indicated that over the last several years they have seen contestation bubble up to the surface both online *and* in the streets. Instead of privileging the democratizing potential of social media at the expense of the benefits accruing from embodied political action, they emphasized the importance of using online and 'real life' activities in tandem to achieve political objectives. These views echo the claims of Marcelo Lopes de Souza and Barbara Lipietz who argue that while new forms of technology often play a critical role in political uprisings, they have not "rendered face-to-face contact, go-ins, sit-ins and physical presence in general, superfluous" (de Souza and Lipietz 2011, 620; Kimmelman 2011; P. Nair 2012).

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[15] Between 2012 and 2014 Malaysia dropped in *Reporters Without Borders*' World Press Freedom Index from 122 to 147 (out of 180 countries) (2014).

[16] In both instances, the emphasis on digital technologies systematically undervalued the candidates' off-line, or embodied, political activities. See Smeltzer and Lepawsky (2010).

[17] One well-known exception worth noting is the creative resistance activities of Wong Chin Huat, a political scientist, activist, and popular contributor to (the recently folded) online news site *The Nut Graph*, who has helped organize peaceful gatherings in places like the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) for the sole purpose of promoting citizens' right to assemble and to challenge the *Peaceful Assembly Act*.

Indeed, the majority of interviewees indicated that they have seen a positive shift in the willingness of citizens to *publicly* defy government orders in the name of political change, and in how these individuals view themselves – as both citizens and 'protestors' with rights and liberties that must be respected. Respondents emphasized that the most important impact of Bersih has been its success in catalyzing citizens to more openly engage in politics writ large, giving participants the sense that they are part of a broader, pan-Malaysian coalition of concerned citizens. They also repeatedly highlighted that the movement was about citizens working together to create a better Malaysia for everyone as opposed to focusing on specific religious, ethnic, or special interest groups. To this end, there was a widespread belief among interviewees that Bersih has played a positive role in politicizing a younger generation, which they claimed the government has actively sought to keep disengaged from politics. The recurring theme was that the movement has opened the door for 'regular' or 'average' citizens to voice their dissent and to see other like-minded individuals engaging in similar activities. In the words of an interviewee working for an NGO, "I've never seen this kind of mutual support in the country before."

Moreover, as citizens take to the streets, parks, squares, and other outwardly public locales to express their political dissatisfaction, it becomes increasingly difficult for mainstream media and governments to ignore their concerns, especially in an environment saturated with access to social media platforms (Appadurai 2001; Dhaliwal 2012; Juris 2012). Concomitantly, many interviewees pointed to the role the Bersih rallies have played in revealing to the wider population the extent to which the government tries to control citizens' freedom of speech, assembly, and expression. As one blogger with whom we spoke argued, the government's heavy-handed reaction to the Bersih 2.0 rally "painted the government in a really bad light for a lot of Malaysians."

The nexus between, on the one hand, government efforts to stifle embodied politics in public spaces and, on the one hand, the responses of concerned citizens to such constraints, offers a vantage point from which to examine contending perspectives on the meaning of democracy and democratization. In the case of Malaysia, the government's long-standing depiction of what democratization means for the country is intertwined with the position it advances regarding the notion of Asian values. This concept revolves around deference to authority and the veneration of collectivity. As Cherian George explains, although the government does not deny that "civil and political rights matter", it frames "such claims as Western in origin, excessively contentious, and opposed to Asian values that are said to emphasize consensus and harmony" (George 2005, 906). The Asian values argument reached its apex in the 1990s under former Prime Minister Mahathir, but remains a mainstay of a national political dialogue that valourizes collective socio-economic priorities above political development and civil liberties. Beyond contributing to economic growth, it is presumed that citizens need not engage in collective action unless it directly promotes internal harmony (e.g. parent-teacher associations,

religious affiliations, charity organizations, sports teams). In other words, the government aspires to constrain the non-economic activities of citizens to the private realm and assumes that political activities not directly supportive of the ruling coalition will harm the country (Slater 2012). This position was aptly summarized by one interviewee who noted that, "supporting the opposition or wanting electoral reform is painted in the mainstream media and by the government as the same as being a traitor."

Seen in this light, democracy and democratization are understood to be narrowly circumscribed to the electoral process of voting as opposed to a broader, more dialogically based framework for structuring political and social relations (Held 2006). To this end, it is generally agreed that, like a growing number of other countries around the world, Malaysia's political landscape operates on the basis of electoral authoritarianism (Case 2009, 2011; Slater 2012; Tapsell 2013) in which the façade of democratic elections is undermined by electoral manipulation and sporadic or ineffective institutional reforms (Tapsell 2013). Given Bersih's advancement of free and fair elections and its support for the rights of citizens to exercise freedoms and liberties in accordance with Article 10 of the Federal Constitution, its rallies materialize struggles over the meaning of democracy within the Malaysian context and tensions between what Isaiah Berlin calls citizens' positive and negative freedoms/liberties. Positive freedoms comprise constitutionally protected rights that provide citizens with the *freedom to* participate in a self-determined society and to be their "own master" (Berlin 1958, 203). Article 119 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, for example, enshrines positive liberty insofar as it guarantees citizens the right to vote. A narrow reading of positive freedoms maintains that holding elections on a regular basis is sufficient for promoting and protecting self-determination, and for registering dissatisfaction with governing powers. The principal shortcoming with this position is its failure to acknowledge the broader elements of political engagement central to liberal-oriented normative models of democracy (Held 2006).

By comparison, negative freedom refers to the absence of barriers, obstacles, or coercion by an outside body, including protection from state and institutional intrusion. Put simply, it is *freedom from* interference by others. Malaysian citizens' negative freedoms are protected in Article 10 of the country's constitution which guarantees freedom of speech, assembly, and association. However, this protection against external interference is heavily qualified by Article 10(2) which specifies that the latter rights are subject to parliament's authority to impose by law "such restrictions as it deems necessary or expedient in the interest of the security of the Federation or any part thereof, …. public order or morality" (*The Malaysian Bar* 2011a). Seen through this lens, constraining the activities of the Bersih movement is a necessary infringement on the negative freedoms of rally participants, so as to safeguard the negative freedoms of other citizens from its potentially destructive interference. This view is clearly articulated in comments made by Prime Minister Najib shortly after Bersih 2.0: "What the government did with regard to the Bersih illegal rally was to avoid any incident that could lead to rioting… When a large-scale street

demonstration is held, rioting, breaking into shops, assaults and counter-assaults may take place" (*Bernama* 2011). It also is evident in claims made by Kuala Lumpur police chief, Datuk Mohmad Salleh, regarding the Public Assembly Act 2012 which he avers "guaranteed the freedom of expression through the proper channel while ensuring that public order remained unaffected to protect the right to freedom of others" (*New Straits Times* 2013).

In seeking to legitimize the constraints imposed on negative freedoms, the government frequently draws upon the example of the KL-based race riots of 1969.[18] For more than four decades it has routinely employed this crisis as a pretext to justify affirmative action policies benefiting the Bumiputra (or Bumiputera, the majority Malay population and some indigenous peoples) (Ahmad and Kadir 2005; Case 2010), and as evidence to explain: i) why Malaysians are not yet ready for Western-style liberal democracy; and ii) why public safety and national security require vigilant control and monitoring of public spaces/places (Slater 2012, 20; see also Loh Kok Wah 2009). During a panel hosted by the online news site *Malaysiakini* shortly after the Bersih 3.0 rally, an UMNO Member of Parliament reiterated this position, arguing that after Malaysia gained its independence, "there were probably more freedom… i.e. democracy. But because of that freedom we ended up with… racial clash of 1969 and the government had to step in."[19] Around the same time, the Former Inspector General of Malaysia's police, Tun Hanif Omar, linked the Bersih movement with communism, announcing to the press that he recognized

> from the photos and broadcast images (taken from the [Bersih 3.0] rally), the pro-communist people who were involved in the 1970s demonstrations…. The tactics of using provocateurs to cause the demonstrators to clash with police and to bring children along in the hope they would get injured were tactics learnt from past pro-communist demonstrations (*New Straits Times* 2012b).

The continual rehashing of such familiar and divisive tropes suggests that the ruling coalition is wilfully ignoring how the country has changed over the last several decades. The heterogeneity of the Bersih movement is one such indicator of the shift, as is the diversity of the PR opposition coalition. Indeed, the Bersih movement has advanced a counter narrative regarding the legacy of the 1969 riots that highlights the positive benefits of its ethnic, racial, and religious variegation. This discourse is present in comments made by Ambiga Sreenevasan in a 2012 interview with *Penang Monthly* in which she states: "What is wonderful about this movement [Bersih] is that it is about getting over the fear of May 13. The different races were helping each other during the

[18] For alternative and nuanced perspectives of the riots, see, for example, Butcher (2001); Soong (2008).

[19] To view the entire debate, see:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmNJ9Nkcd9c&fb_source=message

rallies. It was all very moving" (Bersih 2012b; see also Subramaniam 2012). We also observed it in a number of interviews where respondents stressed that despite the extremity of the provocation, neither the 2009 'cow head incident' in which some citizens carrying a severed cow's head to the Selangor State government in protest of plans to build a Hindu temple in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood in Shah Alam, nor the anonymous leaving of pig heads outside mosques in 2010 and 2011, resulted in rioting. These interviewees maintained that if such egregious acts of disrespect failed to incite ethnic, racial, or religious rioting, there is no basis for suggesting that peaceful gatherings of citizens representing the country's ethnic, racial, and religious diversity will threaten public safety and national security.

On the whole, there seemed to be a general feeling among those with whom we spoke that they were living through an important transformation in Malaysia's political landscape wherein their fellow citizens appear more willing to challenge the government over broad-based political issues. Indeed, a majority of our interviewees offered optimistic appraisals about the ways in which political endeavours have shifted away from being foremost ethnically, racially, and/or religiously based toward more cross-sectorial cooperation aimed at addressing larger issues of common concern. The question remains, however, whether their political agency can discernibly weaken the government's electoral authoritarianism. It is to this issue that the discussion now turns.

Can embodied actions undermine electoral authoritarianism?

Debate abounds about whether Malaysia's variant of electoral authoritarianism is "regime-sustaining" or "regime-subverting" (Case 2011, 439). Proponents of the former perspective maintain that despite manipulating elections, the government remains sufficiently viable to "perform legitimating, co-opting, or information functions" thus protecting its grasp on power, the broad interests of elites, and its permanence (Case 2011, 438). The opposing view counters that electoral authoritarianism can actually subvert the governing regime because "manipulated elections, in their glaring inequity, fuel societal resentments", thereby fomenting the politicization of citizens and enhancing the scope of participation of opposition parties (Case 2011, 438).

Under former Prime Minister Badawi, who seemed to loosen the reins of power just enough to suggest his administration was becoming more responsive to citizens' democratic aspirations, the government appeared to be operating broadly in accordance with the tenets of the former, regime-sustaining model of electoral authoritarianism. However, things began to unravel for the BN with the opposition's strong performance in the 2008 general election. Under Prime Minister Najib, the government has actively cracked down on political activities challenging the governing regime (Abbott 2011; Tapsell 2013; Welsh 2011). Nonetheless, large numbers of people have continued to engage in Bersih-related activities, as well as those of other oppositional movements, suggesting that the government's electoral authoritarianism may, in fact, result in the

regime being subverted. For example, tens of thousands of people attended the 12 January 2013 Gathering of the People's Rising or People's Awakening Rally (Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat in Malay), calling on the government to address a wide range of political issues spanning from clean elections to environmental protection to women's rights (Anthony 2013). A few months later, in the 5 May 2013 general election, the PR opposition coalition performed even better than it had in 2008, capturing the majority of Malaysia's popular vote, but failing to secure overall victory.[20] The BN's share of the vote dropped to below 48% for the first time since 1957. In the aftermath, tens of thousands of Malaysians once again gathered on numerous occasions in different parts of the country to protest what they consider to be a fraudulently won victory for the BN, accusing the government of granting greater representation to areas that tend to vote for the ruling coalition, and of facilitating irregularities in the voter rolls (*Al Jazeera* 2013). Although not under the banner of Bersih per se, the protesters have called for the resignation of the EC in light of continued concerns about its impartiality.

Of course, the precise impact of the Bersih movement on the election outcome cannot be measured. There are a host of other factors that must also be taken into consideration, including Najib's lacklustre 1Malaysia initiative of nation-building, the rising cost of living in the country, ongoing corruption, and issues relating to the rights of minority groups (e.g. Liow 2013; Noor 2013; Welsh 2013). We can, however, say with confidence that since 2008, the Bersih movement has contributed to, and benefited from, an expanded civil society in which "exposés on corruption have become the norm; and the scope and content of political commentary have broadened considerably to include more open criticism of political leaders as well as much-needed attention to issues ranging from the removal of draconian laws to economic policy" (Welsh 2013, 138). These changes lead Postill to conclude that Bersih's impact on local politics is "indisputable" (2014, 94). In terms of tangible outcomes, the pressure the movement exerted on the government helped contribute to establishing the Parliamentary Select Committee (noted above). While the ultimate results of this undertaking may be wanting, one interviewee described the pressure as a critical "building block" for "putting the institutions and culture in place" that are essential to a broader notion of democracy within the Malaysian context.

Nonetheless, there is a need for caution here, lest the movement's role in energizing opposition forces be overestimated. As Garry Rodan observes,

> Middle-class NGOs will continue to play a valuable role in reform movements and in galvanizing forces committed to removing the BN from office. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Bersih movement. Yet this role should not be overstated. By far the largest mass mobilization – the 12 January 2013 Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat, or Gathering of the People's Rising – was principally organized by opposition parties, chiefly PAS, in

[20] BN captured 133 seats of 222; the opposition PR coalition, 89. See *CBC* (2013).

> protest to a range of BN policies. It is when the memberships and support bases of these parties are fully harnessed that mobilization of civil society forces is most formidable – within and beyond Bersih (Rodan 2014, 837-38).

The growing size and regularity of Malaysians' participation in embodied political actions therefore raises questions about the long-term sustainability of the country's variant of electoral authoritarianism. In an effort to mitigate any further challenges to its authority, Najib's government has promised to repeal or modify some of the country's more repressive laws, including the Internal Security Act (ISA), which allowed for detention without trial (*The Star* 2011). In its place is a new Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act (SOSMA), which permits consultation with a lawyer and the notification of detainee relatives. Critics point out, however, that individuals under investigation may be held by police for 28 days before being charged or released (Case 2013). Moreover, and despite a 2012 promise to repeal the country's Sedition Act (*Al Jazeera* 2013; *The Guardian* 2012), the government continues to employ this legislation as a basis for arresting specific individuals who have protested the 2013 election process and outcome, including the PRK's Vice President, Tian Chua, and student activist Adam Adli.[21] The operational leitmotif of the Najib government may thus be characterized as reflecting a compendium of contradictory stances. For example, in allowing civil society some leeway to engage in politically oriented activities, the government has appeared to make space for a modicum of democracy. Yet, when such latitude fails to satisfy demands for various social, economic and political reforms, the government quickly cracks down on any activities it deems as challenging its continuance (Giersdorf and Croissant 2011). It seems plausible that such contradictions are in no small measure linked to tensions within the BN and UMNO. In light of ongoing jostling for power, rumblings about corruption, and the Najib government's inability to address issues related to higher costs of living in the country, Mahathir's son, Mukhriz Mahathir, has publicly warned that the BN must change its ways or risk losing power in the 14th general election (*The Malaysian Insider* 2014).[22] Further complicating matters for both BN and the opposition PR is the challenge of trying to keep together their respective coalitions. As Farish Noor points out, just as UMNO struggles to give pride of place to Islamic concerns without diminishing the status of its non-Muslim allies, within the PR coalition PAS has not been "able to foreground its demand for an Islamic state in Malaysia" (Noor 2013, 95).

Although our respondents unanimously expressed seeing a shift in the country in terms of citizens becoming more politically active, they also noted that, as the

[21] The latter was detained after he called for street rallies to protest the electoral fraud that many believe marred the election.

[22] Internal rumblings within BN and UMNO are also apparent within the domestic blogosphere. A number of posts critiquing Najib have appeared on, for example, both Mahathir's blog, chedet.cc, and that of blogger Syed Akbar Ali, syedsoutsidethebox.blogspot.com.

examples above illustrate, this shift may drive the government to be more defensive and less responsive to their needs. None believed that the government was going to fundamentally change regardless of the pressures faced from political movements. The underlying premise in all the discussions was that one should not underestimate the power of the regime to hold on to power nor the tactics it might employ to do so. The comments of one NGO-based interviewee concisely summed up the dominant view among those with whom we spoke when he noted that "the government isn't going to change its stripes."

A key question in this context then is: What will the government do next? The future of Malaysia's democracy is predicated on, among other things, the opposition coalition's capacity to challenge the BN's hold on power and to offer a viable framework for moving forward in a post-BN ruled Malaysia. The central issue is not whether the opposition coalition wins the next general election, but rather the very plausibility of such an outcome in the wake of long-standing impediments to the equitable participation of opposition interests (*Freedom House* 2013). In addition to fair elections, this requires that the opposition remains both cohesive and capable of offering an alternative to the BN that appeals to a wide enough range of citizens. This is no easy task, for it must also be able to persuade voters that neither the BN nor authoritarianism are prerequisites for political stability and economic prosperity.[23]

Our inquiry began by asking what we might learn about processes of democratization in Malaysia by investigating contending perspectives regarding the uses of public spaces. Our findings suggest that the differing perspectives about the 'appropriate' use of public spaces is illustrative of a classic tension in democratic thought: the dichotomy between equating democracy with people taking to the streets in political protest as part of their responsibilities as engaged citizens versus equating it with the presence of legal frameworks for voting and for defining the relationship between governed and governors. In other words, the core issue is the tension between democracy as individual agency versus democracy as structure.

Through its use of public spaces and embodied political action, the Bersih movement has helped to foment the former: increased levels of political engagement and awareness of the importance of such engagement. Here we see a citizen-led movement applauding the civic virtue and value of communicative action in both on- and off-line locales. By contrast, the government's position aligns more with the latter as it openly equates democracy in Malaysia foremost with voting in elections and the registering of political concerns through 'proper' institutional channels. Hence, the use of public spaces for large-scale embodied political activities aimed at questioning the established political order is actively and forcefully constrained. Further evidence of this can be seen in the

[23] As Tajuddin contends, many Malaysians support, "the central role of the state in providing stable, paternalistic governance for its citizens. This has made any struggle for democratization in Malaysia subordinate to a larger *weltanshauung* – the belief that the state's delivery of strong economic performance benefitting its citizens would ultimately justify the means of undemocratic processes" (2012, xvi). See also Slater (2013, 20).

government's reaction to the post-2013 general election period, declaring electoral fraud rallies illegal and warning citizens not to attend such events lest they face serious consequences.[24]

Our findings also point to the need for caution in equating the Bersih movement's apparent success in catalyzing political engagement with fostering progressive change at the institutional level. Put simply, there is no *direct* link between citizens' increased participation in embodied political activities in public spaces and the establishment of more liberal-oriented institutional structures; participation at the ground level does not ipso facto translate into government level democratic transformation. Just as importantly, we must also recognize that while growing political awareness and engagement do contribute to change, change is a dynamic process that often comes with unwanted and/or unintended consequences (e.g. widespread arrests, the possibility of replacing an existing regime with an even less effective or less democratic government). Hence, there is a need to avoid conflating the Bersih movement's apparent success in organizing and mobilizing for change with efficacy in successfully organizing the change it strives to achieve. Resistance is one thing, successfully transforming that resistance into the achievement of particular political objectives is quite another. Nevertheless, we hold hope that Bersih does indeed represent a key building block in the formation of a society that genuinely respects and protects Malaysians' positive and negative freedoms.

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[24] For example, the authorities arrested 18 youth for holding a peaceful candlelight vigil in support of Adli that was deemed an "unlawful assembly"(*Amnesty International* 2013).

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Wondering while wandering: living between academia and activism

Valeria Pecorelli

Abstract

This paper critically presents a reflexive account of the meaning of activism and its more personal implications as faced by the engaged researcher wishing to act as both an activist and an academic. The main purpose here is to offer a sincere set of observations on the research experiences undertaken as an activist academic in the hope that they might be helpful in some way to other scholars –especially younger academics– wishing to engage in similar studies.

Keywords: solidarity action research, activism, militant methods, social movements, emotions, political engagement.

Introduction

This article presents a set of reflections rooted in my personal involvement during the fieldwork for my doctorate. The investigation engaged with those social movements actively challenging the belief "there is no alternative" to capitalism (TINA), whilst creating workable alternatives in solidarity with marginalized people in the Global South, specifically the Zapatista (EZLN / FZLN) indigenous communities of Southern Mexico, through the practice of solidarity trade[1] (Pecorelli, 2014). The attention particularly focused on Ya Basta-Milano, a member of the Italian Ya Basta network and a member of the European solidarity Zapatista network that articulates autonomous political practices of solidarity at the local and global levels.

Ya Basta was founded in 1996 when a group of Italian activists, together with thousands of people from all over the world, gathered in Chiapas to take part in a global meeting called by the Zapatista movement, the first International Meeting for Humanity and against Neoliberalism. The Italian delegates decided to found an association named Ya Basta as an answer to the Zapatistas' request to the Europeans present in the global meeting to 'start a revolution' in the

[1] The research concentrated on the potential importance as well as the limitations of solidarity trade as an emerging form of constructive resistance. The study adopts the example of the European Zapatista solidarity network (Redprozapa) to examine the nature of organizations involved in radical political practices. One organization – Ya Basta-Milano – was focussed on to examine in detail the operation of, and challenges faced by, an autonomous political group that engages in solidarity trade, being the hub for Italian Zapatista coffee distribution.

power centres of the international markets and capitalist system. Since 1998, Ya Basta has maintained direct relations with Chiapas, organizing and collaborating on different political projects in solidarity with the ideas promoted by the FZLN. This political actor is based in different cities; Ya Basta-Milano is based in the Casaloca social centre[2].

Occupied in October 2003 by a group of activists from the political association of Ya Basta-Milano and renamed Casaloca, this social centre is in the post industrial Bicocca[3] area and initially aimed to respond to the emerging need for more lively social spaces in the city of Milan. This represents an embodiment of an autonomous space within which a number of alternative projects have bloomed within the city of Milan since the Nineties. Since then, it has been proposing a tangible alternative for sociability inspired by the desire for freedom, collectivism, self-organization and solidarity. A number of projects (Students' Inn, a self managed kitchen, free legal support desk for migrants, Cafè Rebelde Zapatista for instance) have invested resources to provide services run on alternative political principles (horizontality, financial self-reliance, solidarity, etc) and providing an ongoing and creative attempt in the everyday journey of constructive resistance. Casaloca has attracted activists, sympathizers and local citizens to form a politically committed group whose activities are oriented towards the needs of the wider society despite and beyond the capitalist framework. Although it cannot be considered a big reality in terms of

[2] A social centre represents a space where radical ideas become real alternatives for others; today's 'centri sociali' embody a recall of the past due to an historical resonance with the 1970s when the first generation of social centres was born (Montagna, 2006; Mudu, 2004). In those years, groups of young people all around Italy took part in the squatting of public spaces and empty buildings as a self managed solution to address the profound changes taking place within industrial society and as an answer to the crisis of consensus experienced by political parties who were no longer capable of representing the emerging political and social needs (Ruggiero, 2000: 176). Although each 'centro sociale' has a distinctive origin, character and focus, being linked to the particular historical period of its founding and to a specific local context and ideological currents, in terms of practical orientation, the main topics generally animating the Italian social centres include: globalization, solidarity with Chiapas, Palestine, the Kurds, the Basques, the Roma population, legal assistance for migrants, minority rights, anti-fascism, anti-racism, workers' rights, environmental and animal rights but also the legalization of marijuana, free copyright and independent media (Montagna, 2006; Mudu, 2004). These are the most widely-discussed issues, which are translated into political action (campaigns, demonstrations, public talks) or cultural events (concerts, shows, movie nights, benefit dinners) within the centres. A systematic analysis of activities carried out in Italian social centres is provided by Mudu (2004).

[3] This part of the city in the northern periphery represented the very first Italian industrial area. It used to house the Pirelli, Breda and Falck factories, considered to be among the biggest firms in Italian industry since the 1970s. During the 1980s, the old industrial structures were gradually dismantled and in more recent times replaced by the Bicocca university campus, residential buildings, business centres and large shopping malls (as shown in Figure 1.2) as part of Pirelli's 'Progetto Bicocca' to revitalize its properties. This plan covered an area of 960,000 m^2 and represented the largest urban regeneration intervention in Italy at the time (www.it.pirelli.com).

members taking part in the collective, it is a well known group in Milan and in Italy, thanks to different projects it has been running since 2003.

The following sections discusses a few issues based on the assumption that if, as activist academics, we commit ourselves to a form of research that aims to challenge an unfair economic, social and political order, we should be aware that this type of research process may unpredictably challenge ourselves too. (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Bello, 2008; Bobel, 2007; Pickerill, 2008). Before illustrating my journey within the realm of activism outside the ivory tower, I want to openly express my profound respect, gratitude and affection for those people who have welcomed me in Casaloca, and who are still working hard in Ya Basta, trying to make this world a better place. Even if the following pages may sound critical or negative to some readers, there is no intention of harming either the association I have been studying or the people with whom I shared an important chapter of my life. The whole study is the fruit of my personal experience; it depends on my sensitivity and political sympathy and I take full responsibility for it.

My personal interest in politics and activism is probably rooted in the history of my family, but it was during my secondary school days that I experienced a sort of epiphany when I first came across and felt attracted to political activism. One day in 1991 a large demonstration was organized against the first Iraq war in Milan. The school I attended was in the area of the city where this type of gathering and marches usually started from. I remember sitting at a table near the window and looking sideways at the big crowd in the street chanting and shouting slogans. Most of the participants looked like students about my age, and I guess the romanticized idea of the young mythic revolutionary figure played quite a role in my teenage sensibility (especially considering that the school was only attended by girls!). At the point when the demonstrators were beginning to move, I heard the headmistress' voice announcing over the school PA system a moment of prayer for peace in the world. I had (and still have) nothing against praying but as a teenager I felt much more drawn to taking part in the march than to sitting down and praying for peace (!)

My university years corresponded with the time of the Zapatistas' uprising in the Global South and the anti-globalization movement's first steps in the Global North. More significantly, for my activism experience, they coincided with the emergence of social centres, which started to prosper in each part of Italy, giving life to Durkheim's "collective effervescence" and passionate politics. After taking a couple of courses in geography and a journey around Chiapas, I realized which side I wanted to be on and I became radicalized. Social justice for me was no longer still just a word but became a real practice. So, from that point on, I began to take part in schooling initiatives for migrants and disaffected children, alternative shopping groups, eco village projects, Critical Mass nights, conscious consumption and fair trade groups and anti–war collective gatherings. I started attending a libertarian social centre in Milan and I participated in a range of demonstrations - including the three days of the anti G8 summit in Genoa in 2001, which represented a turning point for the Italian movement - as well as

the G8 in Gleneagles in 2005 where I met a number of other activist academics from Spain, the UK and the US. In the case of Genoa, for a few days that "inner periphery of politics" became the core in the eyes of international public opinion: 400,000 people were marching in the streets proclaiming that another world was possible, as naïve as that may have sounded under the attacks of the police. The violent re-education of 'Politics' with a capital P, as understood by Mouffe (2005), did not succeed for most of the people who took part to the anti summit; many of us were physically injured and most of us were psychologically shocked. Many participants reported that following the days spent in Genoa the noise of the helicopters and police sirens remained in their ears for weeks. As a result of the brutal repression of the G8 demonstrations in Genoa by the Italian police, my generation went back to their universities and collectives with the hard reality that "the political" was no longer a romantic idea.

Then, some years later, as an activist learning to become a scholar, I aimed to use my PhD experience to contribute to the ongoing debate about activist-research, inspired by Graeber's words, working with and for social movements to "[…] offer the ideas back not as prescriptions but as contributions, as gifts" (2004: 12). My involvement in the activist realm has followed different phases and has encompassed different positions that I had never questioned in depth until I began my doctoral research. I wandered and wondered shifting between two worlds: academia and activism. My methodological approach was distilled from a mixture of further reading and reflection and my personal experiences of conducting the research, which eventually led me to the idea of solidarity action research.

My first dilemma regarded the choice of a suitable method to collect nuanced data for the investigation and will be outlined in the first section. The second and the third parts of this piece discuss the positionality of fitting a double role, reporting some aspects of living inside the activism world and inside the university world. The last part honestly exposes and tries to rethink the position of activist researcher in the light of the hierarchy of emotions and personal sustainability.

Struggling with methods

At the beginning of the period of fieldwork in Ya Basta-Milano, I felt quite disorientated with regard to my dual role as both an activist and a researcher. Firstly because in the realm of qualitative methodology it took a while to find the appropriate set of methods that could include the two sides of my role. Secondly, because as argued in the next pages I was not fully aware of my activist identity.

Initially, I worked hard to be accepted by the group I was investigating. I first devoted particular attention to following all the procedures listed in participant observation guidelines in order to have a solid methodology. However, during this period of establishing my relationship with the group that I was studying,

putting my time and skills at the service of the association, carrying out whatever duties I thought might be useful (from translating documents to cleaning), I felt a subtle doubt gradually insinuate itself. Do I want to write about the change or be part of it? Is participant observation all about a tape recorder and a fieldwork diary? Shall I turn to action research instead and produce knowledge on a little explored topic while solving problems (which in my situation meant obtaining a PhD and helping to keep the space tidy while keeping an eye on the Zapatista Solidarity Network)? In summary, I was unsatisfied with my more traditional-academic methodological preparation. I was either fully engaging with the process or I would have been just an onlooker. On the other hand, involvement was a fascinating methodological issue and the morally decent thing to do but, at least in the way that I understood it then, it required an amount of time and energies that I did not know how to measure. At a later point, on re-examining my field notes from this period, I realized that I had probably experienced a sort of schizophrenic attitude where I was trying to be everywhere and at any time just in case some situation of key importance to my research might happen.

Moreover, I also began to perceive a sort of isolation about my experience. When I was in Casaloca, I thought of myself as an academic wishing to become a full participant in the work of Ya Basta. On the other hand, when I was at the university, I felt more like an activist hoping to be perceived as an academic and worried about openly showing my activist side. Nevertheless, I was trying to use my privileged access to knowledge in the academy to give visibility to and somehow maximize the impacts of a 'constructive resistance' (Routledge, 1996) that was largely just experienced in the activism context. At this point of the research, I felt the urge to explore other similar research experiences and investigations and, after having reviewed all the different levels of participant observation and action research, I finally discovered the idea of critical ethnography and a more politically committed form of action research known as solidarity action research (SAR).

Critical ethnography produces knowledge that is not limited to academic material to be taught and published. It also produces concrete strategies for supporting and developing the phenomenon under investigation (Juris, 2007). The researcher in this case works with the group being studied and also writes about the group, shifting his-her hybrid position of activist-academic between the "time of solidarity" and the "time of writing" (Routledge, 1996: 402). Building on this, the task of the researcher is to build a bridge between academia and activism through a democratic dialogue in a 'third space' of critical engagement "where neither site, role, nor representation holds sway, where one continually subverts the other" (Routledge 1996: 400). Within the panorama of ethnographic approaches, critical ethnography may provide some appropriate tools for collecting data and working for social change. If in my mind it had always been clear for whom the research was for, thanks to critical ethnography's idea of the role of the engaged scholar, it became clearer to me where my place should be as an activist academic.

On the other hand, I was still (naively) looking for programmatic directions as to how to proceed methodologically in the investigation but this approach did not fully provide them. So I went back to the literature around the discipline I was affiliated to –activist geography– but the discussion had been very general in nature and very little of it had been focused directly upon research methodologies. Despite many good intentions, academic literature has provided few direct examples about how to engage in activist research, probably because the term has so many meanings and represents an open process whose borders appear blurred and which is only united by the fact that it is traditionally understood to produce knowledge for activist ends. According to Shukaitis and Graeber (2007:9), activist research "[…] begins from the understanding of experiences and relations generated through organizing as both a method of political action and as a form of knowledge". Similarly, Mitchell et al. (2008) seem to agree that there is no blue print in being engaged with social movements. Furthermore, as Brydon-Miller et al. argue "we are forced to follow the problems wherever they take us and the best among us learn the theories, methods, and processes we need along the way" (2003: 21) and mess is part of the commitment to social change.

After reading this, I confess to feeling relieved. So, full of renewed motivation that I was on the right path, I accepted this torturous process, definable as "the beauty of chaos" approach (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003: 21), as a necessary part of my study. At the end of my research I was able to develop a synthesis of participatory action research, militant ethnography and activist research which I named solidarity action research (SAR) and was conceived as an evolving methodological approach that is committed to social and political transformation to build a bridge between academia and activism through a democratic dialogue in a "third space" of critical engagement (Routledge, 1996). This is intended as being "for" and "from" social movements (not just "about" social movements) so that the researcher works explicitly "with" and "for" civil society, taking part in the change rather than observing it.

Being an activist or doing activism?

After having managed quite successfully – at least from my supervisors' perspective – a rather chaotic approach to activist methodology, there were still a few dilemmas looking for answers. These issues comprised a more individual sphere and were rooted in the complexity of emotionally coping with two overlapping, complex, nuanced worlds: activism and academia. The term 'activism' means many different things to different people (Burbach, 2001) and it is somehow overused, elusive. The social movement literature argues that it is to be connected to personal and collective emotions as hope, joy, anger. It "comes from the heart" (Cope, 2008: 80), "it is something we owe to our fellow human beings" (Bello, 2008: 91), it is a way to say something about ones moral self and often it is awakened by the question "if not you then who?" (Pickerill, 2008: 133).

As anticipated in the introduction, it was during the years of my studies for a degree in political science in Italy that I became politicized and gradually more radicalized. Taking part in political activities, activism was a desire for action rooted in a sense of injustice, a sort of emotional trepidation rooted in anger, hope and joy, to overcome the fact of feeling powerless when facing the world. In my university years, I became actively involved in a number of social and political initiatives, although despite my increasing involvement I remained rather reluctant to define myself as an activist. Even if I was doing lots of activism, I did not consider myself as 'super active', as my efforts were sustained enough to deserve the label. These issues surfaced again when I started to attend a political environment, a libertarian collective in Milan.

My idea of activism at that time was shaped by a stereotype that Bobel describes as 'living the issue' with relentless dedication, anchored to "core values of rigour and humility" (2007: 147). Perhaps, it can be best illustrated via a conversation with some friends, remembering the time we used to attend the squat together, one argued: "We weren't really activists! We were just comrades. Those who were always there (in the social centre) were activists, those who always talk to the police, to the institutions". Interestingly, this underlines a significant point confirming the tension between 'doing activism' and 'being activist' (Bobel, 2007). The 'comrades' who just shared political ideas and projects within the social centre 'did activism' but did not do enough of it to gain the label of activist *tout court,* in other words they practiced a less than perfect activism. In this perspective, while the former played a role of being sympathetic and supporting the cause, the second were personally and publicly involved and whilst all were considered comrades, the latter group were perceived as being more active than the other members.

The label 'activist' often leads some of these individuals to be perceived by others as those in charge of everything, those you can rely on for practical and political questions, whose opinions sometimes may even or often (depending on the collective) carry more weight than the others' during an assembly because they are more politically experienced and outspoken. This aspect can be enforced by a specific radical lifestyle, activist ghettos, an activist culture that in many cases helps "cementing the very fragmentation between activists and others" (Barr and Drury, 2009:257) as if being an activist would confer the right to know better, and do better than those who though equally unhappy with the existing order have not fully embraced activism, or do not share activist methods. Through tireless commitment, full dedication, selfless sacrifice and public exposure, some group members may approach the personification of the 'mythic revolutionary hero' detached from the mundanity of everyday reality (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2009).

During the last phase of my research in Milan, I finally experienced full involvement in Casaloca, putting everything into living the cause; my world was all there in the squat, focused on social centre activities and needs. But while those considered 'super active' members were aware of the cost of their dedication and often lamented their physical fatigue juggling with other

mundane duties such as a job, my position was privileged. In a critical perspective this period was self referential. My political ego was finally satisfied, I finally felt to merit the activist label while I was somehow legitimated to spend most of my time in Casaloca by the fact that I had an academic task: collecting data for the research. In methodological terms, by the last phase of the fieldwork in Casaloca, I probably experienced "the collapse between boundaries of the researcher and the researched" (Kitchin and Hubbard, 1999: 15) and somehow touched levels of the activist 'perfect standard' (Bobel, 2007).

My daily routine was beaten by political activities in terms of time and energy – a sometimes 7 days a week, tiring, thrilling, joyful job where my individual priorities were aligned with the cause and the research. I had become one of those who could always be there, my political identity was fused with the collective identity of the group I was researching; perhaps in their eyes but surely for my ego, I had become a 'good activist' at least for a while. However, soon the period devoted to doing research on the ground expired and my position of activist-academic had to be rethought pondering the "time of solidarity" and the "time of writing" (Routledge, 1996: 402).

So if my dilemmas faced in choosing the right method were resolved, the tension between the time spent sharing activism with the Ya Basta members and the time required for writing for academic priorities (Routledge, 1996) highlighted other difficulties that led to a further renegotiation of my position as activist. Going back to university meant abandoning daily political actions, becoming less physically present in terms of the availability of energy and time to devote to Casaloca. If I was to complete my research, I had to limit my involvement in last minute scheduled meetings or those endless and draining debates that would have interfered with my daily work. In reality, by that point, I was more often in front of my laptop writing about my colleagues than working side by side in the squat. Nevertheless, this situation underlined an uncompromising division of my role. For this reason, I felt guilty and in a way 'disloyal' to the members of Casaloca. How could I fuse my academic duties and a fully activist role? Would I end up as "those who can't, just teach" (Pickerill, 2010: 133)? Aware that my full time engagement at Ya Basta-Milano had created some expectations, I was afraid that returning to the ivory tower would have been perceived as abandonment. Back then, I had not fully negotiated my identity as activist, but with hindsight I can affirm that Cortese's study (2015) on "good" and "bad" activists would have helped to make sense of further nuances of the "activist" construction.

Nevertheless, the contradictory question of "sitting at the desk trying to find the right words to describe the worlds these comrades are actively working to change" (Mitchell, 2008: 104) is an issue that other engaged scholars have acknowledged in working with and for social movements (Brown and Pickerill, 2009, Pickerill, 2008). Then, my concern ignored the fact that writing for political change in an academic context is part of the activist life of activist academics and is possibly another vivid way to work for the cause. It means taking activism outside those milieus that are understood as the only sites of

dissent, such as social centres, and transforming academic spaces into suitable areas for political awareness, critical reflection and the pursuit of social change. It is about giving voice and legitimacy to those radical phenomena otherwise stigmatized or neglected by mass media representations and to present them critically to a wider public. However, from a 'non academic-activist' point of view the fact of being paid to work for and with social movements may look like a sort of privilege; who would not like the idea of getting money for combining work and passion? Therefore, if the commonly voiced critique of the desk-bounded activist academic may sound unfair, on the other hand it is an understandable position for those activists who devote their spare time and energies to the political cause while bound to jobs which may be perceived as less rewarding.

What if I look like an activist?

Invited to lecture in the local university about my research, I faced the dilemma of how I should best present myself to my students given the political nature of the topics covered. My ambition was for my lecture to be heard and to avoid being stigmatized as 'a fanatic' or 'a dreaming anti-capitalist' especially after years in which protesters have been harshly described by the tabloid media as violent and dangerous, particularly since the marches against the G8 in Genoa. As Cortese (2015) suggests, the word activist can paint negative stereotypes in the minds of those outside of the movement, sounding arrogant and or irrational. As Maxey (1999: 2009) states, recounting his own experience as an activist during direct action campaigning in Great Britain, "the label activist was applied to me in ways that were not always comfortable".

What was the most effective tool for inspiring others to get involved in social change? For my personal and political story, 'those days in Genoa' to adopt a common activist expression, had (also) emotionally affected the way I presented myself both in an academic context and in private life. Similarly, to Maxey (1999) I was not comfortable with being constructed as an activist by people who had their own understanding of what this expression meant. Specifically, in the Italian case, this had been produced by a massive media campaign condemning the activists and the dissent while legitimizing police repression and brutality. For this reason, Genoa is still something that activists who took part in the counter summit would name carefully and would not share openly.

Consequently, in more formal contexts such as university lectures, workshops or conferences I tended to entrench myself in very formal clothes and use academic language with the idea of providing legitimacy to topics under discussion and possibly masking my activist side. Before lecturing, I worried about issues such as: "What if I am perceived as less credible or even 'dangerous' because of my political activity?", "Would the pearl earrings and white blouse be enough to disguise for a while my activist background?" Although these questions sound naive, I was struggling not to be be trapped in the stereotype of the one "who took part in the mess of those days during the G8

in Genoa," losing the opportunity to create a space for the students in which the conditions for critical analysis were guaranteed, a space to 'denounce' and 'announce' to use Freire's words (1973). Academia is often (although not always and everywhere) still a place in which opportunities for critical thinking, debate, encounters, diversity and free speech are possible (despite some general critiques of contemporary universities as exam-factories, problem-solving think tanks, feudal institutions or neoliberal puppets; e.g. Holloway, 2005; Burbach, 2001).

As a scholar, I aimed to support critical thought to favour the deconstruction of mainstream ideas and stereotypes; at the same time, as an activist, I wished to communicate that social change is possible. When lecturing, besides theoretically framing radical examples of social change experiences (such as the Zapatista uprising, social centre activities, the G8 anti-summits, fair trade etc.), whilst there were a small number of enthusiastic and sympathizing students, the majority usually had a resigned or skeptical attitude. Surprisingly, when it came to recounting my personal experiences of different radical projects the general atmosphere often changed, with the students becoming more attentive. Would it have been the same if I had turned up dressed in activist clothes such as a t-shirt with a Zapatista slogan on it? Most probably the academic dress was less threatening than the activist one, at least for me. Personally, a more formal dress provided a balance for integrating the activist role into the academic, almost transcending it when talking about delicate topics. This was particularly meaningful when teaching because in a way, my activist part was emotionally charged, shaped by the heart, while the academic side embodied the rational thought to frame and explain (Brown and Pickerill, 2009). In addition, as an activist academic I felt somehow responsible for voicing alternative political experiences in teaching contexts, promoting the deconstruction of stereotypes produced by mainstream media and making appear real and possible social change experiences and alternatives that are otherwise generally regarded as radical, utopian, crazy.

The personal lesson I learnt from this experience was that looking and talking formally and 'giving up' temporarily the activist part, at least aesthetically, may ease the process of turning the classroom into a space of hope. A 'shabby' outfit, a radical sentence on a red t-shirt does not transform an individual into an activist (nor does a tie or pearls transform them into an academic!) The questioning of the activist stereotype refers to mass media representations, usually carrying a negative impact in the eyes of less politicized people and in which the activist themselves may feel trapped if not aware of it. In considering this, activist academics could perhaps pay more attention to their activist role when teaching or presenting in non activist environments; otherwise there is a risk of missing out an opportunity to interact with others on uncommon ground (Chatterton, 2006).

Emotions and activism?

In the previous pages, the focus was on the process that led me to consider myself first as an activist and then as an activist-academic. In what follows, the discussion dwells upon how the activist researcher's position might be critically rethought in the light of the theoretical approach of Brown and Pickerill's (2009) call for creating a sustainable space for emotions in activism, and Wilkinson's (2009) concept of the present 'hierarchy of emotions' in autonomous politics. Social scientists have paid increasing attention to the role that emotions (such as hope, fear, joy, compassion, love, sorrow, anger, empathy, frustration and passion) play in motivating activism and mobilizing political action (Bosco, 2006; Brown and Pickerill, 2009; Cox, 2011; Juris, 2008; King, 2005; Pickerill, 2008; Pulido, 2003).

Emotions are present in every phase and every aspect of social movements, and movements identify which emotions are in their view the most important for politics (Goodwin et al. 2001). In Wilkinson's (2009) view, however, this approach to activism and emotions may create a sort of hierarchy where only some feelings seem appropriate for activism while others such as anger or frustration are out of place if not addressed to the cause, as though some feelings could be more political than others, more appropriate to activism. So far, most of the literature considering social movements and emotions tends to understand this relation as collectively shaped. Individual needs and desires are associated with the political collective identity, remaining untheorised in their more personal extent. Emotions such as anger, hope, and powerlessness (etc.) are a powerful force to pursue social change and forge collective action when they are channeled in a political frame.

However, if collective action is the result of an alignment between the activist's personal sphere and collective identity, how can we manage the more individual emotional part of living /working between activism and academia if still this interplay –as suggested by some scholars– (Bondi, 2005; Brown, 2007; Cox, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2009) can be confusing in the way it is intended and practiced? As mentioned before, in Ya Basta-Milano as other groups sharing similar ideals the political aspect was often the first concern to which devotes time and energy. The attention of the collective is therefore always "out there beyond personal problems" (Barker et al., 2008), running after the future to create alternatives, keeping the space going in order to be politically visible. In spite of that, the ethic of care in creating a better world for all, in organizing 'the world how you want it to be' may not have included a more intimate personal sphere; individual needs and priorities were often taken for granted or relegated to the spare time.

In practice, when I was taking part in the Casaloca collective, it was comprised of individuals who shared the same political idea of the world but were also shaped by other priorities such as work, love relationships, family, money or health issues. When personal actions could not be aligned with collective actions, tensions and judgmental remarks sometimes arose. For instance

resentment and frustration would be experienced when someone was not available to stay until 4 o'clock in the morning to close the squat after a dancehall night, or available at hard working weekends to fix and clean the space. Emotional matters derived from personal frustration and guilt were whispered among comrades but only openly debated on rare occasions. This attitude may illustrate that these 'other' emotions are massively important, whether or not they are seen as being so by activists. This may also question whether "only certain feelings are productive for activism, while other emotions have less relevance in activist theory and practice" (Wilkinson, 2009: 39). In what I experienced, the personal emotional sphere was scarcely considered a possible resource for making the group feel more connected. Connection came from being comrades, sharing the same political perspective, and affective bonds and friendship was based on the shared political interest. But what happens when you cannot put all your time into the cause? Is the criticism 'you do not care enough' the only answer to such circumstances? How long would people remain committed if they felt no longer recognized as 'caring enough'?

In essence, keeping a distinction over what is political (and therefore more urgent) and what is not (and therefore unworthy?) may cause the perpetuation of a selection of emotions. In this perspective, some emotions were not given space because they were simply considered not just out of place but also as time wasting. As a matter of fact, time is often an issue for the radical realities considered to be significant for the cause. The amount of time physically devoted within the group may be seen as characterizing how much you politically care. As described before, Ya Basta-Milano has been self-managing a number of projects in Casaloca that require a considerable amount of energy and time especially considering the number of activists involved, as often lamented by its members but also considering the principles –self management and collectivism – around which these projects are run. Therefore discussion of more personal issues was frequently presented as not urgent and relevant. At the end of the day, when it takes ages just to decide what food will be served and who is going to buy the food for 80 people and then cook a whole Mexican for a fundraising, would discussions about emotions fit in?

Concluding remarks

My time spent collecting data as activist researcher in Casaloca turned out to be a 'work in progress', shaped by unpredictability, messiness and personal dilemmas and on the intersection between action and reflection, theory and practice, the political and the personal and between the individual and the collective. I developed SAR as a methodology to complete my fieldwork, to teach and to negotiate my double identity. However, most of the time, the easiest part of it (I admit) was in using academic space and resources (teaching, publishing etc.) to voice alternatives as real and sensible possibilities. I became aware that a certain degree of messiness and chaos is a normal aspect of the process of working with social movements and I dealt with a double role as activist and

academic (moving between the ivory tower and the barricades). Unfortunately I was not able to promote networks with other activist researchers to create political, psychological and academic support to share similar perspectives and avoid isolation and demoralization. In the activist field, I felt rather more 'unarmed' than in academia. As described in the previous pages, when the fieldwork period finished it was evident that the 'perfect standard' guiding my involvement in the social centre was no longer sustainable given my academic priorities. I could no longer base my whole life on activism *tout court*, at least in the way some Ya Basta-Milano members understood it.

This led to a need to renegotiate my role within Casaloca and in relation to its members, with whom I had affective bonds based on friendship and admiration. In my opinion, when I stopped my full-time presence in the autonomous space of Casaloca, my life was still absorbed in the same struggle to create feasible alternatives but in another context: academia. However, I felt my academic research may be perceived as more of a personal commitment with little political relevance for the association. Then, the attachment and respect I felt for Ya Basta-Milano members and for the shared political cause was unconsciously used by me to shut down a possible dialogue with them about my concern, fearing that it might undermine the balance of the collective or disrupt group harmony: as Wilkinson (2009:41) interestingly describes this attitude, a "dual emotional framework: consensus = good; conflict = bad".

This however, raises a new methodological question: did I take my analysis as far as I could? With the collective's members, I felt no urgent need to openly discuss the fact that much of the dilemmas and emotions I experienced for devoting my time to my life choices, such as writing my research, was also shared by other members for similar reasons. Moreover, to what degree can an activist academic doing solidarity action research stimulate changes? I was not sure what would have been the best way to initiate discussion, for instance over the 'perfect standard,' without appearing as the stereotypical figure of the intellectual who from the top of the ivory tower shows the way to those down on the barricades. Hence, would disrupting the apparent balance of the group have been effective for empowering it? On the other hand, those emotions I did not publicly discuss in the activist context (because they may have been stigmatized as not being politically framed), were problematized by scholars, finding at least a space for debate in academia. As argued by Cox (2012) individual sustainability in social movements is a complex topic; hopefully, the methodological and emotional reflexivity embraced here will produce a brick for building "sustaining spaces for emotions within activism" (Brown and Pickerill, 2009: 24), though I suspect there is still some way to go in this direction.

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Post-representational epistemology in practice: processes of relational knowledge creation in autonomous social movements

Alissa Starodub

Abstract

This article investigates the challenges arising from the relationship of epistemology to the post-representational practices of autonomous social movements. It does so with the help of the concepts of nomad science and royal science developed by Deleuze and Guattari. These concepts allow us to picture the knowledge creation within autonomous social movements, which is based in a politics of the act within everyday life and constituted in relations of affinity between differently situated subject positions, as a different but equal type of knowledge to academic or scientific knowledge. The article engages with two challenges resulting from this relational conception of knowledge within everyday life: the devaluation of such knowledge within academic discourse, and methodological difficulties of recognising moments of knowledge creation for a researcher speaking from within autonomous social movements. Two proposals for facing these challenges are formulated at the end of the article: engaging in an epistemological rebellion in walking on the borderline between royal science and nomad science, and taking the geographies of autonomous social movement's political practices as contestable focus points of sensitive attention to relational knowledge creation processes.

Keywords: epistemology, autonomous social movements, knowledge, practice, post-representational, nomad science, royal science, prefigurative

Introduction

This text was written after inspiring evening discussions in living rooms about direct action within the political context of the right to the city movement, after morning conversations with coffee on the roof of an autonomous social centre about self-organisation and horizontal decision-making and after many other moments of relational epistemological practice. The idea for this text and its first sketches is itself a process of knowledge creation based on personal relations of affinity with those who appear in it. It got reviewed and discussed by some of those who were present in encounters providing material for it. I hope it helps to learn to value our eccentric, fractious, playful, spontaneous and often poorly documented knowledge and the precious moments when it is created in our

encounters and exchanges in moments of reflection within the diverse struggles against oppression that we are involved in.

This text has the form of an article which investigates the challenges arising from the relationship of epistemology to the practices of autonomous social movements. The practices of autonomous social movements are thereby theorised as post-representational articulation of political desire (Day 2005). Because "the movements … see their everyday experiences and creations as the revolution they are making," (Sitrin 2011, 271) the way political desire is articulated already reflects a projection of the desired social transformations that autonomous social movements aim at into the present. The use of horizontality, as in de-hierarchisation of different practices, as a tool and a goal (Sitrin and Azzelini 2014) turns this plurality of political expressions into positionings amongst a series of resonances and gestures that collectively add up to something that goes beyond a gesture-less politics (Tormey 2012). Taking up the concrete example of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) for post-representational practices of autonomous social movements, Tormey writes that OWS is

> one kind of resistance that 'represents' in its post-representativity the response of those at the margin of wealthy countries of the metropolitan centre; the Zapatista insurrection (to take a contrasting example) is another kind of resistance, one characteristic of the needs and resources of groups at the global periphery. They are both concerned with the same issue (…). They resonate in different ways, they have different effects, but their concerns are very similar. (Tormey 2012, 135).

The horizontal self-organisation through direct democratic decision making of these movements projects their political desire to resist institutionalised hegemonic power into the present of their practice. Within the autonomous social movements a plurality of practices is producing knowledge through experience with others. This process is intrinsically linked to the horizontality of the utopian political project of autonomous social movements. Thus theorising about this project, producing knowledge about it, happens in a critical collective reflection within the moment of struggle (Motta 2011, 180-81).

Before continuing to elaborate how the post-representativity of autonomous social movements conditions their prefigurative political practices, we need to make clear what type of prefigurative practices can be attributed to autonomous social movements. In doing so we will briefly elaborate what type of movement we are talking about when speaking of autonomous social movements.

As a demarcation within social movement studies, characteristics of autonomous social movements have been coined by Richard F. Day (2001, 2005), George Katsiaficas (2006), David Graeber (2002, 2004), Marina A. Sitrin (2012), Saul Newman (2010) and many others. Some of these characteristics have led to a definition of autonomous social movements as the counterpart of

institutionalised social movements stating that

> [A]an autonomous orientation entails emphasizing self-management, egalitarian, nonhierarchical structures, and consensus-based decision making. Ends and means have a continuity that reflects activists‘ attempts to apply their ideas of an ideal society to their own movement. In contrast, an institutionalized orientation is characterized by a clear division of labor and authority, a centralized organization, and a lose coupling of ends and means.
>
> (Pruijt 2014, 144)

It is precisely this continuity of ends and means that determines the prefigurative nature of autonomous social movements in their attempt to apply "ideas of an ideal society to their own movement" (ibid, 144): it is defining the prefigurative politics of autonomous social movement actions and knowledge creation as the self-shaping along the lines of their desired society with an emphasis on self-organisation in the creation of alternatives in egalitarian and non-hierarchical social structures (ibid, 145-46). Within autonomous social movements the individual participates in organisations which are dispensable and can be restructured any time because they exist to serve the individual's desires and goals. This is a stark contrast to the role of organisations in institutionalised politics, where the individual is dispensable for the existence of an organisation (Flesher Fominaya 2007, 339). It reveals the opposition of autonomous social movements against a type of hegemony that is attributed to institutionalised and representational structures with a fixed group membership: the hierarchical division of labour and authority (Flesher Fominaya 2007).

In his historical analysis of European autonomous social movements, Katsiaficas (2006) explains the rejection of fixed group identities by autonomous social movements through their opposition to the existing social order. This opposition emerges from the articulation of collective and *individual* needs fleshed out in an anti-oppressive critique of everyday life within the existing social order which reproduces exploitative divisions of labour and authority. The resulting "anti-identitarian" orientation of autonomous social movements can be seen as a further characteristic (Flesher Fominaya 2010, 399) which, according to some authors, makes a collective identity within autonomous social movements impossible (Saunders 2008). Others have argued that it is the ability of (but not limited to) autonomous social movements to generate a collective identity based on plurality, difference and multiplicity (Flesher Fominaya 2010) that characterises them in escaping the logic of representation.

This ability is conditioned by a decentralisation and in-formalisation through affinity-based organising within autonomous social movements (Day 2001): Permanent forms of formal organisation get replaced by the flexible coming together of small groups connected through personal relations of affinity and united in a collective action which is open to different tactics.

Instead of subsumption under an identitarian politics which is representing demands advanced by a shared subject position, cohesion in autonomous social movements is defined by post-representational collective practice of the prefiguration of individual and collective political desire.

How can we know this when doing research on autonomous social movements? The glance at a barricade defending a social centre from eviction varies depending on what kind of relationships we can identify as being involved in its construction. Is the barricade there because people discussed this in small groups or during an assembly, is it there because someone set out to gather material to build it? Maybe s_he asked a friend employed in a workshop? Is the barricade being built in this specific moment because people know that the cops will come? Maybe someone leaked the day of eviction? Is the barbed wire there to provide a spectacle for the media or has it been put up there because of a heated discussion that took place between pacifists and proponents of militant action? If we do not dare to walk on the borderline between scientific knowledge production and rhizomatic, relational knowledge creation within autonomous social movements the relationships creating knowledge horizontally within autonomous social movements remain largely invisible to the eyes of a researcher when investigating their political practice.

If we do not take the act of defending the squat as a process, if we assume that there is one position from which dissent is articulated, if we assume that this position has the goal to mobilise certain elements of the movement or if we assume that the barricade is a political opportunity to mediatise the struggle that this one articulation of dissent aims at, we lose the rhythm of daily life and activities within the squat that shapes the discussion process about whether and how the barricade is to be build, out of sight. We also lose the attentiveness to the relations of different subject positions involved in the struggle, and to the entire process of their transformation (from a squat of pacifistic societal deserters to militant activists). We then lose the connection to the praxis of autonomous social movements while theorising them.

Who speaks?

The challenge of this article has been set out as investigating the relationship of epistemology to the practices of autonomous social movements. At this point a lot has been said *about* autonomous social movements. The need to clarify who is speaking here is related to the question of whether the known object, as in the autonomous social movements, can speak for themselves. This matter is very similar to the question raised by Gayatri C. Spivak in her post-colonial discussion of the banning of sati (1988). In her writing Spivak demonstrates how Western scholarship has obscured subaltern experiences by assuming the transparency of its scholarship and reflects on the question whether the known object, in her discussion the women of colour, can even speak. The question whether the autonomous social movements can speak, as in produce knowledge about themselves from their own perspective, is equally complicated taking into

account their post-representational expression. John Holloway writes about theoretical reflection within autonomous social movements:

> The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle. (...) Our dissonance comes from our experience, but that experience varies. Sometimes it is the direct experience of exploitation in the factory, or of oppression in the home, of stress in the office, of hunger and poverty, or of state violence and discrimination. Sometimes it is the less direct experience through television, newspapers or books that move us to rage. (Holloway 2010, 1)

The "we" of the autonomous social movements is a diffused "we" of different subject positions which reflect and create knowledge in different ways: some produce knowledge about themselves through a structured approach, influenced by their university education, through reading literature and maybe even writing articles. Others produce knowledge about the autonomous social movements through participating in a bike workshop or an autonomous social centre reflecting on and evaluating their practices because they believe that these are an important constituent of the autonomous social movements that they are part of.

When autonomous social movements speak they do this with many voices coming from a multiplicity of subject positions bound together through relations of affinity: personal affinity between people who trust each other, ideological affinity between people who notice each other taking action against oppression and creating alternative and horizontal social relations (Karatzogianni and Robinson 2010, 144 ff). A rhizomatic network of affinities, exchanges and reflections makes a relational knowledge creation process and articulation of autonomous social movements possible and contextualises it at the same time.

In this article I will first work on suitable epistemological conceptualisations of the knowledge creation within autonomous social movements. I will attempt to show that the knowledge creation processes within autonomous social movements have a specific rhizomatic and horizontal logic of knowledge creation through a plurality of practices (Deleuze and Guattari 2013). I believe that outlining how autonomous social movements create knowledge will make their articulation of antagonism and alternatives to social order more expansive because my identity and political practice is co-constructive of and by them: building barricades to resist the eviction of a squatted social centre where I used to organise workshops and cultural events with my friends; or sleeping in a tree house on a road protest site to prevent the deforestation of a woodland that is privatised for capitalist profit paid with resource extraction at the cost of environmental damage and expulsion of local inhabitants. I have never been a stranger here. The experience of strangeness came first when I felt the need to take territory in academic discourses, because I believe that horizontal alternatives should spring up in any sphere, domain, aspect and part of society to

transform it profoundly. This includes academic research and creates some tensions, too.

I remember how, years before I engaged in academic research myself, a researcher introduced herself at an activist gathering that I attended. She explained that her research was supposed to help the voice of the movements being heard and yet I remember how my friends were saying: "I would not like to be researched." We had a controversial discussion and concluded that self-reflection as well as articulation is important and that *someone* had to take this on. I also remember another occasion when a "double identity" as an activist-researcher lead to a controversial discussion on an activist email list and how I came to realise then that being both, an activist and an academic who does research as an activist is one of many possible subject positions within autonomous social movements, one that can cause insecurity and destabilise relations of affinity between activists, too. I have learned from these experiences that doing research as an activist needs to be based on stable relations of affinity with those that we learn with and from.

Yet, I never felt that engaging in academic research alienates me from the people that I take collective action with. It is rather the opposite: we get passionately involved in discussions about academic research being elitist and therefore necessarily hierarchical. Not everyone that I know and consider part of the autonomous social movements agrees with me that writing about how autonomous social movements create knowledge is a fruitful endeavour for our aim of putting horizontal social relations in practice or appropriating more space to do so. Nevertheless I am in a relation of affinity with those within the autonomous social movements who share the idea to voice our imaginaries not only in actions but also in artistic and contentious expressions as well as in words written for others on paper. This is to take space not only on the ground, in the streets, on the sites of dissent, but also in the discourses, in the narratives, in the thoughts. When I speak of "our" imaginaries that are reflected in articulations, I speak of practices that I engage in with others. These practices do not take place because enough individuals have decided to participate but because each time a specific set of relations of affinity calls them into existence. I do not aim to speak *for* anyone when I speak of "our" imaginaries and "our" practices. And yet I cannot speak purely of "my" practices in this context - for these emerge through a relation with others.

Coming from a post-colonial feminist critique of the "exclusionary power/knowledge nexus which produces the known object" (Motta 2013, 1) I will argue in the second part of this article that in the practices of knowledge creation within autonomous social movements there is an emancipatory practice/knowledge nexus which produces the knowing object. The third part of the article focuses on two challenges for epistemological conceptualisations and engagement with the horizontal and relational knowledge creation of autonomous social movements while the fourth part formulates two proposals for facing those challenges.

Royal science and nomad science

In her book on contemporary political protest Abby Peterson writes that the political performance of autonomous social movements is inseparable from the process of articulation of an autonomous social movement community "in sites of collective identity construction" that are within everyday life (Peterson 2001, ix). How is this process of political articulation of autonomous social movements directed towards shared aims and goals? How can autonomous social movements take action or take place? How are strategies evaluated and defined within this process? In other words: How do autonomous social movements create knowledge about themselves?

While it is acknowledged that movements, as distinct from academics, do produce this type of knowledge about themselves (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, Barker and Cox 2002, p. 1 and Cox and Flesher Fominaya 2009, p. 3) the question of who is entitled to produce answers to the type of questions mentioned above is intriguing when talking about post-representative movements.

Answering these questions is impossible without entering the sphere of autonomous social movements everyday practices because this is where the diverse experiences of its participants constituting its post-representational articulations are located.

Political articulation through practices that are entrenched in daily life are different in nature to representative, formalised and hierarchically organised political articulation in the polity. It is, so to speak, a different modality of expression that goes along with a different logic of knowledge creation for and about this practice. To illustrate this difference in knowledge creation through a politics of the act that is inherent in the autonomous social movements (Day 2005) versus a representational political articulation about autonomous social movements as a known object of scientific research, we will use the concepts of royal science and nomad science conceived by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2013).

These concepts represent two different ways of producing knowledge that can be easily compared with a scientific, "impartial" way of stating truth claims about a known object and a rhizomatic, horizontal approach to the production of knowledge which is situated in interactions and encounters in everyday life. The difference of these two ways of producing knowledge is to be found in practice[1].

It has been suggested that there is a borderline in terms of a difference in "types of knowledge" between academic and activist theorising about movements (Barker and Cox 2002, 4). This supposed borderline cannot be simply equated to royal and nomad science producing different types of knowledge. The reason

[1] Although with their description of royal science and nomad science Deleuze and Guattari refer to the natural sciences rather than the social sciences, some connections can be made.

why the concepts of royal and nomad science are used here, is to illustrate that there are different logics of knowledge production and creation at play. They are shifting the focus away from the question of who produces the knowledge towards the question of how knowledge is created. Literature on movement knowledge suggests that certain questions about the identity of those producing knowledge are impossible to pose when talking about post-representational movements such as autonomous social movements. Cox and Flesher Fominaya present two types of questions about how movements produce knowledge: how to make the hidden, silenced and oppressed knowledge of the subaltern visible and how the specific process of knowledge production within social movements works (Cox and Flesher Fominaya 2009, 4). We can find answers to these questions in the Italian operaist tradition, in non-male consciousness-raising groups, in the tradition of popular education in the work of Paolo Freire, in the study of the "hidden transcripts" of peasants serving a master by James Scott and in the literature produced by black feminist writers on gender oppression and racism. A specific subaltern subject position that produces knowledge from its standpoint, such as the exploited worker, women, and people of colour, cannot be identified without ambiguity when talking about the knowledge produced within anti-identitarian and post-representational social movements. Turning our attention to the specific process of knowledge production, its "where", "when" and "how", does, however not free us from the question of who produces or creates this knowledge. Focusing on methodological questions of movement knowledge creation Fuster Morell (2009) distinguishes between knowledge produced by savant individuals (in the words of Barker and Cox (2002, 21): "organic" as well as "traditional intellectuals") and knowledge created collectively where it escapes the logic of knowledge as private property and turns into knowledge as experience through action with others. The concepts of royal science and nomad science will help to illustrate this difference in the logic of the process of knowledge production where it is possible to investigate their differences by investigating their borders - those places that are dimly lit, where royal science and nomad science touch each other. We will start with taking a closer look at the concept of royal science:

Royal science can be simply described as a state science with a methodology restricted to using templates which implies a model of reproduction of this type of knowledge creation (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 420-436). To reach a more detailed understanding it is probably better to use Deleuze and Guattari's example of a travelling worker carving a stone arch on a construction site of a Gothic cathedral in the twelfth century (ibid, 424 ff.). On this construction site royal science would be the architect's master plan to produce a stable stone building which includes precise and technical directions for every single work step, exactly defining how a stone carver has to make an arch that is to be fitted into a mathematical formula predefining every stone arch. Royal science thus imposes a division of labour on the construction site. It seeks to control the travelling workers who were

> building cathedrals near and far, scattering construction sites across the land, drawing on active and passive power (mobility and strikes) that was far from convenient for the State. The State's response was to take over the management of the construction sites, merging all the divisions of labour in the supreme distinction between the intellectual and the manual, the theoretical and the practical, modelled upon the difference between "governors" and "governed"" (ibid, 429).

In opposition to royal science or State science, nomad science

> is a kind of science, or treatment of science, that seems very difficult to classify, whose history is even difficult to follow. What we are referring to are not "technologies" in the usual sense of the term. But neither are they "sciences" in the royal or legal sense established by history.
>
> (ibid, 420-21).

The functioning of the model of nomad science is marked by affinity and affect (cf. ibid, 421). To continue elaborating the role of the knowledge created in nomad science, the construction site of a Gothic cathedral in the twelfth century provides again an illustration: despite the calculations in the architect's master plan created by royal science, "it is the cutting of the stone that turns it [the Gothic cathedral] into material capable of holding and coordinating forces of thrust" (ibid, 424) which is done by the approximative and situated movements of the travelling stone carvers who need no reference to an architect's master plan of mathematical formula to create a stable stone arch. Instead, the skill of carving a stone arch is developed through the worker's own movement, through experience and exchange, through information gathered along the path of the journey, through the varied engagements on construction sites with other workers. The knowledge of stone carving of the travelling worker is what Deleuze and Guattari call "nomad science". Its process of creating knowledge is rhizomatic and horizontal because it is developed in the movement of different workers moving between different construction sites where moments of exchange and coordination are developed through practice. This concept of knowledge is usable for analysing everyday life practices because on this plane the knowledge of the workers is developed when they carve a stone arch together or when they speak about it during lunch or with strangers when they travel from one construction site to another.

It is conceivable to apply these different conceptions of knowledge to the practices of autonomous social movements.

In the study of autonomous social movements royal science would define a research interest, apply a theoretical lens to study a phenomenon which is comparable to the architect's blueprint in the example of Deleuze and Guattari: the researcher would act as an architect with a master plan about how

autonomous social movements engage or react to a specific issue. The researcher's hypothesis predefines how the practices of autonomous social movements fit into a complex set of factors. If for example a researcher would make a hypothesis about the causes for autonomous social movement's engagement in the discourses on the "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968), s_he would gather data to produce scientific, objective knowledge suitable for talking at an academic conference about it or writing a journal article about the movement's practices, defining them, measuring them and thus constituting them as the known object from a perspective from above which impresses a "plane of organization" on the immediate plane of variable material-forces[2].

In this example nomad science would be constituted by the autonomous social movements creating knowledge in meetings, actions and daily encounters in informal settings. Relational knowledge is being created horizontally as participants learn how to engage with an issue when there is a collective need formulated to do so. The "construction sites" where knowledge is created would be within the different groups of people working autonomously in different cities on the topic of gentrification or other related issues depending on their local context and composition of involved subject positions. Here knowledge will be created in relations of affinity between subject positions, relations defined by a shared "standpoint outside of the dominant system whether excluded or self excluded" (Karatzogianni and Robinson 2010, 144), in rhizomatic nodes of relations where "each node connects to every other node" (ibid, 144) facilitating a decentralised sharing of information in group meetings, working groups and private conversations.

To make it clear: the problem that occurs when royal science is applied for making statements about social movements that are rejecting representability through collective fixed subject positions, is not so much about the content of what is written and published. It is not about miss-characterisation of autonomous social movements or the production of statements that are detrimental to their political desire. If the adherence to the logic royal science puts the researcher (at least in the moment of the research activity) in the position of the architect instead of among the travelling stone carvers within the process of knowledge creation, this does not imply that the architect has no complicity with the travelling stone carvers - quite the opposite. Just like architects, researchers can have varying degrees of complicity and sympathy with and for autonomous social movements.

As Deleuze and Guattari make it clear, there are no binary divisions between royal science and nomad science - just like there are no binary divisions between degrees of sympathy and complicity, as well as between an inside or outside the autonomous social movements. What is the problem with knowledge production

[2] "variable material-forces" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 430) are in this example the various social settings and conditions in which autonomous social movements engage with the topic and which elude representation - be it neighbourhood assemblies, working groups inside an autonomous, self-organised social centre or informal discussions.

about autonomous social movements then?

According to Deleuze and Guattari

> the State always finds it necessary to repress the nomad and minor sciences, (...), it does so not because of the content of these sciences is inexact or imperfect, or because of their magic or initiatory character[3], but because they imply a division of labour opposed to the norms of the State. (ibid, 429)

To explain the contention it seems useful to focus on the logic of knowledge production through royal science with its division of labour and epistemic authority. This logic is reflected in what is written and published about autonomous social movements by academics as well as activists themselves. Yet, it is a logic that undermines the prefigurative nature of autonomous social movements when they seek to embrace difference and emphasise collective action and experience in their articulation of political desire.

The division of labour in nomad science is different than in royal science (ibid, 428): it is horizontal instead of hierarchical and thus represents a logic of knowledge production where ends and means are continuous with the autonomous social movements' political project. A difference in the horizontal creation of knowledge within autonomous social movements to the logic of knowledge production through royal science is best fleshed out when reminding ourselves of the epistemological authority of science.

In Western culture "scientific" is an extremely powerful word when used in statements about reality. The statement "Scientific research has proven that capitalism causes recurring economic crises", for example implies that a specialised `scientific´ process of the discovery of truth has taken place. In royal science an architect's master plan of calculations that precisely define with the highest possible correctness how a building is to be constructed, in what angle an arch has to be carved, would be represented by the classical empiricist methodology which an architect would use to calculate the plan for a building. It refers to sensual experience as the sole grounding of all scientific judgement (Fraassen 2000, 30). But what kind of experience is suitable for scientific statements about reality? In the hands of scientists experience becomes "data" that is selected and produced under the condition of a research program following a theoretical commitment that is based on any pre-defined set of assumptions about reality. Behind the scenes of the rigorous empiricist methodology of royal science "anything goes" (Feyerabend 1975, 19) and yet: method is not for everyone! It is only for those who master the complex rituals and language of science to take part in an epistemic culture that defines when it

[3] From our perspective, a perspective from within the autonomous social movements, the words "magic and initiatory character" perfectly describe the atmosphere brought about by a practice of the politics of the act.

is possible to claim to know something about the world. As a result royal science creates a place of epistemological privilege which entitles it to make objective truth claims and claim to be value free. This account of science overlooks that objectivity can be seen as a construct bearing absolute authority to define truth (Haraway 1988), it overlooks the practice that comes from the stone carver's experience on different construction sites when working with a specific type of stone and brings the knowledge about a certain kind of movement of carving it.

Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the "borderline phenomena in which nomad science exerts pressure on State science, and, conversely, State science appropriates and transforms the elements of nomad science" (ibid, 422).

Nomad science and royal science touch each other in various encounters in the field. One place where this becomes visible is the practical relationship between the researcher and the activist - being the same person or not - "negotiating access, (...) offering their services in various ways." (Cox and Flesher Fominaya 2009, 6). In nomad science negotiating to which kind of experience with others the researcher is admitted is solved through a logic of affinity, in royal science the researcher already owns the knowledge produced. Another place where royal science and nomad science touch each other is where activist practices of theorising and knowledge creation become academic knowledge production, and vice versa. For example, in her comparison of action research methodologies Fuster Morell (2009, 28) includes "Action-oriented training and empowerment" which would fit the description of my last example of practice (in a seminar on effective-sustainable activism) of relational knowledge creation within autonomous social movements. Here the logic of knowledge creation of nomad science is placing epistemological importance on the collective, unpredictable and varied moments of rhizomatic knowledge creation while the logic of knowledge production of royal science is predicting and prescribing these moments.

In its next part this article will turn it into a borderline phenomenon between nomad science and royal science: rhizomatic moments of relational knowledge creation will be collected to present them in an expression of royal science looking at how these abstract concepts are reflected in concrete practices of relational knowledge creation within autonomous social movements. This "border-thinking"/"border dwelling" (Motta 2013, 8, 11) has also implications for my subject position as a researcher: living on the border can lead to marginalisation because it destabilises and reformulates my role as an academic providing potential to contribute to "the construction of dialogue between and within movements that result in the development of ´movement´ relevant research. The types of relationships formed in this process challenge traditional conceptualisations and practices of theoretical knowledge creation," (Motta 2011, 181) for doing research "from the border" is not an individual's process of knowledge production. The act of producing "movement relevant knowledge" is turning into a shared creation process through shared practices.

The practice of relational knowledge creation

When looking at how knowledge is created by different subject positions in a relation of affinity within autonomous social movements in contrast to scientific knowledge *about* autonomous social movements, the difference that comes into play is to be found in the process of how the knowledge is created. To stay with the example of autonomous social movements engaging with the issue of the right to the city, I will briefly sketch its idea and development.

Henri Lefebvre's idea that the city should be shaped by its inhabitants instead of an architect's or investor's master plan (1968) had a revival in the context of the progressing neoliberalisation of urban spaces (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer 2012). Since 2007 (U.S.A.) and 2009 in Europe (Hamburg) post-representational movements took up the issue of spatial commodification which includes a whole complex of topics, such as gentrification, privatisation of public space, private property and rent, social exclusion, street harassment and racist police controls. Different activist milieus, such as squatters, citizen initiatives, associations working with migrants, have been engaging with the topic in a variety of ways subsumed in the catch phrase coined by Lefebvre as "the right to the city": from direct actions, such as squatting empty private property or sabotages on construction sites of luxury apartments, to the organisation of events such as lecture series or art performances.

The variety of actors, organisational styles and decision-making processes involved led to the development of different "construction sites" where knowledge is created in encounters. A neighbourhood assembly in a squatted social centre in Barcelona and a reading group meeting in a self-managed infoshop[4] somewhere in Germany are both engaging with the right to the city. Yet they do so coming from perspectives situated in their everyday experience of the city that they inhabit.

Encounters where knowledge for political articulation of autonomous social movements is collectively created are constitutive of their political practices. Hence these encounters occur in action spaces - temporal action spaces of an event created by autonomous social movements (Peterson 2001, 2) or territorial action spaces where "activists act through specific geographies: e.g. on the streets, outside of military bases, surrounding a historical monument, an abandoned building," (Peterson 2001, 5). These time-spaces are confrontational action spaces linked to resistance and since autonomous social movements' politics take the shape of a non-representational politics of the act, these action spaces equally occur in the everyday. The relations between differently situated knowing objects that constitute the networked horizontal process of knowledge creation in nomad science are thereby not any intersubjective relationship but

[4] "Infoshops" are often but not necessarily rented social spaces for encounters, discussions, socialising and networking within and beyond the autonomous social movements. They often display a collection of books, zines, flyers to facilitate a sharing and spreading of information.

specifically a relationship of affinity. Hence occasions for this type of relational creation of knowledge can take place in spontaneous, sporadic and unpredictable moments of exchange marked by affinity in the practices of autonomous social movements.

To provide a concrete example of such a moment of relational knowledge creation taking place spontaneously in the everyday life of autonomous social movement activists, I will take recourse to my own field notes. These were mostly taken down while engaging with the topic of the right to the city from an autonomous social movement's perspective. Just like field notes for the following examples, this dialogue is linked to the purpose of writing this article through my relations of affinity and shared political practices with those who speak in it. Our collective engagement with these issues grew from shared experiences in daily life and the socio-political contentions that we face here. In the first two examples illustrated by my field notes I am present as a participating subject position participating in the knowledge creation process, the third example is part of a dialogical narration.

The following extract was collectively selected from a dialogue between friends involved in a group working on the right to the city about what it means that economically less privileged people are being pushed out of the city centre and resettled due to an investor's luxury refurbishment of a block of houses.

> A[5]: "Of course this is a really obvious example for gentrification in our city. These houses are the last ones with affordable rent located in the central district where everything is easily accessible without using public transport ..."
>
> B: "... which is really not affordable for everybody! ..."
>
> A: "... yes, and it is really unjust that those who have the smallest incomes have to live in a place where they have to spend lots of money for coming to the city ..."
>
> C: "... Do you know how much a monthly ticket is worth in our city? I bet you don´t even know it because you never considered to buy one. It´s almost 75 Euros. Imagine paying 75 Euros a month! This is really unaffordable for people with low income."
>
> D: "And I know for a fact that the people living in these houses have a low income. One of them came to the social centre to get information on how to get his benefits back which means that they [the job centre] have cut his benefits almost completely. It would be even difficult for him to find a new place to live because the rents are so high here."
>
> B to A: "Do you know if the inhabitants want to resist the eviction?"
>
> A: "I don´t even know whether there is really a formally issued eviction order."

[5] Names have been replaced by letters for anonymisation.

> B: "How can we find out?"
>
> C: "I think I have an idea whom we can ask ..."
>
> D: "We should ask the inhabitants first."

Reasons for autonomous social movement's militant action feed into a process of creation of the knowledge necessary to perform the action: Why is the eviction unjust and should be resisted?

> A: "(...) These houses are the last ones with affordable rent located in the central district where everything is easily accessible without using public transport (...) and it is really unjust that those who have the smallest incomes have to live in a place where they have to spend lots of money for coming to the city ..."
>
> C: "(...) [a monthly ticket for public transport] is really unaffordable for people with low income."
>
> D: "And I know for a fact that the people living in these houses have a low income. (...)"

In other words: the socio-economic structure of the lived environment makes it unaffordable for people with low income living on the outskirts to access the city-centre. This leads to social exclusion from places where public life is happening. The bits of assumptions, information and perspectives that the knowledge creation process is constituted of are derived from everyday experience of life in this specific city (*"(...) These houses are the last ones with affordable rent located in the central district ...", "(...) [a monthly ticket for public transport] is really unaffordable for people with low income."*) and is constituted through interactions. It is rhizomatic because anyone could contribute to the discussion - everyday knowledge is situated on a horizontal plane with other everyday knowledges - and yet it is specific people whose everyday experiences take the knowledge flow in this specific direction. Knowledges derived from everyday practices and experiences have simultaneously various possible nodes with other everyday knowledges. In interconnecting with each other the exchange of specific everyday knowledges constitutes a knowledge flow that depends on the everyday experiences of people participating in the knowledge creation process. It is imaginable that instead of connecting the eviction of economically de-privileged people from the city centre to unaffordable prices of public transport the knowledge flow could have spontaneously gone in a slightly different direction - for example in arguing that the inhabitants to be evicted have been criminalised by racist police controls which take place mostly in the city centre. Recent protests against racist police controls in the city might be one of the reasons for the authorities to attempt to pacify the resistance in displacing the targets of racist police controls which is why the eviction of these specific houses should be resisted. Such an interconnection of everyday knowledges might be derived from shared

experiences of being involved in the organisation of the protests against racist police controls.

There is an implicit evaluation of autonomous social movement's strategies to be found in the dialogue as well. It consists in the will not to act on behalf of the oppressed but in solidarity with the oppressed, hence the attention is turning to the will of the affected residents and collection of knowledge about their situation:

> B to A: "Do you know if the inhabitants want to resist the eviction?"
>
> A: "I don´t even know whether there is really a formally issued eviction order."
>
> B: "How can we find out?"
>
> C: "I think I have an idea whom we can ask ..."
>
> D: "We should ask the inhabitants first."

The knowledge creation process leads from the information of the houses getting evicted up to the question of getting relevant information for the resistance to an eviction. The subject positions involved in the discussion recognise that it is necessary to create relations with other subject positions involved to constitute a political articulation of resistance against this specific eviction. They find these relations in their situated knowledges (*"I think I have an idea whom we can ask ..."; "We should ask the inhabitants first."*) connecting those who know and speak about the eviction (students who want to resist oppression in a struggle for the right to the city) and those directly affected by oppression (economically less privileged people to be evicted from their central housing).

Let us assume now that many discussions similar to the one cited above will take place before a leaflet to mobilise people to come and participate in the planned blockade against the eviction will be written and distributed. These discussions might seem insignificant due to their incidental nature: friends spontaneously shift the topic of their dinner conversation from university seminars to the upcoming eviction; guests casually drop in and participate in the discussion; one of the friends decides to speak with other people she considers as being experienced in resisting squat evictions about the issue when she meets them in the social centre a few days later. What if knowledge about the political practice of resistance to the eviction was to be produced without an access to the everyday life of those involved? What if solely the written leaflets calling for a blockade of the houses on the day of the eviction were to be used to research this political practice - for example in doing a discourse analysis of the text based on actor network theory? The everyday experiences of people involved, the political practices from which this experience derives, the ways these experiences interconnect, the settings in which they do so would remain invisible if it is assumed that there is a single political articulation to be studied.

My field notes of the discussion illustrate the spontaneous and informal nature of this relational knowledge creation process. Yet, such a moment of exchange can also be more formally organised in a regular group meeting where people meet to speak about theory and to reflect on local urban politics. In a territorial action space constructed or created by militant action and at the same time co-constructive of these same militant actions (Peterson 2011, 5), such as a squatted social centre, time and place is set for encounters: the activity of a reading group on the right to the city links with other events, like action days or presentations which are other spaces for relational knowledge creation situated on a horizontal plane of the creation of knowledge happening simultaneously in a rhizomatic structure.

The knowledge of friends involved in a right to the city group and the knowledge created in weekly meetings in the social centre in another city can form a node in a more or less formalised manner: through the attendance of members of both groups to the squatting days in Hamburg[6] which was conceived by its organisers as an event to provide space for encounters and collective action during August 2014. Points of connection can also be established without any pre-planned organisation through a casual visit to the squatted social centre where the neighbourhood assembly meets during a journey of one of the friends involved in the discussion about gentrification.

The occurrence of these situations is structured through the rhythm of participant's daily life and political practices: going to meetings, gathering material for building barricades, equipping oneself with tools to do so, discussing the concept of the right to the city in the infoshop where people interested in the topic regularly spend time.

To show how the rhythm of daily life conditions when moments of relational knowledge creation that inform the autonomous social movement's direct actions occur, I will provide another example from my field notes. This example will invite engagement in reflections on the role of lifestyle choices made by participants of autonomous social movements since the rhythm of their daily life cannot be seen as separate from those choices. The example provided here is a conversation that took place during a casual encounter at the bin of a supermarket when recycling cast off food. While it is difficult to state when the act of recycling food from the bin represents an ideological choice that is made by activists and when it represents an economic necessity, it can be said that this practice of daily life creates a shared experience and point of encounter between people with both types of motivation for engaging in the free recycling of food from the bin.

The bin where trash and food are being put on the street at a specific time in the evening is known to those living in the area. The local neighbourhood assembly was discussing the issue of gentrification through tourist consumption, which, it

[6] http://squattingdays.noblogs.org/ (accessed: 20.08.2014)

has been articulated in one of the previous assembly meetings, dissolves the social tissue of the neighbourhood through the creation of places of cultural consumption such as galleries with an entrance fee. A squat containing a self-managed theatre operating without entrance fees and putting up occasional DIY shows for the local community got evicted some months before the unscheduled encounter at the bin takes place. One of the participants in the conversation at the bin of the supermarket is a former resident of the squat who moved to another area of the city after the eviction. Another participant is an inhabitant of the neighbourhood who participates in the autonomous neighbourhood assembly.

> A: "What a surprise! Good to see you here again. How are things and where do you live now?"
>
> (...)
>
> A: "You know, since you people got evicted and there have been no theatre nights in the neighbourhood any more, I feel I know much less of what is happening in the neighbourhood in general."
>
> B: "You mean in people's lives or with the movement in the neighbourhood?"
>
> A: "A bit of both, to be honest. You used to see everyone at the theatre night sometimes: the neighbours that are not so involved in politics, the students, the punks and the people from the social centre [other participants in the autonomous neighbourhood assembly]. Now it has been rare that you would meet all of them coming together in one place."
>
> C: "This is exactly what gentrification is about, isn't it? That places for less consumerist and more social encounters disappear."
>
> A: "Yeah, because having a place that is not a meeting but where you can talk to everybody is also where you can get an impression of what you can do as a political actor for this community."
>
> B: "And the neighbourhood assembly is not such a place?"
>
> A: "Also. But it is only a very specific group of people who want to be really active against gentrification and poverty and all the other things. And they need to be connected to the people from the neighbourhood. This has always been working best when you have a fun reason to meet - like watching a theatre play and having a chat at night in the backyard of (...) [the squat theatre]."
>
> B: "Maybe this means we need a new place to do DIY culture and arts. I would do it again if there are more people interested in squatting something new here."
>
> A: "Maybe I should mention this in the next neighbourhood assembly."

The random, unplanned encounter at the supermarket bin between the autonomous social movement activists is due to their shared practice (despite different subject positions: recycling food as an ideological choice of lifestyle or as an economic necessity) setting specific places and times to go to within their

rhythms of daily life. Unplanned encounters happening in these specific places and times provide opportunities for exchange of information and discussion about other collective practices related to the political context of daily life. In the case of this example the people recycling food from the bin collectively develop a perspective on the evicted theatre that sets it out as a place that fortifies the social tissue in the neighbourhood. This is seen as an opposition to the effects of local gentrification - an issue that the participants are involved in through their activity within local practices of autonomous social movements (through participating in the autonomous neighbourhood assembly and the creation of autonomous cultural spaces for the neighbourhood). In the conversation the need for a self-organised cultural space was placed in the political plane of autonomous social movement direct action:

> A: "Yeah, because having a place that is not a meeting but where you can talk to everybody is also where you can get an impression of what you can do as a political actor for this community."

If a social movements researcher would have overheard this conversation, would s_he assume to have learned about the flow of information within the squatter's movement because the political articulation at stake in the discussion is to open a new squat? This assumption would miss out that there is no squatter's movement as such - it consists of relations between different people with different political practices, between those who crack doors of empty houses at night to turn them into places for self-organised cultural performances and those who feel uncomfortable with actions that can be penalised as a criminal offence and choose to engage in community organising instead. Neither can both participants in the discussion at the bin represent the squatters movement, nor can they represent each other. They were holding different subject positions in the squatted theatre (a guest and a squatter), they have different subject positions from which they get involved in squatted spaces in the neighbourhood (a resident who comes to the squat theatre to meet and exchange information with other residents and a nomadic DIY culture enthusiast who is up for squatting). It is their shared practice of having been part of the squatted theatre that creates relations between these different subject positions and allows them to engage in a spontaneous knowledge flow in every place outside of these practices.

When describing the model of nomad science we see it as "operating in an open space throughout which things-flows are distributed, rather than plotting out a closed space for linear and solid things" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 421). This is a contrast to the type of knowledge that royal science produces in closed conference rooms. As against royal science the knowledge created by nomad science also prefers no predefined citation style, no privileged habitus of speaking and writing or formal entitlement to do so in the institutional context of a university. This is, however, not to say that relational knowledge creation

within autonomous social movements cannot happen in closed conference rooms or that a certain way of self-expression will never be prevalent in certain moments of knowledge created by different subject positions. What distinguishes these moments from the knowledge production in royal science is that no place of knowledge production is granted epistemological authority - be it an encounter at the bin or a seminar on sustainable activism and burn out prevention. The latter constitutes my next example, which is of interest here because it contrasts the previous examples with a set place, time and content as well as with a more formalised (through facilitation and a pre-structured agenda) course of action.

Workshops and seminars on specific issues concerning participants in autonomous social movements constitute a different place of encounter for relational knowledge creation within autonomous social movements. Although in these workshops and seminars a group of people ("trainers", "facilitators", "organisers", ...) is responsible for facilitating the creation of knowledge amongst participants, a characteristic of these workshops and seminars is that they are organised by participants of autonomous social movements for participants of autonomous social movements according to the principle of a horizontal exchange in the process of knowledge creation (through discussion rules, consensus decision-making, exchange of information about differences in subject positions and practices within autonomous social movements, ...).

As an example I will choose the *effective-sustainable activism* workshop that took place in 2014 in the Ecodharma centre, a community in the Pyrenees. The seminar

> …aims to support awareness and change at both the personal and inter-personal levels to enable more effective and sustainable activism. It seeks to foster forms of community organizing and activism that nourish, inspire and empower people, in ways that are personally sustainable and contribute to long term movement building.[7].

In the words of one participant, the seminar:

> A:"… was a place where knowledge got created by the movements for the movements and to an equal amount by all those who attended the seminar, regardless if they were a trainer or a participant. I would say we created knowledge about group building and group dynamics, consensus, burn-out in general and how to deal with burn-outs from activism, the making of everyday routines and practices, self-reflection, ... The trainers were a diverse group:

[7] http://www.ecodharma.com/self-society-a-radical-response/effective-sustainable-activism (accessed: 19.12.2014).

> some of them, from the community itself, were really into the Buddhist stuff and meditation, but they never imposed their views on others. Some trainers came from the U.K. where they were involved in environmental direct action and had nothing to do with these ideas about spirituality. The participants also came from a diverse range of political backgrounds and this is why the seminar was so valuable for knowing more. We had quite a tight time schedule but there was also time for relaxing and thinking. It was really well organised with different seminar sequences leading into each other and one could see that the trainers had experience in facilitating groups. Sessions were still open to change and spontaneous inputs. Of course there was some `seminar style talk´ and group exercises, too. The organisation that funded it also helped to fund the Ecotopia biketour [where the interviewee had previously participated] in the past."

This statement portrays the seminar as a place of horizontal knowledge creation within autonomous social movements that succeeded in embracing a plurality of subject positions:

> A:"(...) knowledge got created by the movements for the movements and to an equal amount by all those who attended the seminar, regardless if they were a trainer or a participant. (...) The trainers were a diverse group: some of them, from the community itself, were really into the Buddhist stuff and meditation, but they never imposed their views on others. Some trainers came from the U.K. where they were involved in environmental direct action and had nothing to do with these ideas about spirituality. The participants also came from a diverse range of political backgrounds and this is why the seminar was so valuable for knowing more."

Despite the more formal organisation in the shape of a facilitated and pre-planned seminar, the access to the knowledge creation process was given to this participant through informal relations formed in previous participation in autonomous social movement practices:

> A: "The organisation that funded it also helped to fund the Ecotopia biketour [where the interviewee had previously participated] in the past."

This example pictures that the relational knowledge creation process within autonomous social movements can include different ways of speaking (in the context of a seminar as opposed to the context of an casual encounter):

> A: "We had quite a tight time schedule but there was also time for relaxing and thinking. It was really well organised with different seminar sequences leading into each other and one could see that the trainers had experience in facilitating groups. Sessions were still open to change and spontaneous inputs. Of course

> there was some `seminar style talk´ and group exercises, too."

Yet, no specific knowledge (of trainers, in this case on spirituality as a tool for sustainable activism,) was granted epistemological privilege despite a specific position and role within the seminar group:

> A:"The trainers were a diverse group: some of them, from the community itself, were really into the Buddhist stuff and meditation, but they never imposed their views on others."

The aim of the seminar is placed within the prefigurative practice of articulating political desire (more effective-sustainably). Within such practices the horizontality of different knowledges remains operative despite the potentially hierarchical setting of different knowledges to be involved (trainers and participants). The seminar is open to participants from different struggles to come together to create knowledge about effective-sustainable activism. The knowledges that these different struggles create (in mediatised campaigns against deforestation or on the street preventing evictions) are thus placed on a horizontal plane where it is possible to connect different nodes of relations of affinity collectively constituting a spontaneous knowledge flow.

Would a social movements researcher choose to study the seminar in order to learn about knowledge production because a seminar is obviously a place and a setting to produce knowledge as an outcome? Assuming that there are such central places for knowledge production within autonomous social movements, we would miss out on all the knowledges from different struggles that people gained elsewhere, that they brought to the seminar from their different places of struggle. Although there might be some seminar outcomes conclusively written on a flip chart on the last day, it remains untraceable what the results really are for the everyday practices of autonomous social movements. Solely looking at the seminar outcomes as one united production of knowledge we do not know in which contexts these insights will be applied in the future, where the various experiences involved in the knowledge flow within the seminar came from, unless we enter the sphere of participant's everyday life that made them engage in the seminar.

The creation of knowledge in autonomous social movements through relations of affinity between differently situated subject positions produces shared conceptions of issues through a horizontal connection of situated knowledges derived from everyday experience within the autonomous social movements struggle (Motta 2011). It is intrinsically related to the practice of socio-political dissent itself because it is in this moment that the creation of knowledge about how and why to articulate dissent takes place (cf. Sitrin and Azzellini 2014, 51-67).

Two challenges

If we conceive the practice of relational knowledge creation within and about autonomous social movements as nomad science happening in moments of reflection within the movement that are rhizomatically connected to each other on a horizontal plane with no epistemologically privileged point, we face at least two important challenges when engaging with this knowledge.

1. Devaluation of nomad science by royal science

Looking at the exclusionary power/knowledge nexus in scientific research which produces the known object we find an "epistemological logics of intellectual production in political science in which only certain ways of performing the intellectual are considered legitimate." (Motta 2013, 1). These privileged ways of intellectual production produce "relationships of 'power-over' between the knower and the known subject." (Motta 2013, 4).

In scientific research which privileges ways of knowing that are objective, neutral, detached and methodologically confined to empiricism, putting more epistemological importance on the practice of autonomous social movements which is situated in everyday life, is a difficult task.

We can relate to Paul Feyerabend's (1975) complaint about the oppressive authority of (royal) science through which different ways of knowing that are intuitive, affinity based, collaborative and informal are epistemologically devalued and "nomad science is portrayed as a prescientific or parascientific or sub-scientificagency." (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 428). This devaluation makes the process of relational knowledge creation with nomad science invisible to the eyes of the scientist who, in maintaining a "legislative and constituent primacy for royal science" sides with the State (ibid. 428) and exerts 'power-over' the autonomous social movements in making them an object of research to be studied, analysed and objectively demonstrated to the outside world refusing to grant the autonomous social movements any agency in their self-definition or positioning. Thus the autonomous social movements as an object of research have lost their ability to *speak to* social research - instead they are being *spoken of* in social research. Hearing the autonomous social movements speak behind the methodological impositions and confines of royal science or State science in academia is therefore extremely challenging.

2. Recognising moments of relational knowledge creation

Accepting the horizontal nature of relational knowledge creation when doing scientific research and learning to recognise moments of knowledge creation as such when they happen is challenging for the researcher. Settings in which these moments occur are defined by relations of affinity between participants, since autonomous social movements are characterised by an affinity-based organising (Day 2001). These moments can be very different, with different modalities of

expression being employed. As described in the previous part of this article, they can happen in a scheduled meeting of a working group but also spontaneously when socialising, or even in a more hectic moment during an action. In these moments it is difficult not to be completely caught up by the social situation itself to recognise that right here and now knowledge is being created.

As activist academics we prone to have relations of affinity with participants in autonomous social movements, we are more likely to assist group meetings where knowledge creation takes place through relations of affinity between differently situated subject positions, and more likely to be present on an action where knowledge and practice intertwine. Yet, we are ourselves part of the situation when doing research, just as the knowledge that we create or that we see being created is situated in a specific context (Anderson 2012). The situation in which knowledge is created horizontally in networked relations of affinity might be stressful, emotionally loaded and present a whole set of everyday life challenges to the knowing object whose first priority as an activist within autonomous social movements might not be with meta-theoretical reflections but with the political articulation itself. The methodology of "border-thinking"/"border dwelling" (Motta 2013, 8; 11) that conceives the researcher as a travelling storyteller that is inhabiting different spaces – scientific ones and experienced ones, the world of research and the one of the researched at once, presents us with another challenge here. On the one hand it prefigures horizontal relationships between different types of knowledges dwelling on the epistemological margins in both worlds which facilitates a transmission of stories making the silenced object of research heard. On the other hand side, a life with full participation in both worlds, the world of research and the world of experience within the autonomous social movements, makes high demands on the activist academic as a travelling storyteller: not only to transcend knowing as mastery and to start learning with and from the movements but also to accommodate the calculations of royal science with the hydraulic model of nomad science based on relations of affinity and affect.

Attempting to do so constitutes exactly the type of "borderline phenomena" that Deleuze and Guattari are interested in (2013, 422): paying epistemological attention to the relational knowledge creation process within the autonomous social movements is an act of transgression between nomad science and royal science when nomad science takes place within royal science. It is an act of de-hierarchising different types of knowledge which allows us, as academics or activists, to engage with the practices of autonomous social movements beyond the strict impositions of royal science. In the next part of this article I will elaborate two proposals to help in this process.

Two Proposals

1. Epistemological rebellion

Faced with the devaluation and discreditation of post-representational and rhizomatic knowledge creation in nomad science by royal science, we can start questioning the rules by which royal science operates. In doing so the set of binding methodological guidelines applied with an empiricist epistemology that produces "intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, `objectivity´, `truth´"(Feyerabend 1975, 18) comes to our attention. Revisiting the history of epistemological rebellion in science we find a seductive starting point for fruitfully engaging with knowledge produced by nomad science in Paul Feyerabned's epistemological anarchism in "Against Method" (1975). He claims, scientific progress occurs through what positivists call "methodological weaknesses" – chaos, opportunism, errors and the opposition to reason (ibid, 158) and violations of scientific laws (ibid, 14) established by royal science. For the reason that "Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge. And a method that encourages variety is also the only method that is compatible with a humanitarian outlook" (ibid, 32).

Feyerabend doubts objectivity partly because of the same reasons as Foucault (2002): no `objective´ truth claim can be detached from its `subjective historical context´ (Feyerabend 1989) and subject position issuing the truth claim. Therefore subjective beliefs and opinions of the scientist have to be included in the research carried out. In "Against Method" he dedicates one of twenty chapters (ibid, 252-267) to the development of his personal beliefs and interests in the topic.

The epistemic authority of science gets challenged by Feyerabend through questioning the rules by which it operates, its underlying assumptions as well as through the suggestion to criticise science from the point of view of a different (but equally important) conceptual systems of knowledge such as mythology or "the ramblings of madmen" (ibid, 53).

"First-world science is one science among many" (ibid, 3). This break gives voice and tools to those who create knowledge outside of the institutionalised scientific community and makes different ways of knowledge creation equal to those of royal science. It empowers those who employ differing ways of speaking about knowledge: speaking through narratives, through myths and traditions, through creating events and encounters for a horizontal process of speaking with each other, speaking through practice in projecting the world we want to live in into the present.

Applied to the study of autonomous social movements this means to learn to listen to different ways of speaking and to unlearn oneself as a scientist. In reclaiming the history of epistemological rebellion in science the known object can suddenly not only speak, it is also situated in contexted positions and perspectives when doing so and it has a post-representational plurality of different situated expressions.

At this point we have to start looking for epistemological allies in the present and we find them in feminist and post-colonial epistemology where, just like when working with autonomous social movement's relational knowledge creation process, the researcher deals with marginalised ways of knowing. The commonalities are obvious: "Feminist epistemology conceives of knowers as situated in particular relations to what is known and to other knowers. What is known, and the way that it is known, thereby reflects the situation or perspective of the knower." (Anderson 2012). To profit from a closer look at feminist epistemology, which is mainly focusing on gender relations, when studying post-representational and rhizomatic knowledge, it is necessary to work out which type of feminist epistemology provides a conceptual link for taking a post-representational plurality of expressions into account. It is important to note that feminist epistemology provides different approaches to seeing how women have been silenced in science not all of which are suitable.

Standpoint theory in general claims "to represent the world from a particular socially situated perspective that can lay a claim to epistemic privilege or authority" and feminist standpoint theory claims "an epistemic privilege over the character of gender relations, and of social and psychological phenomena in which gender is implicated, on behalf of the standpoint of women" (ibid). Feminist standpoint theories ground the claim to epistemic privilege in different features of women's social situation, such as work, reproduction (Hartsock 1987 and Rose 1987), education (Chodorow 1999) or sexualised objectification (MacKinnon 1999).

In contrast, feminist postmodernism provides a rhizomatic conceptualisation of knowledges situated on a horizontal plane. Postmodernists such as Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard claim that what we perceive as reality is discursively constructed in language and systems of thought. They stress the partiality, ambiguity and essential contestability of any particular account of truth about reality. This idea gets extended from language to social practices conceptualising actions as linguistic signs. Within these social practices our identities are equally socially imposed through discursive construction and we occupy a plurality of them at the same time: a woman might also be a lesbian, a person of colour, a daughter, ... Postmodernist feminist theories have provided a variety of criticisms of the concept of "woman" from a post-representational perspective (Collins 1990) which opens up a post-representational meta-theoretical ground for a plurality of situated knowledges and thus resonates with the practices of post-representational movements.

Prefiguring horizontal relationships between these different knowledges created in different ways, an epistemology that stands against the devaluation of the practices of nomad science by royal science treats different processes of knowledge creation and their outputs as different but equal narratives. It facilitates an exchange between them in translating the post-representational narrative of the autonomous social movement practices with care into the language of royal science where it is to stand its epistemological ground.

2. Taking 'homeplaces' as a contestable focus of sensitive attention

The second challenge with relational knowledge creation and its unpredictable context dependent nature is recognising the moments of knowledge creation as such when they happen. This is a matter of sensitive attention, but sensitive attention can not always be maintained when engaging with autonomous social movements "in the field" which is literally everywhere and includes emotionally charged and stressful situations. In an emergency meeting in an occupied house with the police at the doors for eviction, sensitive attention to the fact that knowledge is created in rhizomatic relations here and now is difficult to maintain. Thus I suggest finding contestable focal points of attention for these moments situated on an imaginary map of the practices of the movements. I suggest placing these contestable focal points of attention in the geographies of resistance of autonomous social movements and their nomad science. On a territorial scale, nomads need different points to go to. These points are situated on a horizontal plane of places that are socially constructed in the geographical reality (Cresswell 1996). Moments of relational knowledge creation within autonomous social movements take place in a place. For the researcher to be able to focus on this process with a sensitive attention, it might be useful to ask what kind of spatial settings enable the relational creation of knowledge.

Autonomous social movements act in geographical places, struggling to appropriate place in conjunction with their cognitive action space, their map of place, and it is crucial to understand that they are elements engaged in a struggle against forces of domination. They act on topographies imposed through the spatial technologies of domination, and partly their actions move across these topographies (cf. Peterson 2001, 6). "Their 'room' to manoeuvre in a struggle against authorities which superimposes itself onto physical places is across and beneath these places, in the inevitable cracks which exist and which involve alternative spaces which are dimly lit, deliberately hidden, and saturated with memories." (ibid, 7). Peterson argues that autonomous social movements create action spaces of encounter through their practice of resistance against domination. Sharp et al. conceptualise these places as the autonomous social movement's "'homeplaces' of resistance" (2000, 29), where resistance is never an unfractured practice but the 'homeplace' of resistance remains unstable and penetrable by practices of domination.

In a temporal action space of autonomous social movements, the street can become such a 'homeplace' of resistance when occupied in a demonstration, while territorial action spaces provide a geographically fixed point of reference, such as an infoshop where encounters and collective processes locate the everyday practices of autonomous social movements.

The collective social construction of these places can serve as a focal point for processes of relational knowledge creation because it is in the spatial reality that autonomous social movements become tangible through their practice of articulation and their knowledge is situated within the "geographies of resistance" (Pile 1997) that they create collectively through their articulation.

Conclusion

My aim was to investigate epistemological challenges for a speaking from within autonomous social movements about their practices in contrast to conceiving them as an object of research whose voice is buried underneath quantitative evaluations of media coverage of the movements' actions or "objective" discourse analysis of "social movement actors". I was instantly faced with two different challenges. While the first challenge is a purely epistemological one resulting from the structural privileging of a certain way of producing knowledge by an individualised, rational, detached and socially privileged subject position of the scientist and the hegemonic devaluation of other knowledge creation processes, the second challenge is methodological: the question of the knowing object as a researcher and as the researched at once. This challenge sends us on the quest for suitable methodological tools for working with and within post-representational movements on an emancipatory practice/knowledge nexus which brings their voices and knowledges to the foreground opposing a hegemonic speaking-over by royal science within autonomous social movement studies.

The proposals concerning these challenges that are formulated here, are situated in a specific political context and can be adapted, transformed, modified, to be applied to another situation of the knowing object. Therefore these proposals are part of a plurality of expressions coming from different subject positions within the autonomous social movements and hopefully they can contribute, fertilise, mix and exchange in a horizontal process of articulation along with other expressions.

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An *Enfant Terrible* of International Communism (and Internationalist Communication)

Peter Waterman

Abstract

A reflection on the life and death of Willi Münzenberg, the very epitome of the Communist internationalist and communicator in the period between the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. Münzenberg was a product of State-Communism's early, creative and spendthrift period and also its victim as Soviet Russia became more authoritarian, nationalist and obsessive. And although he must be seen as also a product of national/industrial/imperial capitalism, emancipatory movements of capitalism's global and computerised era still need to be aware of the price to be paid for Münzenberg's crimes and misdemeanours.

Keywords: *Willi Münzenberg, Communism, Comintern, Internationalism, Emancipation, Media, Agitators, Agents, Communicators.*

Youth International; Zimmerwald Conference; Founding Congress of the Comintern; Famine Relief for Soviet Russia; Workers International Relief; Famine in Germany; Proviantkolonne des Proletariats; Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung; Communist Party of Germany; League against Imperialism and for National Independence; Against the Horrors in Syria!; L'Etoile Nord-Africaine; Der Rote Aufbau; The Arab National Congress; La Ligue pour la Défense de la Race Nègre; Mezhrabpom-Film; First International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers; Kuhle Wampe; Free Sacco and Vanzetti!; Neuer Deutscher Verlag; Hands Off China!; Eulenspiegel; Liga Antiimperialista de las Américas; Indonesian Revolt; World Committee Against War and Fascism; Berlin am Morgen; Welt am Abend; ¡Viva Sandino!; For the Release of Dimitrov, Thälmann and all Antifascists; Lutetia Committee; Prometheus Film; Association of Worker Photographers; The Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and Hitler Terror; World Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism; Propaganda as weapon; The International Coordination and Information Committee of Aid for Republican Spain; The Hollywood Anti-Nazi League for the Defense of American Democracy; Die Zukunft, Organ der Deutsch-Französischen Union; "The traitor, Stalin, are you!"; Komitee Menschen in Not; Freunde der sozialistischen Einheit Deutschlands.

(Some of the keywords for the Münzenberg Conference, Berlin, September 2015)

Introduction[1]

What, in this globalised and informatised capitalist world disorder, are we to make of Willi Münzenberg, who lived and died fighting in and against a national and industrial capitalist one? Sean McMeekin (2003), in an otherwise overwhelmingly scholarly work, ends up by presenting Münzenberg as a brilliant but corrupt and vicious propagandist exploiting anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and anti-fascism to threaten the pluralistic West. He even suggests he was a forerunner of the

> Islamic terrorists (who) exploit the very openness of our society to move money, men and munitions across borders, and use our own technology to kill us (307).

Dear oh dear…!

One would have thought McMeekin's title and subtitle sufficient to have Münzenberg hung, drawn and displayed as a frightener to the rest of us (that means those of 'us' enjoying the benefits of an open society that never stops moving money, men and munitions across borders, and whose world-destroying global media lies and manipulation have been increasingly exposed).

Münzenberg was born in Erfurt, Germany, 1889, and died near Grenoble, France, 1940. He was surely one of the most remarkable of the first-generation Communist internationalists. He was a young primary-educated worker when he was urging his brand of radical socialism on the already stolid, late-19th century, German Social Democratic Party. As a starving youth he made his way to Switzerland, where, during the great inter-imperialist carnage of 1914-18, he met Lenin and other early left social democrats and revolutionaries. He was involved in the creation of the German Communist Party but is better known - where known at all - for his international organisational and media activities, which fell under the patronage of the Communist Third International (Comintern).

Münzenberg was, however, an innovator within both the national and international movement, commonly acting first and seeking, winning or imposing approval after. He initiated, shaped and dominated dozens of international solidarity and aid committees – all Communist fronts – addressed to the defence of the Soviet state, to famine victims in Russia or political prisoners elsewhere, to peace, national independence, anti-fascism. He was

[1] This is an edited version of my paper to the 2015 Willi Münzenberg congress in Berlin, which in turn draws on and updates my 2004 review of Sean McMeekin's biography of Münzenberg. The continuing – if not growing - interest in Münzenberg led to the Berlin conference, whose invitation (https://psacommunism.wordpress.com/2014/11/10/call-for-papers-first-international-willi-munzenberg-congress/) provides convincing arguments for the importance of this man. Another reason for reworking this piece is that there are still, on the left, those who believe in both the revolutionary lie and in communication as its instrument.

involved in international Communist film production and distribution. He set up 15-20 journals, newspapers and popular illustrated magazines – some international. He created the Worker Photography Movement, which itself became an international one. He travelled Western Europe, visited Moscow on numerous occasions, was exiled in France. He survived both black and red terror, cautiously avoiding invitations to Moscow as the wave of trials and executions rose. With the Kremlin smearing as 'traitors' thousands, including Willi himself, he returned the insult, stating that 'Der Verräter, Stalin, bist Du!' (The traitor, Stalin, is you!). This is now the title of a compilation on the death of Communist internationalism (Bayerlein 2008).

Münzenberg juggled funds between numerous simultaneous projects, even using Moscow gold to finance the solidarity actions or aid that ostensibly flowed to the Soviet Union either from the 'workers of the world' or from 'democratic and peace-loving forces'. Motivated till his premature death by the international proletarian revolution, he over time developed a nice taste in suits, had a personal barber, stayed at fancy hotels, lived in a fine apartment. The Soviet Union and the Comintern, however, were moving, in the 1930s, away from their early revolutionary, creative and spendthrift beginnings - when there was room for charismatic and creative individuals - into a conjoined bureaucratic apparatus responding only to the latest twitch of its master's moustache.

Münzenberg was, as McMeekin says, a propagandist, and evidently someone who had no theory of the media, no notion of it as an independent sphere, with its own emancipatory possibilities: it was an instrument of 'The Party', like Lenin's Iskra (which preceded his own party).[2]

Münzenberg, who lived on financial and political credit from the Soviet Union, eventually ran out of both, was rejected by a Comintern purged by Stalin, thrown out of the German KPD, and died, under suspicious circumstances, as he attempted to flee Nazi-occupied France for Switzerland. In so far as it seems possible that he was strangled by one of the agents who had for some years been spying on him, the expression 'hoist with his own petard' seems grimly appropriate. Indeed, the bloodless bureaucrats who survived him and ruled the German Democratic Republic, later killed him off 13 years before his actual death! An official East German handbook on the international labour movement gives him a last mention in 1927 (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus 1986:254).

Despite this depressing detail, I still prefer to place Münzenberg within a certain history, or model, of internationalism, and of communication in relation to such. This is, in part, because I cannot see the history of the last 100 years or so in terms of the development of an 'open' and 'self-critical' world society threatened by mad extremisms (read: 'evil empires', 'axes of evil') called Communism, Anti-Imperialism or even Islamic Fundamentalism. I see it, rather as an unevenly liberal capitalist world – as also an imperialist, militarist, hetero-

[2] Which is not to say that Willi M had no ideas about the importance of the media and was not responsible for or involved in a whole series of original cultural experiments. See here Heynen 2015: 508-29.

normative, ecologically-destructive and occasionally fascist one – which repeatedly recreates, to recall a phrase, its own gravediggers. Such gravediggers (pace Marx) are not necessarily civilised by the society that creates them. Nor are their methods necessarily more civilised. Rosa Luxemburg posed as alternatives Socialism and Barbarism. She forgot a third alternative, Barbaric Socialism. But if Münzenberg was a monster, sacred to some, evil to others, than he was as much a monster of the capitalism that gave birth to him as of the Communism he himself helped create. Communism, after all, was not a deus ex machina. It was itself a child of the national, industrial, capitalist modernity into which it was born.

This brings me to another other reason for interest in Münzenberg, a long-standing concern with internationalism, with communications and culture in relation to such, and with the bearers of these, the left or red internationalists (Waterman 2002). Paraphrasing Eric Hobsbawm (1988) – a later-generation German/British and cosmopolitan Communist – I once proposed a historical typology of red internationalists: the Agitators (often freelancers, 'changing their countries more often than their shirts'); the Agents (working for a state or party, whether openly or clandestinely, whether as organisers, propagandists or spies); and the Communicators (creating/instrumentalising/empowering mass action by providing relevant publics with information, ideas, dialogue, son et lumière). It then occurred to me that this was not simply a diachronic typology, it could also be a synchronic one - that these were also forms or aspects of internationalist activity within each significant historical period. (Be it added that this was meant to be a heuristic typology - one that could be abandoned or surpassed in the face of forceful criticism, and especially stubborn evidence). Let us try it out on the Münzenberg case.

Within such a typology, Münzenberg could be seen as a young Agitator, early transformed into an Agent, and as a Communicator whose activities were determined by his Agent role. Upon these bones we have to place flesh and muscle. This means: the party and ideology, the social, economic and political history, the individual personality. Much of this is provided by McMeekin. What he does not show us, either literally by illustration, or figuratively by description, is the remarkable artefacts Münzenberg produced or was responsible for. Indeed, Münzenberg himself is quoted sparingly, except toward the end of his life and this book.

This shortcoming was fortunately compensated for by the pioneering two-volume work of Mattelart and Siegelaub (1979, 1983), *Communication and Class Struggle*. These unique volumes themselves came out of a previous wave of emancipation and internationalism (we are undergoing a new one now), that of 1968. In the second of the two volumes we are not only given a text of Münzenberg on the International Worker-Photographer Movement. We are also shown sample pages, photos and contributions from *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* from the early 1930s. These are usefully preceded by other remarkable statements from the German Communist movement of that time: Bertolt Brecht on radio; and Hanns Eisler on the worker music movement. Brecht, with

brilliant if misplaced foresight, gives radio the democratic communication potential of the computer; Eisler (who invented a whole new musical genre for his party, class and international movement) takes an instrumental and pedagogical attitude to music (but check out the amazing music itself; another article, on 'The Worker's Eye', from *Der Arbeiter-Fotograf* itself, warns that the majority of proletarians are stumbling around with 'a definitely petty-bourgeois eye' (1979: 176)! The worker's eye clearly lies here in that of the vanguardist beholder. Münzenberg's own contribution here is suggestive but predictable – though we must discount the achievements claimed.

The point here is that in the *Sturm und Drang* of Weimar Germany (Heynen, 2015) – and around the world at that time – there was an explosion of left cultural activity, mostly linked, for better or worse, with Soviet and international Communism. When Hitler came to power (due in part to Communism treating Social Democracy as the greater threat), and as international Communism was reduced to Soviet Nationalism, this cultural internationalism pretty much disappeared. As did Münzenberg. 'Our' capitalism played its own part: the increasing technical sophistication, corporate concentration and commodification of what had previously been artisanal media, left decreasing space for both avantgarde artists and working-class culture.

Here a parenthesis is necessary, one not unconnected with the latest global solidarity movements. This has to do with Münzenberg's Internationale Arbeiterhilfe (IAH, International Worker Relief). One of its aims was to aid victims of the Soviet famine of the early 1920s – a famine for which Soviet policies were at least co-responsible. IAH was, however, also created as a Communist-controlled counterweight to not only the American Relief Administration (of the US Quaker, humanitarian and justly-forgotten future president, Herbert Hoover), but also the international Social-Democratic relief efforts initiated by the experienced left-socialist international union leader, Edo Fimmen (McMeekin 2003:107-9).

Casting an eye backward, the IAH could be seen as an expression of that wide range of activities by which the inter/national working-class movement confronted the charity activities of a hypocritical and calculating inter/national bourgeoisie. Looking sideways one could see it as an expression of the war - always cold, sometimes hot – that Communism was carrying out against Social Democracy. Looking forward, we can see the outlines of inter/national 'development cooperation' – today once again addressed to the East as well as the South. The contemporary inter/national trade union organisations are active within this aid effort, but are also largely incorporated within both the institutional/financial practices and the ideological discourses of a Eurocentred liberal middle class.

The Communist project of Münzenberg was partially destroyed by its financial and political shenanigans, including Willi's disastrous efforts to convert the IAH into some kind of international industrial and commercial contribution to

Soviet development. In so far as the contemporary international unions are beginning to see themselves as part of 'global civil society' – even echoing 'Another World is Possible!' - then there is clearly a need to reconsider this whole complex and disastrous experience, and then to reinvent international aid and solidarity activities on a more principled and autonomous basis. (For just one of various recent efforts, see *Interface*, issue 6 volume 2[3]).

Maybe we should see Münzenberg as the left equivalent of a media tycoon or maverick capitalist - a Bill Gates or George Soros - of international Communism. After World War Two the International Communists and Communicators were a dreary lot (I was one of them), as suggested by the very title of the official organ of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy*. Even those who in Britain dredged its endless columns of turgid prose called it, disrespectfully, *For-For*. Left internationalist and cultural expression only revived with what I above called 1968. This was the era of the New Left, less Communist but retaining or reinventing its apocalyptical and creative edge. The most recent left wave is associated with the 'global justice and solidarity movement' – that wide gamut of protest and proposition provoked by 'our' globalised networked capitalism. Thanks to the thoroughly post-industrial internet, this is becoming the first primarily communicative internationalism (and the first post-nationalist one?), whilst simultaneously losing its dead albatrosses – the insurrectionary-apocalyptical zeal, the monopoly of truth, the revolutionary lie.

I suggested above that I was one of the - let us here say *less-inspired* if still enthusiastic - internationalist Communists/communicators. This was in Prague in the later 1950s. I was the English (and inevitably chief sub-) editor of the magazine of the International Union of Students, *World Student News* (Waterman 2014: ch. 2). This was what remained of the Münzenberg Galaxy after its charismatic genius had disappeared, his projects been re-sited inside a Communist-state-bloc and reshaped as pallid organs of a dozen or more international Communist-state-front organisations. The Zeal was tempered, the Truth remained, and the Revolutionary Lie had been converted, mostly, into the diplomatic phrase. Coming from a liberal-democratic Britain and with a diploma in journalism, I struggled within this turgid organisation with mixed success.

And I could also experience how the Czechoslovak state media (film occasionally, oddly, accepted) reproduced the monopoly of truth and the post-revolutionary lie, if not the apocalyptical zeal. Every Communist country had its international magazine, *The Soviet Union Reconstructs, Czechoslovak Life…* One item I contributed to a Czechoslovak weekly had been so heavily 'translated and improved' that I proposed the promised fee (moderate) be paid to the editor responsible. The Prague Spring and Soviet Summer of 1968, which I later experienced, saw the transformation of even Czech state TV (of which my former IUS boss Jiří Pelikán, was now director, later fleeing to Italy). And then, of

[3] http://www.interfacejournal.net/2014/12/interface-volume-6-issue-2-movement-internationalisms

course, there was the outburst of popular fury and creativity when the Soviets invaded: 'Come Back Lenin, Brezhnev has Gone Crazy!'. But this was an overwhelmingly national effort, with no knowledge of Münzenberg, remarakably little inspiration from the Paris Spring, and whose hopes of international solidarity were reduced to attempts to inform a largely indifferent West and its divided and disoriented Left. After Soviet 'normalisation' had been reimposed the media returned to, well, the Communist norm. Even in 1989, with Communism in full crumble, *Czechoslovak Life* was publishing on 'Mushroom Picking in Czechoslovakia'[4]! International Communist propaganda had become national tourist publicity.

Neither of the earlier-mentioned New Lefts knows much about Münzenberg, though they certainly owe him something. It is my belief that the latest of these movements is surpassing the mechanical Marxism of that national-industrial period, as well as the instrumentalisation of culture, the hidden agendas, the primarily didactic disposition, and almost all of the *Parteilichkeit* (partymindedness). It has a rather more sophisticated understanding of international solidarity (which can and should today be pluralised). It no longer, with exceptions, considers that the proletariat needs grafted on to it (by any *Lider Maximo* or *Herr Professor Doktor*) a proletarian eye. It even has some ethical notions beyond that of the revolutionary end justifying the manipulative means. (The alternative is increasingly conceived, and practiced, as 'prefiguration'). But I would still say that it has much to learn from Münzenberg and his comrades. Mostly, of course, to do with avoiding his crimes and even his misdemeanours.

Here another parenthesis is in place, this having to do with… well… misdemeanours leading to crimes? Amongst the revolutionary comrades of Münzenberg in the 1930s would have been the Czechoslovak Communist Jew, Otto Katz/Andre Simone (Miles 2010) and the brilliant and witty, sometime Communist, journalist, Claude Cockburn (father of the now better-known Alex). In his autobiography (Cockburn 1958), Claude relates how he helped Katz fake up a detailed report of an uprising amongst Franco's North African troops in Spain. The purpose – apparently successful - was to get the French government of Blum to provide armed support to the beleaguered Spanish Republican regime. Claude is unapologetic about the revolutionary lies of Katz and himself. But what he fails, at least here, to relate is that Katz was later executed by the Czechoslovak Communist state that further such lies, propaganda and hidden agendas had helped bring into existence. There are evident parallels with the fate of Münzenberg.

We should be grateful to McMeekin. Because if capitalism was partially responsible for creating Gravedigger Münzenberg, then there may be a Little Willi in 'us' (here the 'us' of the new global solidarity and justice movements), ready to cut corners, to stay in 5-star hotels whilst holding encounters against neo-liberalism, to misuse funds, to conceal, to manipulate, to preach - and all in

[4] http://rainbow.chard.org/radio/radio-prague czechoslovakia/ 018-4/

the name of a world or a word assumed to be inevitably superior to those in existence - or to those conceivable by the mass, class or identity in whose name we might claim to speak. Our utopias are, Thank Goddess, not what they used to be. In so far as we work out what they might be, we may escape the brutal attentions of at least 'our own' assassins and the academic mercies of any future Sean McMeekin.

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About the author

Peter Waterman (London 1936) worked in Prague for two Communist-front organisations, as an editor for the International Union of Students in the mid- to late-1950s, and as a labour educator for the World Federation of Trade Unions in the later 1960s. Most recently he has published, online and free, his autobiography (http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/from_coldwar_communism_to_the_global_emancipatory_movement/reviews/). This deals, in part, with Communist internationalism and its media, as well as the State-Communist experience, and attempts to create 'alternative international labour communication by computer'.

How activists can challenge double standards

Brian Martin

Abstract

Activists often encounter double standards: powerful groups make a huge outcry about a problem, meanwhile ignoring their own greater role in exactly the same problem. For example, governments with major nuclear arsenals raise the alarm about the possibility that others might acquire nuclear weapons. Powerful groups use a variety of tactics to reduce awareness and concern about their own actions while raising the alarm about others; activists can try to counter these tactics. As a general rule, it is better for campaigners to choose methods that highlight and accentuate double standards and make it more difficult for opponents to adopt the high ground.

Introduction

Many campaigners encounter a perplexing and frustrating phenomenon. Your opponents accuse you of doing something terrible — but actually your opponents do the same thing just as much or even a great deal more. For example, your opponents are engaged in massive censorship, but accuse you of censorship, or your opponents are engaged in serious terrorism but accuse you of being a terrorist. It seems like gross hypocrisy, yet it can be hard to address.

A classic example involves nuclear weapons. Over the past two decades, the US government has raised the alarm that Iraq, and more recently Iran, might be obtaining nuclear weapons, with the danger presented as so acute that invasion is a potential remedy. During this whole time, the US government has been sitting on thousands of nuclear weapons, and it is just one of several nuclear-armed states about which there is barely a peep of official concern. How can the US government get away with its indignation about alleged Iraqi and Iranian nuclear weapons when it is the world's leading nuclear-armed state? And what can anti-nuclear campaigners do about it?

On a smaller scale, in confrontations between protesters and police, there can be plenty of police violence and brutality, but somehow the media frame the story as a "violent protest" rather than "violent police." It's as if the actions of one side are invisible.

These are examples of double standards in campaigning. A standard is applied to one side, for example concerning nuclear weapons or use of violence, but is not applied to the other side. One way this is done is by an implicit attribution of guilt or danger to one side and virtue to the other: *their* nuclear weapons are dangerous; *ours* are to preserve peace. Achieving such a mindset involves two

processes operating in conjunction: reducing concern about what one side is doing while increasing it about the other side's actions.

To examine campaigning double standards, I first look at methods for determining whether a double standard is involved. Then I catalogue techniques used by the more powerful group to reduce awareness and concern about their own actions while stigmatising the opponent's, using a series of examples to illustrate the techniques. Finally, I outline possible responses to these techniques.

Is there a double standard?

Just listening to claims and counter-claims, sometimes it can be difficult to decide who is right. Neither side may be giving a balanced perspective. Ultimately, there is no substitute for investigating claims and making an assessment. What should you look for?

To begin, it might seem worth looking at the stated goals of each side. However, these might be hidden, misleading or self-serving. For example, if the Iranian government is developing nuclear weapons, it might not want to admit this. Most experts say the Israeli military has hundreds of nuclear weapons, but the Israeli government has never admitted having any. The US government says its weapons are for defence or deterrence. So, at least in the case of nuclear weapons, stated goals are not very revealing.

More useful is looking at who has power, whether this is military power, economic power, support from established authorities or some other source of power. Compare, for example, al Qaeda with the US government. Al Qaeda has support from hundreds or thousands of fighters around the world and is able to participate in combat in some places (for example, Syria and Yemen) and initiate terrorist attacks, most famously 9/11. However, the US government has vastly more power, including to launch wars, assassinate opponents through drone attacks, fund massive surveillance operations, and imprison and interrogate its perceived enemies. So the US government has a much greater capacity to terrorise opponents, and wider populations, than al Qaeda. Indeed, the US government has the capacity to destroy much of the al Qaeda organisation, whereas al Qaeda has no prospect of overturning the US government.

Another criterion for double standards is the consequences for each side of actions taken. If actions affect one side much more than the other without corresponding levels of concern, this is an indication of likely double standards. Consider, for example, Israeli government condemnation of the violence of Palestinian youths who threw stones during the first intifada, 1987–1993. Although a few Israeli soldiers were hurt, a much larger number of Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops.

Some caution is needed in assessing impacts in cases where responsibility is unclear. In some struggles, members of one side will pretend to be on the opponent's side and take actions that discredit it. Police sometimes disguise themselves as protesters, infiltrate protest groups and urge the use of violence, or even initiate it themselves. These *agents provocateurs* encourage protester violence so that police seem justified in using much greater violence. With such "black operations," in which appearances are deceptive, the consequences of actions may be attributed to the wrong group (Lubbers 2012; Soley and Nichols 1987).

In summary, the key criterion for assessing double standards in campaigning struggles is differences in power. If one side has much more power than the other, yet complains vociferously about actions by the other side, it is wise to be sceptical. However, power alone does not prove double standards, because sometimes power is not exercised or is used with restraint. So it is necessary to assess the consequences of actions by each side. If the side with much more power is also causing much more harm, then this side's complaints about being a victim may reflect a double standard.

My friend Jørgen Johansen often uses five criteria to compare words and actions. As applied to the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia, he provides this assessment of NATO governments' rhetoric and actions.

• *What did they say?* British Prime Minister Tony Blair and US President Bill Clinton said the bombing was to prevent ethnic cleansing and to promote democracy and human rights.

• *What were they doing?* Massive bombing from high altitudes.

• *What were the immediate results?* Massive violations of human rights, without increased democracy.

• *What were the long-term results?* Ethnic cleansing of Serbs from Kosova.

• *Who benefited in the long run?* The US military built its largest foreign military base since the Vietnam war on occupied Serbian territory.

Jørgen's conclusion: there is no correlation between words and deeds.

For any issue, there is no substitute for a careful analysis, looking at evidence and arguments. Special care is needed when there is the possibility of black operations in which actions may be attributed to the wrong side.

Examples

Here are a few cases of conflicts in which each side potentially could accuse the other of the same sort of misconduct.

Violence in the first intifada

In the first Palestinian intifada (1987–1993), most of the resistance methods used by Palestinians were nonviolent, for example rallies, boycotts and setting up systems of home-based schooling (Dajani 1994; Kaufman-Lacusta 2010; King 2007; Rigby 2015). Many Israelis declaimed against Palestinian violence, in particular youths throwing stones against Israeli troops.

Analysis The Israeli military had vastly more weaponry and capacity for violence than the Palestinians. Few if any Israeli troops were killed by stone-throwing, whereas thousands of Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops during the first intifada.

Terrorism

Terrorist attacks kill civilians and are widely condemned by governments and citizens. The 9/11 attacks are the most prominent example, but there have been thousands of other attacks. However, it is also possible to talk about "state terrorism," in which governments terrorise citizens, including through mass killing (Chomsky and Herman 1979; Herman 1982; Stohl and Lopez 1984). Two prominent examples are genocide in Indonesia 1965–1966 (500,000 or more killed) and in Guatemala in the 1980s (200,000 killed), in each case with little or no apparent concern expressed by the US or most other western governments.

Analysis States have vastly more power than non-state groups; state terrorism has killed far more civilians than non-state terrorism.

Leaking

When low-level government employees leak documents to journalists or others, politicians make a great play about how terrible this is, often carrying out witch-hunts for leakers. The leakers Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden have been denounced as traitors (Greenwald 2014; Gurnow 2014; Harding 2014; Madar 2012). Meanwhile, politicians and high-level officials routinely leak confidential information — including classified information — to journalists, often for personal or political advantage. However, this seldom receives any comment, much less criticism (Horton 2015, pp. 129–151; Pozen 2012).

Analysis Politicians who leak have far more power than the low-level employees they castigate for leaking.

Nuclear weapons

Countries with substantial nuclear arsenals include the US, Russia, China, France, Britain and Israel. However, the governments of several of these

countries spend much effort raising the alarm about the possibility of nuclear weapons being acquired by other governments, such as Iraq and Iran.

Analysis The long-standing nuclear weapons states have far more power than other states that are alleged to be seeking nuclear weapons.

These are just some of the many instances of double standards found in a range of issues. The typical configuration is that there is a powerful group doing something that some might see as wrong, such as censorship, violence or nuclear threats. However, the powerful group accuses others of exactly the same action and loudly condemns it. Sometimes the powerful group is so successful at shaping perceptions that few even realise a double standard is involved. For example, few people think of major governments as terrorists.

Selling a double standard

To get away with double standards, the more powerful group usually relies on two sets of processes: one is to reduce awareness and concern about its own actions; the other is to raise the alarm about the opponent's actions.

Powerful perpetrators commonly use five types of methods to reduce public outrage over actions potentially seen as unjust (Martin 2007, 2012):

- covering up the action;
- devaluing the target;
- reinterpreting the events by lying, minimising consequences, blaming others, and favourable framing;
- using official channels to give an appearance of justice;
- intimidating and rewarding people involved.

Raising the alarm about someone's actions involves a parallel set of methods:

- exposing the action
- validating the target
- interpreting the events as an injustice
- avoiding or discrediting official channels; instead, mobilising support
- resisting intimidation and rewards

Powerful perpetrators may use both sets of methods selectively, reducing outrage about their own actions while drumming up concern about their opponents' actions.

Cover-up and exposure

The powerful group typically does everything possible to draw people's attention to the allegedly terrible actions of its opponent. These terrible actions, by repeatedly being brought to awareness, become all-consuming, and alternative concerns become afterthoughts.

Meanwhile, the powerful group, if possible, hides its own activities. This is possible in some cases. Torture, for example, is almost always carried out in secrecy. However, in many cases, the actions of the powerful group are almost impossible to hide, for example the possession of nuclear weapons arsenals. In these cases, there are two main options. One is to say nothing about it, so people don't pay attention to it, even though the evidence is overwhelming. The other option is to reinterpret the actions, as discussed below.

Devaluation and validation

The powerful group nearly always tries to discredit and defame its opponent. If the opponent is devalued, then what is done to it does not seem so bad. Leaks by low-level employees are painted as security threats and the leakers castigated as traitors, malcontents, or even terrorists.

At the same time, the powerful group paints itself as virtuous, with the implication that its actions are praiseworthy. Nuclear weapons states portray themselves as responsible members of the international community, defending freedom and preserving the peace. They present themselves as qualitatively different from "rogue states" that are alleged to be a serious danger to international security.

When one group can portray itself as good in a struggle against evil, this allows double standards to persist without critical examination. When terrorists are seen as evil and those who oppose them are thought of as the "good guys," the actions of these "good guys" escape scrutiny, even if they cause far more death and destruction.

Interpretation struggles

The powerful group can use various techniques to convince people that its opponents are in the wrong while it is in the right. One technique is lying. For example, while governments decry torture elsewhere, they deny doing it themselves. A second technique is minimising consequences. When justifying torture in Guantánamo Bay prison, some apologists said the harm to prisoners

was not so great. A third technique is to blame others. At Abu Ghraib prison, torture was blamed on prison guards, with higher-level officials exempted from responsibility. A fourth technique, often the most powerful one, is framing. What opponents do is said to be torture, but the US government labelled actions at Abu Ghraib as "abuse," never using the word torture, and US media went along with this framing.

Similarly, the term "leaking" is applied to anonymous disclosures by low-level employees, whereas when politicians and top officials leak information, it is framed by the media in different ways, for example "a source revealed" or "according to a knowledgeable official." For leaks by low-level workers, the language used focuses attention on the leaker, whereas for high-level leakers, the language focuses attention on the information leaked, without invoking the concept of leaking.

Official channels versus mobilisation

Official channels include regulatory agencies, courts, treaties and a host of other processes and agencies that are supposed to resolve problems and provide justice. Powerful groups, rather than allowing official channels to operate independently and fairly, often use them to defend themselves and to attack opponents.

As a response to public concerns about nuclear weapons, governments negotiated the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. According to the treaty, non-weapons states are supposed to avoid moves towards nuclear weapons; in return, weapons states are supposed to eliminate their arsenals. In practice, the treaty has been used against potential newcomers to the nuclear club, with the nuclear disarmament aspect of the treaty largely ignored.

In the conflict between Israel and Palestine, there have been numerous formal processes invoked, for example the 1993 Oslo accords and various "peace processes." These have given the appearance of moving towards a resolution of grievances. However, the Israeli government has not changed its actions on the ground in relation to several vital matters, for example the return of Palestinians expelled decades earlier. Meanwhile, attention to the various supposed peace processes soothes audiences expecting something to be done.

Intimidation and resistance

Powerful groups commonly attempt to intimidate opponents and anyone who might help them, for example journalists. Meanwhile, these same powerful groups make a great issue of alleged threats from their opponents.

The US government maintains troops in over a hundred other countries, has invaded various countries, uses drone attacks for extra-judicial assassinations and maintains comprehensive surveillance programs. These activities serve to

intimidate opponents. At the same time, it devotes enormous resources to resisting intimidation by non-state terrorists, al Qaeda in particular, and attempts to mobilise public concern about threats from terrorists.

When workers speak out about corruption or abuses, their employers often label them as snitches or troublemakers, and subject them to harassment, ostracism, reprimands or dismissal. These are methods of intimidation that serve to deter others from becoming whistleblowers. The US government treated Chelsea Manning, who leaked war logs and diplomatic cables to WikiLeaks, savagely, with months of solitary confinement. Meanwhile, employers make a great play about the damage caused by whistleblowers, presenting themselves as the victims of a sort of attack.

In summary, powerful groups use five sets of processes to reduce concern about their own actions while drumming up concern about less significant actions by their challengers. What can activists do to counter these double standards?

The immediately obvious response is to raise the alarm about abuses and to put their own actions into perspective. The tables give examples for the cases of terrorism and leaking.

Table 1. Challenging government alarm about terrorism

Types of methods	**Government techniques**	**Possible activist responses**
Cover-up and exposure	Hide complicity in state terrorism; publicise evidence of non-state terrorism	Collect information about state terrorism and publicise it
Devaluation and validation	Devalue enemy terrorists; praise own troops	Use the label “state terrorism”
Interpretation	Explain the need for security measures and foreign interventions; lie or exaggerate the dangers and consequences of non-state terrorism	Expose justifications for state terrorism; propose alternative ways of responding to non-state terrorism
Official channels versus mobilisation	Refer critics to courts and appeal processes	Mobilise support to challenge state terrorism
Intimidation and resistance	Threaten and harass critics	Resist intimidation

Table 2. Challenging official alarm about leaking

Types of methods	**Government techniques**	**Possible activist responses**
Cover-up and exposure	Do not discuss leaking by high-level figures; publicise leaking by lower-level employees	Publicise high-level leaks, especially damaging ones
Devaluation and validation	Call low-level leakers traitors, snitches or malcontents; call high-level leakers "sources" or "officials"	Call low-level leakers "whistleblowers" or "public interest leakers"
Interpretation	Explain the need for official secrecy; lie about the damage caused by low-level leaks	Explain the damage caused by excessive official secrecy and the benefits of access to information
Official channels versus mobilisation	Claim that whistleblower laws protect those who speak out	Encourage whistleblowers to work with journalists and action groups rather than trusting in whistleblower protection
Intimidation and resistance	Search for low-level leakers and subject them to reprisals	Help employees develop skills in leaking anonymously

Accentuating the double standard

Double standards can be challenged in several ways. As illustrated in the tables, there are various tactics to reduce concern about minor matters and increase concern about the behaviour of more serious offenders. There is also another step that can be highly effective: reduce or eliminate the pretext for criticism.

In a rally, protesters might do some things like pushing police or yelling abuse that are minor in comparison to police brutality against them. Yet the government, police and media may make a great play about protester violence while drawing attention away from police violence. In this context, one reaction is for protesters to say, "we were justified in what we did." That may be true, but it is not the point: even minor actions that can be portrayed as aggressive will be

used against protesters. A different strategy is to undermine suggestions of protester aggression, for example by using humour, formal dress, silence or other techniques to establish an image of non-aggressiveness. In this context, police violence will seem much greater, and is more likely to backfire on the police (Martin 2007, pp. 43–64).

In the first intifada, the Palestinians primarily used methods of resistance causing no physical harm to Israelis, such as boycotts, strikes and setting up their own education systems. Israeli troops used far more violence, but the limited Palestinian violence was enough for many Israelis to see the intifada as a violent uprising, thereby forming the wrong impression of Palestinian goals (Abrahms 2006). Some commentators therefore have recommended that it would be more effective for the Palestinian resistance to avoid stone-throwing (Dajani 1994). This would accentuate the double standard.

This same consideration applies to many other situations involving double standards. The weaker side may be *justified* in its actions, because the other side is doing terrible things, but be more *effective* by avoiding any behaviour that can be negatively portrayed.

Terrorism is another example. Many of those labelled "terrorists" are, in the eyes of others, freedom fighters. They feel justified in striking back against vicious repression or overwhelming oppression. Yet in doing so, the double standard is eroded.

It is useful to remember that many challengers to repressive systems have been called terrorists. For example, the US government in the 1950s and 1960s referred to the National Liberation Front (or "Vietcong") in Vietnam as terrorists, while its own military operations led to millions of casualties. In South Africa from the 1960s to the 1980s, the South African government called the African National Congress terrorists. In the Philippines, there has been a long-running armed insurgency, and the government calls the insurgents terrorists. However, the Philippines military has been involved in numerous human rights abuses that might better warrant the label "terrorism." Today, in the US, environmental activists are sometimes called "eco-terrorists" even when their actions cause no loss of life. What is striking in these and other examples is that the label "terrorist" is applied only to challengers to dominant groups, whose own actions might better warrant the label.

One option is to avoid any actions that can easily be labelled "terrorism." Hijackings, bombings and suicide attacks, however justified, can readily be stigmatised. Even seemingly minor actions like throwing bricks through shop windows can be counterproductive via selective labelling. Choosing methods that are less easily stigmatised can be more effective.

In Serbia, during the resistance to ruler Slobodan Milošević, members of the group Otpor made fun of the regime's attempts to label activists as terrorists, by presenting to a crowd a mild-mannered student activist and doing a parody of the regime's description.

When to ignore double standards

In some cases, it may be better for activists to ignore double standards. When the US government acts against nuclear weapons development in India, that may be a good thing, even if there are thousands of US nuclear weapons. When the Australian government signed the Kyoto climate change protocol, this sent a valuable signal, even though Australian greenhouse gas emissions per capita were among the highest in the world.

Activists themselves are often accused of double standards, and sometimes are guilty. For example, a climate activist might fly to numerous international conferences or a public transport activist might sometimes drive a car. Very few individuals are able to live a blemish-free life. It is worth avoiding clashes between principles and practice when possible, but unrealistic expectations and rigid requirements should be questioned.

Implications

Activists need to be alert to the possibility of double standards and how to expose and challenge them. The first step is to be sceptical whenever a powerful group raises the alarm about someone or something else. The claims might be correct, and something unsavoury might be going on, but it is important to ask whether something more important is happening elsewhere but not receiving sufficient attention. For example, when a government raises the alarm about terrorism, it is worth examining the government's own role in terrorising populations.

The next step is to look at the methods used by the powerful group to increase concern about the problem. These include publicity, stigmatising others as dangerous or evil and using experts and formal investigations to give credibility to claims. In the case of nuclear weapons, there is much attention to governments of North Korea, Iraq and Iran that are assumed to be dangerous ("mad mullahs"; "axis of evil"), with international relations experts quoted in support.

While concern is ramped up about dangers from the "other," powerful groups seek to reduce outrage about their own actions. Standard methods are covering up their actions, labelling them as good, giving reasonable-sounding explanations and rewarding those who assist in this process.

Seeing through double standards, and recognising the methods used to maintain them, is hard enough. Even more difficult is trying to expose them, as a means of opposing abuses of power. Five sorts of methods are useful: exposing the actions; blaming those responsible; explaining why actions are wrong; mobilising support and not relying on official channels for support; and standing up to intimidation.

Finally, there is an important step: behaving in ways that accentuate double standards. If governments make accusations of terrorism, for example, then avoiding actions that can be labelled as dangerous can strengthen the movement. This often means using low-risk actions, such as boycotts and symbolic protests, that allow wide participation. The more people who join, especially when a cross section of the population participates, the harder it is to discredit them as terrorists.

Many people believe in fairness as a fundamental value (Haidt 2012; Moore 1978). Double standards represent a violation of the principle of fairness and therefore are a potential tool for activists. However, double standards may not be obvious, so there is work to be done to become aware of them, make them visible to others and to behave in ways that highlight them.

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Palestinian armed resistance: the absent critique

Claudia Saba

Abstract

Advocates for Palestinian rights who operate outside the Fatah-Hamas binary have emerged as a third political tendency in recent years. Palestinian and international activists have advanced an alternative framework through which to act on the Palestine question. Their campaigns, consisting of education, advocacy and direct action, have managed to advance a rights-based understanding of the Palestinian plight. One area that global Palestine activism has not delved into is that of offering a critique of Palestinian armed resistance, as practiced primarily by groups in Gaza. Drawing on the public positions of prominent Palestinian commentators and on media statements made by organizations within the movement, as well as my own participation in Palestine advocacy, I propose that activists have largely evaded a critique of the armed strategy. This paper explores possible reasons for this and argues that activists should engage on this issue. I explicate why this is a legitimate, necessary and feasible task.

Keywords: Israel; Palestine; Hamas; Fatah; Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS); structural hole theory; transformative politics; nonviolence; social movements.

Introduction

Palestine solidarity work is often understood as separate to Palestinian politics and is treated as auxiliary to the actions of Palestinian activists. This paper argues, alternatively, that activism by internationals and activism by Palestinians has come to embody a loose but coherent social movement that is central to the advancement of Palestinian rights in a way that extends beyond solidarity. Palestinian and international activists, although operating under myriad organizations with varying stakes in seeing a resolution to the Israel-Palestine impasse, have, to a considerable extent, coalesced under an umbrella of views about the conflict and a set of conditions required to resolve it. This convergence is noted *inter alia* by the fact that a large number of both international and Palestinian groups have signed up to the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS) and accepted its principles. Through BDS and other advocacy campaigns activists have made strides into raising awareness about the nature of Israeli aggression and expansionism by reaching out directly to international publics, bound less by the limitations that formal political actors face in the diplomatic arena. With the growing influence of global Palestine activism come responsibilities and opportunities. I argue that among

those responsibilities/opportunities is that of starting a serious debate around the role of armed resistance to Israel and how armed action fits or clashes with a vision for a just resolution to the conflict. While Palestinian agency will remain the principal determinant of political strategy, Palestinian and international activists operating outside the Fatah-Hamas framework can make a useful contribution to the Palestinian national dialogue in this regard.

A debate on armed resistance is urgent because of the danger involved with its continuation. Successive assaults on Gaza have increased in deadliness and there is no sign that regional or international states will take action to ameliorate the lives of Palestinians in Gaza or even to prevent matters from deteriorating further. The assault on Gaza in 2014 caused a far larger casualty rate than that of the other two major Israeli assaults on the Palestinians in the previous five years. In terms of intensity, bomb tonnage and rate of killing, the most recent war was far deadlier than even the Second Palestinian Intifada. Indeed the 2014 summer war on Gaza was the most intense assault by Israel since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. Furthermore, it was accompanied by a dangerous violent rhetoric in the Israeli public sphere that included calls for genocide, some of which came from Israeli lawmakers (Abunimah, 2014, Mondoweiss, 2014). At the center of Israel's argument for such violence was the need to respond to Palestinian fire, despite the latter's impotence in inflicting serious losses on Israel. The Palestinian armed resistance strategy is therefore extremely costly and, as I will discuss further down, hopelessly ineffective *vis-a-vis* the occupation.

This paper is organized into three parts. First, based on research carried out for my PhD dissertation in which I studied thirty groups involved in Palestine advocacy operating in the west and inside Palestine, I propose an understanding of global Palestine activism as constituting a movement owned by both internationals and Palestinians. As I will show, this argument goes against some of what has been written by popular Palestinian commentators in their critique of western solidarity, which viewed solidarity as exogenous to Palestinian liberation politics. My perspective on the nature of the movement, as a joint Palestinian-international tendency, will be supported by a number of empirical considerations.

After having established a certain strategic mandate for Palestine advocacy work, the second part of the paper demonstrates the movement's discursive positioning in relation to Palestinian armed resistance. This is done by looking at discourse generated by social movement organizations (SMOs) during and after the 2014 war on Gaza. In July of that year, Israel launched a massive 51-day military assault on 1.8 million Palestinians trapped in Gaza, killing over 2100 people, wounding over 11,000 and rendering 100,000 homeless. Its victims, mostly noncombatants, included some 500 children, patients lying in hospital beds, the elderly and the disabled. Israeli and American politicians and the mainstream media of their countries framed Israel's assault as self-defense against Hamas, whose rockets, we were told, were Israel's target while the lives extinguished were acceptable collateral damage (Khalidi, 2014).

Like many others, I was deeply distressed by this "war", if that is the right term to describe the confrontation given the obscene disparity between the two sides. Thinking back on people that I had met during a trip to Gaza two years prior and remembering how war weary they were even then, I felt a great sadness for their plight and wondered how much say they had in the confrontation that was underway. How would those people, already devastated by previous attacks, hold up under another major military campaign? Did they really all support Hamas's defiant stand against Israel's assault even as it drew more fire? Or would some of those people, at least, have preferred a laying down of arms by the armed groups if this held the possibility of ending Israeli attacks? Certainly, the reaction on Twitter that came from Gazans (the lucky few with mobile connections) was one of defiance. At the same time, prominent Palestinian commentators in the west appeared to support the armed resistance. Through an examination of press statements from five major Palestine-specific SMOs during and in the aftermath of the war, I demonstrate that there was no public critique of the resistance by pro-Palestine activists. This evidence is supplemented by a number of public statements made by Palestinian commentators active in the movement during and before the war.

The third part of the paper discusses the merits and problems of the absent critique. Should Palestinian activists and their international counterparts offer a critique of the armed Palestinian resistance? What are the implications of either doing or not doing so? How would such a critique be received by the Palestinian community? In approaching these questions I draw on network theory and a relational analysis of social movements for transformative politics.

Defining the movement

Fatah controls the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its post-Oslo peace process offspring, the Palestinian Authority (PA), while Hamas determines how Palestinians respond to Israeli aggression from Gaza. The two tendencies of Fatah and Hamas whose respective methods are those of realpolitik and armed resistance both differ from the methods of Palestinian and international activists operating outside that binary. The third tendency, which emerged in discernable form around the year 2001, may be studied in distinction to the two traditional actors. Moreover, all three tendencies may be studied as relational and collective movements rather than as monoliths since political identities and strategy alter as networks and opportunities shift (Tilly, 1997).

The new activist tendency is often studied from the perspective of international activists who naturally - and perhaps out of deference to the people they support - regard the international component of advocacy on Palestine as separate from the work of Palestinian activists. This separation, on occasion, has been discussed by Palestinian activists. For example, in 2006 a group of prominent Palestinian activists in the diaspora wrote a piece in which they emphasized the need "to draw a distinction between the solidarity movement and the

Palestinian national movement" claiming that "rebuilding the Palestinian national movement is a task of Palestinians in exile, not of the solidarity movement" (Hanieh et al., 2006). This conceptualization, which separates the role of internationals from that of Palestinians, misses that many Palestinians have been organizing independently of Fatah and Hamas and have increasingly preferred to collaborate with international activists. In the diaspora community, Palestinians can be found within the so-called solidarity organizations that have positioned themselves as independent of Palestinian factional politics. However, it is not only such "western" Palestinians that operate independently from traditional actors. In the OPT, mobilization by the popular village committees, the youth movement of 2011, and the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign have also charted an independent path and are also working in conjunction with international activists.

The popular village committees have been holding weekly protests across a number of villages affected by Israel's illegal wall since 2002 and have sought to publicize their campaigns via international solidarity groups. Mindful that Israel is unlikely to respond to their weekly protests, their intended audiences are international publics whom they hope to win over to their cause. This means that collaboration with solidarity groups to attend and spread information about their protests is of central importance to their campaign (Saba, 2014). At the same time the committees have deliberately avoided alignment with any of the political parties. Similarly, the Independent Youth Movement (al-Harak al-Shababi), which sprang up in March 2011, was expressly opposed to cooptation by Hamas or Fatah, instead emphasizing cooperation across borders, both with Palestinians on the "outside" and with international solidarity groups (Hoigilt, 2013: 355). Moreover, both these groups of Palestinian activists support BDS, an inherently outward-oriented initiative whose very success is contingent on international collaboration. What results, therefore, is a movement that is a totality comprised of international and Palestinian input and engaged in collaborative work that extends beyond mere solidarity.

Conceptualizing global Palestine activism as a joint international-Palestinian effort has implications for how the movement is practiced. As a Palestinian myself, I view the recent internationalized grassroots-led tendency within the long Palestinian struggle as representing a phase distinct from previous predominantly nationalist and Islamist expressions of the cause. The new movement does not focus on state making or on religious claims to Palestine. Instead its campaigns have sought to highlight the human rights abuses that Palestinians endure, expose the colonial and apartheid nature of Israel's domination and campaign to end those practices. Therefore it is analytically useful from a macro-historical perspective to assess the new movement as competing with the main traditional actors within Palestinian contentious politics, namely Fatah and Hamas.

It is important to recognize the significant role played by Palestinians in shaping the new tendency of Palestine activism. Based on research into the movement's origins and development, I have identified significant Palestinian involvement

at the foundational, leadership and participatory levels (Saba, 2014). Based on interviews with leaders of Palestine solidarity organizations in the United States, Britain, Ireland, France and Italy, both in the context of how those organizations came to be set up and in their mode of collaboration with groups inside the OPT, it became evident that internationals have heavily relied on the input of Palestinians for their political framing of the conflict. Indeed, the very birth of the current paradigm of solidarity may be traced to the founding of the SMO the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) by a handful of mostly Palestinian activists at the outset of the Second Palestinian Intifada (Seitz, 2003, Saba, 2014). The ISM was pivotal in changing the way international supporters related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, away from the paradigm of "encouraging dialogue" between Palestinians and Israelis and towards the paradigm of standing squarely with the oppressed Palestinian side. Likewise, another Palestinian SMO, the Palestinian Campaign for the Cultural and Academic Boycott of Israel (PACBI), explicitly asked supporters to depart from "peace-industry" initiatives so common in the wake of the 1993 Oslo peace process and instead support Palestinian academic and cultural institutions directly "without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for such support" (PACBI, 2004). It was Palestinian agency, therefore, with its demand that internationals recognize the imbalance of power between Israelis and Palestinians, that set the tone for the movement which began to emerge.

Palestinian influence on the tone and politics of solidarity extended into the networks that evolved out of early campaigns. An important consequence of solidarity visits organized to Palestine through groups such as the ISM and Association France Palestine Solidarité, which also played a prominent part in that early period, came in the form of new networks in the west that introduced the Palestine issue onto the agendas of other progressive and leftist causes (Saba, 2014). Hence groups such as the World Social Forum, which in its 2001 conference in Porto Alegre included Palestine as a prominent political agenda item, embraced the Palestine issue as a cause coherent with global struggles against colonization, securitization, and neoliberalism (Collins, 2011). The forging of broad alliances with multi-issue campaigns necessarily shaped the Palestine question into one about equality and universal human rights, and permeated western civil society spaces such as trade unions, churches and anti-war groups in a way that the official Palestinian leadership had never managed to do.

Whether physically present in the OPT or in western countries, the network of support and collaboration between Palestinian actors and their western counterparts has since been evident through the synchrony of campaigns relating to the separation wall, the Gaza blockade, the prisoner hunger strikes and protests against military attacks on Gaza by Israel. Hence, Palestinian activists have sat on committees that organized the Welcome to Palestine campaign, the Gaza Freedom March, the Freedom Flotilla, and have worked transnationally with western groups on BDS (Saba, 2014).

The multivariate alliances that exist between Palestinians and their supporters may therefore be seen as part and parcel of a movement whose aim is to expose internationally Israel's oppression of the Palestinians and pressure civil society and governments to end complicity with the occupier, in order to bring about a just political solution for Palestinians and Israelis alike. Drawing on the classic definition of a social movement as a "network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" it would be fair to treat this global activism as a movement, however disparate (Diani 1992: 13). That is, it is more than the sum of the various SMOs that form it by virtue of its distinct political contestation and identity.

Moreover, movements are constituted of associations, members and participants on the one hand, but also of ideas and meanings on the other (Gusfield, 1994: 62). This constructivist approach reminds us that norms are changed by social movements and this change is often measurable only over time. Put another way, social movements are spaces for knowledge production since they often try to change the way grievances are perceived and how the politics of addressing them are practiced (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). Viewing movements as fluid phenomena - where changes occur not only inside organizational fora but in addition to organized and directed action, and through knowledge production over time - it becomes possible to study movements for the ideas, norms and discourses that they generate.

To summarize the above, whereas activism on Palestine has been studied in the literature on social movements as a solidarity movement, seen from a Palestinian perspective the internationalization of our movement represents a new phase in our historical struggle for rights and may be studied as such. It is this conceptualization of global Palestine activism as a new movement of loosely connected groups, complete with a set of ideas and norms and representing a third way for Palestinian liberation that I assess for an absent critique on armed resistance.

The absent critique

The critique that one would hope to find among activists is around the effects of armed resistance both on Palestinian lives and on the Palestinian cause. The two are not necessarily the same and a positive contribution by armed resistance to the Palestinian cause may work to justify its disastrous results on Palestinian lives. However, I would argue that armed resistance has neither advanced the Palestinian cause nor protected Palestinian lives. On the contrary, it may have strengthened Israel's hand to crush the Palestinians with impunity.

Ever since Hamas became confined to the Gaza Strip it has pursued the "cause" through *inter alia* armed means. It made no gains from this in the form of concessions from Israel; it did not liberate an inch of land and it did not reverse Israel's cruel siege of Gaza. Meanwhile life in Gaza has severely deteriorated as a result of repeated military confrontations with Israel. Israel's latest war on Gaza

"eliminated what was left of the middle class" and sent "almost all of the population into destitution and dependence on international humanitarian aid" (UNCTAD, 2015: 8). Compounding Israel's policies towards Palestinian infrastructure, environment and natural resources, which had rendered Gaza nearly uninhabitable (United Nations, 2012), the armed resistance has proven immensely costly to the Palestinians. As such, one might expect an energetic debate about it among those involved in advocating for Palestinian rights.

For example, efforts could be made to amplify the voices of Palestinians opposed to armed resistance. Campaigns could be launched to publicly dissociate from Hamas's and other armed groups' tactics so as to discourage support for their methods. In particular a debate could be extended on the use of nonviolence for the attainment of political goals, as famously put forth by Gene Sharp (1973). Maintaining nonviolent discipline, according to Sharp's theory of "political jiu-jitsu", can bolster the view that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is deeply unfair and must be countered. When Hamas launches rockets at Israel it diminishes perceptions of the conflict as lopsided; indeed the rockets may give the false impression that Palestinians can defend themselves. Yes, of course Israel would find ways to undermine an exclusively nonviolent resistance strategy -- oppressive regimes often do. Here advancements in nonviolent theory such as the "backfire" method whereby activists anticipate the oppressor's response to nonviolent mobilzation and take action to make it backfire could be discussed by activists (Martin, 2015). And although usual acts of nonviolent resistance such as demonstrations, boycotts and sit-ins would not work in Gaza since it is deprived of direct contact with Israel and the world, alternative acts of protest and civil disobedience could be explored and made possible by collaboration with activists on the outside through the use of information technologies and other means.

Moreover, debates with regard to activists' vision for the cause must interrogate the role of armed resistance. Many activists have proposed a vision of a single state in Israel/Palestine in which all would enjoy equal social and political rights while at the same time ensuring just redress for injustices incurred (Abunimah et al, 2007). Although many SMOs engaged in the movement do not officially take a position on the one/two-state debate, campaigners have increasingly argued that the two-state solution is no longer attainable given the number of Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas. In this context, conferences advocating for one democratic state have become more common (Farsakh, 2011)[1]. Debates in this area remain at the theoretical level and have not defined the means of reaching the one state goal. The continuation of armed confrontation between

[1] Farsakh (2011) lists the following conferences as significant: '*Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace,* York University, Toronto, June 22-24, 2009; *Re-envisioning Israel/Palestine,* Human Science Research Council, Cape Town, June 12-14, 2009; *One State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for all of it Citizens?* University of Massachusetts Boston, March 28-29, 2009; and *The Haifa Conference on The Right of Retum and the Secular Democratic State in Palestine,* Haifa, May 23, 2010.'

Israel and Palestinian groups is likely detrimental to the prospects of a single democratic state. However this, to my knowledge, has not been addressed. On the contrary, there is confusing discourse around campaigns such as BDS that seems to leave the door open to armed resistance. For example, in an assessment of BDS in the Palestinian publication *Al Majdal,* one author warned of the "dogma" of nonviolence that could come to plague BDS and asserted that "violent and nonviolent tactics have always co-existed as forms of resistance and they are likely to do so in the future" (Sultany, 2013: 15-16). Nonviolent discourse among Palestine activists, according to Sultany, "has become more fashionable today since it resonates with Western perspectives" (Sultany, 2013: 15). This sort of talk needs to be challenged by a healthy and rigorous debate on the real merits of committing to unarmed methods. I provide further examples of Arab commentators who criticize nonviolence in a later section. For now, suffice it to say that evading criticism of armed resistance has become the norm among many people active in the movement, as I demonstrate in the next section.

Statements on the 2014 Gaza war

In order to gauge how activists reacted to the 2014 assault on Gaza, and more specifically to search for a critique of Palestinian rockets, I looked at public statements released by five major organizations involved in global Palestine activism, two of which are Palestinian-led. A total of 40 documents issued by the five prominent organizations were examined for the period during the 51-day war and the period immediately following. Although only publicly disseminated material was studied, it reflected the main messages of prominent participants within global Palestine activism. Documents were studied for references to Hamas and the Palestinian armed factions more generally, and to see whether they contained any critique of Palestinian armed resistance. Since one would not expect criticism of the oppressed side to come from those who stand in solidarity with it in the midst of war but perhaps only once fighting has ended, statements in the three months following the end of the war were also studied.

I found no reference to the armed resistance in the statements issued after the war, and only scant reference to it during the war. Therefore what is presented below is the result of statements issued during the war since the statements after the war contained no reference to the armed resistance. The exception is the statement issued by the Russell Tribunal on Palestine which was released only after the war had ended.

The first three of the five SMOs studied are prominent Palestine advocacy groups operating inside the United States, the fourth organization is led from Palestine and the fifth organization is transnational.

The US Campaign to End the Occupation (USCETO), founded in 2001, is a coalition of 400 affiliated organizations in the United States whose stated mission is it to bring about a US policy that would uphold human rights and

international law in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Of only two statements issued in the period under study one focused on the Gaza crisis. In the statement entitled "Obama Applauded for Freezing Missile Deliveries to Israel" USCETO evaded any reference to Hamas rockets[2]. Instead it focused on the US's complicity in the war. Since USCETO's mission is to change US policy towards Israel, which it regards as detrimental to the Palestinians, its lack of public pronouncement on the role of Palestinian armed resistance was not surprising as that would deviate from the organization's main focus.

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), another major SMO with 35 national chapters in the US, issued a total of eighteen statements during the war and in the three months following. Although there was no elaborate critique of the armed resistance, several statements made clear the political position of the organization: while violence was rejected and abhorred by all sides, JVP rejected the narrative of "cycle of violence" between two peoples locked in interminable conflict and asserted that violence occurs within an overall context of structural violence, primarily that of the occupation of the OPT. For example, in a statement issued on 18 July entitled "Jews Across the US Oppose the Assault on Gaza" it was explained that "this violence has a root cause: Israel's illegal occupation"[3].

The US Palestinian Community Network (USPCN), another US-based SMO of notable size, founded by American Palestinians in 2008, released eight statements during the period under study. In one of these, on the eve of the final ceasefire, entitled "Victory for the Resistance in Gaza, as the Struggle for a Free Palestine Continues", the armed resistance was lauded:

> Israel clearly lost this battle on both military and political levels. One of the strongest armies in the world could not accomplish its goal of disarming and defeating the unified Palestinian resistance in Gaza. All the Palestinian resistance groups participated together in the defense of our land, and proved, like in 2006 in Southern Lebanon, that Israel's military is not invincible. [...]our people recognize that the victory in Gaza was a victory of resistance, and not of negotiations.[4]

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[2] USCETO. "Obama Applauded for Freezing Missile Deliveries to Israel" 14 August, 2014. US Campaign to End the Occupation. http://endtheoccupation.org/article.php?id=4135#sthash.WJyPcaf8.dpuf
For USCETO's mission statement see website brochure. (n.d.) http://endtheoccupation.org/downloads/brochurefebruary2013.pdf (Accessed on 8 May 2015)

[3] JVP. "Jews Across the US Oppose the Assault on Gaza" Jewish Voice for Peace. 18 July, 2014. https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/blog/jews-across-the-us-oppose-the-assault-on-gaza (Accessed on 8 May 2015)

[4] USPCN. "Victory for the Resistance in Gaza, as the Struggle for a Free Palestine Continues" US Palestinian Community Network. 29 August, 2014.

For USPCN, Palestinian armed resistance was not critiqued for its ineffectiveness or strategic purpose, but instead praised as though it had been victorious. Parallels were drawn with Hizbullah's 2006 resistance to Israeli assaults on Lebanon, which had cost the lives of over a thousand people and devastated Beirut's infrastructure. Moreover, a binary was presented between "negotiations" and "resistance", the former in derogatory terms aimed at the Fatah-run PA and the latter in laudatory terms. The binary implied that "negotiations" or "resistance" were the only two options open to Palestinian strategists. This choice between only those two options is a recurring theme among Palestinian commentators involved in global Palestine activism, a concern that I will return to.

So far, the relevant statements of three permanent SMOs have been presented. To diversify my search for statements that might have addressed the armed resistance, I turned to two temporary SMOs set up for specific campaigns: the BDS campaign and the Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP). BDS, the Palestinian civil society call for a boycott of Israel until the latter complies with international law, has been taken up by a majority of SMOs looking to the Palestinians for guidance on how to advance their work (Ananth, 2014, McMahon 2014, Saba, 2014). Given the BDS campaign's centrality to global Palestine activism, its press statements seemed an obvious place to look for a critique of the armed resistance, particularly since BDS is by definition an explicitly nonviolent Palestinian tactic, and, moreover, is Palestinian-led.

The RToP, meanwhile, was chosen because of its high profile within the movement and because it had organized a public session to assess the assault on Gaza that I attended in Brussels in September 2014. The body, which operates like a court, composed of figures internationally renowned for work in legal and ethical disputes, heard evidence from a number of journalists and other witnesses to the war and produced a document of findings based on testimonies from those witnesses. What I analyzed in the case of the RToP was the twelve-page summary of findings given to the attendees of its press conference in Brussels on 25 September 2014. Neither of the BDS campaign nor the RToP offered a specific critique of the Palestinian armed strategy in the documents analyzed, although one BDS-affiliated organization implicitly criticized the violence as I shall elaborate below.

Since the BDS call comes from the BDS National Committee (BNC) BNC documents were analyzed. Bear in mind that the BNC is the largest coalition of organizations representing Palestinian civil society according to its founding member, Omar Barghouti (Saba, 2014: 92). In the period under study, this SMO published a total of eleven statements issued either by the BNC itself or on behalf of its member organizations. The content of these statements may be

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http://uspcn.org/2014/08/29/victory-for-the-resistance-in-gaza-as-the-struggle-for-a-free-palestine-continues/ (Accessed on 8 May 2015)

summarized broadly as calling on the international community of supporters to urgently intensify BDS work in response to the horrific attacks that were being launched on Gaza at the time. One statement among those studied alluded to the armed resistance. Printed by the BNC on behalf of Kairos Palestine, a coalition of Christian Palestinian organizations, the statement urged that Israel and the international community recognize that the Fatah-led PA had chosen the "path of peace", and "maintains its right and constant position" but had unfortunately "lost its popularity among its own people, who see that these ways of peace facing Israeli violence are fruitless"[5]. The statement therefore implied that nonviolent tactics had long been the method of the official Palestinian leadership but that Israel, through its non-reciprocation of those peaceful methods, had effectively given rise to renewed support for armed resistance.

As for the summary of findings by the special session of the RToP, again here, there was no discussion of the Palestinian armed strategy apart from a reference to the international law-sanctioned right of people living under colonial rule or under a foreign occupation to resist occupation (RToP, 2014, 3)[6].

In summary, western-led USCETO and RToP focused on the havoc wreaked by Israel's war and appealed for the urgent end of western complicity in Israel's actions. JVP did the same but also made a point to say that it opposed violence by all sides. The findings from these three SMOs is to be expected given that the *raison d'etre* of groups based in the west is that of advocating for the end of the occupation with the aim, via the boomerang model, to pressure the powerful countries of the Global North to end their complicity in Israel's actions[7]. Since such solidarity organizations tend to take a principled position to not get involved in the internal affairs of the Palestinians, it came as no surprise that an elaborate critique of Hamas and other armed groups was not offered[8]. What was

[5] BNC. "Diplomatic pressure for Peace: A call for Sanctions from Palestinian Christians", statement by the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine Kairos Palestine, published by the BDS National Committee. 1 August, 2014. http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/diplomatic-pressure-for-peace-a-call-for-sanctions-from-palestinian-christians-12463 (Accessed on 8 May 2015)

[6] RToP. "The Gaza War (2014) under International Law: An Inquiry into Israel's Crimes, Responsibility, and the Response of the International Community". Russell Tribunal on Palestine, Extraordinary session. Brussels, 25 September, 2014.

[7] 'The boomerang' model which Keck and Sikkink (1998: 12-13) identified in relation to human rights groups that appeal to states in third party countries to pressure an offending regime is also used by Palestine activism in its appeal to international publics to pressure their governments to hold Israel accountable.

[8] The case study results have necessarily been more the result of absent content than of existing content. During the course of my dissertation research into global Palestine activism SMOs, I did come across some public critique of Palestinian resistance, however it was of a limited quantity. For example, the *Palestine Solidarity Committee Seattle* tackled the issue of resistance by clearly stating that it was against all forms of violence that targeted civilians, whether this came from Palestinian or Israeli sources. See http://www.palestineinformation.org/civiliantargets.html

however surprising, was the absence of this critique among groups like the BDS/BNC and the USPCN. Both those SMOs are ostensibly Palestinian-led, thereby giving them the moral authority to reflect on Palestinian resistance strategy. However, as described above, the BNC largely sidestepped the discussion, while the USPCN published a statement in support of the armed resistance.

Possible explanations for the absent critique

One could argue that it is not the role of the above organizations to publicly critique Palestinian armed factions since that would render them vulnerable to pro-Israel groups keen to show that the Palestinian camp is divided. Perhaps such discussions happen privately then? According to personal firsthand experience in Palestine advocacy in a number of solidarity groups, as well as evidence gathered for my PhD research into Palestine activism, discussion around Palestinian armed resistance as a liberation strategy is evaded because it is seen as outside the scope of control of the movement[9]. Advocates for human rights operate on a different plane to those who take up arms to gain their rights and this in itself represents a gulf between the two types of actors. In addition to being ideationally removed, movement practitioners within global Palestine activism are also physically removed from the machinations of the Palestinian factions, particularly from those groups operating inside the besieged Gaza Strip. This physical separation can easily give rise to the impression that armed group strategies are a world onto themselves, beyond the comprehension or influence of civil society actors that use nonviolent means to pursue political goals. Another possible reason for this omission is that international members of the movement may be purposely avoiding certain complexities of Palestinian politics in order to avoid internal splits and breaches with Palestinians (Landy, 2014). Whatever the dominant reason for the absent critique, if we are to overcome it, the lead will likely have to come from Palestinians involved in the movement.

In the first part of this paper I discussed the influence that Palestinian practitioners have exercised on the movement with regards to framing the central issues of occupation and imbalance of power. In this they have been very successful, a testament both to their ability to assert their views and to their western colleagues' openness to listen. That is encouraging and hints at the possibility of a useful debate on Palestinian armed strategy if a sufficient number of Palestinian activists were to introduce the sensitive discussion.

Thus far, to my knowledge, this has not happened. Instead, there have been a number of interventions by prominent Palestinian commentators to the opposite effect. Consider the following words written during the height of the

[9] My Palestine advocacy experience includes work within the Irish Anti-War Movement and Irish Ship to Gaza, the Irish campaign of the Freedom Flotilla.

2014 war on Gaza by prominent Palestinian commentator and editor of the Palestine Chronicle, Ramzy Baroud (2014):

> Palestinians cannot be judged for defending themselves and for resisting Israel to end its military occupation ... Armed struggle is a right defended by international law for people living under foreign occupation.

In addition to uncritically defending the armed resistance, Baroud employed the binary of pitting Palestinians into one of only two camps, that of armed resistance, and that of collaboration with the enemy, when he said:

> There can be no bad vs good Palestinians. There are those who resist, and those who collaborate with the enemy; those who pay the price, and those who benefit from the occupation.

In other words, criticizing Hamas was construed as supporting Fatah, making matters awkward for those who want to challenge the policies of both.

Similar sentiments on resistance strategy more generally have been expressed by others. Consider a piece two years earlier by Palestinian activist and journalist, Linah Alsaafin (2012), entitled "How obsession with “nonviolence” harms the Palestinian cause" in which she wrote:

> Israelis and internationals and unfortunately even some “enlightened” Palestinians champion “nonviolent resistance” and consider throwing a rock to be a violent act. The argument goes that throwing rocks tarnishes the reputation of Palestinians in the western world and immediately negates the “nonviolent/peaceful” resistance movement. This argument falls into the trap of western- (read, colonizer) dictated methods of acceptable means to resist.

Both Baroud's and Alsaafin's interventions have the effect of discouraging discussion of Palestinian resistance. In Baroud's opposition to (presumably) western "judgment" of the resistance and in Alsaafin's invocation of the threatening "colonizer", the message, whether intended or incidental, is that non-Palestinians, whoever they may be, should not interfere with Palestinian political strategizing. This warning is also meted out to what Alsaafin sarcastically calls "enlightened" Palestinians who stray from the mantra that all resistance is good resistance.

These examples are indicative of the opposition that those involved in global Palestine activism can expect to come up against if they attempt to analyze various forms of resistance, including the rocket strategy adopted by Hamas in recent years. Activists, it would appear, are expected to focus on advocacy but not to engage in strategic movement making. This edict has become a norm

within the culture of many SMOs, defining what is appropriate or inappropriate debate. It stagnates the movement and perpetuates a situation whereby activism is limited to support rather than extending to transformative politics.

There is an important context for this aversion to debating armed versus peaceful methods. In a study on the underreported practice of nonviolence practiced by Palestinians in the Second Palestinian Intifada, Julie Norman (2015) investigated why nonviolent tactics failed to spread on a wide scale as had happened during the First Intifada. She found that the notion of nonviolence had become distorted with the Oslo peace process whose nonviolence workshops and trainings approached Palestinian subjects in a patronizing and unhelpful way. A narrative was propagated by the myriad Oslo-associated, western-funded projects that nonviolence was a way of life rather than a means of resistance. The few projects which did teach nonviolence as *activism* used western examples from the American civil rights movement rather than local precedents from the First Intifada and Palestinians' own traditions of nonviolent civil disobedience. Oslo nonviolence discourse therefore had the effect of equating notions of nonviolence to an accommodation with the status quo, to normalization of the occupation and to passivity. Nonviolence lost its correlation with agency for transformative politics.

The absence of a critique of the armed resistance among activists can also be connected with efforts to reverse years of racist misinformation propagated by Israel about the Palestinians. In order to address the imbalance in public discourse about the origins and nature of the conflict Palestinian commentators, in particular, are loathe to criticize the resistance in terms that may appear to echo Israeli propaganda about Palestinians as violent terrorists (Abu Nimah, 2007). The thinking goes that if Palestinian tactics are criticized then this will play into the Israeli narrative of self-defense and the latter's need to kill Palestinians in the name of security, thereby wasting years of hard work spent on reframing the conflict as one about colonization, occupation and violence by the occupying power. From discussions with them, it is clear that international pro-Palestine activists take their lead from their Palestinian comrades and refrain from critiquing armed strategy for the same reason. I propose that the two critiques, that of Israel and that of the Palestinian response to its aggressions, are not mutually exclusive. Nor must those opposed to Fatah's role refrain from criticizing the armed strategy of its rival, Hamas. Not only does silence about the problems of armed resistance threaten to detract from the ethos of global Palestine activism as a nonviolent movement, but we also miss an opportunity to contribute fresh ideas on a political strategy where the energy and cost poured into armed resistance is redirected towards a winnable strategy.

Global Palestine activism and transformative politics

Legitimacy

The first question that activists might ask is whether their role can legitimately extend to critiquing Palestinian political strategy at all. In my earlier discussion about the nature of global Palestine activism as a movement "from below" whose efforts at network-building and advocacy in the west have overshadowed those of traditional Palestinian factions, I sought to demonstrate that the movement has become integral to the Palestinian struggle as a whole. It has been grassroots activists that have led demonstrations, campaigns and direct actions against Israeli policies in recent years and thus become the voice of pro-Palestinian politics on the streets of western countries. Given this state of affairs, and given that Palestinian agency is built-into the movement, it seems legitimate for participants to engage in political strategizing that includes an interrogation of the role of armed resistance to Israeli aggression.

If one views global Palestine activism not as external to Palestinian liberation politics, but rather as a modern tendency within the latter, then the movement's role becomes comparable to that of other Palestinian political movements. It should be recalled that both Fatah and Hamas started life as small movements with external input. Fatah began its existence through informal meetings among small groups of Palestinians in exile in the 1950s. "Wherever there [was] a concentration of Palestinians ... between ’58 and ’62, there was a Palestinian movement", remarked one of its founders (Cobban, 1984: 23). It took a decade for Fatah to coalesce into a force capable of fending off Israeli attacks as it did in the Jordanian village of Karameh in 1968 (Sayigh, 1997: 178), or to become the main political force in the Egyptian-established Palestinian Liberation Organization (Sayigh, 1997: 71). Similarly, Hamas began life in 1987 as a small movement that drew on the existence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, the latter an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Roy, 2011: 19-21). Therefore, Palestinian political movements are neither immutable nor immune to external influence. As with the rise of groups such as Fatah, Hamas and others, it is conceivable that global Palestine activism and its participants could give rise to a new political force in the Palestinian body politic.

Seen in this light, an intervention by participants within the movement into the political strategy of the Palestinian camp need not be seen as an intrusion into the affairs of others or as the negation of Palestinian autonomy (Landy, 2014). On the contrary, an intervention by activists has the potential to alter the current state of deadlock in Palestinian contentious politics. For several years, the policies of Fatah inside the West Bank and those of Hamas inside Gaza have merely reproduced the structure around them. In the former's case, policies have failed to curb Israel's expansion through illegal settlements or to remove its continued military occupation. In the latter's case, rocket fire has not only failed to reverse Israel's blockade of Gaza, but conditions in Gaza have severely worsened as a result of recurrent military confrontations. With no visible sign of an alternative "traditional" faction to break the cycle of Israel's violence and the

Palestinians' response to it, activists should look seriously at their own movement's potential for transformative politics.

Capacity

Here we must explore the question of whether activists could indeed exercise influence over Palestinian political strategy. In its short history global Palestine activism has been successful in its externally-oriented work of improving understandings of the Palestine question by exposing Israeli policies. It has not, so far, focused internally on the arena of Palestinian politics. Dealing with the question of armed resistance requires that the movement orient itself internally as well as externally. But does it have the capacity to do this? I think the answer lies in exploring why it has been successful in its internationally-oriented work.

In its work of building solidarity for the Palestinian plight internationally the movement has been a political entrepreneur. According to social network theory, "political entrepreneurs", be they individuals or collective actors, use ideas and actions to create structural change within a political landscape (Goddard, 2009a: 251). The Freedom Flotilla (FF) campaign which sailed boats towards Gaza, most dramatically in 2010, provides one example.

Although unsuccessful in ending Israel's devastating blockade on Gaza, the FF campaign succeeded in achieving two important results. The first was the highlighting of the Gaza situation to international audiences in a way that traditional Palestinian actors had failed to do. Hamas's pleas to lift the blockade had been largely ignored by the media because of its designation as a terrorist outfit. Meanwhile, Fatah, perhaps partly due to its feud with Hamas, had also failed to effectively highlight the severity of the blockade. After Israeli forces stopped the FF and killed nine activists aboard one of its ships international attention became drawn to Gaza in a way it had not been before. With the FF campaign, the blockade was temporarily widely publicized in the international media with the term "siege" even making it into mainstream news (Martin, 2010).

The second effect of the FF campaign was that of pressuring Israel to increase, if only slightly, the amount of goods allowed into Gaza. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "following the tragic results of the flotilla's attempt to break the blockade, Israel announced a package of measures to ease the access restrictions it had imposed on Gaza since June 2007" (OCHA, 2011: 2). Although the effects of this "eased" blockade were soon reversed by Israel, it is clear the campaign and the reaction it drew from Israel managed for a brief time to both expose Israel's harsh treatment of the Palestinians and force its hand to ease the closure policy, however minimally. I have written about this case study in detail elsewhere (Saba, forthcoming 2016). For the purposes of this paper, the point is that global Palestine activism has the potential to tilt the power imbalance in favor of the Palestinians from its positioning as an internationalized Palestinian movement.

By way of its positioning as a semi-outside actor, global Palestine activism succeeded in launching a campaign that Palestinians alone would not have been able to implement. Since Israel routinely kills Palestinians extra-judicially and with impunity, it is not far-fetched to conceive that had the various Gaza flotilla campaigns consisted purely of Palestinian activists, Israel may have used even greater lethal force against them and the matter may have received much less media attention. International activists are pivotal to the movement *because* they are internationals, and because many of them are westerners. Israel cannot eliminate them with the same level of impunity and media blackout.

Another campaign that illustrates the importance of global Palestine activism's insider-outsider positioning is the BDS campaign. Traditional Palestinian factions could not have run this campaign with the same degree of success it has attained, however limited the latter remains. The Fatah-run PA, much less a group like Hamas, does not possess the networks within western university campuses, churches and trade unions that grassroots activists have forged in recent years. Moreover, the PA, through its engagement with the Oslo peace process to whose adherence its very survival depends, could not openly call for a boycott of the state with whom it is supposed to be negotiating. And yet Palestinian factions benefit from the campaign. Indeed it is conceivable that the threat of BDS served as a bargaining chip for the PA to advance its campaign for a labeling of settlement goods at EU level (Barker and Reed, 2015). In this way, BDS created a political opportunity for the wider Palestinian camp by changing the political environment around the Israeli problem. As with the FF, also with BDS, global Palestine activism's positioning as a Palestinian-international, insider-outsider movement effectively gave it the power of broker between Palestinians and the outside world.

Can the movement's ability to act as a political entrepreneur be extended internally to the Palestinian political camp? Political entrepreneurs, that is, agents who can effect structural change, have been found to occupy a position of broker between actors that would otherwise remain disconnected (Burt, 2004, Goddard, 2009a). This theory, sometimes called "structural hole theory", posits that brokers in a network who operate in the space between more conventional groups within a network are optimally positioned to introduce new ideas. Their ideas are better received by other actors in the network precisely because they operate outside of the institutionalized - even ossified - frameworks of traditional actors who themselves are disconnected from each other, as Fatah and Hamas, and large sections of their constituencies, are today. Consequently, these agents have greater success at introducing new norms and even new identities into a system (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Global Palestine activism fulfills the role of broker in its externally-oriented campaigns, aimed at the world, thanks to its distinction from traditional Palestinian actors and from Israel. Although working for a just resolution to the Palestinian plight, the movement also offers a just solution for Israelis wishing to live in an apartheid-free, equal society, and indeed projects an image of a movement aimed at that vision, particularly through calls for a single democratic state. I posit that the movement can replicate this broker role internally inside the Palestinian camp

because of its positioning as independent from Fatah and Hamas while nevertheless belonging to the broader network of Palestinian contentious politics.

Let us consider the existing structure more closely. The Fatah-dominated PA in Ramallah is wedded to the ongoing diplomatic process with Israel that it pursues through periodic negotiations and by lobbying western governments to support the establishment of a Palestinian state. Hamas, on the other hand, is wedded to the idea that liberation will come through armed resistance. The constituencies of each political entity are presumably similarly entrenched in one of these two positions. But there are two important points to consider. One is that there is a Palestinian constituency that remains unsatisfied by either of those strategies. This is evident from initiatives like BDS to which a large number of Palestinian civil society organizations have signed up. It is also evident in the work of popular village committees in the West Bank which have consistently resisted the co-optation of their weekly protests by either Fatah or Hamas (Saba, 2014). It is further evident from polls that show 28 percent of Palestinians in the OPT support popular nonviolent action as a means to liberation (as opposed to the remainder 26 percent who support continued negotiations and the 42 percent who support armed action) (PCPSR, 2015: 5). Palestinians seeking a third path therefore represent a large constituency inside the OPT which could potentially become much larger should a new movement offer a vision and strategy for a winnable campaign.

The second point is that global Palestine activism is helpful to both Fatah and Hamas in their politics *vis-a-vis* Israel. As mentioned earlier, Fatah likely benefitted from BDS in its campaign for a labeling of settlement goods, and Hamas benefitted from the FF boats because they highlighted the plight of Gaza (Martin, 2010). Indeed, the whole Palestinian body politic stands to benefit from campaigns that expose Israel in the west. This earns the movement a certain level of authority and command. It follows that debates and ideas put forth by its participants would reverberate across the Palestinian body politic and across Palestinian society. Through diffusion and socialization, a debate on resistance strategy has the potential to provoke discussions around the utility, validity, cost and sustainability of armed resistance inside the wider Palestinian arena of contentious politics.

At the beginning, it is sufficient in my view, to simply challenge the norm that currently exists about Palestine SMOs not interfering in Palestinian strategies of resistance. The aim of starting a fresh debate around armed resistance should not be aimed necessarily at shifting the policies of armed groups, but at proliferating an active debate among Palestinian *society*, beginning with the Palestinian diaspora and activist community. Since norms "do not appear out of thin air" but are "actively built by agents having strong notions about appropriate or desirable behavior in their community", it follows that the introduction of the absent critique would represent a bold step against existing discursive norms (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 896). As with any entrepreneurial action, the success of achieving a lively and constructive debate

around this question carries risks. Structural hole theory posits that success is contingent on the position of movement actors in the network and on power relations related to ideology and hegemony. In other words, depending on how a political entrepreneur's ideas are received within the wider network, they can either strengthen or sever ties by resonating or appearing dissonant with particular coalitions (Goddard, 2009a).

Challenges

The first obstacle likely to be faced by the introduction of such a debate would come from Palestinian actors resistant to the idea of reformulating the methodology of Palestinian resistance. A January 2015 poll found that 76.5 percent of Palestinians in the OPT supported "the continuation of rockets from the Gaza Strip on Israeli cities and towns until Israel ends its siege and closure of Gaza" (PCPSR, 2015: 14). This group overlaps with the 28 percent of OPT Palestinians, cited earlier, who believe that non-violent protest is the correct path to liberation. Rather than reading this contradiction as a case of Palestinians wanting it both ways, it should be read as a reflection of the very harsh living conditions that Israel's blockade of Gaza has caused - in Gaza, 73.7 percent describe living conditions as either "bad" or "very bad" (PCPSR, 2015: 10). Support for armed resistance may be read as stoicism and also as a rejection of the Fatah-run PA, which has been unpopular for some time. There is also the issue that over time and following much oppression at the hands of Israel, many Palestinians have come to believe that armed resistance is the only appropriate response to Israel's violations, but this belief is borne of emotion rather than reasoned debate, the latter being largely absent. Even in the face of evidence to the contrary, many people continue to blindly hold the belief that liberation can come through armed means.

Such deeply held views about Palestinian liberation strategy, like deeply held views about desired outcomes, are difficult to change. Consider for example, Yasser Arafat's inability to reach a compromise settlement with Israel at the 2000 Camp David talks. Israeli intransigence towards the Palestinians had hardened public opinion and polarized the debate around issues such as the right of return of refugees and the indivisibility of Jerusalem. Arafat was conscious that his constituency would not accept certain terms within the settlement (Pressman, 2003, Goddard, 2009b). This made it difficult for him to compromise beyond what he thought his society would accept. Similarly, the revival of the armed strategy that came with the surge in Hamas's popularity means that a debate around the armed resistance would be met with stiff opposition. Supporters of armed resistance, such as that exercised in the most recent assault on Gaza in 2014, will point to Hamas's success in standing up to Israel. People will say, for example, that Hamas managed to shut down Israel's airport for two days during the war, a feat unheard of in the history of the PLO. In the context of a conflict that has persistently resulted in losses for the Palestinians it is understandable that people look up to the armed militants for

at least "hitting back". This does not mean that such views should not be challenged, nor that they are immune to change.

Political identities within movements alter as opportunities and political networks shift (Tilly, 1997: 59). This does not happen without some upheaval. The production of ideas by social movements is highly contingent on modes of dissemination and modes of organizing, therefore practitioners would have to approach the debate carefully and sensitively (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 69). Regardless of the difficulties global Palestine activism practitioners can expect to run into in approaching this discussion, an examination of the armed resistance at a time when Israeli aggression has become ever more deadly is urgent and necessary.

Consistency

A further point worth making is around the question of consistency. Global Palestine activism comprises organizations and participants that are highly critical of the Fatah-run PA and rightly criticize its policies. A quick perusal of the Electronic Intifada demonstrates the ubiquity of this critique. BDS founding member, Omar Barghouti, has explained that it is impossible for the PA to stand behind BDS since the Oslo setup made it "inherently incapable of supporting any effective resistance strategy" (Barghouti, 2011: 56). However no similar criticism has been made about Hamas, whose potential alignment with BDS can hardly be feasible or credible given that its strategy of direct military confrontation jars with one founded on building civil society support to hold Israel accountable. Practitioners need to ask themselves whether their nonviolent tactics can work alongside armed struggle or whether parallel armed struggle diminishes the power of nonviolent tactics.

The challenge for movement practitioners is to decide how to relate to the two main political actors: the realpolitik Fatah camp on the one hand and the armed resistance camp of Hamas on the other. While much has been written about the shortcomings of the PA in activist fora, hardly anything has been written about the policies of Hamas. For instance one could note that funds are wasted when directed into militarization instead of more pressing needs such as housing and civil infrastructure. Certainly much of the de-development Gaza has undergone is directly related to Israel's blockade, but how much of it is also a result of Hamas's armed policy? Approaching such questions would strengthen global Palestine activism because it would necessitate deeper engagement with Palestinians from various camps.

The role of activists is not to cheerlead existing factions, but to articulate a third path. That peoples under occupation are legally permitted to resist through arms does not mean that they should do so. Movement practitioners should question the armed strategy by proposing an alternative overall resistance strategy. Currently Fatah and Hamas are both weak. There exists a space which can be filled by bold actors willing to challenge traditional strategies and replace them with new ones.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the internationalized pro-Palestine movement with and by Palestinians has remained largely silent on the utility and validity of armed resistance to Israeli aggression. While the movement has critiqued Fatah-run PA policies it has evaded a similarly energetic critique of Hamas and its resistance strategy. I discussed the positioning of the movement as a potential broker within the larger network of Palestinian contentious politics and argued that this gives activists a good vantage point from which to launch a critique of the armed resistance and propose alternatives. Far from giving Israel ammunition to attack the Palestinians, such a critique could strengthen the role of global Palestine activism and campaigns such as BDS by reviving political discussions around strategy. Social movements, after all, are about people taking action to change relations of power and existing social arrangements. Silence on a major aspect of the struggle stifles this agency.

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Books reviewed this issue:

Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, 2014, *We Make Our Own History, Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*. London: Pluto Press (272 pp., $34 paperback).

Reviewed by Christopher Gunderson

Chris Dixon, 2014, *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements*. University of California Press (363 pp., $27.95 paperback)

Reviewed by Lesley J. Wood

Theresa O'Keefe, 2013, *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (247 pp., £68 hardback)

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Reviewed by Tomás Mac Sheoin

Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, 2014, *We Make Our Own History, Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*. London: Pluto Press (272 pp; $34 paperback)

Reviewed by **Christopher Gunderson**

We Make Our Own History promises to spark lively debates on the future direction of social movement theory. Discontent with mainstream social movement theory on the part of activists and activist scholars has become almost a fixture of the field. While there have been many criticisms of the limitations of the dominant paradigm elaborated in the works of Tilly, Tarrow, McAdams and their many co-thinkers, attempts to articulate a comprehensive alternative approach have been considerably fewer and, in any event, have heretofore been largely ignored. Cox and Nilsen, however, have written a book that will be much harder to dismiss.

An element of this is timing. As the authors quip in their account of the difficulties they encountered in finding a publisher when they first proposed the work a decade ago, "what a difference a recession makes." The global wave of protest movements that erupted in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown and the subsequent "Great Recession" have prompted many scholars to question the strange silence of definitive theoretical works, like *Dynamics of Contention* (McAdam et al 2001), on how class and other social antagonisms of capitalism generate and structure contentious politics. This questioning has contributed to a revived interest in Marxism among social movement scholars that is reflected in the recent publication of the collected volume, *Marxism and Social Movements* (2013), of which Cox and Nilsen were two of the editors.

While the timing of the book is auspicious, it is its success in fulfilling its considerable theoretical ambitions that will continue to command our attention in years to come. *We Make Our Own History* gives us, for the first time, a serious, comprehensive and unapologetically Marxist theory of social movements – of what they are, of where they come from, of how to understand their successes and failures, and of where they stand in relationship to the larger historical development of human society. More than a welcome response to a new conjuncture, *We Make Our Own History* is a major challenge to the reigning theoretical perspectives in the study of social movements.

Movement relevant theory

While the authors occasionally draw on their own experiences and research in Norway, Ireland and India to illustrate particular points, *We Make Our Own History* is fundamentally a work of theory and an erudite one at that. It is also, however, a remarkably accessible work. This is no doubt in part a reflection of Cox and Nilsen's talents as writers, but more importantly of their view of what

a proper theory of social movements needs to do. Building on Bevington and Dixon's (2005) call for "movement relevant theorizing," Cox and Nilsen start from a view of social movement activism as a process of learning that is itself productive of theory. While social movement scholars will correctly perceive within it a pointed polemic against the method and approach represented by McAdams et al (2001), it is first and foremost addressed to movement activists who recognize the practical necessity of a theoretical understanding of their own activity.

Marxism, in the authors' view, is a theoretical approach that, in contrast with the mainstream of academic approaches, emerged directly out of the efforts of participants in social struggles to understand their own experiences. If Marxism is not the only theoretical tradition rooted in social struggles with important things to say to social movements (anarchism, feminism, post-colonialism, and queer theory are others), the authors argue persuasively that it is the most comprehensive and offers the most robust point of departure. The introductory chapter of the book is thus dedicated to making the case, on the one hand, to activists of the need for theory, and on the other, to scholars, for the need for such theory to be movement-relevant, and finally to both, that Marxism's understanding of history as a process of emerging collective human agency – or "historicity" – is best suited to meet those needs.

Species being

The second chapter is an extended elaboration of ideas sketched out in the first. It begins with a discussion of Marx's understanding of human *species being* as an expression of our unique capacity to satisfy our needs by making and remaking our world through conscious collective activity. This process is both shaped by and constitutive not just of the particular historical social formations within which it occurs, but of corresponding forms of consciousness. Cox and Nilsen argue here that Marx's approach represents a decisive break with the subject-object dualism of western philosophy that imagines theory as existing outside of or separate from the social practices it purports to understand. Marx's break with this dualism is expressed in his understanding of the dialectical interplay of theory and practice which he calls praxis in which our subjectivity emerges through our critical reflection on our conscious efforts to transform our world. Social movements are thus understood, not simply as objects of academic study, but as themselves productive of our understanding not only of episodes of contention, but of the social totality that gives rise to them.

Thus, in contrast with the ways that

> academic social movement theory today often sees capitalism and the state as a taken-for-granted framework within which movements represent a particular 'level' of political action. (p. 25)

Cox and Nilsen give us

> a picture of social movements [...] in which they have been, for at least 300 years, part and parcel of struggles over 'historicity', the ways in which human beings create their own societies and orient their priorities and development. (p. 26)

From above and below

After establishing the general orientation and philosophical foundations of the book, Cox and Nilsen lay out the core of their approach in the third chapter. Rejecting both mainstream academic social movement theories and more structuralist versions of Marxism that "treat popular agency as a theoretical afterthought set against the more significant role of political economy" the authors

> posit social movements – from above as well as from below – as the fundamental animating forces in the making and unmaking of the structures of needs and capacities that underpin social formations. (p. 56)

Conceiving of social movements not simply as instruments of the oppressed and marginalized, but as the collective projects of any social groups, acting from above or below, to either change or maintain existing dominant structures, Cox and Nilsen give us a theory of those structures as the product or "sediment" of social conflict.

The implications of the recognition of social movements as coming from above are significant. Elite interests and strategies are not presumed to be either obvious or inevitable, but rather mediated by understandings that are often contested among elites. Similarly, exploitive class relations are not presumed to be automatically self-reproducing, but are rather recognized as requiring conscious efforts to maintain. Social structures are thus understood not as necessarily stable configurations but as "truce lines" to be "continually probed for weaknesses by both sides and repudiated as soon as this seems worthwhile" (p. 57). This is not so much a theory of social movements as it is a theory of society as a whole in which the development of contending social movements explain its configuration at any particular moment.

The making of social formations

The last two chapters of the book consider the role of social movements in the long development of contemporary global capitalism. It is really in the fourth

chapter, which charts the role of social movements, from the enclosures of commons lands in 16th century England to the recent global financial crisis, that Cox and Nilsen demonstrate the power of their theoretical approach to cast the whole field of social movement studies in a new light. From the primitive accumulation of capital to the major bourgeois revolutions that birthed the capitalist state in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the consolidation of liberal regimes in the 19th century to the "organized capitalism" that emerged in the mid-20th century, they trace how the initiatives and counter-initiatives of specific class forces have both precipitated and resolved periodic crises.

These crises revolve around the failure of particular accumulation strategies and state forms, and the inability of hegemonic states to direct and lead the capitalist world-system. In this manner we arrive at an understanding of the global neo-liberal order as a response to the failure of an earlier configuration – the era of "organized capitalism" that followed the Second World War – to both ensure continued capital accumulation while containing insurgent political challenges. Neoliberalism is, in this view, a social movement from above that successfully sought to regain the initiative against the subaltern classes, nations and other social groups that had forced elites in the middle of the century to exchange concessions for social peace.

The final chapter of the book seeks to apply the framework and insights developed over the course of the rest of the book to the problems confronting contemporary movements against neoliberalism. In so far as it attempts to grapple with the question of what it would actually mean for these movements to win, this is the book's most ambitious chapter. Not surprisingly, it is also where the book encounters its greatest problems.

Bringing socialism back in

In its account of the role of social movements in the historical development of capitalism as a world system, *We Make Our Own History* is characterized by a very peculiar omission. While discussing the contributions of many other movements, it barely even acknowledges, much less analyzes, the most significant social movements from below of the 20th century – the communist-led socialist revolutions that occurred in Russia, China and several other countries.

There is really no way to engage the complex strategic and organizational questions tackled in the final chapter of the book without first reckoning with these experiences. By effectively excluding them from their account, the authors let stand, and at moments themselves even appear to embrace, the anti-communist verdicts on these events that have become the "common sense" of our age and that so effectively grounds the neoliberal insistence that "there is no alternative."

So, while Cox and Nilsen rightly give considerable attention to the agitation of Chinese labor in the 21st century in their discussion of contemporary

challenges to neoliberalism they have nothing to say about the social revolution that abolished the Chinese landlord class, freed a quarter of humanity from the terrors of famine and foreign rule, and that more than any other single event accounts for the first sustained reversal of the ten thousand year-long global trend of rising economic inequality.

The socialist revolutions of the 20th century and the regimes that they brought to power raise many complex questions that a Marxist theory of social movements must be able to address. Conflating processes, in which literally millions of the poorest and most oppressed people in the world took history into their hands, with the wholly top-down national development projects pursued by post-colonial regimes such as those established in India or Egypt, as Cox and Nilsen seem to at one point (p. 125), impoverishes our understanding of both the real extent of the accomplishments of movements from below as well as of the challenges that so persistently arise when they are able to take power.

Excluding the socialist revolutions leads to a North Atlantic-centered account of the periods of capitalist development that ignores not just how the example of the Russian Revolution loomed over the transition from liberal to organized capitalism, but also how what Hinton called "the Great Reversal" of the egalitarian thrust of the Chinese Revolution represented by the defeat of the Cultural Revolution and the rise of Deng Xiaoping, was pivotal in the transition from organized to neoliberal capitalism.

Whatever their deficiencies, the socialist revolutions of the 20th century were popular upheavals that radically altered the balance of power between oppressors and oppressed for the better part of the century. They gave courage everywhere to the downtrodden and put fear in the hearts of ruling elites. The concessions made to organized labor, the negotiated decolonization of much of Africa and Asia, the extension of suffrage and other rights to women, the civil rights movement in the U.S., all of these obtained significant momentum from the socialist revolutions. We forget this at great expense.

Similarly, the complex unravelling of those revolutions and the reintegration of the countries in which they occurred back into the capitalist world-system did much to put popular movements on the defensive worldwide and thus to facilitate the rollback over the past several decades of many of the gains secured under organized capitalism.

One need not adopt an uncritical view of the regimes established by the socialist revolutions to recognize this dynamic. Indeed, Cox and Nilsen's recognition of social structures as unstable truce lines between movements from above and below has enormous potential to illuminate the richly contradictory historical experiences of socialist revolution. Regrettably this potential is not developed where it needs to be.

Dare to win

The concluding chapter of *We Make Our Own History* includes some interesting reflections on how the reluctance to talk or think about winning "contribute to the current stalemate between the institutions of the 'New World Order' and the movement of movements" (p. 182) as the authors characterize the diverse range of forces challenging neoliberalism. In opposition to what they regard as a crippling fear of really winning on the part of social movement participants, the authors argue that

> if we want to create movements that pose a serious threat to those in power, we had better be very serious about winning. […] To say 'another world is possible' and effectively resist the system, while planning to leave those in power in control of armies, prisons and police forces is to risk the lives not only of activists, but of their partners, families and friends, and of anyone who might be seen supporting them (pp. 183 – 184).

Here, however, we see the real costs of not looking more closely at those moments when the movements from below actually did win, and were confronted with the very real contradictions involved in assuming power because the alternative of leaving it in the hands of the old ruling classes carried too high a price. The valuable distinction that Cox and Nilsen make between movements from above and from below is complicated by those moments when movements succeed in capturing state power and then use it with varying degrees of popular participation to simultaneously restructure social relations within a national territory while resisting the efforts of global capital to reintegrate them into the world-system. Instead of grappling directly with that complication the authors fall into a meandering rumination on the pitfalls of entanglements with the state that does not meet the high standards of theoretical rigor set by the rest of the book.

Whatever weaknesses there are in *We Make Our Own History*, however, should be seen as very much secondary. Cox and Nilsen have written a book that should redefine the field of social movement theory. It will quickly find a place in both graduate and undergraduate courses on social movements and its tightly argued challenges to reigning orthodoxies should make it the subject of fruitful discussion and debate across the field. Movement activists and organizers will also find much of value here. *We Make Our Own History* will help them locate their own experiences within larger, indeed global, processes of social change and will give their discussions of movement strategies a theoretical grounding that is so often lacking. It is an exciting and important book that deserves a wide readership.

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Chris Dixon, 2014, *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements.* University of California Press. (363 pages, $27.95 paperback)

Reviewed by **Lesley J. Wood**

Chris Dixon introduces his book *Another Politics* with a quote from Detroit writer/facilitator/healer Adrienne Maree Brown,

> A lot of our movements are shaped defensively, necessarily. It can be easy to set our dreams only on the horizon of what seems possible in circumstances largely controlled by oppressive systems. It feels like radical work to actually stretch our imaginations and recenter ourselves in the long arc of what we need to survive (p. vi).

The quotation is well chosen as this book pushes those of us trying to build powerful anti-authoritarian movements to think critically about our current movements and imaginatively about how, sometimes, they succeed.

Dixon is respected as a writer and organizer in movements in both Canada and the US – having lived and organized in both countries over the past twenty years. A white, middle class guy from the punk scene in the early 1990s, he began to organize within anarchist networks around animal rights, the US sanctions against Iraq, the prison industrial complex, and against sweatshops. He is part of an anti-authoritarian tendency within these movements that combines direct action with an emphasis on prefiguration and draws inspiration from intersectional anti-racist feminism. His book joins a cluster of rich reflections about movement building produced over the last five years, including those by Harsha Walia, Chris Crass, Marina Sitrin, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Dan Berger, Alex Khasnabish, Dean Spade, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

The book is divided into three sections, Politics, Strategy and Organizing. In Politics, Dixon describes 'Another Politics' as anti-statist and anti-capitalist, and notes that it is most easily defined by what it is not. This approach is not bound up in political parties nor the non-profit or agency sectors, not in the counterculture of contemporary anarchism. Four key principles define this politic – first, struggling against all forms of domination, exploitation, and oppression; second, developing new social relations and forms of social organization in the process of struggle; third, linking struggles for improvements in the lives of ordinary people to long-term transformative visions and fourth; organizing that is grassroots and bottom-up.

On the one hand, this is a book for those already engaged in this set of politics – rich with insight into strategy, organization and relationships. Dixon uses dozens of in-depth and frank interviews with contemporary activists in Canada and the US to illustrate this politics and its practices. But it avoids navel gazing

and nepotism as it identifies the limits, tensions, possibilities and contradictions within these movements. But one doesn't need to be an insider to appreciate the book – those interested in recent movements such as Occupy, student movement, No One Is Illegal, Palestine solidarity, indigenous solidarity movement, environmental justice, anti-war, feminist, and anti-racist organizing, or the political landscape more generally will find the book rewarding.

The stories and the clear language make it a fast read for busy activists who will appreciate the clear articulation of a politics that has emerged over the past twenty years. They will also appreciate the clear-eyed recognition about the weaknesses. In particular, Dixon shows us how we often set up our own obstacles to effective strategizing. We do this by prioritizing principles over plans, tending to fetishize particular tactics and forms of organization, and organizing as if everything was a crisis. These three problems have different but related consequences: they limit the openness of our movements to new people and new ideas, they tend to stop us from evaluating the context and goals, and they burn us out.

Strategy, the second section of the book, ends with a quote by the Team Colors Collective: "The seed of the new society is not just created in the shell of the old, (to use an old but still very true metaphor), but seeks to organize toward the point of confrontation" (p. 105). Dixon continues:

> When we consciously link 'against' and 'beyond' in our organizing, we create possibilities for collective action that fundamentally challenges what is while practically building what we want. This dyad, the two aspects intentionally fused together, is the core political promise of another politics. (p. 105).

This is one of a number of points in the book where Dixon challenges existing dualisms in movement thinking. He cites Ashanti Alston in noting that the strategic framework of this politics is at its best when it is both in the world but not of it. By this he means that movements shouldn't isolate themselves into activist enclaves, but engage in movements that are relevant for a broader set of people, even while keeping our imaginations open about what real transformation might look like.

The third section on Organizing looks at key questions of tactics, and forms of organizing. Across the board, Dixon emphasizes base building, strategy, experimentation and compassion. Particularly interesting is his section on organizations – or what he nicely calls 'Vehicles for Movement-Building.' The argument against fetishization of tactics is more well known, but here Dixon moves us to a useful recognition that fetishization of form is also a problem. He notes that although many activists get stuck in the 'ruts' of organizational forms, including affinity groups and non-governmental organizations, there is dissatisfaction about these forms. Instead of insisting on a particular form, many activists long for particular organizational experiences, including

accountability, flexibility and support.

Dixon concludes with the recognition that there are two different ways to see 'another politics'. The first is as a political pole, and second as an open political space. As a pole, this politics asserts a way of understanding and acting in the world – a particular articulation that challenges many past efforts. As a space, the goal is to generate new conversations and possibilities among movements. He notes that although there are tensions between these two projects, we need to embrace both and push forward. He then builds on the resonance of the Occupy/99% frame and proposes that it would be particularly effective to tap into a broad understanding of anti-capitalism and class struggle in order to build an inclusive movement that targets "those who are profiting off the system "and the structures that sustain their power and profit- making" (p. 225).

Throughout the book Dixon hammers home the need for our movements to create open, respectful, collaborative relationships and dialogues. But to do this, we need to abandon our purism. I found this insistence particularly relevant, having seen how movements in decline often fall back on defences of 'solid politics' or 'correct line' thinking that exclude those with even slightly different approaches as 'fucked up.' Such divisiveness doesn't build movements.

Dixon refers back a number of times to the Zapatista phrase of "Walking we ask questions." He concludes with six questions.

1. How can we foreground the interconnections among multiple forms of oppression while also making strategic choices about which fights we take up?
2. How can prefigurative praxis be intentional and yet avoid reinforcing insular activist communities?
3. How should we relate to electoral politics?
4. How can another politics foster visionary organizing approaches that are useful and meaningful to ordinary non-activist people?
5. What kinds of organizations and institutions should the anti-authoritarian current build in order to further movements, consolidate gains and lay infrastructure for a new society?
6. How should anti-authoritarians relate to liberal, social democratic, Leninist and other left political currents?

These questions and the dialogue that they inspire are part of the gift that Dixon offers. Both hopeful and practical, *Another Politics* helps us in our struggle to build a different world.

About the review author

Lesley Wood is interested in how ideas travel, how power operates, how institutions change, how conversations influence practices, how people resist and how conflict starts, transforms and ends. She is an activist and researcher in Toronto, working at York University. She can be reached at ljwood AT yorku.ca

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Theresa O'Keefe, 2013, *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements.* Baskingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (247 pp., £68 hardback)

Reviewed by **Annette Behrens**

Theresa O'Keefe has written a book that addresses complex questions on feminist identity development through feminist political theory, nationalism and social movement theory. *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements* is based on a case study of the Irish republican movement through ethnographic interviews with women activists. The aim of the book is to show how feminist identity development and nationalism can be interlinked. This is the book's main intervention, where it provides a critical take on feminist contemporary discourse, which draws a negative relationship between feminist identity and nationalist activism. O'Keefe prefaces her intervention as an intersectional one, which allows her to suggest that "women did fare well by partaking in republican nationalism" (p. 14) and that nationalist movements can be sources for feminist activism.

The book provides a practical example of how different and perhaps at first sight incongruous struggles may intersect both in terms of knowledge production and political strategies. O'Keefe's intervention may be useful to both scholars of social movements and activists in asserting the complex ways in which movement formation and political identity development take place. While the book challenges the feminist discourse that engages with nationalist movements as inherently patriarchal, the author acknowledges that the Irish republican movement and the mobilisation of women are ambivalent, fragmented, intricate and contextually specific.

O'Keefe starts the book by setting out a brief review of the current literature dominating the different sets of theory on nationalism and gender. As anyone familiar with these discourses knows, women are often remembered as 'victims' of nationalist struggles, rarely as violent insurgents or as beneficiaries of revolutionary counter-violence. Nationalist movements are indeed unlikely spaces for feminist praxis because they are often embedded in traditional patriarchal gender roles, where women's bodies and their reproductive capacities are used as symbols of the nation's virtue and prosperity. Thus, women's bodies often become objects of contestation, which materialise through sexual violence. As such, the figure of women-as-victims has become important to scholars of nationalism and gender in an effort to make women's suffering in war and conflict visible (see Cockburn 1998, 2001; Eisenstein 2000; Mostov 2000). As O'Keefe argues, women's agency in nationalist struggles remains underexplored within this literature. When their agency is highlighted, women are re-essentialised as peacemakers, through the trope of women as universally non-violent and having a natural preference for peace.

The second chapter describes the way in which British state violence was the primary source of abuse against women during the Irish Troubles (1968-1998) and a main contributor to the politicisation of women in the struggle joining the armed resistance. Excerpts from O'Keefe's interviews give a particularly graphic description of the violence that both women and men endured through the internments, imprisonment and strip searches. To me this is an interesting second chapter because of its privileging of raw interview transcripts that, set against the critique of conventional sensationalism of women in conflict in the previous chapter, reads as an interesting, yet ambiguous representation. On one hand, it seems as if O'Keefe is merely reproducing the sensationalism she is critiquing in the first chapter, that women in conflict are only viable as victims through the uninhibited reproduction of violent images. On the other hand, I found the structure of the chapter also subversive of this kind of familiar sensationalism. Precisely because the author allows the description of violence to not only stand by itself but rather she surrounds these excerpts of violence within a wider context of women's emancipation and agency, that is in particular set against the structural abuse by the British state as a colonial force.

The third chapter draws these questions in closer, describing the roles that women undertook during the struggle, including combat, their role through IRA policing and informants, military training and leadership. In this chapter O'Keefe argues that women refused passive roles and committed to violent resistance feeling frustrated about the escalating violence and societal instability brought on them and their communities by British and anti-republican brutality. Simultaneously, although women clearly proved a strong collective commitment, they were continuously pathologised, either as temporary replacements for men in prison or through their caring responsibilities or other patriarchal inventions against women's participation and agency. This culminated in women being completely side-lined, underrepresented and unheard during the 1993 peace talks. The author notes that this disappointment contributed to stronger gender awareness amongst the participants in her study. Republican women began to better recognise the unequal treatment they received from their male comrades, and "feminism was nourished in reaction to the patriarchal elements of republicanism" (83).

The fourth chapter explores the other side of the pathological dichotomy of women's participation – the dangerous 'femme fatal' and the passive 'unusual suspect'. O'Keefe addresses this detrimental dichotomy by demythologising the iconography that follows the imaginary of women's participation during the Troubles. Indeed, this representation of women is severely skewed as portraying women as victims helped the movement politically as women's agency was not seen to be a garner of sympathy from the masses.

O'Keefe not only challenges this detrimental dichotomy but she also notes the narrativisation of history through cultural memory, which entails the privileging of the male hero and the writing off of women's contributions. Consequentially, she argues, that even when women are doing the same tasks as men, and countering the same dangers as men, they tend to be nevertheless written out of

history, and their participation and actions are either downplayed or forgotten altogether. O'Keefe does a particularly good job in reiterating the way in which women have been left out of history books by detailing her own struggles in completing the research.

The next two chapters focus on the notion of republican feminism and demonstrate the space that raised gender awareness through nationalist struggle can provide. The author's concluding argument in chapter five, that "[t]he politicisation of republican women and subsequent feminist development are inextricably linked to and are a product of their participation in the national struggle" (p. 148), is posed against the attempt of mobilising women through the autonomous, or mainstream, women's struggle. While she asserts her use of intersectionality to prove this lack, O'Keefe could utilise the framework of intersectionality more specifically to make this argument stronger as I found it the weakest in the book. Intersectionality is a complex concept that requires a more careful outlining than the "recognition of interlocking systems of oppression" (p. 10), particularly in the author's departure from the origin of intersectional thought located in Black feminist epistemologies. Thus, I propose two suggestions that would have made a more specific intersectional framework work in this book. First, it appears as though the broader feminist significance here could be supported better with links to other anti-colonial nationalist movements and struggles. Second, O'Keefe claims that Irish autonomous feminism failed to take up the radical project of republican feminism (she gives the example of abortion here) through their rejection of an intersectional analysis of the feminist struggle. However, there needs to be a better justification for this than the claim to identity politics and the ways in which intersectionality works both to analyse struggles of the less powerful and those of more dominant standing. A more detailed and broader definition of intersectionality would explicate this further.

O'Keefe both starts and ends the book with problematising McClintock' claim that "Nowhere, has feminism been allowed to be more than the maidservant to nationalism" (1993:78). This sentence suggests to O'Keefe that feminist nationalism is an oxymoron because of the supposed anti-violence stance inherent in feminism. It also favours women's autonomous organising, and construes nationalist movements as being invariably homogenous. O'Keefe's counterargument raises the question of anti-colonial struggles that are simultaneously nationalist but provides a ground for fighting patriarchal values and structures. While this book is unique in the sense that it provides a detailed look into women's participation in the Troubles, and a nuanced view of their participation. However it would be interesting to see a more comparative analysis, where more focus would be paid to other movements that are affected by different kinds of intersectional complex inequalities. A comparative analysis of this kind would make the argument stronger. However, as a contribution to the bodies of literature on conflict and peace studies, gender studies, theory on nationalism and critical social movement theory, this book supplies the

discourse of 'women in war' with a fresh disrupting of the boundaries constructed around the representation of women in armed conflict.

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Betsy Leondar-Wright, 2014, *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*. Ithaca: ILR Press (274 pp., $21.95 paperback)

Reviewed by **Bob Eastman**

Over the years, the various left-leaning oppositional movements in the United States have been limited by the complex realities of and history of race, gender, social position, and identity. While great strides have been made in advancing radicals' understanding of how these manifest themselves within both our movements and our lives, much work remains to be done. In particular, the role that class plays is frequently neglected, with both activist and mainstream discourse oscillating between downplaying the role of class (assuming that everyone can come together equally in a movement because it is "horizontal") and over-simplifying it (for example, the 99% rhetoric of the Occupy movement). In *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*, Betsy Leondar-Wright challenges this limited view, presenting a compelling look at how class informs activism in the United States.

Leondar-Wright's book is the result of fieldwork studying 362 participants in 25 different "left-of-center" groups ranging from professional progressive activist groups to non-profits and even anarchist groups. The work builds on Leondar-Wright's experience as a self-described progressive activist who became politicized through the anti-nuclear struggles in the 1970s and the Movement for a New Society (MNS). The roots of *Missing Class* lie in the limits of that organizing, as Leondar-Wright came to realize that in some cases the "inessential weirdness"—aspects of counter-cultural identity not essential to a participant's identity (for example, eating granola as opposed to sexual identity)—often limited their potential mainstream support and erected barriers that prevented collaboration (p. 134). In many cases, these barriers had strong class undertones. In the years since Movement for a New Society, Leondar-Wright has continued to explore how class functions in the United States, working for the progressive group United For A Fair Economy and ultimately undertaking the fieldwork necessary to produce *Missing Class* as a graduate student.

The result is a very nuanced discussion of how class plays out in various social movements in the United States. Leondar-Wright begins by acknowledging the paradox that while many leftists in the United States reject the myth of a "classless society," they often embrace the idea of a classless movement (p. 29). This is seen in the limited discussion of class amongst various social movements in the United States. Contrasted with other identities—for example race or gender—class has received less focus. Leondar-Wright argues that this is in part due to the lack of shared vocabulary for even talking about class in the United States. To help the discussion, Leondar-Wright introduces some of the concepts first articulated by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, especially the idea of predispositions and learned behaviors that grow out of our class positions and

cultural capital (p. 32). The author is especially interested in these concepts as they are often the hardest for individuals to self-identify and overcome.

Leondar-Wright categorizes the 362 activists observed in the book based on four broad class categories: life-long-working-class, life-long-professional-range, upwardly-mobile, and voluntarily-downwardly-mobile (p. 38). Based on interviews that explore their current occupations, education, and family backgrounds, Leondar-Wright is able to note each activist's class position and then study how those positions influenced their opinions and behaviors within groups. From there, the information is used to make larger observations about shared actions, behaviors, and dispositions. A real strength of *Missing Class* is the detail through which this is explored. It moves beyond simple assertions of what people do based on their class position or background and instead examines the complex ways in which class manifests itself. Still, there are broad sets of behaviors associated with specific class positions, such as working-class activists' tendency to talk about the concrete and specific aspects of an issue, for example, what needs to change or who is the problem, whereas college-educated activists tend to talk in more abstract and theoretical terms. In addition to examining behavior based on class, Leondar-Wright also explores how movement traditions impact behavior. The twenty-five observed groups are divided into four broad traditions: grassroots community organizing, professional antipoverty advocacy, the labor movement, and social change groups working on both global and local causes (a category that is sub-divided into three ideological tendencies: progressive/nonprofit, anarchist, and anti-imperialist) (p. 64). The author provides a brief historical introduction to each of these broad groupings, which is particularly important for those like the anarchist tradition that might be less familiar to some readers.

All of these different categories and classifications could make for a somewhat disjointed study that doesn't flow well or offer much to readers, but the author does an excellent job of organizing the book around how class cultures affect specific, concrete issues within social movements. After the introductory chapters that explore class, the various movement traditions discussed, and define the necessary terminology, the remaining chapters are organized around common problems faced by social movements and how class influences the ways in which they are approached. The problems—recruitment and group cohesion, leadership and group process, anti-racism, over-talking, and extreme behavior violations—are issues that come up repeatedly in social movements. In between the chapters, there are brief interludes that explore how language differs as it relates to class. Organizing the book in this way really brought a sense of cohesion to the book and helped to illustrate how differently activists approach things based on class. For example, when it comes to low attendance, the contrast between working-class centered groups who emphasized the importance of food, community, and concrete benefits with professional-middle-class activists who emphasized ideological agreement, vividly illustrates a real difference.

It is in these chapters that the real value of the book comes through, as readers will likely see bits of themselves in the discussion, which is helpful for identifying behaviors that may otherwise have gone unnoticed or unconsidered. As someone who has been involved in various anarchist and anti-authoritarian groupings over the years, I was particularly struck by some of these discussions. For example, I found myself cringing when Leondar-Wright discussed how people in anarchist groups avoid conflict, as is shared in a story about how one anarchist collective allowed a problematic situation where a member was taking money from the collective go unresolved for years. While one would like to think that it's an extreme situation, it's symptomatic of the kind of avoidance of conflict inherited from the activists' professional class backgrounds. Another example is how anarchist groups sometimes deal with those who engage in more minor transgressions—for example over-talking—by referring to the problem individual in the third person, rather than dealing with them directly. It's a behavior that I've definitely noticed over the years, and if I think critically, have likely engaged in some variation of it myself. It was in these moments of critical self-reflection that I found myself most engaged with the text.

In many ways, *Missing Class* is an example of how writing on social movements should be done. It is written by a researcher who has an intimate familiarity with the topic and a vested interest in social transformation. Leondar-Wright's personal experience with the broad social justice tradition in the United States since the late 1970s allows them to share insights that a researcher approaching the topic from more distance—for example a sociologist without prior experience—might not see. For example, connecting the experiences and flaws of Movement for a New Society, the anti-globalization movement of the early 2000s, and the Occupy movement, would likely be missed by someone without a broad personal experience. Similarly, as a participant in social movements, Leondar-Wright knows that much of the audience for *Missing Class* will be those interested in applying the ideas it raises, and as such, the book is written in an accessible way in which there are few unnecessary barriers created through the use of excessive academic or theoretical terminology. Similarly the organization of the book around key problems activists face—attendance, diversity, leadership, etc—makes it easy for activists to identify the concrete ways in which class influences their work. In the final pages of the book, Leondar-Wright's vision of a cross-class movement really shows the strengths that people of each class background and movement tradition can bring to their organizing (pp. 230-231).

If the book has one flaw, I would argue that it comes in terms of its consideration of the politics and affinities of the twenty-five groups in considered as part of the study. While it is interesting to compare the class and racial make up of labor groups compared to anarchist groups, for example; doing so requires a certain amount of vagueness or presumption of some type of unity or common path. In the case of *Missing Class*, Leondar-Wright situates the groups as being concerned with "building a mass progressive movement" (p. 232). The groups studied—which range from explicitly anarchist groups to

professional advocacy organizations—have widely different orientations and assumptions about society. Is describing them as "left-of-center" and assuming that they are all interested in creating a mass, united movement of some kind, the best way to conceptualize these groups (p. 2)? To the author's credit, Leondar-Wright does a good job of looking at how class dynamics play out in the unique spaces and movement cultures of these different groups, but the assumption driving the book is that all of the groups want to appeal to a "mainstream" or "mass" of some sort. In some cases, I felt like the assumption undermined the analysis a bit, as in the discussion of comparing the working-class base of anarchism in the 1930s (p. 112) to the contemporary anarchist movement. Class no doubt informs practice—as the author shows throughout the book—but it is also worth contemplating how differences in political ideology and goals might complicate the author's vision of a unified cross-class mass movement.

Overall, *Missing Class* is a strong exploration of how class informs activism in the United States. There is a lot for the thoughtful activist or organizer to consider in the book. On almost every page, there are insights that lend themselves to further discussion, which is the ultimate goal of the book. Leondar-Wright does not provide readers with a blueprint for creating cross-class alliances, but rather asks a difficult but essential question: "What would it look like to openly discuss class, claim class identities, and tap all class cultures to strengthen a group?" *Missing Class* can be an important starting point for answering the question.

About the review author

Bob Eastman is an anarchist living in the occupied territory currently known as Grand Rapids, Michigan. He studied history in college. More importantly, he has spent the past fifteen years engaging in a variety of activist and collective projects ranging from student organizing to autonomous spaces. He can be emailed at bobeastman AT riseup.net

Todd Wolfson, 2014, *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. (248 pp., $30 paperback)

Reviewed by **Gino Canella**

Todd Wolfson approaches his analysis of social movement media and the Global Social Justice Movement as a scholar and ethnographic researcher, but what truly informs *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* is Wolfson's experience as an organizer, activist, and co-founder of the Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) in Philadelphia. A non-profit, community-media center housed in West Philadelphia, MMP grew out of Wolfson's "disquiet with the logic of the Cyber Left" (p. 8) and produces activist campaigns that focus on public education, labor rights and media policy. In coining the term "Cyber Left," Wolfson draws a connection between the organizing structures and ideologies of the popular uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s – often referred to as the New Left – with the digital technologies and communication tools utilized by recent movements like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and Black Lives Matter. While recognizing the potential benefits these new forms of networked communications provide for democratic participation and social change, Wolfson complicates several aspects of the "Cyber Left," and these complications are discussed below. Wolfson's time studying and working with indymedia allows him to provide not only a detailed and critical analysis of the "Cyber Left," but offer practical solutions and guidance for contemporary, networked social movements seeking to navigate this somewhat new digital landscape.

After providing a historical review of social movements and the evolution of the New Left in part one of the book, part two of *Digital Rebellion* describes three key elements to modern social movements' "Logic of Resistance": Structure, Governance and Strategy. Defining this "Logic of Resistance" serves as a blueprint for how Wolfson's alternative community media hub, MMP, connects its messages of social justice, through media, to activism and advocacy that is built on (1) relationships with poor and working-class communities, (2) the development of movement leaders, and (3) political education of its staff. By working with local neighbourhood groups and community organizers on long-term campaigns that resonate with the public, MMP seeks to influence and pressure government officials with the ability to reform policy. The organizational structure and campaign strategies employed by MMP create a situation where the leaders are held accountable for their decisions – a major pitfall Wolfson sees facing the "Cyber Left."

Wolfson grounds his historical review of the Global Social Justice Movement from 1994-2006 in political-economic and networked communication theories and focuses on his fieldwork with indymedia – both in the United States and internationally – to present a convincing critique of the "Cyber Left." *Digital Rebellion* problematizes and champions social movement media by seeking a

theoretical space between what Jodi Dean (2009) refers to as "communicative capitalism" and Laclau and Mouffe's views that socialist ideals are "in crisis."

Wolfson challenges the notions that a review of materialist economic conditions is reductive and the hope that social change can be generated from the working classes is a "Marxist fiction" (p. 156). Dean defines communicative capitalism as the "participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism" (p. 2). Inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis and Slavoj Žižek's work on the decline of symbolic efficiency (1998), Dean's argument is centered on the notion that an overwhelming amount of news and information available online leads to "a mistrust of what is said in favor of what can be detected" (Andrejevic 2009). Dean cautions online activists about the personalization of politics that may be exacerbated by Web 2.0 and other participatory communication networks. Wolfson, while not going so far as Dean in his analysis of the "Cyber Left," reviews the strategies of the labor movement, New Left and other movements of the past because, he says, "to understand a specific period of resistance, it is vital to look at historical antecedents as well as the current socioeconomic environment" (p. 185).

The "Cyber Left," according to Wolfson, emerged out of the logic of the New Left movements of the 1960s and reflects similar characteristics, such as horizontal, non-hierarchical structures that operate with leaderless governance and "radical democratic revolution[ary]" approaches towards social change. These characteristics are foregrounded by an account of the strategies employed by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) of Chiapas, Mexico that proclaimed in 1994, "One NO to neoliberal capitalism, many YESES" (p. 18). While several autonomous actors can indeed unite under this banner, seek to reject neoliberal capitalism, and support issues ranging from labor rights to environmental activism, Wolfson highlights here a critical aspect of the Zapatista's story that is often missing from the "Cyber Left's" discourse and strategies and one that is essential to understanding this movement: the on-the-ground organizing and shared messaging that occurred between the Marxist urban revolutionaries and the Mayans that allowed the organization to develop "dialogue, patience, and community" (p. 33).

This relationship-building enabled the movement to proceed with a cohesive and effective strategy, but, because the EZLN used a combination of old and new media to broadcast and promote its oppositional messages in its struggle with the Mexican army, the focus of many scholars and activists has wrongly centered on the technology's role in the movement. In detailing the community relationships the Zapatistas developed, Wolfson demonstrates how new communication technologies utilized by social movements can benefit activists, but also how these tools distract researchers and journalists interested in understanding these organizations from the social, political and economic conditions affecting the production and distribution of the movement's messages and the labor of the activists involved. Secondly, and more importantly, by emphasizing the relationships the Zapatistas built with the

Mayans, Wolfson is highlighting the organizing efforts and messaging strategies needed to develop and maintain long-term campaigns for social justice and connect them with poor and working-class communities.

Wolfson also details the rise and eventual successes of the Seattle Indymedia Center (IMC) during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests to describe the potential advantages networked communications have when utilized by activists who are mobilizing and uniting union leaders, community organizers and others. While the open-publishing platform used by Seattle IMC was essential to its distribution of news about the protests, Wolfson makes a deliberate effort to avoid falling into a techno-deterministic analysis. The horizontalism of indymedia, and the "Cyber Left" more broadly, is what accelerates rapid growth in the number of participants – similar to that seen by Occupy Wall Street and the protests of the Arab Spring – and allows more voices to feel connected and empowered by the movement. This structure and the digital media and new communication technologies that come with it, as Wolfson points out, also tend to privilege those with more social and cultural capital to reach positions of authority – typically upper-middle-class, well-educated, tech-savvy young men. Online activists working from remote locations are also placed at a physical distance from those the campaign is aimed at helping, which creates a barrier between them and the poor and working-class communities they are supposedly supporting. For these reasons, Wolfson shares Žižek's concerns about the "Cyber Left's" long-term viability and potential to connect its online activism to on-the-ground support. If movements are to utilize these technologies in any sort of shared struggle, it is essential for scholars and activists to return to a critique of capitalism and class, develop leaders who can be held to account for the movement's long-term campaign strategy and decisions, and promote political education training within social movement organizations.

Digital Rebellion offers tangible advice for building, strategizing, and sustaining durable, networked movements and is a useful and accessible resource for scholars, activists, and community organizers working within the Global Social Justice Movement. Wolfson's measured analysis of social movements and the media they utilize is useful because there tends to be either an uncritical celebration by those eager to credit new technologies for their role in promoting social justice or vilification by others who only see these movements and their media-making activities as servicing Western capitalism. *Digital Rebellion* offers scholars and activists theoretical and practical frameworks that situate social movement media within historical and socioeconomic contexts. What I would have appreciated more of, however, was a further exploration of the Mayans' appeal for sensible dialogue. At a time when many social actors appear to be shouting down their opposition and reasoned debate and consensus-seeking seems lost, realizing how and where the Mayans found common ground with the Marxist revolutionaries is a critical place for contemporary movements to begin working towards policy reform. Detailing the work of activists who are producing and distributing messages of social justice in concert with community

leaders, politicians, the public, and other activists, while focusing on the labor that is required to build and maintain these relationships, is critical for understanding social movements operating within networked communications fraught with (symbolic) inefficiencies. Perhaps Occupy Wall Street's introduction of the "99 percent" into the public consciousness was a success.

For others, new legislation or policy reform is the only metric for success. The "Cyber Left," and the movements Wolfson would say are associated with it, has been panned for offering radical messaging in the form of slogans, catchphrases, or hashtags, which disappear from the public discourse within months. Encouraging social movements to follow the community-centered strategies the Mayans shared with the Marxist urban revolutionaries in Chiapas, Mexico is an opportunity to rethink how sensible "dialogue, patience, and community" can foster consistent, inclusive messaging and lasting social justice.

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Steve Martinot, 2014, *The Need to Abolish the Prison System: An Ethical Indictment.* Los Gatos, CA: Smashwords, Inc. (84 pp., $1.99 e-book)

Reviewed by **Nick J. Sciullo**

Steve Martinot's latest book is precisely what it portends to be: an ethical indictment of the U.S. prison system. Martinot is not wrong in theory about the curative force of democracy, but his hope in democracy contains little practical advice for activists and inmates on the ground. Many scholars, activists, and practitioners, particularly since Michelle Alexander's (2010) *The New Jim Crow*, have called for either substantial reform or abolition of the prison system. Now more than ever, it seems as though the movement to abolish prisons is strong. But, as much as theorizing prison's end is necessary, so too do scholars need to think about the ways this theory works on a day-to-day level where activists are engaged in work against the prison system.

Martinot's ethical claim rests on the potential of democracy to produce equality because democracy at least rests upon some notion of equality, fairness, and justice. Democratic theory suggests that the more we rely on more people to shape decisions and decide policy, the more that policy will reflect equality. In practice, though, democracy has become a convenient byword to mask oppression because it functions as a panacea to mask difference and struggle. To be sure, Martinot is no oppressor. His work has been helpful in raising critical consciousness and challenging structural oppression, often while chasing elusive democracy. Yet, democracy, particularly in its representative form, is often structured by leaders who fracture minority groups and has the unfortunate result of leading to quite undemocratic results including structural racism, classism, and sexism. Quite clearly Martinot knows this, and has indeed, in his longer works, addressed these concerns, but this book leaves much to the reader's interpretive schemas.

Martinot proposes five steps toward democracy, but it is not clear what his democracy is, or how his democracy interacts with others' theories of democracy. He wants us to dismantle the prison, bring judicial and law enforcement officials to justice through the creation of a new theory of justice (that remains unspecified), reform the judicial system so that it looks more like the truth and reconciliation model (that could be discussed fully), engage restorative justice as a theory to structure society (that may be the theory of justice he wants established), and rehumanize those labeled as offenders. Again, Martinot is not wrong, but in this short volume he does not provide the mechanisms for accomplishing these noble goals.

Martinot could enhance his ethical claims by substantively engaging Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Derrick Bell, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Genet, Jacques Derrida, and others. Gramsci's theory of hegemony might better inform Martinot's book by helping to flesh out a theory of power. Likewise, Derrick

Bell's theory of interest convergence might help explain how prison activists might gain allies. Jean Genet might have helped Martinot work through embodiment and performance as they relate to prison life and activism. Activists have engaged with these authors, particularly French theorists who worked with the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP), or Prison Information Group, which provided an intellectually robust as well as active resistance to prisons. The revolution always needs sustained theoretical interventions, to nod toward V. I. Lenin. Martinot's *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity, Governance* (2002) and *The Machinery of Whiteness: Studies in the Structure of Racialization* (2010) certainly engage the relevant theoretical literature. His artful and engaging *Forms in the Abyss: A Philosophical Bridge between Sartre and Derrida* (2007) stands as proof that Martinot is an able theorist in his own right. More of this should have been included in his most recent book, and with Martinot's able prose, it would no doubt have been approachable for a broad audience.

Martinot's "What It Will Take" section lays out steps to take toward achieving democracy, but does not describe how one does what it will take. In order to achieve this resistance to racism, capitalism, the carceral state, and more, to transcend of the state, the penal colony, the abject state of permanent criminality, one must consult different works.

This is not to say other authors do a better job describing how to organize against prisons. While Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* provides the first note in Martinot's text, she as well does not explain exactly how to organize. The rage, the passion, and indeed the ethical arguments are clear in Martinot and other authors, but that still brings advocates to the question of how does one mobilize. From an applied ethical perspective, one might theorize organization strategy fruitfully as an ethical orientation toward a recognized evil. This is to say; Martinot could have put ethics to work in a more direct manner to better help with organizing.

Martinot's next book will hopefully tackle this question. The issue of organizing has been well handled by many scholars and activists in many disciplines from Latin@ studies to labor organizing. Organizing manuals abound all over the Internet. Martinot references the Living Wage Movement as an example that moved in the right direction although quite clearly had limited success. Should the prison abolition movement look to the Living Wage Movement for inspiration? What about comparative analysis of the Civil Rights Movement or Black Power Movement? Were either of these on track or instructive? Martinot does not give the reader this analysis in his book.

While it is difficult to fault a humanistic, ethical treatment for not citing to more evidence; this is precisely the problem with which I was confronted. As a rhetorical scholar, I was left wanting more in the way of citations to substantiate arguments. Martinot's activist audience, and based on the reviewer's reading of many pamphlets, blog posts, and organizing manuals from race and class activists, do not require tons of citations, but the reader is left wondering where

the evidence is. For example, Martinot might include the many reports that describe the ways the prison system has endangered families of color, the ways prisons impose environmental harms to communities, and the health-related concerns from which prisoners suffer. The danger in short books is that they only affirm the already supportive instead of shaping the minds of those that disagree. They are, essentially, preaching to the choir. Those that disagree should be the targets as much as the cause's allies. Activists need not only preach to the choir, but must also convert the disbelievers.

While this reviewer recommends those who question prison abolition to read this text, this reviewer's fear is that this book, passionately and not without occasional persuasive flavor, will only continue to affirm those already pursuing prison abolition. That is not all bad. Movements succeed when they are fed and strengthened by the erudite writing, speaking, and acting of their members. To be sure, Martinot is erudite and his prose readable both for its style and substance. But, readers may be left hoping for the next installment. In order to better serve those that believe in prison abolition, scholars must discuss more the ways to organize. In order to convert the un-converted, scholars must provide more evidence to support the arguments they make by using anecdotes, testimony, statistics, etc.

This book, despite qualms, is recommended across disciplines and issue foci to scholars and activists interested in prison reform and prison abolition. Martinot's continued work on prison abolition and publications in the popular press and academic fora must continue for he is a clarion voice in the movement.

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Temitope Oriola, 2013, *Criminal resistance: the politics of kidnapping oil workers.* Ashgate. (xvi, 243 pages, £68.00 hardback)

Reviewed by **Tomás Mac Sheoin**

After the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight comrades in 1995 following conviction by a military tribunal, core country interest in struggles in the Niger delta decreased. There were a number of reasons for this: the hanging appeared to show the failure or at least the limits of non-violent struggles against a state which had no great problems in being violent and new activists in the Delta had guns and seemed to be prepared to use them. This last factor moved the movement outside the limits of permissible action and solidarity in core countries, where Amory Starr (2003) could proudly boast that "there has not been a single case of weapons preparation or use by anti-globalization protestors in North America" and the question of state power was in many cases being ignored as theorists claimed to wish to make a revolution without capturing state power. While this was a reasonable response to the experience in both Europe and North America with leftist armed groups in the 1970s –where the armed group arrogantly claimed for itself the vanguard position the Leninist party had previously claimed- and a response to a situation where some claim core country states are reluctant to use fatal force against protestors (Cox 2014, but see Calafati 2013), these developments were not much use in situations where the state had consistently shown no great problem in meeting protest with lethal violence, whether covert or overt, as illustrated by the wave of the 'Arab spring' protests breaking against a state and security apparatus which did not accept the rule of the non-violence game. So possibly one of the ways we may now distinguish between social movements in the core and the periphery is that the latter still consistently face state (and non-state) violence.

As Oriola notes social movement scholarship has mainly concentrated on liberal democratic states in core countries despite the fact that "most episodic or systemic evincing of contentious repertoires of protest takes place in authoritarian regimes, especially in the developing countries of Asia, South America and Africa" (p.9). He continues that, while there has been an increase in studies of protest in peripheral countries since the 1990s, this has mainly focussed on state repression and "the adoption of violent architecture of protest by private, non-state actors has not received commensurate attention" (p.10). Studies of violent movements are thus left to counter-insurgency and other 'security' experts rather than incorporated in the study of social movements.

Oriola's study is welcome purely on the basis that it looks at a social movement that uses a violent repertoire, if for no other reason. The book is also welcome as an example of interdisciplinary work, situated as it is "in the interstitial space between the burgeoning subfield of critical criminology and social movement scholarship" (p.15). It's also pleasingly eclectic in the theoretical sources on which it draws including Hobsbawm's social banditry, political opportunity and

new war theories. It draws on interviews and focus group discussions with "activists, military authorities, insurgents engaged in kidnapping, NGO representatives, community leaders" (p.19). Of particular interest is that it draws on interviews with 42 insurgents who took part in the 2009 government amnesty: thus opinions of rank and file militants are articulated as well as the 'official' leadership position as expressed in emails from Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Oriola provides an account of the phases through which kidnapping developed as part of the delta struggle on p.181, somewhat late in the book. The first phase – from 1960 to 1990 – saw Nigerian or foreign oil workers briefly held hostage during periods of communal agitation: in these cases ransoms were neither demanded nor paid. The second phase from 1990 to 2002 saw newly emergent groups kidnapping only foreign oil workers while the third phase from 2003 to date saw an increase in the intensity of oil worker kidnapping as well as a massive increase in the ransoms demanded and involvement of purely criminal elements. Kidnapping is only one of a number of illegal tactics embraced by the movement. Over 400 illegal refineries are reported to have been discovered and destroyed by the military between 2008 and 2009 (p.108), while of the 3203 oil spills reported by the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency in the delta between 2006 and 2010, some 45% were attributed to vandalism or sabotage (p.168).

Oriola puts the use of violent methods, including kidnapping, in context, showing that kidnapping exists in other parts of Nigeria not only as a profitable criminal activity but also as part of the normal repertoire of Nigeria's political elite. Similarly kidnapping is shown to have been a tactic previously used as early as the 1960s, while groups that advocate non-violence have also been involved in kidnapping oil workers. Oriola gives an indication of the number of oil workers kidnapped, citing statistics from a private company, Bergen Risk Solutions: 2006 - 70 workers; 2007 - 165 workers; 2008 - 165 workers; 2009 - 48 workers; January-June 2010 - 31 workers. At least $100 million was paid in ransom between 2006 and 2009 for kidnapped oil workers. One indication of how serious the situation is is provided by the sums the oil industry spends on security –between 2007 and 2009 industry expenditure on security was $3 billion annually.

The struggle over oil in the delta is also put into perspective by Oriola when he reports "the three core Niger Delta states comprising Bayelesa, Rivers and Delta have a combined total of at least 120-150 ongoing violent conflicts" (p6), though regrettably he gives no details of the causes, histories or scales of these conflicts. The oil struggle is different, however, as "the explicit aim of MEND is to cripple the capacity of the Nigerian rentier petro-state to produce crude oil –its lifeblood" (p.3). This represents an existential threat to the Nigerian state as "the delta generates about 96 percent of all foreign earnings and 85 percent of state revenues and is fundamental to the existence of the Nigerian state" citing an official estimate that, in the decade 1999-2009, Nigeria earned $200.34 billion from oil (p.8).

Public support for the insurgency is widespread, which is not surprising given what the oil industry has brought to these communities: "the host communities in the Niger Delta ... have seen little beyond violence, state repression, squalor, unemployment and pervasive neglect" (p.3). One indication of the spread of the insurgency is given by the numbers reported as having accepted the 2009 government amnesty – over 20,000, though these figures are of course contested. Community support is obvious as these illegal tactics could not be used without community connivance, at the very least through turning a blind eye. It is also shown by survey results from 18 Delta communities which Oriola cites showing 80.84% felt a high grievance level against the government while 36% were willing to take up arms against the government.

MEND was formed late in 2005: it was "established as an umbrella coalition to take the credit for various insurgent collective actions. Militant leaders endorsed a pact in late 2005 to credit various successful insurgent activities of their largely independent affiliates to MEND" (p. 93). It has a loose structure and fluid membership, does excellent media work, while its member organisations benefit from the geographical inaccessibility of its bases in the creeks of the delta. Funding comes from illegal fuel distillation and sales, ransoms, protection payments and donations from locals and the diaspora. Rather than draw on material on separatist movements, Oriola draws on Hobsbawm's concept of social banditry to interrogate MEND's activities, despite his noting that "attempts to find historical groups and personalities approximating Hobsbawm's social bandit have yielded little supporting evidence" (p. 53). Bandits are drawn from the ranks of unemployed young men who live in inaccessible areas, have next to no organisation or ideology, flourish in times of impoverishment, economic crisis and transition, respond to perceived injustice and are seen by the communities from which they come as avengers of the poor and fighters for justice.

Oriola is too good an analyst not to record some of the less savoury aspects of the movement he has such high praise for, including ambivalent relations between the movement and the Nigerian political elite; as one example he cites the demands for the release of 24 Filipinos kidnapped in January 2007:

> The militants requested to have automatic political tickets –to allow them to run for office through the ruling party –to chair rich local governments such as Bomadi... They also demanded that 'choice political appointments be reserved for some of their leaders' (p. 29).

Further he notes that, despite the damage the conflict in the delta causes, it also provides benefits for many of the actors involved in the conflict. (He is honest enough to include in his list of those who benefit academics, analysts and commercial commentators.)

> Ending the insurgency is not in the interest of most of the actors involved. Many of them have become entrenched in the ongoing insurgency and will suffer considerable economic and/or symbolic loss should it end (p. 47).

The core of the book is an examination of the framing of MEND's struggle, with Oriola on occasions almost rapturous in his praise of MEND's framing. Here again however the success of the insurgents is facilitated by the inaction of the Nigerian state and the total failure of the state and any of its agent to frame their own efforts. As Oriola notes "the failure of the Nigerian state and its organs … to engage in any consistent and rigorous counter-framing efforts is a windfall for MEND's framing aesthetics. The entire framing space is thus conceded to MEND" (p. 179).

Frames identified include injustice, human/minority rights, environmental justice, return to (true) democracy and a master frame which Oriola labels the imperative of violence frame. This frame involves a number of claims, that Nigeria is at war with the Niger Delta (shown by military activity, including bombing from the air); that violence is the only thing the Nigerian state understands (as shown by the failure of non-violent protest: "The failure of the Nigerian state to accede to peaceful protest is constantly cited by present-day insurgents as a major reason why they took up arms against the state and began kidnapping oil workers" (p. 59)) ; that in a state of war kidnapping tactics are acceptable, even mild; that oil workers can be defined as enemy combatants or acceptable targets in a war situation and that the oil industry operates as a substitute target for the state in a situation where "in many cases, oil companies are the only government presence in remote oil-bearing communities" (p. 77).

Oriola's investigation of whether kidnapping is seen as social protest or common criminality by the communities of Agge and Okerenkoko –the test of whether kidnapping is social banditry in Hobsbawm's definition- comes to a not terribly surprising conclusion: where an insurgent commander provides social services or benefits –such as clean water or roads- the community sees kidnapping as protest activity; where such benefits are absent kidnapping is seen as criminal. There are a number of defects which detract from the impact of the book. Given the significance of terrain, the lack of a map is unfortunate, particularly for those of us not conversant with the different states in the Niger Delta, as is the lack of a list of acronyms. Four of the eight chapters are reprints of previous articles or papers which leads to unnecessary repetition. Adequate copyediting by the publishers would have dealt with this as well as ensuring all references in the book are listed in the bibliography –examples of missing references I came across (and I wasn't looking for them) include Tarrow 2008 (p.9), Houreld 2006 (p.31), Courson 2006 (p.63), Curtis and Zurcher 1973 (p.93), Okonta 2008 (p.150) and Weber 1968 (p.187): this is inexcusable for a scholarly volume for which the publishers are asking £68 sterling!

Finally better presentation of the empirical evidence would have been useful: a simple chronological table listing the actions claimed by MEND would have

given some credence to some of the author's more hyperbolic claims such as "MEND's choice of where and whose oil workers are kidnapped, what company's facilities are destroyed and sites of bomb detonations are (*sic*) a work of art" (pp. 95-96). The author's style can become irritating and occasionally result in formulations that hide rather than reveal meanings. He can also be a little fulsome in his praise –for example "insurgent women also display incredible genius in executing their assignment" (p. 126) – and in his estimate of the importance of the insurgency and insurgents – for example "Well-sought for interviews as a kind of nouveau cognoscenti with international appeal, insurgents know that the oil-thirsty world leans on every word they utter" (p. 107).

Despite these problems the book is well worth reading. Essential reading for anyone interested in Nigerian politics and the Niger delta, it is illuminating to anyone examining struggles over extractive industries, the resource curse and violent social movements. Oriola is to be congratulated for bringing violent movements into the purview of social movement studies: hopefully this work will encourage further work in this area and thereby extend the reach of social movement analyses.

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