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Social movement auto/biographies

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Cover art

Angela Davis speaking at Myer Horowitz Theatre, University of Alberta. Photo attribution to Nick Wiebe, [licensed CC BY 2.5](#). The image has been altered from the [original](#) for an A4 format.

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.

The *Interface* website is based at the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Social movement auto/biographies

Peter Waterman, Lesley Wood, Laurence Cox

Social movement auto/biographies¹

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 writes in his study of the US-Central American 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 can 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?

The case for writing about our movements *auto/biographically* is as follows. This genre is not an art or skill confined to the academy or professional writers.

¹ This section draws on Peter Waterman, "Of saints, sinners and compañeras: internationalist lives in the Americas today". Working Paper no. 286, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, May 1999.

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. We should remember that movement activity can seem exotic *and even suspect* to the public we hope to reach or claim to speak for. The popularisation of social movement politics therefore remains a permanent challenge.

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). Knowing the history can help. As movement storytellers like Howard Zinn recognized, movement participants often return to the stories of individuals like Ella Baker or Che Guevara to think through their own problems. As activists, as EP Thompson put it, we "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

At the same time, movement auto/biography – rightly sceptical today of Heroes and Martyrs – 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 near-mythical figures of the US 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 the imagined life of Lizzie Burns (McCrea 2015). Moving beyond the individual as subject, this issue has David Van Deusen's account of the "autobiography" of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective that tells us something about how lives shaped around movements shift and persist.

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 milieu 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 understood 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), generational roles, the national community, an authoritative state, life-advancing science, 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, apparently meets a current 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.² These can, in turn, feed back to mass audiences unreachable by written work - as well, of course, to the activists, organisers and educators themselves.

We may add to these arguments that suggested by Fernando Mires in the introductory quotations.³ The implication here is, evidently, not that the

² For an example of the use of (auto-)biographical materials by a creative artist, consider the novel by the Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska (1997) on the life of the Italian-US-Mexican photographer and international Communist activist, Tina Modotti. The English edition is half the length of the Spanish original, reported to have been a spectacular success on its publication in Mexico a few years earlier. Poniatowska reports in her acknowledgements the 350-page interview granted to her by another internationalist Communist activist, Tina's one-time lover and comrade, Vittorio Vidali, another Italian who had also been active in Mexico in the 1930s-40s. Hereby hangs another tale. For a more conventional biography of Modotti, see Hooks 1993.

³ It is worth noting, firstly, that Mires broke the silence on Chile just *before* the silence was broken, around Pinochet, in late 1998, secondly, that the silence was not broken by Chilean civil society alone but by 'a global civil society in formation'. Behind the breaking of the silence lies

historians should be silenced but that today the chorus should - and can? - speak. The words of John Kelly address the post-nationalist historian more positively. These two quotations imply 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, GLTBQ 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 plays, novels and films to bottom-up forms of commemoration and celebration. In this way too, auto/biography is a key part of how movements think about themselves.

And Angela Davis?

Davis is on our front cover, not only because she was an international icon of the Civil Rights/Black Power movement in the US of the 1970s, became one of the FBI's 'most wanted', was imprisoned and threatened with the death penalty, was lionised in Cuba and Russia, joined, became a leader of, and later broke with, the US Communist Party. As a feminist academic (now retired), she has remained a social activist, attacking the 'prison industrial complex' which [specially penalises Afro-Americans](#). She has also come out as a lesbian.

Even more recently she spoke in South Africa and gave the Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, 2016, where she identified with the student protest movement. She appears at various points in the bibliography of this special issue *Interface*. But more notably – for our purposes - she was reported as saying

“The revolution we wanted was not the revolution we helped to produce.”... As a new generation of activists begin to find their voices, Davis urged them [to] not only question the celebrated legacies of leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Biko's and even her own, but to devise a new language of struggle.

It is this socially-committed and self-reflective spirit that inspires this issue of *Interface*. This motto tops one of the contributions below.

In this issue

In our Call for Papers we looked for writing that responded to questions such as:

- Why do people become (life-long or intensely involved) activists?
- What are lives shaped around movements like?

the persistent activity of not only a Spanish judge but numerous internationalist activists, both within states and within civil society more generally.

- How do movements shape the lives of their participants (and vice versa?)
- How do 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 is helpful in other times, places and struggles?
- How can we understand the “politics of memory” as they relate to individual lives?

The themed section of this issue moves us forward.

Themed articles

The themed section of this issue opens with three very different approaches to activist auto/biography, but each situated in a very distinctive space. Thus the Social Library Conxa Pérez in Barcelona, situated in a squatted bank, draws its name from an anarchist activist whose life stretched back to pre-Franco cultural centres. The piece highlights her involvement in the Spanish Revolution, in enabling activist networking under fascism and in continued political involvement after the fall of the regime. Meanwhile Silke Roth’s reflections on the complexities of professionalisation in activist lives, which opens our themed section, focusses on an analysis of a quarter century in the Berlin women’s coop *WeiberWirtschaft*. She explores a typology of different roles played by women in founding and sustaining the organisation. Thirdly, David Van Deusen’s piece on Vermont’s Green Mountain Anarchist Collective constitutes a sort of collective auto/biography, covering the collective’s emergence during the global justice movement, its work around black bloc theorising and its long commitment to direct action through many different struggles.

Veteran activist Peter Waterman has contributed three, very different pieces to this section. The first, “Of Icons, Of Myths and Of Internationalists”, calls for a demythologised approach to activist auto/biographies, arguing that we should approach them not as icons but as companer@s. Secondly, his critical dialogue with Dutch specialist on worker self-management Gerard Kester explores both the latter’s life and his autobiography, as well as debating the issue of self-management. Finally, his “rough guide” and annotated bibliography for movement auto/biographies covers both a wide range of primary texts of this kind as well as useful secondary resources including sources and methodological reflections. Our book reviews this issue include both Kester’s review of Azzellini on self-management and Featherstone’s review of Waterman’s autobiography.

Indira Palacios-Valladares’ article looks at the biographical impact of high school and university occupations in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. While occupations can be biographical high-points, enthusing participants and developing political community and commitment, they can also prove exhausting and breed feelings of disillusion over time. Finally, Laurence Cox’s

reflections on researching the biographies of Irish people involved in the pan-Asian, anti-colonial Buddhist revival of the late C19th and early C20th discusses the practical challenges and research strategies involved in transnational biographical research. It also notes the way in which this research relativises organisations, encourages greater attention to failure and opens up a wider sense of historical possibility.

General articles

This issue's general section opens with two educational experiences. Paddy O'Halloran's article explores the black student movement at "the university currently known as Rhodes" in Grahamstown, South Africa. Focussing in particular on the Black Student Commons occupation of 2015, O'Halloran asks about the relationship between student and subaltern political praxis and about the possibility of decolonising the university and reconstituting it as a site of protest. Meanwhile Alessandro Mariano, Erivan Hilário and Rebecca Tarlau's article on Brazil's Landless Workers Movement explores the movement's extensive education and training programmes. Highlighting the core principles and practices in the movement's pedagogy, the piece discusses the "itinerant schools" within MST land occupations as well as the movement's national political training school, showing the links between the movement's pedagogical practices and the social order it strives towards.

Staying with Brazil, Simone da Silva Ribeiro Gomes' Portuguese-language piece discusses the "June days" of 2013 in Brazil in terms of the legitimacy of violence. She discusses both legitimacy as a mode of analysis and the rhetorical manipulation of this language by the state and demonstrators. In Italy, Pamela Pietrucci's discussion of the trial following the disastrous L'Aquila earthquake of 2009 challenges the Anglophone discussion of the trial as a witchhunt of seismologists. Noting how state pressure led to official reassurances of safety that cost many lives, she highlights the power of local counternarratives.

Adam Kingsmith's piece discusses humour as a subversive political performance as well as part of a repertoire of contention. With particular reference to Radio Alice in the Italian 1970s and the contemporary hacktivist collective Anonymous, Kingsmith argues that while humour can be contained or controlling, it can also point towards substantial dissent. By contrast, David K. Langstaff's "What could it mean to mourn?" argues for a understanding of how personal grief and trauma are tied to participation in radical movements. He suggests that this enables a radical politics of grief and mourning which critiques the violence of modernity and enables new forms of gathering resistance.

Luca Sebastiani, Borja Íñigo Fernández Alberdi and Rocío García Soto's Italian-language analysis of the Spanish right-to-housing organization PAH explores its organisational form, its effectiveness in underminin hegemonic discourses and its technological strategies. They argue that its internal dynamics form a point of

junction between its affective practices and its capacity for social transformation. Rudi Epple and Sebastian Schief's article explores the field of force between the Swiss women's movement and various countermovements around the cantonal Offices for Gender Equality. Using coincidence analysis, they show that it was the struggle between these movements which determined the implementation or otherwise of Offices, while identifying the importance of "taboo" breaking for countermovements.

Lastly, John Hayakawa Torok's event analysis looks at the combination of labour solidarity and antiracism in Oakland's 2011-13 decolonize / "Occupy" experience. Drawing on his own participation and the city's longer history of radical struggles, he explores the radical politics of the Oakland encampment and its afterlives.

Book reviews

Finally, we have book reviews of Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboga, *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan* (Patrick Huff); Kerstin Jacobsson (ed.), *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Bojan Baća); Dario Azzellini (ed.), *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy* (Gerard Kester); Peter Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist* (David Featherstone); Robert Ogman, *Against the Nation: Anti-National Politics in Germany* (Ina Schmidt); Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela Pisoiu (eds), *Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu* (Andrew Kettler) and Shaazka Beyerle, *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice* (Valesca Lima Holanda).

Mandisi Majavu

We are sorry to lose our long-standing book reviews editor, Mandisi Majavu. Mandisi has been a stalwart of what can often be a difficult task, and has consistently ensured that the reviews section reflects the true spirit of *Interface*, with activist as well as academic pieces, a wide range of regions of the world and movements represented, and reviewers with very different backgrounds. Something of the cheery cacophony that is writing from and for movements has always come through in the sections he has curated. Mandisi's co-editor, Bjarke Skærlund Risager, is continuing his good work and bringing his own distinctive contribution to our reviews, as can be seen in the list above. Mandisi's latest book, *Uncommodified Blackness: the African Male Experience in Australia and New Zealand*, has just been published by Palgrave.

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About the authors

Laurence Cox is senior lecturer in sociology at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. He has been working on a series of biographical pieces about early Irish participants in the pan-Asian, anti-colonial Buddhist revival of the late C19th and early C20th and has been involved with a number of oral history projects in working-class Dublin, most recently on the movement against water charges. With Lesley Wood he is currently working on an activist-led oral history of Peoples Global Action. He can be contacted at [laurence.cox AT nuim.ie](mailto:laurence.cox@nuim.ie)

Peter Waterman (London 1936) worked twice for international Communist organisations in Prague before becoming an academic (1970). After rejoining from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (1998) Peter has published various monographs, (co-)edited compilations and numerous academic and political papers – the latter almost all to be found online. Since retirement he has also had invitations for teaching, lectures, seminars and consultations from universities and/or movement-oriented bodies worldwide. He is now editing a third compilation of his scattered writings, under the working title, 'From Left Inter/Nationalism to Global Social Emancipation: An Era of Disorientation and Reorientation'. He can be reached at [peterwaterman1936 AT gmail.com](mailto:peterwaterman1936@gmail.com).

Lesley Wood wants a world where water protectors and migrants were honoured, instead of people like Trump. She is Associate Professor in Sociology at York University. While working with Laurence on the Peoples Global Action oral history project, she is thinking about temporality and social movements. Her most recent book is *Crisis and Control: The Militarization of Protest Policing*.

Call for papers volume 9 issue 2 (November 2017)
Social movement thinking beyond the core:
theories and research in post-colonial and
post-socialist societies

Laurence Cox, Alf Gunvald Nilsen, Geoffrey Pleyers

The November 2017 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 studies beyond the “core” countries of north America and western Europe.

There will also be a special section on repression and social movement research, for which we are happy to publish contributions anonymously (and credit them when their authors feel it is safe to claim them). Contributions on other themes, as always, are also welcome.

The academic study of social movements

“Social movement studies”, as an academic entity with a (limited) degree of power, resources and legitimacy, clearly has its institutional roots in north America and western Europe, and the same is true for pretty much all the thinkers who are routinely cited in general “social movements” textbooks. Similarly, some of the most “powerful” (insofar as the term has any sense) theories used *within* social movements also have roots in these societies and are shaped by their specific historical experiences.

These specificities, however, are often not recognised or discussed, including in those contexts elsewhere in the world where academics or activists are importing such theories as ways of thinking about local (and global) realities.

Tomas MacSheoin’s (2016) article in *Interface* 8/1, and the article by Poulson, Caswell and Gray (2014) in *Social Movement Studies* 13/2 (see also the 2014 response by Graeme Hayes), have discussed the question of how far social movement studies, in their academic form, are a product or reflection of specifically northern / western approaches (primarily as opposed to those of the global South). Ágnes Gagyí (2015) has recently asked how adequate the subdiscipline is to post-socialist experiences (cf. Piotrowski 2015, Císař 2016).

Of course there are other histories of academic social movement studies. Several substantial schools of European writing which have not been translated into English have been rendered invisible by the growing global domination of English. Some of these, however, have a very fruitful relationship with Latin American scholarship, something which is true both for Spanish- and Portuguese-language scholarship but also, for example, for the work of Alain Touraine. There is of course a strong Latin American scholarship on social

movements in both languages, crossing national borders but rarely noticed in the Anglophone world and other contexts relying on English as an academic language. Conversely, the extensive Indian literature in English on social movements is rarely exported far beyond the country's borders.

Our own work has increasingly explored these questions: for example, Geoffrey has been organising discussions around this theme within the International Sociological Association's research committee 47 (Social Movements and Social Classes) and in his dialogues with researchers from the Global South (Bringel & Pleyers, 2015); Alf has been working on the question of sociologies of the global South in his research on India (Nilsen 2016); while Laurence has been working on understanding social movements in Ireland as a post-colonial society now increasingly located within the "West" (Cox 2016).

There are several dimensions to these questions, including

- the distinctive experiences of social movements and revolutions in different regions of the world
- the varied roles of academics and intellectuals in different societies
- the diverse kinds of relationships between academics and movements
- the complex trajectories of particular disciplines
- linguistic barriers

This discussion also raises the wider question of how far social science as currently conceived is specifically western in origin, structure and / or method. Scholars have increasingly been asking after the possibility of a "sociology of the global South": if so, is a "social movement studies of the global South" (Bringel & Dominguez, 2015) possible? How can we "think globally" (Wieviorka et al. 2015)? Or, with Sousa Santos (2006), should we rather be thinking in terms of "ecologies of knowledge" that connect different forms of movements' own theorising, different languages of communities in struggle and different kinds of emancipatory research?

Other forms of thinking about movements

As this last point suggests, there are also *other* histories of thinking about what might be called social movements, both academic and activist, which are typically excluded in western scholars' accounts of the development of "social movement studies". Indeed it is a true indictment of the provincialism of this approach that it situates the origins of systematic thought on social movements within a particular lineage of US scholars – at times deigning to include an arbitrary handful of west European writers (Cox and Fominaya 2013) – as though writers in states whose very existence is the product of social movements and revolutions do not reflect on those experiences. Often these other reflections do not use the term, or only in a very general way and for external purposes. Of course there are also locally-specific forms of apparently

Northwestern thought which are radically different in practice from their originators, whether that fact is celebrated or obscured: Southern Marxisms and feminisms often bear little resemblance to dominant forms of these approaches in the global North, even when they seek academic legitimacy by citing Northern authorities.

But there are also both activist and academic traditions of thinking about movements which have fundamentally different histories. Articulating these is a way of challenging the intellectual power relations that automatically place Northwestern thought at the centre, and contributes to the creation of a genuinely global dialogue about social movement experiences and learning.

In much of the core, social movement studies are understood as relatively marginal to the central concerns of the social sciences. However in much of the postcolonial world in particular, intellectuals and academics have at times had particular concerns with social movements and revolutions – arguably in far deeper ways than in the West, given the impact of anti-colonial movements and the centrality of postcolonial movement struggles in many societies, but also in terms of expectations of intellectuals around social change. In postcolonial Ireland as in India, it is in history and literature that many of the key debates about popular struggles have taken place, and social movement studies' limited engagement with these fields is its own loss – a gap often made up by postcolonial theorising.

In movement thinking too, since the development of articulate forms of activist theory in then-colonial contexts, the anti-imperial and anti-capitalist revolutions which shook much of the twentieth century, and later waves of movements and revolutions against the newly-independent states (and those of Latin America, officially independent since the 19th century), Southern voices have become increasingly central to global dialogues. From the Ghadar movement (Ramnath 2011) and the Baku “Congress of the Peoples of the East” to the Zapatistas and the World Social Forum, movement thinking from beyond the core has increasingly set the agenda – and regularly had more to show for its efforts than many movements in the global North.

Actors, intellectuals, ideas, experiences and epistemologies from the South provide insights into their own reality, but also the challenges for democracy and possible emancipation paths in the Global North. We aim at developing research and analyses beyond borders and to fully include sociologists from all regions of the world.

The importance of dialogue

All of these questions, of course, are central to *Interface's* original mission of supporting and encouraging dialogue between reflection on social movements from different parts of the world and the different languages (theoretical, political, disciplinary, intellectual, cultural) in which movements think about themselves and research is framed, something embodied in our unique

organisational structure. We are happy to see that MacSheoin's article shows that our approach bears some fruit, in terms of a wider global focus than other social movement journals – while recognising that there is still a huge way to go. If rough parity between articles on movements in core societies and those on movements in the global South probably mirrors to some extent the global distribution of academic researchers and resources, it does not in any way mirror the far greater strengths of *movement* theorists in the global South, and we need to find more effective ways of including these in our dialogue.

One key reason why *Interface* equally encourages dialogue between different intellectual and political traditions as well as between different disciplines is similarly the very different significance of these different ways of thinking in different national and regional contexts. This is of course also true for thinking *from and for* movements, which arguably plays out very differently in countries where empires have been overthrown within living memory, or for that matter those which are experiencing a reaction either against the socialist experience or against the hopes raised by the movements of 1989.

This special issue seeks to bring together contributions which articulate particular approaches to social movement research, movement-based theories and histories of thinking about these subjects which are rooted in the post-colonial and post-Soviet experiences, in the context and cultures of the global South or that in other ways decentre taken-for-granted assumptions and institutional power relationships about the production of social movement theory.

We are interested in everything from indigenous thought via religious forms of mobilisation to the particularities of movement theorising in China or in East and Central Europe. Intellectually we are open to discussions ranging from Indian subaltern studies, research on the Black Atlantic, Latin American feminisms to South African radical thought and more. We are interested in papers which challenge mainstream forms of social movement theory (whether resource mobilisation, political opportunity structure, new social movements, frame theory, dynamics of contention, strategy-framework etc.) from the perspective of movement experiences in the global South.

We are also interested in papers that highlight types of struggle which go beyond the themes of nationally- or core-defined politics. Thus work on anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles, indigenous and peasant movements, mass-based left and ethnic movements, campaigns against free trade deals etc. are all very welcome.

We are particularly interested in theoretical discussions (eg around sociologies from the global South, Michel Wieviorka's *Penser global* project etc.) and social movement thinking processes (e.g. the World Social Forum discussion processes; Sen and Waterman 2008, Sen and Saini 2005) which reflect a consciously global aspiration based in the global South.

We are particularly interested in reflections on how far it might be possible to invite or include existing political and academic debates and discussions which are primarily focussed within a single country or region of the world into a wider debate, in *Interface* or elsewhere.

Finally we want to underline that this call does not require authors to subscribe to a particular analysis but instead invites conscious reflection on how far terms and distinctions like global South / global North, postcolonial, core / periphery etc. are helpful in understanding the movements they are studying.

Repression and research

In a series of countries (not least Egypt, Turkey, Russia, India and Mexico), authors and journalists, academics and students involved in or working on social movements have come under sustained, at times lethal attack. This obviously forms part of wider assaults on movements, but at times it is clear that movement-linked thinking and writing are seen as a particular threat, or that the attempt is being made to remove movement voices from academia and publishing.

Authoritarian governments seem in some cases to be consciously testing the limits of what they can get away with, in an increasingly polycentric world and one where the thuggish celebration of violence often plays well with their own power bases. The key word here, though, is “testing”, and the question is whether they will get away with it: if they do in fact have a blank cheque for repression or if it is possible to push back, form alliances and effectively undermine their legitimacy.

We have been here before: disappearances and torture chambers, blacklists and institutional collaboration are nothing new, and nothing is served by presenting this situation in terms of simple despair, however theoretically sophisticated. As before, some of our own skills – clear analysis of what states are up to and why, whose tacit or active support is needed for repression, who our potential allies are and what international solidarity should focus on – may help, as may mobilising our own networks and using our own skills to highlight and discredit these strategies to the point where they are not worth pursuing (or better, where these governments follow earlier despotic regimes into oblivion).

Of course only some of this repressive wave directly targets movement intellectuals and academics, and large part of the response is best organised as solidarity with movements on the ground, or in the form of radical human rights campaigns appealing to a wider public opinion. But – together with other movement research networks who have highlighted this issue, such as the International Sociological Association’s RC47, mentioned above – we feel it is also incumbent on us as researchers and movement theorists to see what if anything we can offer specifically in these cases.

The new wave of attacks on movement intellectuals does not spare the core, as recent cases in countries like the US and Italy remind us, and of course the coercive waves that spread out from global programmes of surveillance, assassination by drone, containment of migrants in camps, campaigns against “extremism”, states of emergency, harassment of left academics and the like have their roots in core states. Nonetheless the greatest depths of repression – for now – have been experienced outside the core, and we hope to learn from activists and scholars there. In this context we are happy to publish anonymous contributions, which their authors can put their names to in later and happier years.

Questions for contributions to the themed section

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

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

All contributions should go to the appropriate regional editors by the deadline of May 1, 2017. Please see the editorial contacts page (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/editorial-contact/>) – and use the appropriate template. Please see the guidelines for contributors (<http://www.interfacejournal.net/submissions/guidelines-for-contributors/>) for more indications on content and style.

General contributions

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

In this context, we welcome contributions by movement participants and academics who are developing movement-relevant theory and research. In addition to studies of contemporary experiences and practices, we encourage

analysis of historical social movements as a means of learning from the past and better understanding contemporary struggles.

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

We can accept material in 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 2017, is 1 May 2017. 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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Figure 1 shows that squatting to create social centers is a widespread practice in Barcelona, although for practical reasons we will limit ourselves to the ones created in bank offices. Throughout 2014, six new bank offices have been squatted, mostly in the Eixample neighborhood, the middle class residential neighborhood of Barcelona. It occupies most of the territorial space in Barcelona and was never previously a place where people squatted to create social centres. There have been other new kinds of squatting actions as well but we do not have space to describe them here. First, l'Entrebanc came about in April. Then, came La Vaina, La Porka, La Industria, El Rec, and others. Counted together with El Banc Expropiat and the Casal Tres Liris (squatted as part of the campaign to stop El Banc's eviction), there are now eight squatted bank offices in Barcelona, as well as others in Girona and Blanes. This article has been written by people who participate in the upkeep of Ateneu l'Entrebanc.

Figure 2 – Entrance of Ateneu l'Entrebanc the day of its 2nd birthday



Source: authors

The project to create Ateneu l'Entrebanc had been thought through carefully before the place actually got squatted. The space was a former office of a bank and was chosen because it stands right next to Germanetes, which is a 5000 square meter space of which 500 square meters were temporarily leased free of charge to the community. Some neighbors related to the 15M assembly of Eixample Esquerre made a proposal for a public project called Pla Buits [TN: "Plan for the Empties"]. Just after the City Hall finally gave access to the people, we opened this bank office in order to strengthen the infrastructure available to the neighbors. We've had all kinds of activities: guitar classes, English classes, yoga, gymnastics, tattooing, etc. There have been study groups on medicinal plants, child abuse by state institutions, anti-technological thought, critical economics, to name just a few. A network that coordinates self-managed study groups often meets at Entrebanc. There are also some collectives who come regularly, such as the neighborhood's 15M and feminist assemblies. We also participate in community events such as an cooperative market that happens nearby once a month. There is a weekly assembly that manages the space and an irregular assembly that allows collectives who are active in the social center to coordinate.

As Conxa Pérez died in February 2014, just a few months before Entrebanc got squatted, the library collective decided to give her name to the library. Conxa Pérez was 98 when she passed away, after living most of her life in the neighbourhood. It is precisely because she was committed to the struggles of our neighbourhood that the library of Ateneu l'Entrebanc became a tribute to Conxa. Furthermore, the library project is part of the Social Libraries Network, a collaborative initiative. The idea is to gather and lend books that are hard to find in public libraries. Thus, the focus is on books that speak about social change, critical theories, radical projects, and so on. Besides adopting the name of Conxa Pérez, the library collective did some research on her personal history. This article summarizes the findings of this collective and the opinions of those who had the opportunity to know her in person. As we chose to present the integral fragments of text provided by the neighbors, the narrative below oscillates between a geographical and a chronological description of Conxa's biography.

Some inspiring episodes of Conxa Pérez's life

Right next to the space where Ateneu l'Entrebanc is located, one can find the market of Sant Antoni. There, Conxa sold jewelry and underwear during the fascist regime of Franco (1939-1975). Conxa's stall became a hideout for anarchists, who found shelter in her stall and held political meetings there. According to Laura and Salva, neighbors of Ateneu l'Entrebanc:

"When Conxa returned from France, businessmen did not hire those who had collaborated with the republic and the stall she installed at the market was the way she found to earn a living and get something to eat. Yet again,

her way of being explains why she hid anarchists and held political meetings there” (21/07/16)

But Conxa Pérez's ties with the neighborhood of Sant Antoni-Eixample Esquerre go further. Advancing into Sant Antoni, at Avinguda Mistral, Conxa Pérez was active in Ateneu Faros, which existed throughout the Second Republic (1931-1936). Like other Ateneus, “Faros” was divided in several sections: hiking, Esperanto, theater, culture and commented readings. Ateneus are popular cultural, social, and political centres that started to multiply in the late XIX century, to then become central to the people's self-organization before the Civil War. Back then, Conxa didn't live in the neighborhood. She lived in the neighborhood of Les Corts, but she felt attracted by Ateneu Faros, maybe because it was more active than places in her own neighborhood. In any case, Conxa Pérez and twenty other youngsters regularly left their neighborhood to participate in Ateneu Faros.

Figure 3 – An old photo of Conxa Pérez



Source: libcom.org

Conxa was also a member of the Graphic Arts group of the major Spanish anarcho-syndicalist organization, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT, "National Confederation of Labour"). This labour union "became the beacon of international anarchism in the 1930s. During the early stages of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), its membership reached almost two million and it engaged in the organization of a social revolution in the form of industrial and agrarian collectivization" (Romanos, 2013, 3). Conxa stated that she would bring young women like her to the syndicate, but that they usually dropped out quite fast. On the contrary, she soon discovered that women tended to feel more comfortable in the Ateneus, and usually ended up finding a space of their own there (Prado and Rodrigo, 2013, 380). The aforementioned facts also demonstrate that Conxa Pérez was quite active in the neighborhood of Entrebanc, Sant-Antoni-Eixample Esquerre. We know that Conxa Pérez was the daughter of a well-known member of the CNT and that during her youth she participated, first, in the conflicts over the Second Republic and, later on, in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). By 1933, and as the economic situation deteriorated, the social conflict rose to unprecedented levels. Several uprisings take place throughout in Catalan cities with a strong presence of the CNT and elsewhere throughout Spain, such as in Bajo Aragón, Rioja Alta, etc. According to Prado Esteban and Rodrigo Mora (2013: 380) Conxa "participated in an active fashion in the armed uprising of January 8 of 1933, handling weapons and grenades to assault military barracks. Her gun was found on her when she got arrested." Although these authors correctly identify her militancy in the Graphic Arts group of CNT, Conxa's version of what happened during that uprising sheds some doubts on their narrative:

"In 1933, the dockers initiated a generalized strike. Pickets were formed, and we went to help them disrupt work. At a workshop, they told us that they wanted to finish a job. We left with the impression that they were trying to deceive us. And when we got back there in the afternoon, they were still working normally. So we got a little rough with them, and started breaking windows and things. The police finally came and managed to arrest almost all of us. A comrade was carrying a gun and told me "Conxa, hide it". So once I got to the police station I asked to go to the toilet, to try to get rid of it. But the police had figured me out already and a woman searched me. They wanted to know who owned the gun. Obviously, no one believed me when I told them that I had found it in the countryside. They were pressuring me to tell them that it was my brother's gun. Finally, the real owner of the gun confessed it was his gun. Both of us were convicted, for unlawful possession. Still, we weren't charged for the broken windows. Anyway, that led me to the women's prison." (Pérez, 2006, 5)

Thus, Prado and Rodrigo's claims seem very much exaggerated. In any case, Conxa stands out as a virtuous person who was very much engaged in the political struggles of her time. Later on, Conxa did go to the front with the militias in July 1936 at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. According to her

friend Llum Ventura, she went to the front of Belchite, where she was shot in the leg. Thus, Conxa only stayed around six months at the front, and then went back to Barcelona. She felt that she had more to offer at the rearguard of the armed conflict. First, she worked in a bakery. Then, she participated in a maternity hospital. Further on, she worked in a collectivized ammunition factory. A comrade from Ateneu Entrebanc, Nani Miras, recalls the impression Conxa left on her:

I met Conxa at the retirement home of Barceloneta, her friend Llum was also with us. I went there with a friend of mine that wanted to ask her about the ammunition factory she had worked in many years ago. Conxa had worked in a factory of a hospital that initially produced lipstick and then became a factory that produced bullets. I was surprised at how little she was, and the energy she unleashed. She talked about many things. She talked about how the uprising in Plaza España was organized [to face up to the fascist coup]. She talked about the trucks they used, on which they installed metal plaques. She got on one of those trucks with two comrades, and went towards Via Laietana, where the trucks were riddled with bullets. She let us touch her leg, that still had some shrapnel in it... Ken Loach also touched her leg when he came to shoot "Tierra y libertad". Her eyes sparkled when she told us how emotive it was to open the doors of the city jail. Indeed, she had spent some time in jail, because she had been arrested once while carrying a gun. It was very exciting to hear her tell all those stories. I don't recall what she said about the factory. We didn't tape the interview, because we had planned to come back another day, but I ended up not going to this second meeting. She was a woman of action that transmitted her energy. I was deeply impressed by her courage and her anarchist experiences, such as the uprising of July 1936 (30/03/16)

Figure 4 – Propaganda poster saying “the militia needs you!”



Source: Bllibertari.org

Conxa had first hand experiences of the Spanish Revolution, in which many workers took over factories and collectivized the land (Garrido González: 1979; Pérez Baró, 1970; Ranzato: 1977). The spontaneous character of the collectivization-socialization process implies that it was not the result of some instructions given by a party, a syndicate or a state agency. It was the result of the decisions of workers, and it was made possible by their own organizational structures, such as the aforementioned CNT, whose neighborhood committees had an important role. Thus, workers put into practice their ideas and conceptions about how society and the economy should be run. These ideas were the result of the libertarian culture that had been shared through ateneus, syndicates, cooperatives, etc. (Castells Duran: 2003: 22; Gomez Casas: 1969). The experience of the Revolution of 1936 has become a reference point for all those looking for historical cases where anarchist ideals were applied (Carrasquer, 1985; Leval 1972, 1974). Moving on, Llum Ventura adds some

detail to Conxa's engagement during the Civil War, and tells us a bit more about the dark period that followed:

Conxa used to tell us a story that happened to her when the war began. She was at a bar called “Los Federales” with some comrades. As the uprising began, they went to the barracks of Pedralbes to get weapons. It was only after leaving the barracks that they realized that they had forgotten to get ammunition, so they had to go back. After the war, she passed through several concentration camps in France. In one of them, she fell in love with a doctor of the camp, and got pregnant with her only son, Ramón. Then, the doctor went to Germany to fight against Hitler, and Conxa never heard of him again. She got back to Spain without suffering too much mistreatment from the fascists because she was carrying her 8-month old son. Once she got back to Barcelona, she met her first boyfriend again, who had just become a widower. They got together, and he became the step-father of her son. This is when they set up the stall in Sant Antoni, where at first they sold underwear. Conxa was very fond of her stall, and later on she also sold jewels. The stall was also used as an hideout for dissidents of Franco during the dictatorship. She was a virtuous woman who never gave up on her principles. I feel lucky to have known her. (11/04/16)

After the death of Franco and the fall of his regime, Conxa Pérez participated in the organization of the first neighbor associations and in the restructuring of CNT. She was also a founding member of the association of Women of 1936, a collective that was created in 1997 for women who had participated in social and political movements during the Civil War. This association had the goal to promote the experiences of Republican women and organized, for example, talks in public schools. This group came to an end in 2006, as the members of the groups were impeded by their increasing age.

Figure 5 – A recent photo of Conxa Pérez



Source: datecuenta.org

Conclusions

This text is only a brief summary of the turbulent life of Conxa Pérez, who was a member of the anarchist militia and a tireless agitator. She is an example amongst others of the people that made possible this Revolution, a revolution that was brief, yet real: the brief summer of anarchy, as it had been called. Thus, the failure of the revolution was followed by the dark period of the dictatorship, which lasted almost forty years. But those who struggled didn't surrender, indeed they found new ways to transform reality through their actions.

It is very important to remember persons such as Conxa Pérez, and to make an effort to understand the world through her experiences. We know that times have changed, and that the society we live in today is not the same as the one that existed during the Revolution. But this doesn't mean that their point of view loses validity. It simply means that we need to update it, and adapt it to the current period, discarding those things that are not useful, while learning from the ones that can make a difference. "Anarchism is movement", Tomás Ibáñez once said. Ibáñez was born in Zaragoza after the war, in 1944, and was involved in French libertarian movements until the death of Franco allowed him to return from exile. Ibáñez means that we shouldn't understand anarchism as a rigid and inflexible ideological theory, but instead see it as a series of ideas (such as the struggle against all kinds of domination, for instance) that can be adapted to each time period. Factors such as globalization, the digital era or the energy

crisis seem to be crucial strategic factors nowadays. But this should not eclipse the testimonies of the past, such as the one of Conxa Pérez, which can still serve as an example to us nowadays.

Acknowledgments

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About the author

The Social Library Conxa Pérez can be reached at bibliotecaconxaperez@riseup.net. Ateneu l'Entrebanc's email is ateneulentrebanc@riseup.net.

Professionalisation and precariousness: perspectives on the sustainability of activism in everyday life

Silke Roth

Abstract¹

Sustainable activism requires both elasticity and rigor, the ability to learn and compromise as well as the willingness to stick to values and convictions. In this article I argue that activism and professionalisation are not necessarily mutually exclusive but that the ability to move from one to another form of activism is important for the sustainability of activism at the individual, organisational and movement levels. Acknowledging the diversity of activism also highlights that activism and everyday life can be intertwined and that family, community and work can in fact motivate and be sites of activism. The shift from one sphere and form of activism to another is important at the individual level in order to prevent burnout. Furthermore such shifts allow for different tactics, a division of labour and coalition building at the organisational and movement levels. I introduce some key figures in social movements who represent different forms of activism and professionalism. They connect different spheres of activism, take on different roles in and provide access to various resources to social movements. These key figures illustrate biographical consequences of activism as well as boundary crossing between different spheres and activities. Finally, I introduce the case study of a women's cooperative to show how activism and professionalism intersect.

Keywords: activism, burn-out, career, cooperative, feminism, key figures, professionalisation, real utopia, social change organisations, *WeiberWirtschaft*

Introduction

My article addresses the relationship between professionalisation of social change organisations² and activism. Rather than considering activism and professionalisation as mutually exclusive, I argue that a more nuanced perspective is necessary in order to better understand how activism can be sustained at personal, organisational and movement levels. This includes acknowledging the diversity of activism as well as the shifts from one form to another form of activism across the life-course of activists and in the development of social change organisations and social movements. In this

¹ I greatly appreciate the insightful comments by Laurence Cox and two anonymous reviewers. I thank Clare Saunders and Milena Büchs for comments on much earlier versions of this paper.

² For the sake of brevity, but also to highlight similarities (despite significant differences) I will refer to social movement organisations, non-governmental organisations and third sector organisations as “social change organisations”.

article, I will first discuss professionalisation in the context of social change organisations, then I turn to concepts of activism and burn-out, followed by introducing some key figures in social movements who represent different forms of activism and bridge different spheres. I finally discuss the case study of a women's cooperative to illustrate the contribution of these key figures and to explore the relationship between professionalisation, professionalism and activism.

Professionalisation and its discontents

Literatures on third sector organisations (TSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movement organisations (SMOs) demonstrate ambivalence regarding professionalisation processes. Positive evaluations of professionalisation processes in social change organisations are associated with the resource mobilisation approach (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Edwards and McCarthy 2007) that sees little difference between SMOs and interest groups. In addition, studies that evaluate the impact of social change organisations on legislation and support for anti-discrimination, development, humanitarianism and human rights tend to associate success with professionalisation (Keck and Sikkink 199; Martens 2006; Barnett 2011; Watkins et al. 2012). Formalisation and professional leadership contribute to the continuity of SMOs and thus to the sustainability of social movements (Staggenborg 1988). Public and private funding allows professionalised third sector organisations to hire staff to devote themselves full-time to the cause.

Whether such organisations have any members and whether the involvement of members goes beyond paying membership fees and having the option to participate in annual members meetings varies. Some large membership organisations – for example Oxfam or Amnesty International – combine staff-led professionalised national offices with volunteer run shops, groups and projects at the local level. Hensby et al. (2012) refer to this involvement as *bureaucratic activism* due to the fact that these organisations offer limited and bureaucratised forms of activism for volunteers. However, bureaucratised SMOs which function as “protest businesses” provide knowledge and expertise and are able to generate loyalty and trust among members (Hensby et al. 2012). Critical perspectives on the professionalisation of social change organisations highlight the consequences of upward accountability – that is accountability to donors, rather than constituencies – which results in a growing distance between NGOs and grassroots activists (Dauvergne and LeBaron 2014; Choudry 2015). According to Smith (2015), the “process of professionalisation, institutionalisation and bureaucratisation – known as “NGO-isation” is associated with the institutionalisation and de-radicalisation of movement demands” (p. 612). What positive and critical perspectives on professionalisation processes share is that they rarely define professionalisation and that the terms “professionalisation and professionalism remain ambiguous and multidimensional” (Ganesh and McAllum 2012: 153).

So what do professionalisation or professionalism comprise and what consequences do they have for activism and activists? Although related, the two concepts refer to different aspects. Professionalisation concerns organisational form and processes (bureaucratisation, rationalisation, marketisation) whereas professionalism concerns practice and (occupational) identity (Ganesh and McAllum 2012: 153). Professionalisation transforms voluntary organisations and social movement organisations into “formalised, knowledge intensive and professionally staffed organisations” (Andreassen et al. 2014: 336). These transformations are related to gaining access, legitimacy and resources from governments, intergovernmental organisation and private donors. NGOisation involves access to government agencies and transnational organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and its agencies as well as the European Union (EU). Such access includes representing constituencies at the local, national and international levels as well as access to (limited) funding. Smith (2015) compares the contemporary incorporation of civil society organisations into the political process with colonial strategies of indirect rule, i.e. the inclusion of local elites into the colonial administration in order to prevent mass resistance.

So far, only a few studies focus on those working in such professionalised social change organisations (but see Frantz 2005; Hopgood 2006; Rodgers 2010; Eltanani 2016). These studies highlight the motivations of paid staff and their career opportunities as well as their working conditions which include precariousness and burnout. In addition, the working lives of humanitarian and development workers have recently received more attention (Fechter 2012; Harrison 2013; Roth 2015a; Visser et al. 2016). This research addresses the tensions, strains and contradictions experienced by paid staff members who have chosen highly demanding and potentially dangerous work (Fast 2014; Roth 2015b). The commitment and devotion of paid staff in social change organisations challenges a strict distinction between activism and professionalisation processes. I will return to the working conditions in NGOs below. First, I discuss different forms of activism.

Doing activism, being activist

Who counts as an activist varies widely in the literature on social movements as well as among those engaged in them. Bobel (2007) notes that movement participants distinguish between “doing activism” and “being activist”, which might overlap – or not. Based on her case-study of (mostly) women involved in menstrual activism, she found that regardless of similar patterns of involvement not all of those whom she interviewed identified as activists. Some felt that they did not meet the “perfect standard” because “being activist” required being “super-active” and engaged in “tireless commitment, selfless sacrifice, unparalleled devotion” (Bobel 2007: 154). Thus, an activist identity was grounded in core values of rigour and humility rather than in involvement in specific actions. Brown and Pickerill (2009: 27) point out that this “perfect standard” draws on gendered assumptions even though they stress that macho

heroism related to daring acts during the participation of social action is not restricted to men (see also Hopgood 2006).

Based on a comparison of participants in four different social movement organisations (SMO), Corrigan-Brown (2012) also found that the involvement in activism did not predict whether someone identified or as activist or not. She found that SMO members who were leftist in ideology and had previously been involved in social movement activism were more likely to identify as activists and to stay involved. In contrast, those who had a negative view of activism rejected an activist identity despite engaging in exactly the same behaviour. Thus, while Bobel (2007) found that the label “activist” was rejected because participants felt they did not deserve it, Corrigan-Brown (2012) observed that participants distanced themselves from it because they resented it.

Still another perspective is offered by Cortese (2015) who, on the basis of interviews with LBGQTQ movement participants, identified three types of activist identity: *emphatics*, *demarcators* and *reconcilers*. *Emphatics* identified with an activist ideal-type, were deeply involved and often movement leaders setting the standard of activism in the organisation. *Demarcators* engaged in boundary-setting and distinguished between “good activists” (themselves engaging in polite activism) and “bad activists” (others engaging in radical, in-your-face activism). *Reconcilers* identified as activists although they did not meet the criteria of the “perfect standard” of high-level involvement. They had either only recently joined the movement or their activism had decreased or they perceived working in their current occupation (for example as teachers) as activism. Cortese (2015) refers to the latter group as *occupational activists*. This concept expands activism beyond the paid and unpaid participation in social movement organisations and makes an important contribution to our understanding of sustainability of activism over the life-course.

Trajectories of activism

Social movement research has primarily focused on recruitment into activism (Klandermans 2007) and to a lesser extent on retention (Corrigan-Brown 2012; Bunnage 2014) and disengagement (Fillieule 2015). Studies which have employed a biographical perspective on activism have addressed “biographical availability” (McAdam 1986), that is whether activism might be constrained by family or work commitments. However, studies have demonstrated that family and professional obligations do not affect the participation in non-hazardous, and even in dangerous actions. For example Nepstad and Smith (1999) have shown that men and women have been involved in solidarity movements with Central America regardless of their marital status and their careers. On the contrary, the close connection between various life-spheres means that commitment is maintained (Passy and Giugni 2000). Moreover, as I will discuss below, working conditions and parenthood can actually motivate people to become politically active.

What the studies that look at persistence in and disengagement from activism have in common is that they tend to focus on the involvement in one particular movement or one particular form of protest. For example, Passy and Giugni (2000) studied members of a SMO of the Swiss solidarity movement. They found that those who experienced a congruence of life-spheres (activism, work and family) stayed involved in the movement whereas those who experienced a disconnection of the life-spheres – for example living with a partner who did not share the same political goals or making career changes – tended to withdraw from the movement. However, due to its focus on Third World activism, this study cannot capture to what extent the involvement of those who disengaged from the solidarity movement might have moved on other causes, for example environmentalism. Similarly, Downton and Wehr (1998) who studied activists in the peace movement found that a congruence of life-spheres, for example joining a peace commune which allowed activists to share making money and raising children, contributed to sustaining activism.

Corrigall-Brown (2012) considers different social movements and distinguishes four different trajectories: persistence, transfer, individual abeyance and disengagement. *Persisters* stayed active in the same movement, those who *transfer* stayed active in the same movement while moving to another place, *individual abeyance* characterises those who interrupted their participation and resumed it later on whereas *disengagement* does not involve a return to activism. Although Corrigall-Brown (2012) acknowledges that activists might shift from one movement to another and that they resume their engagement after a period of individual abeyance, she is very much focused on involvement in “contentious politics” including “participation in both civic and community social movement organisations and activities, including demonstrating, rallying, marching, and protesting” (p. 11). Although this conceptualisation includes a broad range of activities, it does not include *occupational activism* (Cortese 2014). Occupational activism occurs in paid employment in a range of occupations including radical social work (Lavalette 2011; Turbett 2014; Emejulu and Bassel 2015) and *academic activism*³ (Taylor and Raeburn 1995; Askins 2009; Brown and Pickerill 2009; Kyle et al. 2011).

I argue that in order to gain a fuller understanding of the sustainability and trajectories of activism it is important to think about activists as “boundary crossers” (Lewis 2008; Kyle et al. 2011; Roth 2015a) who move between different sectors and between paid and unpaid activism over their life-time. Such a perspective builds on and further develops the notion of “biographical consequences” (McAdam 1989) of activism, that is what impact activism has on personal and professional life-spheres. McAdam (1989) found that former activists were more likely to work in helping professions, however, he does not identify these occupations as a form of activism. The participation in NGOs can also lead to a variety of careers, especially when the boundaries between

³ Academic activism or academic activists refers to academics who are involved in social movements and who reconcile their work as researchers and educators with their work as activists.

political activism and volunteering is not drawn too strictly (Eliasoph 2013). Thus, volunteering in Amnesty International as a student can be helpful for a career as a lawyer, participation and interest in autonomous movements can contribute to an academic career and voluntary participation in political parties and trade unions can lead to full-time positions (Roth 2003).

Moreover, voluntary and full-time social-political commitment can be exercised simultaneously or successively and can be reflected in a variety of forms in career choice and activism trajectories. Thus, the voluntary commitment in the workplace lead to a staff position in advocacy work – or vice versa (see also Taylor 2004). On the basis of four generations of activists, Janet Newman (2012) shows how voluntary participation in grassroots organisations alternated with paid positions in trade unions and political parties while academic research was complemented by voluntary participation in think tanks. Thus activism can be maintained in different forms and with different material and personal consequences. In the next section, I discuss burnout as a risk to sustained activism and how it can be prevented.

Experiencing and preventing burn-out

How can socio-political commitment be sustained over the life-course? What are the requirements for "personal sustainability" (Cox 2009, Cox 2010), which are also important for the sustainability of social movements and social change organisations? Work in social movements can be physically, psychologically, physically and financially stressful. Maslach and Gomes (2006) identify exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy as three key components of burnout. Exhaustion (the individual stress component) is experienced as being overwhelmed and drained; cynicism (the interpersonal component) is a response to exhaustion, initially self-protecting it undermines the commitment to the cause; inefficacy (the self-evaluation component) is experienced as lack of achievement due to lack of resources and unachievable goals (Maslach and Gomes 2006, p. 44). Thus, burn-out results not only from vicarious post-traumatic stress, for example, when working with victims of abuse, but also can also be triggered by the working conditions in social change organisations which are characterised by long working days, conflicts and varied frustrations, in addition they often lack of resources and recognition (Cox 2010).

Gorski and Chen (2015) report that *education activists*⁴ experienced chronic psychological and mental health effects including chronic depression, stress, anxiety and panic attacks, the decline of physical well-being as well as disillusionment and hopelessness. Pursuing the "perfect standard" identified by

⁴ Gorski and Chen (2015) define these activists as "social justice activists whose activism revolves around social justice concerns such as racism, sexism, the corporatisation of the public sphere, anti-immigrant oppression, and environmental justice as they relate to school and schooling" (p. 386). However, only those who were involved in unpaid activism were included in the study even though many worked in educational organisations including universities, schools and non-profit organisations addressing educational justice (p. 392).

Bobel (2007), they developed a “culture of martyrdom” (Gorski and Chen 2015, p. 397) that prevented them from engaging in self-care. As social justice activists they felt that taking advantage of high-quality health-care or taking time out to sustain themselves would undermine their activism. However, when they realised that burn-out can lead to disengagement, some of the activists interviewed changed their attitude towards self-care and became interested in learning how to overcome the “culture of martyrdom”.

It needs to be emphasised that burnout is not only experienced by volunteers in social change organisations but also by paid staff. Rodgers (2010) analysed the work-culture and emotional context of Amnesty International which is characterised by commitment, sacrifice and guilt. The normative expectations of selflessness that are reinforced and institutionalised in the organisation result in high turnover of paid staff. Moreover, it is important to point out that paid employment in social change organisations is often low paid and precarious as it depends on unreliable funding and donations (Eltanani 2016).

It is common for (feminist) activists to work on short-term contracts or combine various part-time jobs or freelance work. After all, most activists have to make a living – they might work in a helping profession and volunteer in social change organisations before they find paid employment in social change organisations. Full-time activists who do not have a paid position in a social change organisation have to rely on savings, benefits and the support of friends and family unless they have inherited wealth. Thus, those from privileged backgrounds will find it easier to volunteer than those who have to provide for themselves and dependents.⁵ Notwithstanding international networks, recognition and prominence, activists’ careers are often precarious (Newman 2012; Faludi 2013).

In order to prevent or overcome burnout, the imbalance between goals and resources to achieve them needs to be addressed. This can include shifting the focus of activism and develop more realistic, pragmatic goals (Maslach and Gomes 2006). Furthermore, engaging in mindfulness practices such as yoga, tai-chi and meditation can help activists to deal with burnout and become more effective in the social justice movement (Gorski 2015). Achieving a balance through paying attention to personal needs, avoiding exhaustion through work, making time for reflection and play and diversifying activities enables activists to avoid burnout and contributes to sustaining activism (Downton and Wehr 1997: 543). In her study of feminist and women’s right activists involved in online campaigning, Gleeson (2016) found that even though the two campaigners who worked on the campaign as paid part-time employees were in a precarious position, they remained far longer with the campaign than the unpaid campaigners. The paid campaigners avoided burnout since they were able to distance themselves from the campaign and to work fewer hours. At the same time, the paid campaigners were highly identified with their work and reported that they spent more hours than needed. Frantz’ (2005) study of NGO

⁵ Regarding class-differences between activists see also Valocchi (2013).

staff also highlights how professionalism and social values were intertwined. Staff emphasised that they wanted to develop professionally in order to be better able to contribute to the realisation of the aims of the organisations they were working for.

Activism, paid or unpaid, has “biographical consequences” (McAdam 1989) for the private lives and professional choices of activists. Burnout is a risk both for volunteers as well as for staff in social change organisations. In order to sustain activism, burnout needs to be avoided which includes (what I would call) an “activism-work-life balance”⁶. I argue that in order to understand the development of activism over the life-course it is necessary to acknowledge that activists might shift from one movement to another or from one tactic to another, including occupational activism. Such boundary-crossing is overlooked if one focuses only on one form of activism or only one social movement. Moreover, it is important to recognise that (in addition to social change organisations) family, community and work places can also be sites of activism. In the next section, I provide a brief overview over varieties and different spheres of activism.

Spheres of activism - varieties of activism

Closely related to the question of how the participation in social movements fits into the life course is the question what form this involvement takes on. It is well known that the action repertoires of social movements are extremely varied, ranging from low-risk (eg peaceful, approved demonstrations) to high risk (eg, illegal occupations), and low-cost (eg, signing an e-mail petition) to high-cost (eg time-consuming participation in grassroots discussions) actions (Tarrow 1998, Taylor and Van Dyke 2007). This means that there is a wide range of more or less time-consuming and potentially dangerous activities which can be more or less easily be reconciled with other commitments.

In addition to distinguishing different forms of participation based on cost and risk, another dimension is the question of whether it is outsider or insider activism. *Outsider activism* refers to mobilisation outside political institutions such as peaceful protests or direct action, in contrast to *insider activism* includes “lobbying, testifying, writing legislation, providing public education, mobilizing constituencies, and supporting women candidates” (Spalter-Roth and Schreiber 1995, p. 105). Much social movement research has focused on outsider activism and activism tends to be equated with it, however insider activism including the involvement in governmental and intergovernmental organisations has found increasing scholarly attention. In the context of the women’s movement this includes research on “femocrats” (Eisenstein 1996), feminists who have taken on positions in local, regional or national

⁶ There is a wide literature on “work-life” balance which discussed how employment and family can be reconciled (Eikof et al. 2007; Roberts 2007). This literature has primarily addressed women’s ability to combine work and care obligations. I suggest developing this further and consider how activism can be both reconciled with family and paid employment.

governments. Pettinicchio (2012) points to the central role of *institutional activism*⁷ and encourages overcoming the dichotomy between outsider and insider activism. Social movements can have more or less outsider status, moreover insider activists (eg members of Green parties or government commissions) can provide important resources for grassroots organisations.

The relationship between outsider and insider activism is of interest in many respects. Of political interest is the ability to create alliances and mobilise resources (Glasius and Ishkanian 2014). Analytically a differentiated (or differentiating) look at different forms of participation is important to enable the division of labour and cooperation and overcome conflict between different movement actors. In this context, key figures in social movements (which I discuss later on) who have gained experience in different political contexts and can mediate between various spheres of activism are of particular importance. Staff positions in social change organisations and insider activism provide access to various resources which in turn can be made available to outsider activism. Moreover, activists might be engaged in multiple forms of activism at the same time. For example, holding a staff position in an NGO or in local government does not rule out participation in protests. A biographical perspective shows that over the life course insider and outsider activism can alternate or can be exercised simultaneously and result in boundary crossing between different sectors (Lewis 2008, Roth 2015a). Insider and outsider activism, exit and latency phases are thus integrated into everyday life and are in mutual relationship with other spheres of life. Moreover, activism is not restricted to social movement organisations but can be embedded in everyday life – in parenting practices, neighbourhood involvement and workplace engagement.

Family

Parents and "significant others" can have a great influence on the political socialisation of their children.⁸ For example, Weigand (2001) found that "red-diaper babies" who grew up in communist households participated in the second wave of the women's movement. In her study of NGO staff, Frantz (2005) documented that in the majority of families of origin political commitment played an important role. Women in the GDR peace movement felt that they owed it to their children to fight for their convictions even if this involved risking prison sentences (Mieth 1999). They perceived that their parents had been complicit with the Nazi regime and they did not want to be accused by their own children for not standing up to the communist regime. Parents can thus be role models and children's experience of participating in a

⁷ Institutional activists are individuals who effect change "from within organisations and institutions" (Pettinicchio 2012: 501).

⁸ Apart from family members (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings etc.), for example teachers and religious figures (eg pastors) may have an influence on the value system and the political beliefs of children and young people.

demonstration, attending an anti-authoritarian day care centre or a Waldorf school or growing up in shared housing can influence children's future political participation. This does not mean that children of leftist, anti-racist, feminist parents necessarily share the beliefs of their mothers and fathers.

Social movement scholars have so far paid little attention to parenting practices as a form of activism. However, Sisk and Duncan (2006) discuss parenting in the context of peace work – it can contribute to raising the next generation of peace activists as well as contribute to “the own growth as effective peace worker” (p. 56). Similarly, Sommers-Flanagan and Sommers-Flanagan (2006) perceive “plant[ing] the seeds of nonviolence in our children” as peace activism (p. 229). Furthermore, LGBTI parents are constantly confronted with the question how to raise children in a heteronormative society (Averett 2016). Thus parents can - consciously and unconsciously, positively and negatively – influence the political socialisation of their children. It would be of interest to systematically investigate care work and the gendered division of household labour as a form of “lifestyle activism”, i.e. primarily individual action in the privacy sphere (Haenfler et al. 2012). Political mothering also includes community engagement for educational justice (Fuentes 2013, Macdonald 1997) and health-related issues (Ryan and Cole 2009). Thus, parenting can motivate social engagement in community and environmental activism, as I discuss in the next section.

Community and environment

Neighbourhood and environmental activism are also embedded in everyday life and can be a further expression of parental involvement. Commitment to environmental issues can be based in the concern for the lives of family members, and the ethnic community (and social class) (Naples 1998). Pardo (1995) for example examined the mobilisation of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles against a prison and an incinerator in their neighbourhood.⁹ As “mothers” they understood themselves initially as defenders of the neighbourhood, but over time they worked together with environmental groups across the state. The identity as mothers plays a crucial role for the involvement in environmental justice activism (Bell and Brown 2010). Of course, community-activism is not restricted to parents but also includes environmental and social justice activism of youth (Shah 2011).

Conscious consumption or political consumerism constitutes another form of activism embedded in everyday life. In this context one can distinguish “boycotts”, thus avoiding products that have been manufactured in an environmentally stressful way or under exploitative conditions, from “buycotts”, i.e. the acquisition of products produced in an environmentally friendly and fair way (Balsiger 2010, Neilson 2010, Brown 2013). Such forms of political

⁹ MELA - Mothers of East Los Angeles - a grass-roots organisation comprised also some Catholic priests and Mexican-American politicians on the city and state level.

consumerism can be understood as "lifestyle" movements (Haenfler et al 2012). These individual, private actions can contribute to social change.

Employment

Finally, employment constitutes a central arena for activism. Rank and file members, full-time trade unionists, women's and minority officers are active on behalf of their constituencies, act as mentors, recruit union members and involve union and non-union members in events (Roth 2000, Roth 2003, Kirton and Healy 2013). Voluntary and paid representation in the workplace focusing on the improvement or security of working conditions constitutes an important form of social activism which is anchored in everyday life.

Furthermore, feminist organisations have been defined as "the places in which and the means through which the work of the women's movement is done" (Ferree and Martin 1995: 13) and provide contexts for volunteer and full-time commitment. Such organisations not only comprise political groups, feminist magazines and health organisations, but also businesses (Martin, 1990; Ferree and Martin 1995). Of course, other social movements also offer paid employment in non-governmental organisations, magazines, book and food stores, clinics and so on (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, Kleinman 1996, Brown 2013).

As long gender¹⁰ structures paid and unpaid work we can observe gender differences in social movement participation which are characterised by different experiences and interests. Thus men and women may engage in various ways for (or against) social change in different stages of their life. Of course, not just gender, but class, ethnicity, "race", religion, nationality, sexuality, age and many other aspects of privilege and discrimination shape the involvement in social movements. For example, class differences matter with respect to recruitment and activist identity (Valocchi 2013).

Participation has not only biographical consequences for activists and may influence their career and family planning, it has also an impact on their immediate environment - family members, friends and neighbours and colleagues. I will now turn to some key figures in social change organisations and what they contribute to social change organisations.

Some key figures in social change organisations

Social movement literature has put significant emphasis on the discussion of leaders and their roles for social movements (Morris and Staggenborg 2007, Reger 2007) and the invisible leadership of (African American) women has been noted (Barnett 1993). Attention to key figures who perform significant tasks in social movements supplements the existing literature on leadership. Based on

¹⁰ Gender differences and (stereotypical) notions of femininity and masculinity are socially constructed.

my research (Roth 2003, Roth 2007, Roth et al. 2014) I suggest the following key figures which can only be analytically distinguished and in practice often overlap: the broker, the femocrat, the knowledge producer, the consultant and the founder, who take on various functions in social movements. This is not an exhaustive list of key figures¹¹, but rather these types reflect various forms of occupational or institutional activism. Although these key figures are primarily based on my research and reflections on feminist activists and women's organisations, I suggest that they play a role in a wider range of political and social movement contexts.

A central role is played by the *broker*, who by virtue of participation in diverse political contexts and organisations mediates between grassroots organisations, local government, international non-governmental organisations and intergovernmental organisations and who thus can provide contacts and contributes to the diffusion of ideas (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Woodward 2003). Through volunteer and full-time commitment, she¹² has gained experience and knowledge. The broker has created networks on which she can rely and which she is constantly expanding. She establishes connections between activists working in different spheres who either do not know each other or have difficulties interacting with one another.

The *femocrat* (Eisenstein 1996) has - at least temporarily - decided to take on the "march through the institutions" and is thus engaged in *institutional activism* (Pettinicchio 2012). Her political socialisation might have taken place in the autonomous women's movement, in (more left-wing) parties or trade unions. Her office might represent the interests or provide services to women, sexual or ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups. She has access to resources, but is confronted with the accusation of de-politicisation and co-optation when she makes compromises. Such criticism overlooks, however, that the femocrat not only has a mediating function (between government and social movements), but that she can also provide material resources as well as access and legitimacy.

The *knowledge producer*¹³ is located in universities and think tanks. She seeks to contribute to the formation of critical thinking through teaching and research. Her analysis of social change can provide a basis for the evaluation of social and economic policy. On the one hand, through her participation in committees, she can critically accompany and legitimise political decisions; on the other hand, she can make her expertise available to autonomous feminist

¹¹Further key figures include the witness, the mentor, the pioneer, the veteran and the scapegoat (Pettenkofer 2013), the martyr and the financier (Virchow 2013) as well as the organiser, the strategist, the motivator and the representative (Rucht 2013).

¹² These key figures could be female or male. Men are also meant when I am using the female form.

¹³ Of course, knowledge production and learning processes are not restricted to formal educational institutions and research institutes. On the contrary, social movements are important sites for the production of knowledge (Choudry 2015) and learning processes (Miethé and Roth 2016).

organisations and provide a critical outsider perspective. This type represents *occupational* and *academic activism*.

The *consultant* has her own business and works with organisations in the private, public and third sectors. She might offer equality and diversity training or conceive and carry out events. She has created an enterprise which expresses her political convictions. The consultant is more independent and flexible than those who are employed by institutions, but also more precarious. As an entrepreneur, she has to sell herself to an even greater extent than those (more) permanently employed with regular income. In contrast to a (full-time) university employee who can more easily afford to give a lecture or participate in a conference without obtaining an honorarium, a self-employed consultant carefully needs to consider her commitment to the cause, the potential networking opportunities and the loss of income which she might risk by participating in an event without being paid. She also represents *occupational activism*.

Finally, another key figure is the *founder* of a movement organisation; whether it is a grass-roots organisation, publication (for example a journal) or company. The founder can mobilise resources of all kinds - whether unpaid labour, real estate, financial resources, media attention or political support. Her organisation may be engaged in protest and advocacy or provide information, training or services and creating jobs or apprenticeships or internships.

Common to these key figures which are identified here – the broker, the femocrat, the knowledge producer, the consultant and the founder – is that they are constantly facing the contradictions and tensions between insider and outsider activism, co-optation and transformation due to their border-crossing activities (cf. Lewis 2008; Newman in 2012, especially Chapter 7). Their work is characterised by the tension between reform and radical critique. In order to illustrate the work of these key figures, I will now turn to a feminist organisation, the women's cooperative *WeiberWirtschaft* which was created in the late 1980s in West-Berlin. This allows me to explore the relationship between professionalisation and activism and the sustainability of activism at the individual, organisational and movement levels.

The women's cooperative *WeiberWirtschaft*

The emergence and development of the women's cooperative *WeiberWirtschaft* is embedded in the transformations of German, European and global women's movements (Wichterich 2010, Ferree 2012). In the 1970s, autonomy - which included a distancing from political parties and trade unions - played a major role for the West German women's movement. With the creation of the Green Party and of women's representatives and woman equality bodies in the 1980s the integration of West German feminists in mainstream political institutions began. This process became even more intense after German unification (1990). The subsequently increased presence of women in politics and business and the adoption of policies seeking to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family

life can be seen as a success of the women's movement. However, the affinity between (liberal) feminism and neoliberalism has been noted (Fraser 2009). In a tricky way, the demands of women's movements for self-determination, self-reliance, individual liberty and autonomy are compatible with the logic of globalised markets. What does this mean? Neoliberalism involves the transfer of tasks that were previously covered by the state, to private sector or civil society as well as an emphasis on personal responsibility and efficiency. This meets with feminist demands for self-determination and opens up possibilities for women's NGOs and gender consultants. Kantola and Squires (2012) characterise these changes as a shift from *state feminism* to *market feminism*. While it is welcome that the expertise and services of feminists are paid adequately, the reliance on project and performance-bound funding encompasses the risk of co-optation and de-politicisation.

I consider the fact that the cooperative *WeiberWirtschaft* could be established and that it is still active as a success and an example for sustainable activism at the organisational level. As I will argue in this section, this success is based on a willingness to take risks, to learn, to compromise and to put many hours of (unpaid) work into the founding and development of this organisation. Luck and historical circumstances contributed to the success of this initiative, but without the ability to negotiate with a broad range of actors it would not have been possible to take advantage of these political opportunities.

From a feminist perspective, organisations are of great interest. On the one hand, women have for a long time been excluded from influential organisations and from influential positions within such organisations (Acker 1990). On the other hand, women have formed a wide variety of feminist organisations which have contributed to social change (Martin 1990, Ferree and Martin 1995). The majority of these organisations are cultural or political, as a primarily economic organisation or enterprise the women's cooperative *WeiberWirtschaft* is an unusual feminist organisation.

This women's cooperative represents a real utopia in the sense that it is guided by the moral principles of equality, democracy and sustainability (Wright 2013). The organisational structure of the cooperative and the low share price (€ 103) ensure equality and democracy to a much greater extent than other business enterprises. Men can buy shares, but can only be involved in a limited form due to the organisation's commitment to promote women. The cooperative represents three models of intersectional feminist practices distinguished by Naples (2013): local democratic practices, cooperation between state and community, as well as democratic practices in the transnational context. What factors and paradoxes contributed to the success of *WeiberWirtschaft* and how does this project reflect and inspire feminist transformations? In this section, I will first discuss the data on which this case study is based. Then I will provide a short history of the women's cooperative before I turn to the role of the key figures of social change organisations that were introduced earlier.

Data

This account is grounded in personal and activist knowledge (Choudry 2015) rather than on a systematic academic research project. My discussion of this organisation is primarily based on reflections by the founders and other members of the cooperative which were published in a book celebrating the 25th anniversary of *WeiberWirtschaft* (Neusüß and von der Bey 2015). The book documents the difficulties and conflicts that the organisation encountered as well as the success which even surprised the founders themselves. Thus, the data on which I draw was created by the organisation itself. As a (close) friend and colleague of some of the founders, I knew about the project from the earliest discussions in the second half of the 1980s and became one of the members of the cooperative. Thus my knowledge of the organisations is embedded in my everyday life and biography. However, I don't consider myself an activist in the organisation. My involvement was restricted to listening to the accounts of my friends about the difficulties and successes they experienced, occasionally attending events, supporting the organisation financially¹⁴ and offering reflections from my perspective as scholar of feminist organisations in the afterword of the book. Thus my account is partial and might be perceived as sympathetic and biased. I certainly hope that this account will be supplemented by studies that employ interviews with founders, former and current renters and executive board members.

A short herstory of *Weiberwirtschaft*¹⁵

The idea of *WeiberWirtschaft* is grounded in feminist scholarship and the women's movement. In 1985, three of the founders of *WeiberWirtschaft* published a report on the obstacles to women's self-employment based on a study funded by local government, the West-Berlin senator for economy and employment, in which they outlined the idea of a women's founders centre. This idea was further developed during a women's movement event - the first women's work conference in West-Berlin in 1987 - and a voluntary association was founded in the same year. As a result of these debates, the idea of creating a women's founder centre to help women overcome the obstacles of founding businesses such as lack of affordable offices or missing day care facilities emerged.

Between 1987 and 1989, in preparation for the founding of a cooperative, the founders established a voluntary association, opened an office and obtained public funding for paid positions for project management and public relations.

¹⁴ In addition to buying shares for myself, I gave shares to my niece and mother – representing three generations of supporters of a feminist organisation.

¹⁵ This account is based on the information provided on the website of *WeiberWirtschaft* http://www.weiberwirtschaft.de/fileadmin/user_data/pdf/informieren/Praesentation_auf_3_Seiten_englisch_2014.pdf and on Neusuess and von der Bey (2105). Details are provided in order to show what obstacles the organisation faced and what role the key figures which I introduced earlier played in dealing with them.

The cooperative was founded in 1989, moved into an office in 1990 and obtained funding for two staff positions from the senator for women in the local government. In 1992, the cooperation was included in the register of cooperatives and bought a building complex which was renovated between 1993 and 1996. In 1994, the refurbishment of a part of the building complex was completed and the first tenants moved in. Two years later, in 1996, the entire complex, including social housing (13 apartments) was available for use.

In 1998, the cooperative experienced a significant crisis when 40% of the building complex was affected by contamination. Ironically, this was a result of the ecological renovation of the building (heating, airtight windows, the removal of tiles from the walls) which within three years after completion of the renovation had allowed naphthalene, which was part of the roofing cardboard in the suspended ceiling, to diffuse into the air (Smentek 2015, p. 75). The contamination had to be removed and new spaces for the renters whose office spaces had become unusable had to be found. These measures put significant financial pressure on the organisation which had to raise additional funds in order to keep the building. The refurbishment was completed in 2000 and in order to deal with the conflicts between the executive board and the renters a mediation unit was established.

In 2000, 80 per cent of the units were occupied; as of 2012 100 per cent of the offices were rented to businesses and other interested renters joined the waiting list. In order to support women founders a number of services were introduced: cheaper rents for founders during the first year, access to a day care centre on site, affordable meals in the restaurant on site and micro-credits for members of the cooperative. Over the years, the cooperative won a number of awards recognizing it as an ecological, family-friendly, innovative enterprise. In the next section, I will address what makes this enterprise a feminist organisation and why the involvement in the organisation should be considered feminist activism.

***WeiberWirtschaft* as a feminist organisation**

According to Patricia Yancey Martin (1990) an organisation is feminist if it meets the following criteria: “a) it has a feminist ideology, b) has feminist guiding values, c) has feminist goals, d) produces feminist outcomes, e) was founded during the women’s movement or as part of the women’s movement” (p. 116). These criteria¹⁶ apply to *WeiberWirtschaft*, as I will illustrate based on the recollections of the founders and members of the cooperative.

Feminist ideology

The idea of the cooperative emerged based on an analysis of the obstacles to women’s self-employment. The findings of the study indicated that women

¹⁶ As mentioned above, *WeiberWirtschaft* was founded in the context of the women’s movement.

found smaller enterprises and usually on their own, they have often a family that they are caring for and they have less access to public funding. These obstacles could be overcome by creating a centre for women entrepreneurs where small enterprises can share infrastructure and participate in training. This infrastructure should enable women to create their own workplaces and “move away from the victim role” (Hübner 2015: 38). Founders deliberated about the legal form of the organisation. They considered private property as an expression of existing patriarchal power relations and rejected the idea to become a “capitalist”. The idea was to put property into women’s hands and to redistribute the profit gained through renting out the property by making it available to the women’s movement (von der Bey 2015: 15). Thus the founders developed the idea of a women’s cooperative to start a feminist money cycle: Many women contribute small amounts of money, to 1) buy a large property, create space for women’s enterprises and women’s projects which 2) provide employment opportunities for women, 3) make the economic contribution of women visible and 4) make profit that will be used to support women’s projects (von der Bey 2015: 15).

Feminist guiding values

In order to put this idea into practice, a significant amount of money had to be raised. Even though the cooperative successfully pooled money through selling shares to women (and later on also to men), the shareholders equity (about € 250,000 in March 1993) was not nearly sufficient to buy and renovate a large building complex. The cooperative thus had to consider what compromises to make to raise the necessary capital (approximately € 6 million) to buy the building. In line with their values, the founders hoped to get a mortgage with ideologically compatible banks such as the *Ökobank* (ecological bank) or the *Bank für Sozialwirtschaft* (Bank for social economy). However, these banks could only offer credit up to € 500,000. The founders then looked for a bank that was led by a woman, but the only woman in Berlin who led a branch of a bank could only make credit decisions up to € 500,000. Not only was it difficult for *WeiberWirtschaft* to find a bank that met their values, mainstream banks were not keen to give a small group of women, mostly social scientists with lack of management experience and hardly any equity, a very large sum of money. Moreover, the banks were afraid that supporting feminists from the women’s project movement would spoil their reputation (Gather 2015: 46). In the end, a partially publicly owned bank specializing in mortgages provided the credit needed to buy the property (Gather 2015). Just as the legal form of the organisation was informed by feminist values, they also shaped the process of finding the necessary resources. At the same time, financing the project required compromises, a point I will return to below.

Feminist goals and outcomes

The aim of *WeiberWirtschaft* is to enable women to create their own businesses, but that does not make it a liberal feminist organisation. First, as a cooperative the organisation spreads participation and decision making throughout the shareholders. Second, with lower rents for new entrepreneurs the organisation engages in redistribution. Third, the founders actively sought financial support from local government. Furthermore, the organisation considered sustainability and the reconciliation of paid work and care work through establishing a day care centre. At the time of writing this article, *WeiberWirtschaft* is still repaying its loans. Once this is achieved, it remains to be seen whether *WeiberWirtschaft* will be able to return to its origins and realise the feminist money cycle making earned surplus available to feminist projects, single mothers, and to people and businesses in the Global South. Thus, *WeiberWirtschaft* represents an alternative to neoliberal practices, by contributing to the redistribution of resources.

Crises and conflicts – and how to deal with them

Of course, the herstory of this feminist organisation was not free of crises and conflicts. The question of how renters should be involved in the decision making processes became particularly salient in the crisis situation when part of the building were found to be contaminated by naphthalene. Renters voiced the suspicions that they had been misled and that the problem had been known to the executive board when the property was purchased (Smentek 2015: 78). The members of the executive board who had put years of unpaid labour in establishing the founders' centre were hurt and outraged (ibid). The conflict was even covered in the local press. General assemblies as well as renters' assemblies were held, some women left the cooperative. In response to the conflict, a mediation unit was founded in order to solve conflicts between the executive board and the renters (Smentek 2015: 78).

Another conflict concerned rent arrears. The cooperative could not afford to relinquish income through rents and had to figure out how to deal with renters whose businesses were not successful. Some renters envisioned the cooperative as a "big nurturing mother" (Zauner 2015: 66) and experienced the fact that the executive board suggested restructuring if rents were not paid after repeated extensions as a lack of solidarity. The executive board reflected on whether they were "adopting male behaviour from the evil economy" and had become "normal landlords" (ibid), but concluded that they had to take a clear stance in order to assure the success of the enterprise. Moreover, they recalled that (some) renters were grateful to be confronted with a "reality check" instead of further investing in an unsuccessful endeavour (ibid).

The collection includes an article which is based on a conversation between the editors and five renters who moved into the building complex between 1994 and 2008, according to which conflicts played a bigger role in the early stages of the cooperative and declined after the building work was completed (Mieterinnen

im Gründerinnenzentrum 2015). Renters (all of them are shareholders of the cooperative) are involved in the decision what enterprises can move in thus can prevent competitions. Some of the renters take advantage of the networking and exchange opportunities that the proximity to other enterprises offers.

Thus, *WeiberWirtschaft* had to overcome various obstacles and conflicts in order to realise the dream of a “real utopia” (Wright 2013). I consider the women’s cooperative as “prefigurative politics” (Yates 2015) because it successfully created workplaces for women in an ecological, family-friendly, democratic feminist enterprise. Paradoxically, the creation of workplaces for women was accomplished through a great amount of unpaid, voluntary work.¹⁷ In the next section, I return to the relationship between professionalisation, professionalism and activism and to the key figures of social movements that I identified earlier.

Professionalisation, pragmatism and principles

How was it possible that a small group of students, unemployed women and recent post-graduates with no equity and little prior knowledge of property development were able to buy and refurbish a large property and establish a cooperative and women founders’ centre of international reputation? Each of the key figures I introduced earlier played a different role in this process. Obviously, the women are *founders* since they established a new organisation.

Thus, let’s start with the *knowledge producer*. The starting point of the project was the insight – findings from a study on women’s employment opportunities – what obstacles women who want to establish businesses face. The founders thus were academic activists addressing the problem by coming up with a solution, a women’s founder centre. Throughout the phases of creating the cooperative and founders centre a lot of knowledge and expertise was needed: legal, financial, architectural, planning and business expertise. In addition, the cooperative had to learn how to deal with conflicts within the organisation. The necessary expertise to establish the project was acquired in different ways – to a large extent through learning processes of the founding members and those who joined later on. However, activists also benefited from expertise sponsorship, for example, a well-known female architect supported the project through providing her expertise pro bono. In addition, the cooperative paid for legal assistance.

Closely related to the ability to mobilise resources is the fact that the women engaged in *WeiberWirtschaft* were capable *brokers* able to create alliances across multiple sectors. On the one hand, as a women’s project *WeiberWirtschaft* could mobilise the support of women identifying with and active in the women’s movement who bought shares throughout the herstory of the organisation. Given that it is unclear whether it will ever be possible to pay

¹⁷ The founders estimate that in the 1990s alone the unpaid labour put into creating the cooperative was worth the equivalent of about € 2.5 million (von der Bey 2015: 19).

out the shares – and that the idea is to invest potential profits into women’s projects – in this case share ownership means investment in the women’s movement, not in individual profit. During the crisis that required the refurbishment, the cooperative had to raise money in a short period of time. The organisation put together a campaign involving events, panel discussions, press conferences and marketing actions and successfully sold 2000 shares, increasing equity by 30%. On the other hand, the founders had to convince banks and local government that the project is efficient. Thus the organisation successfully communicated both with the women’s movement as well as with economic and political leaders and the general public. *Femocrats* in the local government played an important role supporting the project. The cooperative offers office space for *consultants* which use the networking opportunities on site.

Professionalisation and activism – professional activists

So could every activity be activism? Yes and no. This depends very much on the context and the social movement as well as the stage of the life course of an activist. For example, *digital activism*, that is supporting a social movement, social change organisation or campaign through online action (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010) can be prefigurative and recruit participants in offline protest events (Mercea 2012) or it can contribute to movement retention (Bunnage 2014). Thus, rather than equating activism with radical or direct action, it is important to differentiate between different forms of activism and appreciate that they suit different demands – demands of movements and social change organisations, but also demands of the individuals active in them. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that radical activism can have system-stabilizing effects (Blühdorn 2006), while occupational and academic activism can have significant negative career consequences and may include harassment and intimidation (Taylor and Raeburn 1995). Thus, high-risk activism is not limited to direct action, but can also include occupational and academic activism. Whether an activity qualifies as activism thus depends on a variety of factors, including the identity of activists, goals and outcomes.

Shifting between different forms of activism over the life-course can sustain activism at the individual, organisational and movement level. Activists gain experience in paid and unpaid work which can be transferred from one sphere of activism to another. This includes learning processes as well as spillover effects (Meyer and Whittier 1994). Such shifts are also important to address or prevent burnout. For example, a gay rights activist who had been involved in direct action and advocacy work demanding support for communities affected

by HIV and AIDS might open a gay friendly health clinic, thus providing a service for one of the affected communities while making a living.

Furthermore, *academic activism* can play a particular role in sustaining activism.¹⁸ It can offer long-term activists paid employment that allows to continue working with social movements and activist communities as well as socializing new generations of activists while at the same time earning money that allows sustaining a family. It also offers spaces for activists who return to university for courses or a degree which provide a space for reflection, learning and networking (Kyle et al. 2011, Roth 2015a). Thus the academy can support and sustain as well as legitimise and professionalise activism (Kyle et al. 2011).

Does this mean that professionalisation of activists and activism is unproblematic? No. Just like any form of activism, professional and professionalised activism requires ongoing critical reflection on strategies, goals, practices and compromises. No matter how good the intentions, social movements are not free from contradictions as accounts of racism, sexism or homophobia in progressive movements demonstrate. Moreover, demonstrations can be important means to express outrage and oppositions, but they can also become ritualistic (Rucht 2003). Fair trade is aimed at improving the lives of farmers, but can be and is incorporated into capitalism (Brown 2013, Dauvergne and LeBaron 2014, Busa and King 2015). Canvassing is an efficient means of gaining large numbers of signatures for progressive causes but undermines meaningful participation and fails to build grassroots capacity in local communities (Fisher 2006). Gaining access to local and national governments and intergovernmental organisations can distance NGOs from the constituencies they are representing (Lang 2013, Carroll and Sapinski 2015). Sustainable activism – no matter in what form it comes – requires accountability to values and to constituencies and contribute to empowerment (Kilby 2006).

Conclusions

Sustainable activism requires both elasticity and rigor, the ability to learn and compromise as well as the willingness to stick to values and convictions. As I have argued in this article, participation in social movements should not be thought as separate from but as integrated in everyday life and the life course. Everyday experiences - for example, discrimination, inequality and injustice - can be the cause to become active in different ways to fight for one's own interests or for future generations. This commitment in turn can serve as a model for others. If we understand activism as embedded in everyday life, then we find key figures as role models and mentors in parents, teachers, students and colleagues. Political beliefs may be reflected in educational methods, the choice of schools, transportation, consumer products and jobs. These decisions,

¹⁸ Of course, in the neoliberal and managerial university, the spaces for academic activism are increasingly difficult to create and to defend (Crowther & Scandrett 2016).

in turn, can affect children, partners, neighbours and colleagues. Thus I argue for a sophisticated understanding of commitment that does not reduce activism to the participation in protest events, but takes into account a wide range of more or less collective action. This does not mean that the importance of protest events should be questioned but that these should be more strongly related to other forms of activism as it is currently the case in the study of social movements. This also means perceiving the cross-border work of insider and outsider activists: mediator, femocrat, knowledge producer, consultant and founder represent different key figures who mediate between civil society, public sector and market as I have shown in my case-study of the women's cooperative WeiberWirtschaft. Key figures in social movements are active at local, national and international levels, as volunteers and paid staff. A focus on sporadic protest behaviour or a particular variant of movement participation (either insider or outsider, protest or participation in a movement organisation) does not address these life projects. A biographical perspective, however, allows to take the sequence of participation in various social movements and forms of activity in the view and to recognise the extent to which these experiences of multiple participation influence the development of networks and social movements and contribute to the sustainability of activism at the individual, organisational and movement levels.

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About the author

Dr Silke Roth is Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology at the University of Southampton (UK). She is interested in meaningful work and engagement for social justice. Her areas of research include the participation in and the impact of voluntary organisations, social movements and non-governmental organisations. In order to understand the intersection of individual and social change she finds biographical methods particularly useful for connecting micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis. Contact email silke.roth AT soton.ac.uk

The rise and fall of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

David Van Deusen

Abstract

The story of the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective of Vermont gives us an example of the many chapters, shifts and turns in the life of a collective. Emerging at the height of the global justice movement, in an area with a long history of local democracy - GMAC worked to deepen the strategic thinking around the use of the black bloc. Beyond and through writing, and living the revolution, the group used direct action in its labor organizing, community organizing, solidarity work and immigrant justice work – keeping anti-capitalism and anti-authoritarianism central.

“The chains of authoritarianism and capitalism can only be shattered when they are broken at many links. Vermont is our home, and it serves as the one link that we can access, but it is only one. Any victory here would only be partial. Deliverance to the Promised Land will only come when many more than us rise up against that which holds the multitude in bondage.”

-The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective,
from “Vermont Secession”

Montpelier, Vermont - Established in 2000, in a cooperative household located at the termination of a wooded dirt road in Southern Vermont, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective (GMAC), for a time, did its part in carrying forth Vermont’s long tradition of radical, leftist politics. Founded in Windham County by Natasha Voline, Johnny Midnight, Xavier Massot, and (myself) David Van Deusen, the collective was birthed with strong Situationist, leftist, and militant inclinations. The original GMAC nucleus lived together (along with comrades Imelda R, Bridget M, and Ted K), and operated as a kind of outlaw community, connected to the broader area counter culture based in and around Brattleboro. Together, they functioned on a cash & barter basis, opening phone and utility accounts under assumed names. They adorned the walls with stolen Salvador Dali works. Torr Skoog and Liam Crill, of the Boston band *the Kings of Nuthin* [who Massot befriended shortly after he emigrated from his native France], were occasional visitors. Half of the household’s income came from the black market, the rest from a single student loan and occasional manual labor [once being paid to build a bird aviary for Kermit W –the rumored son of Egypt’s Nasser]. One household member was wanted by the law (facing some years in prison); another was an artist; two were brought up in strong union households; a few experimented in poetry; the household included two guitars

and a five piece drum set in the living room. All present shared an interest in furthering a more creative, life affirming, and non-capitalist future. When not cutting their-own wood to feed the stove (which was typically the case), they “borrowed” a half cord at a time from unoccupied vacation homes scattered throughout the area. Trips to town often involved beer at the Common Ground (a co-op founded by local communes in the 1970s), or \$5.40 double whiskeys at Mike’s (a rough-around-the-edges working class tavern on Elliot Street). However, town, being 15 miles away, largely remained un-visited. Instead, target shooting off the back porch with .22’s & SKS’s, making firecrackers out of black powder, listening to The Clash & Johnny Cash, trying to get a half junked 56’ Chevy working, long conversations, chess, strong marijuana (*very strong marijuana*), vigorous debate, and intensively reading from the Situationist, Existentialist, Anarchist, and Marxist cannons filled the time until a more direct political involvement came to be.

When this group founded the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, it was agreed that its first task would be to provide support and tactical innovation to the Black Bloc and growing revolutionary anarchist movement; a movement which was gaining steam in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Seattle [1999]. What marked GMAC as different from some anarchist or leftist collectives, was that it was anchored in a deeply rural community with a strong tradition of local democracy (Town Meeting), and this broader community (Vermont) itself was premised upon a revolutionary uprising prior to the Revolutionary War [the guerrilla war against for Royal New York Colony, 1770-1775]. These facts, as much as the artwork of Dada, Russian Futurists, or the writings of Debord, Bakunin or Marx, came to form the radical world view of this collective, while also influencing the content of its own writings. In brief, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, at its best, helped to give voice and organized action to the anarchist and leftist prescriptions concerning the problems of modern capitalism, while also framing such radical paths of progressive change in an old world language particular to Vermont; their revolutionary cannon being one part Debord, one part Bakunin, and two parts Ethan Allen & the Green Mountain Boys. That said, the full realization of this revolutionary language did not appear upon conception. Rather, GMAC evolved as the scope of its community organizing experiences expanded.



The political premise

From the start, the collective, which was never a mass organization-but rather a tightly knit cadre, held an anarchist-leftist political position influenced by Situationist concepts. It argued that twenty-first century capitalism, along with class oppression, represents an abstraction of organic existence, one which seeks to have the individual (and by extension the group) subordinate its notion of reality to the artificial singularity of 'capital' as a universal commodity (with all aspects of contemporary existence being understood as commodities). However, the contemporary nature of 'capital', for the most part, no longer being linked to a universally recognized (tangible) signifier (be it gold, silver, or even paper money), makes 'capital' into a kind of 'Holy Ghost' of the current Western World. In such, *capital*, and therefore contemporary *capitalism*, becomes akin to a post-religious and all reaching *grid of perception*. By achieving this, capitalism maintains its economic primacy while also reaching into a realm previously reserved for religious or mystical understanding; it becomes an epistemology, ontology, and a means by which a kind of daily survival is perpetuated. Such is the singularity of this form of capitalism that its internal logic dictates a colonization not only of foreign markets (as with conventional later-stage capitalism), but also the colonization of the individual's subjective thoughts, desires, perceived needs, etc.. And here, upon success, a kind of artificial objectivity is created where objectivity is, in reality, void. Thus the danger of a more stable oppressive social/economic/cultural super structure becomes apparent.

GMAC also held that this model of individual and mass perception perpetuates a unequitable, unfulfilling, and oppressive class system whereby the many are subordinate to the few insofar as this new campaign to commodify the subjective mind serves the same basic role as the colonization of foreign territories did during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; namely the creation of new frontier accessible to the primary and secondary exploitive relationships to capitalist markets. The few who economically benefit from this new colonization (and the resulting buying and selling of false or perceived want), for their part, also become subordinate to the abstract system which ostensibly serves their material (minority) economic interests. Furthermore, by society focusing mass amounts of time, energy, and resources into the creation of such needs (advertising, public messaging, etc.), and then manufacturing the objects of these needs, requires the equivalent amount of social energy being taken away from tasks which could serve the real interest of humanity. As such, GMAC argued that human growth and political/economic equality (not to mention sustainability) would come only through the success of a militant revolutionary movement which would seek to overthrow not only the political and economic structures which support the status quo, but also the predominate new culture (referred to by GMAC as anti-culture) which allows for the absurd to become accepted fact. Therefore, the revolution required to deliver a victory against the new capitalism would not only take militant action against the state, but also a counter-cultural effort against that which is perceived *to be*; this victorious revolution would concern itself not only with *guns and butter*, but

also with *music and art*. GMAC further argued that both the physical and cultural resistance must be emanated from the bottom up (in line with radical democratic principles), in order to reflect the realized goals of a non-alienated, equitable, post-revolutionary society, whereby the individual (and group by extension) could realize its creative potential through a collaborative nexus of free expression, experimentation, and basic cooperation. And finally, in that it would take the many to overcome the *few* (or in relation to the anti-culture, to overcome the striving *totality*), and because it is the many who suffer most in the current exploitative paradigm (and are it's natural foe), GMAC understood the need for this revolutionary process to be an expression of the majority economic stratum: *the working class*.

The collective, while starting largely as a support cell for the militant movement outside Vermont, soon became deeply engaged in local efforts to bring about radical change in the Green Mountains. These efforts tended to be grounded in the labor movement, but also, at times, ventured into the struggle of the small farmers. As GMAC became more and more vested in the local struggle against capitalism (and for a direct democracy), they also became more drawn to Vermont's unique cultural posits which tend to run counter to the larger consumer culture of the United States. And with such cultural difference, GMAC sought to build a bridge from the distant memory of rural insurrection, over the demons of modern capitalism, to the realization of a socialist community entrenched in the ideals of an expanded Town Meeting democracy: a kind of Guy Debord and Jean Paul Sartre meet yeoman farmers with aspirations.



The Black Bloc and beyond

From its inception, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective recognized the historic importance and potential for change in the growing anti-globalization movement. Here, GMAC posited that this movement was inclined to question not only the negative symptoms of the failure of the modern age, but also was inclined to look for the root causes; the mother disease which birthed said systems. And here GMAC believed the likely conclusion of any such mass diagnosis would be the unveiling of capitalism (with all its current mutations) as the essential prime mover. Given that organized labor and the mass environmental groups were increasingly engaging in this movement (along with small radical cadres from hundreds if not thousands of cities), the collective saw the potential for a shift in popular consciousness. However, GMAC also asserted that capitalism, increasingly fortified by not only the obvious chains of oppression, but also with the unseen chains binding individuals through the colonization of the mind, possess the ability to create many false crossroads aimed at fooling or misdirecting the people. Therefore, a concerted and militant effort would have to be inserted into this movement in order to help create the conditions necessary for a kind of mass clarity; the reality of Bakunin's *instinct to rebel*. And finally, it was argued that in the face of an increasing singularity of oppression, physical resistance is not only a right, but a necessity. On the other hand non-violence, and non-violent resistance, although not completely rejected by GMAC, was viewed with distrust by the collective. Specifically, GMAC questioned whether or not non-violence, if not balanced by a parallel physical militancy, would increase the likelihood of submerging resistance into a quagmire of strictly symbolic action which does little to threaten a status quo already relatively secure in its expanding singularity. Where militant and direct resistance can be jarring, disruptive, and challenging, pacifism, to GMAC, was understood as a sort of hollow self-therapy; a million may walk down the road carrying a sign, and thousands may block an intersection for a few hours, but at the end of the day these actions, alone, do not alter the experience of those passively viewing the actions, or even those taking part. Such activities typically carry little risk in the more developed capitalist world; the lack of risk, to the uninitiated popular mind, often sugars out into a *lack of interest*; to those at the pinnacle of power, it reads as *little threat*. In brief, *an apostate that lives in the wilderness threatens no believer*.

GMAC did however make a distinction between *non-violence as a tactic*, and non-violence as an ideology (*pacifism*). As a tactic, the collective saw a conditional role. As an ideology, it viewed it as borderline insane. GMAC accepted that a tactic should be utilized and judged based on contextual analysis and successful results. As an ideology, it viewed it as a very mature and brilliant appendage to the anti-culture; as a kind of false opposition to that which *is*. Once resistance becomes self-limiting and non-lethal to its other, the other has taken a long step toward the perpetuation of an alienating social system

whereby the chains are no longer seen, and whereby the key is lost to the collective memory.¹

With these premises in place, GMAC understood the rise of the Black Bloc as a chance to further cultivate one aspect of the resistance movement. It was towards the Black Bloc that GMAC therefore turned.

If ideological pacifism represented a kind of hollow self-therapy, GMAC understood the violent and assertive actions of the Black Bloc as a kind of mass shock-therapy; one capable of further shaking the foundation of popular belief and acceptance. Here it should be noted that GMAC did not advocate for an unreasoned, isolated, or suicidal Black Bloc. Rather, it campaigned for one that served its role within a larger movement of resistance which, ironically, was not ready to fully embrace militant tactics. For GMAC, the Black Bloc represented *one* dynamic and necessary aspect of a diverse struggle waged on many fronts and through divergent means; the totality of these differing approaches, together representing a kind of mutually dependent arising of revolutionary potential. But again in order to realize the full effectiveness of the Black Bloc, GMAC understood it necessary to analyze, critique, and modify its tactics and organizational structure in order to address ostensible failings experienced by the Bloc in historic street actions (failings that GMAC feared would intensify as state police and intelligence agencies studied Black Bloc manifestations). Hence, in its early years the collective worked to strengthen the capabilities of the Black Bloc. This emphasis led it to the writing and wide circulation (within anarchist and leftist circles) of the pamphlet *Communique on Tactics and Organization* [Kersplebedeb Press, Montreal QB, December, 2000].

This pamphlet identified indecision, deficient mass mobility, lack of coordinated planning, and a cavalier security culture as the immediate causes of its limitations in effectiveness. Looking to history (specifically anarchist history) GMAC then sought to recommend a democratic internal command structure within the formation, as well as the utilization of more complex use of tactical maneuvers. To quote from the tactics communique:

“[O]ur experiences have... illustrated certain short comings that we thus far are yet to overcome. Specifically our lack of democratic tactical command structure has hindered our abilities to act with more punctuating speed and tactical ferociousness... [W]e [therefore] propose that the present use of elected affinity group spokes people be expanded to that of acute tactical facilitator... The role of this person should be to help facilitate the organized movement of their immediate section as recommended by [a] general tactical facilitation core.”

This first edition of the pamphlet was met with a mixed reception among anarchist groups. Some charged that GMAC's position risked a shift towards a

¹ This points were further discussed by GMAC in the pamphlet *On The Question of Violence and Non-Violence*, Black Clover Press, Vermont, 2001.

more centralized Leninist command structure. While others, such as the Boston based Barricada Collective, and Ohio based Columbus Anti-Racist Action, agreed with the need to move to a re-organization of the Bloc. Those that viewed the work favorably tended to agree with GMAC's assertion that the temporary election of militant leaders was in line with the historic practices of the CNT and FAI anarchist militias during the Spanish Civil War [1936-1939]. The Barricada Collective published this first version of the pamphlet in 2001, in their magazine, also called *Barricada*.

An on-going correspondence between GMAC and Columbus ARA led to the meeting between the groups in Ohio, in the winter of 2001. It was agreed that further changes should be made in the pamphlet to strengthen the abilities of the Black Bloc. A second revised edition of the pamphlet was produced and circulated in July of 2001 [Columbus ARA Press, Columbus OH]. Key recommendations included: the Black Bloc should elect a temporary officer core empowered to make tactical decisions, especially concerning movement and engagement with state forces during street actions; the Bloc should hold a force of one third in reserve to be called into action at the demand of the officer core during acute times of need; and finally, individual affinity groups should be organized into larger clusters responsible for the integrity of different areas of the Bloc (front, back, right, left, center), and that each affinity group focus on a specialized need concerning the Bloc's core (offensive, defensive, capitalist property destruction, recon, first aid, morale, public outreach, etc.).

Upon its release by Black Clover Press (and distribution by AK Press), this revised pamphlet was met with mixed opinion; those skeptical of formal organization remaining opposed, those recognizing the value of increased organization tending to be in support. In general, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (who the Barricada Collective was affiliated with) supported the recommendations. GMAC joined this federation, as its Vermont affiliate, in 2002.

In 2001, GMAC members Xavier Massot and David Van Deusen also (largely) wrote and edited the book *The Black Bloc Papers* [Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002]. The book sought to provide a comprehensive collection of Black Bloc communiques from North America, while situating the phenomenon within a cultural-social-economic context of creative resistance.

In the book's introduction, Xavier Massot posits:

"Getting away from the instinctive fear of not having enough is the next real bridge to cross for humanity. Our ancestors had to find ways to survive. The world today knows how to live, yet refuses to do so in an equitable manner. A work ethic is a great thing, that is undeniable, but to work for the sake of working is nothing but a slow cop-out suicide... Let's eliminate the role of society as murderer and rapist. If we are going to fuck up, let's do it ourselves without unnecessary abstractions guiding and excusing our treachery."

In Chapter I, David Van Deusen writes:

“Within... a [revolutionary] counterculture it is only natural that certain people will carry the ball in this [militant] direction. And it is here that specific people and collectives will organically key in on revolutionary political action akin to that presently demonstrated by the Earth Liberation Front cells on the one hand and the Anarchist Black Bloc on the other. Here it cannot bide its time and wait for the perfect moment. It must lash out at its other as a basic means of political expression. It must transcend its relative passivity through violent resistance of its own repression as well as the repression directed against the poor and working classes as a whole. And in such, it achieves an honesty that progressive impostors cannot readily provide.”

And again from Massot:

“A lot of people object to the Black Bloc on both sides of the protest fence... I understand their grievances and I disagree with all of them... I am, however, certain that it’s healthy to physically confront authorities who physically uphold a rotten system and to remind the rest of the populous that such things can be done.”²

In the same year that the Black Bloc Papers was published, GMAC member Van Deusen (the author of this article) produced an additional pamphlet entitled *On The Question of Violence and Non-Violence in the Social Protest Movement* [Black Clover Press, Montpelier, VT; distributed by AK Press].

It’s important to recognize GMAC’s militant—rather than merely intellectual roots and motivation. Prior to the founding of the collective, future members took part in Black Bloc actions across the United States. These included the marches against the Democratic National Convention (Chicago-1996); Millions For Mumia (Phillidelphia-1999); the protests against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (A16-Washington DC-2000); and the demonstration against the Republican Nation Convention (Phillidelphia-2000). GMAC also took part in the Quebec City uprising against the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA) in 2001, and the Siege of Lewiston (against a failed fascist organizing drive-Maine-2003). It was through GMAC’s Black Bloc experiences that it drew its conclusions concerning the need to enhance the

² The Black Bloc Papers was originally slated to be published by AK Press, this first edition was eventually produced by Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, in 2002, and covered Black Bloc activities in North America from 1999-2001. An expanded online version of the work was published by Breaking Glass Press, Lawrence KS, in 2010 (covering the years 1988-2005). As of 2014, Little Black Cart, Berkley CA, (an imprint of Ardent Press) published a third edition of the work.

Bloc's tactical abilities. During later, post pamphlet actions, it further sought to incorporate the changes it recommended into street experiments.

Leading up to the massive protests against the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement summit in Quebec of April, 2001, GMAC was asked by Columbus ARA to facilitate the clandestine border crossing of this group. At the time, Columbus ARA was recognized as one of the most militant organizations in North America, and there was concern that they would be barred from entering Canada if they sought to cross the border through traditional means. GMAC, with wide logistical support from rural Vermont residents (otherwise unaffiliated with the organized aspects of the movement), was successful in this effort, crossing the frontier on foot, through thick forests in the cover of darkness. The crossing location, which necessitated a rugged overnight hike over a mountain and through deep spring snow, was recommended to them by a friendly 65 year old radical (RH, a former member of the revolutionary *Free Vermont* commune movement of the 1970s) who previously used the same route to help undocumented workers (from Central American warzones) pass through the borders in the 1980s. Columbus ARA and GMAC were therefore able to play a militant role in the urban conflict which ensued over two days of rioting in Quebec City, which included sections of a security fence being torn down, a bank being torched, and police being effectively fought back through the use of clubs, stones, and petrol bombs on numerous occasions.

After the Quebec City actions, membership in the collective became fluid. GMAC's first generation of membership broke down in the summer of 2001 while people traveled. Massot went west and then back to Brattleboro. Van Deusen moved to Columbus, Ohio, for a good part of a year. Johnny Midnight left the collective altogether. The second generation of GMAC began to form in 2002 when Van Deusen, along with LV of Columbus ARA (and now GMAC member), moved to a rural area in North Central Vermont. Van Deusen and LV established another collective household. From this base, new members became emerged and brought with them their unique perspectives. HR, a resident of the Northeast Kingdom (NEK), was a radical largely involved with food security issues. Will Dunbar, who at the time also lived in the Kingdom (in another collective household), was an early member of the Second Vermont Republic (a Vermont separatist organization which he resigned from in order to join GMAC) and was rumored to be attached to the Iconoclast Liberation Front. Will was also instrumental in the founding of the Northeast Kingdom Music Festival. SW and JM moved from Philly (where they were members of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists-NEFAC) to Montpelier and were interested in retaining their political activity. KW, a Montpelier native, came to the group through her personal relationship with numerous members and her political activism (KW did counter-recruitment against military service among high school students, and soon would become the Chief Steward in a new radical labor union). NR, (a labor activist previously from Michigan) and AL (a Montpelier native) joined after becoming engaged with the collective largely through a union organizing effort. HB was going to the University of Vermont

(Burlington) and was a member of the Student Labor Action Project. People joined, and people left. They had their reasons.

It should also be recognized that the collective did not think of itself as geographically-based (unless that geography is expanded to include all of Vermont). When the majority of members lived within a dozen miles of Montpelier, it still recruited members in the Northeast Kingdom and even in Burlington. For a time Massot (who would go through periods of being a member and not being a member) maintained an affiliation while remaining in Southern Vermont (even though the majority now lived in the North). Suffice to say that GMAC always viewed itself as a statewide anarchist organization; one that believed its campaigns and energy should be focused on affecting progressive and revolutionary change on Vermont as a whole; not in a single municipality or community as such. While there doubtlessly are criticisms that could be lodged at GMAC, failing to see the forest for the trees is not one of them.

In September, 2001 the terrorist attacks caught everyone off guard, including the collective. Massot was in France. Van Deusen and (soon to be a member) LV were together in Western Canada (and were only able to slip back into the US). The political aftermath of this attack changed the social landscape. The state used this as an excuse to launch a massive crackdown on civil liberties, to aggressively go after dissident groups, and the American public seemed to pause; suddenly the tens-of-thousands turning out for anti-globalization rallies dwindled to a few thousand. It would not be until the rise of the mass anti-war rallies in 2003 that the numbers and energy would return to the streets. But regardless, for the next year after 9-11, members of GMAC remained dispersed, and direct political activity became immersed in the broader anarchist movement (not with a clear GMAC identity attached to it). The only unique GMAC activities during this time were the publication of written material (as discussed elsewhere in this work). However, by September, 2002, when LV and Van Deusen established the new base near Montpelier, and as a new generation of members began to come to the collective, GMAC would become active again as its own political entity. This time it would affiliate with the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (which had member collectives in Quebec, New England, and throughout the broader Northeast region). As NEFAC's Vermont affiliate, GMAC continued to engage in militant street actions, and increasingly in radical grassroots organizing.

GMAC joined NEFAC for a couple reasons. First, it understood the need to better coordinate the militant resistance to capitalism across the region. It also was impressed by NEFAC's apparent ability in organizing Black Blocs. And finally, it agreed with the undertone of member collectives who argued in favor of political organizing beyond mass protests. Even so, GMAC was surprised when at a 2002 conference held in Baltimore, Maryland, elements of the federation strongly argued that they should deemphasize their engagement with mass Black Bloc actions at large anti-globalization protests, and instead to focus the federation's collective energy towards labor and community organizing.

While GMAC delegates recognized (and agreed with) the need to engage in community and labor organizing, it opposed the decision to partially disengage from large scale Black Bloc actions. GMAC argued that the role of the revolutionary anarchist organizations should be to embody the principles of being both *the most relevant and the most militant*. GMAC also argued that the relative success of high profile Black Blocs resulted in not only an advance in popular consciousness concerning resistance to capitalism, but also acted as a prime recruiting mechanism, drawing militant and committed revolutionary youth into the federation. However, by a democratic vote of NEFAC delegates, GMAC's position was defeated. GMAC, as an affiliate of the federation, remained in NEFAC and respected the strategic decision of the organization, even if it continued to believe it was the wrong decision.

This refocus by NEFAC, along with the changed domestic political reality following the 9-11, resulted in a temporary regression concerning the use and growth of the Black Bloc as an effective street tactic in North America. This regression would not begin to reverse itself until after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.



Building the movement

Back in Vermont, GMAC members, in November 2002, walked picket lines of striking United Radio, Machine, and Electrical Workers of American (UE) outside the gates of the Fairbanks Scale factory, in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. The union factory workers had a long history of militancy (during their previous strike picketers overturned a bus filled with scabs). When a delivery truck sought to drive into the factory grounds, UE members and GMAC participants attempted to block the vehicle. This situation soon led to violence between picketers and deputy sheriffs. One GMAC member exchanged head-butts with one cop and took a face full of pepper spray as a result. Still, the blockade was not relinquished until union leaders gave the order. When police came to arrest the (now blinded) GMAC member, union leaders intervened, making an arrest impossible. The following week GMAC returned to the picket line to the applause of the union workers. The union went on to win the strike, securing better pay and working conditions on the shop floor.

In January, 2003, GMAC led the militant organizing effort aimed at shutting down a planned fascist organizing effort in Lewiston, Maine. Working with

local radicals, other NEFAC collectives, and ARA chapters, the collective (under the direction of LV) helped organize a 500 strong protest contingent, 100 of these being organized into a Black Bloc. In the front line of the march was GMAC along with Vermont comrade, JW (a former member of the Love and Rage #10 Collective, co-founder of the Vermont Workers Center). Utilizing methods supported by GMAC's tactics pamphlet, this Black Bloc was able to push through police barricades, and lay siege to the armory (where the fascist meeting was being held) without suffering a single arrest. NEFAC's deemphasizing of Black Bloc tactics only related to their use at high profile national events. It did not apply to small scale actions, especially those aimed at confronting fascism.

LV, in her written report back to NEFAC stated:

"We were expecting the... pig force of Lewiston to be able to utilize their special training for our arrival, and the following precautions were to be employed by them: the confiscation of flag or sign poles, backpacks, cameras that weren't given previous press clearance (because you know how terrorists like to hide bombs in cameras?!), and random searches. No protesters were permitted to be in radius of the National Guard Armory, and were going to be directed to two 'park and rides' half a mile down another street. Roads were going to be blocked off, and ID's checked upon rerouting traffic to the park and rides... Deciding to use Black Bloc tactics was an advantage on our part. With this situation at hand, the contingent of Antifa decided to employ Black Bloc tactics (it is specifically important here that we decided to march in formation, and elected a tactical facilitation core)... By wearing black, masking up, and marching in a tight rectangular formation with banners on all sides, we looked intimidating to the pigs. The first road block consisted of three cop cars and six or so pigs. All but one stood there staring, while the "ranking officer" approached us. The banner was lifted right over his head, and wouldn't you know-he found himself right in the middle of the Bloc. Piece of cake. (Here, this worked well. In another situation, where the police are our primary combatants, we should never allow an enemy in our midst except to physically deal with them.) The next barricade consisted of two city dump trucks and a few cop cars. It looked tough and could have been, but we never paused and just kept moving forward. The drivers of the trucks were working people. One driver waved to us, while the other backed up just a little. We moved on through...When we passed the [non-Black Bloc] protesters who were stuck at the park and ride, we enthusiastically invited them to join us. A Bloc of only 50 quickly turned into about 300 when seemingly everyone from the two park and rides joined us!"

Not all of GMAC's activities were centered in street conflicts. As previously eluded to, from late 2002 on GMAC devoted substantial time and organizational resources to grassroots campaigns. Seeking to achieve a broader impact in its efforts, the collective typically worked in cooperation with other democratic/leftist community organizations. In 2002, GMAC decided to commit itself to providing limited support to a farmer organizing campaign known as the Dairy Farmers of Vermont (DFV). This group, founded by

Progressive farmer Dexter Randle, and organizers Anthony Pollina and Peter Sterling, was seeking to gain the affiliation of farms representing a minimum of one third of all raw milk produced in the state. [Note that Deter Randal went on to be a Progressive Party State Representative for the Town of Troy, Anthony Pollina went on to received 21% of the vote for Governor in 2008 and and became a Progressive Party State Senator in 2010. Sterling would later head the pro-single payer organization Campaign For Healthcare Security.] Upon reaching this number, DFV intended to seek to collectively bargain for a sustainable price for said milk from the processors. Failing this, the group was exploring the possibility of opening a farmer owned processing plant which could provide payments that could be sustaining to family farms. DFV operated internally through democratic principles.

GMAC, recognizing the significance of mobilizing Vermont's farmers towards resistance to current capitalist expressions, provided DFV with volunteer hours on a regular weekly basis. GMAC's support tended to be low level activities (stuffing envelopes, answering phones, research, etc.), but necessary ones never-the-less. In the end DFV, who achieved its membership goals, was stonewalled by the processors, but did manage, for a time, to open and operate a farmer controlled processing plant in the Northeast Kingdom.

In 2003 GMAC worked with representatives of the state's largest labor unions and other mass organizations in forwarding a project called the Peoples' Round Table Organizing Committee. This campaign, largely the brainchild of Ed Stanak—the president of the Vermont State Employees Association (VSEA) and IWW supporter, and later eventually the 2012 Progressive Party candidate for Attorney General--sought to build a united left platform from the grassroots of all the major popular VT organizations, and to further this platform through mass action and political participation. However, GMAC learned from this effort that the specific leaders of the various mass (VT) organizations, no matter how well intended, do not necessarily reflect active support from below. While a limited number of public (platform building) meetings were held throughout the state, and while a draft platform was produced (after countless nights and hours of delegate meetings), the campaign largely proved to be lacking in the necessary buy-in and active support from the tens of thousands of members whom the organizing delegates ostensibly represented. Even so, the political sentiment which underlined this effort, a decade later, was to see fruition in the political sphere; the 2011 passage of VT single payer healthcare legislation being one example of such progress [legislation which was later derailed by Democratic Governor Peter Shumlin]. But again, for the moment, GMAC reflected on the fact that it spent significant time on this project but saw very little immediate political successes in return. It is worth noting that the Director of the Vermont Workers Center (an organization founded in 1998 by members of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation), James Haslam, warned GMAC of this potential outcome from the start. However, it was a lesson GMAC needed to learn on its own.

In that same year (2003), GMAC became heavily engaged in the Montpelier Downtown Workers' Union (MDWU, UE Local 221). The campaign, initiated by the Vermont Workers Center and the United Radio, Machine, and Electrical Workers of America (UE), sought to build an experimental geographic based labor union throughout the unrepresented sectors of Vermont's capital city. The objective was to build a democratic, bottom up union that provided workers with a collective voice. GMAC recognized that a successful conclusion to the project could lead to the model spreading to other towns and cities in Vermont, and beyond. GMAC hoped to help create the example of a democratic workers' organization that could both positively impact the realities for workers on the shop floor, as well as one that could give a broader political expression to workers' struggles in general. Although the campaign ended in defeat, GMAC saw the potential of such an effort and became an outspoken supporter of the union, producing and distributing (to Montpelier workers) the handbill entitled *Union + Town Meeting = Democracy*.

At the time, GMAC argued:

"Montpelier could be just a beginning... [I]f the workers of towns... come together into strong organizations, and these organizations build strong ties between each other, the Vermont working class as a whole would no longer be at the heels of politicians who have to answer to the bosses... If this time comes, these strong and democratic organizations... in collaboration with farmer's organizations... and taking into account the general will as expressed through more than 200 Town Meetings, would now be in a position to put forth a united and legitimate voice of all these working persons who make Vermont what it is."

GMAC made this campaign its priority for the next two years, eventually counting its members as a majority on the union's Steward Committee (including, among others, SW & NR), along with the elected Chief Steward, KW. At its height, the union claimed 100 members, out of a labor pool of 800, employed in two dozen shops in Montpelier (population: 7800). In a number of shops (including State Street Market, Charlie O's Tavern, Rivendell Books, and J Morgan's/Capital Plaza Hotel) union membership, for a time, represented a majority. Other shops where the union claimed members included, but was not limited to, Shaw's Supermarket, M&M Beverage, Rite Aid Pharmacy, Vermont Compost, Onion River Sports, Karma Imports, and Vermont Center For Independent Living. Contracts were eventually achieved at the Savoy Theater and Mountain Herbal Café.

While the winning of union-labor contracts was one goal of the organization, it was not the intended end point. Later in 2004 the Union implemented a citywide grievance procedure, facilitated by Steward-workers, that all Montpelier employees had access to (not just dues paying members). Although not enforceable through a contract (with the exception of the two aforementioned shops), it was remarkably successful in winning a majority of its grievances through public pressure and direct action. Here the effective

leadership and advocacy of Chief Steward and GMAC member KW should be recognized. It is also of note that the Steward Committee and the citywide grievance procedure was supported by the formation of a Workers Defense Squad. This grouping was co-chaired by GMAC member David Van Deusen, and included rank and file members of other area labor unions (including the Carpenters, the Iron Workers, AFT, etc.).

From 2004 on, major policy decisions were made at Worker Town Meetings through a directly democratic process. This method of internal decision making highlighted the fact that the underlying principles of the union reflected the anarchist practice of bottom up, participatory democracy.

In the spring of 2005, while the MDWU was still fully operational, GMAC hosted a NEFAC conference at the Socialist Labor Hall in Barre, VT. Also in 2005, the Philadelphia affiliate of NEFAC was engaged in a similar effort in the South Street district of that city. At the same time, the Montreal affiliate was engaged in some organizing efforts aimed at workers in its city. GMAC made an official proposal to NEFAC that it adopt the geographic, bottom-up union model as the strategic focus of the organization for the coming year. Recognizing that the Vermont experience concerning the MDWU was predicated on the prior example of the Workers Center, GMAC proposed that in NEFAC areas of operation where no similar organization existed, that the first step be to create the equivalent (as the Love and Rage # 10 Collective proved to be an achievable task by a small group of radicals). This proposal was voted down, in essence, by the federation. NEFAC hence declined to adapt this (or any other) truly coordinated regional campaign, and instead continued to function more as a loosely affiliated network of autonomous collectives than as an organization with a platform of united and rational revolutionary action. While the early years of NEFAC brought the affiliates together through common mobilizations at large anti-globalization Black Bloc actions, since 2002 the federation increasingly lacked such common purpose. NEFAC, at least in name, ceased to exist in 2011.

In later 2005, after failing to win a recognition effort in a larger city hotel/restaurant, and recognizing that overall membership had not reached a self-sustaining level, the Workers Center and UE made the joint decision to conclude their involvement with the project. GMAC, or rather a faction of GMAC, briefly sought to keep the organization present through the affiliation of MDWU with the Industrial Workers of the World. However, this move only put off the ultimate decline of the union, which concluded in its entirety before the start of 2006. The chances of GMAC reinvigorating the union was further limited by the fact that key GMAC members at the time, former union leaders, also decided to move on. While failing to win a sustainable geographic union, the effort did prove that the concept was plausible. During its life, the union also gained wide coverage in the Vermont media, and became widely known to the public. The chances of a similar effort building on the successes and failures of the MDWU experience should not be discounted out of hand.

Following the demise of the MDWU [and printed in the Northeastern Anarchist], SW reflected:

“We lost the Montpelier Downtown Workers' Union. And the fact is, most organizing drives fail. The cards are stacked against us. At many facilities, workers will go through 3, 4, or even more union drives before attaining success. If organizing at work is truly important to you there are plenty of unorganized places to organize. So don't let one failure get in the way of continuing to fight and eventually winning... Revolutionary socialist anarchism as a political philosophy is based on the fundamental hope that the majority, the working class and all oppressed people, can be the agents of change that will bring about a federated, democratic, and free society of self-managed communities and workplaces... If we, as the majority of common people, are going to do this, we will need to build confidence as a class, and to learn how to work together for our defense and for the advancement of our common interests.”

From 2002-2007, the years in which GMAC was most active and acutely engaged in Vermont politics, the collective also supported the anti-war movement, continued its anti-fascist/anti-extreme right efforts, and continued its support of the worker co-op movement and ongoing labor struggles. In terms of its anti-war work, GMAC took part in demonstrations, attended two People's Assemblies Against the War, and proposed and passed a resolution calling on Vermont soldiers not to engage in offensive combat operations in Iraq.

One amusing incident took place in Boston, at a December 10th, 2004 workers' rights march. In support of this rally (which was sponsored by organized labor), the Vermont AFL-CIO brought down a bus full of Vermonters. Among them was GMAC members (then largely members of the MDWU). Also on the bus was Peter Clevelle. Clevelle, a good and likable man, was then a long time [social democratic] Progressive Party Mayor of Burlington (Vermont's largest city) and that year was the Democratic Party candidate for Governor (opposing incumbent Republican Jim Douglas). Once in Boston, the members of GMAC found the local anarchist contingent organized by the area NEFAC affiliate. Once the march was underway, under the night sky, a mustached man in a suit and tie emerged from the march of 15,000, and conspicuously walked under NEFAC's black flag. Anarchists, largely with their faces covered by black bandanas, began to give the suited man suspicious looks. None too concerned, the man loudly stated, *“I thought I would march with my anarchist friends for a while!”* The suited man continued under the black flag, all smiles, for maybe 10 minutes, then moved on to another place in the march. One Boston NEFAC member asked, *“who was that guy?”* And GMAC member SW, without skipping a beat answered, *“That was Peter. He is very possibly the next Governor of Vermont”*, to which a Boston NEFAC member muttered something akin to *“Vermont is a strange fucking place.”* [Clevelle lost to Douglas in that election.]

In addition to union organizing, some members of GMAC became active in the worker co-op movement. In 2004, GMAC member Will Dunbar, with comrades outside of GMAC, opened up the worker owned Langdon Street Café in Montpelier. The café, which was also a bar, drew the participation of a number of people with connections to the Bread and Puppet Theater group. Langdon Street served for a number of years as a community meeting place and venue for radical (participatory) art, as well as organized leftist political talks. The upstairs of the café was occupied by an anarchist book store (Black Sheep Books-also a co-op -co-op members included anarchist writer Cindy Milstein and others with various affiliations to the Institute for Social Ecology). During its years of operation, the cafe often functioned as the meeting location for the AFL-CIO's Washington County Central Labor Council, as well as Workers' Center events. The café remained in operation from 2004 until 2011.

In 2006, GMAC helped build a successful protest against the rightwing anti-immigrant group, the Minutemen. The collective recognized that the leftward trajectory of Vermont could be furthered not only by effective grassroots organizing but also by creating a broad environment that was free of organized fascism and extreme rightwing groups. Keeping Vermont free of organized fascists thus remained a priority for the collective. The Minutemen, for their part, previously acted as an armed anti-immigrant vigilante group with a focus on the southern border with Mexico. In 2006 these right wing militants had hopes of building local chapters along the northern border with Canada. Towards this end, a Massachusetts based Minuteman chapter announced plans to patrol the border between Vermont and Quebec with the hopes (and expectations) of identifying local supporters. GMAC, hearing this news, coordinated efforts with the Burlington chapter of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), local unaffiliated anarchists from the Northeast Kingdom, and even the separatist Second Vermont Republic. In the end, 50 Vermonters turned out in the rain to protest this racist group and to demand that they leave Vermont. The Minutemen, numbering only 3-5 out-of-staters panicked, failed to show up, and instead decided to walk a bike path in the nearby city of Newport (near the border) for an hour or two before calling it quits.

GMAC and a number of its recruited supporters attended the rally with pistols under their coats and rifles ready in their vehicles. The motivation here was never to see a repeat of what happened in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1979, when the Klan shot and killed 5 activists at a rally opposing racism. But instead of a shootout, GMAC and the protestors marched to the border where they met with friendly anti-Minutemen protesters in Quebec. These included NEFAC members from north of the border. There handshakes were exchanged, songs of solidarity sung, and a soccer ball was kicked back and forth across the official line separating these nations.

Later that night, a number of local anarchists (unaffiliated with GMAC) located the motel where the Minutemen were staying. Accompanied by a member of GMAC, these anarchists laid in wait. By the end of the night, one Minuteman suffered a bloodied nose, and another, their apparent leader, had his truck

vandalized. The next day the Minutemen left Vermont, never to return. They recruited no one from the Green Mountain State.

All told, the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective remained very active in numerous aspects of Vermont's social movement through much of the 2000s. Its increasingly deep relationships led to GMAC members joining the Steering Committee of the Vermont Workers Center, and becoming members of the NWU/United Auto Workers, the Teamsters, the United Electrical Workers, and the AFL-CIO in general. A member of GMAC, Van Deusen, served as a District Vice President within the Vermont AFL-CIO, and, again, KW, another GMAC member, was elected as Chief Steward of the MDWU, UE Local 221.

In addition to organizing active and militant street protests, GMAC continued to engage in struggle through the written word. In 2002 the collective launched the publication *Catamount Tavern News*. This newspaper, for a time, was the only statewide print publication in Vermont, and was the only Vermont media source with a Quebec Affairs Desk (first based out of Quebec City, and later staffed by MD –an ex-NEFAC member- out of Montreal). The paper was published seasonally from 2002-2009. By 2009 it claimed 50 distribution points across the state, and had a circulation of 1,500 (considerable given a state population of just over 600,000). In 2008 it affiliated (as a worker owned operation) with the Teamsters Local 1L, making it the only unionized newspaper in Vermont. In addition to writers from GMAC, it also published works by James Haslam (Director of the Vermont Workers Center), Traven Leyshon (President of the Washington County Central Labor Council AFL-CIO-and later Secretary/Treasurer of the Vermont AFL-CIO), Brian Tokar (well-known environmentalist), Cindy Milstein (from the Institute of Social Ecology), and leftist-economist Doug Hoffer (who was elected as Vermont State Auditor from the Vermont Progressive Party in 2012). The publication also printed interviews with a number of notable Vermonters including farm organizer Peter Sterling, longtime activist Anthony Pollina, and Iraqi Veterans Against the War member Drew Cameron. While the focus of the paper was on the worker and farmer struggles specific to Vermont (as well as cultural issues), it also provided coverage of national protests and Black Bloc actions, as well as coverage about a social movement within Provence Quebec, within New Orleans in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, from the streets of Paris during the 2008 French Protests, and EZLN/Zapatista efforts from within Chiapas, Mexico.

Initially the newspaper was edited by LV. Later, GMAC member SW became editor. In its final years, GMAC co-founder David Van Deusen assumed this role. The paper, with some success, strove to bridge the usual gap between concepts of revolutionary social transformation and regular non-initiated wage workers. It sought to achieve this through the publication of articles and material that further reflected the interest of regular Vermonters. With this in mind the newspaper, at various times, covered the Vermont Golden Gloves boxing tournament, included a regular hunting and fishing column (written by Joana "Black Jack" Banis), a column on the harvesting and use of wild plants, a crossword puzzle, and (recognizing the necessity of the cultural struggle against

contemporary capitalism) printed poetry and artwork. During its years of print, it was not uncommon for its contents to be read and debated in working class taverns, especially in Brattleboro (taverns being common distribution points for the paper). GMAC members LV, Will Dunbar and Xavier Massot played key roles in the operations of the paper, as did fellow travelers (who never joined the collective) such as JR. LV, its first editor, made the crossword puzzle, Dunbar served as a staff writer and distributor for the Northeast Kingdom area of Vermont, Massot as Obituaries Editor, and JR (a self-proclaimed socialist) as staff photographer and Image/Design Editor.

While Catamount Tavern News was perhaps the most visible written organ of GMAC, the collective also made regular contributions to NEFAC's regional English language newspaper, *Strike*, and to its quarterly magazine, *The Northeastern Anarchist*. Even so, the collective's seminal written political expression must be judged as the pamphlet entitled *Neither Washington Nor Stowe: Common Sense For the Working Vermonter* [Catamount Tavern Press, Vermont, 2004]. The first edition, composed and printed while still engaged with the MDWU and DFV, reflected the later maturity of the group. While concerning itself with the core transformation of society from a modern capitalist one to a libertarian socialist one, the work largely spoke the language of the common Vermonter. From the pamphlet:

"Because of this remoteness our Green Mountains often feel a century away from Boston, and a million miles from New York. Yet we are still tangled in the treacherous web of Washington politicians and the wealthy elite from Wall Street, to Texas, to Stowe. We are our own people, yet we are compelled to mimic the same bureaucratic structures in our government and economic dead ends in our communities that strangle the common working person from California to Maine."

And later, while seeking to frame the domestic challenge faced by Vermonters:

"There are, in fact, two Vermont's: One of wealth and privilege, and one of hard work and sweat. If Vermonters have any chance of success against the forces of Washington and Wall Street, the battle must start in our own backyard against the business and political elite of Montpelier and Stowe. We must guard against the sly maneuvers of both the conservative and the liberal status quo in Vermont, and fight to win more power for ourselves in our towns and workplaces... There will be no victory over the enemy without, before there is victory over the enemy within. Fore it is the privileged and powerful locally and their dupes who will stand as the first serious line of defense for the privileged and powerful classes in general. So do we bow our heads, mutter curses under our breath, and continue to subsist on the scraps they throw to us- or do we dare to struggle and dare to win against the local elite?"

Drawing on Vermont's deep revolutionary, anti-establishment, and rural tradition, this pamphlet sought to explain the post-revolutionary society as an extension of the Town Meeting system which remains embedded deeply in Vermont consciousness. The work further drew on contemporary examples such as the Dairy Farmers of Vermont and Montpelier Downtown Workers Union to explain how worker and farmer control over the means of production (and the achievement of a non-alienated society) is not only possible, but, perhaps, the logical progression of such movements. In brief, GMAC called for the reorganization of Vermont (and the broader world) through a greatly empowered network of Town Meetings, an expanded and democratic federation of labor organizations, and countywide farmer groups. Staying true to GMAC's early assertions, the pamphlet also called for continuing support and expansion of radical cultural projects such as the Bread & Puppet Theater. Economically, *Washington Nor Stowe* advocated for the elimination of the commodity driven paradigm, in favor of a stable, more cooperative labor hour means of exchange, along with strong socialist rights concerning a persons' basic social wellbeing. This pamphlet, first produced in 2004, was revised and reissued in 2007, and a modified release is planned for 2015-2016. The work, which was distributed through the Green Mountains, concludes with:

“As working class and farming Vermonters, we owe it to our cultural past, the future of our grandchildren, and ourselves to seek the fulfillment of our common dreams and aspirations. We can no more accept a future where our mountains are further masked by the two dimensional trappings of capitalism, then we could a world without seasons. Before consumerism, bureaucracy, and centralization obscure our culture of independence and equality, we must come together in order to reassert that which is just. For this we must continue to build the popular organizations that will inherit our hills, and we must build them so as they face the proverbial south. And for us, that is toward direct democracy, socialism, and creativity. In a word, we are a people who continually look toward the end of winter, and friends with a little hard work the spring will find us.”

The fall & legacy

During its active years, the collective, which had no more than 20 members (total), cooperated with a number of leftist organizations. GMAC often lent support to the ongoing efforts of the Workers Center. On occasion it would work with organizations such the Dairy Farmer of Vermont, the United Electrical Workers, the AFL-CIO, and even the International Socialist Organization. It further maintained friendly relations with activists within the Vermont Progressive Party. Although GMAC would later criticize and distant itself³ it even worked with the Second Vermont Republic (as outlined above) in

³ See the article “Vermont Secession: Democracy and the Extreme Right”, Catamount Tavern News, spring, 2007.

issuing a joint statement against the racist Minutemen. These efforts were often met with skepticism by other revolutionary anarchists (often by those same anarchists who previously opposed GMAC's militant assertions concerning the Black Bloc). However, based on its analysis of contemporary capitalism and its revolutionary commitments, GMAC argued that a broad-based mass movement from below was necessary. For GMAC, the revolution was both a physical and cultural challenge that unfolded overtime, but could explode in an instant. As such, engagement in mass and visible street actions, as well as engagement in mass organizing efforts, were understood as the key to success.

To recognize that a small insular collective, alone, is incapable of throwing off the chains of social/cultural/ economic oppression is to come to one of three conclusions: (1) that revolution is in fact impossible; (2) that a uniquely new mass movement must be built from the ground up; or (3) that revolutionaries must work with those mass organizations already in existence in order to influence a left turn in their direction. The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective emphatically rejected the first of these conclusions, finding history to tell a different story. GMAC then sought to synthesize the second and third of these conclusions into concerted series of actions. In short, GMAC worked with existing organizations, where possible, to build *new* expressions of class struggle that would be more grounded in anarchist principles than its parent groups—e.g., the support for the Dairy Farmers of Vermont and Montpelier Downtown Workers Union (although it could be argued that the Vermont Workers Center, excluding the question of Black Blocs, was as far left as GMAC). Finally, GMAC saw no compelling reason not to work with *existing* mass organizations in a defensive capacity aimed at overcoming further attacks of capitalist and reactionary interest against working people: e.g., its collaborations with the ISO and SVR in opposition to the Minutemen, with organized labor against acute attacks of the boss against workers, and with numerous coalitions calling for a withdrawal of U.S. troops from foreign occupations.

The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective never officially disbanded. However, by 2006 the only original member remaining in the collective was Van Deusen (although Massot later became an active contributor to Catamount Tavern News). After Van Deusen ran for and was elected as First Constable by his Vermont town (2007), NEFAC, in general, expressed concerns that being elected to office (especially an office associated with limited local law enforcement powers) ran counter to the political principles of the federation. As a result, Van Deusen resigned from NEFAC, and began to distance himself from GMAC. For a time, through the continuing efforts of Will Dunbar and HB, the collective continued on. Even so, no longer engaged in a defining strategic project, the collective soon drifted into inactivity. The one GMAC project that had a solid, if limited life beyond 2007, was Catamount Tavern News which was printed into 2009 (although, by that time, it no longer claimed to be a publication of GMAC). Since GMAC's decline (post-2007), former members have occasionally come together (lending the GMAC name), but only for reissuing or revising previously written works. The time of the Green Mountain

Anarchist Collective engaging in political action, as a distinct organization, has past.

So how should one assess the legacy of this anarchist organization from the rural and rugged landscapes of the Green Mountains? On the one hand, GMAC's most ambitious political project, the Montpelier Downtown workers Union, failed to achieve lasting success. The Peoples' Round Table Organizing Committee did not achieve immediate political victories. Even the Dairy Farmers of Vermont (which GMAC played a small supporting role in) was compelled to close down its farmer controlled milk processing plant in 2008. On the other hand, GMAC spent considerable energy helping to build the Vermont Workers Center. And today, the Workers Center is the most effective and powerful grassroots organization in the State (largely responsible for creating a political environment whereby minimum wage was increased to above \$10). GMAC also played a strong role in shutting down the Minutemen's Vermont organizing drive. The war and military occupations that GMAC resisted are either over or winding down. There is no Free Trade of the Americas Agreement. And politically, Vermont continues to evolve according to a leftist trajectory, largely counter to the direction of the rest of the nation. GMAC did not achieve these victories on its own. But GMAC, along with thousands (if not tens of thousands) of other Vermonters, and millions of north Americans, did its part. It resisted and experimented in new ways through which revolution could be hinted at. GMAC, as part of a broader, diverse, bottom-up movement, achieved politically successes. But of course, the battle, let alone the class war, is far from won. Capitalism, although threatened along the periphery, remains essentially intact. And yet still, the resistance continues to grow in these parts of the Northeastern woods commonly referred to as Vermont. After all, history, radical change, and even revolution ebb and flow with the organizations, groups, classes, and individuals that are periodically sparked into flame by the necessity of fight. The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, for seven years, took risks, fought battles, and reflected on its wins and losses. In brief, it made a contribution to anti-authoritarian revolutionary struggle.

About the author

David Van Deusen co-founded the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective and is a former member of Anti-Racist Action. He is a past District Vice President and Member-At-Large of the Vermont AFL-CIO & served on the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs. David is also a past member of the United Auto Workers Local 1981, Teamsters Local 1L, United Electrical Workers Local 221, and co-authored the Black Bloc Papers & Neither Washington Nor Stowe. In addition, he was elected to two terms on his local Select Board (endorsed by the VT Progressive Party, VT Liberty Union Party & the AFL-CIO), and three terms as First Constable. He currently is a Senior Union Rep for the Vermont State Employees Association (representing road crew workers), is a member of the Vermont Workers' Center, and rides a Union made Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Of Icons, of Myths, and of Internationalists¹

Peter Waterman

“The revolution we wanted was not the revolution we helped to produce.”... As a new generation of activists begin to find their voices, Davis urged them [to] not only question the celebrated legacies of leaders like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Biko’s and even her own, but to devise a new language of struggle.

[Angela Davis at a Steve Biko Memorial event, South Africa, 2016](#)

Abstract

The iconisation and/or mythologisation of prominent ‘internationalists’ (the active individual bearers/promoters/subjects of international solidarity) is problematic. The iconisation/iconoclasm is revealed in the case of Rigoberta Menchú Tum (Nobel Peace Prize 1992), around whom a remarkable academic and political controversy arose. It revealed many of the problems that arise when when ‘the subaltern speaks’, and a new kind of international icon appears. But the Rigoberta books also reveal to us a contemporary kind of internationalist/internationalism. The problem of myths/mythologisation is revealed in a recent essay by Doug Ennaa Greene that defends/promotes such by Leftist social movements. Greene mentions such international/ist figures as the Peruvian, Jose Carlos Mariátegui and the Argentinian, Che Guevara. It is here argued, however, that we need to approach both such outstanding historical and contemporary internationalists free of iconisation and mythology, treating them as neither saints nor sinners but compañer@s.

¹ This paper draws in part from an older and much longer one (Waterman 1999). It makes limited reference to the more recent literature of or on social movement auto/biographies, including a recently compiled bibliography (Waterman, this issue) which should nonetheless be consulted by anyone interested in the subject.

Of icons and internationalists



Rigoberta Menchu with Rolando Moran/Ricardo Ramirez (1929-98), during peace negotiations, 1996, that ended decades of military repression and guerrilla warfare in Guatemala. If she represents one face of a contemporary internationalism, he represented, successively, two faces of the historical Communist one. We could do with a non-iconic, non-mythologising biography of him.²

Following her Nobel Peace Award in 1992, a controversy broke out around Rigoberta Menchú Tum. This concerned both her first book, *I, Rigoberta Menchu* (Menchú 1987) and her second one, *Crossing Borders* (Menchú 1998a).

I, Rigoberta Menchu (henceforth *I, RM*) contributed to making this indigenous Guatemalan woman activist an international icon, and provided perhaps the main stimulus for US/Western European solidarity movements to propose her for the Nobel Peace Prize. It was after this, and with her consequent international reputation, that Rigoberta became a major public figure, speaking to an indigenous, national and international audience on a range of peace, democracy, indigenous rights and related issues.

The controversy about the use/abuse of the Latin American *testimonio* had actually began earlier amongst anthropologists and other academics in the US (Chronicle of Higher Education 1999, Gugelberger 1996, Lancaster 1998).³ It

² I knew him as Ricardo Ramírez when we worked together as editors of *World Student News*, magazine of the International Union of Students in Communist Prague, in the later 1950s. At that time we were both international Communists. Ricardo, who had met Che Guevara earlier, during the US-backed coup against the leftist Arbenz government of Guatemala, later became part of the informal international *Guevarista* movement. For my own memories of Ricardo, see Waterman (2014: 'The Insurrectionary Guatemalan').

³ For a compressed summary of the issues, see Gugelberger 1998, which discusses the second book of Rigoberta precisely in terms of its differences with her first.

passed into the public sphere with the publication of a book on Menchú and *I, RM* by David Stoll (1998). This threw doubt on both the literal veracity of her first testimony and its claim to represent the whole indigenous Guatemalan community. Whilst, I think, treating Menchú with some respect, Stoll argued that the testimony was a product of the relationship between her, her community, the armed insurrectionary movement she then identified with, and the international peace and justice movement itself. Despite the *New York Times* press spin on the book, with Rigoberta as a 'tarnished laureate' (Rohter 1998) Stoll also publicly stated that he considered the Rigoberta phenomenon as having contributed to the peace process within Guatemala (Fernandez Garcia 1998).

This was, however, not the first controversy around *I, RM*, since, as Stoll records, there had been a long and complex series of disputes between Rigoberta and her Venezuelan/French interviewer/editor, Elizabeth Burgos Debray, concerning both the text and the income from *IRM*. Following the publication in English of Rigoberta's second book, *Crossing Borders* (Menchú 1998a, henceforth *CB*), another row blew up. The co-editors of this one accused the socialist Verso Books in London of intellectual theft in deliberately leaving their names not simply off the cover but out of the book as a whole.⁴ Verso, however, denied any intention to mislead or misuse, explaining the matter as due to their translation having been done from a manuscript which did not carry these names, and the following failure of the copyright holders to point out any shortcoming in the English draft supplied them for commentary. They also promised rectification (Verso 1998). The accusation of intellectual theft against Verso by Rigoberta's collaborators nonetheless suggests the sensitivity surrounding her books.

The controversy, more significantly, suggested what happens when the world's voiceless begin to find tongue, when for the first time 'the subaltern speaks'.⁵

⁴ The Spanish-language original of *Crossing Borders* (Menchú 1998b) has a very different appearance. Entitled, *Rigoberta Menchú: Granddaughter of the Mayas*, it indicates the two collaborators on its front cover. It also has preliminary statements by a Spanish leader of Amnesty International, of the Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano, and of one of the collaborators himself. In an acknowledgement, Rigoberta expresses her thanks to this man and his colleague. The copy I have seen was a *third* 1998 edition, which indicated, moreover, that the book had won a major Spanish prize for 'International Co-operation'. *CB* was thus reinforcing her iconic status within the framework of what is still called 'development aid'.

⁵ The reference here is to Spivak 1988, who suggested that s/he could not. As for the iconisation of the marginalised indigenous or outcaste third world woman, this did not begin with Rigoberta. Before her there was Domitila Barrios de Chungara (Barrios 1979), a woman of the indigenous mining communities in Bolivia. After her came Phoolan Devi, the Indian bandit leader, immortalised in what many consider to be the best Indian movie ever, *Bandit Queen*. There was, on its release, a considerable national and international controversy around this movie, with Phoolan Devi suggesting her story had been ripped off and distorted by the Indian-British production team responsible. Feminists crossed swords and theories, some stating that the movie was sexually exploitative, others that it showed an independent and empowered outcaste village woman wreaking vengeance on her higher-caste rapists in a manner available to her. Yes, they did use her. Yes it is a great movie. Or, if you prefer, the other way round.

These voices are neither innocent nor simple, nor can they be taken as *the* voice of a particular community or universe. Nor are they even *heard* without the mediation of comparatively wealthy, sophisticated or powerful Others, with their own already-developed skills, institutions and agendas - political, communicational or academic. Rigoberta was, over the years between her two books, partially formed by the 'international of goodwill' that both campaigned for and gave her the Nobel.

But this is not to disparage the international solidarity movements either, or even the funding agencies largely dependent on liberal-democratic states or capitalist corporations/foundations. It is rather to recognise a turning point in the history of international solidarity movements. For, as Stoll's book reveals (though this is not his intention), these have, over the last 20-30 years, operated largely on a one-way, top-down, North/West-to-South/East axis and direction.

This has been a 'substitution solidarity'⁶ in which the rich/powerful/free, left/democratic/liberal movements, in the North/West, have related to the poor/weak/oppressed in the South/East. As Stoll further reveals, these solidarity movements needed such icons. And the regional/national/local movements behind the icons-to-be needed the international solidarity movements. But this was also during a period totally dominated by North/South and East/West dichotomies. And that was before globalisation made us aware of the South in the North and the North in the South (Sousa Santos 1995) or that global problems, global identities and new global social movements existed (or could exist) across, despite of, and against these increasingly blurred frontiers (Pollack 1998).

Regardless of the critique and controversy, *Crossing Borders* provides a unique contribution to an understanding of the new internationalisms. This is largely due to the manner in which it illustrates, in practical, personal and eminently readable terms, recent academic writing on what is variously called 'global civil society', 'the new internationalisms', 'transnational advocacy networks', or the 'global solidarity and justice movement'. Rigoberta's *CB* must have reached thousands more readers than the writing of people like Stoll or myself. If these readers now look at her and her work as my colleagues look at me and mine, this can only contribute to creating the kind of public necessary for a self-reflective and self-critical global solidarity culture.

Rigoberta, the person, her testimonies, her iconic status, it seems to me, stand at another frontier crossing - between an old *internationalism* (a relation between nations, nationals, nationalities, nationalists, nationalisms) and the new more complex, more critical, more self-conscious global solidarities. If the case, finally, raises questions about the role and value of testimony in the

⁶ Rather than presenting 'international solidarity' as a simple and undifferentiated quality, I suggest the following types: Identity, Substitution, Complementarity, Reciprocity, Affinity, Restitution (Waterman 1998/2001:235-8).

creation of international or global community, perhaps it also argues for an end to iconisation in creating a contemporary solidarity.

For further discussion of Rigoberta, consider the response to the controversy of a veteran of Dutch solidarity with Latin America, Mario Coolen (as reported in *Trouw* 1998). Coolen received Rigoberta on her first visit to Europe in 1981, and recognises the extent to which she has become entrapped both in the fame of her Nobel Prize and in the building of her own 'development empire'. At the same time, however, he defends her work - but as creating a 'corporate personality representative of her people'. And he is suspicious of the motives of Stoll. Coolen accuses Stoll of undermining international support work for the Guatemalan *indígenas*, of creating the impression that things were not so bad for them in Guatemala, and of playing along with a familiar US strategy intended to undermine the participation of the *indígenas* in forthcoming elections. Rigoberta herself was reported, in the Guatemalan press, as insisting on the literal truth of *I, RM*.

The Uruguayan revolutionary, Eduardo Galeano, who died in 2015, defended Rigoberta the icon and bitterly attacked Stoll for reproducing US imperial and racist attitudes (Galeano 1999).

Arturo Taracena, a major actor in the creation of the first book, broke a 16-year silence to comment critically on the roles in the controversy played by both Elizabeth Burgos Debray and David Stoll. Taracena, a Guatemalan historian, one-time revolutionary, long-time friend of Rigoberta and co-ordinator of the campaign for her Nobel, said in part:

Rigoberta did not win the Prize ... only because of the book. It was because of her political organising, her leadership role and her political capacity. Rigoberta won the Nobel Prize for an entire trajectory. She was where she had to be at the right time. She was in the United Nations, in Geneva, she campaigned for human rights and for indigenous rights, not only in Guatemala, but throughout the Continent; she managed and maintained a leadership role at a global level. She came back to Guatemala, and she was captured. The Nobel wasn't given to her as a writer; besides, the book came out 10 years before she won the Prize. The Nobel Prize was a message to all of Latin America from Europe regarding the question of indigenous peoples and the construction of democracy and peace, but many people refuse to see that'. (Aceituno 1999).

Grandin and Goldman (1999) commented as follows:

perhaps Western readers expect only simplicity and naiveté from Indian women. And perhaps it was this expectation that Menchú skilfully used to publicise the wholesale slaughter being conducted by the Guatemalan military [...] Similar to what he accuses Menchú of doing, Stoll arranges and suppresses events to support his claims. Stoll would have us believe that if not for the

guerrillas, the military might not have become the most bloodthirsty killing machine in the hemisphere. Yet by reducing Guatemala's conflict to the back-and-forth sparring between the guerrillas and the military, Stoll wilfully - or ignorantly - misrepresents the history of Guatemalan political opposition and repression. It is unfortunate that at this moment, when truth commissions and exhumations are opening the secrets of the recent past to scrutiny, Stoll's work provides both these stereotypes with a scholarly patina.

Of myths and internationalists

Douglas Enaa Greene (2016) has written a wide-ranging, learned and challenging essay on the role of the [myth and revolution](#), an essay illustrated by that icon (see above) of revolutionary internationalism, Che Guevara. Greene's introductory paragraph embraces the Revolutionary Myth:

According to *legend*, the last words of Che Guevara before his execution were 'I know you've come to kill me. Shoot coward, you are only going to kill a man.' What Che meant here was that the cause of revolution would live on despite his death. *Whether or not the myth is true*, the meaning behind it has inspired revolutionaries throughout the world. In certain ways, *the myth surrounding Che Guevara has been just as important as the truth*. In fact, myths provide a crucial underpinning to how ideology and society is able to function. *Myths play a major role not only in society, but in radical political movements*, as was recognized by the French syndicalist Georges Sorel and the Peruvian communist Jose Carlos Mariátegui. *And despite the scientific pretensions of much of the left, myths also supply inspiration, passion and faith to militants in the course of struggle*. (My italics. PW)⁷

Now, I happen to have written on two of these revolutionary icons, Mariátegui (1894–1930) and Che (1928–1967), if not Sorel or others discussed by Greene. In the case of both Mariátegui and Che this was in relation to their internationalism. And in both cases I made an effort, precisely, to critique their own myth-making and/or others' mythologisation of their roles. I do not pretend to have captured these roles, but, I would like to hope to have helped to *de-mythologise* them.⁸

⁷ Che is still, 2016, a subject of Left admiration (and debate?). See [here](#).

⁸ For the non-mythical Che we can turn to the Congo disaster, which could be taken as prefiguring that in Bolivia where he died. His [Congo diaries](#) make for depressing reading. He describes this Cuban state-sponsored intervention in distant Africa as one of 'foreigners who went to risk their lives in an unknown land where people spoke a different language and were linked to them only by ties of proletarian internationalism'. That there were no proletarians at either end here is indicative of an internationalism existing only in the imagination of these foreigners. Che goes on to castigate the Cuban authorities, if not its *Lider Maximo*, Fidel, to whom he is writing):

I appreciate the role that myth has played 'not only in society, but in radical political movements'. But then there is the essential ambiguity of myth-making recognised by Greene himself. And, given the endless global variety of past, present - and hypothetical future - myths in 'radical political movements', I *can* 1) find a place for them within the 'global justice and solidarity movement' but *cannot* 2) see them as productive of the non-particularistic and dialogical universalism toward which I am oriented. I grew up with *Man Against Myth* by one-time Communist and US witch-hunt resister [Barrows Dunham](#). And I had myself to go through a prolonged struggle against Soviet (and other Marxist) icons and myth-making.⁹ Note what Greene says:

There is a dark side to myths, rituals and symbols that affects socialist and communist movements, just like religions, that needs to be recognised. The PCF (French Communist Party. PW] was said to be...the secular equivalent of the Catholic Church: with their own dogma, orthodoxies, saints, martyrs, heresies, and demons. [...] For example, in the Soviet Union, those who were deemed showing 'lack of faith'...were not just seen as a 'loyal opposition' but as traitors.

So it does seem to me that the only principle and effective appeal against such 'bad' myths is not a 'good' myth but an appeal to the Enlightenment principle of reason, stripped of its instrumental rationality and particularistic universalism, qualified by the practice of openness to and respectful dialogue with other civilisations/cosmologies.¹⁰ So how did I respond to my iconised and mythologised internationalists?

With a very heavy heart, I calculated that [his own on-ground efforts] would require \$5,000 a month. Now I learn that a sum 20 times higher is given to people who pass through [Cuba?] just once, so that they can live well in all the capitals of the African world, with no allowance for the fact that they receive free board and lodging and often their travel costs from the main progressive countries [in the Soviet bloc?]. Not a cent will reach a wretched front where the peasants suffer every misery you can imagine, including the rapaciousness of their own protectors; nor will anything get through to the poor devils stuck in Sudan. (Whisky and women are not on the list of expenses covered by friendly governments, and they cost a lot if you want quality.)

I am left wondering how Douglas Enaa Greene would turn this state-funded disaster into a heroic myth.

⁹ In relation to Marx himself, I note two opposing dispositions. One is that of the Marxism International Archive (MIA), which has an entry on '[Marx, Myths and Legends](#)' concerned to defend Marx from such. It includes the 'myth' about 'Marx's Illegitimate Son'. The second is that of Mary Gabriel, author of a biography of Marx and his family. This item is entitled '[Marx The Man Vs Marx The Myth](#)'. She argues that he did have an illegitimate son, who he quite disregarded. Whilst the MIA entry is interesting it is also predictable: Myths Bad, Marx Good. In so far as Gabriel presents a three-dimensional and contradictory Marx my sympathies lie with her presentation. In her [book](#), he seems rather closer to the contradictory and fallible *compañer@s* I know ... including myself.

¹⁰ Consider here the mythology preached and iconisation practiced by the [Nation of Islam](#). The great Malcolm X (later: el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) eventually criticised both its idols and its

With Mariátegui (henceforth JCM), it was a matter of translating and publicising his essay on ‘Internationalism and Nationalism’ (1923), particularly for its unique and brilliant insight that ‘communication is the nervous system of internationalism and solidarity’. My critique (Waterman 2005: Part 3) was for this essay’s political-economic determinism, its assumption 1) that capitalist industrialisation was inevitably producing in the proletariat the privileged revolutionary subject and 2) that this proletariat was also the privileged bearer of internationalism.¹¹

In the case of Che (whose poster we had up at home for a decade or more) it was a matter of recognising his iconic status but arguing that he was more of a revolutionary nationalist (a serial-nationalist?), on the model of Giuseppe Garibaldi or Simón Bolívar, if with a distinct, 19th-20th century Marxist aspect. A book on Che, subtitled ‘Writings on Internationalism’ (Guevara 1989) reveals that this was a subject which he never theorised or conceptualised. (For my own brief take on Che, see *Appendix 1*). His famous call, at a state-sponsored conference of the Tricontinental for ‘two, three or many Vietnams’ is one from which the newest emancipatory global social movements would react with shock, if not with horror. Whilst Che would have been aware of the cost to the Vietnamese of that war, he would surely have reacted, with at least shock, to what a united Vietnam has become.

The point of both critiques was not to rubbish these heroic revolutionaries but to consider them historically and to see what we might learn from their lives today. But why does Greene, a mythologiser of the Russian Revolution and the early Soviet state, a convinced Communist of the Leninist tradition, feel the need for the revolutionary myth?¹²

mythology by shifting his identity from the Nation of Islam to Sunni Islam. Whilst the latter was combined with radical ideas of a more-modern and/or more Western cast, and whilst one can understand both sets of beliefs – and their spokesperson - as expressing the humiliation, frustration and opposition of US African-Americans to their oppression, neither seems at all adequate to overcoming the oppression/oppressors they reveal. Consider, on the other hand, this, from a commentary on the myth-making surrounding a Post-Soviet oligarch:

The truth is that in public life, and especially in politics, myths are harmful and dangerous. The struggle against them, however, must not be reduced merely to running down the heroes of the myths — the individuals concerned are least of all to blame. The challenge lies elsewhere, in understanding the real content of the processes that have taken on mythical forms, and also in understanding what really lies behind them. In line with this, the question of demythologizing social consciousness also takes on a pressing form. (Bulavka and Buzgalin 2016).

¹¹ This effort was for a workshop, was drafted in both Spanish and English, and whilst still somewhat drafty is available [here](#).

¹² Here I cannot resist recalling the final demonstration at a European Social Forum, 2002, in Florence, in which the ... err ... Vanguard Position? ... had been captured (no vote, no consultation) by the Socialist Workers Party (UK), chanting ‘One Solution, Revolution!’). To which my response (regrettably not verbalized at that time and place) was that they didn’t know the difference between a solution and a problem.

After a consideration of the the social role played by myth throughout history, and the academic literature on its various functions, he declares that

[E]ven though socialism is founded on materialistic and scientific principles, myths, symbols and rituals play key roles in teaching militants how to live, fight and die as comrades for the communist ideal.

In considering internationalists and internationalisms, I would be inclined to distinguish symbol and ritual from myth, and particularly from *mythologisation*. But, then, I am also more interested in seeing how internationalist militants live, fight and *survive*. And in how they construct their own utopias rather than devote themselves to a ‘communist ideal’ that seems to exist before they ‘play key roles’ in its realisation.

Perhaps Greene needs the myth of revolution because the reality of the Russian one that he presents, in primarily positive terms, is, he admits, today ‘in ruins’. ‘[B]ut’, he adds ‘a new socialist world will rise in its place, to serve the interests of a redeemed humanity’. He is, though only in his Conclusion, however, cognisant of

the dogmas and inquisitions that an embrace of myths can encourage in radical movements.

Oh!

If they are so ambiguous, should we not try to do without them? It seems that Greene’s embrace and recommendation of revolutionary myth-making is a necessary complement to his political-economic determinism, to the shortcomings of what we have to call ‘actually non-existing socialism’.

Whilst Greene happens to mention two of my historical internationalists, he does not address himself centrally to their internationalism. So let me return to the historical internationalists and the contemporary bearers of what I would call ‘global justice and solidarity’ (with ‘global’ meaning both universal and holistic).

Now, Mary Gabriel has written a unique biography of Marx (communist, exile, cosmopolitan, internationalist) and his family entitled *Love and Capital* (Gabriel 2011a) I thought – given its understanding and exposition of his work – it could as well have been called ‘Capital and Love’. In a journalistic piece on her own book she writes:

[A]t the start of the twentieth century, when Marx’s name finally gained the currency that eluded him during his own lifetime, the Karl Marx that emerged was nearly more myth than man. To some, he was a stern oracle whose words

could be manipulated to support repressive governments, justify massacres, and fight wars. To others, he personified political and social evil. These viewed him as anti-freedom, anti-religion, anti-family, and anti-progress.

To many others — those tens of millions without food or shelter, those children condemned to work long hours, those men and women exploited as the rich became richer — he was the beneficent father who offered the hope of a meal and a bed, and ultimately a brighter future. But all of those visions of Marx were muddled. They reflected more on the beliefs and aspirations of the person or party that conjured him up than on the Marx who lived from 1818 to 1883, devoting his life to the study of man's interaction with other men. (Gabriel 2011b).

I think we do such internationalists and ourselves a fatal disservice in iconising or mythologizing them. Or by adding - to a political-economic determinism - iconisation or mythologisation as the active, creative, imaginative, humanising, supplement. Iconisation is an invitation to iconoclasm or to *counter-iconisation* (Trotsky versus Stalin or Lenin, Mao versus Che, Che versus Fanon - or any other set of hypothetically competing icons). Mythologisation surely thrives at the expense of both a critical posture and effective strategy.

I prefer, in considering internationalist icons and myths, that we adopt the posture favoured by Gramsci, 'Pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will'.

In reference to the active or outstanding bearers of internationalism, I strongly suggest that we consider them as neither saints nor sinners but rather as *compañer@s* (an androgynous Spanish-language form that can mean friend, workmate, associate, sexual partner, or political comrade). A *compañer@* is, surely, someone one dialogues with, not someone either glorifies or lies about - or to. Today the Internet makes it increasingly possible to both talk about and sometimes even to those we admire. It is surely in the spirit of the above that we should consider study of the *new* internationalists.

In/conclusions

It seems - and with this thought we must bring these reflections to an end - that the creation of a new internationalism requires not so much the right ideology (in the sense of a pre-existing discourse backed by one or other kind of authority) but a particular kind of behaviour, a way of relating to other people, and to their ideas. And here we return to the necessity and possibility of a growing number of people and peoples (armed with information, disposed to tolerance and flexibility, culturally sensitive, equipped with technology, committed ethically) creating global solidarity communities of their own. In order to achieve this, I think we need to publicise internationalist (h)activists in such a light that the public response may be 'I admire her/him', but might be 'I should do that', 'I could do that' and (previously here unconsidered) 'I think I could enjoy doing that'.

Appendix

Che Guevara (1928-67) is not only the most famous revolutionary internationalist activist of this century but is also considered something of a theorist of internationalism. Yet, whilst he wrote extensively about Latin America, the Third World, imperialism, revolution and international economic, political and military relations, he seems to have rarely addressed himself to the concept of internationalism and, where he did so, tended to conflate 'ties of proletarian internationalism' with support for - evidently non-proletarian - 'wars of liberation'... Initially an adventurer, who travelled the sub-continent, Che, an Argentinean, was inspired by the bolivarista tradition, and threw himself into the struggle to defend the radical-nationalist Arbenz regime in Guatemala against a US-backed military coup (1953). He then became involved in the Cuban Revolution and was a leading figure in the new revolutionary government. Along the way he became a convinced Marxist-Leninist, though later critical of the Soviet variety. The combination of radical-nationalist bolivarismo and socialist Marxism-Leninism served well in contributing to the various *tercermundista* (thirdworldist) international(ist) projects produced in Cuba at this time. These ranged from the diplomatic, to the political-agitational, and, at the extreme, logistical/military/intelligence support to insurrectionary movements. Nor must we forget the cultural internationalism, of which the brilliant posters were just the best-known products. Che increasingly involved himself personally with such revolutionary movements, notably - and unsuccessfully - in the Congo (1965) and in Bolivia, where he met his death. Che, combining the youthful irreverence of the 1960s, the looks of a Dean or Brando and the aura of Jesus - was the outstanding international icon of the generation of 1968. Che was himself uneasy in the new Cuban state he had helped bring into existence and sought to contribute personally to a tricontinental insurrection. After his death, his tradition was continued by the Cuban party/state, in the person of Manuel 'Barba Roja' Pineira. Later Cuba became increasingly involved in military aid to Third World regimes, some of a distinctly repressive, militaristic and even imperial nature. Che as icon lives on, as could be witnessed in streets and shacks on the 30th anniversary of his death in Latin America, 1997. He has also been the subject of two major biographies, both of which throw light on his internationalism. He may be the last great representative of insurrectionary nationalist internationalism. Yet Che, as portable and reproducible icon, also points forward to the communications internationalisms of the present day, for which the audio and visual count as much as the written and spoken. He, too, combines (or exchanges) the roles of *agitator and agent*. (Waterman 1999).

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About the author

Born London, 1936, Peter Waterman worked twice for international Communist front organisations in Prague (for students in the 1950s, trade unions in the 1960s) before abandoning politics, journalism (and Communism) for academia. He became a Senior Lecturer at an institute of development studies in The Hague (1972-98), specialising on unions, labour and social movements, and (computer) communications in relation to such. He edited the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* through the 1980s. He has lived in Czechoslovakia, Nigeria, South Africa and Peru, and been published in English, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, German and other languages. He spends three months a year in Lima with his wife, Virginia Vargas Valente, a Peruvian feminist writer and activist. He has played a significant role in continuing academic/political exchanges on 'social movement unionism' and 'the new internationalisms'.

Gerard Kester's search for democracy: on the autobio of a Dutch academic specialist on worker self-management

Peter Waterman

Interviewer's introduction

I was intrigued when a former colleague in Labour Studies at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, told me that he had written his autobiography. This was about six months after I had published mine (Waterman 2014). This colleague was Gerard Kester, who had welcomed me into Labour Studies at the ISS in The Hague, when I joined as a specialist on Third World unions in the early 1970s.

Gerard, specializing on workers' participation and self-management, was for me both a model and challenge. When I arrived, 1972, Gerard was already well-established at the Institute, busy with teaching, consulting for various other institutes and governments, with research in Malta, field-cum-research trips to Yugoslavia, and then with doing a PhD part-time (Kester 1980) during the breaks permitted by our nine-month labour studies diploma programme. Although we had radically different orientations toward the latter, I am not sure that without his model, I would ever have done my PhD (many of our colleagues never completed PhDs).

All I actually now wanted from Gerard was to know what his reaction might be to my autobio, in which he gets some mention. What I received from him was some 1,000 pages of his own autobio (Kester 2014)! The work, which is in Dutch, was unpublished, though Gerard had had it professionally edited and laid out. And it was, and is, therefore camera-ready for either a print or online publication. I want to see it published – in both Dutch and English. But he has reasons for holding up immediate publication.

Reading Gerard's draft, I was struck by parallels, not only in the decade or so we had been together in Labour Studies at the ISS. We are of almost the same age (he is around 79, I am 80 as I write this). He, like me, had started his working life as a journalist, though his experience was even shorter than mine. He was, when I first met him, 1972, married, like me, with two kids, though his were a little younger than mine. He, like me, had had some relationship with the international solidarity/development work of the major Dutch trade union confederation, the FNV.¹

Gerard, like me, travelled widely for his work in the Third World/Developing Countries (take your pick), since ours was and is an institute of development studies. Gerard worked heavily in Africa, whilst I did my PhD on Nigerian trade

¹ For my recent take on some 40 years of the FNV's international solidarity-cum-development cooperation operations, see Waterman (2015)

unions, and been early involved with the South African ones. Gerard had been a frequent visitor to (the then) Communist Yugoslavia and studied 'worker participation and self-management' there.

But any parallels, so far as they were such, were matched (mismatched?) by radical differences of direction. Gerard, whilst never tied to any of them played, I would say, a role close to that of the national and international labour institutions toward the end of the 20th century. I played a marginal one, oriented toward a future labour movement of the – or anyway of my - imagination.

I should say something more about 'Workers' Participation and Self-Management', as the issue appeared in the 1970s-80s. In one of my questions below I mention the book by Assef (now Asef) Bayat on Workers' Control and Self-Management. Elsewhere (Waterman 1993) I commented on this book as follows:

Struggles against authoritarianism within the wage-labour situation are traditional to the labour movement, expressed in terms of 'workers' control', 'workers' self-management' or 'workers' participation'. Recent writing here, however, is taking it beyond the traditional framework by recognising the crisis of socialist strategies, by taking an international perspective (including, for example, tropical African experiences and South African union policy), or by making connections between labour demands and those of the New Alternative Social Movements (see Bayat 1991). The work of Bayat is exceptional in its address to democracy more generally, its awareness of the new social issues and movements, and its response to a range of contemporary literature on alternative social models. His conclusion on the possibilities existing under non-authoritarian capitalist conditions in the Third World are that control may take at least four forms: 1) 'natural' workers' control in the petty-commodity sector; 2) the democratisation of cooperatives; 3) state-sponsored forms resulting from worker pressure (Malta); 4) union attempts to influence enterprise management and national development policy (tropical Africa), efforts of plant-level unions to counter employers' attacks resulting from changing industrial structures (India).

I am not sure that in his autobio Gerard makes such distinctions, either with respect to 'self-management' or to 'democracy'. And I note that recently another veteran of international - or at least European - labour relations, the Marxist Richard Hyman (2015) is discussing 'the very idea of democracy at work'. He concludes:

[T]he struggle for the democratization of work and of the economy requires a new, imaginative – indeed utopian – counter-offensive: a persuasive vision of a different and better society and economy, a convincing alternative to the mantra of greed, commodification, competitiveness and austerity, a set of values which connects with everyday experience at the workplace. Whether this is described as 'good capitalism', post-capitalism or socialism is of secondary importance. The

urgent need is to regain an inspiring vision of unions as a 'sword of justice', which many trade union movements seem to have lost. In other words, unions have to articulate a more humane, more solidaristic and more plausible alternative if they are to vanquish neoliberalism, finding new ways to express their traditional core principles and values and to appeal to a modern generation for whom old slogans have little meaning. And since defending the weak is inescapably a question of power, unions have to help construct a new type of politics – in particular, by engaging with campaigning and protest movements that attract the Facebook and Twitter generation in ways which most trade unions have failed to do (even if many have recently begun to make serious efforts in this direction). Do unions dare to abandon old rules and routines in order to create new strategies? What is required is nothing less than a multinational liberation struggle!

Hyman does not consider the increasingly-all-encompassing but disputable terrain of the digital economy, nor does he consider another possible slogan for his alternative world – 'All in Common!'. But he does raise profound questions about 'worker's self-management', 'democracy', and the relation between these, that I think Gerard tends to circumvent.

Reason enough, anyway, for wanting to interview Gerard. And suggesting he reframe, at will, my questions and add any I had failed to pose.

Peter Waterman, December 2015-April 2016

1. This interview is for an *Interface* Special on Social Movement Autobiographies. In what sense would you consider 'Workers Participation and Self-Management' (WP&SM) a social movement?

I consider WP&SM a social movement in a larger perspective of the democratization of the economy and it is the latter I address in my autobio. This may become clear in my answers to your subsequent questions. My lifetime research interest was the democratization of labour relations and of the economy. The notion of 'worker participation' came in handy to get access to information and funds as WP was innocent and popular. My research was not in relation to the past or present, but to the future (you and I share that orientation) hence my love for 'theories of dynamics'.

2. You seem to have considered WP&SM as crucial to the title of your autobio, 'A Search for Democracy'. Do you consider WP&SM to be fundamental to democracy everywhere? Now and in the future? A global issue rather than one for the Third World/Developing Countries that the ISS was focused on?

This is a misunderstanding. My title 'A Search for Democracy' has only indirectly to do with WP&SM, it is, rather, a reference to democracy in general and should lead to what is going to be the third volume, an autobiographic look ahead to the future of Europe when the struggle must be waged to get the economy under democratic control. It is true that there is much on WP&SM in my autobiography as I have done a lot of research and published widely on it (see Bibliography). I realize that many people saw this as part of my identity. (In Malta I was often greeted as 'Mr Participation'). But I was not a fan of WP as I found it, and my publications make this clear. I was - as I wrote so many times - disappointed with almost all existing worker participation systems I came across and exhausted myself in proposals on how to make participation more meaningful and effective and turn it into instruments in which management and employers could be made accountable to employees.

My real love was fully fledged *self-management*, hence my interest in and studies of Yugoslavia, an Israeli kibbutz and self-managed enterprises in Malta, Sri Lanka and Mali – enterprises which were occupied or taken over by workers and or trade unions. Sadly enough, self-management in Yugoslavia and in all the firms elsewhere no longer exists. Only the kibbutz remains but I understand that a recent wave of privatization has been drastically reducing the number of kibbutzim.

No, I do not think WP&SM is specifically relevant to Third World countries. Beating the neoliberal enterprise is a challenge anywhere in the world, this is the challenge to democracy in general. See my answer to your next question.

3. I recall Workers' Participation *and/or* Self-Management as being labour movement issues in Western Europe and parts of the Third World in the 1970s-80s. This as part of a Post-1968 upsurge in labour and socialist protest and writing at that time (see for example Bayat 1991). I have the impression that interest in WP&SM declined in the 1990s. And then, again, that at least the Self-Management/Workers' Control part, has risen in the new century, now in connection with what I call the 'global justice and solidarity movement', and today using the language less of democracy or socialism than of 'radical-democratisation' or 'the commons'. How do you see the matter?

As you know, there is a world of difference between worker participation and self-management. The first is normally a complement to the privately-owned firm (not always) and the second a definite departure from it. I am extremely happy that, especially in Latin America, self-managed firms are on the increase but hope that they will not face the same fate as the firms I just mentioned, in Malta, etc.

Recently I read an interesting book, *What is to be Done : A Dialogue on Communism, Capitalism and the Future of Democracy*, involving the communist philosopher, Alain Badiou, and the liberal-democrat, Marcel

Gauchet (Badiou and Gauchet 2015). They addressed the same question as Lenin did in 1902 : What is to be Done?, Reformism or Revolution? Poor Badiou did not, of course, want to be associated with the real-life experience of state communism, but was also unable to explain how the communist hypothesis (as he calls it) could be realised without falling back again into totalitarianism. Undemocratic, that is. For him of course 'reformism' is a dirty word. Gauchet argues that reformism is the instrument of change in democracy, and I think the same way. Democracy must and can be the instrument for change - also for fundamental change.

I suspect that the fashion of many writers in speaking of 'radical democracy' or 'revolutionary democracy' is an attempt to smuggle a single ideology (Marxism I presume) back into political discourse, but understanding that the word democracy must feature somewhere today. Let us accept that change, also fundamental change, should be part of the democratic process and not be achieved in a totalitarian way. That is what I have always argued, but this was dismissed as bourgeois bullshit, as the word 'reform' was considered reactionary.

Nevertheless Badiou correctly says that private ownership is the holy cow of capitalism. Indeed, private ownership is the central motor of neoliberalism and it is there where fundamental change is needed. But not by resorting to collective or state ownership. The essence of private ownership lies in the rights derived from it. So let us seek to change the legal framework and the rules of the game, define capital as a cost and labour as a value and link labour-capital relations to the core values of freedom, equality and solidarity. A cumulative series of structural reforms is needed, which are democratically decided and implemented, transforming private ownership into social ownership.

4. How do you see your own academic work and socio-political engagement over the decades? A steady line? A rising one? Something that goes in waves? Or what?

In waves, as far as academic work is concerned. That is inherent in empirical research. It seems to me that here is a great difference between writers who keep ruminating and replaying 19th century ideology, even if it makes for a continual publication output.

Empirical researchers may have years of publishing silence whilst they collect data through interviews, case studies and so on which finally lead to publication. They do not reproduce ideology; they listen and look and report in all honesty what they observe, whether or not it fits their own ideology. So unavoidably they publish in waves. Once a period of empirical research is over they can publish substantively.

In my case there have been four such waves. The first was after I had finished my research on self-management in Yugoslavia and Malta - three books

published between 1976 and 1981 (see again, the Bibliography). A long silence afterwards when I was collecting data in Africa as well as in Europe, a period of incubation. Then came the second wave, five books published between 1992 and 1999). This was followed by another period of incubation. In 2007 I published a book summarizing all my research. And now I am in my fourth wave, there are the two volumes of my autobio and a concluding book on the future of democracy in Europe (Kester 2014, 2015 and Forthcoming).

As for political engagement that is different, this is not a question of being a researcher but of being a citizen. There are no waves, I have always been a democrat at heart, my democratic commitment continually rising but my worries about the functioning of democracy have been also continually growing.

5. Your autobio was inspired by and addressed to your grandchildren. And written in Dutch. It comes over as very much the work of a family man. And, of course, it has, scattered throughout, letters directly addressed to these. To what extent, then, might it, in English translation, communicate to the kinds of workers, unionists or researchers in Europe or the Global South with whom you worked and write about?

As already suggested, it was my grandchildren who asked me to write my autobio, even if they expected a different one from what I finally produced. And perhaps that is because I am not, as you suggest, a family man but a man of the 20th century who is very much concerned about the possible development of democracy in the 21st century. I do a lot of work and should therefore be considered a workaholic rather than a family man.

I do address my worries to my grandchildren but not only to them, hence the title of the autobio. Indeed, the two volumes are actually addressed to all the groups you mention, in short, to the next generations. What I wanted to do was to draw out of my own very personal and professional experience a vision of a better future. That is why my autobio is unfinished. The third volume, that I am currently working on, is precisely trying to draw lessons from the past and project them as a vision of the future. Not that I think I have the answers, but at least I would like them, and also others, to take the future and not the past – as is unfortunately the case today - as the point of reference. And develop a vision for themselves. I have no pretensions here; I know too well that my vision is only one of billions.

6. Do you read or have you read any other auto/biographies? Did you have any such in mind when you wrote yours? How on earth did you ever manage to write 1,000 pages?

Only a few biographies: of Tchaikovski, Verdi, Rimsky Korsakov, Mussorgski, Pushkin, Kazantzakis and Theodorakis, and only one autobiography, by Peter Waterman! No, I had none of these bios in mind at all. I took my old diaries (I had saved all of them) as well as all the letters I had written to my wife (I was travelling so often that I wrote many such), my travel reports and publications, and started writing, just for the fun of it. And because my grandchildren asked me to. I wrote under what most would consider strange conditions, mostly in parks, on terraces of cafés and restaurants in Buenos Aires, with lots of wine. Hence the 1,000 pages. But, as already suggested, it is not yet finished. I am now working on the third volume, a sort of an autobiography of the future – I wish I had a model for that, and I should perhaps drink less wine.

7. Your life's work was made possible by the ISS in which you worked, the endorsement and/or funding of the Dutch FNV union federation and even of the Dutch state and European Union. Did you see any contradiction between such institutions/funders and your 'search for democracy'? Or between their priorities and yours (which I understand to have been to create a relationship of solidarity with those you were working with internationally)?

I was not actually 'involved with the solidarity/development work of the FNV'. I approached them to get funding for a research-cum-education and training program in Africa. I had consulted several universities in Africa as well as the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU, then under Denis Akumu and Abdoulaye Diallo), and the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT, then led by ISS labour studies graduate Thomas Bediako). I submitted a long-term plan which the FNV accepted and financed. Many plans were submitted to them for finance later, but I never got involved in FNV-initiated plans or projects.

I could not care less about any contradictions you mention as long as I could carry out my research in search of more democracy. But you are perhaps too cynical about the motives of ISS and FNV (are they against democracy?) or even the Dutch state and the European Union: they do have funds to work on the development of democracy and it would have been crazy not to make use of such.

8. Your major effort over a decade or more was the APADEP (African Workers' Participation and Development Programme), based at the ISS in The Hague, and resulting in numerous publications, but working with African trade unions at national and regional level, carrying out research and creating some labour studies centres there. Given the subsequent development of Africa and its unions, particularly the Organisation of African Trade Union

Unity (OATUU) and the South African COSATU, how do you now evaluate your APADEP efforts?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the impact of APADEP. More than 10,000 people took part in its activities, many of them in a one- or two-week education programme, but also hundreds of them in much longer programmes and in research and publication activities.

Many present African trade union leaders, at different levels, are APADEP alumni, including Kwasi Adu-Amankwah, the present General Secretary of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Kwasi was for long one of the central figures in APADEP.

An African Labour Research and Education Centre has been established at the African ITUC headquarters in Lomé – a continuation of APADEP. At the University of Cape Coast post-graduate diploma programmes, begun by APADEP, are still being offered. Kessie Moodley (of the Workers College, South Africa), another key APADEP figure, set up a very successful African Labour Education Network (ALLEN) in keeping with the APADEP tradition of labour education. So much for the 'structural' consequences of APADEP. What has been the effect on African labour relations? Difficult to judge. Sometimes I get appreciative letters, for instance one from Guinée in which the trade union stated that it was thanks to the APADEP education programme throughout the country that a national general strike in 2007 was successful. But on the whole, I find it indeed difficult to evaluate the impact.

I am glad you asked about OATUU. I thought it should not have been in APADEP from the moment Hassan Sunmonu (a major Nigerian union leader) became General Secretary in 1986. He remained so for more than 25 years following repeated elections. His tenure resembled the lifetime dictatorship of some African political leaders (that he himself criticized unless they shared his ideology or sent generous cheques to keep OATUU running). All this demonstrated his disdain for democracy. The Dutch FNV continued to support him for reasons of political correctness until they eventually dropped him like a hot brick.

The OATUU was not a trade union organisation, it was a political invention of the Organisation of African Unity to keep trade unions under control, it collected funds from more or less dubious governments, not from workers, and used these mainly for its own survival as an organisation, or for the diplomatic (!) privileges of some of its staff. I never caught OATUU in the act of defending worker claims or rights. Its main role appeared to be to play the hero at conferences of the International Labour Organisation and ensure its candidates would get lucrative positions in that body. I know this sounds cynical but in my many years of intense contact with it I have not been able to ever discover an achievement other than going with rhetorical speeches from congress to conference, reaping per diems, sometimes doing double invoicing, stating they spoke on behalf of many millions of members.

9. I have always wanted to know how much funding, from outside the ISS, went into APADEP? I have a feeling this must have run into five or six figures, in Euros, over the decades. Can you give details or at least a ballpark figure?

In as far as I can remember my research was always generously funded. Before APADEP I received money to conduct a national attitude survey of construction workers, of approximately 50,000 guilders (22,000 euros), and from the Sri Ram Foundation in India the equivalent of about 12,000 euros to conduct an attitude survey of industrial clerks around Delhi.

Thereafter I received substantial amounts from the University of Malta to conduct a series of studies there, and from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs I 'brokered' several hundreds of thousands of guilders for a comparative study of worker participation and self-management in Asia, Africa, America and Europe, through the International Centre of Public Enterprises in Ljubljana in former Yugoslavia.

The overall APADEP programme, from 1981 to 2008, in some 27 African countries, was financed by the FNV to the amount of around 3 to 4 million euros, by the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation to the amount of 4 million euros also, topped up by contributions from the European Union (some 100,000 euros), and the Friedrich Ebert and the Adenauer Foundations some minor amounts. Finally, the so-called Scenario 21 project on the future of democracy in the European economy (including more than 10 countries) was financed by the European Union through the French Democratic Trade Union Confederation, CFDT, amounting to more than a million euros. Democracy costs money, doesn't it?

10. Whilst we were both attached to the ISS, 1970s-90s, we also both had major conflicts with the ISS itself or with other colleagues there. How do you see such now?

I never had conflicts with ISS or with colleagues there: they had conflicts with me! It must be my fault. My son and daughter have the same problem, even my youngest granddaughter. Our fault is to be too direct and too honest and to express ourselves accordingly. Recently that granddaughter, 14 years old, went up to her teacher to ask him to explain his behaviour to her. How I see it now? I would not wish everybody to be like that, but it helps to have some brave people who are not afraid to stick their neck out, right?

My conflicts with ISS staff did not hinder me in any way. As I had my own projects financed with 'outside' money I was what I call in my autobio an *intrapreneur*, I made use of the facilities of ISS and had to pay overhead costs but otherwise I was in command of my own budgets for activities of the moment. For the last twenty years of my work at ISS I was fully independent in

that sense and had sufficient funds to have a good team of supportive staff at ISS. To my great surprise (and still I cannot imagine how this was possible) I was not accountable to anyone.

11. Either alongside or subsequent to your APADEP work, you were active on WP&SM in West and East Europe. How do you now evaluate such efforts?

In part these efforts yielded very little, in part they had unexpectedly positive results, in part they left me frustrated.

The work I coordinated together with Henri Pinaud (a CNRS researcher in Paris), the so-called Scenario 21 Project, on a revitalisation of democratic participation in Europe, did not have a follow-up. Two books were published (one with a long preface by Left French and European politician, Jaques Delors) but were completely ignored in the wake of the neoliberal wave, in which the mainstream European trade union movement was also trapped. (See Kester and Pinaud 1996)

My research and other activities in Malta had a far more positive outcome. In my 1980 book I had proposed the setting up of an autonomous research and education centre at the University which would monitor the development of democratic labour relations, contribute to policy making, run training and education courses, and should, for all these activities, be governed by all relevant social partners. To my surprise such a centre was established one year later and is still flourishing today, after 35 years, as the Labour Studies Centre of the University of Malta. I am still an Honorary Board member.

My main disappointment lies with (former) Yugoslavia. For many years my heart was with the genuine efforts of so many people who wanted humane, solidary and democratic labour relations, even when the national political system was totalitarian and therefore undemocratic, and whilst inter-ethnic strife was also increasingly undermining the federation. When it fell apart, especially in the way it did, I cried many tears. I cannot and will not give up my admiration for the people who were committed to worker self-management, some of whom are still active today trying to defend it. I am still in contact with Vera Vratusha who keeps publishing on self-management and encourages and supports others all over the world.

11. Your autobio is far from confined to WP&SM or other work, dealing at length and detail with your childhood, your Catholic education, your youthful cycling and hitchhiking adventures, your past and present families, your consultancies internationally, your cultural tourism, your love of good food and (white?) wines, your recent travels to Argentina and Russia. Do you understand yourself as an academic, a consultant, a bon viveur? a cosmopolitan? an

internationalist? a workaholic (your own term)? Or all of these? Or something different?

A *bon vivant* first of all, together with my wife Sonja. Life is short and should be lived. And workaholics can only survive with good food and good wine - red wine in particular - preceded by a glass of good white. Cosmopolitan, of course. Academic ... not all the way, perhaps too normative and too much motivated to have an impact on policy and politics. Sport has been and still is an essential part of my lifestyle, my bicycle is still my best friend. I never drove a car.

11. We each wrote our autobiographies without knowing of the other's effort. I also started making notes, comparing the two, under the working title 'Touching but not Parallel: Different Life Paths in International Labour Studies and Solidarity'. I have laid this aside (for at least the time being) in favour of this interview. But, bearing in mind these differences – not to mention our considerable conflicts whilst in labour studies at the ISS – I am curious about how you might see these two works, which differ not only in length (mine published online, some 300 pages, referenced and footnoted, intended to address the 'global justice and solidarity movement'), yours (unpublished, some 1,000 pages, much less 'academic', more personal and addressed to your descendants)?

You have already answered the question, even if I would rather say: parallel but not touching. We both had an international outlook and even when based in The Hague, our activities and interests were anywhere around the globe except in The Hague or even in Holland. But, as I already said, yours was an ideological enquiry, mine was an empirical one. Not that you did not conduct empirical research – but that was not your main activity. Not that I did not interest myself in ideologies, but empirical research was my main activity. No wonder we clashed regularly, I always distrusted you as leaning towards a triumphalist dogmatism, you distrusted me as leaning toward bourgeois democracy. More recently, you seem to have come closer to my point of view, but you will of course say that I came closer to yours. Whoever is right, the meeting point was democracy and that we should both rejoice.

12 Gerard, it seems to me that 'Worker Self-Management' is today increasingly being linked to related initiatives, now under the general rubric of 'The Commons'. I attach a relevant recent document (Convergence Assemblée 2015). So I would like to add a question about it to the others posed above. Would you like to provide an additional answer?

It is interesting that all through history initiatives for self-determination emerge in reaction to attempts to kill it. First against feudalism, then against industrialist exploitation and now against global financial capitalism. Core values are associated labour, democracy, equality, community service, solidary surplus distribution. These initiatives are again on the increase today and could become an impetus for the imagination of an alternative vision of the economy. Typically, they come from below which make them genuine and at the same time vulnerable. If the Argentinian 'factories without bosses' and similar cooperative projects want to escape the fate of similar experiences in the past they will have to organise themselves and establish alliances, find appropriate legal formats and most importantly, a common supporting structure to provide education and training, to conduct research and evaluation, assist in marketing and financing -to mention just a few requirements. If that succeeds, a critical mass may be reached and the movement may become an important link in the democratisation of the economy. But the impression I have is that at present the main activity which binds the more or less isolated self-management experiences together is a vibrating intellectual academic debate (with dogmatic overtones) which may be useful to generate an ideological orientation but is far from sufficient to render effective practical support. Perhaps the ball is in the court of the trade unions to take up the challenge of support or even or to play at least a significant role in it. The main challenge is to fight neoliberalism, head on, and not to contend with some marginal (romantic?) experiments only.

13 Do you have any additional or alternative questions?

Yes, I would like to say more, about the third volume mentioned above, and how I will try to translate my life experience into a vision for the future.

That is what keeps me busy right now and again I keep the faces of my grandchildren in front of me. Because the future is their future. I want to limit myself to their continent, Europe. I decided to imagine how Europe will look like a hundred years from today. I am working on it right now and will give you an idea of the impossible task I am setting for myself. Because one cannot predict the future, I know that bloody well, but one can imagine the future.

Of course I am sure that by that time – as you will agree - there will be a United States of Europe. But that is not just going to be a lifting of national to continental scale as people like Guy Verhofstadt (former Belgian Prime Minister) would like to see (Verhofstadt 2015). It will be, in my imagination (I avoid the word 'vision') a different Europe, qualitatively, not just structurally. I am trying to elaborate four dimensions of such a development: migration, 'western' arrogance, the utopia of neoliberalism, and re-inventing democracy. I will briefly elaborate.

The most forgotten aspect when imagining the future of Europe is the impact of migration. It is now mostly seen as a burden, but it will turn out to be an asset. Not - or in any case not in the first place - because it will solve labour market

problems in the long run. Much more importantly, it will bring new blood to a continent which is suffering quasi-incestuous nationalist feelings. Migrants do not know national borders in Europe, they have no ground (*Blut und Boden*) in this or that country or region of Europe. Being borderless they will promote cosmopolitan ideas and practices. And they will become a catalyst in overcoming the so-called 'clash of civilisations'. They will, together with progressive Europeans, re-invent Europe.

Concurrently, European arrogance, with its double standards and (together with the US) exaggerated show of military power will, in the new multipolar context, dwindle.

It will become evident that neoliberalism is a utopia full of illusions: the freedom illusion, the equality illusion (Piketty 2013), the solidarity and democracy illusion (Rosanvallon 2006, 2008, 2011 and 2015), and the Europe illusion (Verhofstadt 2015).

Therefore and finally, democracy will be re-invented. Until now democracy has been unable able to realize the core values of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*. So democracy has to be re-launched, not only as a political procedure but also as an ideology of its own – replacing the invisible hand of neoliberalism with the visible citizen, free, equal and solidary, in an economy that must, therefore, be democratically controlled.

Interviewer's in/conclusions

I do not want to here raise either old or new challenges I might have to Gerard's view of either democracy or worker's self-management. I would prefer that others might do so in following issues of Interface. I am happy enough to continue a dialogue that we might have carried out, at least verbally, in our programme at the ISS in The Hague, in the 1970's-80's. And I look forward to a consideration of whether or not either democracy of self-management can be advanced today without a continuing relationship with the social movements and socially-engaged social thinkers as are today increasingly addressing themselves to both the increasing attacks on both and the increasing new wave of experiments and reflections on such – whether in the Old West, the Old East and the Old South. If this formulation suggests that these distinctions between world socio-economic areas are indeed 'old', then the implication might be that suggested by Hyman:

'What is required is nothing less than a multinational liberation struggle!'

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Note : Gerard Kester's own sole or co-authored writings are highlighted in red.

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Social movement auto/biographies: A rough guide to sources and resources

Peter Waterman



Malcolm X, Internationalist by Mike Alewitz (see below).
The mural was destroyed, for some reason, by the IRA.

In a rhetorically effective social movement autobiography, form enables the rhetorical functions of self-definition and social advocacy to become mutually reinforcing, so that the author's life story demonstrates the plausibility of enacting the movement's ideology at the level of the individual, while the movement's "story" provides a backdrop against which the author can achieve a meaningful form of self-definition. (Griffin 2000).

It is true that storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it, that it brings about consent and reconciliation with things as they really are, and that we may even trust it to contain eventually by implication that last word which we expect from the Day of Judgment. ([Hannah Arendt, 'Isak Dinesen: 1885 - 1963', Men in Dark Times](#))

Introductory note

Why a *rough* guide?

Because this is the first attempt (to my knowledge) at constructing such a listing. And because of a hope that others may smooth out the bumps over time. Whilst, of course, making selective use of it in their own work.¹

This list was initially dependent on my own autobio (Waterman 2014), my personal three metres plus of autobios, and therefore excessively weighted towards the Communism of my early years, the internationalism(s) of all my years. Not to speak about it being weighted toward my friends, my own self ... and even my mother! It is also weighted toward the English language and towards Britain and the Netherlands (where I have long lived and worked). Not, again, to mention - before feminists do - the bias toward the masculine gender. Such biases, however, may suggest how much there is to add about other countries, in other languages. I have nonetheless made attempts here to surpass my biases, particularly with respect to Latin American figures and their more-or-less common languages. And, well, inter/national feminist movement ones, starting with Flora Tristán.

A question arose in my mind as I was compiling this list: should I include those figures who operated or at least seem to have operated without attachment to a social movement, particularly those who operated as whistle-blowers (the clandestine/subversive/illegal act of whistle-blowing more or less requires this). The obvious case might be Julian Assange, in so far as he has or even cultivates an arrogant, unfriendly, lone-wolf image but then is surrounded by a number of wealthy supporters. Mordechai Vanunu might be another such individualist, if one who has paid an awful price for his heroic acts. I have included both below because it does seem to be increasingly the case that such self-sacrificing (even self-promoting) acts increasingly reach out to and affect a global public. This is particularly so with those who act within 'Cyberia' – the increasingly central agora of global emancipatory struggle. And if or when the behavior of such individuals prevents their iconisation, provokes controversy about the expansion of The Commons, so much the better.

I have also sought out resources *on* auto/bios, such as the one leading the Resource List below. Such resources may not themselves be focused on *social movement* figures but I consider it important to consider the auto/bio as a genre – not only of writing but, obviously, that of movies and other audio-visual forms.

Some of the entries may be problematic in so far as the subjects/objects thereof may not consider themselves as social movement activists/leaders (my mother, in her old people's home rejected my attempt to interview her as an 'internationalist'). This might be the case, also, for some academic specialists on social movements whose influence on these may be only indirect. On the other

¹ Stefan Berger, of the [Institute for Social Movements](#), Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, has expressed interest in housing such a running bibliography on the institute's website, but only if curated by someone beyond its over-committed staff.

hand, there may be here found persons so heavily engaged that their auto/bios appear as functional or even subordinate to The Movement they are identified with. I would recommend here Griffin (2000) not so much because I identify with his argument as because of his focus on ‘self-definition and social advocacy’ in movement auto/bios, raising questions also about those whose lives might have themselves moved from one movement to another, or to various others...

I first resisted the notion of adding the notes (in red below) to the entries, fearing both the work involved, then the expansion in size. Having been persuaded to nonetheless provide such, the exercise proved educative. Despite myself having this Jewish Communist internationalist background, I had not realized just what a proportion of my subjects shared this. Any eventual correction of bias here would be welcome. But it is not difficult to understand why (East) European Jews, in particular, became Communists, nor how their experiences of national persecution or discrimination might have led them to opt for that unimagined community, ‘The International’, and identification with other victimized persons or peoples. At least until 1956-7 and the exposure of Soviet discrimination against and brutal persecution of Jews...

Another discovery (more of a confirmation) was the extent to which at least early Communists willingly combined their internationalism with not only clandestine activity but quite specific secret service to the Soviet state. Whilst this might have first been due to a spontaneous conflation in their minds of the Comintern and the Soviet state, many continued after the (quite arbitrary Soviet) dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 (many were later abandoned, castigated, arrested or killed by that state. See Curiel, Münzenberg, Trepper, below). They thus conformed to the model, once suggested by Eric Hobsbawm. This was of the second generation - in his case actually Communist - of internationalists, as ‘agents’ rather than the earlier generation of ‘agitators’. This was, after all, a period in which many left utopias amounted to what the East German Communists eventually called ‘actually-existing socialism’. Though, it occurs to me, that for non-Communist activists such utopias might have been represented by Social-Democratic or Populist governed states. Or, for that matter, by liberal capitalist/imperial regimes (see ‘Irving Brown’ below).

The notes (in red remember) are of inconsistent nature, being created from my inevitably faulty memory, from Wikipedia, from blurbs or longer publishers’ book descriptions. I started off using quotation marks to indicate those most heavily dependent on sources other than myself, but found myself editing these. I abandoned the distinction and the notes are what they are and...

... Corrections would therefore be more than welcome. Even more welcome would be a way of transforming these notes into a more standardized, if not sanitized, form. And, so, for that matter, would be the addition of relevant dates for those listed!²

² I regret I have not been able to respond to a reaction from former colleague, Bridget O’Laughlin, who emailed, 090816:

Whilst leaning heavily toward Left auto/bios (without defining 'Left'), I could not resist the temptation to include at least one entry on that ... *problematic?* ... 'international activist', Mother Teresa (see, below, 'Criticism of Mother Teresa'). She was born in Albania but worked primarily in India. She came from an 'international social movement', if one self-subordinated to a church. And she must still be an icon for millions of Catholics. She was canonized by her church – something not liable to happen to those with the critical and self-critical disposition more common, perhaps, to contemporary social movement activists. So we may be obliged to call Mother Teresa by her elevated status, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, at least if we believe in saints who do *not* go marching in...

Sister Teresa is a bird of a different feather: a liberation theologian, a feminist supporter of a woman's right to choose, a critic of not only her own church as patriarchal but also as specifically misogynist, an activist for Catalonian self-determination. She comes over as a public Catholic activist for our era, as does or did Mother Teresa for previous centuries. Moreover, Sister Teresa Forcades convinced me (a cancer and heart-disease survivor) to ignore the strong recommendation of three doctors in two countries, and reject the H1N1 vaccine approved by the World Health Organisation/Big Pharma complex. In such cases a movement may be even kick-started by an individual auto/bio.

The Mother/Sister opposition may be a bit of a stretch, in so far as the Mother was self-subordinated to her church. But this opposition hopefully raises further questions about iconophilia (icon worship) and iconoclasm (icon smashing) with respect to social movement auto/biographies or representations. These arise with respect to, for example, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Rigoberta Menchú or Malcolm X. The case of Lei Feng, for example, may be an extreme one, in so far as he may have been invented or reinvented – if, again by a hegemon rather than a social movement. These and others are included, not to necessarily support iconoclasm but to problematize the matter of social movement auto/bios. More interesting and relevant to the global justice and solidarity movement may be the case of that 'icon for our times', Subcomandante Marcos (see below).

I have, as indicated above, made occasional use of Wikipedia, particularly where other up-to-date sources are missing or seem lacking. This was so for the Peruvian Hugo Blanco, even if Wikipedia reported him as still being a leader of the Trotskyist Fourth International (aka the 4I), which I believe to be more than somewhat out of date or even originally misleading. His own autobiographical note below does not mention any such leadership role. And one of the Wikipedia sources mentioned only that he was present at a 4I event at a World Social Forum.

'[T]he project is so broad that I now understand that it is just a beginning - entries are relatively few and uneven in content. If the objectives include not just getting people to think but also to contribute then I think you need some more discussion of that in the preface. It would also be useful if you named some themes or questions and made a try at putting your bibliographic entries where you think they belong, as opposed to structuring by alphabetical order.'

Well, quite, and unless I get a sudden rush of conscience and energy, this will have to remain as a suggestion to anyone prepared to take over the baton.

(I have myself taken part in events of the 4I without being either a leader or a follower of such). So an adequate auto/bio of this iconic figure of the Peruvian peasant, indigenous and environmental resistance still lies in the future I know of a new effort to interview him at length in Peru, one contribution to such being Vargas (2016).

The advantage of this list being online is, obviously, that of allowing readers doing word/name searches, whether, for example, for Mother Teresa (beatified or sanctified) or Sister Teresa (that nun for our season). More fruitfully, I would like to hope, in searches for Rigoberta Menchú and for the controversy surrounding her two 'testimonies/testimonios'. Or on other controversial icons, such as Gandhi or Malcolm X. Searches can bring together that which the Sources and Resources divide.

Acknowledgements are due to Gina Vargas, Laurence Cox, Anissa Helie and Tom Wengraf for suggestions concerning either the structuring or the content of this list.

Peter Waterman, Lima-The Hague, January-November 2016.

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Jewish London East Ender, Communist till 1956-7, active in solidarity with Spain, Soviet women, the Rosenbergs, South Africa. Author of two semi-autobiographical novels.

Agee, Philip. 1975. *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

First of the famous US intelligence/espionage whistle-blowers. Fascinating source for the 'trade union imperialism' of the US union centre, the AFL-CIO, in Latin America.

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Mike Alewitz is a mural painter working in the U.S. and internationally. He has traveled throughout the world creating public art on themes of peace and social justice. Alewitz has organized cultural initiatives for numerous unions and progressive organizations. Because his work is a voice for working people, he is one of the most censored artists in the world. Alewitz was a student leader at Kent State University and an eyewitness to the murders of four students in 1970. He was a leader of the national student strike that followed the massacre and has remained a life-long activist in movements for social change. For his murals, see [here](#).

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Non-hagiographic account.

Anderson, Jon Lee, and [José Hernández](#). 2015. *Che Guevara. Una vida revolucionaria*. Graphic novel. Mexico: Sexto Piso. 172 pp.

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Powerful contribution to the iconoclastic accounts.

Anon. 1970. *Tania, la guerilla inolvidable*. Havana: Instituto del Libro.

Hagiographic account of East German (of Argentinean origin) who accompanied Che on last fatal (for her also) expedition.

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Born Guatemala 1937, daughter of a politician/diplomat, educated in France and Mexico, Aura Marina became an anthropologist. She died 2007 whilst working at an academic institute in Mexico. Prior to this she had been a *guerillera* in Guatemala and the partner of guerilla leader, Ricardo Ramirez/Rolando Morán (See under Morán below). This autobiography evokes times and places she visited or lived in: The Triconcental Conference of the Peoples of African, Asia and Latin America in Havana; Hanoi, during major bombardments, 1967, as member of a Guatemalan guerilla delegation; Peking during the Cultural Revolution; seeking gothic remains in a snowy city; swimming across the River Suchiate, Guatemala, to bring (from Havana via Prague), letters from Ché Guevara to guerilla camps in the mountains of Guatemala.

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Au Lung-yu. 2006. 'Alter-Globo in Hong Kong'. *New Left Review*, 42.

Interview with leading Hong Kong labour activist/internationalist, co-founder of *Globalisation Monitor*, 1999. Deals with his life and involvement with labour, socialist and social movements in Hong Kong and China.

Barreto, Fabio (Director). [Lula, Son Of Brazil](#). (Biopic).

Hagiographic movie in commercial cinema style. Led to controversy during shortly-following presidential election.

Barrios de Chungara, Domitila (with Moemma Viezzer). 1978. *Let Me Speak: Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines*. London: Stage 1.

Early woman activist's *testimonio*, leading to others and controversy - also about the 'co-authoring' common to such.

Bell, Thomas. 1941. *Pioneering Days*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

One of a half-dozen or more autobiographies by leading British and Comintern activists of the genre traditional to early labour movement figures in the UK.

Bensaïd, Daniel. 2013. *Daniel Bensaïd, An Impatient Life: A Political Memoir* London: Verso.

Leading figure in the Trotskyist Fourth International.

Berger, Sarah. 2005. 'From Aldermaston Marcher to Internet Activist', in Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw and Neil Stammers (eds), *Global Activism: Global Media*. London: Pluto: pp. 84-91.

UK activist. The title says it all.

Blanco, Hugo Galdos. 2002. [Autobiografía De Hugo Blanco Galdos: Historia de un luchador social](#). Confederación Campesina del Peru.

Brief and rare autobiographic account by a leading Peruvian peasant leader, from the 1960s till today, sometime associated with Trotskyist Fourth International, now emphasising indigenous and ecological issues.

Braam, Connie. 2005. *Operation Vula*. South Africa: Jacana Media.

Conny Braam is a respected Dutch novelist and a former head of the major Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement, from which she split on account of its moderate tactics. In her new organisation she worked with the armed wing of the African National Congress to recruit the operatives and train them as undercover agents in South Africa. She dedicated over 10 years to the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement and her role was integral to the success of the operation.

Brodie, Louise. 2011-12. ['McCrinkle, Jean \(Speaker, Female; Interviewee\)'](#).

Nine hour interview with Jean McCrinkle (b. 1937), whose political life began with her Communist actor and unionist father, Alex McCrinkle (Jock in the post-WW2 radio soap, 'Dick Barton, Special Agent'), and stepmother, Honor Arundel (film critic of the *Daily Worker*, and continued with brief membership of the British Communist Party in the 1950s (see elsewhere in this bibliography) and continued with the socialist-feminist movement, set up Women against Pit Closures. Jean travelled widely, including Italy, China and Ghana. She spent a decade or more in the Labour Party, becoming a parliamentary candidate, before breaking with this party too. Along the way she had close relationships with a couple of major British Marxist social historians. She has (co-) authored several books about such movements. A remarkably rich and frank account of her life, loves and troubles.

Brown, Irving. [Wikipedia](#).

He was the leading instrument of the CIA in particular, US imperialism in general, within the national and international trade union movement, moving through Europe, Africa and elsewhere, wherever the US state considered the 'Communist threat' to exist. In France he collaborated with Pierre Ferri-Pisani, identified (though not in this entry), as a major international drug smuggler.

Brown, Elaine. 1992. *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*. New York: Doubleday.

Elaine Brown is an American prison activist, writer, singer, and former Black Panther Party chairwoman based in Oakland, California. Brown briefly ran for the Green Party presidential nomination in 2008. She continues to agitate politically.

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Internationally famous Indian novelist/activist accuses Gandhi of discrimination against women and low-caste/tribals.

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Critically-minded Czech Communist, Pelikán, headed the International Union of Students in Prague in the 1950s, and Czechoslovak Radio during the Prague Spring and Soviet invasion, 1968, then edited an exile bulletin from Italy, where he was active in the Socialist Party.

Callaghan, John. 1993. *Rajani Palme Dutt: A Study in British Stalinism*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Of Swedish and Indian parentage, Dutt was the British Communist Party's leading intellectual and India specialist, with his own journal, *Labour Monthly*. He was infamous, even within the CPGB, for referring to Stalin's crimes as 'spots on the sun'.

Castaneda, Jorge. 1997. *Compañero: La Vida y Muerte de Che Guevara*. New York: Vintage. 400 pp.

Critical account by leading social-liberal Mexican writer/politician.

[Carlín \(Carlos Tovar\)](#). SoHo.

Prize-winning political cartoonist, expressing, without mercy, popular disenchantment with the political class in Peru. Other web searches in Spanish show him as a populariser of Marx and a proponent of the 4-hour working day (with text in English). So this brief autobiographical note in Spanish requires follow-up.

Cervo, Martino. 2013. *Willi Münzenberg Il megafono di Stalin*. Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli.

Critical account of the role of Willi Münzenberg as a Comintern

propagandist.

Chang, Jung. 1991. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*. London: Harper Collins.

Three generations of women, as seen by the granddaughter, her mother and herself being involved with the Communist Revolution and its aftermath.

Christie, Stuart. 2004. *Granny Made Me an Anarchist: General Franco, the Angry Brigade and Me*. London: Scribner.

Charming account by a Scottish anarchist, imprisoned and threatened with a death sentence in Franco's Spain, and later with imprisonment in Conservative Britain.

[Citizen Four](#). (Edward Snowden Documentary)

A real-life movie thriller, unfolding by the minute, giving audiences unprecedented access to filmmaker Laura Poitras and journalist Glenn Greenwald's encounters with Edward Snowden in Hong Kong, as he hands over classified documents providing evidence of mass indiscriminate and illegal invasions of privacy by the US National Security Agency. The movie places you in the room with Poitras, Greenwald, and Snowden as they attempt to manage the media storm raging outside, forced to make quick decisions that will impact their lives and all of those around them. The film not only shows you the dangers of governmental surveillance—it makes you feel them. After seeing the film, you will never think the same way about your phone, email, credit card, web browser, or profile, ever again.

Cockburn, Claud. 1958. *Crossing the Line*, Vol. 2, London: MacGibbon & Kee.

Brilliant British, sometime Communist, reporter/agent during Spanish civil war, edited *The Week* (anti-appeasement), later a novelist/scriptwriter.

Cockburn, Claud. 1981. *Cockburn Sums Up: An Autobiography*. London: Quartet.

See above.

Commire, Anne (ed.). 2002. 'VARGAS, Virginia (1945-). Peruvian feminist activist, in *Dictionary of Women Worldwide*. Detroit: Thomson/Gale. (3 Vols).

This entry on Gina Vargas is just one of the 25,000 entries (see further in Resouces) and now inevitably dated, but gives a surprisingly accurate sketch of this energetic and productive Peruvian and international activist. Commented and extended to some extent in the autobio of her later longtime partner (see Waterman 2014).

Van Hear, Nicholas, Selina Molteno and Oliver Bakewell (eds). 2016. [A Retrospective for Robin Cohen: From the New Helots to New Diasporas](#). Oxford: Oxford Publishing Services.

Of South African Jewish origin, Robin Cohen began his academic career

in the UK with the first book on Nigerian trade unions, continuing with studies of African labour more generally, and then with the 'new international labour studies' of the 1970s. He was a co-founder of the *Newsletter of International Labour Studies* in the 1980s, his interest moving to migrants, new social movements and later to diasporas. Whilst self-admittedly coy about direct social movement activities, more-activist colleagues and students were inspired by his prolific writings.

Criticism of Mother Teresa. [Wikipedia](#).

Crook, David. (c. 2000?). *Hampstead Heath to Tienanmen: The Autobiography of David Crook*.
<http://www.davidcrook.net/simple/main.html>

Of British Jewish middle-class origin, Crook travelled widely and acted as a Comintern agent/spy in the Spanish Civil War, later settled in China, survived Cultural Revolution imprisonment. Eventually expressed limited criticism of the Chinese regime.

Cuneo, Martín. 2015. *Las diez vidas de Hugo Blanco*. Lima: Lucha Indígena. 16pp.

Pamphlet biography.

Davidson, Neil. 2004. 'The Prophet, his Biographer and the Watchtower'. *International Socialism Journal*. Issue 104.

Critical account of both Trotsky and his most famous biographer.

Davies, Angela. [FemBio](#).

A US academic and Black Power icon, who became a leading US Communist and later an activist on prisoner rights.

Deitch, Gene. 2002. *For the Love of Prague: The True Love Story of the only Free American in Prague during 30 Years of Communism*. Prague: Basset Books.

Title says it all, giving an original and vivid account of the Soviet invasion of Prague, 1968.

Dennis, Peggy. 1977. *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life 1925-1975*. New York: Lawrence Hill. 302 pp.

A major national and international Communist figure who eventually broke with the party. Married to US Communist leader, Eugene Dennis.

Desai, Ashwin and Goolem Vahed. 2015. *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Iconoclastic account of Gandhi's disregard for Africans during his time in South Africa.

Deutscher, Isaac. 2009. [The Prophet: Trotsky: 1879-1940 \(Vol. 1-3\)](#)

Most famous biography by Deutscher, himself of Polish Jewish origin, and a one-time dissident Polish Communist, later Trotskyist.

Ellis, Stephen. 2014. '[New Light on Nelson Mandela's Autobiography](#)', Politics Web.

A veteran writer on the African National Congress and African politics here comments on the 627-page [draft autobiography](#), of Mandela, dated 1977, that was only made public around the time of his death. It therefore long predates the famous 'autobiographical' (in quotes because redacted by a US journalist) [Long Walk to Freedom](#), published 1994, to almost universal liberal and left acclaim. Ellis reveals what had been previously concealed or denied, that Mandela had been not only, if briefly, a member of the South Africa Communist Party but also of its Central Committee. He had also accepted Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism, and favoured the SACP's switch to an armed strategy before the ANC itself did so. See also the [Wikipedia](#) entry, that fails to mention either the draft autobio or the controversy aroused by the Stephen Ellis article.

Evans, Kate. 2015. *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*. London: Verso.

A giant of the political left, Rosa Luxemburg is one of the foremost minds in the canon of revolutionary socialist thought. She made herself heard in a world inimical to the voices of strong-willed women. Always opposed to the First World War, when others on the German left were swept up on a tide of nationalism, she was imprisoned and murdered in 1919 fighting for a revolution she knew to be doomed. In this graphic biography, writer and artist Kate Evans has opened up her subject's intellectual world to a new audience. (See elsewhere for Rosa).

Fawzy-Rossano, Didar. 1997. *Mémoires d'une militante communiste (1942-1990) du Caire à Alger, Paris et Genève. Lettres aux miens*. L'Harmattan, Paris 1997.

She was a cosmopolitan Egyptian revolutionary (1920-2011), of Italian Jewish background, a Communist, a Nationalist, related to [Henri Curiel](#) She was later involved in Europe in solidarity with Algerian independence and South African anti-Apartheid movements, escaped from a French prison, became an academic and specialist on the Sudan. See further [here](#).

Fernandez Garcia, Dina. 1998. 'Stoll "No busco hundir a Menchu"'. El libro de David Stoll sobre Rigoberta Menchú sacudira los estudios sobre Latin America' (Stoll: "I am not trying to destroy Menchu". The Book of David Stoll on Rigoberta Menchú Shakes Latin American Studies', *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala City), December 18.

Contribution to controversy surrounding the *testimonios* (customarily co-authored) of a Guatemalan and international indigenous and human rights icon, and Nobel Prize winner.

Forcades, Sister Teresa. [Wikipedia](#).

Not to be confused with Mother Teresa. Teresa Forcades is a feminist critic of the Catholic Church, a medically qualified critic of the World Health Organisation, big pharma, and a Catalan nationalist.

Frankenheimer, John. 1994. [The Burning Season](#). (Biopic about Chico Mendes).

Prize-winning movie on life, struggle and death of a labour, indigenous and human rights icon.

Freeman, Joseph. 1938. *An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics*. London: Gollancz. 576 pp.

For its time a remarkably critical account of the author's experience of the Comintern in Moscow.

Galeano, Eduardo. 1999. 'Disparen sobre Rigoberta' (They are Firing at Rigoberta), *Brecha: Nueva Edicion Internet* (Uruguay). January 15.

Contribution to the Rigoberta Menchú controversy.

Gandhi, Mahatma. 1927. [Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth](#).

Despite increasing criticism in the present century, still surely the outstanding Indian and international icon of non-violent protest movements.

Garvey, Marcus. [Wikipedia](#)

Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr., (1887–1940), was a Jamaican political leader, publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, and orator who was a staunch proponent of the [Black Nationalism](#) and [Pan-Africanism](#) movements, to which end he founded the [Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League \(UNIA-ACL\)](#). He also founded the [Black Star Line](#), a shipping and passenger line which promoted the return of the [African diaspora](#) to their ancestral lands.

Geary, Rick. 2009. [Trotsky: A Graphic Biography](#).

Goldman, Emma. 2011. *Living My Life (Two Volumes In One)*. Cosimo.

Russian Jewish working-class woman anarchist who played a major role in the US working-class movement in the early 20th century.

Gordon, Eric. 1972. *Freedom is a Word*. London: Morrow.

British Communist journalist becomes a Maoist and experiences the Chinese Cultural Revolution with wife and child. For trying to smuggle documents out of China is imprisoned in a hotel room until eventual release.

Gott, Richard. 1996. 'Che Guevara and the Congo', *New Left Review*, No. 220, pp. 3-35.

The first (?) detailed account of Che's unsuccessful attempt to export his notion of guerilla warfare to Africa. (See, further, Guevara 2000)

Grange, Bertrand de la and Maite Rico. 1997. *Marcos, la genial impostura* [Marcos, the Brilliant Impostor]. México DF.

Despite the title this is a serious work that distinguishes the two faces of this international icon of the new social emancipatory movements, the man and the myth. It may have been the first to publicise his real name, Rafael Guillén. Most writings about Marcos prefer to 'forget' this. Marcos brilliantly crossed numerous traditional social movement boundaries: between the academic and the activist, the urban and the rural, the national and the indigenous, the South and the North, the Marxist and the Indigenous/Popular, the guerilla strategy and the prefigurative, the theorist/strategist and the story-teller, the serious and the humorous. The book was originally published in French. (For an English-language and updated bio see [here](#)).

Grogan, Susan. 2002. *Flora Tristan: Life Stories*. London: Routledge.

Early-19th century French pioneer labour, socialist and feminist writer and traveller.

Grossman, Victor (Stephen Wechsler). 2003. *Crossing the River: A Memoir of the American Left, the Cold War, and Life in East Germany*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Fascinating account of a US serviceman, with a Communist or fellow-traveller background who quite literally crossed a river whilst escaping to Communist East Germany. Initially treated with considerable suspicion, the author was a faithful supporter of the state until it collapsed.

Guevara, Che. 2000. ['From Cuba to Congo, Dream to Disaster for Che Guevara. The Revolutionary Leader Describes his African War in Exclusive Extracts from his Previously Unpublished Diary'](#). *The Guardian*. August 12.

Guevara, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. 2001. *The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo*. London, Harvill.

Gugelberger, Georg. 1998. 'Remembering: The Post-Testimonio Memoirs of Rigberta Menchu Tum', *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 62-8.

Contribution to the controversy concerning Rigoberta's *testimonios*.

Guha, Ramachandra. 2014. *Gandhi Before India*. New York: Knopf.

Major 'pro-Gandhi' biography.

[Han Dongfan](#). Wikipedia.

An advocate for workers' rights in China for more than two decades during which time he has won numerous international awards including the 1993 Democracy Award from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy. He helped set up the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation (BAAF) during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. In August 1993 he was arrested in Guangzhou and expelled to Hong Kong. In 1994, he established

China Labour Bulletin, a Hong Kong-based non-governmental organization that seeks to uphold and defend the rights of workers across China.

Hardy, George. 1956. *Those Stormy Years: Memories of the Fight for Freedom on Five Continents*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Major contribution to early British and Comintern biographical genre.

Hill, Denis. 1989. *Seeing Red, Being Green: Life and Times of a Southern Rebel*. Brighton: Iconoclast Press.

Autobiography of British working-class unionist and Communist, from provincial Brighton, who worked at the International Union of Students in Prague, 1950s, and eventually broke with Communism.

Hitchens, Christopher. 1996. *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*. London: Zed Press. 98 pp.

Iconoclastic and witty account by brilliant journalist. One of several such accounts, this one criticising the Albanian nun's complicity with the Albanian Communist regime whilst making publicity and collecting funds for her charitable Indian operations.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 2002. *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life*. New York: Pantheon.

Autobiography by best-known British Communist historian, whose life spanned the 20th century.

Hooks, Margaret. 1993. *Tina Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary*. London: Pandora. 296 pp.

An American would-be actress of Italian origin, Modotti became a photographer, involved with Mexican and other Communists and artists, she abandoned photography for Comintern work in civil war Spain.

Hooks, Margaret. 1998. *Tina Modotti: Fotógrafa y revolucionaria*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janes.

See above.

Hyde, Douglas. 1951. *I Believed: The Autobiography of a Former Communist*. London: Heinemann.

One-time journalist on the British *Daily Worker*, an example of a common Cold War genre.

Ilic, Melanie and Emilia Kosterina. 2013. 'Lyudmila Mikhailovna Alekseeva (born 1927)', in Melanie Ilic, *Life Stories of Soviet Women: The Interwar Generation*. London: Routledge.

This interview covers family background; WW2; Evacuation; attitudes to sexual relations and marriage; education professional training and work; the 1937 Terror; attitudes to Jews and minority nationalities; post-war life,

the Moscow Helsinki human-rights group; exile in the USA; the Post-Soviet era and human-rights activities in the Putin period.

Jolly, Margaretta (2006) '[Every Secret Thing: An Interview with Gillian Slovo](#)'. In: Lütge Coullie, J, Meyer, S, Ngwenya, TH and Oliver, T (eds.) *Selves in Question: Interviews on Southern African Auto/biography*. University of Hawaii Press, pp. 315-328.

Gillian is the novelist daughter of leading white South African ANC and Communist Party activists, Joe Slovo and Ruth First. Gillian also writes of her difficult relations with own hyper-activist parents.

Kadalie, C. 1970. *My Life and the ICU: The Autobiography of a Black Trade Unionist in South Africa*. London: Frank Cass.

Kadalie was the leader of first major black union organization in South Africa.

Kaminsky, Adolfo/Adolphe. [Wikipedia](#).

Born in Argentina on 1 October 1925, he was a member of the French Resistance, specialising in the forgery of identity documents, who later went on to assist Jewish emigration to the British Mandate for Palestine and then to forge identity documents for the National Liberation Front and French draft dodgers during the Algerian War (1954–62). He forged papers for thirty years for different activist groups, mainly national liberation fronts, without ever claiming payment for it. For his daughter's biography in French, see [here](#).

Kapur, Sheka (Director), 1994. [Bandit Queen](#).

Controversial prize-winning movie based on life of notorious low-caste bandit, [Phoolan Devi](#), who takes vengeance on the higher-caste villagers who had raped her.

Kautsky, Karl. 1902. Autobiography.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1902/12/autobiography.htm>

Written at the time when Kautsky was considered the heir of Marx and Engels, this is a modest account of his meeting with them in London, his collaboration and differences with other historical figures on German and Austrian Social Democracy.

Keane, John. 1995. *Tom Paine: A Political Life*. London: Bloomsbury. 644 pp.

More than any other public figure of the eighteenth century, Tom Paine strikes our times like a trumpet blast from a distant world. Setting his compelling narrative against a vivid social backdrop of pre-revolutionary America and the French Revolution, John Keane melds together the public and the shadowy private sides of Paine's life in a remarkable piece of scholarship. This is the definitive biography of a man whose life and work profoundly shaped the modern age.

Kelly, Alfred (Ed.). 1987. *The German Worker: Working-Class Autobiographies from the Age of Industrialisation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Translated selections from the autobiographies of nineteen of the now-forgotten millions who in the 19th century turned Germany into an industrial power. Provides an intimate firsthand look at how massive social and economic changes are reflected on a personal level in the everyday lives of workers.

Kester, Gerard. 2014-2015. 'Een zoektocht naar democratie: Met brieven aan mijn kleinkinderen' (A Search for Democracy: With Letters to my Grandchildren). Two Volumes. Leusden: Unpublished.

This 1,000-page political-academic-personal autobio (with a third volume planned) is by a Dutch specialist on worker self-management who spent most of his working life at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (1963-98). Gerard's work was mostly in Africa, mostly in collaboration with unions (local, national, regional, international), and with local universities. As a self-characterised workaholic, bike-addicted, hyperactive and travel-aholic person, he has also worked (vacationed and/or wine-tasted) in West and East Europe (mostly Yugoslavia), Asia and Latin America. The work is largely based on diaries, kept with remarkable persistence, also after his retirement from the ISS.

Kimmage, Ann. 1996. *An Un-American Childhood: A Young Woman's Secret Life Behind the Iron Curtain*. Georgia University Press: Athens and London.

Sad, if not tragic, account by the daughter of a self-exiled US Communist activist, in Cold War Prague, Moscow and Beijing.

Kimmage, Ann. 1998. 'Growing Up in Exile', in Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (eds), *Red Diapers: Growing up in the Communist Left*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 184-91.

See above.

[Khaled, Leila](#). Wikipedia.

Leila Khaled is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and an airline hijacker later released in a prisoner exchange for civilian hostages kidnapped by her fellow PFLP members. She came to public attention for her role in a 1969 hijacking, and one of four simultaneous hijackings the following year as part of Black September. 2015 she condemned ISIL as a terrorist organization. In the 1970s she was something of a popular culture icon.

Kozak, Nikolai. 2016. 'My Father Saved 30,000 People in Chile'. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03z6238>.

Nikolai Kozak grew up thinking his father Roberto was a quiet diplomat. Then one day he found out he'd helped save 30,000 political prisoners from persecution under Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile. As Pinochet

began persecuting his opponents, Roberto was determined to help them. He negotiated a deal to allow political prisoners to go into exile, and at great risk to himself, he personally escorted people to airports, or safe locations - he even hid people in his house. Nikolai, now an artist, tells the story of his father. Rodrigo del Villar Canas - who as a student had been detained by Pinochet - describes how Roberto helped him flee.

Krijt, Hans. 2001. *Enkele Reis Zaandam-Praag (Single Ticket Zaandam-Prague)*. Baarn: De Prom.

Krijt grew up in a Dutch working-class family, deserted from his army service during the attempt to restore Dutch power in Indonesia after WWII, and escaped to Czechoslovakia just before the Communist coup, 1948. He studied film and became a cineaste. His attempt to re-establish his family in the Netherlands failed and he returned to live and die in his country of original exile.

Kruckewitt, Joan. 2001. *The Death of Ben Linder: The Story of a North American in Sandinista Nicaragua*.

In the summer of 1983, this 23-year-old American arrived in Managua with a unicycle and a newly earned degree in engineering. In 1986, Linder moved from Managua to El Cu, a village in the Nicaraguan war zone, where he helped form a team to build a hydroplant to bring electricity to the town. He was ambushed and killed by the Contras the following year while surveying a stream.

Kuzwayo, Ellen. 1985. *Call me Woman*. London: Women's Press.

Ellen Kuzwayo was a South African Black activist whose life spanned the 20th century. While the autobiographical sections of *Call me Woman* are vivid and alive with Ellen Kuzwayo's emotional and moral strength, the parts of the book which attempt an analysis of the condition of African women in South Africa, and a description of the broad effects of apartheid, are very sketchy. There is an assumption that the experiences of the educated African classes are the experiences of all the African people, and there is a jarringly naive faith in the work of the Urban Foundation, a group of influential financiers who since 1976 have worked to co-opt middleclass Africans to accept minor changes in the status quo.

Lang, Clarence. 2011. ['Manning Marable and Malcolm X: The Power of Biography'](#), *Solidarity*.

Critical review of Marable's biography of Malcolm X.

Leather, Alan. 2005. 'Labour Union and NGO Relations in Development and Social Justice', in Alan Leather and Deborah Eade (eds) *Development NGOs and Labor Unions: Terms of Engagement*. Kumarian Press.

Provides unusually personal account of a British unionist's increasing involvement with union development-cooperation work.

Lei Feng. [Wikipedia](#).

Fascinating account of a Chinese soldier, turned into a Maoist icon, with this (at least semi-)mythical figure's fate changing after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

Leonhard, Wolfgang. 1979. *Child of the Revolution*. London: Ink Links.

Child of German Communists, refugees in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, records soberly how they became victims of the purges, his postwar return as a Communist to Eastern Germany and his break with both.

Lerner, Gerda. 2003. *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Of Austrian origin, and a refugee in the USA, Lerner recounts her life as a Communist, active in its international women's movement, her persecution during the Cold War, her pioneering role in academic women's history.

London, Artur. 1970. *On Trial*. London: MacDonald.

Czechoslovak Jewish Communist, active on behalf of Soviet intelligence in Spain, imprisoned by Nazis, became Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia under Communism, imprisoned and threatened with death during Stalinist purges, survived and fled to France.

Loos, Ted. 1999. '[La Comradessa: Two biographies of an enigmatic photographer and revolutionary](#)'. (Tina Modotti). *New York Times On the Web*. May 2.

See elsewhere for Tina Modotti.

Lovestone, Jay. Wikipedia.

He was at various times a member of the Socialist Party of America, a leader of the Communist Party USA, leader of a small oppositionist party, a major anti-Communist and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helper, and foreign policy advisor to the leadership of the AFL-CIO and various unions within it. Eventually forced out of office by the AFL-CIO following the exposure of that union's Cold War relations with the CIA.

Lubitz, Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz. 2004. [Sal Santen: Bio-bibliographical Sketch](#). Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet.

Dutch Jewish working-class socialist and resistance activist, heavily involved in international Trotskyism, arrested for printing false French currency for the Algerian resistance.

[Manning, Chelsea/Bradley](#). Wikipedia.

Chelsea Elizabeth Manning (born Bradley Edward Manning, December 17, 1987) is a United States Army soldier who was convicted in July 2013 of violations of the Espionage Act and other offenses, after disclosing to WikiLeaks nearly three-quarters of a million classified or unclassified but sensitive military and diplomatic documents. S(h)e came out during her trial as a trans woman.

Marable, Manning. 2011. *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. New York: Allen Lane. 2011.

See elsewhere for Manning and Malcolm X.

Margolius Kovaly, Heda. 1988. *Prague Farewell*. London: Gollancz.

A Czech Jewish survivor of both Nazi concentration camps and Communist repression (her husband was executed during the purges) she became a respected translator under her second husband's name.

Martínez, Maruja. 1995. *Entre el amor y la furia: crónicas y testimonio*. Lima: Sur Casa de Estudios del Socialismo.

A rare memoir by a Peruvian woman member of a Trotskyist party affiliated to a cultish British Trotskyist 'guide' party. She survived the experience, and prison, to become a respected editor/writer with the Lima group, Sur: Casa de Estudios del Socialismo.

Mashinini, E. 1991. *Strikes have Followed me all my Life: A South African Autobiography*.

Emma started working in a textile factory and rose to become the founder of a new trade union. Shortly after this, she was arrested without charge under the South African Terrorism Act. She was mentally tortured and given subpar conditions in which to live during her stay at multiple prisons. Upon leaving prison, she resumes union work, and must deal with a variety of psychological problems. This book was written against threats of death from the South African government, and chronicles the life of a woman who endured psychological and physical torture for the cause of a free democratic government in South Africa.

McCrinkle, Jean. 2006. 'The Hungarian Uprising and a Young British Communist', *History Workshop* No. 62:194-99.

Personal experience of the crisis that seriously split the British CP. (See further Brodie (2011-12). Compare Waterman (1993), also published in *History Workshop*).

McMeekin, Sean. 2003. *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West*. Yale University Press, New Haven. 2003.

The biography that re-discovered Münzenberg for the English-speaking world.

Meana, Carlo Ripa di. 2000. *Cane Sciolto* (Unleashed Dog). Milan: Kaos Edizione.

Scion of an Italian aristocratic family, he abandoned the 'Ripa di' as a young Communist and became editor of the monthly of the International Union of Students in Cold War Prague. After abandoning Communism and reclaiming his full name, he became an Italian left ecologist politician and served briefly in the European Union.

Meeropol, Robert. 2003. *An Execution in the Family*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

One of the sons of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, executed in witch-hunt USA as 'atom spies'. The two boys were adopted by the author of the classical anti-lynching song 'Strange Fruit' and his wife. At the time of the anti-Vietnam War campaign the boys (now young men) 'came out'.

Menchu, Rigoberta. 1987. I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala. London: Verso. 1987.

Best-known of the Latin-American women's *testimonios*, this one having to do with her experience as a rural Mayan girl and then a leader of indigenous resistance. Later it became a matter of considerable controversy, concerning its authenticity and representativity – and that of the *testimonio* form more generally.

Menchu, Rigoberta. 1998a. *Crossing Borders*. London: Verso. 242 pp.

Rigoberta's later adventures, including international ones, in the period that led up to her Nobel Peace Prize, 1992 and in the settlement of the civil war. And further controversy.

Menchu, Rigoberta. 1998b. *Rigoberta: La nieta de los Mayas* [Rigoberta: Granddaughter of the Mayas]. Madrid: El Pais/Aguilar. 348 pp.

See above.

Mendes, Chico. 1989. 'Peasants Speak: Chico Mendes - The Defence of Life', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 160-76.

On life, struggle and assassination of Brazilian labour, indigenous and human rights icon.

Mendes, Chico. 1992. *Fight for the Forest* (Updated Edition). London: Latin America Bureau.

See above.

Menting, Marcel. ????. '[Sal Santen \(1915-1998\): Verslonden door de revolutie](#)'. (Sol Santen (1915-1998): Devoured by the Revolution). *Onvoltooid Verleden: Nieuwsbrief voor de geschiedenis van sociale bewegingen*.

In June 1960 the Amsterdam stenographer and Trotskyist was, together with Greek and International Trotskyist leader, Michel Raptis, condemned to one year of prison for their attempt to forge French francs for the Algerian FLN.

Miles, Jonathon. 2010. *The Dangerous Otto Katz: The Many Lives of a Soviet Spy*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Otto Katz, a.k.a André Simone, of Czech Jewish origin, was one of the most influential agents of the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. He participated in all the major Comintern disinformation campaigns in the 1930s, under the leadership of Willi Münzenberg, who he may have helped

assassinate. He was framed up and killed during the Czechoslovak witch-hunt of the Cold War period.

Miloslavich, Diana (ed). 2000. [The Autobiography of María Elena Moyano](#). University Press of Florida.

Only partly autobiographic, mostly tributes to the outstanding 'popular feminist' in the Peru of the 1980s. Moyano, Deputy Mayor of Villa el Salvador (VES, the Soweto of Lima), stood up in particular for women in squatter settlements, gained international recognition, and confronted the Maoist Shining Path terrorist movement when it tried to take over VES. She was assassinated in front of her children, and her body set on fire. Her death marked a significant moment in popular revulsion against Shining Path.

Morais, Fernando. 1990. *Olga: The 'Gift' to Hitler*. London: Halban. 245 pp.

Olga Benario was a German Jewish Communist. Aged 19 she organised a prison raid to free her lover. Together they escaped to Moscow. She was later trained and chosen to serve as bodyguard to the legendary Brazilian Communist leader, the ex-military man, Luis Carlos Prestes, who became her lover. Involved in a Soviet-backed but disastrous Communist revolution in Brazil, they were rapidly captured. She was imprisoned and then deported to Nazi Germany, where she was eventually executed. She was an early one of a number of European women who identified with Latin American revolutions and revolutionary leaders, most of whom were killed for their pains.

Mother Jones. <http://www.biography.com/people/mother-jones-9357488>

Mary Harris Jones was born in 1830 in County Cork, Ireland. She lost her family to a yellow fever outbreak and her home in the great Chicago fire. She became a labour activist and was given the nickname "Mother Jones." She was a campaigner for the United Mine Workers Union, founded the Social Democratic Party and helped establish the Industrial Workers of the World. Jones died in 1930.

Naidoo, Kumi. [Wikipedia](#).

Charismatic South African activist of Asian descent, prominent in Social Forums and international NGOs such as Civicus and Greenpeace.

Neruda, Pablo. 1977. *Memoirs*. London: Souvenir. 370 pp.

Latin America's greatest poet, a Communist politician, exiled, sometime diplomat, widely travelled, identified with Stalinism, awarded a Stalin Peace Prize in 1953, forceful critic of US imperialism.

Ngoyi, Lilian. 2012. 'Letters from South Africa', in Helen Lauer and Kofi Anyidoho (Eds), *Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities Through African Perspectives* (Volume 1). Legon: Subsaharan Africa Publishers. Pp. 521-37.

Fullest available, if partial, autobiographical account of an outstanding ANC activist, a founder of its women's wing, who travelled to both Western and Eastern Europe/USSR, during the height of Apartheid repression. Enriches numerous shorter biographical entries to be found online. Mentions UK stay with Ray Waterman (see Ruth Adler) who wrote about her using pseudonyms.

[Nijmeier, Tanja](#). 'A Dutch Guerillera: The Foreign Face of FARC's Civil War', *Spiegel Online International*. March 2, 2014.

Interview with and biography of the Dutch woman who fought for a decade for the Colombian FARC guerilla movement and who reappeared in public as a spokesperson during negotiations with the Colombian government in Havana.

O'Laughlin, Bridget. 2014. 'Ruth First: a Revolutionary Life in Revolutionary Times', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 41, Nr. 139.

Writing about the life of Olive Schreiner, Ruth First hoped that biography could capture the dilemmas of a white South African woman and writer at the turn of the twentieth century, caught in a world that made her, but in which she could not bear to live as it was. Ruth First, too, struggled her entire life against the injustices of race and class in southern Africa, but she did so with a confidence, joy and energy that Schreiner never achieved. Written on the basis of conversations with Ruth First in Mozambique in the last period of her life, this paper explores the possibilities and dilemmas posed by her commitment to a disciplined collective revolutionary project embedded in strong nationalist movements.

Marc Becker, *Mariátegui and Latin American Marxist Theory*, Latin American Series, No. 20, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Monographs in International Studies, 1993.

O'Lincoln, Tom. 199?. 'A South American Revolutionary: Jose Carlos Mariátegui and Peruvian Socialism'. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mariategui/biography/biography.htm>

Mariátegui, the first major Marxist theoretician in Latin America. Although identified with, first, the Russian Revolution and later the Comintern, Mariátegui had experience in the turbulent Italy of the years after WWI, and never visited Russia nor became part of the Comintern apparatus. So, although a founder of both the first Marxist party in Peru and its first trade union confederation, he also considered its indigenous peoples as a revolutionary force. See also [here](#).

Ostrovsky, Nikolai. [Wikipedia](#).

Ostrovsky, totally devoted to the Russian Revolution, fighter in the Civil War, later disabled and blind, wrote a book, variously translated as 'How Heroes are Made' or 'How the Steel was Tempered', an international icon of Stalin's Russia.

Pedraglio, Santiago. 2014. 'Gustavo Gutiérrez, en *Conversaciones con ojos del siglo XX*. Lima: Universidad Católica del Perú. Pp. 155-87.

Well-known Peruvian academic and journalist interviews Peruvian founder of the Theology of Liberation.

Pedraglio, Santiago. 2014. 'Hugo Blanco Galdós', en *Conversaciones con ojos del siglo XX*. Lima: Universidad Católica del Perú. Pp. 374-98.

Well-known Peruvian academic and journalist interviews veteran peasant, ecological and indigenous activist.

Pelikán, Jiří. 1975. *S'ils me tuent* (If They Should Kill Me). [Account recorded by Frédéric de Towarnicki]. Paris: Bernard Grasset.

Interview with dissident Czech Communist, one time General Secretary of the International Union of Students, Director of Czechoslovak Radio during Prague Spring and Soviet Invasion of 1968, later editor of exile magazine in Rome.

Perrault, Giles. 1970. *The Red Orchestra*. London: Mayflower Books.

This was the name given by the Nazis to what they considered the most formidable Soviet spy network during WW2. Its head was the Polish Jew, Leopold Trepper, who had long worked as a Soviet agent. Trepper was eventually arrested by the Nazis but escaped to join the French resistance. On return to the Soviet Union he was imprisoned by Stalin but survived and opted to return to Poland, where he was active in Polish Jewish affairs. Attacked by the Polish Communist regime during an anti-Jewish purge, he landed up in Israel where he eventually died.

Perrault, Giles. 1987. *A Man Apart: The Life of Henri Curiel*. London: Zed Books.

Henri Curiel (1914-1978) was a Jewish cosmopolitan revolutionary activist. Born in Egypt, Curiel led the communist Democratic Movement for National Liberation until he was expelled from Egypt in 1950. Settling in France, Curiel aided the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale and co-founded 'Solidarité', which supported other Third World revolutionary movements. In 1978 Curiel was assassinated in Paris; his murderer has never been identified. This book is Part 1 of the French original.

Persepolis. The Movie. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persepolis_%28film%29.

Animated semi-autobiographical movie about a young rebellious Iranian woman who survives persecution in Iran and discrimination in Europe. Subject of both international awards and controversy.

Petersson, Frederik. 2013. "We Are Neither Visionaries Nor Utopian Dreamers". Willi Münzenberg, the League against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925 – 1933'. Doctoral Thesis, Abo Academy, Turku, Finland. https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/90023/petersson_fredrik.pdf?sequence=2.

This book represents the product of a very substantial amount of original research which transforms our understanding of the history of the League against Imperialism. Until Petersson availed himself of the opportunities afforded by the opening of the Russian archives comparatively little was known about the LAI, its organisation, its relations with the Comintern, or the role of its principal players, particularly that of Willi Münzenberg. Petersson has transformed that situation, and tracked the complex history of the development of the LAI as a result of his extensive research in the archives of RGASPI (Moscow), SAPMO-BA ZPA (Berlin), IISG (Amsterdam), together with a number of other minor sources.

Podbrey, Pauline. 1993. *White Girl in Search of the Party*. Durban: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.

A lively account by a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania who arrived in South Africa in the 1930s. While still a schoolgirl, she was active in trade union affairs, and this autobiography provides an account of life among the comrades in Durban and Cape Town, in the 1940s and the early 1950s. Covers the years from 1952 to 1955, which Podbrey and her husband, H. A. Naidoo, spent in Budapest - an experience which led them to complete disillusionment with Communism.

Polak, Chaja. 2004. *Salka*. Amsterdam: Meulenhof.

Novel closely based on life of the author's mother, Annie Fels (a.k.a. Kupferschmidt, Polak), Dutch Jewish Communist resistance activist who survived Auschwitz and became a leader of the International Auschwitz Committee. Author was herself born during WWII and only re-united with her mother at its end.

Politkovskaya, Anna. 2007. *A Russian Diary*. London: Harvill Secker.

Harrowing account by outstanding Russian journalist and opponent of Putin, eventually assassinated. Substantial editorial introduction.

Poniatowska, Elena. 1997. *Tinisima*. London: Faber and Faber. 357 pp.

Mexican writer's account, based on the life of Tina Modotti, the photographer and revolutionary involved with the circle around Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

Porter, Cathy. 1988. *Larisa Reisner*. London: Virago. 195 pp.

Reisner was perhaps the model Russian revolutionary woman, joined the Bolshevik Party after the Revolution, played a leadership role during the Civil War, travelled to Afghanistan, reported the (Soviet-supported but failed) German Revolution, had a relationship with Karel Radek. Died before the rise of Stalin.

Post, Ken. *Memoirs*. Unpublished. The Hague.

Born to a working-class family in South-East England, was a brilliant kid

who got a scholarship to Cambridge, got into African studies, firstly post-independence Nigerian politics. He became a Marxist in the mid-1960s, was involved with student and popular radicalism in the Jamaica of the late-1960s (leading to his forced departure from its university and the country), landed at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. As Professor of Politics, he was the most prolific author there, writing on social classes, movements and processes in West Africa, Yugoslavia, Algeria, Vietnam, Jamaica, Europe, as well as several theoretical works on Marxism. Whilst the peak of his social-movement engagement was in Jamaica, he was also the point of reference for staff and student (would-be) Marxists, and involved in occasional protests within the institute.

Rénique, José Luis. 1997. '[El Perú de Maruja Martínez: Reflexiones en torno a un libro excepcional](#)'. *Cyberallu*.

A review of the book and life of Martínez, for whom see elsewhere.

Revkin, Andrew. 1990. *The Burning Season: The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Amazon Rain Forest*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

See elsewhere.

Revkin, Andrew. 1992. *Chico Mendes: Su lucha y su muerte por la defensa de la selva amazonica* (Chico Mendes: His Struggle and His Death in Defence of the Amazon Forest). Mexico DF: Paidós. 253 pp.

See elsewhere.

Ridenour, Ron. 1986. *Yankee Sandinistas: Interviews with North Americans Living and Working in the New Nicaragua*. Willimantic (CT): Curbstone Press. 175 pp.

Includes author's thoughtful reflections.

Riordan, Jim. 2009. *The Spy who Played for Spartak*. London: Harper Perennial.

Former British soldier and Russia-watcher who switched allegiances. Later became academic in UK. Whether he did actually play for Spartak is elsewhere questioned.

Rodinson, Maxime. 2006. '[Sultan Galiev - a Forgotten Precursor: Socialism and the National Question](#)', *Europe Solidaire sans Frontieres*.

This is actually a book review by a great Marxist scholar which deals with the Tatar, Mirsaid Sultan Galiev, an almost forgotten figure of early Soviet history. His career from protégé of Stalin (when Stalin was Commissar of Nationalities) to victim of Stalin is a poignant commentary on the failure of the Russian revolution to live up to its early promise in the eyes of many that it professed to liberate. For Galiev's earlier life, [check here in Wikipedia](#).

Rodriguez, Spain. 2008. *Che: A Graphic Biography*. London/New York: Verso Books.

One of several such graphic bios.

Rohter, Larry. 1998. 'Special Report: Tarnished Laureate: Nobel Winner Accused of Stretching Truth in Her Autobiography', *New York Times*, December 15.

Major contributor to the controversy.

Rojas, Marta and Mirta Rodriguez Calderón (eds). 1971. *Tania: The Unforgettable Guerilla. The Scrapbook of a Young Girl who Worked for the Revolution in Cuba and Died with Che in the Bolivian Jungle*. New York: Vintage. 210 pp.

English version of a Cuban book.

Rosenstone, Robert. 1975. *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed*. New York: Vintage.

Best known for his account of the Russian Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, US journalist, John Reed, supported the IWW (aka Wobblies), rode with Pancho Villa during the Mexican Revolution, and was involved in the creation of the US Communist Party. He is buried, alongside other heroes of the Revolution, at the base of the Kremlin Wall.

Rowbotham, Sheila. 2000. *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties*. London: Penguin.

Delightful and thoughtful reflection of the 1960s by this famous British feminist historian and thinker.

Rowbotham, Sheila. 2009. *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love*. London: Verso Books.

Carpenter was a British poet, thinker, writer, a late-19th century, early socialist, homosexual, libertarian. This is one of the author's various historical works.

Rowbotham, Sheila. 2011. 'The Revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg', *The Guardian*. 5 March 2011.

Review of the English-language publication of Rosa's letters.

Rütters, Peter. 2001. [Interview with Dan Gallin](#). Global Labour Institute.

Gallin is best known as the retired long-term General Secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF). But he has long been a socialist and internationalist, tracing his inspiration to independent socialist unionism of the 1920s-30s. After retirement he founded the Global Labour Institute and has, in this capacity and his own writings, shown himself to be a fierce critic of the traditional union internationals, and to be, perhaps, the international trade union veteran most open to the new kinds of workers and the new kinds of social movements.

Russell, Sam. 2011. 'Moscow-Havana-Prague: Recollections of a Communist Foreign Correspondent, Sam Russell'. *20th Century Communism: A Journal of International History*. No. 3.

Sam Russell (originally Lessor) was an East London Jewish Communist and long-time journalist for and Foreign Editor of the *Daily Worker/Morning Star*. He here confesses to a mixture of cynicism and naivety concerning the Communist world he made propaganda for.

Ryder, Guy. [Wikipedia](#).

Ryder has surely to be seen as an icon of 'social-partnership' national and international unionism, having risen from the one to the other and presently being General Secretary of the International Labour Organisation. He had two university degrees before entering union employment with the TUC in the UK. He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2009.

Sack, Jon, Adam Shapiro, Lucha Castro. 2015. *La Lucha: The story of Lucha Castro and Human Rights in Mexico*. London: Verso.

Through individual stories, such as that of Lucha ('Fight' in Spanish), a feminist human rights activist, and the notorious Ciudad Juarez, shows in stripbook form the heroic but heart-rending struggle for human rights in Mexico.

[Samuel, Raphael](#). Wikipedia.

Samuel, from a Jewish Communist family (on his mother's side) joined the Communist Party of Great Britain as a schoolboy and left following the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary in 1956. At Balliol College, Oxford he became a member of the brilliant Communist Party Historians Group. He co-founded the journal, *Past and Present* in 1952, and the Partisan Coffee House in 1956 in Soho, London, as a meeting place for the British New Left. He founded the History Workshop movement at the union-connected Ruskin College, Oxford. Samuel and the *History Workshop* journal and movement powerfully influenced the development of the approach to historical research and writing known as 'history from below'.

Satrapi, Marjane. 2007. *The Complete Persepolis*. (Graphic Novel). New York: Pantheon.

See 'Persepolis'.

Saul, John. 2009. *Revolutionary Traveler: Freeze-Frames from a Life*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Press.

Widely respected Canadian Africanist writer/activist/academic, whose Thirdworldism has been tempered after the liberation of Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. His itinerary is interspersed with long extracts from his writings.

Sayle, Alexei. 2010. *Stalin ate my Homework*. London: Sceptre.

Famous Liverpool comedian, of Communist and partly-Jewish working-class origin, gives droll account of his family and youth, (mis-)adventures on East European vacations, but no actual evidence concerning the book's title.

[Shiva, Vandana](#). Wikipedia.

An Indian scholar, environmental activist and anti-globalization author. Shiva, currently based in Delhi, has authored more than twenty books. She is one of the leaders and board members of the International Forum on Globalization and a figure of the global solidarity movement known as the alter-globalization movement. She received the Right Livelihood Award in 1993, and numerous other prizes.

Studer, Brigitte. 2015. *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.

The 'Cominternians' who staffed the Communist International in Moscow from its establishment in 1919 to its dissolution in 1943 led transnational lives and formed a cosmopolitan but closed and privileged world. Full of sympathy, eager to learn, hopeful of emulating Bolshevik success 'at home', they were first-hand witnesses to the difficulties of the young Russian Revolution, before seeing it descend into the terror to which many of them fell victim.

Semprun, Jorge. 1980. *Communism in Spain in the Franco era: The Autobiography of Federico Sanchez*. Harvester Press.

Fascinating and revealing account, based on the brilliant author's own life, also as a resistance fighter in France, and later as a clandestine Communist during the Franco period and its overthrow.

Sen, Mala. 1991. *India's Bandit Queen: The True Story of Phoolan Devi*. Pandora/ HarperCollins.

See elsewhere.

Shakur, Assata. 1988. *Assata: An Autobiography*. London: Zed Books.

Belies the fearsome image of Assata (JoAnne Chesimard) long projected by the US media and the state. Recounts the experiences that led her to a life of activism and portrays the strengths, weaknesses, and eventual demise of Black and White revolutionary groups at the hand of government officials. Two years after her conviction for the death of a state trooper, Assata Shakur escaped prison. She was given political asylum by Cuba.

Singh, Rama. 2016. 'If Gandhi must fall, so should all our gods and all our heroes', [McMaster University](#).

Forceful response to the 'anti-Gandhi' wave in Ghana, itself following the iconoclastic South African book by Desai and Vahed (see elsewhere).

Šlingova (a.k.a Wilbraham, a.k.a. Sling-Fagan), Marian. 1968. *Truth Will Prevail*. London: Merlin Press.

Marian Wilbraham, from a middle-class family in the UK, became a Communist peace and student activist in pre-WW2/wartime Britain. She met and married Czechoslovak Jewish Communist, Otto Šling. After playing a prominent role in the new Communist state, he was framed up during the anti-semitic show trials and executed. Marian was separated from her children and persecuted for many years. She eventually became a respected translator, her boys permitted university education. Somehow she kept her faith in Communism. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, she returned to the UK and married British Jewish Communist veteran, Hymie Fagan.

Sneevliet, Henk. [Wikipedia](#).

Henk Sneevliet came from a Dutch working-class family, was a trade union militant, went to Dutch colonial Indonesia, where he supported left nationalist movements, returned to the Netherlands, joined the Communist Party and the Comintern. He was sent as a Communist agent to China, represented Indonesia at a Comintern Conference. In the 1930s broke with the Dutch CP, and was part of a revolutionary resistance network when he was caught by the Nazis and executed.

Soderbergh, Steven (Director). 2008. *Che*.

Rather than follow a standard chronological order, the films offer an oblique series of interspersed moments along the overall timeline. *Part One* is entitled *The Argentine* and focuses on the Cuban Revolution from the landing of Fidel Castro, Guevara, and other revolutionaries in Cuba to their successful toppling of Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship two years later. *Part Two* is entitled *Guerrilla* and focuses on Guevara's attempt to bring revolution to Bolivia and his demise. Both parts are shot in a cinéma vérité style, but each has different approaches to linear narrative, camerawork, and the visual look.

Spenser, Daniela. 2010. '[El viaje de Vicente Lombardo Toledano al mundo del porvenir](#)', *Desacatos*, núm. 34

Vicente Lombardo Toledano (VLT) was the pre-eminent and quasi-mythical union leader in Mexican history. This paper traces the itinerary of Vicente Lombardo Toledano to the Soviet Union and puts the ideas of the Mexican traveller into a broader perspective. It explores both the enthusiasm and the fear that his lectures provoked in Mexico and the world on his return to Mexico, in the fall of 1935. This was a moment in which the political elite and the population were divided between supporters and opponents of President Lázaro Cárdenas. [See further here](#). The author is completing a full-length biography of VLT.

Sullivan, Linda. 2013. 'One Woman's Fight for Water Against Gold in Peru'. [The Detail](#).

Account of how an Irishwoman got involved in a major regional campaign against ecologically-destructive extractivism in Peru.

Stevenson, Graham. [Falber, Reuben](#).

Reuben Falber was a British Communist stalwart, of low profile but evident accounting capacities, who liased with Soviet diplomats to receive the 'Moscow Gold' that Communist leaders always denied and party members scoffed at. Finally exposed by a UK newspaper, he compared this Soviet money to that which rich British Conservatives gave to their own party. This is one of numerous British Communist bios in Graham Stevenson's substantial listing.

Stewart, Bob. 1967. *Breaking the Fetters*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

A classical British Communist autobio, this time by a working-class Scottish unionist and prohibitionist, who worked at one time for the Comintern. His clandestine Comintern activities are not relayed here.

Stock, Jonathon. 2014. '[A Dutch Guerillera: The Foreign Face of FARC's Civil War](#)', *Der Spiegel Online*.

The Dutch Tanja Nijmeijer spent more than 10 years fighting with the armed rebel FARC group in the jungles of Colombia. More recently, she has been part of the guerillas' peace negotiating team in Cuba. The latest case of a European woman identifying with guerilla movements in Latin America?

Stoll, David. 1998. *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of all Poor Guatemalans*. Boulder: Westview. 336 pp.

A major contribution to the extensive controversy.

Taibo, Paco Ignacio. 1999. *Guevara, also Known as Che*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Mexican novelist and historian Paco Ignacio Taibo II here captures the life and character of Che Guevara, the preeminent Latin-American revolutionary of the late twentieth century. In the years since he died, fascination with Che and his independent and pragmatic brand of Guerilla Marxism have become increasingly focused.

Taibo II, Paco Ignacio. 2011. *Arcángeles*. Editorial Planeta Mexicana

In these pages there parade beings who chose to take the revolutionary path of no return: Friedrich Adler who believed in assassination on moral grounds; Librado Rivera, believer in the power of the written word; Larisa Reisner and Adolph Joffe, Bolsheviks of the early twentieth century; Sebastian San Vicente, an orthodox anarchist; Peng Pai, the convinced Marxist agrarian; Piero Malaboca, an outspoken red internationalist; Rivera and Siqueiros, revolutionary painters; Buenaventura Durruti, anarchist; Juan R. Escudero, the Communist mayor of Acapulco; Max Hölz, German

revolutionary; Raul Diaz Arguelles a convinced Guevarist in the Latin American the 1960s.

[The Square. Al Midan](#) (original title). 2014. Documentary, 1hr 35min.

We meet five courageous characters, a variety of Egyptians, and we learn why they devoted the last two years of their lives to protesting in The Square. The way they speak about their country is heartbreakingly direct, and when they suffer for their goals it's heartbreaking. Interesting, too, is the balance of art, protest, technology, discussion, and music in the protester's toolkits. The picture is up-close, traumatic, and fast-paced.

Thorez, Maurice. 1949. *Fils du peuple* (Son of the People). Paris : Editions Sociales.

Autobio of the miner and labour activist who became the long-term General Secretary of the Stalinist French Communist Party.

Tolentino, Jia. 2014. 'Interview: Dr. Rebecca Gomperts, who Brought Women Abortions by Sea', *Jezebel: Sheroes and Zeroes*.

Gomperts is the Dutch physician who runs a ship providing abortions in international waters for women from countries where these are illegal.

Tom, Petrus. 1985. *My Life Struggle*. Johannesburg: Ravan

Petrus Tom became an activist in the South African SACTU union confederation, allied with the ANC and the Communist Party. After its repression and the imprisonment/exile of these, he became an activist in the politically-autonomous but militant FOSATU confederation that eventually became the COSATU. One of a series of worker pamphlets published under Apartheid by Ravan Press.

Trepper, Leopold. 1977. *The Great Game: Memoirs of a Master Spy*. London: Joseph.

Autobiography of Trepper (see elsewhere), written after he had been released by the Polish Communist state and settled in Israel.

Trevizan, Liliana (2001). "Virginia Vargas". [Notable Twentieth-Century Latin American Women: A Biographical Dictionary](#) (1st ed.). Westport, Conn. [u.a.]: Greenwood Press. pp. 287–291.

Virginia (Gina) Vargas Valente is a leading Peruvian, Latin American and international feminist activist and writer. This may currently be the most substantial and up-to-date biographical note on Gina (see also elsewhere).

Trincher, G. C. Rutgers and K Trincher. 1974. *Rutgers: Zijn leven en streven in Holland, Indonesië, Amerika en Rusland* (Rutgers: His Life and Struggles in Holland, Indonesia, America, and Russia). Moscow: Progress Books.

Sebald Rutgers (1879-1961) was a Dutch engineer who became a Marxist, played a leading role in revolutionary socialist organisations in the US, went to post-revolutionary Russia, met Lenin, worked for the Comintern, was involved in a major Soviet 'internationalist' industrialisation project

there, returned to the Netherlands in 1938. He is said to have played a role in resistance to the Nazis. For a less red-starry-eyed account, also in Dutch, see [here](#). This says that if he had not left Russia at that time he would have been caught up in one of Stalin's show trials of engineers.

Tristan, Flora. 1986. *Peregrinations of a Pariah*. London: Virago. 312 pp.

Memoirs of the journey made by the French pioneering socialist/feminist to Peru, where she hoped – but failed – to get recognition from her dead father's family. After a depressing account of her lengthy sea voyage she gives a lively account of a Peru which had recently won independence from Spain. (See elsewhere for Flora).

Trotte, Margarethe von. 1986. [Rosa Luxemburg](#). (Movie)

Polish Jewish Marxist, Rosa Luxemburg, theorises and strategises about internationalism and revolution during the era of the German and Russian empires. While she campaigns relentlessly for her beliefs, getting repeatedly imprisoned in Germany as well as in Poland, she spars with lovers and comrades until she is assassinated by the extreme-right *Freikorps* for her leadership of the Spartacist uprising after World War I in 1919. (See further for Rosa).

Trouw. 1998. 'Rigoberta's Niet-Gebeurd is al te Waar' (What Did Not Happen to Rigoberta is only too True), *Trouw*, 17 December 1998.

Tsuzuki, Chushichi. 1991. Tom Mann, 1856-1941: The Challenges of Labour. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 288 pp.

Biography of famous British engineering worker unionist who played a leading role in the New Unionism of the 1890s, was an active syndicalist (left libertarian) socialist leader, travelled with his tools and organizing experience to Australia and South Africa, became a leading British Communist.

Vanaik, Achin. 2003. 'A Life of the Mind', *Biblio: A Review of Books* (New Delhi), March-April. P. 21.

Review of Eric Hobsbawm's autobio. Vanaik denies Hobsbawm was a Stalinist (see elsewhere).

[Vanunu, Mordechai](#). Wikipedia.

Vargas, Gina. 2013. '[Cuarenta años no es nada! En el dolor de la pérdida](#)'.

Personal memories of the coup in Chile, September 11, 1973, by a Peruvian studying sociology with outstanding Latin American left academics, and heavily involved with the Left movement in Santiago at that time.

Vargas, Gina. 2016. 'Hugo Blanco: Traspasando Décadas, Fronteras y Movimientos' (Hugo Blanco: Across Decades, Frontiers and Movements)

Born in the Peruvian Andes, 1934, first known internationally as a leader of landless Quechua peasants. He has survived imprisonment, a death sentence, exile, a life-threatening illness, and was once

elected to the Peruvian parliament. He has been an active supporter of the most recent radical-democratic social movements in Peru and is currently editor of *Lucha Indígena* (Indigenous Struggle). This item is a contribution to a forthcoming compilation scheduled for publication by the Programa Democracia y Transformación Global, Lima, 2017.

Vásquez Perdomo, María Eugenia. 2005. [My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary: Reflections of a Former Guerrillera](#). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gripping account of her experiences as a member of M-19, one of the major guerrilla movements in Colombia's tumultuous modern history. Vásquez took part in some of the M-19's boldest operations in the 1970s and 1980s and became one of its leaders. When she tells of her love affairs with some of M-19's top leaders, she cannot separate romance from camaraderie or escape a sense of impending tragedy. She gives us an unsparing analysis of what it meant to be a woman in the movement and how much her commitment to radical politics cost her.

Wainright, Hilary. 2015. 'Why I Became a Feminist Socialist', *Jacobin Magazine*. December 28.

Veteran British feminist, socialist and labour activist/writer on the relationship between her 1960s left feminism and contemporary emancipatory movements.

Walesa, Lech. [Wikipedia](#).

See elsewhere.

Waterman, Peter. 1993. 'Hopeful Traveller: The Itinerary of an Internationalist', *History Workshop*, No. 35, Spring, pp. 165-184.

First sketch of what later became a full-scale autobio (Waterman 2014).

Waterman, Peter. 2002. 'Of Saints, Sinners and Compañeras: Internationalist Lives in the Americas Today', <http://www.antenna.nl/~waterman/saints.html>

Full draft of paper later submitted, in radically cut and updated form, to the Special Issue of *Interface Journal* on 'Social Movement Auto/Bios.

Waterman, Peter. 2006. 'Agents of the Revolution and/or the Soviet State?' ([Review Article, Unpublished](#)).

Review of Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn (eds), *Agents of the Revolution: New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Bern: Peter Lang. 2005.

Waterman, Peter. 2008. [The Worlds of International Communism and Communist Internationalism: Lost but not \(to be\) Forgotten](#).

Illustrated paper reviews various autobiographical or biographical pieces on Communists and includes an autobiographical sketch.

Waterman, Peter. 2014. [*From Coldwar Communism to the Global Justice Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist*](#). Into-Ebooks.com.

Personal/political autobio, of English Jewish Communist, who after witnessing Soviet invasion of Prague leaves both 'the Communist world and the world of Communism', later becoming an academic specialist/activist on labour and other internationalisms.

Watters, Frank. 1992. *Being Frank: The Memoirs of Frank Watters*. Doncaster: Askew Design and Print.

Classical British working-class Communist autobio, though mostly of Post-WWII vintage, Frank becoming a fulltime CPGB organizer in the Midlands, remaining in the party until his death.

Weissberg, Alexander. 1952. *Conspiracy of Silence (Later The Accused)*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Account by physicist of Polish-Austrian Jewish origin, who emigrated to the USSR to help build communism and fell foul of the Great Purges. His account of Stalin's regime, attempting to get him to play a star part in a show trial, is riveting. He was handed over to the Nazis at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact. He survived this and played a role in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943. (For a 1952 review, see [here](#)).

Wolf, Markus. 1997. *Man without a Face: The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster*. New York: Public Affairs. 411 pp.

Wolf was the long-standing chief of Communist East Germany's foreign intelligence operations. (In)famous for exploiting sex to trap West Germans into spying for the East. Identifying with Gorbachev, he resigned his post just before East Germany collapsed.

Yousafzai, Malala. 2013. *I Am Malala: The Girl who Stood up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

The Pakistani schoolgirl who promoted education for girls, was subject to an assassination attempt, survived and became a Western icon. (See further [here](#), where some criticism of her Nobel award and idolisation can be found).

Zaagsma, Gerben. 2010 '[Naftali Botwin - a Jewish Communist Hero in Interwar Poland](#)', paper *Cult of Heroes in Central Europe 1880-1939 - Practices and Representations* (Central European University, Budapest, 12-13 November 2010).

Zirin, Dave. 2016. '[The Hidden History of Muhammad Ali](#): Muhammad Ali's resistance to racism and war belongs not only to the 1960s, but the common future of humanity'. *Jacobin*.

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a/b. *Auto/biography Studies*.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/raut20/current>

Arfuch, Leonor. 2010. *El espacio biográfico: Dilemas de la subjetividad contemporánea*. Buenos Aires: Efe.

Leonor Arfuch borrows the concept of 'biographical space' to reflect on the construction of a particular sphere of interaction that begins in the conversational dynamics that characterize interviews, life stories, autobiographical accounts and, in general, any of the methods that support work in recovering the testimony of the other. Her biographical space refers us, then, to the narration of experiences, experiences both individual and social. Basically, in all cases, it is the presence, proximity, between researcher and subject researched, or what is the same, between known and unknown subject.

Autobiographical Manuscripts in the Tamiment Library.

https://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/tam/bio_mss.html

[Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly](#).

[Biography and Memoir](#). Oakland: PM Press.

Chansky, Ricia and Emily Hipchen (Eds). 2015. *The Routledge Auto|Biography Studies Reader* (Routledge Literature Readers). Routledge: London.

Commire, Anne (ed.). 2002. *Dictionary of Women Worldwide*. Detroit: Thomson/Gale. (3 Vols).

Contains 25,000 brief biographical entries, historical and contemporary, providing complete biographical information for most entries.

Cosslett, Tess, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (Eds). 2000. *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, theories, methods*. London: Routledge.

[Dictionary of Labour Biography](#). (UK). Palgrave-Macmillan.

Dimensions of Socialism Workshop. 2010. *Biographies & Narratives I and II*. International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

<https://socialhistory.org/en/events/dimensions-socialism>

Feminists' Memoires/Autobiographies.

<https://www.librarything.com/list/322/all/Feminists-memoirs%25252Fautobiographies>.

Ganz, Marshall. 2001. '[The Power of Story in Social Movements](#)'. Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, California.

'When we tell our story we do identity work, reenacting who we have been and forging the persons we become. As an interaction among speakers and listeners, story telling is culture forging activity, constructing shared understandings of how to manage the risks of uncertainty, anomaly, and

unpredictability grounded in recollection of how we dealt with past challenges’.

Graaf, Anouk van der. 2016. [*Powerful Patterns of Persuasion: Reading the Activist Autobiography: Social Movement Techniques and the African-American Literary Tradition in the Life Narratives of Black Nationalists Malcolm X, James Forman and Angela Davis, 1965-1975*](#). MA Thesis, University of Utrecht.

Griffin, Charles J. G. 2000. [“Movement as Motive”: Self-Definition and Social Advocacy in Social Movement Autobiographies’](#). *Western Journal of Communication*. Volume 64, Issue 2.

‘In a rhetorically effective social movement autobiography, form enables the rhetorical functions of self-definition and social advocacy to become mutually reinforcing, so that the author's life story demonstrates the plausibility of enacting the movement's ideology at the level of the individual, while the movement's “story” provides a backdrop against which the author can achieve a meaningful form of self-definition’.

Gugelberger, Georg (ed.). 1996. *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Jolly, Margaretta. 2000. ‘The Exile and the Ghost-Writer: East-West Biographical Politics and The Private Life of Chairman Mao’. *Biography*, 23 (3). pp. 481-503.

Investigates the biography as text to consider the light it throws on the form and function of political biography in the 1990s. Argues that both Li's debunking and eyewitnessing are more coded and constructed than their apparently ‘confessional’ stance encourages us to believe, particularly since when it first appeared, the biography was ghost-written, in English, by American sinologist Anne Thurston. Concludes that when viewed in relation to biography as a genre, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* tells us about as much about current uses of biography as about the history of Mao himself, with important messages about cultural perceptions of the individual in both China and in the United States.

Jolly, Margaretta (ed). 2001. *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*. Vols. 1-2. London: Fitzroy-Dearborne.

King, Jamilah and Stokely Baksh. 2011. [Seven Revolutionary Icons Being Used to Pimp Capitalist Excess, War and Vanilla Ice Cream](#). Alternet.

How even revolutionary icons can be commodified by the capitalism they opposed.

Lütge Coullie, J, Meyer, S, Ngwenya, TH and Olver, T (eds.) *Selves in Question: Interviews on Southern African Auto/biography*. University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 315-328.

[Marxist Internet Archive](#). Biographies.

Extensive alphabetical listing of Marxists which uses Google as its 'internal' search tool.

McIlroy, John, Kevin Morgan and Alan Campbell (eds). 2001. *Party People, Communist Lives: Explorations in Biography*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

This book, consists of a collection of biographical essays. In the last 10 years, there has been an increased interest in biography and life histories. The contributors share the belief that 'writing biography can be an exciting and rigorous way of writing history, one which restores the flesh and blood, the inspiration and perspiration, to Communist lives'. They bring together a collection of very diverse essays focused on the period 1920-1940, topped by a chapter by Kevin Morgan, about the historiography of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and Communist biography.

Morgan, Kevin, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn (eds). 2005. *Agents of the Revolution: New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang.

Movies For Socialists. <http://culturewarreporters.com/2015/05/05/movies-for-socialists/>

Mulhern, Francis (ed). 2011. *Lives on the Left: A Group Portrait*. London: Verso.

The extended critical interview is especially flexible as a form, by turns tenacious and glancing, elliptical or sustained, combining argument and counter-argument, reflection, history and memoir with a freedom normally denied to its subjects in conventional writing formats. *Lives on the Left* brings together sixteen such interviews from *New Left Review* in a group portrait of intellectual engagement in the twentieth century and since. Four generations of intellectuals discuss their political histories and present perspectives, and the specialized work for which they are, often, best known. *Lives on the Left* includes interviews with Georg Lukács, Hedda Korsch, Jean-Paul Sartre, Dorothy Thompson, Jiří Pelikan, Ernest Mandel, Luciana Castellina, Lucio Colletti, K. Damodaran, Noam Chomsky, David Harvey, Adolfo Gilly, João Pedro Stédile, Asada Akira, Wang Hui and Giovanni Arrighi.

Perkins, Margo. 2000. *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties*. University Press of Mississippi.

A study of the Black Power narratives of Angela Davis, Assata Shakur (a.k.a. JoAnne Chesimard), and Elaine Brown as instruments for radical social change. Recipient of the Mississippi University for Womenas Eudora Welty Prize

Pittaway, Mark. 2005. 'Introduction: Workers and Socialist States in Postwar Central and Eastern Europe'. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 68(Fall) pp. 1-8.

Poitevin, Guy. '[Dalit Autobiographical Narratives: Figures of Subaltern Consciousness, Assertion and Identity](#)'.

Popkin, Jeremy. 2005. *History, Historians, and Autobiography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/H/bo3534022.html>

[Revolutionary Lives](#): Critical Biographies of Radical Legends. (Series). London: Pluto Press.

Selected Marxist Writers. [Marxist Internet Archive](#).

Simón, Yar. 2015. '[These Anti-Princess Books Give Young Girls Badass Latina Heroines to Look up to](#)'.

The first two children's books in the series deal with the Mexican artist/activist Frida Kahlo and the Chilean protest singer/songwriter, Violeta Parra. A promised further work is on Juana Azurduy, a Bolivian guerilla/military leader who spoke Spanish, Quechua and Aymara.

Socialist Biographies and Autobiographies.

<http://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/books/DisplayBooklist.php?BookListID=80>

Socialist History. ?????'. '[Biography and Political Uses of Memory](#)', Socialist History, Issue 34.

Within the communist and socialist tradition processes of memory and the construction of identity have been highly politicised. One notable arena for the development of this has been in the writing and rewriting of biography and autobiography. The theme articles in this issue of *Socialist History* consider the nature of writing about the self and the political uses of such historical writing.

Socialist, capitalist, anarchist and communist movies.

<http://www.imdb.com/list/ls008325243>

Sparrow, J. W. 2007. 'Engineering your own Soul: Theory and Practice in Communist Biography and Autobiography'

<https://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/eserv/rmit:9551/Sparrow.pdf>

Through the life of an Australian left intellectual, explores the different strands of thought within Australian communism, the impact of Stalinisation on the movement both in Australia and overseas, and the personal and political difficulties confronting anti-Stalinist radicals.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Demonstrates concern for the processes whereby postcolonial studies ironically reinscribe, co-opt, and rehearse neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural erasure. Suggests that any attempt from the outside to ameliorate their condition by

granting them collective speech invariably will encounter the following problems: 1) a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and 2) a dependence upon western intellectuals to "speak for" the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves.

Stevenson, Graham. 2004-. A Compendium of Communist Biographies.

http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=2&Itemid=92.

A formidable compendium by a longtime British working-class union and Communist activist, son-in-law of Frank Waters (see elsewhere).

Tappan, Mark. ????. [Autobiography, mediated action, and the development of moral identity](#). Education and Human Development, Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

'Explores a sociocultural approach to the development of moral identity, by considering the ... autobiography of Ingo Hasselbach. Hasselbach, the founder (in 1991) of the National Alternative neo-Nazi party in East Germany, writes about his childhood and youth, how and why he embraced the neo-Nazi perspective, and how and why he ultimately repudiated the movement that he had helped to create'.

TAS (The Autobiography Society). <http://auto-biography.org/>

Wengraf, Tom. 2001. *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. London: Sage.

Chapter 6 provides a do-it-yourself manual for those interested in doing narrative interviews with selected movement people whose stories and experience they want to get to know and/or don't want to get lost. Or (cheaper) contact tom.wengraf@gmail.com for a free 'Quick Outline Sketch' of the method. Or see [here](#).

[Wikipedia](#).

A massive and growing resource for biographies, whether of social-movement figures or not. Their accuracy or adequacy is sometimes indicated by Wikipedia itself. Elsewhere, of course, this and other such listings are to be used with caution.

[Writing Lives](#). Collaborative Research Project on British Working-Class Autobiography.

Yow, Valerie. 1994. *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. 284.

Protest communities and activist enthusiasm: student occupations in contemporary Argentina, Chile and Uruguay

Indira Palacios-Valladares

Abstract

This paper examines how occupation communities shape activist enthusiasm. Based on the analysis of more than sixty interviews with student participants in recent high school and university occupations in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, the paper argues that occupations have complex and contradictory effects on participants due to the relatively long time spans involved and the consequent heightening of risk, intimacy, and community building efforts. On the one hand, they offer exhilarating experiences that foster strong feelings of being a community bound together by affect, moral political commitment, and feelings of collective empowerment and freedom. On the other hand, protracted conflict breeds equally strong feelings of uncertainty, fear, boredom, and/or alienation that put into question the validity of the occupation community. Thus, occupations enthuse activists but can also exhaust and disillusion them, generating some strategic challenges for social movements.

Keywords: Protest, movement communities, occupations, encampments, student movements, mobilization, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay

Introduction

Protest occupations and encampments have been a hallmark of many contemporary social movements.¹ Some, such as Occupy Wall Street in the United States, Okupa in Spain, Ghezi Park in Turkey, and Tahrir Square in Egypt, have become synonymous with the act of occupying or the places they have occupied. Throughout these different contexts, occupations have shared a key characteristic: the on-site emergence of autonomous and self-governing movement communities.

This paper examines how these occupation communities shape activist enthusiasm. It argues that occupations have complex and contradictory effects on participants due to the relatively long time spans involved and the consequent heightening of risk, intimacy, and community building efforts. On

¹ It is important to note that occupations have, for a long time, been part of the repertoires of contention of the poor, the unemployed, as well as peasant, labor, indigenous, black, women, and youth movements across the world. In modern times, they have taken many forms, from the Paris Commune to the landless movement in Brazil and beyond.

the one hand, they offer exhilarating experiences that foster strong feelings of being part of a community bound together by affect, moral political commitment, and feelings of collective empowerment and freedom. On the other hand, protracted conflict breeds equally strong feelings of uncertainty, boredom, fear, and/or alienation that put into question the validity of the occupation community. Thus, occupations enthuse activists but can also exhaust and disillusion them, generating some strategic challenges for social movements.

These arguments draw on the analysis of more than sixty in-depth interviews with student participants in recent high school and university occupations in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.² In these three countries student movements have a venerable tradition of occupying schools and universities.³ Following this tradition, in recent years Argentinean, Chilean and Uruguayan students have staged protest campaigns in order to challenge neoliberal views of education as a private investment rather than a public good and social right. More specifically, students have used occupations, marches, and cultural performances to protest the rising private costs of education, the persistence of socio-economic inequities in access to quality education, the physical and academic deterioration of the public system, the lack of democracy in academic governance, and/or the increasing narrowing of the educational curriculum to market demands, among other specific grievances. These protests have drawn thousands of students and sympathizers, and shut down, for months at a time, significant portions of the secondary and/or university system.

Some accounts of these campaigns suggest in passing that participation in occupations had a significant impact on activist engagement with the student movement (Zibechi 1997; Graña 1996; Aguilera 2006; Alvarez 2008; Domedel and Peña y Lillo 2008; Enrique 2010; Simonsen 2013; Larrondo 2014). Yet, they do not probe this idea or explore the causal mechanisms behind such a relationship. This paper takes on this task. In doing so, it seeks to more broadly contribute to our theoretical understanding of how movement experiences affect activist enthusiasm during heightened moments of mobilization (protest cycles), a topic that has not received enough attention in the broader social movement literature and that has important implications for the study of mobilization processes. In particular, the paper illuminates how occupation community experiences shape participants' understanding of the movement and their feelings and attitudes toward their own involvement in it.

² Interviews for this paper refer to the Argentinean student occupations of 1996 and 2010; the Chilean student occupations of 1996, 2006 and 2011; and the Uruguayan student occupations of 1992, 1996 and 2000.

³ In Chile, for example, the first recorded student occupation dates back to 1833 when eighty students of the Instituto Nacional, an elite public school, occupied the principal's accommodations to protest against corporal punishment and a too rigid disciplinary system. The use of coordinated school and university occupations became, however, a routine repertoire of southern cone university student movements during the late 1910s and 1920s and of high school movements in the 1940s and 1950s.

The focus of the paper is, thus, not to study individual occupations, or to develop a cross-national comparative analysis of occupations and/or student movements in the southern cone, but to highlight common experiences across somewhat similar occupations and occupation communities.⁴ This approach means that the paper does not dwell on the specifics of different occupation campaigns within or across countries. Instead, it focuses on common themes that can be extrapolated from the specific contexts in which they arise in order to draw some general lessons that can be potentially applied later to other occupation contexts.

What is an occupation and how does it shape activist enthusiasm?

Occupations, also referred to as protest or squatter camps, are characterized by the unauthorized entry, forceful holding, and long-term encampment in a public or private space with the goal of challenging power and seeking social, political, and/or cultural change.

As a form of protest, occupations are a tactical choice, that is, a strategic means of coercion or persuasion through which movements pursue their goals vis-à-vis other strategic actors (Jasper 2006; Piven and Cloward 1977; Mc Adam 1983; Ganz 2009; Gould 2009). They are nonetheless a peculiar tactical choice.⁵ Unlike marches and rallies, which last at the most a few hours and involve a steady stream of participants, occupations entail the construction of a “place-based social movement strategy that involves both acts of ongoing protest and acts of social reproduction needed to sustain daily life (Feigenbaum et al 2013: 12).” The result is the generation of “free/ autonomous” spaces where networks of individuals and organizations that support change come together intimately and for extended periods of time, developing in the process movement structures, rituals, ideas, and events, that is, a movement community (Staggenborg 1998, Polletta 1999, Taylor and Van Dyke 2004).⁶

⁴ Argentina, Chile and Uruguay share some commonalities that make the cases comparable. They have high levels of economic development and urbanization by Latin American standards and strong traditions of left-leaning student party organization, and similar recent political regime trajectories, having made a transition from conservative military dictatorship to democracy during the 1980s and sustained democracy since then.

⁵ Although it is not the topic of this paper, it is worth pointing out that the literature on social movements offers a number of explanations for why people choose to protest in particular ways. These include the existence of familiar and easily adaptable cultural repertoires that protestors can borrow from the past or other movements (Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1995), the opportunities and constraints imposed by institutions, other actors, and structural conditions (McAdam 1983; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1995), the strategic goals of movements (Della Porta and Diani 2006; Manzano 2008), and the emotional and moral meaning of certain forms of collective action (Jasper 1997; Doherty 1999; Gould 2009).

⁶ Network theorists use the term subcultural or communitarian action field to refer to the same idea (Diani and Mishe 2015: 314-15).

Occupations are forms of protest especially likely to generate strong movement communities. This is the case because occupations' prolonged face-to face interactions within a confined, autonomous, and high risk context tend to nurture intense affective bonds between participants (Zibechi 1997 and 2003: 142-3; Della Porta and Gianni Piazza 2008: 92-6; Ondetti 2008: 114; Hughes 2011; Castells 2012: 10-2; Della Porta 2012: 268-74; Feigenbaum et al. 2013; Hammond 2013). These bonds are forged by "being there," bearing together the risks of the struggle (Zibechi 2003:141).

Occupations form strong movement communities in more indirect ways as well (Zibechi 1997; Da Silva Catela 2005; Wittman 2005; Alvarez 2008; Castells 2012; Della Porta and Gianni Piazza 2008; Meyer and Chaves 2008; Ondetti 2008; Castell 2012; Gitlin 2012; Taussig 2012; Feigenbaum, Frenzel and MCurdy 2013; Perrugoria and Tejerina 2013; de la Llata 2015; Gould-Wartofsky 2015; Sigaud 2015). First, they activate and connect networks, serving as nodes of communication that allow activists to influence each other, helping diffuse the forms and content of protest (Della Porta 2012; Tindall 2015: 235-6). In other words, occupations are "activist hubs: widening, strengthening and uniting social movements (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006)."

Second, occupations generate relatively stable political, social and cultural structures. Sustaining an occupation involves a number of challenges, including: securing the occupation from police attacks, meeting the food, shelter, and even entertainment needs of participants, making strategic and tactical movement decisions, avoiding movement isolation and loss of (social and/or traditional) media attention, and preventing member cooptation and desertion. Efforts to confront these challenges require in turn the development of an on-site organization structure and culture, that is, shared social norms, including rules for everyday cohabitation and decision-making, language, symbols, rituals, principles and values (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995; Gould 2009; Della Porta 2012; Routledge 2015; Tindall 2015: 238).

Third, occupations offer activists unusual spaces of collective empowerment. Built almost from scratch and in the heat of the struggle, social movement culture and organization develops as a result of constant on-site deliberation, negotiation, and enactment. Such processes contribute in turn to generate among participants an acute sense of "permanent" collective engagement and agency (Polletta 2002; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004; Della Porta 2015; Routledge 2015: 291). They also generate organization, culture, and politics that operate as the living embodiment of the change the movement pursues (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006; Taylor et al. 2009; Howard and Pratt-Boyden 2013; Van Sande 2013). In doing so, occupations offer living examples of plausible alternative forms of power relations, in some cases leading to the creation of more permanent countercultures (McAdam 1994; Melucci 1996; Rochon 1998; Ranis 2006; Haenfler 2013; Sbicca and Perdue 2014; Della Porta 2015; Routledge 2015: 391-2; Vasudevan 2015).

All this contributes to the strong politization of collective identities and the development of shared counterhegemonic discourses, providing meaning

through which movement members can bridge individual and organizational differences, draw boundaries and establish alliances (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 268; Gould 2009; Della Porta 2012; Ramadan 2012; Routledge 2015: 391). In this way, occupations are likely to strengthen what Taylor et al. (2009) call oppositional consciousness and collective identity (Sbicca and Perdue 2014).

Occupation communities are, however, not devoid of tension. Some of these tensions stem from the fact that more committed, previously organized activists, may try to shape community culture in ways that clash with contents and processes that arise more spontaneously from the on-site experience itself. For example, attempts to generate more formal movement structures, take over leadership, or provide top-down political education, may clash with more horizontal, anti-establishment occupation practices (Triguboff 2008; Salter and Boyce Kay 2011; De Vore 2015; Gould-Wartofsky 2015). Others result from ideological, philosophical, or strategic differences among different movement groups participating in the occupation (Wittman 2005; Della Porta and Piazza 2008; Aitchison 2011). Others arise over issues of cohabitation, involving, for example, hygienic practices, excessive drinking, violence, idleness, free riding, and stealing (Da Silva Catela 2005; Taussig 2012: 63). Yet, others emerge from occupations' reproduction of class, gender, and racial inequality, and even authoritarian national political traditions (Gould-Wartofsky 2015; Núñez 2011); or differences in cultural style between different groups partaking in the occupation (Aguilera 2006). Finally, occupations can turn into ghettos and unwelcoming spaces of deliberation, dominated by those with more resources and/or commitment (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006: 312).

The social movement literature suggests that tactical choice has significant effects on the trajectory and relative success of social movements (Mac Adam 1983; Tilly 1995; Amenta 2006; Taylor et al 2009).⁷ In particular, it points out that the form and character of protest and its interaction with the broader economic, political and attitudinal context affect the prospects of social movements (Gamson 1975; Piven and Cloward 1977; McAdam 1983; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1995; Almeida and Brewster 1998; Amenta 2005 and 2006; Cress and Snow 2000; Hassan and Staggenborg 2015; Beckwith 2016). This scholarship has yielded a rich analysis of, for example: how movement and targets' tactical innovation and adaptation shapes, in a chess-like fashion, the pace of mobilization (McAdam 1983), how the relative policy success of certain tactical choices depends on their fit with the context (Amenta 2006), how protest contributes to the development of movement identities, solidarity and community that ensure movement survival over time (Fantasia 1988;

⁷ This is mediated by activist interpretation. Polletta (2006) argues, for example, that how movement communities remember and recount their struggle can mobilize participants, attract support, and influence targets. In particular, she points out to the power of story-telling, that is, conventional folk narratives that offer dramatic characters and sequences of events, linking the emotional and moral appeal of movement stories, and offering plausibility and coherence, to movements' relative success.

Staggenborg 1998; Della Porta 2012) or lead to the radicalization and division of movements (Della Porta 1995; Cross and Snow 2011), and how the novelty, militancy, variety, size and cultural resonance of protest shapes the effectiveness of mobilization (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 278-83).

What is less developed is a theoretical understanding of how protest impacts activists at a personal or individual level.⁸ Furthermore, existing studies on the topic tend to focus on the effect of protest on the **future** biographical or generational trajectory of those that partake in it, devoting little attention to how protest affects activists' during protest (Guigni 2004; McAdam 2004; Bosi et al 2016). In particular we don't have enough understanding about how specific forms of protest affect activist enthusiasm, that is, the degree to which activists feel excited and actively interested in the movement they are participating in. This is an important gap since enthusiasm very likely has significant effects on activist involvement, and thus is probably another important factor behind the strength and scope of protest movements.⁹ Understanding this dynamic would, therefore, contribute to enriching our knowledge of the mechanisms behind the trajectory of social movements during protest cycles.

To make some progress in this direction this paper explores how occupation communities are socially and ideationally constructed by activists and how such constructions affect members' perceptions of their occupation experiences, ultimately affecting their enthusiasm for the movement. This approach reflects the contemporary preoccupation of social movement theory with emotions, a topic that has been gaining traction in the field in recent years (Jasper 2011). Such studies show how different emotions have important consequences on activist involvement in social movements, the trajectory and intensity of mobilization, the means of protest, the radicalization of activists, and also the creation of movement solidarity, rituals, and group dynamics (Goodwin et al. 2001; Jasper 2011). This paper's findings contribute to this literature by suggesting that occupation experiences generate complex and contradictory feelings, affecting participants' enthusiasm about the movement in dialectical ways.

Occupations and activist enthusiasm

As I mentioned in the introduction, accounts of recent student mobilization campaigns in the southern cone suggest that occupations affect student participants in major ways. What aspects of occupations generated enthusiasm in activists during the heat of mobilization? and why?

⁸ In contrast, there is an ample literature that focuses on the personal or individual factors that account for participation in protest, including attitudinal and psychological determinants, activists' socialization, and biographical availability and embeddedness in movement networks (McAdam 2004: 490).

⁹ For an exception, see Hammond (2013) work on Occupy Wall Street.

Across the different interviews analyzed in this paper, a common theme was, as a former activist well put it, a sense that occupying entailed “unique living experiences of communion with others (...) it is unreal, you are suspended from normal life, it’s like there is an outside but there is an inside where all things are happening (Huerta, Chilean activist).” Interviewees in the three countries referred to this experience as “convivencia,” or coexistence in English (Huerta; Martínez, Argentinean activist; and Matías, Uruguayan activist)

The bonds that formed such coexistence or communion had complex and multilayered meanings for participants.¹⁰ At one level the community formed in occupations was one of friendship. In the words of an interviewee, occupations create “ties among people new to each other, it is something different in that it opens possibilities of friendship that would not exist otherwise (Matías).” The basis of such community arise from a somewhat spontaneous but intense “self-chosen” sense of responsibility, loyalty, and commitment toward other participants, forged to a great degree in the difficulties and risks of camp life. As an interviewee recalled, “someone suggested we closed our eyes and ask ourselves if we were willing to take the risk [and occupy] and everybody said yes. So we started six days of living in community, of feeling deeply committed to one another, of taking care of each other. That intense sense of friendship, even with people I did not know that much (...) I’ve never felt the same way again (Mellano, Argentinean activist).” It also arises from the sense of coming together to do something of social and political relevance. As the same interviewee described it, “the act of occupying felt super important, it felt as if we were coming together for an epic deed, like a fellowship (Mellano).” Referring to her own experience occupying schools, an activist echoed this point, stating that in occupations students felt they had come “*codo a codo* (side by side in English) to fight for a noble cause (Martínez).”

These sentiments were not simple abstractions. They were validated by actions in which participants put themselves at risk to protect their comrades, and events that dramatized how each participants’ fate depended on the protest community at large. Evoking the first night of an occupation, another activist pointed out: “[it] was hard. They tried to evict us but we fought back with stones. We learned the next day, that in the Zorrilla [another high school occupied that night] the police had grabbed a student, but his comrades had rescued him” (Alvarez, Uruguayan activist). For other activists, friendship stemmed instead from the pleasure derived in genuine closeness and fun. As an interviewee recalled, “we had our clandestine radio on the top of the building to transmit what was going on inside. It was incredible, we had a large audience and lots of fun (...) up there we threw some chorizo on the grill, chatted, had an amazing time with friends. Everything was so fresh and genuine (Cossia, Uruguayan activist).” These feelings generated a landscape of enthusiasm that

¹⁰ For an interesting analysis of how the socio-economic characteristics of the student population are associated with differences in participants’ ideational constructions of the movement and occupation experiences see Alvarez (2008).

bonded participants through a complex blend of duty, pleasure, thrill, and hardship.

Occupations were, however, also understood by students as a political community of free self-governing equals. As a student activist expressed, “the occupation was an autonomous space outside of the sovereignty of parents and authorities. It was by osmosis a political space (...) you couldn’t escape it, we talked about politics all the time. It was an exercise in self-government (Vielmas, Chilean activist).” Central to this type of community were practices of horizontal deliberation and direct mechanisms of participation in decision-making, conceptualized by students as bottom-up democracy. This lent the movement legitimacy. As an activist recalled, for example, “we occupied with the certainty that it was the right thing to do because the occupation had a democratic origin (Soto, Chilean activist).” Horizontal political practices also provided feelings of empowerment and political engagement. According to a participant “Occupations were spaces of permanent deliberation in the sense of both political theoretical debate and everyday democratic decision-making. They were the greatest instance of movement struggle: you ask yourself questions, connect with others, and take risks, without anyone telling you what to do (Thea, Argentinean activist).” Thus, as another activist remarked, occupations were experienced by participants as “an inversion of power and a feeling of being free for the first time (Valenzuela, Chilean activist).” This made a powerful impression on participants who “felt very young, very new (...) but were witnesses to the potency of our own actions (Soto).”

To work in everyday life, this community needed some structures. These contributed to the formation of a community defined by its own cultural codes, which helped generate in turn cultural and aesthetic identification and strengthen a sense of “we-ness.” According to one activist, “The occupation had its rites, norms, and symbols, from the colors that we used and what we did, it all reflected our desire for unity (Cossia).” A lot of that was created on-site, a result of activists’ “leisure and excitement (Huerta)”. At the same time innovation and creativity reflected the idiosyncratic, pre-existing, mix that individuals and organizations brought to the site. One activist pointed out, for example, that “The thing with occupations is that they reflect the people who are in them. Ours was very countercultural, punk. But different schools had their own thing (Matias).”

Occupations were cultural communities, in another sense as well. They constituted living moral communities that embodied desired normative values, and allowed participants to live an alternative moral world. Activists pointed out that during occupations they felt “[that they were] in permanent action, there is no hallway politics and obscure theory (Fader, Argentinean activist).” Hence, participation in the movement is “not only about the demands, it is about the process, about living politics the way you want and seeing that that is possible (Matías).” This creates unforgettable experiences of political and moral socialization. As an activist put it “At that age, occupations make a huge moral

impact on you. They shape who you are as a person. You sort of become the movement (Ramírez, Chilean activist).”

The growth of social media has allowed for rapid sharing of these positive experiences, contributing to the diffusion of enthusiasm beyond the site. As an interviewee argued, “people were creating stuff in the schools and then putting it up on photologs, so students in other schools would see it. Some came and visited, even joined, others decided to occupy their own school (...) it was all so cool that no one wanted to be left out (Seguel, Chilean activist).” As an activist pointed out “we could see what was going on in other occupations, it felt like, even if they were very different, we knew them and we recognized ourselves in them. It was incredible” (Seguel).

In sum, occupations generated emotional and cognitive bonds that created a uniquely empowering political, moral and cultural community of friends, which appealed to student activists beyond ideology and allowed for building solidarity across groups and individuals. This enthused students, generating positive feelings about the movement and their own involvement in it, contributing to legitimize the movement.

Occupations and activist disillusionment

Some occupation features, however, challenged the construction, and even the very idea, of a strong protest community by casting doubt on its authenticity, and thus dampening activists’ enthusiasm about it.

First, occupations have no clear time lines, the occupation is supposed to be over once success is achieved. Hence, occupations involve member commitment to the movement for the duration of conflict, whatever its length. Yet, as it drags on, protest can dampen participant commitment and enthusiasm. As an activist described it, “there are risks, and when you bear risks permanently, it’s exhausting (...) You can’t live with those fears for very long (Ramírez).” Thus, extended occupations became “consuming (E. González, Chilean activist)” and “anti-climatic (Alvarez).” This generated a situation of “gradual exhaustion (Alvarez),” where activists feel “it is impossible to continue, but to give in is to fail (Alvarez),” and where they do not know “what we were going to do (Alvarez).” Because, as an activist argued, “at some point people want to just go on with their lives,” or another pointed out, “some people were worried about losing the academic year, or being expelled, and you know, for those that were poor it meant going to a bad school (Seguel)”. Thus, the problem for occupation leaders becomes one of “how to manage hopelessness (Soto)”.

Second, occupations are almost entirely self-regulated. Yet, as an activist pointed out “when you have one hundred kids sleeping together, without control, problems of every kind are bound to happen (Thea).” In every occupation, “there is always a sizable group that wanted to party and see the school as a hotel (Vielmas).” Former student leaders reported that although they usually created a dry law in the end they could not “stop the smuggling of alcohol (Mlynarz, Chilean activist).” Problems aggravated as days passed by,

and boredom started to sink in (Soto and Valenzuela, both Chilean activists). The challenge for student leaders “was how to avoid those problems from delegitimizing the occupation (Thea).” As an activist recalled “The first two days were tortuous: people were de-regulated, power was so close, and there were no ways for managing divergence (...) we had to make up everything from scratch, build structures (Soto).” As another interviewee pointed out “we felt we had to validate the [occupation] space (...) that we had to take care and not destroy it, and to do that we had to be creative and edgy, that is why art was key to the occupations (Huerta).”

Attempts to reign in disorder had, however, some unintended consequences for the formation of occupation communities. According to student leaders, such efforts contributed at key times to diluting political commitment, dividing occupation members, and self-imposing more rigid structures destined to monitor and regulate behavior (Thea and Vielmas). This in turn detracted from the movement self-image described in the previous section, and therefore was actively or passively resisted by students. Hence, ironically, as an activist put it “the very structures you form end up defeating activists (Matías).”

Third, occupations isolate activists from the larger society. According to an interviewee “the problem with occupations is that you turn inwards. You go like ‘society is so shitty that we are going to build our own micro-society’ (Matias).” They also “hide the movement” from the outside (Valenzuela). By turning inwards, occupations not only become less able to and perhaps even less willing to capture more members or a larger audience, but also become focused on internal conflict. The latter can contribute to drag on weak occupations and, as described below, turn off some participants. As an interviewee argued, “There were so many fights (...) at some point there was no more steam, but we just had to keep going on automatic pilot (Mellano).” In the words of another activist “We thought that after authorities agreed to some important demands, there was no point in going on: you never get everything you want. We were just going to weaken ourselves. We needed to pause and regroup before we self-imploded (Mellano).” From the outside, the persistence of the movement can thus be cast by opponents not as a sign of commitment and righteousness, but as a sign of recalcitrance and misunderstanding of the movement’s context, or hidden political agendas. An activist pointed out, for example, “the mayor pointed at us and said: hey they are still occupying because they are manipulated by the communists, or hey they are just skipping class, schools are becoming whore and party houses. Surveys showed that some people bought that message (Vielmas).”

Fourth, occupations entail internal conflict and power struggles, and run the risk of even reproducing the power relations of the outside.¹¹ With regard to deliberation, for example, as moderates viewed it, some occupations “developed into crazy, disorganized situations, where some small radical groups captured

¹¹ For a reflection on how less democratic traditions and national political shortcomings are reproduced inside occupations see Núñez’ (2011) essay about Argentina.

discussion and made people feel alienated and a bit scared of speaking their mind (Mellano).” Some participants, pointed out that they “did not like the more aggressive ‘ultra’ line of the people that ended up being in charge of discussion. They drowned out the voices of the reasonable people. It was madness and I wasn’t sure I wanted to be a part of that (Vielmas).” Even more radical activists felt that “the logic of domination does not stay out of the assembly (E. González).” Participants decried also how occupations reproduced traditional gender and family roles. Recalling an occupation, a Chilean student activist stated that “the occupation context was pretty conservative, I mean moms’ brought the food (Vielmas).” Similarly, a female former activist recalled “there are all these norms of how women are supposed to behave.” This, and other similar contradictions, generated sentiments of disillusionment and feelings that “[the movements’] so-called direct democracy was not so democratic (Valenzuela).”

In sum, the lack of time lines, the self-regulating character of occupations, and internal conflict and power relations contributed to divisions and factionalism within occupations, ironically producing what some activists thought was less democracy, a feeling that contributed to disillusion and exhaustion.

Taking stock

Occupation communities are socially and culturally constructed in everyday practices and interactions, and filled with ideational and emotional meaning. The interviews marshalled in this paper suggest that the identity and social features of such communities generate contradictory feelings, contributing to both fulfill and turn off activists, affecting their enthusiasm about the movements they are part of.

As suggested in the prior sections, occupations create unusually long-term contexts of shared risk, intimacy, autonomy, self-organization and deliberation that amplify and intensify collective action. This contributes to the creation of protest communities built on strong ties of love, solidarity, and morality. These ties bridge ideology, class, or other sociological characteristics, allowing activists to create and negotiate their own alternative anti-hegemonic identity, culture, and forms of self-government. Such an experience is seldom available in normal life and thus provides activists with intense feelings towards each other, and the sense that together they can effect change, giving democratic legitimacy to the movement. Embedded 24 hours, seven days a week, the individual merges with the collective, generating strong movement communities that students identify with and are drawn to.

Such a radically democratic community is, however, far from idyllic. Risk, intimacy, autonomy, self-organization and deliberation also amplify and intensify conflict, power struggles, and sentiments of fear and uncertainty. The enclosed character of occupations also helps to breed among some activists a sense of alienation from the outside and in some cases also an alienation from the inside. All this casts doubt on the democratic and liberating promises of the

occupation community, weakening group solidarity and moral commitment. When such fractures are visible to the exterior, they can also provide ammunition to state and counter-movements that challenge the movement's claims to legitimacy or coherence.

Occupations are, thus, inherently dialectical. The challenge for social movements is then how to counter occupation exhaustion and disillusionment, while helping to strengthen movement solidarity and maintaining the movement's momentum among activists. Building on the empirical material and secondary literature discussed in this paper, I end by suggesting some ways in which movement activists can overcome three important shortcomings of occupations: the reproduction of rigid mechanism of social control, isolation, and disorder and conflict.

The first suggestion is to encourage, not limit deliberation. It is true that in the long-term, occupations' excessive deliberation can at times become paralyzing and encourage capture of the leadership by vocal minorities. As Gould-Wartofsky (2015) well describes in his account of the US occupy movement, this not only breeds division, but also may lead to parallel offsite organization. The key is not so much the existence or not of deliberation but its dynamics and norms. Activists must heavily invest in forms of deliberation that are inclusive, and if not rigid or formal, have some institutionalized way of coming up with at least temporary consensus about structures and institutions that different occupation groups can live with. This type of deliberation may be an important tool to prevent the take-over of the occupation by particular groups and/or its development into an unwelcoming space, as well as to build organization structures that are more flexible and a better fit with the community. Ironically, deliberation may also at times be an antidote to conflict. Remembering his own experience, a former activist argued "everybody talked and talked and I think that that helped you sometimes to see things differently, see the others' perspective" (Cossia).

This, of course, requires a culture of respect and love for the other. While this culture is an inherent potential of every occupation, it is only a potential. Thus, the second suggestion of this paper is to encourage on-site collective activity beyond the reproduction of life camp. Camps must be spaces of eclectic collective artistic, intellectual, and even economic production. It is in the doing, particularly when it reflects bottom-up identity, that collective solidarity and knowledge is built. Hence, while not necessary developing top-down planning, occupation leaders must open and sustain negotiated spaces for different groups' self-expression and encourage communication between the different forms of collective action that may arise in the camp, encouraging a healthy stream of collective creative activity. As an interviewee stated at its best "the occupation experience is about being with others, doing things with others (Huerta)." In other words, solidarity will emerge from the occupation's political praxis.

Finally, activists must avoid the isolation that may stem from creating encampment institutional enclosures that secure the occupation from police

infiltration or the entry of participants that lack any commitment to the movement. One way of doing this is to actively engage with the exterior, through social media and traditional media. This allows occupiers to connect with outside sympathizers or other occupiers or would be occupiers.¹² The combination of occupations and other repertoires of contention may also be a way to avoid isolation. The outside can become an escape valve for decompressing internal conflict and also help replenish creativity and enthusiasm. In addition, as an interviewee pointed out other repertoires, such as marches can “give visibility to occupations” (Fader).

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¹² A similar suggestion emerges from other works. See for example, Lubin 2012 analysis of Occupy Wall Street and Theocharis 2011 analysis of student occupations.

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About the author

Indira Palacios is assistant professor of political science at Missouri State University. Her research focuses on social movements in Latin America's southern cone, in particular women, labor, and more recently students. She is interested in issues pertaining to movement diffusion, repertoires of protest, and outcomes, and the interactions between movements and other social and political actors. She can be reached at [indirapalacios AT missouristate.edu](mailto:indirapalacios@missouristate.edu)

Researching transnational activist lives: Irish Buddhists and the British Empire

Laurence Cox¹

Abstract

This research note explores some methodological challenges arising from biographical research on early Irish Buddhists in the colonial period. It briefly situates the role of such figures in relation to Asian anti-colonial movements and highlights the research challenges posed by multiple languages and countries, the variable preservation and digitisation of different kinds of sources, and the polarisation provoked by such figures. Practical solutions include international collaboration, digitisation, and a combination of quasi-philological precision and quasi-ethnographic understanding. The note highlights three relevant findings: a relativisation of the importance of organisations, a greater appreciation of the meanings of failure, and a historical materialist approach to possibility.

Keywords: biography, social movements, religious movements, organising, internationalism, Buddhist Studies, colonialism, pan-Asian, U Dhammaloka

For generations which have learned to take the problem of standpoint seriously, biography presents two major problems. Firstly, with relatively few exceptions the biographer is unlikely to have had as interesting a life as their subject; in other words, they are likely to be researching someone who has been blessed or cursed with a more dramatic and challenging set of experiences and difficulties around the very things (political activism, for example) which make their life worth writing about. Secondly – if to a lesser extent – there is often a sharp difference in more narrowly demographic experience: the subject has often experienced more generations, bereavements and so on than the biographer. Few biographers of Marx, for example, can have any real sense of what it means to have lost four children in childhood and to see another die as an adult.

At the most intimate level, where the biographer seeks to understand and interpret the choices and actions of their subject, this should inject a note of caution: as EP Thompson famously put it, “they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not” (1963: 13). In particular, in an age

¹ Many thanks to Brian Bocking, Alicia Turner, Peter Waterman and Lesley Wood for comments on an earlier version of this piece.

where it is not only conservative writers who seek to reduce political lives to questions of ethics and personality imagined in the narrowest of terms, it might be wondered how many biographers (or for that matter readers) can really claim the right to judge in this way.

This problem is perhaps inherent in biography, which claims attention precisely because it handles significant aspects of the past through the frame of an individual life, and so to seek a picture of the person (standing in for this wider perspective) in their actions and personality as we (think we can) understand and assess them. This problem is particularly acute in social movement biography, where the subject is almost by definition controversial, their experiences usually extraordinary, and the judgement on the individual acts as a synecdoche for judgement on the movement, organisation or political tradition. This problem is, I think, a constitutive one which should not stop us from writing or reading biography, but should be remembered as an ironic aspect of the whole enterprise. All too often the writer at their desk and the reader in their armchair are far from having walked a hard mile in the cheap shoes of their subjects, let alone – as with Dhammaloka – crossed Asia barefoot.

Irish Buddhists, religion and anti-colonialism

In this research note I discuss some methodological issues arising out of the study of early Irish Buddhists. Over the past seven years I have worked with a series of colleagues internationally on four such figures. With Alicia Turner, Brian Bocking and many others I have worked on the figure of U Dhammaloka (?Laurence Carroll, ?1856-?1913), a Dublin-born hobo, sailor and finally Buddhist monk whose atheist polemics against missionary Christianity challenged the imperial order across Buddhist Asia. With Brian Bocking and Yoshinaga Shin'ichi I have researched Captain Charles Pfoundes (1840 – 1907) – sailor, interpreter, Japanologist and founder of the first Buddhist mission to the west (London, 1889-92). With Mihirini Sirisena I have researched John Bowles Daly (?1844-?1916) – journalist, historian and educational reformer who played a significant role in the development of modern Buddhist education in Ceylon against the dominant Christian schools. Lastly, with Margery Reynolds I have studied Vivian Butler Burke (?1881 – 1937), an Irish-American Republican, correspondent of Romain Rolland, Tucholsky, Tagore and Gandhi, and founder of the first Buddhist centre in Ireland².

I should probably explain for *Interface* readers what this idiosyncratic collection of apparent eccentrics has to do with social movements. In the later nineteenth

² The site <http://dhammalokaproject.wordpress.com> gathers together links to the various parts of this research.

and early twentieth century, with a majority of the world under imperial rule, there was a widespread tendency for religion and ethnicity (often intertwined) to become more important politically – in the construction of colonial racial hierarchies, in the definition of legal and administrative arrangements, and in the justification of empire itself – than they had been in the preceding period. In Asia, where the majority of the world’s population lived and live, and in the British empire in particular, this tendency was a pronounced one: borders were constructed, and reorganised, in ways which had important implications for later nation-state formation; elaborate racial hierarchies were constructed; and missionary Christianity became an important practical and symbolic part of the colonial enterprise in new ways.

One of the most important historical facts of the twentieth century – the formation of a majority of today’s nation-states out of the ruins of empire – was foreshadowed by a series of elite and popular movements in opposition to different aspects of colonial rule, or to the thing itself. In this context Ireland, with partial independence in the early 1920s, found itself in what today appears an unlikely homology with Asian countries – so that Burmese nationalists translated the accounts of Irish guerrilla fighters, for example. Anti-colonial movements took many forms, but one of the most common was that of religious revival, from Irish Catholicism via Gandhi’s Hinduism to the Boxer rebellion.

As Daniel O’Connell’s followers had learned in the 1820s and 1830s, there was much to be said for organising behind a religious banner. In this period the colonial power could not simply be seen to repress “native” religion, and any intervention ran the risk of creating a new rallying cause which could offer popular support for urban nationalist elites. However, the colonial power’s own semi-identification with religion (itself in part a product of the growing need to gain popular support at home for empire abroad in a period of partial democratisation) meant that the (in principle) legitimate articulation of local religion – and in particular polemics against conversion, or against Christianity – could readily be understood in political terms. This was more than convenient in circumstances where open treason or sedition was a very risky activity. Thus a grey zone was created in which a skilful activist like Dhammaloka could say everything they needed to say, gaining popular support both when they said it and if the authorities intervened³.

In much of Asia – which was far more religiously complex than we now grasp – Buddhism offered a particularly powerful point of reference. It was unarguably older than Christianity, had successfully staked its claim to be a world religion, and held significant prestige among educated audiences globally for its

³ In other cases, such as the liberal Home Ruler Daly, their Buddhist affiliation put western participants in a more radical situation within Ceylonese politics than they would probably have chosen independently.

philosophical articulation and artistic heritage. More importantly, it could be credibly presented as a *pan-Asian* religion, with long roots in many countries, not least the few uncolonised Asian states (Siam / Thailand, Japan, and until 1904 Tibet). As also with global Islam in this period, it presented the possibility of a revival spanning much of Asia and thus matching the western empires or the spread of Christianity in ambition. Finally, this revival enabled the construction of new kinds of collective *lay* organising geared towards the politics of the colonial age⁴.

The Irish Buddhist lives I have been researching take their place in this context. Empire, and a new intensification of capitalist relationships and communication, made travel much more accessible and enabled the construction of new kinds of international religious and political organisations structured around international branches and conferences and the publication and exchange of periodicals. Irish emigration – always high but massively increased since the Famine of the 1840s – combined with the experience of colonial and religious conflict in Ireland to produce a number of figures who found themselves at home in, and contributed to, the pan-Asian Buddhist revival of the period. Their political and religious positions were diverse but one important feature is that all were involved in *Asian*-led organisations of different kinds and transgressed the racial and religious boundaries of the high colonial period.

The difficulties of writing transnational activist biography

Above I have highlighted the difficulties for present-day biographers, with their own standpoints, of adequately assessing their subjects. One obvious corrective to this is to place multiple, broadly comparable, lives side by side so that we are at least comparing like with like. In this respect, working on the four biographical projects mentioned above (often concurrently) has been a very helpful experience, as has the prior existence of biographies of figures bordering my concerns, such as the Irish Buddhist sympathiser, writer and Japanophile Lafcadio Hearn / Koizumi Yakumo [1850 – 1904; Murray 1993, Tweed 2000] and the world's first female-to-male transsexual by plastic surgery, the doctor, theorist of sexual identity and – in the post-independence period - Buddhist monk Michael Dillon [1915 – 1962; Hodgkinson 1989, Kennedy 2007].

In my *Buddhism and Ireland* (2013) I was also able to work on the wider context, exploring the various world-systemic relationships that connected Buddhism's Asian heartlands with Ireland in different periods and that brought

⁴ To avoid misunderstandings, this is not intended as any kind of justification of religion as such, but rather to observe that what we now call social movements often took a religious form in the high colonial and post-colonial period, and that there are historical reasons for this.

Irish people to Buddhist Asia, or Asian Buddhists to Ireland. The 4 biographies discussed here grew out of this project, but I came across many other figures glimpsed more fleetingly – in stray newspaper mentions and memoirs, in census data, in organisational documents and distribution lists. It was also possible to discover how contemporaries viewed Irish Buddhists – in Kipling’s best-selling *Kim* (1900-1) or the now-forgotten *Road to Mandalay* (1917), both of which tied their imagined heroes to the wider history of Irish soldiers’ children and deserters in Asia – and even in the 1936 ordination in Ceylon of a Buddhist monk who held false Irish papers but was in fact a Jew from Berlin (Cox 2013: 256). All of this makes it possible to set the individual life in much wider context and, I hope, to assess it more fairly.

Studying transnational activists is never going to be a simple project, even if it is in my experience a hugely rewarding one. Firstly and most obviously, transnationality is likely to imply the need for multiple languages and the ability to master the libraries and archives of multiple different countries – if not for our subject’s own writings and records (which are often extensive), then certainly to see the traces they left in official records, newspapers and periodicals, and other people’s reminiscences and photographs.

For activists in this period in Asia, matters are more complex still, in that colonial-language and establishment records are far more likely to have survived and to be accessible (today particularly through digitisation) than are the records of movement organisations and those in local languages. There may also be a similar contrast between high-status local languages and those of ethnic minorities and diaspora networks. Thus it is a very rare pleasure when for Dhammaloka’s 1909 tour of Ceylon we were able to set side by side several of his speeches (in Sinhalese translation), the (English-language) diaries of the tour organiser, the Sri Lankan nationalist Anagarika Dharmapala, critical commentary from the Catholic press and a diary entry showing the interest of the colonial state’s embryonic intelligence structure (Sirisena 2016): yet we can still not be certain why the tour was not completed.

As this suggests, sources for movements are almost inevitably strongly polarised, presenting apparent facts (some of them highly doubtful) with a primary eye to convincing other audiences who had no way of immediately verifying particular claims and may have been more or less receptive to particular presentations of reality. The tabloid representation of plebeian, foreign, religiously unorthodox and politically suspect individuals has a long history, and it is not for nothing that *Kim* and *Mandalay* could use such figures.

More typically, sources are very unevenly preserved, not only along these linguistic and political dimensions but also as between different countries: it is a rare privilege to be able to compare like with like. More commonly, we have to attempt to estimate the extent and likely significance of what has *not* survived –

a particularly challenging historical task, but not one that can sensibly be avoided. Much of the evidence is simply fragmentary, and “random access” in nature: not in any official source, structured archive or well-known organisation but discovered accidentally, sent in by friends or strangers, or initially overlooked and only acquiring significance in the light of some subsequently-discovered fact.

Some practical solutions

There are, thankfully, some relatively straightforward ways of handling some of these difficulties. The most obvious one is international collaboration: not only because no one individual is likely to have the linguistic and archival skills necessary to track a transnational activist across their various contexts, but also because so many different *academic* kinds of expertise – political, religious, cultural – are often required to understand this moving between worlds; and, most fundamentally perhaps, because two or three heads are much better than one in making sense of and assessing the wide range of different kinds of evidence that can more easily be gathered than understood.

In particular, memory and meaning become major challenges: memory because of the quantity of quite separate kinds of information which are collected (and risk being quickly forgotten), and meaning because our ability to remember is often tied up precisely with our situating a particular fact in a given context. There is a constant tendency to try to identify meaning in what may in fact be less significant than we think, and to relate it to other things – whether existing frameworks of interpretation which we are satisfied with or other problematic data for which we are also seeking a context. Dialogue with other researchers is helpful both for minimising information loss but also for holding our interpretations lightly.

The digitisation of data is, perhaps, the single fact which has both transformed this field and made some kinds of research possible in ways that were simply unavailable twenty years previously. If a transnational activist is genuinely forgotten – if they do not form part of the official history of a well-known organisation or tradition – how are we to know that they were there at all? Digitisation in all its forms – of out-of-copyright books, of extensive newspaper databases, of photographs, of texts like the organisational diaries of Col. Olcott, Theosophist and Buddhist activist across Asia – offers an easy way to check both how extensive the record of any individual is and if they have been researched before from some other angle. This is decidedly imperfect but still far better than reliance on what is already known within the canon of (for example) an academic discipline, a national Left, or an official religious history. At the same time, we are routinely faced with the problem of names: false names

(Dhammaloka had at least five), religious names (for radical movements of the period activist or code names were also common), the representation of names from one language or alphabet in another, and for that matter simple misspellings or OCR failures.

A necessary ability, and one common to historiography in general, is that of reading facts backwards: of working backwards, for example, from the fact that a writer decided to devote column inches to attacking our subject, to the question of whether this is because our subject was sufficiently prominent to be worth attacking, or because although relatively unimportant they could be turned into a useful symbol of something wider (perhaps legitimating a call for money to support missionary activity, or substantiating the demand for greater repressive measures), or for that matter because there was some personal animus at play. In other words, the most interesting fact is often not what a given author wants to tell us explicitly; but it can take time for the researcher to become familiar with, for example, the peculiarities of the colonial press, with its cut-and-paste plagiarism, its need to fill column inches, and its reliance on an almost gossipy sense of what counted as news within a narrowly-defined social world.

Our own biographies can be a source of strength here: a classic case, to return to EP Thompson, is his commentary on the minutes of the London Swedenborgian church from which William Blake and his wife were excluded following a bitter conflict (1993: ch 8). Thompson, as a past member of the Communist Party, had a much sharper sense than many of what an organisational leadership might be up to with the minute book, and how to spot this.

In the widest sense, though, it seems to me that we need to try and combine two things. One is an almost philological exactitude: we need to understand organisational rules, official ideology, the genealogy of splits and so on in order not to read vaguely but to situate what is being said within a precise context. With the relative decline of formal political and religious organisations today, this sort of sharp specificity may need more active cultivation.

However – and nobody would be more aware of this than an international activist – we need the ethnographic understanding that these things did not mean the same thing in different places. The *vinaya* may officially govern the behaviour of Buddhist monks, but actual expectations are historically and locally specific; self-proclaimed Marxists may make reference to *Capital*, but they take very different things from it; the meanings ascribed to a particular split at the time do not necessarily tell us what happened next. This double discipline, “philological” and “ethnographic”, is again perhaps best handled through collaboration.

Social movement findings from Irish Buddhist lives

Relativising the importance of the organisation

This piece is intended as an exploration of research methods in transnational activist lives. Many of the findings from the projects discussed here are specific to the individuals concerned, or to the wider fields of the Buddhist revival in Asia – and take up a great deal of space in the work devoted to those findings. Nevertheless a few points may be worth highlighting for readers of *Interface*.

One is that when we look at the individual level, we often find far greater agency – and mobility – than a focus on a single organisation in a single place would suggest. From the latter perspective, we may see dissenters or drifters. From another perspective, however, we see what Elizabeth Humphrys (2013: 358) calls movement networkers: the people who at a personal level kept networks alive, made links, and gave individual struggles in individual places a wider relevance.

Similarly, this perspective is often unkind to organisations, not only in their often tense or problematic relationship to individuals, but also as regards wider social movements and less formal networks. It is not obvious, of course, which of these is more important: however (as with individual vs organisation or mobile vs place-bound), our own choice of method and subject often presumes the primacy of one over the other. It is worth remembering this and not becoming unconscious prisoners of the contingencies of our discipline, data sources or political commitment. In this sense, relating biographies to one another and to study of the wider context and organisational histories is a way to ask more freely which of these seems to be dominant, or which different areas are more strongly shaped by which kinds of processes.

A perspective which often stands out in activist biography is that of movement *milieux*: the counter-cultures (Piotrowski 2013), alternative scenes (Creasap 2012), friendship contexts (Gandhi 2006), spaces of cross-mobilisation and so on which in specific times and places bridge what from the outside may seem different movements, organisations, issues, ideologies or social groups. It is often such *milieux* which enable the construction of new organisations or within which movement entrepreneurs can attempt to launch new themes and directions. Such spaces certainly enable ideological and political experimentation; they also enable individuals to shift track, be recruited, find allies and so on.

The significance of failure

Experimentation implies failure: the rhetoric of “forgotten” figures often means fairly straightforwardly that they do not today hold a privileged position in the genealogies and origin stories which are repeated within particular organisations or movements. At times this is because they did hold such positions in their own time but were subsequently marginalised in the retelling; more interestingly, it is often because the things they tried did not work, or worked in their own time but did not survive into the present. Activist rhetorics sometimes fetishise particular tactics or ways of organising as almost universally applicable, while positivist forms of social science often wind up in a similar place, in both cases abstracting from the complexities of situations which activists themselves, like their opponents, were trying to reshape.

More broadly, I want to suggest, biography helps us to correct the perspective in which success should be almost a normal state of affairs for social movements. Successful and innovative radical activists – and in their own day all the figures discussed here were this to some extent – necessarily combine a degree of stubborn refusal of everyday reality (the ability to conceive of a completely different world, or to imagine a very different way of going about things) with a certain kind of opportunism (the ability to see possibilities where others see nothing of the sort). Consequently they are inveterate experimenters, and as might be expected the number of times they fall flat on their face is relatively high compared to the number of times they strike gold. Even when they do strike gold, what works at the time (even what is famous or notorious) is not necessarily the same as what survives, for a very wide range of reasons.

Biographical research constantly discovers experimentations which went nowhere, organisations and projects which had a real impact in their own time but have not been incorporated into a present-day genealogy, and the like. Failure is extremely interesting, and not only from the instrumental perspective in which we want to get it right, or at least better. It also shows us what outcomes could realistically be conceived, or expected, at a particular point in time, avoiding Thompson’s “enormous condescension of posterity”.

Two examples may serve. One is that it was entirely reasonable – up to a certain historical point – to assume that equal votes would lead to an equalisation of wealth, or that national independence would transform the economic life of the new states. There is a real and necessary learning process in such cases: some things seem so obvious that they have to be tried before any significant number of people can not only see that they do not bring the expected results, but also understand why things do not pan out that way. At the time, however, this very obviousness can mean that people rarely explain why they are persistently pursuing what hindsight would see as an obvious red herring.

Secondly, at the turn of the twentieth century both Christian missionaries and Buddhists seem to have genuinely believed that extensive preaching and polemic, the construction of Young Men's Christian or Buddhist Associations (the Buddhist ones being modelled on the Christian) and so on were effective tools for conversion. In retrospect, it is much clearer both how far material and political interests played a role in decisions to convert or mobilise (to access education or affiliate with a rising ethnic group, for example) – and how far receptivity to missionaries or support for anti-colonial religious revival was shaped by membership of locally subaltern or dominant ethnicities respectively.

As with the disappointments of electoral democracy or national independence, it is not that such things were completely hidden from every contemporary or inaccessible to any kind of research – it is rather that for those who had not made an in-depth study of the matter, or who were new and enthusiastic, it was *then* reasonable enough to start from the assumption that a particular kind of organising was what was needed. The ability to break from these assumptions, or to find effective ways of working, was a rare achievement.

The implications for social movements are not hard to see: today, good activist theory and good research are both likely to recognise to some extent how innovative movement actors are starting from socially or locally specific ways of doing things, familiar cultural frameworks and the political models which are available to them. At the same time we do not often specify as clearly as we might how activists can better bridge the gap between the world as it is in this sense, the world as we believe it to be and the world as we would like it to be. In the lives I have studied, effectiveness often appears as a combination of comparative perspectives from one's own transnational experience and reading, together with effectively engaging with and listening to the Asian actors and networks whose practical support was central to the survival and propagation of projects which on paper appear as those of Irish Buddhists. These local actors and networks, even though they often take a backstage in the official Anglophone press that forms a central part of the surviving record, had their own history of experimentation and failure which no doubt contributed massively to shaping the possibility for these successes.

Biographical study, perhaps, can help us become more relaxed about the likelihood or even the necessity of repeated failures and simultaneously clearer about how to keep going despite this, to a new project which might surprise us with its success – and how to learn more effectively from others.

Conclusion: rethinking possibility

Thompson's preface to *Making of the English Working Class*, quoted at the start, rightly discusses the need to stand outside the triumphal and teleological narratives of the particular organisational lineages which have survived to the present day, and to recognise in these past voices alternative possibilities, both good and bad. The preface bears reading and rereading, but the point is harder to take on board in practice than it is to restate.

From a Marxist perspective, one of the key processes involved in the period I am researching is the changing meaning of particular categories. Nation, ethnic group and race; religion, atheism, morals, philosophy, mythology, literature; revival, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism – all these categories are being fought over, not only verbally but in organisational practice and in the complex and diverse shaping of anti-colonial struggles across the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century in Asia.

In this sense the fact that Dhammaloka was able to use radical atheist (free-thinking, in the language of the day) arguments against Christianity and on behalf of Buddhism is not irrelevant. Nor is the fact that we have Irish individuals closely involved in Asian processes of primarily national cultural and religious reassertion which would lead to the end of empires – and would in this sense be disavowed by the later architects of Japan's "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere" or by today's Buddhist nationalists in Sri Lanka or Burma. Nor, for that matter, is it irrelevant that we find the latter's contemporaries in Ireland resisting the definition of Irish politics as being "really" about Catholic vs Protestant and the definition of Irish religion as being "really" about nationhood, and turning to Buddhism as an escape from all this.

To take an example from a different sphere: Alf Nilsen and I (2014: 203) have argued that much Marxist discussion of "the party" is vitiated by the implicit assumption that "party" meant the same thing when the *Manifesto* was written, at the heyday of the SPD, in 1917, under Stalin, in the sectarian groupuscules of the 1960s and 1970s or in the debates around Podemos, Syriza and Momentum today – an assumption innocent of any real historical materialism (see Barker 2001 for a more nuanced approach).

The same, of course, is true for the widely varied kinds of thing that can be described with the category "social movement"; and one of the points of *Interface* is to enable a greater dialogue between these different kinds of realities and the different ways in which activists and researchers conceptualise them: not to mention contributing to the possibility that actually-existing movements can become more, and other, than they are at present.

Activist biography can help us develop a stronger sense of possibility in this sort of perspective: it is not that past radicals were necessarily wrong in terms of an

objectively-available structure of the world, which they failed to grasp correctly (though they were often wrong). It is at least as true to say that they lost the struggle to shape the future – and that, often in the countries under discussion here, the new society bore the birthmarks of the old in ways that have led to other people having to fight for the same kinds of substance in different ways, as William Morris put it. If this is nonetheless defeat, it is a less disempowering kind than others, and one which licences us to fight our own battles today – with no guarantees of success but perhaps free of the sense that no matter what we do, some hidden hand will sweep our efforts away.

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About the author

Laurence Cox has written, co-written or co-edited (with Brian Bocking, Alicia Turner and others) various books, special issues, articles and chapters exploring early western involvement in the pan-Asian Buddhist Revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He can be contacted at [laurence.cox AT nuim.ie](mailto:laurence.cox@nuim.ie)

The African University as a site of protest: decolonisation, praxis, and the Black Student Movement at the University Currently Known as Rhodes¹

Paddy O'Halloran

Abstract

During 2015, students at South African universities raised the question of 'decolonisation' of higher education. Their struggles against race-, class-, and gender-based oppressions and against scheduled national tuition increases have been considered by some to be 'a moment of possibilities' for South African universities. This paper focuses on the case of the Black Student Movement at The University Currently Known as Rhodes, in Grahamstown. It builds on Naicker (2016), who considers how the student movements brought what she calls 'subaltern' politics and practices into the 'civil society' space of universities. Two questions form the core of this paper: What is the significance of a student political praxis that resembles 'subaltern' political praxis? What does this mean for decolonisation of South African universities and for the idea of an 'African university'? The argument imagines, through the praxis of students, the possibility of constituting the university—an African university—as a site of protest. These questions are considered through the politics practiced, contested, and contradicted in the Black Student Movement Commons, a site of occupation from 26 August to 2 October 2015. Through successes and failures of this politics, some direction is proposed in regard to the 'possibilities' that emerged through the student movements.

Keywords: Black Student Movement; South Africa; decolonisation; student movements; praxis; African university

Decolonisation and popular politics in the university

In late October of 2015, student protests at South African universities culminated in a countrywide revolt, 'FeesMustFall' (FMF), which succeeded in preventing a scheduled tuition increase for 2016. Student movements around the country had organised and mobilised during the year with the project of 'decolonising' their universities: exposing and challenging exclusionary and oppressive institutional structures and cultures reflecting colonial traditions and logics. In March, seven months before the FMF revolt, students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) threw buckets of shit onto a statue of Cecil

¹ This name for Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa is widely used by students, and has some currency among academics and the public. It indicates support for name change and for necessary practical and political changes to the institution that could signify 'decolonisation'.

Rhodes, and 'the Rhodes Must Fall movement (RMF) was born', bringing 'thousands of students' from UCT into 'a conversation to decolonize the university' (Naicker 2015, np). Protest quickly spread from UCT to South Africa's other elite, historically white universities. Unlike frequent student protests (including during 2015 and 2016), at historically black and currently under-resourced institutions, these protests at elite universities garnered extensive media attention. Writing on the student revolt on 21 October 2015, a day of South Africa-wide student protest action, Richard Pithouse, a senior researcher at the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR), observed, 'There is now a national movement, a movement with critical mass, a movement with all kinds of connections outside universities, a movement that has come to voice and power at a time when the ANC [African National Congress] no longer enjoys the hegemony it once did [...]'. It was, in the face of corporatisation and neo-liberalisation of universities that 'militates against the imperative to deracialize and decolonise', 'a moment of possibilities' (2016a, 193-194).

In the context of a movement for 'decolonisation', what are the possibilities? Decolonisation is itself a contested concept, and under its wide conceptual arch are found proponents of reactionary as well as revolutionary discourses and politics, all staking claim to and making great use of the word 'decolonisation'. In the context of university struggles, Achille Mbembe argues that decolonisation of 'knowledge and the university as an institution' means contesting Western epistemology that has 'not only become hegemonic', but 'also actively represses anything that actually is articulated, thought and envisioned from outside of these frames' (2015, 10). According to Mbembe, decolonisation is a matter of 'de-privatization and rehabilitation of the public space' in relation to the idea of 'the common'; it is, crucially, a matter of 'reshaping' without necessary reference to 'pre-existing models' (2015, 5; 12-13).

During the student political activity in 2015, discussions of what it meant to be a 'university in Africa' or an 'African university' were common. Students were critical of institutional cultures, racial compositions of academic staff and students, and curriculums 'that did not reflect the locality of the university or its place within the African continent' (Naicker 2015, 54). Some have been critical of the idea of 'Africanisation', including Mamdani, who argues that it amounts to politically limited deracialisation of power (1996, 20), and Mbembe, who similarly argues, via Fanon, that Africanisation and decolonisation are different processes, the former a product of nationalism (2015, np). However, while certain strains of nationalism possibly existed among the politically active students of 2015, the South African student revolt was fundamentally a critique of the African National Congress (ANC) government and its political choices since 'national liberation' in 1994. Perhaps more significantly, the currency of the idea of an 'African university' in the midst of a moment of popular struggle suggests that the concept of 'Africanisation' may be evolving, and that, in post-apartheid South Africa, certain forms of 'Africanisation' may extend deeper than deracialisation or African nationalism and present political junctures of real significance. The purpose here is not to suggest that only one understanding of decolonisation was articulated and acted upon by students, for many were and

are current in student political circles. This is a discussion of how decolonisation can be argued to have been articulated and acted upon in specific political circumstances, by one movement, for a short period of time. We will turn to that account, shortly.

In a theoretical treatment of the student movements of 2015, Nigel Gibson reflects on Frantz Fanon's critique of political elites and intellectuals as incapable of 'rationaliz[ing] popular praxis'. Gibson suggests a 'meaning of decolonization as a real substitution (that is not mediated by a leader, or organization) but grounded by a critical engagement with the rationality of popular praxis' (2016, 15). The 'liberal intelligentsia', Gibson continues, 'could not make sense of the student movements', their rationality, and their unique contribution to various processes of decolonisation, because the students' politics and actions 'betrayed' the 'values' of 'civil society' (2016, 15). Indeed, the student movements of 2015—which have continued in more localised fashion into 2016—were not only critical of their universities (bastions of civil society), but actively disrupted them in various ways. The concept of 'disruption' was understood differently by different student activists. For some it was symbolic or performative, for others a matter of ensuring that no university activities could take place without their demands being addressed, for many a combination of these; likewise, the actions that students chose—graffiti, interrupting examinations, mass mobilisation—were motivated by different ideas of disruption. The greatest difference was between students who saw disruption as their objective and those who considered it tactically necessary to fostering a different politics in their universities. These two ideologies were not always at odds with one another, as student movement politics was a combination of many ways of thinking.

Complexities of this sort were ingrained in the 'rationale' of the student movements, and, from this complexity, students developed their politics locally and linked them to the politics of the broader student movement and to the contemporary moment of popular politics in South Africa. Significantly for this discussion of praxis, Camalita Naicker has written on the idea of popular politics in the university space in South Africa. She observes,

[W]hat happened at South African Universities culminating in the #feesmustfall movement, can be seen as a proliferation of the kinds of political praxis that is often used, and seen as, outside of the institutional space. Mainly black students, who felt marginalised and excluded from institutional culture and practices of the liberal university, adopted political practices that are closer to urban social movements and independent strike committees than traditional unions and political parties (2016, 57).

Indeed, at both historically white and historically black institutions of higher education, student protest activity included practices, such as road blockades and collective decision making, which have frequently been employed by both urban and rural popular movements in South Africa. Furthermore, Naicker

argues that students were able to create alliances with workers and with community struggles, as at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, where students fought to end outsourcing of workers, and UCKAR in Grahamstown, where students had connections with the local Unemployed People's Movement (2016).

Naicker's argument raises some important questions: What is the significance of a student political praxis that resembles what she refers to as 'subaltern'² political praxis? What does this mean in regard to the students' professed project of decolonisation of South African universities? These two questions form the core of this paper. In brief, the argument imagines, through the praxis of students, the possibility of constituting the university—an African university—as a site of protest. There are important South African comparisons for this idea that build upon Naicker's demonstration of the links between student and popular politics, which will be discussed. This is not an argument for permanent marches, demonstrations, and clashes with university management and police, but for a reconstituting of the university as decolonised and decolonising, as a contestation of a colonial and colonising institution. This, at least in contemporary circumstances, does suggest that some form of active militancy will be ongoing, whether this involves protest action or other political acts. Knowledge production can itself be a form of protest, significantly, as philosopher Lewis Gordon argues, against the colonial 'geography of reason', which presumes 'the global situation of the center and its concomitant organization of knowledges into knowledge' (2011, 95). Ultimately, this shift lies at the heart of the African university as a site of protest—the acts of learning and knowledge production as forms of (decolonising) political protest. This paper primarily deals with overt modes of protest, but modes that envisioned a project of learning as protest that, at least conceptually, went beyond local contestation of structures and logics that obtained in one institution. This discussion of student praxis also provides an opportunity to begin to interrogate some of the political problems that arose in the course of the student protests of 2015, and ways in which these problems for praxis suggest a way forward for the university as a site of protest. This interrogation forms the conclusion of the paper.

Although the student movements of 2015 achieved successful semi-coordination in October in the FMF campaign, and there were ongoing interactions among student activists from different universities throughout the year, their experiences were also local, with politics, actions, and problems arising from specific circumstances at each university. This inquiry focuses on the Black Student Movement (BSM), which organised at UCKAR in Grahamstown in the

² This work has no intention of loyalty to subaltern theories or theorists. Attending to the many strains and critiques of 'subaltern studies' can be more distracting than fruitful. Defining 'the subaltern' or 'subalterneity', arguing whether these are fixed or flexible concepts—or not concepts at all but specific types or groups of people—are some of the debates which I seek to avoid here. Compellingly simply, Cox and Nilsen define 'subaltern groups' as 'social movements from below' seeking to change the status quo and 'develop alternative social orders' (2014, 2). This will be the definition employed here.

Eastern Cape Province. The information about the movement is drawn from the BSM's public statements, from articles published by BSM members, from the author's experience of participation, and, most importantly, from the experiences of other student activists who were members of BSM or activists who participated in BSM activities. The conclusions drawn from this one example of student politics are, of course, only partially applicable to other experiences of student politics in South Africa in 2015. Likewise, this is necessarily a partial narrative and analysis of the BSM, focused around the specific questions asked in this paper. Complete histories of the BSM and other student movements at South African universities in 2015 would be important additions to the record.

The Black Student Movement

The BSM first mobilised in the rain on Tuesday, 17 March 2015, during an outdoor public meeting organised in solidarity with the Rhodes Must Fall protests that had begun on 9 March 2015 in Cape Town. The Rhodes Must Fall campaign had resonance with students at a university named after the same Rhodes whose statue and legacy were being contested at UCT. At the 17 March meeting, students took turns speaking through a loudhailer, voicing their experiences of racism, sexism, homophobia, and a generally exclusionary institutional culture. The students called for a name change as an important step in 'transformation' or 'decolonisation' of the university, as well as for practical changes to improve the experiences of, especially, black and working-class students in the university, who felt neither at home nor able to cope. Jonis Ghedi Alasow, a student activist at UCKAR, explained this link between symbolic and practical decolonisation, 'The name must change and it will change [...]. But the more fundamental change, which is even more urgently necessary, is a shift away from the colonial logic that this University continues to embody and propagate,' so that, even with a name change, 'Rhodes University does not become, say, Stephen Bantu Biko University, whilst continuing to be an institution of which Cecil John Rhodes would be proud' (Ghedi Alasow, 2015, np).

After an hour, recognising that students had classes to attend, the organisers of the meeting suggested that the meeting conclude with a march into and through the university's main administration building, nearby. Many of the gathered students began a slow-moving march towards the building, singing, but the doors were shut and locked against them, and the Campus Protection Unit quickly arrived. One student organiser announced, with some humour, the arrival of the 'repressive apparatuses', and the meeting disbanded. The students had been openly political and also managed to draw a section of the student body into their political conversation about oppressive institutional culture and the growing conversation on decolonisation. However, they also elicited a demonstration that their form of politics was not welcome at the university.

The experience of speaking openly their critique of the university combined with the lockout and news of growing protest in Cape Town imparted a sense of urgency to the new movement. Over the next several days, the BSM organised meetings to plan further mobilisations. The movement also released a manifesto explicating its position, motivation, and purpose. The first paragraph of the BSM Manifesto³ reads:

The Black Student Movement is a group of students concerned about the institutional culture of Rhodes University. This institution is exclusionary to the disadvantaged and marginalised students who are just as much a part of the university but do not receive any support. This movement came out of conversations about our personal experiences as marginalised students who are not able to cope because of the structural, class-based, and intellectual oppression of the Rhodes environment. There are students suffering due to the inequalities and injustices they face daily. We formed the Black Student Movement to take the responsibility of eradicating this structural, class-based, and intellectual oppression.

Beyond this statement of purpose, three significant ideas are articulated in the BSM Manifesto: the project of decolonisation; the centrality of the university, students and study to the movement; and a democratic political praxis.

The BSM professed a duty 'to challenge the colonial legacy and symbols that confront us every day', including the colonial name of the institution. 'It is twenty-one years after democracy in South Africa,' the Manifesto reads, 'and we are still battling for transformation'. The first three items in the Manifesto's second section, 'Our Objectives', can be read as relating directly to this project of decolonisation. These are: the name change, the eradication of racism, and the re-politicization of the student body at UCKAR. However, other objectives are also important in regard to decolonisation. These include: supporting international students, many of whom come from other African countries and face similar problems of access to and exclusion within the university; changing the university's exclusionary culture; ending hunger and financial exclusion at the university, and changing the curriculum. There is a *specific* conception of decolonisation that can be defined in the BSM Manifesto and which was attempted in action; it was, crucially, political, practical, and intellectual.

In regard to the university, the BSM announced their 'duty to work with students who are struggling academically', and their commitment to multi-lingualism and 'intellectual diversity'. The BSM committed to 'provide a platform where we can work together in our academics', to tutor students, to 'fight for assistance' for students without access to computers or internet at home, and to fight for curriculum changes that would 'include important

³ First public on 19 March 2015

thinkers like Stephen Bantu Biko, Angela Davis, Frantz Fanon, and other African scholars in the Rhodes curriculum’.

Several points in the BSM Manifesto relate to praxis, both internally and in relation to society. Among the objectives is ‘remain[ing] a participatory, democratic movement’ that will ‘constantly engage with students in order to identify their concerns and struggles, and to take these seriously’. The link between forms of politics and struggle that Naicker has identified were explicitly part of the founding principles and plan that the BSM set out in its manifesto, as the BSM extended its solidarity to ‘the wider community of Grahamstown in their struggles against continued colonial oppression’ and to ‘academic[s] and staff in their battles for transformation’ (Black Student Movement, 2015a).⁴

It is important to note that the movement did not work towards all twenty of the objectives listed in its Manifesto, although they were all (and are still) important. These objectives were largely inspired by and compiled from the issues students had raised publically at the first meeting on 17 March. It was an ambitious list that assumed a long-lived movement, but it was also a way of communicating the movement’s purpose and thinking through its future actions. Although issues identified in the Manifesto are not resolved, or addressed, or, for some, even thoroughly discussed, the objectives in the BSM Manifesto could still function to communicate and to think through a course of action to change the university currently known as Rhodes.

One objective listed in the Manifesto came to underpin the single most important mobilisation organised by the BSM: ‘To stand for those who are being vacated from the Rhodes University residences during holidays’. On Monday, 23 March, less than a week after it first mobilised, the BSM began its first campaign, ‘We Are Not Leaving’, which challenged the university policy that required students to leave during the two short vacations each year or to pay a fee in order to remain in residences (ZAR3900 and ZAR2080 for March and September, respectively). The compulsory costs of either travel or the residence fees caused financial hardship for some students and their families: just one way in which the university was exclusionary of poor or working-class students, the majority of whom are black. The protest action, which threatened occupation of university buildings if students were not allowed to remain in residences free of charge during the March vacation, achieved negotiated resolutions with the university administration, but no long term resolutions. Some students receiving assistance from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) were assisted with travel funds by the university, but these were ad hoc arrangements. The university’s failure to announce a long term plan led the BSM to remobilise the ‘We Are Not Leaving’ campaign beginning Monday, 24 August 2015, before the short vacation in September. A Vice-Chancellor’s

⁴ More than one revision process of the BSM Manifesto was begun but never completed. By the end of 2015, the manifesto had become largely irrelevant to the BSM after a breakdown and shift in focus away from many of its early commitments—the result of personal power struggles. However, when the movement first mobilised, the document was widely accepted by active students.

circular of the same day announced a plan regarding accommodation for the vacation. The BSM 'discussed the circular with students and identified several problems. These were presented to the VC, and a second meeting was set for 26 August to hear the VC's response' (Black Student Movement, 2015b). Among the problems identified were that the plan required students to 'perform poverty', and, perhaps more cogently, that their performance *did not guarantee* accommodation, as the university could still deny them assistance (Black Student Movement, 2015b). Failure to reach an agreement with the university led the BSM to begin an occupation of the university's Council Chambers beginning on Wednesday, 26 August 2015. The Chambers were renamed the Black Student Movement Commons.⁵

It is important that the BSM did not see their action regarding short vacation accommodation as simply a practical matter of access, but a political matter of access. In a statement of 1 September 2015, the movement affirmed, 'The BSM, as part of an undertaking to *decolonise the University*, has made it clear that it seeks a sustainable solution to the exclusionary arrangements for short vacations' (Black Student Movement, 2015c; emphasis added). The occupation was also intended to provide a place to eat and to sleep for students who actually could not afford the fees; this did not exclude other students from staying in the Commons during the week of the vacation. It is the politics and praxis that developed during what became a month-long occupation of the Commons which form the core of the argument here. Internal struggles within the movement during the occupation disrupted this politics and praxis (see below), and provide opportunity for further discussion of the comparison and connection Naicker makes between student and community struggles.

The 'BSM Commons'

During the occupation of the BSM Commons, which lasted from 26 August until 2 October 2015, what were usually the empty Council Chambers became a thriving space of politics, study, engagement, and protest. Nathan Kabingesi, an Economics student and member of BSM in 2015 says, 'What came to be known as the Commons during the occupation was transformed into a space that no longer celebrated the elitism that had become synonymous with the university'.⁶ In direct contrast to the décor throughout the rest of the main Administration building—dreary portraits of bygone Vice-Chancellors—the walls of the BSM

⁵ There was also a major occupation at UCT, where Bremner House was dubbed 'Azania House', in the tradition of Black Consciousness. This occupation lasted from 20 March until 12 April 2015. There was also an occupation at Wits, where Senate House was renamed 'Solomon Mahlangu House', after a member of uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) executed by the apartheid state in 1979. It is important to note that RMF and the BSM were distinct movements, and student politics varied across universities. This study and narrative should not be understood to apply to other occupations. Another study that considers together the different student occupations of 2015 would be valuable.

⁶ Personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

Commons were decorated with photographs of dozens of black intellectuals, artists, and revolutionaries. The photos were diverse: African, global, from different struggles and different times. Among the many people honoured there were Angela Davis, Steve Biko, Albertina and Walter Sisulu, Bob Marley, Frantz Fanon, Ellen Kuzwayo, Frederick Douglass, Maya Angelou, Robert Sobukwe, Harriet Tubman, Miriam Makeba, Patrice Lumumba, and Malcolm X. The many faces arrayed around the Commons contradicted the pomp, tradition, patriarchy, whiteness, and hierarchy of the Vice-Chancellors' portraits. What had been a sanctuary of solemnised, unimaginative bureaucracy had become a democratic, multilingual, and politicised commons where different practices, inspired by 'decolonisation', had replaced the procedural status quo as the mode of operation.

'The fact', says Kabingsesi, 'that so many marginalised students felt alienated at the university currently known as Rhodes [...], makes the occupation of the [C]ouncil [C]hambers, a room that for most students was remote and inaccessible, a powerful act in itself.'⁷ The Chambers were 'remote and inaccessible' in a political sense: This is where important university decisions are made, without student involvement except for the all-but-token inclusion of the Student Representative Council (SRC) President on a Council of twenty-nine unelected members with all senior university administrators in attendance. Students also questioned the role and legitimacy of the SRC as representatives of the student body during the year. Generally, in 2015, the BSM considered the SRC to be a part of the institutional structure and culture and not a real or potential driver of change. Relationships between SRCs and student movements have differed across universities, and sometimes been erratic. At UCKAR, in March 2015, the SRC President called for government intervention to stop protests (Koyana, 2015). In July 2015, after the resignation of several SRC members, including the President, the SRC came out in support of a name change (Sokana, 2015). Support from the SRC for protesters' objectives and from protesters for the SRC has continued to be unstable in 2016.⁸ In organising and occupying, students no longer accepted "the whims and will" of management⁹ and institutional structures like Council and the SRC to decide their future. It did not mean a capture of power, but a contestation.

In the Commons, student occupiers held frequent meetings to strategise, to respond to changing circumstances and to the actions of the university management, and to collectively discuss the content of movement statements. This was practical and political work. Kabingsesi explains that 'the context of the occupation, the demands for the equitable treatment of students who could neither afford to stay in residences during vacation or go home, [...] went

⁷ Personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

⁸ The relationships between student movements and SRCs at South African universities is another topic that would be valuable to the study of recent student protest.

⁹ Kabingsesi, personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

beyond any merely symbolic gesture'.¹⁰ There were other times when everyone in the room sang—borrowing songs from the anti-apartheid struggle, and revising some of the lyrics for the student struggle—and the singing, clapping, and stamping of feet echoed throughout the administration building. In this regard, the occupation was a sustained escalation of similar brief disruptions that had happened throughout the year, when the BSM staged marches to meet with the university management or to deliver memoranda.

The Commons was not, however, chaotic. There were times when it had the unmistakable character and activity of a university, carried on alongside the work of political activism and protest. Protesters studied, read, and wrote for their courses. To complement the symbolic inspiration of the photographs, the BSM established a library; many of the authors to be found there were also among the faces on the walls. Siviwe Mhlana, who participated in the occupation as a third-year Commerce student, recalls, 'A lot of people thought we were just these delinquents', but 'while we were protesting, we were protesting as students, so while the protest action and things were happening, people were constantly working. [...] We tried to make the space suitable for both political objectives and academic objectives'.¹¹ Similarly, Kabingesi explains, 'The mantra of "protest and pass" put paid to the notion that protesting and studying were somehow mutually exclusive' and also challenged the perception of the occupiers as 'hooligans' because 'disruption was not necessarily destructive'.¹²

Achieving this balance was a matter of praxis: of working together, discussing, debating, and arriving at decisions. As Mhlana puts it, expressing the fundamental challenge of popular politics: 'We had to figure out what to do'. The occupiers decided that the room next to the main Council Chamber was designated for sleeping and for working in silence, while the main room was for daily large meetings, conversation, as well as work. Mhlana continues, 'You [were] responsible for the space you [were] sharing with other people. It was a completely different world than existed outside of that space. Everyone had a responsibility to that place, and that wasn't gendered'.¹³ Tasks such as arranging and attending meetings with university representatives or community members, or writing statements, were managed by 'task teams' chosen by nomination and volunteering, or by individuals chosen in the same way. It was common for a BSM member to suggest a different person for a task than had volunteered, so that work might be shared more evenly, different people would have opportunities to be involved, the university would have less opportunity to single out individuals as leaders, and to make sure that female and LGBTQ students were not overlooked. The work of living in and working in the place was meant to be equally shared, although some students came to feel they were

¹⁰ Personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

¹¹ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

¹² Personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

¹³ Author interview, 5 August 2016

acting more responsibly than others. This was not a repudiation of the communal project, but a difficulty these particular students faced in managing it.

The engagements in the Commons were rich. Jonis Ghedi Alasow, an MA student in the Humanities faculty and participant in the Commons, explains, 'There were interesting debates and discussions, articles were being written inside the commons, and every night the meeting was intense and productive. One came to understand the conditions that led the different members into that room and ideas about "where to from here" were imaginative'.¹⁴ This was both an educational and political process, and it helped expand individual students' experience beyond specific disciplines. As Mhlana explains, students' learning expanded outside the boundaries of their respective faculties; in particular 'there was a lot of political education happening in the conversations we were having with each other'. These conversations, which were 'always educational', also went beyond the 'main objectives' of the occupation. For instance, although the occupation was motivated by the vacation accommodation issue, 'We'd have conversations about the oppression of women in political spaces', or about 'economics and commerce, but not necessarily the colonial versions that occurred in class'. 'We had a meeting about language,' she remembers, 'about what language we were prioritizing, about people using the language they were comfortable in, which is something missing in South African universities'. These were 'tools to critique the colonial space'.¹⁵

Gender was considered carefully in the Commons. At most meetings, women were selected (through nomination) as chairpersons. Women and LGBTQ members were also often selected to represent the movement in public demonstrations or meetings. This was a self-conscious practice intended to disrupt the sexist cultures of politics as well as of the university. Many participants understood and discussed this practice in terms of 'intersectionality': the student struggle for a decolonised university must (or did) take into account the struggles of women and LGBTQ people in a patriarchal society as linked to the struggles of black people in a racist and society.¹⁶ The position of class in this discourse proved contentious, as will be discussed below. It was not always a straightforward politics or practice, and disagreements, some constructive and some harmful, arose from the discussions and practices around gender.

There are other instances in South Africa of the joining of study and protest, or protest and knowledge production—perhaps, 'protest universities'—which are useful to thinking about the BSM Commons. These are not the only examples of

¹⁴ Personal correspondence, 7 August 2016.

¹⁵ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

¹⁶ One of the failings of the BSM Manifesto was that it did not explicitly take a stand against gender-based oppressions. Nevertheless, sexism and patriarchy were frequently addressed in BSM meetings, and as the movement evolved it took on this politics seriously.

'protest universities', either in South Africa or in global struggles, but they illustrate the concepts under discussion here.

On Robben Island during apartheid, the political prisoners formed themselves into a university. 'We became', Nelson Mandela writes in his autobiography, 'our own faculty, our own professors, our own curriculum, our own courses' (1995: 556). Crucially, this was an act of protest: it was done outside of the prison regulations; banned subjects such as politics were taught; and it was informed by the anti-colonial struggle in which the prisoners were involved. It was a university dedicated to learning, but also constituted through and in protest. Important to this discussion is Aaron Bady's critical observation that 'in fetishizing the prison as university, we risk the suggestion that revolutionaries had to be disciplined by incarceration before they—and the masses they represented—were prepared for the burdens of self-governance' (2014, 109). The university on Robben Island was not a matter of successful institutionalisation, but rather a successful anti-institutional project that helped sustain anti-colonial consciousness. Anti-institutional politics and knowledge are important to the argument here. While political imprisonment is not a requirement either of political struggle or of an African university, historical moments such as this are important in considering a future for universities that are decolonized and African.

In the post-apartheid period, the ANC is no longer engaged in organising but in repressing protest and other forms of popular political praxis that Naicker observes moving into elite university spaces (2016). An important, contemporary example of a 'protest university' is the 'University of Abahlali baseMjondolo'. Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) is a Durban-based 'organisation of the militant poor' (abahlali.org, 2006), who have faced violent (and illegal) eviction and repression from the state, especially the local ANC, when they assert their right to urban land for housing: actions of lived necessity that are termed 'land invasions' by the state. AbM are engaged in the forms of popular political praxis that Naicker characterises as subaltern. AbM explains on their website: 'Abahlali [baseMjondolo] has been an intellectually serious project from the beginning. Among the banners painted in Kennedy Road while people were singing against the army who were occupying the settlement back in 2005 was a key slogan – the "University of Kennedy Road". After that a "University of Foreman Road" was declared [...] and then a "University of Abahlali baseMjondolo" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2016). According to the former president of AbM, S'bu Zikode, 'We have often said that struggle is a school. The first point of learning is the thinking that people do about their situation, their struggle and how their struggle is received. But there is also learning that comes from the solidarity that a struggle experiences once it is in motion' (in Gibson, 2011, vi). This is theorised and organised in opposition to the brand of intellectualism, of 'the state and the institutionalised left' that is premised on the idea that 'the poor should not think their own politics' and that such thinking constitutes a criminal breach of order (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2016). As Anna Selmeczi has shown, AbM's invocation of the 'university' is an appeal to 'people higher up in the social hierarchy to directly experience life in the

informal settlements', as well as a declaration of equality of knowledge, based on experience and suffering as a form of knowledge (2012, 510).

A similar critique through popular political logic of both word and action appeared in the thinking of BSM. The institutional approach was opposed by a very different politics. We can first recall the statements made in the BSM Manifesto that are critical of an exclusionary institutional culture. The changed name of the rooms that the BSM occupied is also significant, first as it modelled the name change that they sought for the university and secondly because of the political idea of a 'commons'. In accord with student practices, Mbembe writes, 'The decolonization of buildings and of public spaces is inseparable from the democratization of access.' This, he writes, 'starts with a redefinition of what is public, i.e., what pertains to the realm of the common and as such, does not belong to anyone in particular because it must be equally shared between equals' (2015, np). Returning to the similarity in practices between students and community struggles that Naicker identifies, we can make a further comparison or juxtaposition of BSM with AbM. In an article on 'Decolonising the Commune', Pithouse describes AbM's 'homemade' politics, in which 'autonomy was taken seriously' not 'as an exodus from sites of constituted power', but as 'a political commitment that would enable effective collective engagement on other terrains', like in the media or university space (2016c, np). AbM's politics includes actual occupation of urban land. BSM's came to involve actual occupation of university spaces, similar in many respects to what Pithouse identifies in AbM: a 'political form of the commune [...] understood as the self-management of a spatially delimited community under popular democratic authority' (2016c, np). Significantly, in the context of comparison to community struggles, the BSM Commons was organised around living as well as protesting. Ghedi Alasow comments that, in the Commons, 'There was also time for eating, doing homework, laughing, joking and just being normal and not intensely political. Perhaps what I found best about it is that this was all happening organically and *at the same time*'.¹⁷ While students argued that they could not be comfortable in the institution of the university, there was a sense that, despite the pressures of the protests, the BSM Commons was different. There was 'a level of respect among people as comrades' that Mhlana found unique.¹⁸

Connections to community struggles were not only theoretical. As Naicker notes, there was a relationship between the BSM and the local Unemployed People's Movement (UPM). UPM organised in Grahamstown in 2009, as organiser Ayanda Kota explains it, to offer 'a dissenting voice' in the absence of actual democracy and a corrupt municipality.¹⁹ Their first action was against the 'bucket [toilet] system' in Grahamstown, demanding the dignity of proper toilets for all residents. They demonstrated the urgency of the matter by dumping the

¹⁷ Personal correspondence, 7 August 2016.

¹⁸ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

¹⁹ Author interview, 9 March 2015.

bucket toilets in the foyer of City Hall. Today, UPM continues to contest issues including housing, land, water, education, sexual violence, and corruption.

From the time that UCKAR students began sustained organisation in March 2015, UPM was involved and offered support, which usually took the form of UPM's participation in marches, attendance at student political meetings, and of informal discussions with student activists. BSM and UPM planned a joint march from the township to the university on 28 May 2015 under the banner 'Decolonise this Institution', in order to highlight the colonial character of Grahamstown and the university's position in it. The university's site at the extreme western end of Grahamstown, opposite the eastern townships and shack settlements, emphasises its elite-ness, its inaccessibility, and its distance from the black and poor residents of the city. Although miscommunications resulted in only a small number of UPM members participating in this march, the BSM, joined en route by some members of the community, undertook the march. A few members of UPM were also members of the BSM, for much of the year. UPM, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, BSM, viewed collaboration as a necessary part of their programs, explained through a discourse of uniting student and community struggles. Partly because the BSM was relatively short-lived as a potent force, it did not fully commit to actions of solidarity with community and workers' struggles, although it articulated solidarity clearly (for example, see the BSM Manifesto, quoted above).

Members of UPM also participated in the occupation in September. The participation of UPM brought a different dimension to the occupation and its decolonising project, in which community members accessed the elite space named after a British imperialist and mass exploiter of southern African people. The student struggle's objectives of improving the experience and access of working-class, black students at UCKAR is an important one in Grahamstown, where high school matriculation rates (except at the expensive, elite high schools) are extremely low (Westaway, 2015), and very few local students attend the university within walking distance of their homes. Although durable links were not maintained between the BSM and UPM as movements, there were opportunities, the occupation included, for linking the two struggles. Mziyanda Bulani, a member of UPM, observes that UPM's participation in the occupation had two dimensions: sharing of ideas and solidarity. Remarking on the occupation, Bulani says, 'we didn't have all the answers', which meant that sharing of ideas was necessary inside the BSM Commons. As participants, and because UPM members were affected by the student struggle, they 'had to share [their] ideas with the students'. Bulani notes that students could 'take or not' from these ideas, but opportunities were present in the BSM Commons for developing praxis jointly with a community-based social movement from outside the university, not only for adopting their practices within the university. On solidarity, Bulani says, 'We learn[ed] more about sharing the pain with students, black lecturers, and workers of the university who were affected directly by some of the things that were happening inside the boundaries of the university'. With this knowledge, and, I would add, from their experience as activists, UPM members were able to lend what Bulani calls

'moral support' to some students when they were discouraged.²⁰ Through UPM's small but significant presence in the BSM Commons, sharing, learning, and solidarity form a praxis within the broad moment of the occupation.

A certain political logic emerges through these aspects of the BSM Commons. Ghedi Alasow writes of the BSM, 'the movement positions itself as diametrically opposed to the passively liberal politics which is rife in historically white universities across the country' which has two key assumptions: first, that 'those who exist in the peripheries of this institution – and our society – can simply get together, sign a petition and have their grievances addressed', and, second, that 'those who are protesting are asking to be integrated into the system that currently excludes them'. In this imposed 'methodology of participation', the status quo is protected 'via appeals to the right way of doing things'; but, 'the BSM is not interested in the "right" way of doing things' (2015, np).

The African university as a site of protest

Jonathan Jansen, Vice-Chancellor and Rector of the University of the Free State (UFS),²¹ one of the many sites of student protest in South Africa, was one critic of the student protests and protesters who had a clear idea of the 'right way of doing things'. He claims that the protests would ruin South African tertiary education by scaring away 'external investments' and 'top scholars', until 'what we will be left with is our low-level training colleges rather than leading universities' (2016, np). His argument is based in neo-liberal assumptions of the university as a market (which were rejected by protesting students), and turns to essentially charging the students with conspiracy against these assumptions:

There is a reason this new brand of protests has identified our leading universities. The idea for some of the most dangerous protesters is to raze to the ground these prized institutions of higher learning until all 26 public universities are indistinguishable in their academic capacities or ambitions (2016, np).

Jansen is writing in 2016, when confrontations between student protesters and police had become more frequently violent during a serious pushback through securitisation of campuses and repression of protest. These circumstances had hardened some strains of student politics and factored in discussions of 'cleansing violence' heard in the complex world of student activism.²² However, it was at Jansen's own UFS that reactionary students and other spectators at a

²⁰ Personal correspondence, 29 August 2016.

²¹ Jansen will be taking up a new post at Stanford University in the United States after 2016.

²² See Pithouse, 2016b.

rugby match violently attacked peaceful protesters that had interrupted the match on 22 February 2016 (News24, 2016).²³

Jansen's reaction to students is a defense of universities as certain kinds of institutions, not of universities as places of learning, per se. Institutional status quo lies at the heart of Jansen's argument: the 'top universities' were 'built up steadily over a century' and 'the threat to safety and stability' has led 'big donors' to begin to 'withdraw their money' and allowed less time for the recruitment of scholars (2016, np). The same logic is expressed in an article that links UCKAR financial difficulties to the student protests, and in the university's implementation of 'austerity measures' (Phakathi, 2016, np). The argument works through the two assumptions that Ghedi Alasow identifies in 'liberal politics' (see above); Johnson claims that the protests 'were never about "transformation"', and the 'violent protesters'—the great majority of whom he perceives as violent for disrupting institutions, not committing violence—'could not have chosen more vulnerable institutions than universities to cause lasting damage to sites of learning that could lift millions out of poverty with a first degree in the family' (2016, np)

This argument for indebtedness to donors and institutions inflects with neo-liberalism an apartheid logic that led to student protests in South Africa in 1976: "In urban areas, the education of a Black child is being paid for by the White population, that is English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking groups. Therefore the Secretary for Bantu Education has a responsibility towards English- and Afrikaans-speaking groups" (in Nieftagodien, 2014, 54). The universities have responsibilities to their donors, which Jansen shifts onto the students. For their part, students advanced opposing arguments that their universities were neither improving the lives of most South Africans, nor were they designed to do so.

Writing in Uganda, in an essay that invokes the student movements in South Africa, Bwesigye Bwa Mwesigire critiques a donor-driven model of the university like Jansen's. A 'reliance on Western donor funding is not an issue on its own', he writes, 'but when this funding is used as a tool to control the affairs of the university, then the relationship replicates colonialism'. He is critical of standards of excellence that are determined by these Western donors and by Western institutions of learning (2016, np). In contrast, as an example of a 'decolonial' university, he describes Marcus Garvey Pan Afrikan University (MPAU), in Mbale, Uganda: a university with closer ties to its surrounding communities, where students can work in their first languages, that privileges local knowledge production, and which he calls 'relevant to the Uganda post-colonial situation' (2016, np). This type of university, Mwesigire argues, reflects real decolonisation.

One can be critical of Mwesigire's argument. For one thing, it is published on a website operated by the Royal African Society (London), which limits some of the anti-imperial ideas in the essay. Further, his focus on 'indigenous' knowledge could potentially reflect forms of colonial logic around 'the native'

²³ Jansen condemned the violence, while calling the protests illegal (Chabalala, 2016).

and 'indigeneity'. Mbembe takes a different route than the focus on 'indigenous knowledge' arguing that decolonisation entails 'a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions' aimed at 'a less provincial and more open critical cosmopolitan pluriversalism' (2015, np). The two routes are decidedly different, and the objective here is not to decide between them, but to situate the BSM Commons moment into ideas and debates around what a university should or could be. Of the two arguments, Mbembe's is perhaps the more valuable in that it presents decolonisation as more clearly politically related to decolonisation and democracy outside of institutions. Mbembe, influenced by Fanon, writes, 'Black students and staff have to invent a set of creative practices' that 'make it impossible for official structures to ignore them [...], to pretend that they are not there'; and, furthermore, decolonisation moves with 'an expansive sense of citizenship itself indispensable for the project of democracy' (2015, np).

Far from attempting to implement a version of Mwesigire's or Mbembe's conception of decolonisation, however useful they might be, the BSM was engaged in its own version, which was developed in discussion and argument over the course of months. The principle of decolonisation was protected through the obstacles and urgency of daily events and politics, and the changing shapes of the movement throughout 2015. The first two weeks of the occupation, from 26 August until 9 September, were the peak of BSM's engagement with decolonial praxis. This period of political activity makes an important contribution to debates around decolonised, African universities.

The BSM understood that decolonisation requires change: not only the changing of policies and calendars, budgets and staff, but also the reinventing of university spaces, rhythms and procedures. BSM offered a glimpse into such a transformation. Significantly, it came during the longest and most fraught protest action that the BSM engaged in during 2015. The version of decolonisation practiced in the BSM Commons demonstrated a different version of the 'African university' than the one which has been discussed and debated: the African university as a site of protest. The pictures displayed on the walls of the BSM Commons served as a reminder that decolonisation could only be practiced through acts of protest.

The BSM Commons was an African university constituted as a revolt. The Commons was always imagined not as confined by the walls of the room but as a project for the entire university. The revolt rejected 'transformation' as a process of new policies decided upon and implemented in the usual manner. The BSM sought to impress upon the administration of their university that the 'usual way of doing doings' was not only unsatisfactory, but colonial. Their action demanded genuine and fundamental shifts in the political imaginations of university administrators and staff, in addition to students.

The BSM Commons was a critique of the colonial university, of the conception of the university as institution, and of the increasing corporatisation of the university. It was decolonising not only in its outlook and its objectives, but in its form and modes of operation. It was open revolt against modes of operating

that conserve traditions that are variously oppressive, anti-transformational, and reformist—all of which have been read by student protesters as colonial. In the BSM's combination of protest, politics, and study, a different idea of 'Africanisation' than the narrow and nationalistic versions discussed above is visible. This is not to say that protest is exclusively or essentially African, nor that Africa is or must be fixed in permanent protest; it is to say, however, that decolonisation of universities, in an African context, is a matter of protest, and that the experiences moving and motivating those protests will be distinctly African, in all of the variation that implies. This is not fixed either, and debates that occurred within the student movements of 2015 around the ideas of 'Black' and 'African' continue today.²⁴ However, the BSM Commons understood itself as 'African' and decolonising, and through this understanding and accompanying practices, it had fundamentally changed the space in which it occurred. As the BSM stated on the second day of its occupation of the Commons, 'The university currently known as Rhodes should aspire to be an Afrikan University, and not simply a University in Afrika' (2015b, np). As Mhlana puts it, referring to the pictures of black and African thinkers, revolutionaries, and artists decorating the Commons, 'The things we say are missing from our curriculum [were] on the wall. It was international and shared the idea of what we feel is an African or Africanised university'.²⁵

In the BSM Commons, one possible direction for such a university was attempted. Through the Commons' constitution as protest, oppressive tradition was rejected, institutional authority was held accountable, and opportunity for change was intensely present. Complete with its limitations, the BSM Commons was one moment of real significance among the many important moments that students created during 2015. We will now turn to a discussion of some limitations for praxis, as an important aspect of what it meant to bring popular political practices into the university, and what this means for the idea of an African university.

Problems in praxis for (and as) a way forward

The politics of the student movements across South African during 2015, and continuing into 2016, have never been internally uniform or uncontested. While critics and detractors have often simplistically latched onto specific voices of student politics precisely in order to critique or detract, the fact remains that those voices and many others less often heard were part of the complex period of political movement (in many directions) that signified the student protests of 2015. As are all political impulses, the praxis that emerged in and sustained the BSM Commons as an alternative to the institutional university was marked by contradictions. Asavela, a second year Science student at the time of the

²⁴ These debates and their significance to student politics, to South Africa, and to ideas around decolonisation remain to be recorded.

²⁵ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

occupation, takes a more critical view of the Commons. She says, 'We tried by all means to create a decolonized space', but 'the colonial society reflected itself within our interactions amongst us, as the BSM members'.²⁶ After two weeks of occupation, long-developing internal conflicts reached a point that led to the breakdown of consensus-based decision making and greatly decreased the number of students participating in the occupation. From over seventy students at its peak, numbers dwindled at times in the second half of the occupation to a handful. This does not immediately mean that the occupation was a failure, either politically or practically. The BSM still won a victory, negotiated with university management, in regard to short vacation accommodation; and, for two weeks, under great strain, the BSM Commons had been successfully organised as an alternative political and educational space that was at least premised on decolonising practices. This should not gloss over the fact that problems and failures did exist and occur. Just as the experiences of the BSM are important to demonstrating possibilities for praxis, so too are the BSM's problems valuable to an analysis that seeks to show the significance of such praxis.

Naicker asks, 'will students be able to see the difference in access to resources or class divides in order to bridge them [...]?' (2016, 60), and the question alludes to some problems for student politics that are not fully developed in her article. Despite the optimism of Kabingesi, who emphasises the 'openness' and 'freedom' of the Commons²⁷, Mhlana remembers, for example, 'There were some people saying that the Black middle class does not exist, and others saying it did. That conversation on class did not take place'. Regarding the eventual breakdown of the Commons, she continued, 'People had their ideas, and their ideas were the "right" ideas, and that was imposed in a space where it should have been decided together. People were silenced in different ways'.²⁸ Class and gender, and discourses around 'intersectionality', in particular, were sometimes mobilised in an attempt to 'silence', to delegitimize, or to control other members. Class privilege was sometimes denied through 'intersectional' arguments that highlighted race and gender. Female members' arguments were sometimes dismissed as 'patriarchal' if they did not take a certain line. Working class and poor students were sometimes accused of limiting the definition of blackness or of the legitimate subject of struggle for simply expressing feelings of alienation within the movement. These exclusionary refrains were made by a tiny minority who nonetheless exercised a degree of power by claiming they were themselves victims of silencing. This is not to say that they *never* were. In general, though, a few students, relatively privileged compared with their peers and comrades, defended a position of power within the movement through such discourses. Involvement of white students (always few), raised other issues of privilege.

²⁶ Personal correspondence, 4 September 2016.

²⁷ Personal correspondence, 20 September 2016

²⁸ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

An early debate in the BSM, carried on over several meetings in April 2015, was about reading. Some members argued that basic political texts were requirements for active participation in the movement, citing most often Steve Biko and Frantz Fanon, while other members argued for the opposite position, that commitment to the principles of the struggle was the only requirement, pointing out that many members coming, for instance, from the Science or Commerce Faculties, did not have a background in this type of reading material. Such requirements privileged students in the Politics Department as well as those students most comfortable with English. The two groups (not exhaustive of members' positions) accused each other of exclusionary vanguardism and of anti-intellectualism, respectively. While the works of Biko and Fanon were both included in the BSM Commons library and widely discussed there, the practices surrounding reading them in that context was decidedly different, as we have seen, than the limiting of vocal participation and engagement and the discrediting of positions based on whether they had been read. It is worth considering the affirmation by Zikode, 'If very *gogo* (grandmother) does not understand your politics then you are on the road to another top-down system' (in Gibson, 2011, v). The basic problem of a hierarchy, intentional or not, was not solved in the Commons, however. As Asavela recalls, 'The people who had voices, were people who were more articulate in terms of their English and choice of words', those with 'cultural capital' such as 'Postgrads in Humanities or people who [...] went to [a former] Model C school. If a point was raised by someone who wasn't articulate enough, no one will take it seriously'.²⁹ The BSM, as an intentionally 'leaderless' movement, sought to prevent a 'top-down system' from developing, but these examples of internal disagreements and privilege show that it was not always straightforward.

The occupation of the BSM Commons reached its highpoint after two weeks, on 9 September 2015, when the BSM was joined in a demonstration by members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU), some academics, and some Grahamstown residents and members of UPM under the banner 'Students Workers Academics Unite! 2015'. Despite the public solidarity of these groups, and the great potential therein, the BSM was embroiled, almost immediately after the march, in internal quarrels that severely limited its ability to strengthen links with workers and community activists. Conflict at the time hinged on an alliance with a particular group of academic staff. Some students argued that the character of the alliance was sidelining the students and threatening the movement's autonomy in a dangerous way, while other students saw it as a necessary alliance. A primary argument from this group of academics was that the BSM was unclear in its objectives and politics. Given the sheer volume of public statements and restatements of the movement's objectives and positions from March 17 through September, the critique was unjustified; it amounted to a *difference* in objectives and politics. This 'lack of clarity' critique was a line which, coming during an exhausting period of political action, bred argument in the BSM. This external influence intensified internal divisions and

²⁹ Personal correspondence, 4 September 2016.

personality conflicts. A minority of students in the Commons took up the 'lack of clarity' line—once again signaling a *difference* rather than actual lack. Some resorted to manipulation, accusations, bullying, and fearmongering. This created distrust and the breakdown of consensus as a mode of decision making, and ultimately a drastic shrinking of the movement in terms of numbers and of political dynamism. The alliance with staff occurred, but it cost the movement's strength. Although Naicker is correct that the student movements of 2015 often rejected civil society 'representational structures' for alliances 'outside of the elite space of the university' (2016, 57), this was not a consistent practice and, in the BSM's case, one alliance within the elite space of the university did shift the politics of the movement significantly, at the expense of strong political relationships outside the university that were most possible on 9 September.

Internal struggles and breakdown are not unique to student politics, but are part of popular politics, which is an important aspect of the link Naicker has made between student practices in 2015 and struggle practices outside the university. The repression, attempted co-optations, and criminalisation of popular struggles—all of which the BSM and other student movements experienced in 2015—can significantly contribute to creating and widening internal divisions, as well. In the forward to Gibson's book, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, S'bu Zikode of AbM discusses both the internal and external political problems that face popular struggles. He writes, 'It is an illusion to think that we can distance ourselves from the collectivities that made us [...] the same walls that divide the rich and poor' also divide those engaged in popular political struggle. He continues:

These walls do not only divide us physically, they are also there to teach us that liberation has been privatised and that success is about getting yourself and your family on the right side of the walls. It is these walls which breed individualism and make it difficult for activists to organise collectively (2011, viii).

This is related to the external pressures that a movement faces, often from a 'regressive left', as 'the tendency to treat our insistence on the autonomy of our movement as criminal', 'the tendency to co-opt individuals', and 'the desire to ruin what they cannot rule', which directly impact upon 'the risk of co-optation, individuals detaching from the rest of the group as they become popular and the possibility of corruption' inside the movement (Zikode, in Gibson, 2011, vi). To protect against this, both AbM and the BSM limited their leadership by collectively choosing delegates or assigning work, rotating chairpersons, and, in BSM's case, intentionally operating without a leadership structure. This choice was ultimately not successful for BSM, as personalities clashed and power struggles developed.

This reflection on difficulties and conflicts faced by and within the BSM illuminates a crucial aspect of the 'university as a site of protest': that, like all struggles and, especially those premised on democracy, it requires ongoing

work. We must consider the African university not as something to be implemented, but rather as something to be practiced—not instituted, which is the mode of the university at present, but constituted in political activity. The African university is not a decolonised institution but a university that is engaged in the process of decolonising. To be engaged in such protest, in the process of decolonising, does not mean that the African university will cease to be a place of learning, nor that all of its times and spaces will be taken up with sit-ins, marches, singing, graffiti and the other methods of protest that marked the student protests of 2015. Intensified repression against students in 2016 suggests these actions will remain necessary (and difficult), but they do not signal the entirety of what it means to be a university in protest. Fulfilling its mandate as a place of learning can become itself an act of protest in the African university. The study, learning, and engagement that occurred in the BSM Commons, was, briefly, just such a form of protest, which had consequences outside of the Commons, as explained by Mhlana:

‘At some point, [lecturers] couldn’t ignore that this was happening. The BSM Commons [was] in the Commerce Faculty, so whether you hear[d] people singing, these people [were] occupying a space that’s in that faculty. It would come out why people were doing these things. We had to take time out of [some] classes to discuss what was actually happening.’³⁰

The ‘moment of possibilities’ that characterised the protests at South African universities in 2015 has become increasingly complicated during 2016. Some directions that were possible at the outset of 2015 have likely been limited, while other directions have emerged. Increased securitisation of universities and repression of protest in 2016 make organising more difficult. The BSM has not been a viable force at UCKAR in 2016. Nevertheless, in April 2016, protests at UCKAR against rape culture and the university’s response to instances of rape and sexual assault moved the university administration to take out a court interdict against students. The interdict, which still stands as of November 2016, is worded so vaguely that it renders almost any form of protest illegal at UCKAR. Since late September 2016, FMF protests have reemerged at many universities, with students opposing another scheduled fee increase for 2017 and voicing an argument for free education. Sixteen universities have experienced temporary shut downs. However, violent—and often illegal—repression from the South African Police Service (SAPS) has increased. In addition to stun grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets, this has meant harassment and arbitrary arrest (including of non-protesters), violent arrests, intimidation (including tailing known activists), alleged sexual abuse of students, and what can only be described as drive-by shootings at Wits (15 October) and similar events at UCKAR (17 October). This has meant that some students have also sometimes taken more violent approaches. On 10 October, a

³⁰ Author interview, 5 August 2016.

pitched battle broke out at Wits between rock throwing students and private security and police with stun grenades, tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons. Jane Duncan (2016) discusses the trend towards actual violence by protesters, and the central role that security forces have played in that trend. Nevertheless, critics' claims that all student protesters are engaged in destructive or violent acts are baseless. Most students operate under a logic of active disruption that does not include, but is increasingly sympathetic to, acts of destruction. While a library was partially burnt at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Westville campus, a bus was burnt in Braamfontein near Wits, and some buildings have been set alight at UCKAR, student protesters often do not know who is responsible. Whether founded or not, many students suspect agents provocateurs.

This confusion could support other critics' point that there is a lack of strategy in this year's FMF protests. Certainly, long-term and politicised occupations like the BSM Commons have not happened this year, including at UCKAR. Current activists are not contributing their positions as consistently to the public debate as was sometimes the case in 2015, leaving room for a range of critics—reasonable and not—to comment in comfort. However, at UCKAR, FMF activists did manage to bring the university to negotiations and reach agreement on a number of their demands over a weekend in early October. This does not suggest incoherence or lack of effectiveness. However, the university withdrew all of its commitments when students said the university should remain closed for a week in solidarity with FMF movements across the country (Carlisle, 2016). Most student activists see this as another example of bad faith by university administrators.

Whether the current situation can be described as 'mass revolt', like the FMF protests of October 2015, is up for debate. Certainly, a large number of students are protesting, but against greater challenges to claiming legitimacy (given the attention on increased violence) and with greater challenges to organising effectively, as universities and the state respond with force. It is also clear that participation in 2015's protests has succeeded in politicising student bodies across South Africa in new ways, particularly at the elite institutions. Naicker's argument around practices from the 'informal sphere' of politics entering elite institutions is one of the most significant ways, and has important implications for what the possibilities might be, as we have seen. It is not clear what form student revolt will take and what politics will be practiced, moving forward. Recent events and the ensuing debate around relative values of lives and libraries, around acts of destruction and political acts, make the question of 'possibilities' especially significant. As new modes of student politics emerge, as the collective memory of the student movements in South Africa grows more complex, as internal contradictions appear in sharper relief than collective strengths, and as external forces identify and seek to widen divisions, the work of thinking about moments when solidarity and collectivity were practiced (even imperfectly) becomes crucial.

It is important to reflect on the events of 2015 and take stock of the potential that existed in the many and diverse political successes and failures that movements created and experienced. The BSM Commons is one such set of experiences. As Ghedi Alasow says of the Commons, 'There were moments that were truly productive – both in terms of the *mode* of politics and the *outcome* of our actions [...]. I do think that the commons was one such moment'.³¹ Asavela observes, poignantly, that 'there are so many contradictions amongst ourselves even though we are all in the struggle and conscious', and 'there are some errors we become blind to but notice only later', but '[t]he beauty is that we learn from them and move forward as a block'.³² She reminds us that neither the ways in which the politics of the BSM Commons were limited or contradicted, nor the formal end of the occupation, means an expiration of the politics that were practiced there for a time. These can be relearned and reclaimed as students continue to be the important thinkers of what South African universities should and can become.

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About the author

Paddy O'Halloran earned his MA in Political and International Studies from the University Currently Known as Rhodes, in Grahamstown, South Africa, where he was a student in the Unit for the Humanities at Rhodes University (UHURU). His thesis was entitled, 'Landscapes of Division: Social Movements and the Politics of Urban and Rural Space in the Grahamstown Region of the Eastern Cape'. He was a participant in the Black Student Movement. He can be reached at paddy.ohalloran1 AT gmail.com

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Pedagogies of struggle and collective organization: the educational practices of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement

Alessandro Mariano, Erivan Hilário, and Rebecca Tarlau¹

Abstract

The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) is one of the largest and most influential social movements in Latin America. Since the very beginning of the movement's agrarian reform struggle, MST leaders have developed a broad-based program of leadership, political training, and education for all participants in the movement. The MST's educational demands are organically connected to the movement's attempt to create, in the present, a new social order based on social justice, participatory democracy, autonomy, and humanistic and socialist values. The goal of this article is to introduce to an English-speaking audience the main contours and components of the MST's educational proposal. The first part of this article discusses the three theoretical foundations of the movement's educational approach and its five pedagogical practices. The second part of the paper presents two concrete experiences of educational institutions administered by the MST leadership: the "Itinerant Schools" in Paraná, a network of public schools located inside MST occupied encampments, and the MST's national political training school, the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF). Together, these two cases offer concrete examples of how the MST's educational proposal is implemented in diverse Brazilian contexts.

Key words: Landless Workers' Movement (MST), social movements, counter-hegemonic education, popular education, Freire, Makarenko, Pistrak.

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) has been globally recognized as one of the largest and most influential social movements in Latin America. The MST is an agrarian reform movement, with the primary goal of redistributing large land estates to landless workers. The MST arose in the early 1980s in the southern part of Brazil, not as a united movement, but rather, as dispersed attempts among poor rural laborers to claim

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land through occupations of large, unproductive estates. These land occupations were organized with the support and encouragement of progressive priests following the ideals of liberation theology,² a philosophy advocating for structural solutions to poverty and inequality. Even during those early years, while Brazil was still under a military dictatorship, these land occupations were successful and hundreds of families living in occupied encampments received land in newly formed “agrarian reform settlements.”³

In 1984, the leaders from these diverse occupations came together to form the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST).⁴ Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the MST’s struggle for land expanded across the country and currently the movement is present in 23 of 26 Brazilian states. Over 400,000 families (2 million people) have received land through MST-led land occupations, with tens of thousands of people still living in encampments waiting for land rights. Although the MST was born out of this fight for land, the movement currently struggles for three interrelated goals: (1) land, (2) agrarian reform, and (3) social transformation. The MST makes a distinction between the fight for land and the fight for agrarian reform, as the former represents ownership over the primary means of agricultural production (land) and the latter represents the struggle for all of the resources that are necessary to have a productive and dignified life on this land (roads, houses, technical assistance, agricultural credits, schools). The MST’s third goal, social transformation, represents the movement’s desire to transform the capitalist system and construct new forms of economic and social relations in the countryside based on family-farming, food sovereignty, agro-ecology, solidarity, collective work, and socialist practices.

Since the very beginning of the movement’s agrarian reform struggle, MST leaders have realized that to achieve social transformation it is necessary not only to occupy land but also to develop a broad-based program of leadership, political training, and education for all participants in the movement. As Pizetta (2007) writes, the goal of this educational process is, “political and ideological unity, the development of a political-organizational consciousness in order to overcome the challenges imposed by capitalist reality” (p. 242). This investment in leadership training is also an expression of the MST’s emphasis on autonomy: the movement’s desire that all Brazilian citizens become subjects (agents) critically analyzing the world and constructing new possibilities for their communities. Over the past three decades, the MST has invested a huge amount of financial and human resources in developing alternative political education and leadership development courses for its activists and leaders. These courses

² For more information about liberation theology and education see: (Berryman, 1987).

³ While land is being occupied it is referred to as an *encampment*, after families win the rights to live in this area is called a *settlement*.

⁴ One of the social movements that was critical in organizing the first land occupations in Rio Grande do Sul was the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Land Pastoral Commission, or CPT), an organization formed by the progressive priests following liberation theology. Some highlights of these early land struggles are discussed in Morissawa (2001).

occur in dozens of schools or “training centers” across the country, which MST leaders administer autonomously from the state.

In parallel to this struggle for internal leadership development and political education for new activists and leaders, the MST has also fought for access to state-administered public schools in its territories (encampments and settlements). Formal public schooling became important within the movement because the families living in MST settlements and encampments were worried about their children and began to demand access to public education (Hilário 2011). These families mobilized and put pressure on state and municipal governments to build schools in their communities. However, the families who won educational access quickly realized that the state’s educational project was in direct contrast to the movement’s goal of social transformation. In particular, the capitalist model of the Brazilian public school system, which functions (at best) to prepare students for an urban job market, did not support the movement’s goal of establishing vibrant small-farming communities in the Brazilian countryside. This capitalist model of public schooling emphasizes individual social mobility, competition, and conformation, not the movement’s values of solidarity, collectivity, self-governance, and autonomy. Furthermore, the public schools in Brazil were increasingly seen as a source of profit, a sphere of capitalist intervention through the production of textbooks and standardized teacher training, not a public institution with the purpose of promoting collectively defined social goals. Thus, along with the demand for schools, a demand for “another type of school” was also born: a school that contributed to the movement’s social and political vision for the countryside.

In summary, the MST’s educational demands are concerned with both political training for the movement’s established and new activists, to cultivate in each person the ability for leadership and autonomous action, as well as the transformation of thousands of state and municipal public schools located in MST camps and settlements across the country.⁵ The MST has also attempted to create university programs at the bachelors and graduate level that adhere to the movement’s socialist vision. The MST’s pedagogical proposal in all of these spaces is characterized by the direct connection between these educational processes and the movement’s larger social struggle. The goal of this article is to introduce to an English-speaking audience the main contours and components of this educational proposal.

In the first part of this article, we discuss the *three theoretical foundations* of the movement’s educational approach and the *five pedagogical practices* that characterize this proposal. We present the MST’s educational approach in dialogue with the other pedagogical practices that have been developed historically by working-class movements. The second part of the paper presents two concrete experiences of educational institutions administered by the MST. The first case is the “Itinerant Schools” (mobile schools) in Paraná, a network of

⁵ The movement has won access to 2 thousand schools in these new communities, with over 8 thousand teachers attending to 250 thousand students (Carter & Carvalho, 2015).

public schools located inside MST occupied encampments that are currently serving hundreds of elementary and high school students. The second case is the MST's national political training school, *Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes* (ENFF), which over the past 11 years has educated over 30 thousand activists, organizers, and social movement leaders across Latin America and the world. The Itinerant Schools and the ENFF are concrete examples of how the MST's educational proposal is being implemented in diverse Brazilian contexts.

Methodology

This paper is based on two decades of the authors' first-hand experiences with and research on the MST's educational initiatives. The article also draws heavily on the theoretical reflections elaborated by the national MST Education Sector. Two of the authors are currently members of this national education sector, and also accessed much of their formal schooling through the MST's educational programs. The third author is an academic and community organizer from the United States, who is a long-time collaborator with the MST.

Alessandro Mariano entered the MST in 1997, when he was 11 years old and his family participated in a land occupation in the southern state of Paraná. He immediately became involved in the organizational life of the camp. When he was 13 he participated in a statewide gathering of hundreds of children from MST camps and settlements (*sem terra*). Two years later, he enrolled in a high school degree program with a specialization in teaching at the Josué de Castro Institute (also known as ITERRA), a school in Rio Grande do Sul administered by the MST leadership (graduated in 2003).⁶ During this period he became an adult educator, using Paulo Freire's literacy method to teach adults to read and write in MST camps in his state. After graduating from the MST high school program, Alessandro took on the task of organizing one of the first Itinerant Schools in his state, with 500 encamped students. Alessandro received a bachelor degree in the Pedagogy of Land from the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) (2008), a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) (2011), and a graduate specialization in *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside) also from UNIOESTE (2015). All of these university degree programs were administered through a partnership between the universities and the MST, with funding through the federal program PRONERA (National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform). Alessandro also has a Masters in Education from the State University of Central-West Paraná. Alessandro is currently a member of the national MST education sector,

⁶ This is the first formal educational institution that the MST founded, in 1995. The school was first considered a research institute known as ITERRA (Technical Institute of Research and Training on Agrarian Reform), and offered two types of high school degrees programs (in teaching and cooperative administration). Shortly after the ITERRA's founding the MST obtained permission from the Rio Grande do Sul Educational Advisory Board to found the Educational Institute Josué de Castro, named after the writer of *Geography of Hunger*.

participates in the pedagogical coordination collective of the MST's Florestan Fernandes National School, and is part of a research group on social movements and education at UNICENTRO.

Erivan Hilário is an educator and activist in the MST from the municipality of Santa Maria da Boa Vista, in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco. Erivan entered the MST in 1998, when he was 13, after his mom participated in an MST land occupation and won land rights. Although Erivan resisted moving to the settlement, once he arrived he fell in love with its organizational dynamics and the integration of youth into the camps participatory structure. He was invited to become an adult educator in one of the MST's literacy campaigns, travelling to several cities to learn about Freire's pedagogical methods. That same year he was asked to become part of the MST education collective in the region, and he was invited to attend the MST's first high school degree program in the Northeast (hosted by the University of Paraíba, graduation in 2002). Erivan received his bachelor degree in pedagogy from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (2006) and a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2011), both degree programs administered in partnership with the MST and these universities through the federal program PRONERA. During this period Erivan became one of the leaders of the statewide MST education Sector, attempting to implement the movement's pedagogical proposal in public schools throughout the State. Between 2012 and 2015, Erivan was part of the coordinating collective of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF), when he also earned his masters' degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) (2016). Erivan is currently living in Brasília and is one of the two leaders of the MST's national educator sector and also participates in the UNICAMP Laboratory of Observation and Descriptive Studies (UNICAMP/LOED).

Rebecca Tarlau attended public school in the United States, in the state of New Jersey and went to college at the University of Michigan (2006), where she majored in Anthropology and Latin American Studies. The daughter of labor union leaders, Rebecca was an activist in the United Students Against Sweatshop and a labor solidarity group in college. In 2004, Rebecca went to Brazil for the first time and worked with a women's organization in the city of Recife, Pernambuco, that was using Freirean education as a method of social change. Rebecca decided she wanted to learn more about Freirean pedagogies and moved to Bolivia for a year to work with a grassroots organization offering political education classes to social movements. When she returned to the United States she worked as a popular educator for an immigrants rights organization in Maryland. In 2007, Rebecca entered a doctoral program in Education at the University of California, Berkeley (graduated 2014), with the goal of returning to Brazil and working with the MST's education sector. Between 2009 and 2015, Rebecca spent more than 20 months living in MST settlements and camps, conducted more than 200 interviews with MST activists and state officials, observed dozens of MST teacher trainings, and participated in other MST educational initiatives. Rebecca is currently a Postdoctoral scholar at Stanford University where she is writing a book about the MST's thirty-year

struggle to transform education in the Brazilian countryside. Her contribution to this article is both empirical, as the article includes some of her own experiences and observations, and as a translator of Erivan and Alessandro's writings—in the sense of translating Portuguese to English *and* translating the MST's conceptual frameworks to resonate with an audience unfamiliar with these educational ideas.

The theoretical foundations of the MST's pedagogical approach

The MST's pedagogical approach was born out of the struggle for land in Brazil. The process of creating this educational proposal began in the early-1980s, when families living in MST settlements and camps began to discuss the type of school they wanted to construct for their communities. It was the female activists and mothers who were the protagonists of this process, forming regional "education collectives" that would oversee the learning process in the public schools built in their communities. In 1987, a national MST education sector was founded to develop a more concrete educational proposal for the movement. Over the past three decades, the MST's educational proposal has been influenced by three main theoretical traditions.⁷

Three theoretical traditions

The first educational theorist that influenced the movement was Paulo Freire (1921-1997), and in particular, his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Many of the women and men who were involved in the first MST land occupations already had experiences with Freirean educational theory through their involvement in local church study groups that incorporated Freirean practices, known as *popular education*. According to Brandão (2002), popular education refers to the community-led educational practices that developed throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in Brazil, based in Freirean principles. By the early-1980s, these community-based educational projects were present in poor neighborhoods throughout urban and rural Brazil (Kane, 2001).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1968] 2002), Freire critiques the conception of schooling as simply a process of transferring information to the student, or "banking education." Freire pointed out the necessity of valuing students' reality in the educational process, which for the MST meant the reality of landless people in Brazil. Another lesson that the MST took from Freire is agency, or the idea that working-class people can be their own protagonists in constructing a new society. For Freire, this agency requires both dedication and humility. Inspired by these ideas, MST leaders began referring to the movement's educational approach as the "Pedagogy of the MST," similar to Freire's

⁷ These three theoretical traditions are discussed by Roseli Saete Caldart in Sapelli (2014).

“Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” In other words, rather than construct a pedagogy *for* the MST, the movement’s goal was to construct something *of* the MST, led by the movement itself.⁸ As one MST leader, Maria de Jesus, says: “When people ask us, ‘What pedagogy does the MST follow?’ we should respond that the MST does not follow a pedagogy, the MST has a pedagogy!” The MST’s focus on constructing its own pedagogical approach is related to the movement’s belief in community sovereignty and autonomy: working-class people’s right to take part in determining their own destiny.

The second theoretical foundation that is central to the MST’s educational approach is what the movement refers to as *socialist pedagogy*. These are the pedagogical experiments that were developed historically by other socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union and Cuba. Local MST leaders first began to read about these socialist educational experiments in the mid-1980s, when several outside intellectuals introduced texts from the Soviet Union to the movement. These socialist theorists were important because, while Freire’s focus is primarily on classroom pedagogy, these authors discuss the transformation of entire educational systems. In particular, MST leaders were inspired by the educational experiments that developed immediately after the Bolshevik revolution, when the country was attempting to create a school system to support a new socialist society.⁹ For the MST, one of the most important of these authors is Moisey Pistrak (1888-1940), a Soviet educational leader who discusses the importance of manual labor as an educational process (Pistrak, 2000).¹⁰ A second author that the MST draws on is Anton Makarenko (1888-1939), a Ukrainian writer and educator who organized schools as student-led collectives.¹¹ Pistrak and Makarenko reinforce two central ideas within the MST’s educational approach: the pedagogical value of manual labor and the importance of student self-governance.¹²

In the 1990s, the MST also began to study Cuba’s educational experiments, and in particular, the 1959 literacy campaign when the Cuban government

⁸ In the late-1990s this idea inspired *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside), a rural educational approach built *with* rural populations, not *for* them (Tarlau 2015).

⁹ The MST draws on Soviet theorists writing between 1917 and 1931. The MST always references 1931 as the moment when the Soviet Union stopped investing in the creative capacity of its population for collective work and self-governance, and became a top-down industrial model.

¹⁰ There are no English translations of Pistrak’s writings.

¹¹ In his book *Road to Life* (Makarenko, 2001), Makarenko writes about his experience founding a school for orphans in the new Soviet Union, known as the Gorky Colony. The Gorky Colony educated marginalized and orphaned Soviet youth by giving them collective responsibility over their own school.

¹² The MST has also studied several other Soviet educators, although Pistrak and Makarenko have been the most influential. Another reference is Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist that saw children’s intellectual development as based on their social interaction and life conditions (Vygotsky, 2007). More recently, the MST began studying th Viktor N. Shulgin (1894-1965), a Soviet educator and government official that developed many of the educational pedagogies used by the Soviet Union in the early 1920s (Shulgin, 2013).

suspended all schooling for a year and sent students to the countryside to teach illiterate adults how to read and right. More recently, the MST has created rural literacy programs based on the Cuban literacy program, *Sí Se Puede* (*Sim Eu Posso*, Yes I can). The MST has also been directly inspired by Cuba's approach to childcare. Setting up *cirandas infantis* (child care centers) during all MST political events is a priority for the movement, allowing for equal gender participation while educating MST children through age-appropriate pedagogical activities. Learning about Cuba's educational experiences deepened the MST's conviction that schools are places for integral human formation, not just academic instruction.

The third theoretical foundation of the MST's educational approach were the *organic practices of the movement*. The MST always refers to this as the movement's third educational inspiration, because it was only through the process of studying these other theoretical references that MST leaders were able to perceive their own practices as a legitimate source of knowledge. This led to MST leaders studying these organizational processes, such as the democratic participation, division of labor, collective work, solidarity and the other cultural practices that make up the day-to-day life of the movement. By studying these practices, the MST leaders were able to extract elements of the movement's own organizational structure that could help to construct educational goals that aligned with the goals of the movement.

Five categories of pedagogical practices

Based on these three theoretical foundations—Freirean theory, socialist pedagogies, and organic movement practices—the MST has developed five categories (“matrixes” in Portuguese) of pedagogical practice in their schools and courses: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. The first pedagogical practice of *work*, inspired by the Soviet theorists, is understood as human creative activity. For the MST, work is what it means to be human. As Marx says, “What is life, if not activity?” In this sense, labor is not just wage work or labor exploitation, as it is usually manifests in capitalist society. Rather, the “pedagogy of labor” attempts to convert all human beings into workers who are able to overcome alienated forms of individual wage work and instead help students use their collective labor power for the improvement of their own communities. The MST believes that this type of work/labor must be at the center of any educational project.

One of the MST's most important educational principles is “everybody is working,” or the idea that all students should participate in “socially beneficial work” for several hours each school day. Socially beneficial work refers to labor that produces benefits for the entire community, for example repairing a bridge, organizing a radio program for the community, producing a newspaper, or organizing a cultural event (Shulgin, 2013, p. 41). Socially beneficial work also includes the daily chores that allow the school to function, such as dishwashing, cleaning the school's bathrooms, and cooking. This work is decided, planned,

and carried out by the students, taking into consideration the ages of the participants. Again, incorporating “work” in the schools is not an attempt to “train” students to assimilate to the job market; rather, for the MST, labor is a source of creative production associated with free, autonomous workers. Work is also the best way to help students connect to and identify with the working-class.

The second component of the MST’s pedagogical approach is *social struggle*. Social struggle—participation in occupations, protests, marches—is the essence of the movement and considered the driving force of any transformation. As Caldart writes, (2004, p. 331), “Everything is achieved through struggle, and struggle also educates people. This is one of the lessons inherited and built by the MST’s historical trajectory.” Social struggle is integrated into the school day through various methods, one being students’ constant investigation of working-class movements. Social movements become the scientific object of study in classrooms, during extracurricular activities, seminars, debates, and weekly or monthly thematic events. In addition, part of the schools’ curriculum is students’ active involvement in these local struggles, either through their connection with the MST or through other working-class organizations in their communities. As part of their educational experience, students participate in mobilizations, marches, protests, and other activities, such as local gatherings of MST youth. These activities vary according to students’ age and local context.

The third pedagogical practice is *collective organization*, which is the way in which the MST organizes itself. The MST tries to promote collectivity within its movement, not individuality. The hope is to build communities that are based on socialist ideals, whereby everyone is considered equal and there is gender equity in participation. The most important aspect of collective organization occurs through the students’ self-governance of their schools. All of the students participate in decisions concerning curriculum, finances, extracurricular activities, outside visits to the school, decorations, or any other issue pertaining to their daily educational experience. This student participation occurs through smaller student collectives, known as *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Groups), which are the most important organizational component of the school. Collective organization is also practiced in the classroom, through study groups as well as a collective evaluation processes in which all of the students and teachers are evaluated each semester. The overall goal is to make students the main protagonists of their educational process, thus promoting their freedom and autonomy for critical thinking, creativity, and action.

The fourth pedagogical practice that is central to the MST’s educational proposal is *culture*. Culture is understood as our collective human experience. It is a way of life and a way of being that produces and reproduces knowledge and world visions. Culture is our collective inheritance of certain values, objects, science, arts, and technologies. Every person is born in a particular culture that shapes her or his daily activities. If one becomes conscious of the influence of culture on our actions then it can be used to affirm or change these practices. Thus, the MST’s educational proposal involves an *intentional* “practice of

culture,” whereby educators attempt to cultivate among students a collective identity as working-class farmers and peasants—through art, dance, music, theatre, and other cultural expressions. The goal is to promote daily practices in the schools that directly critique the cultural hegemony of capitalist society (industrial culture). The pedagogical practice of culture involves a range of activities, among the most prominent *mística*: daily performances that express local traditions and social struggles through theatre, poetry, music, arts, gestures, and rituals.

Finally, the fifth pedagogical practice is the MST’s approach to *history*. The MST believes that it is impossible to be involved in working-class organizations without an historical perspective. The MST leadership educates itself by studying the successes and failures of other social movements that have historically fought for land. This collective memory of struggle helps the MST to move forward, as activists realize that their current fights are part of a long historical process. In the schools, students practice history by studying these past struggles and analyzing the lessons these histories hold for the movement’s current challenges and contradictions. Teachers cultivate a daily “practice of history” by teaching students how to make these connection between the past, present, and future. In the classroom, this involves learning about the relationship between memory and history and the need to form a historical consciousness. Students are asked to record everything that takes place in the school each day, and constantly reflect on these events. The students are also taught that to comprehend our current lives it is necessary to analyze every action and situation from a historical perspective, or in other words, learn how to analyze the relationship between past, present, and future.

In summary, three theoretical foundations—the pedagogy of the oppressed, socialist pedagogies, and the movement’s own organic practices—have inspired the MST’s educational approach. These educational theories have consolidated around five categories of pedagogical practice: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. While the MST’s educational approach is not new, it is innovative as it brings together the practices and educational experiences of other working-class groups from different geographical regions and historical moments. The MST wants an educational proposal that directly contributes to the construction of autonomous, socialist societies, which strive for equality and the ample participation of all people, according to their needs and capacities, in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Moreover, the MST’s educational initiatives are aimed at ensuring farmers’ right to a dignified life in the countryside. The following two sections describe two examples of how this educational proposal is currently being implemented in practice.

Itinerant Schools: public schools in MST occupied encampments

Itinerant Schools are public schools inside of MST “occupied encampments,” locations where hundreds of families are occupying land for an unknown amount of time to demand the right to farm this land. Itinerant Schools are recognized by the government and have official permission to be “mobile,” or in other words, move with these communities through their various transitions. Camini (2009) links the origins of these Itinerant Schools to the informal educational activities that MST activists have organized in their camps since the founding of the movement. A pivotal moment occurred in 1985, when thousands of families in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul occupied Fazenda Anonni. More than 600 children were involved in this occupation. A survey of the encamped families found that about a dozen former teachers had been part of the occupation. These teachers formed a collective and began to voluntarily educate the camp’s children each day, under trees, in squatter shacks made of black plastic tarp, and during the political protests and marches that frequently occurred. Through this process, the MST began to realize that a new form of education was being organically constructed, an educational approach that could adapt to the chaotic and unstable life of the landless workers occupying land. This new type of school, constantly moving due to the evictions, marches, and protests of the encampment, became known as an “Itinerant School.”

It was only in 1996 that the state government of Rio Grande do Sul first recognized the Itinerant Schools as state public schools. This concession to the movement occurred after two-years of continual protests, with hundreds of children living in occupied camps throughout the state participating in large political actions in front of the state Secretary of Education. In one of these protests, the children read the Brazilian Statute on Childhood and Adolescence, declaring that their rights were being violated as they did not have educational access in their camps (Camini 2009; Tarlau 2013). The Itinerant Schools functioned throughout the state for the next decade, and were also established in several other states including Paraná (2003), Santa Catarina (2004), Goiás (2005), Alagoas (2005), and Piauí (2008).

The Itinerant Schools have faced harsh critiques and direct political attacks in all of these states, leading to the closing of most of these schools. For example, after a decade of legal recognition, the Itinerant Schools in Rio Grande do Sul were shut down in 2009 by a right-leaning government determined to weaken the MST’s presence in the state (Tarlau 2013). By 2016, Itinerant Schools were only functioning in one state: Paraná. The government’s closing of the Itinerant Schools demonstrates the threat that these public schools posed to elite interests, as they were directly contributing to the mobilization and internal capacity of the occupied encampments; both in this sense of both guaranteeing the children in these camps a place to study—and therefore, ensuring that the children do not have to leave the camp to pursue their studies—and becoming a

space of learning the basic arts and sciences in connection with their lives, the exercise of autonomy, the collective planning and execution of work.

The state of Paraná still has an expansive network of Itinerant Schools, a total of 11 schools with 1,800 students studying at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Table 1). The success of the Itinerant Schools in Paraná, yet their uniqueness within Brazil, illustrates both the possibilities and challenges of establishing educational initiatives within the current political system that directly contests capitalism.

Table 1: Summary of composition and location of Itinerant Schools in Paraná in 2016

Itinerant School	Municipality	MST Encampment	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
Carlos Mariguella	Carlópolis	Elias Gonçalves de Meura	56	08
Valmir Mota	Jacarezinho	Valmir Mota	103	15
Maria Aparecida Rosignol	Londrina	Eli Vive	344	30
Paulo Freire	Paula Freitas	Reduto de Caragata	23	5
Caminhos do Saber	Ortigueira	Maila Sabrina	178	30
Sementes do Amanhã	Matelândia	Chico Mendes	38	12
Egídio Brunetto	Londrina	Eli Vive II	40	5
Herdeiros da Luta	Porecatu	Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu	134	25
Herdeiros do Saber	Rio Bonito do Iguaçu	Herdeiros da Luta do 1º de maio	476	30
Vagner Lopes	Quedas do Iguaçu	Dom Tomas Baldoino	220	30
Zumbi dos Palmares	Cascavel	Keno Vive	230	30
TOTAL			1,842	220

The Itinerant Schools, given their location in the occupied encampments, are directly inserted into the MST's broader political struggle. Among other things, this means that the students and teachers have to continually confront the reality of state violence in these encampments and the constant repression of organized militia hired by oligarchical landlords to harass the landless workers. Over the past thirty years, more than 1600 rural activists have been assassinated throughout Brazil. In the state of Paraná, between 1995 and 2015, there were more than 200 evictions of landless families from their camps, 470 arrests of rural workers, and close to 30 landless workers that were assassinated. Nonetheless, the MST leadership has pushed forward its proposal for the Itinerant Schools, in the midst of this violence.

In Paraná, the Itinerant Schools serve a dual purpose: students' learning and their preparation for life in the encampment. In other words, although the Itinerant Schools teach the students all of the traditional academic subjects, students are also encouraged to use this knowledge to engage in community projects. The MST believes that in order to change the precarious situation in the countryside it is necessary to educate students to be leaders in the encampments and promote practices that are more democratic and equitable. It is this dialectical relationship between the current reality of the countryside and its future possibilities that inspired the MST to think about public schools as institutions that could prefigure this future world. This is more than simply connecting theory and practice; it is transforming the organization of the school, the relationship between teachers and students, and the school's methodology to illustrate that another social, economic, and political society is possible.

There are two elements that distinguish the Itinerant School's pedagogical approach from traditional, capitalist schools: *self-governance* and *diverse educational spaces*. These two central elements contribute to the MST's five pedagogical practices of work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. The first element, "*self-governance*," is how the schools are organized—a process that involves the collective organization of both the students and the teachers. In the Itinerant schools, there are four primary spaces of collective self-governance: the Student Work Collectives, Teachers' Collective, the School Executive Coordination, and the School Assembly. The second element of the Itinerant Schools are the "diverse educational spaces," which refers to the organization of the school day to include time for activities beyond classroom study. The MST believes that study is only one component of learning, and therefore, it is important to intentionally incorporate time for other educational processes. The rest of this section goes into detail about the self-governance of the Itinerant Schools and the diverse educational spaces that compose the daily routine of these schools.

Student self-governance and school organization

The students' *Work Collectives (Núcleos Setorias)* are the most important organizational component of the Itinerant School. These are spaces where

students practice collective organization and work, and exercise their autonomy as subjects of the educational process. According to Mariano and Knopf (2015), these student work collectives are based on the organizational structure of MST camps, in which *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Groups) are the fundamental decision-making unit. The NBs on the camps usually consist of 7 to 10 families, with a male and female coordinator that represent each collective. These base groups are spaces of local organization and decision-making.

Similarly, the student work collectives in the Itinerant Schools include students across various ages and grades. The number of work collectives is determined in each school by assessing the real needs of the students and teachers at the school, with the goal of promoting “socially beneficial work” processes (Shulgin, 2013).¹³ In other words, the work collectives are organized to engage in practical activities (teacher support, finances), as well as the daily work that is needed for the school to function (cleaning, cooking). While these student work collectives are set up according to the real demands of each school, they are also organized around learning objectives. Table 2 summarizes the different work collectives in the Itinerant Schools, the students’ responsibilities in these collectives, and how these tasks relate to learning.

¹³ As described in the first part of the article, “socially beneficial work” refers to labor that produces benefits for the entire community (Shulgin, 2013, p. 41).

Table 2: The Organization of Student Work Collectives in the Paraná Itinerant Schools

Work Sectors	Students' Responsibilities	Related Skills
Memory Collective	Students are responsible for keeping a daily records of what occurs in the School. This collective writes about the activities in the school using three different methods: a) A daily school diary, b) Documentation of the pedagogical practices in the school; and c) Photographic and Audiovisual Archives.	Orthography, writing, organization of texts, archiving, reading, etc.
Culture and Communication Collective	Students are responsible for sharing information about the schools with the families in the camp and nearby settlements. This collective provides everybody with facts about the school. The collective organizes the school's radio, newspaper, and announcement boards. They also read out loud the school's diary each morning.	Speaking, writing, the use of diverse technologies such as the radio, internet, newspapers, murals.
Teacher Support Collective	Students are involved in the teaching process in the school, helping with the planning of lessons and the scheduling of diverse educational spaces. They are also responsible for organizing the educational materials and equipment in the school, such as the TV, radio, and DVD player, all of the school's materials. This collective is also responsible for organizing the library and school's office. The collective also welcomes visitors to the school, which involves presenting to the visitors the school's pedagogical proposal and the school's daily dynamics.	Organization, how to take care of equipment, and cataloguing books and information. They also learn about how to welcome outside people, how to present on the pedagogical proposal of the school, and the school's logic, etc.
Finance and Structure Collective	Students are involved in the financial and administrative planning of the school. They help to organize the school's financial processes, including the money that comes in and out of the school, financial planning, and the payment of bills. They oversee the schools expenses, for example, funding of daily meals.	Calculation, electronic tables, planning, and financial management.
School Decorations Collective	This collective helps to organize the school's appearance. Students try to create an environment where nature and human activities are in harmony. They are primarily involved in three activities: planting flowers, trees, and bushes; organization of school's esthetic appearance, for example the identification of spaces to exhibit student projects; and, finding ways to value the school's symbols (flag, mascot, etc.)	Esthetics, organization of environments, planting and gardening, art projects, planning.
Health and Wellness Collective	Students are responsible for the collective wellness of the school. This collective is responsible for ensuring healthy food is served, and also to monitor student hygiene and well being. They execute cleaning tasks and hold meetings to discuss healthy eating habits and hygiene.	Basic cleaning procedures and hygiene as well as the preparation of healthy food.
Agriculture	Students are responsible for the agriculture practices at the school. They plan the school's food production and take care of the agroecological gardens, orchards, plantation, and animal husbandry. This food is allocated for both the school and families in the encamped communities.	Learn about rural practices, from planning the agricultural production to the harvesting of the plants, all based in scientific knowledge about agricultural production.

Similarly to the students, all of the teachers at the Itinerant Schools participate in a *teachers' collective*, which is when all of the lesson planning takes place. The goal in this collective planning process is to make a connection between the class content and a real-world phenomenon relevant to the students' daily lives. The teachers also connect the academic content they are teaching to the work happening in the community, such as the agricultural work, the raising of animals, etc. Together, teachers develop diverse teaching methods, such as field trips, experiments, observations, and research. There is also a teacher from this collective that participates in each of the students' work collectives, providing the students with help, support, and any information that is requested. For example, the science teacher oversees the agricultural work collective; the Portuguese teacher participates in the memory collective, and so on.

Who are the teachers at these Itinerant Schools? Often, the first through fourth grade teachers are women and men who are living in the occupied encampment and have degrees in pedagogy. These teachers are chosen by the MST education collective and then hired by the State Secretary of Education. For the higher grades, teachers more often come from outside of the camps since it is unlikely that anyone in the camp has the specialized degree required for these educational levels. The State Secretary of Education assigns these teachers to the Itinerant School. Generally, they live in the cities near the camps and commute daily to the schools. When a new teacher arrives at the school, the teacher is immediately introduced to the MST's pedagogic proposal. Then, these teachers receive pedagogical training through professional development courses, which take place in the schools and also statewide, generally run by the MST Paraná state education sector. The new teachers are also integrated into teachers' collectives, allowing them to become protagonists in the process of lesson planning, developing new teaching methodologies, and overseeing the students' work collectives. Often, the teachers that are the most engaged with the MST's pedagogic proposal are invited to take part in the construction of new Itinerant Schools in other MST encampments. These teachers become organic members of the MST education sector, helping to develop and implement the movement's educational proposal in other regions.

The *School Executive Coordination* is a collective composed of two student coordinators from each of the work collectives, two representatives from the teachers' collective, the principal of the school, and a parent representative. The principal of the school is always a member of the MST's state education sector, which allows for coordination between the different Itinerant Schools throughout the state. The school's Executive Coordination collective oversees and reflects on all of the pedagogical processes and activities that are taking place in the school during any given year. The students that participate in the Executive Coordination rotate from time to time, so that all of the students have the chance to learn "how to coordinate and to be coordinated." In this way, the participation of all students in all of the collective processes of the school's governance structure is guaranteed.

Finally, the *School Assembly* is an important decision-making moment that occurs at the beginning and at the end of each semester. Students, educators, parents, and staff all participate in the assembly. In the school assembly all of the reports from the work collectives and the teachers' collective are read and decisions about the school's future are discussed. In this way, the school assembly helps to share all of the information about the school and the different activities taking place in a fully transparent and open process. After the school assembly, it is the Executive Coordination collective that is responsible for making sure that there is follow-through on the collective decisions made during the assembly.

In addition to these four primary collective spaces (student work collectives, teachers' collective, executive coordination, and the school assembly), there is also an administration commission that oversees the bureaucratic aspects of the school and the school's relationship to the state. One of the participants in the administration commission is the principal of the school, although all of the decisions concerning school administration are collective. There are also several full-time employees in the school that provide specific support to the student work collectives, like cooking and general services.

Parents also participate in the educational process of the school in three ways: (1) Helping to build the school, as the construction of the Itinerant Schools often depends on the community's own effort after the area is occupied; (2) Electing a parent representative to participate in the school's Executive Coordination collective; (3) Participating every semester in the participatory class councils, which oversees the continual process of evaluation and assessment of the students, teachers, and the school as a whole. This participation of the parents and broader community in the school is critical for the Itinerant Schools to function. This educational approach, geared towards the creation of a new society, only works if families are also actively engaged this process of transforming the world around them.

Diverse educational spaces

The second feature that distinguishes the Itinerant Schools from other public schools are the *diverse educational spaces* that are incorporated into the daily school routine, allowing the students to participate in learning processes beyond classroom study. These diverse educational spaces are based on the idea that the integral education and multi-dimensional development of each student is critical.¹⁴ In order to incorporate these diverse educational spaces, the MST has received permission from the state government to increase the school day from the usual 4 hours to 6 hours each day.

The Itinerant School's diverse educational spaces include: (1) *school opening*, which is the first moment of the school day, when all of the students, teachers

¹⁴ In Manacorda (2007) this is referred to as the "omnilateral" learning, which is defined as the development of the totality of human capacity for a new level social life.

and workers gather together on the school patio. During this moment there are cultural presentations, school announcements, and the flags of Brazil and the MST are hoisted. The coordinators of the student work collectives organize these activities. (2) *Class time*, which is focused on teaching the traditional school subjects and curriculum. This is the educational space where the students spend the majority of their day; (3) *Work collective planning time*, a moment that is essential for the general management of the school. This is the moment when the work collectives meet to organize and evaluate the daily work processes and make proposals to share at the school assembly. This planning time for the work collectives happens once or twice a week; (4) *Work time*, this is the moment for the execution of practical work that is conducted by the work collectives. It involves the entire collective, since everyone has a daily job/responsibility regarding some aspect of the school; (5) *Reading time*, which is dedicated to reading books, tales, and newspapers, with students divided according to their ages; (6) *Culture time*, which is a moment for the creation of and reflection on different local cultural practices, through organizing cultural events, the practice of daily cultural performances (*mística*), watching movies, etc.; (7) *Study time*, which is dedicated to student research and homework; (8) *Workshop time*, which are moments when students develop a specific ability, such as playing the flute, performing theatre, or woodwork. These are activities that contribute to students' manual, cognitive, and motor abilities.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of the Itinerant Schools is that the idea of "failing" and "ranking" does not exist. Different methods for continual improvement have been adopted, which do not require assigning a grade to each student. Some of these forms of evaluation include: individual and collective self-evaluations, presentations and feedback through seminars, and continual assessment of the students' completion of tasks in the school. An important moment for evaluation occurs at the end of each semester, when teachers, students and parents come together for a "participatory class council," in which all students *and* teachers evaluate each other and themselves. To prepare for this moment, teachers write long, descriptive reports of students' progress, indicating if the student reached the learning goals for each subject. The students also evaluate each of the teachers. During the participatory class council, students first read their evaluations of the teachers and the teachers read their self-evaluations of their own work. After the evaluations of the teachers, there is an evaluation of each student. First, the student coordinators read the teachers' reports on each student and then the students read out loud their self-evaluations. This leads to a collective discussion of goals and plans for student and teacher improvement the following semester. During this evaluation process everyone has the right to speak: parents, teachers, and students.

In conclusion, the Itinerant Schools are attempting to construct new social relations based on the principles of participatory democracy, self-governance, and collective work practices. The goal is to develop students' capacity for autonomous action and self-governance, and who will then fight for new forms of social relations in the larger society. The Itinerant Schools require the

rigorous teaching of academic knowledge, because students cannot participate in constructing a new world if they are ignorant or lack this academic background. However, the goal is for students to appropriate this knowledge, in order to increase their leadership and self-esteem and use this knowledge for constructing a new, socialist society.

Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes: a national school for activists and organizers

The Florestan Fernandes National School (*Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes*, or ENFF) is not a part of the K-12 public school or university system. Unlike the Itinerant Schools, the ENFF is a training center within the movement, founded for the life-long learning, education, and study of working-class social movement leaders in the MST and globally. Since the ENFF is autonomous from the state, the MST leaders who run the school are able to implement the MST's educational proposal with fewer constraints than the Itinerant Schools. The ENFF, coordinated by a collective of MST activists, has become a place to share knowledge, experiences, theory and practice, and to bolster the struggle and organizational efforts of working-class organizations globally.

The ENFF is located in Guararema, about 40 miles outside of the city of São Paulo.

The Florestan Fernandes National School officially opened in January 2005. Over its 11 years of existence, more than 30 thousand workers have participated in the school's courses, meetings, seminars, debates, and conferences. Today, the ENFF also partners with many public universities in Brazil and other Latin American countries, to offer university degree programs. However, while these university programs take place at the ENFF, the partnering universities issue the degrees. The students who come to study at the ENFF are activists, social movement leaders, and educators, both rural and urban, from across Latin America as well as other continents, such as Africa. The teachers at the school are educators with a commitment to social justice and include hundreds of university professors that volunteer their time to contribute to the educational practices of the ENFF each year.

The ENFF is based on the MST's educational approach, and consequently, the school seeks to construct an educational experience that is connected to the challenges of working-class populations globally. The courses at the school teach students about the destructive logic of capitalism, and the organization of the school attempts to advance new forms of human coexistence, such as cooperation and collective work. The knowledge shared and produced at the school is not just any kind of knowledge; it is strategic knowledge aimed at human emancipation through the study of diverse Marxist traditions across different continents. The school also teaches about the various particularities of

workers' struggles, such as race, gender and LGBT movements, thus including the experiences of different organizations on the global left.¹⁵

Constructing the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF)

The ENFF's pedagogical approach is a synthesis of the MST's 32 years of educational experiences and debates. The history of the ENFF can be traced back to the VII National Meeting of the MST in 1996, in the city of Salvador, Bahia, when it was agreed to develop a proposal for a national school within the movement. After this collective deliberation, the MST started an international campaign to raise funds for the school by selling dozens of photographs donated by Sebastião Salgado, the CD *Terra* (Earth) by Chico Buarque, and the book *Terra* by José Saramago and Sebastião Salgado. Many international organizations also donated directly to the campaign. The actual construction of the school, which began in 2000 and was concluded in 2005, was carried out by voluntary brigades of MST activists who travelled from across the country to help build the school during a period of several years. According to the ENFF records, this construction project involved 12 thousand hours of voluntary work by over a thousand people, organized in 25 different voluntary brigades from 112 settlements and 230 occupied encampments across 20 Brazilian states.¹⁶

According to the school's mission statement, or the *ENFF Political Pedagogical Proposal* (PPP), the construction of the school was itself an education process:

[This process] involved volunteer work and solidarity. Volunteer workers built the ENFF, while also participating in an educational program as they were constructing the school. Thus, the construction of the school integrated workers into a process of physically building the school as well as their own educational development. Building the school meant not only a physical school but also the construction of the humans involved in the process. (ENFF, 2009, p. 3)

Thus, the ENFF was a dream translated into reality through "socially beneficial work." With every brick made, the workers transformed their dream into reality. These workers studied political theory, while putting into the ground the building blocks of the school. For the MST, both knowledge and work are the tools of the working-class. As Florestan Fernandes himself says, we need quality education because, "The greatness of a man is defined by his imagination, and

¹⁵ This focus on race, LGBT, and gender has been a more recent development in the movement and the MST's emphasis on these issues is still not as strong as the movement's class critique.

¹⁶ In order to maintain the ENFF, the MST continues to rely on donations from dozens of national and international NGOs and the active campaigning of "Friends of the MST" committees in Europe, the United States, and Canada. The MST also raises money through the international peasant network, *La Via Campesina*, during meetings, seminars, and conferences about land and agroecology.

without a top-quality education, imagination is poor and incapable of giving men the tools for transforming the world” (Fernandes, 1977, p. 142)

The MST chose to name the school after the Brazilian activist and sociologist Florestan Fernandes, thus paying homage to one of the most important political figures of Brazilian history, who tirelessly fought in defense of education. Born in São Paulo on July 22, 1920, Fernandes was a shoe shiner, salesman and teacher. His search for knowledge can be described in his own words:

I say that I started my sociological learning when I was 6, when I had to make ends meet as if I were an adult. Through this concrete experience I absorbed knowledge about human coexistence and society. [Fernandes 1977, 142]

Florestan Fernandes learned from a young age what it means to live and struggle. Throughout his life, Fernandes was a dedicated activist and organizer in working-class struggles. He is also considered the founder of critical sociology in Brazil. Ianni (1996, p. 26) says, “All of his intellectual writing is packed with a style of reflection that questions social reality and thought.” The ENFF is an attempt to materialize Fernandes’ vision of critical reflection. This is not a new project, but a product of the experiences amassed over time by the working-class organizations of Latin America. The goal of the ENFF is to contribute to the multiple dimensions of human formation by training the activists and organizers of our time to struggle for new forms of human coexistence, by prefiguring these socialist human relations in the present.

The ENFF in practice: organization and method

The educational process at the ENFF aims to train activists, organizers, and movement leaders, both from the MST as well as other movements, to be capable of engaging in critical thinking and knowledge production, in order to overcome capitalist alienation and build a different social world. These other movements include organizations in diverse sectors and geographical areas, for example, organizations participating in *La Via Campesina* (LVC), the *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (CLOC),¹⁷ as well as urban and indigenous movements. The ENFF draws on the philosophical and pedagogical principles of the MST’s educational approach, organizing the school around four major categories of practice: study, collective organization, *mística*, and work.

Study

For the MST, *study* represents the need for human emancipation. The appropriation, socialization, and production of knowledge must support the

¹⁷ The LVC and CLOC are the two largest networks of agrarian social movements globally.

development of the new man and woman, becoming a tool in the fight for a more just society. For that reason, study at the ENFF is focused on the following areas of knowledge: land/agrarian issues, human rights, education, agroecology, culture, political economy, and others topics related to social movement struggles. The methodology of study developed at the ENFF includes both individual study time and collective study processes. The students have at their disposal a library with more than 40 thousand books, spaces for individual and group work, and Internet access. The students live at the school for their duration of study.

There are dozens of courses that are held at the ENFF each year, organized into four “study groups”: National Political Theory; Latin American Political Theory; Formal Courses; and Seminars and Debates. Table 3 outlines the courses and leadership programs that were taking place at the ENFF in 2015:

Table 3: Courses offered at the ENFF in 2015

Study group	Courses offered
National Political Theory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic Introduction to Marx’s writings • The Legacy of Political Theory of Florestan Fernandes • National Course on Land / Agrarian Issues • Training Course for MST Leaders • Training Course for Leaders of all Social Movements • Feminism and Marxism
Latin American Political Theory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalist Brigades • Training Courses for Latin American Educators • Internationalism • Latin Studies (ENFF / Federal University of Juiz de Fora) • Training Course for Educators (in English) • Latin American Political Theory
Formal Courses Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters in Territorial Development in Latin American, in partnership with the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) • Masters in Health, Work, Environment and Social Movements, in partnership with FIOCRUZ
Seminars and Debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly seminars on a range of national and international themes • Series of debates that promote the culture of discussing historical and contemporary topics related to class struggle

The time load of each course varies, from a few weeks to a few months or several years. Some of these courses, such as the training course for MST leaders, are for activists who are not able to spend a lot of time away from their communities. Consequently, this leadership-training course may occur for several one-week periods during the course of the year, or several week-long sessions. Other courses, like the training course for Latin American educators, is

a one-time course that takes place for 3.5 months every year, with over 100 activists from across Latin America. The formal courses, which are always run in partnership with a degree-offering institution, take place over the course of several years. Students in these courses will alternate their study between several months living at the ENFF and several months back in their home communities, engaging in practical research projects that are related to the course. The seminars and debates happen every Saturday with all ENFF students at the school expected to participate. These Saturday discussions are also open for the general public, as cultivating an open and educative relationship with the outside community is a principal goal of the ENFF.

Collective Organization

Collective Organization refers to the process of permanent participation of all students in the governance of the school. It is only through self-governance that working-class populations can overcome traditional hierarchies and build their autonomy for strategic action. Since there are constantly different courses being held at the school, with varying numbers of students and lengths of stay, a permanent collective of MST activists lives at the school, overseeing the collective organizational structure. This collective, known as *Brigada Apolônio de Carvalho (BAC)*, is the administrative and pedagogical core of the school. The name of the BAC honors Apolônio de Carvalho, who was born in 1912 in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Apolônio de Carvalho was a member of the Brazilian Communist party and participated in a range of international socialist brigades, fighting in the Spanish Civil War, the French Resistance against the Nazis, and the struggle against the military dictatorship in Brazil. Apolônio de Carvalho died in 2005, the same year the ENFF was inaugurated.

The BAC is made up of around 35 MST leaders who live and work at the school continually for 2 to 4 years, giving them enough time to contribute to the organization of the school while also allowing for the constant flow of new activists into this coordination collective. The BAC collective has various functions ranging from coordinating the work sectors at the school (planting, tending, reception, gardening, hosting) to supervising the courses. The work sectors are all organized around the idea of “socially beneficial” labor. This labor includes both domestic tasks to maintain the school, such as cooking and cleaning, as well as work that produces collective goods for the school, like gardening. The students who come to participate in the ENFF courses are all integrated into these work sectors, with the supervision of MST leaders from the BAC. Once the students become part of a work collective, they are now in charge of the planning and division of tasks in that work sector, as well as the constant evaluation of the collective work process in order to suggest improvements.

Within the BAC there is also a smaller collective, known as the school’s Political and Pedagogical Coordination (CPP), which is in charge of the political and pedagogical oversight of the school. The CPP is responsible for ensuring that the ENFF is in sync with the MST’s social and political needs, as well as the needs of

the other organizations and social movements attending courses at the school. The CPP also oversees all of the courses taking place, helping to determine their pedagogical content and purpose. The CPP has between 5 to 7 MST leaders who form this collective. In addition to the school-wide CPP, each course also has its own political-pedagogic collective, known as the course's CPP. The course CPP includes members of the school-wide CPP as well as outside activists who come to the school for a period of time to oversee a particular course. Often, members of a course's CPP have already studied in the course or similar ones previously. The responsibilities of the course's CPP are: (1) To plan and organize the classes and study topics; (2) To guarantee that the collective organizational structure and educational goals are being carried out within each student collective; (3) To dialogue with the volunteer educators who come to the school, helping them organize the content of their classes and reflect on their teaching methodologies; (4) To be educators themselves through their everyday interactions with the students.

As mentioned previously, all of the ENFF educators who teach at the school are volunteers who also work in other spaces (universities, social movements, etc.). The contribution of these educators occurs for short periods, for example, one class or several days when the educator stays at the school to teach. This means that for a month-long course, there may be 20 different educators who come to the ENFF to teach the content of course. Consequently, it becomes the job of the class CPP, not these educators, to ensure the coherence of the course and that the political-pedagogic objectives are achieved.

In every course the students are organized into *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Group), small student collectives that become spaces of study, debate, and reflection about their classes and the organization of the ENFF. The number of participants in each NB varies with the size of the cohort, but is usually 5-10 students. Each NB elects a coordinator and a recorder. The election takes place through an open discussion between with all members of the NB, when anyone can indicate a candidate. After that, there is an open debate between each pair of candidates (coordinator and reporter), and the final decision is reached by consensus, or by the opinion of the majority. The coordinator's function is to facilitate and lead the study process within the NB. The recorder is responsible for guaranteeing that there is a (written) memory of the activities that take place within each NB. All of the coordinators of the NBs form a larger class collective, the Political-Pedagogic Support Collective (CAPP), which coordinates issues pertaining to the entire course. The CAPP becomes its own space of collective, autonomous debate and discussion within the cohort.

Another important element of the Base Groups, or NBs, is the students' choice of a name (identity) for their collective, with the goal of paying homage to an activist, a historical struggle, or even to a dimension of life expressed in the field of critical literature. These names should not be someone who is still alive, as priority should be given to martyrs and fighters that left us with a legacy of struggle. Issues of gender and ethnic diversity should also be considered. Choosing a name for each NB is one of the first tasks of this collective group, a

process that occurs at the beginning of each course. The choice of names happens separately in each NB, and is later shared with the entire cohort. After choosing a name, the members of the NB do research to learn more about this person or historical moment. Some of the names that have been used at the ENFF include Hugo Chávez, *primavera dos povos* (People's Spring), Rosa Luxemburgo, Che Guevara, Olga Benário, Playa Giron, Sumak Kawsay, Bartolina Sisa, Soledad Barret.

During their period of stay at the school the student collectives—the NBs—immerse themselves in all aspects of the planning and oversight of the educational life at the ENFF. For example, when there is a case of discrimination of any kind, the first place to discuss this issue is in the NB. If the issue cannot be resolved, the class CPP is informed, and in some cases, the school CPP becomes involved. The goal in these collective spaces is to discuss the occurrence and to look for practical follow-up activities that can address the issue. Sometimes the CPP will decide to have a school-wide debate about a relevant topic, for example, a debate on gender discrimination in society if gender relations become an issue within a cohort.

Over 11 years of educational practice, the ENFF has also developed a series of collective agreements that all students discuss at the beginning of every course. These agreements are a product of the contributions of the many different students that studied and worked at the school. At the start of every new course, the NBs take time to discuss both the ENFF's political pedagogical proposal (mission statement) and these ENFF collective norms. One of the norms in this document prohibits aggression of any kind, and in the case of physical aggressions, the responsible student must leave the school and return to his or her state or country of origin. This strict discipline is important, as the ENFF attempts to become a space of liberatory theory and practice and therefore there is no tolerance of any kind of violence.

The MST's ultimate goal is for the ENFF to continue to be constructed by the students who arrive, through a permanent process of organizational and curricular innovation. For example, for many years the Latin American political theory course offered at the ENFF did not include debates about gender and indigenous people, however, as a result of students' critiques, the curriculum evolved to include these discussions. Similarly, the students' work tasks were previously isolated from the broader "work sectors" at the school, such as the school's agricultural production sector. Recently, based on the evaluation of students, there was a decision to integrate the students into these sectors while they are studying at the school.

No single student cohort, however, has complete control to transform the school in any way that the students see fit. Partially, this is because the established practices at the school affect other student cohorts as well as the BAC, and therefore, changing these practices must be part of a larger collective discussion. Furthermore, the overall goal of the ENFF is to provide political training to activists to build a global working-class movement; therefore, the MST leaders in the BAC are responsible for ensuring that these objectives are met and

students' suggestions must be analyzed from this perspective. The MST believes in provoking students to creatively construct their own educational experiences at the ENFF and improve the school's educational proposal; however, there is a limit to students' interventions, as the ENFF's broader goals and the accumulated collective experiences of the students' who came before them must always be considered.

Mística

Mística (mystic in English) broadly means the cultivation of the social and human relations that we want to build. *Mística* is an artistic means of communication, which can include music, poetry, storytelling, dance, theatre, etc. At the ENFF, these artistic expressions are always constructed around a theme of struggle, for example, humanitarian and socialist values, the Cuban Revolution, collective work, the history of the MST, etc. Every morning, a student NB is in charge of presenting a *mística*, during a period of time known as "human formation," when everyone in the school comes together for 20 minutes before classes begins. The goal is to inspire in the students and teachers the *feeling* of collective struggle, before studying about it. During the moment of *mística* everyone in the school is present, including the MST leaders permanently living at the school. However, the students themselves coordinate the presentations of the *mística* through their NBs.

The students' daily preparation for the morning *mística* is as important as its implementation, as each NB has to meet the day before to discuss the theme they are going to present (land reform, environmental crisis, industrial strikes) and create a plan for expressing this theme in an artistic form (theatre, poetry, dance). These *místicas* are recorded and become part of the "memory" of the school. For example, the ENFF records state that on September 21, 2013, a *mística* was preformed by the NB Camilo Torres, a student collective in the Latin America political theory course named after a Colombian socialist and priest who was a promoter of liberation theology. According to this report, the objective of the *mística* was to remember the indigenous struggles during the period of colonialism through a theatrical presentation. The *mística* incorporated music, poetry, speeches, audiovisual materials, and photographs. The presentation began with a song, "Heights of Machu Pichu," during which a person dressed as Túpac Amaru enters wearing jewelry, a sword, gold bullion, and holding a bible. Túpac says, "I am Tupac Amaru and I represent the struggles of indigenous resistance against the colonial power." The sound of drums accelerates as he speaks. Four more people enter as though they are riding horses, attempting to assassinate Túpac. They injure Túpac and then steal his bible, jewelry, and gold bullions. Then the music stops and someone comes in and reads a poem called "Poetry of Túpac Amaru," which is about why it is not possible to kill Túpac Amaru. The poem includes lines such as, "They want to break him, but they cannot break him." After the poem is read, four more people enter the room, each representing the independence or socialist struggles of Haiti, Paraguay, Cuba, and Chile. These four people fight off the

colonists and free Túpac. As Túpac rises from the ground, each of the four revolutionaries shouts a chant that represents her or his country's struggle. Then, Túpac Amaru shouts, "We raise our voices because we are the people, we are the land, and only socialism frees us!" Everyone in the room repeats this phrase three times and the *mística* ends.

This is just one example of the cultural performances that are created and performed everyday at the ENFF. These artistic expressions are never repeated, as the process of creating the *mística* is as important as the presentation itself. For the MST, *mística* is a process of translating collective dreams into art and bringing together, through this artistic expression, the feeling of past struggles and the possibilities for the future. Thus, *mística* is part of the pedagogical approach of the school, as it teaches students that the struggle for a more just world precedes us, and that we are not only a part of the past but also connected to future generations to come, who will know about our collective struggle in the present.

Work/manual labor

As already discussed, work is considered one of the pillars of the MST's educational approach because the movement believes that humans build their existence through manual labor. The work activities at the ENFF are all socially beneficial, or in other words, they are processes of production for the collective and not for private appropriation, as the logic of capitalism dictates. Collective work has been a cornerstone of the ENFF since the very beginning of its construction. As the ENFF's *Political Pedagogical Proposal* states:

The experiences that developed through the ENFF's construction reframe and reinforce the meaning of volunteer work as a fundamental value for a free society . . . These work practices serve as a reference for social movements and organizations that have not lost hope in the future and therefore keep building, in the present, the base and the principles of a socialist society. (ENFF, 2009)

Everyone who studies at the ENFF is involved in manual labor, because it is through this process that we begin to identify as the working-class. This focus on work also breaks the historical divide in capitalism between manual and intellectual work. At the ENFF manual labor is an educational principle, a space to both produce our livelihoods through the production of food, arts and culture, and through domestic services such as cooking and cleaning. By including men and women equally in all of these tasks, the ENFF also breaks with the sexist societal norm of domestic labor being "women's work." Instead, these work activities become spaces for creativity, as both women and men collective design and executive these diverse work processes.

For these reasons, the ENFF does not have employees. Its governance and management is collective and self-organized by the students and the MST

leaders that live at the school. The goal of integrating students into the work necessary to maintain the school is not just a practical necessity, it is also an educational process as students learn how to *plan collectively* and decide as a group how they are going to organize and divide the completion of tasks. For this to occur, it is necessary for students to have weekly meetings among their work teams to plan these activities. There is also a continual process of evaluation of the challenges that arise, in order to improve this collective work process.

The school organizes this process through work sectors and work units. For example, the “Production Sector” includes several units, including agricultural production, tending to the animals, and cultivating fruit trees. The “Pedagogy Sector” has work units that focus on child care for the children of the students studying at the school, cultural production, and the school’s daily “memory” (diary of school activities). The “Service Sector” is divided into work units that take care of the dining hall, general cleaning, and maintenance. These are all work processes that requires planning and permanent evaluation. Every student at the ENFF must be involved in at least 1.5 hours of daily collective work. As already mentioned, the students do all the planning for their work collectives, under the supervision of the BAC.

The ENFF is a school that remains in construction. In other words, its process of construction did not end with the finishing of the physical building and its inauguration; rather, the ENFF’s construction continues in every collective action that the school executes. Throughout its 11 years of existence, the ENFF has developed a new practice of Latin America popular education. Like the daily struggles of the social movements that participate, the ENFF keeps moving forward as an educational strategy that contributes to the struggle for socialism.

Conclusions: education and social movements

The MST has attempted to construct an educational proposal that is connected to the movement’s fight for land, agrarian reform, and social transformation. For the MST, this means building a socialist society that is just, egalitarian, autonomous, and based in solidarity. This vision is in direct contrast to capitalism, which increases inequality, the concentration of wealth, and misery for the majority of the population. In its current phase, global capitalism is run by finance capital and large multinational corporations, which dominate and control the production and circulation of goods in every country.

This same nefarious, capitalist process has also made education a new sphere of business and profit. In addition to the historical role schools have played training workers for these businesses, now corporations are turning education into one of their enterprises and are seeking political and pedagogic control over public schooling. Large business groups have been intervening more and more in educational politics, and government’s have accepted these private sector proposals with their false pretense of improving the quality of public education.

In practice, these proposals are part of an accelerated process of turning education, across all levels, into a market good.

First, these proposals seek to illustrate that the public school system is in crisis, students are failing to learn, teachers cannot teach, and the educational system does not work. Then, these corporations suggest as a solution that schools be run according to theories of work and management from capitalist businesses. This implies the use of metrical targets, external control of the pedagogical process, loss of autonomy for the teachers, individual accountability for students' learning, and curricula developed to serve large-scale, high-stakes evaluations. These private actors argue that, in order to maximize efficiency, businesses themselves should be in charge of the public schools and receive public resources to this end. In Brazil, these private groups are organized as the coalition "*Movimento Todos pela Educação*" (Education for All Movement). In other countries, this process has involved the active participation of private capital in public education through the promotion of charter schools, vouchers, and new educational industries. All of these interventions result in working-class populations' decreasing control over public education.

Currently, the MST is trying to become a counterpoint to this capitalist model of public education. For 32 years the MST has drawn on its own internal practices and the historical experiences of the working class to develop an educational proposal based on solidarity, collectivity, and local sovereignty. First, drawing on the decades of experiences of grassroots organizations that have incorporated Freirean theory, the MST promotes the idea of working-class agency and autonomy, the need for a "*Pedagogy of the Movement*," and the importance of local knowledge and dialogue. Second, drawing from the historical practices of the Soviet Union and Cuba, the MST has appropriated the idea of student self-governance, the educational value of work, and socially beneficial work practices. Third, drawing from its own organizational practices and pedagogies of struggle, the MST has incorporated agro-ecology, cultural performances, and *mística* into students' daily educational routine. The movement has also created a direct articulation between these educational practices and the movement itself. All of these theories and practices have helped to produce the Pedagogy of MST, and its 5 main pedagogical components: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture and history. As we have emphasized throughout this paper, these 5 components are not new, but rather, a product of generations of working-class organization and innovation. These pedagogical practices are adapted to each regional context, through the participation of local communities and the MST leadership.

There are at least three lessons that we can extract from the MST's educational experiences, which can help inform other global struggles: (1) A constant investment in leadership development, grassroots education, training, and human formation—namely, a pedagogy of struggle and collective organization—is critical to the long-term autonomy of working-class movements; (2) These educational practices, whether within movement spaces or in state institutions, must construct and prefigure in the present the types of social and human

relations we hope to build in the future. It is necessary for people to experience other types of power and forms of participation inside their organizations, so that workers can demonstrate that effective paradigms for a new society and participatory democratic governance exist; (3) Working-class organizations around the world have the responsibility of disputing the current educational model with these alternative practices, because if they do not private actors will continue to use education as a tool for reproducing capitalist relations and education will be reduced to a private commodity.

In conclusion, the development of a truly emancipatory educational process should be the goal of the collective working class. In many locations working-class groups have already created concrete educational practices, which offer alternatives to the hegemonic educational model. As Florestan Fernandes said, “socialism teaches us that equality, liberty, fraternity and happiness can only be achieved through the collective self-emancipation of the oppressed classes” (Soares, 1997, p. 98). Thus, we must learn from the experiences of grassroots organizations and their historical processes of political training, informal education, and self-organization. We must build, starting right now, concrete alternatives to the hegemonic model and, through political struggle, song and poetry, we must bring this future (socialism) closer to the present.

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About the authors

Alessandro Mariano grew up in MST encampments and settlements in the state of Paraná and obtained a high school degree with a specialization in teaching (2003) from the Josué de Castro Institute, a school in Rio Grande do Sul administered by the MST leadership. In terms of higher education, he received a bachelor degree from the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) (2008), a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) (2011), and a graduate specialization in *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside) also from UNIOESTE (2015). All of these university degree programs were administered through a partnership between the universities and the MST, with funding through the federal program PRONERA (National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform). Alessandro also has a Masters student in Education from the State University of Central-West Paraná. Through his activism with the MST, Alessandro has coordinated Freirean literacy programs (2000-2003) and has participated in the pedagogical coordination of the MST's Itinerant Schools in Paraná (2003-2014). Alessandro is currently a member of the national MST education sector and part of a research group on social movements and education at UNICENTRO. He can be contacted at [alessandromstpr AT gmail.com](mailto:alessandromstpr@gmail.com) (in Portuguese or Spanish).

Erivan Hilário is an educator and activist in the MST who attended public school on an MST agrarian reform settlement in the municipality of Santa Maria da Boa Vista, in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco. Erivan obtained a high school degree with a specialization in teaching (2002) through the MST's first high school degree program in the Northeast (hosted by the University of Paraíba). Erivan received his bachelor degree in pedagogy from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (2006) and a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2011), both degree programs administered in partnership with the MST and these universities through the federal program PRONERA. Erivan also has a masters' degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) (2016). Between 2012 and 2015, Erivan was part of the coordinating collective of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF). Erivan is currently a member of the national MST education sector and participates in the UNICAMP Laboratory of Observation and Descriptive Studies (UNICAMP/LOED). Erivan is currently living in Brasília and is one of the two leaders of the MST's national educator sector and also participates in the UNICAMP Laboratory of Observation and Descriptive Studies (UNICAMP/LOED). He can be contacted at [hilarios.erivan AT gmail.com](mailto:hilarios.erivan@gmail.com) (in Portuguese or Spanish).

Rebecca Tarlau attended public school in the United States and went to college at the University of Michigan (2006), where she majored in Anthropology and Latin American Studies at the. She received a doctoral degree in Education from the University of California, Berkeley (2014), focusing her doctoral studies on the MST's attempt to implement its educational proposal in public schools throughout Brazil. Between 2009 and 2015, Rebecca spent 20 months collecting ethnographic data on the movement's educational initiatives in four regions of the country, conducting more than 200 interviews with MST activists and state officials, observing dozens of MST teacher trainings, and participating in other educational activities. Rebecca is currently part of the national coordinating collective of the Friends of the MST-U.S. She is also a postdoctoral scholar at Stanford University where she is writing a book about the MST's thirty-year struggle to transform education in the Brazilian countryside. She can be contacted at [rtarlau AT stanford.edu](mailto:rtarlau@stanford.edu)

Notas sobre um deslocamento de legitimidades: uma discussão acerca da violência a partir das jornadas de junho 2013

Simone da Silva Ribeiro Gomes

Abstract

On the basis of an analysis of the “June days of 2013”, this article analyses the legitimacy of violence, both on the part of state actors and those of protestors.

Its primary objective is to highlight the issue of the excess of violence in street demonstrations, in particular in relation to the rhetoric of “force” used by the state repressive apparatus, but also in the justifications of clashes provoked by demonstrators. Hence the investigation focusses on legitimacy as an actual mode of analysis and in its form of rhetorical manipulation, in relation to the practices of those involved in this historical episode. There is also a brief discussion of the debate on the “violent X non-violent protests”, and lastly of how the violence of the groups using black bloc tactics have as one effect the criminalization of collective action.

Keywords: legitimacy; social movements; June 2013 protests; violence; police.

Resumo

A partir do que ficou conceituado como “as jornadas de junho de 2013”, o artigo analisa o deslocamento de legitimidades da violência, tanto dos agentes do Estado, quanto dos sujeitos que foram às ruas. O principal objetivo é dar visibilidade à questão dos excessos da violência nas manifestações de massa, sobretudo a partir do uso da retórica da “força” pelo aparato repressor estatal, tal qual das justificativas dos enfrentamentos provocados pelos manifestantes. Investigou-se, portanto, a legitimidade enquanto um operador analítico factual e em sua forma de manipulação retórica, para as práticas dos envolvidos nesse episódio histórico. Ademais, menciona-se brevemente o debate da violência X não-violência nos protestos, e, finalmente, como a violência dos grupos que utilizam as táticas conhecidas como Black Bloc, tem como um de seus efeitos a criminalização da ação coletiva.

Palavras-chave: legitimidade; movimentos sociais; manifestações de junho de 2013; violência; polícia.

O presente artigo aborda a legitimidade da violência estatal nas ações coletivas a partir da situação empírica do que ficou conhecido como as "jornadas de junho de 2013". Dessa forma, o debate se dará entre as estratégias tidas *violentas* de alguns grupos em protestos, performativas, junto às ações do aparato repressor do Estado. Para tanto, a adequação da violência estatal será considerada, na medida em que é encarada como uma das formas de auto-defesa possíveis, quando há um entendimento da ilegalidade da violência de agentes do Estado.

Partindo, portanto, da discussão sobre a legitimidade da violência, recuperaremos as proposições sobre a licitude estatal. Entenderemos a legitimidade como um construto político e social, e não exclusivamente jurídico, no qual legítimo é o que está de acordo com a lei, e onde atos violentos são possíveis, em um Estado de direito somente nas hipóteses de legítima defesa, contra a ação direta e imediata praticada contra a pessoa ou em Estado de necessidade, para salvar-se ou resgatar alguém de perigo direto e imediato.

Assim, a legitimidade política e social se dá a partir da conceituação weberiana de uma crença social num determinado regime visando obter a obediência, mais pela adesão do que pela coação, sempre que os respectivos participantes representam o regime como válido, pelo que o legítimo se torna obediência consentida. Discutiremos, a seguir, as estratégias retóricas utilizadas para confundir o uso da violência com a força, sobretudo pela instituição policial, mobilizado para eleger manifestações e violências legítimas e ilegítimas. Para tanto, uma breve explanação sobre o debate da violência X não-violência nos protestos será feito.

Passaremos ao que nomeamos como "deslocamento de legitimidades", a partir do ocorrido em junho de 2013, no Brasil. Finalmente, abordaremos a violência dos grupos que utilizam as táticas conhecidas como Black Bloc, em uma discussão mais ampla sobre os precedentes jurídicos e societários abertos em períodos como esses, a saber, a criminalização da ação coletiva e de manifestantes individuais, e a militarização da vida cotidiana.

Grosso modo, buscaremos entender a interface entre a violência política e seus efeitos na criminalização das mobilizações coletivas. As "jornadas de junho de 2013", portanto, assumem o papel de situação empírica, como uma variável da expressão das criminalizações, ao passo que a legitimidade será entendida como um operador analítico para a análise.

Existe um discurso (legítimo) sobre a violência (legítima)? Considerações sobre violência, poder e legitimidade.

Malgrado à ilegalidade de ações violentas por parte de agentes estatais, salvo em situações de defesa própria ou dos bens do Estado, abordamos os deslocamentos da legitimidade da violência, com ênfase nas manifestações, assim como seus discursos. Para tanto, faremos antes um breve exame dos usos de conceitos mobilizados por setores tão distintos como partes da mídia

hegemônica, as forças municipais, estaduais e federais de repressão e os próprios militantes.

Assim, cabe analisar os conceitos tanto de violência, quanto de força, da forma que foram colocados na noção weberiana que caracteriza os Estados, cunhada no século XIX, definidos como: "a comunidade humana que dentro de um determinado território - esse "território" é traço distintivo - reivindica para si (com sucesso) o *monopólio do uso legítimo da força física*" (WEBER, 2013, p.434). Assim, a relação de dominação que se estabelece entre governantes e governados, sustentada por meios de uma violência legítima, só existe, portanto, sob a condição continuada de dominação à autoridade reivindicada pelos dominadores.

Importa precisarmos que essa noção foi tornada clássica e amplamente utilizada de forma descontextualizada, negligenciando o fato de que tratamos de um tipo ideal, ou seja, Weber já sublinhava o quão limitada era a experiência de Estados bem sucedidos em centralizar e monopolizar a violência. Podemos também observar que essas foram utilizadas de forma pouco analíticas, desde então, retiradas de seu contexto histórico, parte indissociável do *esprit de corps* da academia alemã, excessivamente influenciada por correntes de pensamento militarista.

Militarismo esse, que teve na formação do Estado nacional e as expropriações de bens privados, etapas fundamentais para consolidar esse órgão centralizador, contando com a expansão do público sobre o privado e a proibição de formação de exércitos particulares subsequente. Assim, houve a diminuição do poder de alguns setores da sociedade em relação ao poder do Estado, que o concentrou todo em suas mãos, amparado pelo direito e por leis estatutárias.

Controlar e concentrar os meios de dominação, como o exército e o uso da violência física, exemplifica a concepção de Weber (2013) do Estado moderno: uma associação política que detinha os meios legais e materiais de dominação. O pensamento weberiano indica que a tentativa de restrição da circulação de atos violentos criaria em tese as condições para inibir sua existência difusa na sociedade, excluindo-os da interação social cotidiana. Como veremos, tal noção é problemática, dado que a concentração da coerção no aparato estatal não foi eficaz em eliminar do tecido social outras aplicações da violência.

Weber foi um pensador chave na reflexão sobre a coerção na teoria social, com suas hipóteses sobre as relações de poder quase de soma zero e de um Estado em termos do monopólio da força física, que seguem influentes. O poder enquanto uma probabilidade de alguém em uma relação especial "em posição de conduzir sua própria vontade apesar da resistência, sem levar em consideração as bases sobre as quais esta probabilidade se assenta" (WEBER, 1978, p. 53-54), já indica a condução estatal das manifestações, haja vista o cálculo da resistência estar abarcado em sua definição.

Tanto o poder quanto a legitimidade foram pensados frequentemente juntos. Dessa forma, Beetham (1991), por exemplo, pensa um poder legítimo, quando esse é adquirido e operado segundo regras justificáveis, com evidências de

consentimento, em que pese as variações societárias que o tornam legítimo ou rejeitável e ilegítimo, quando adquirido em contravenção às normas ou exercido de forma a excedê-las. A capacidade de ser justificado tanto por dominantes quanto por dominados seria um indicador da legitimidade do poder. As alegações necessárias devem, portanto, advir de uma fonte de autoridade legítima – sobretudo no poder político, as regras servem para garantir que os que o detêm tenham as qualidades necessárias para exercê-lo, tal como a estrutura de poder deve ser reconhecida como de interesse geral. Contudo, sabemos que nem sempre a população enxerga nos governantes eleitos e em suas posturas políticas legitimidade, o que ocasiona com frequência manifestações de rua, que questionam a institucionalidade.

Ao ampliarmos essa discussão para a esfera estatal, Barker (2001) afirma que é apenas a alegação da legitimidade da violência que caracteriza os Estados, não implicando propriamente no monopólio legítimo, mas tão somente na afirmação desse. Recorrendo à uma explanação histórica militarista, o aumento de ações violentas, portanto, baseia-se em uma tradição de poder, de natureza coercitiva e ideológica, em que os bem-sucedidos requerem mais legitimidade e poder coercitivo do que os outros. Contudo, é preciso observar a centralidade da categoria do reconhecimento dos governados nessa relação, não bastando o Estado considerar legítima a violência que inflige, mas as pessoas necessitam consentir com a relação de dominação subsumida no próprio ato de governar.

Da ligação inexorável do Estado ao seu aparato coercitivo, na forma do exército e da polícia, é que presumimos a vinculação da violência ao poder, que não existe sem basear-se na manipulação do anterior. Contudo, para Malesevic (2006), essa relação é multilateral, dado que a coerção existiria apenas como um meio para o poder político, com a qual concordamos, ressaltando sua complexidade. Observamos a manipulação a nível retórico e prático, da violência como uma forma de dominação que extrapola fins pragmáticos, sobretudo perpetrada pela força policial, não raro recorrendo à estratégias de tortura e outras violações de direitos humanos.

Um dos emblemas do Estado moderno, portanto, é o uso de seu aparato repressor – a legalidade de atos violentos, como meio de manutenção do poder e instrumento de dominação. A força certamente não é o único meio do Estado, mas o caráter que define a política e por consequência o Estado, delimitando propriamente o que seria o político. Contudo, a despeito da vida civil não ser um interminável exercício da violência pura e simples, há uma relação estatal estreita com a violência, pois, esta encontra-se concentrada nas mãos de uma organização, que na modernidade, de forma compulsória, organiza a dominação (Weber, 2013).

Para a filosofia política, segundo Ames (2001), em uma leitura de Maquiavel, a violência fundadora do Estado seria a mesma constituidora da lei, pois ambos visam a abolir atos violentos originários existentes anteriores ou à margem de todo ordenamento estatal e legal. Maquiavel, portanto, aponta para o tensionamento do conflito, quando regido pela ambição (privada) de cargos e riquezas e não pela necessidade, a destruição do público se instala, demandando

o refundamento do político em suas origens e princípios. Assim, ao Estado caberia manter sua autoridade por meio de um retorno contínuo ao momento da origem, como o autor explicita:

[...] ao desejo desmesurado dos grandes pela apropriação/dominação absoluta, opõe-se um desejo não menos desmesurado e absoluto do povo de não sê-lo, de não ser dominado nem dominar. Ao caracterizar o desejo dos grandes como um desejo de comandar e o do povo como de viver em liberdade, Maquiavel deixa claro que aquilo que funda a relação política não se confunde nem com a regulação do desejo de poder (dos grandes), nem com a regulação do desejo de liberdade (do povo). Maquiavel não pensa a ordem política como neutralização do conflito, mas como seu parcial e transitório ordenamento (Ames, 2011, p.23)

Dessa forma, não haveria, a partir de uma perspectiva estatal, instituições nem ordenamentos ou leis que não se fundem e se estabelecem sem um grau de violência, proporcional àquela a que visam suprimir. Portanto, quaisquer desordens institucionais somente se resolveriam a partir de um reordenamento ou refundação institucional, recorrendo ao mesmo poder absoluto e à mesma violência originária que constituíram em seu princípio essas ordens e instituições.

Da inferência maquiavélica de que a violência encontra-se associada à ideia do poder político, de forma intrínseca à natureza de todo poder, subscrevemos a tese da indissociabilidade do uso autoritário da coerção. Contudo, a partir da perspectiva weberiana, em que a força e sua extensão, a guerra, são passíveis de permanecer sempre no horizonte do poder, pressupondo a possibilidade de aceitar a violência de agentes do Estado que, torna-se previsível e calculada, questionamos a racionalidade do uso da repressão estatal. Assim, à prerrogativa estatal do uso dito cirúrgico da força, questionamos sua utilização política, sobretudo em mobilizações populares.

A despeito da sujeição aos limites da lei, a atividade policial, quando em seu exercício abusivo, está, teoricamente, sujeita a processos criminais e disciplinares. Se a preservação da ordem pública é função das forças policiais, que devem assegurar o exercício dos direitos outorgados ao cidadão, há a prerrogativa do uso da força em suas atribuições cotidianas, caso devam restabelecer a paz e a tranquilidade pública. Ao poder judiciário, portanto, cabe julgar os excessos ou desvios da instituição policial.

Por fim, a ontologia do Estado, para Malatesta, inclui o político, definido em termos de relação de força, no direito de fazer as leis e de impô-las a todos pela força, e portanto, a instituição policial surge como uma necessidade de sobrevivência dos governos, em uma espécie de “violência permanente” (1975, p.193). Contudo, a práxis anarquista possui como contraponto a necessidade da remoção da violência de todas as relações humanas (Malatesta, 1921), se opondo ao Estado enquanto organização coercitiva e violenta da sociedade.

A leitura de Malatesta, Avelino (2007), reflete sobre a violência e poder, enquanto agentes não-exclusivos da repressão. Assim, a “violência permanente” não se apresenta na reflexão do teórico do século XIX como repressão contínua do governo, mas como um ciclo histórico do poder que se fecha apenas quando o perigo do abuso da força, inerente ao seu exercício, é colocado, em sua forma legal. Assim, se o poder não engendra contradições, cabe à legitimidade e à positividade de suas estratégias o validarem, logo, a permanente violência do Estado funciona como um transformador de excessos, que perpetua a violência do poder sob outras formas. Partimos, portanto, para um deslocamento dos discursos sobre a violência, para evidenciar à discussão da desproporcionalidade do uso da força.

A manipulação da violência: crítica à polícia como braço armado do Estado e a cisão entre manifestações violentas e não violentas

A concepção de vida pública desde a modernidade relega ao Estado a exclusividade das instituições e a autoridade, além da monopolização - legítima - de todas as formas de conflito encontradas na vida cotidiana (Jappe, 2013). Ademais, junto à justiça, essa ganha excessiva competência nas contendas cotidianas, dado que, se as funções e o funcionamento do Estado variaram na história, seu denominador comum é o exercício da violência.

É nesse sentido que buscamos entender a polícia, enquanto braço armado do Estado, uma delimitação coercitiva originada nos séculos XVIII e XIX, quando as tarefas de ordem pública são separadas burocraticamente da guerra externa. A ressalva se dá para dissociar a coerção enquanto categoria analítica das polícias modernas, fenômenos empíricos, para que, no presente trabalho, é entendido como o aparato repressor, ou seja, nos episódios históricos, em sua presença enquanto forças policiais. Essas, portanto, dizem respeito a um conjunto de instituições de ordenamento social em diferentes aspectos e na distribuição de papéis, configurada a partir de meios institucionalizados, entre eles os meios de comunicação, educativos, econômicos, jurídicos, que fazem circular modos de existir, dizem o que se pode ou não pode fazer (Rancière, 2010)

Para aprofundarmo-nos nessa discussão, faz-se necessário antes abordar os meandros da retórica que equipara a violência e a força, apresentadas como intercambiáveis pelo poder estabelecido. Os meios hegemônicos de comunicação não raro manipulam tais construtos, contudo Souza (2014), afirma que enquanto a violência diria respeito a agressões entre indivíduos (ou de pessoas contra outros seres vivos), a força visa fundamentalmente à transformação ou a destruição da matéria inerte, não viva, definição a qual subscrevemos.

A humanidade pressuposta na definição da violência é igualmente sublinhada por Genro Filho (2009), que busca distinguir a força da violência a partir da essência humana, própria em violentar o mundo, interferindo na legalidade das

coisas, apropriando-se do que seria desimportante. A positividade ontológica das violências, se daria na construção e organização da sociedade, não podendo ser negada e reduzida a presença da força, que é um privilégio dos sujeitos. A prerrogativa da consciência é fundamental, nesse sentido, pois implicada em atos violentos, não significa que esses prevejam todos os resultados da práxis em sua dimensão coletiva ou individual. Partimos, portanto, do que é propriamente humano nessa delimitação, para problematizar os ocorridos em manifestações.

Como em protestos em 2009, na universidade da Califórnia - UCPD, aprendemos que aos policiais cabe separar a violência física de uma quantidade de força passível de ser empregável. Ato contínuo, a relação entre a força e o dano e/ou morte infligida, entre o ato violento e a pessoa para quem essa foi direcionada é secundarizada. Na linguagem do departamento de relações públicas policial, seus porretes não machucam corpos, mas fazem contato com esses; os ferimentos e mortes causados são efeitos colaterais da manutenção de categorias etéreas como "paz e ordem" e "saúde e segurança".

Ainda assim, o excesso de violência, frequentemente legitimado como força no vocabulário policial, não seria evidente do ponto de vista do aparato repressor, dado que a força é uma prerrogativa empregada contra um sujeito estável, a-histórico, violento e projetado em situações diversas. O contraponto das manifestações não-violentas, para a polícia, implica em uma obediência às autoridades absoluta e acrítica, especialmente quando há a violação ou abuso de direitos e do seu poder de incriminar terceiros, a seu próprio interesse. O que não significa que, extra-oficialmente, dado que por razões corporativas, seria problemático fazê-lo de forma oficial, a estrutura repressiva, às vezes, não avalie seu excesso de violência.

Assim, mesmo que as forças policiais operem dentro do sistema jurídico estatal, com táticas interpretativas livres para redefinir o que consistiria um crime e expandindo seu próprio poder para incriminar dissidentes, elas estão sujeitas a falhas e arbitrariedades. A história brasileira, por exemplo, conta com episódios marcantes de violências cometidas por policiais que resultam em um ônus desproporcional, como o desaparecimento do pedreiro Amarildo Dias de Souza, na favela da Rocinha, em 2013, tomado como emblemático de um "erro de avaliação" do contexto social e político, ocasionando um desgaste tanto para a corporação policial quanto para o governo.

A relação entre a força e a violência do aparato estatal com as manifestações aponta para uma polissemia da violência, como colocado por Benjamin (2012) a partir do exemplo das greves, ações anti-estatais, da perspectiva do operariado, cujo próprio direito é entendido como um direito à violência para alcançar um determinado fim. Ademais, essas devem ser entendidas em um contexto de produção da desesperança, da sensação de que não haveria outro caminho, da parte dos governos, de forma que as mobilizações não possam propor alternativas. Esse aparato requer exércitos, prisões, polícias e segurança privada, além de propagandas que fomentem o medo, a conformidade e desespero (Graeber, 2008).

O papel da polícia na sociedade contemporânea, para Graeber (2008), tem em sua ontologia política a aplicação presumidamente científica da força física de forma a executar as leis que governam a sociedade. Ademais, apenas uma pequena parte do trabalho policial é relativo ao crime, e grande parte é representar o monopólio da violência estatal. Nesse sentido, buscamos problematizar como, na busca pela manutenção desse monopólio, os policiais manipulam a seu favor a força com a violência.

Dado que é a própria instituição policial que decide a quantidade de força - ou violência - empregada, é importante assinalar que sua instituição igualmente exemplifica o Estado moderno. Benjamin (2012) menciona que o poder para fins jurídicos convive com a autorização para instituir tais fins dentro de limites amplos. Ainda assim, as competências da polícia raro são suficientes para intervir de forma mais brutal:

"podendo, no entanto, exercer-se de forma mais cegamente sobre áreas vulneráveis e pessoas sensatas, contra as quais o Estado não estaria protegido pelas leis - reside no fato de nela não se verificar a separação entre o poder que institui e o que mantém o Direito. Ao primeiro pede-se a legitimação pela vitória, o segundo está sujeito à limitação de não poder postular novos fins para si próprio. O poder policial está isento dessas duas condições. É um poder instituinte do Direito - porque, não sendo sua função promulgar leis, pode decretar medidas com validade jurídica - e que mantém o Direito, porque se coloca à disposição daqueles fins" (Benjamin, 2012, p.69)

À polícia, caberia como direito, o ponto em que o Estado, por diversas razões, não teria como garantir, pelo meio da ordem jurídica, seus fins empíricos, que pretende atingir a qualquer preço. Em oposição ao direito que reconhece na "decisão" fixada no espaço e no tempo uma categoria metafísica à qual reclama o seu direito à crítica, a ocupação com a instituição policial não se depara com nada de essencial, ou seja, é responsável por assegurar o cumprimento das normas, mantendo oculta a violência da instituição de privilégios mantenedores de desigualdades na sociedade.

No debate sobre a violência x não violência nas mobilizações, compartilhamos o entendimento de Benjamin sobre as manifestações pacíficas, menos frequentes, pois implicam em relações singulares entre os sujeitos, excluindo o caráter arbitrário e imprevisível das aglomerações humanas. Benjamin (2012) afirma que à legitimidade, suas decisões seriam em nome de poderes acima da razão, com validade universal e passível de generalização. Contudo, a justeza dos fins, a despeito de serem reconhecidos e universalmente válidos, numa situação não o são para outras, implicando em um desconhecimento das estruturas de poder que sustenta algumas situações como legítimas.

O deslocamento de legitimidades: as "jornadas de junho de 2013"

Finalmente, no caso empírico, são importantes as nuances do caso brasileiro, como enumeradas por Porto (2000), como características da violência *deslegitimada* do Estado, em que o monopólio da violência estatal é conjugado a múltiplas formas de privatização. Assim, agentes públicos da ordem assumem funções de seguranças privados e a violência policial se autonomiza, sendo orientador de sua conduta, além da manutenção da ordem em benefício da afirmação de interesses privados e, portanto, uma reificação violenta é aproveitada por certos agentes. Logo, a violência policial, no Brasil, exemplificaria um dos usos ilegítimos da violência por agentes do Estado.

A discussão sobre força, violência e legitimidade anterior é necessária para apresentar o caso empírico em questão, no que ficou conhecido como as "jornadas de junho de 2013", após o aumento das tarifas de ônibus de R\$ 3,00 para R\$ 3,20 nas principais cidades do Brasil. A violência policial foi uma das questões mais prementes das mobilizações, e no caso paulistano, justificadas pelo governador, rotulando os manifestantes de vândalos e baderneiros. Aos manifestantes levados para as prisões, restaram acusações de crimes de formação de quadrilha.

A segunda semana de junho já contou com manifestações em diversas cidades do país, tendo a violência policial ganho uma visibilidade inesperada, com imagens à exaustão de jornalistas e manifestantes feridos por balas de borrachas, bombas de efeito moral, de gás lacrimogêneo e de pimenta e pelos golpes de cassetete. O MPL - Movimento Passe Livre foi tido como um dos incitadores das grandes marchas, que não tomavam essa proporção desde os 1970 nas lutas contra a ditadura, chegando a cerca de 1 milhão de pessoas, no dia 20 de junho de 2013.

A violência nas manifestações, para os manifestantes, se localizaria nos excessos policiais, ao passo que para a força policial, essa é dividida na resposta às manifestações de violência (i.e depredações, tentativas de incendiar edifícios públicos) e no uso da força para a manutenção da ordem nos protestos. Qual delas é legítima? A legitimidade remete às distinções weberianas entre poder e autoridade, em que o primeiro se vale predominantemente do uso da força, ainda que regulada por meio da lei, e a autoridade, contrariamente, se concentraria na relação entre cidadãos e Estados por meios não coercitivos, legítimos. A legalidade, portanto, em sua forma instrumental, necessitaria de uma sociedade dependente da constante vigilância estatal para desestimular a criminalidade, ao passo que a legitimidade política fortaleceria a normatividade .

O deslocamento da percepção sobre o que seria legítimo, portanto, é encarado a partir de perspectivas dessemelhantes, como observado em junho de 2013, das quais destacamos duas: a que encara a violência do aparato repressor e a que privilegia os manifestantes violentos, *vândalos*, para a mídia hegemônica. A própria definição da violência é contestada, de forma a transformá-la em

ilegítima, em uma linguagem da legitimidade que facilita seu uso exclusivo pelos governos. Afinal, como opera tal deslocamento? A discussão de distintas correntes anarquistas, frequentemente, remonta às violências estruturais sofridas pela população, para problematizar o conceito de violência.

O texto "*the violence of legitimacy, the illegitimacy of violence*", aponta para como a sociedade se baseia em danos ou ameaças que violam o consentimento dos sujeitos. Assim, seria mais violento resistir à polícia que despeja as pessoas de suas casas ou se colocar ao lado dos tornados sem-teto? A retórica da não violência, portanto, se dá na medida em que negue o dano imposto pelas classes dominantes na sociedade, contudo, é flagrante que existam tantos investidos nos privilégios que a violência os proporciona. A pergunta sobre se uma dada ação é violenta deve ser contraposta a se essa se coloca contra ou se reforça as disparidades de poder. Dado que mesmo a legitimidade é distribuída de forma desigual, de forma a manter disparidades, a nomeação de pessoas ou ações como violentas é uma forma de excluí-las do discurso legítimo, tendo como consequência a justificava de um discurso da força contra essas.

Entretanto, a percepção de legitimidade por parte dos sujeitos, diante de autoridades legais alocadas em instituições democráticas, a partir de uma perspectiva normativa, depende da aceitação dos resultados obtidos nos contatos com as instituições, mas, sobretudo dos meios pelos quais se chega aos resultados (Camassa, 2014). É lançada luz sobre os procedimentos utilizados por representantes das instituições, como os policiais, como exemplificado pela situação de junho de 2013, em que os abusos da corporação foram sentidos por amplos setores da população nas ruas, seguidos de um debate na esfera pública sobre a violência policial. A percepção partilhada por setores da sociedade foi que os excessos da instituição policial se deram, sobretudo, pela utilização em demasia nos protestos, com relatos de policiais disfarçados, por exemplo, incitando brigas entre os manifestantes, para dispersar a população (ROSA, 2013).

No Rio de Janeiro, onde excessos documentados por midiolivristas, foram cometidos pelas forças policiais nas manifestações ocorridas em junho e julho, mas não somente, cabe o adendo de que os policiais foram acusados de forjar flagrantes, entre outros abusos de poder. E esses membros, sobretudo da força policial militar, frequentemente, respondiam por crimes prévios às manifestações.

Ademais, nossa discussão faz referência aos manifestantes nas mobilizações de massa brasileiras, taxados de violentos e vândalos pelos grandes jornais do Brasil (Oliveira, 2013). O discurso sobre a legitimidade da violência nas manifestações de junho de 2013 foi recorrente, dado que os protestos violentos eram uma pauta frequente. Em um esforço de manipulação retórica da legitimidade, os articulistas do jornalismo de alta circulação, se esforçaram para reforçar a legitimidade de ações legais estatais, sobretudo frente à manifestantes violentos. Assim, a violência era um elemento apresentado para retirar a legitimidade das manifestações, em um diálogo em que o oposto simétrico seriam os protestos pacíficos.

Um importante ator nas manifestações é a instituição policial, que aparentemente funciona e forma padrão, evidenciando alguns tratos específicos do aparato repressor dos Estados. Sua defesa institucional é igualmente perpetrada pela mídia hegemônica, como sublinha Graeber (2013), posto que se a polícia ataca um grupo de manifestantes, afirmará ter sido provocada, e os meios de comunicação repetirão esse discurso, a despeito do quão crível sejam as narrativas. O autor prossegue, fazendo uma ressalva sobre a comunicação anti-hegemônicas e advindas das ruas, que podem desvelar arbitrariedades policiais, por mais que seja impossível filmar todos os momentos durante os protestos. Além disso, é evidente a escolha do lado do aparato repressor, pela mídia:

[...] façamos o que façamos, os meios de comunicação informarão de forma débil 'os manifestantes provocaram enfrentamentos com a polícia', ao invés de 'a polícia atacou manifestantes não violentos'. Ademais, quando alguém devolve gás lacrimogêneo, ou lança uma garrafa, ou escreve algo com spray, devemos assumir que o ato será empregado como uma justificativa retroativa, ainda que a violência policial tenha acontecido antes dessa ação. (Graeber, 2003, p.7)

Para corroborar o caráter transnacional de nossa hipótese sobre o funcionamento dos aparatos repressores estatais, Della Porta e Fillieule (2004), evidenciam a relação de poder desigual entre policiais e manifestantes. Essa, conta com uma tendência para uma relação de dominação ou de troca negociada, ainda desigual, mas margeada pela barganha política. À prerrogativa geral de que a preservação da lei e ordem em uma democracia seria mais bem assegurada em um consenso, pressupomos a concepção coercitiva como mantenedora de um problema fundamental na credibilidade desses regimes, sob o risco de dirimir a legitimidade das autoridades eleitas.

Isso posto, a legitimidade das forças policiais, cabe uma legislação específica - em particular direitos civis e políticos (direito à movimentação, direito à expressão); direitos dos acusados (prisão preventiva, presença de advogados); direitos dos presos (privacidade, contato com o mundo externo). Contudo, a capacidade de respeitar tais trâmites varia entre os contextos, assim como as sanções aplicadas e a capacidade do poder judiciário de controlar tais atividades, critérios colocados à prova nas "jornadas de junho de 2013", em que foram muitas as narrativas de excessos cometidos pelas polícias no Brasil.

Essa legitimidade, portanto, parece operar um deslocamento maior em regimes considerados autoritários, em que pesem à centralização, à falta de responsabilização e à militarização. Isso posto: "Embora um ambiente institucional em que os direitos dos cidadãos sejam protegidos pela lei certamente desencorajam uma intervenção repressiva da polícia, isso é insuficiente para assegurar o cumprimento de leis relativas aos protestos" (Della Porta, Fillieule, 2004, p.223).

No desenho da ilegitimidade dos envolvidos em manifestações, os autores, no que tange à cultura policial, apontam para alguns estereótipos relativos aos manifestantes, sobretudo aos quem antecipam dificuldades que podem enfrentar majoritariamente desenhadas a partir de sua cor de pele, tamanho do cabelo ou estilo de vestimenta. Não raro, no entanto, o imaginário da força policial sobre quem são os manifestantes se sobrepõe a outros grupos comumente incluídos na definição (construída) de desordeiros públicos, tornando mais aceitável a criminalização de determinados segmentos da sociedade, no caso brasileiro: homens, negros, jovens e pobres.

Esse grupo societário, em junho de 2013, foi, com frequência, criminalizado a partir de uma construção midiática da suposta violência perpetrada pelos Black Blocs e seu embate com as forças policiais nas grandes cidades. Em relação às táticas surgidas na Alemanha da década de 80, essas são estratégias de ação de manifestantes ligados ao movimento Autonomen, em protestos anti-nucleares e antifascistas, que encontraram formas de se defender tanto da polícia quanto de grupos neonazistas (Van Deusen, 2010), através da criação de um bloco para proteger os manifestantes das balas de borracha e do gás lacrimogêneo. A mesma foi reativada no contexto de movimentos por justiça e antiglobalização de Seattle, em 1999, e em outros países nos anos seguintes. O bloco comumente se forma na hora, e seus alvos são circunscritos a lojas e bancos, tal como a polícia, bandeiras e símbolos do nacionalismo.

Acrescentamos, entendendo que a violência policial foi um dos espólios de junho que mais chamou a atenção tanto à população que foi às ruas, quanto a segmentos da mídia, que tratamos de uma construção histórica muito anterior aos episódios de 2013. Ora por sua abundância, ora por seu ineditismo fora do habitual território periférico: favelas e periferias de cidades como Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo, foram excessivos os relatos de abusos das forças repressivas. Nesse sentido, a pauta dos excessos cometidos pelo aparato repressor estatal não foi tratada de forma isonômica, dado que sempre contraposto à violência de grupos *Black Blocs*.

Em um deslocamento de legitimidades operado, no nível retórico, pela mídia e pelo aparato repressor estatal, e problematizado pelos manifestantes, observamos as matizes do uso indiscriminado da violência. O contexto de junho de 2013, portanto, assemelha-se a 1968, em sua conjuntura particular, com acusações de ativistas como anarquistas, niilistas e “ludistas destruidores de máquinas” e à reintrodução da conflitualidade na cena política, demonstrando os limites de uma política institucional conciliatória, em que o governo, por meio de amplas coalizões, busca agradar a atores antagônicos no Brasil (Bringel, 2013).

No que tange o entendimento da violência como uma tática de confrontos em manifestações legítimas, há nuances no discurso que localiza no Estado a matriz e legitimidade de toda forma de violência. À perspectiva das funções estatais enquanto braço armado do capitalismo, para Gordon (2005) é simplista, pois contar com a violência não implicaria necessariamente em ser violento, dado que:

“a estrutura social “confia” na polícia apenas em última instância, quer dizer, face à resistência. O argumento de Malatesta, portanto, sugere que a violência de um Estado servil ao capitalismo é necessariamente reativa – o Estado só é “violento” na medida em que a desobediência traça uma resposta violenta, a acusação de protagonismo violento portanto ressoa no rebelde” (Gordon, 2005, p.209-210)

Em uma tentativa de ampliar o quadro histórico da discussão sobre a violência na teoria anarquista, é preciso situá-la, nos séculos XIX e início do XX, em dois contextos, na insurreição armada de massa ou no assassinato de chefes de Estado. Contudo, a “violência anarquista” é reduzida a protestos violentos, em que a destruição da propriedade privada é descontextualizada, mas o foco midiático não raro recai sobre os enfrentamentos com a polícia. O contraponto de Essex (2009), é de que a violência, como entendida na sociedade contemporânea, foi redistribuída, dado que a tortura, a prisão, as injeções letais, entre outras formas violentas das forças armadas seguem sendo empregada pelos países.

Não se trata de uma apologia da violência, de acordo com Gelderloos (2007), nem da glorificação da mesma, pois aos anarquistas não caberia nem a condenação, tampouco a negação absoluta de estratégias ‘não violentas’. O que significa que há um consenso pela diversidade de táticas utilizadas nas manifestações, sobretudo que impliquem numa combinação efetiva de estratégias, que se oponham a um sistema opressor e ao Estado.

Assim, os discursos sobre a legitimidade da violência nas manifestações são múltiplos e polissêmicos, mas abrigados em duas linhas gerais, estariam assim dispostas: há uma manutenção de privilégios cuja responsabilização é de atos violentos originários, como o colonialismo, o patriarcado, entre outros, portanto, não há o apoio a práticas violentas. Na contramão dessa fala, o vandalismo, segundo a grande mídia, quando na ocorrência de protestos, são encarados como reativos, pois a violência estrutural é sempre maior e mantenedora de privilégios e opressões. Doravante, discutimos os efeitos das violências empregadas de ambos os lados dos protestos em junho de 2013, nas grandes cidades brasileiras.

A abertura da caixa de pandora: o pós junho e a criminalização da ação coletiva

A caixa de Pandora, artefato da mitologia grega, do mito da criação da primeira mulher criada por Zeus, é uma jarra que continha todos os males do mundo, sendo um desenho possível para o ambiente aberto pelas manifestações de junho de 2013, no Brasil. Após sua abertura, só a esperança fica, encarada, portanto, como um mal da humanidade, por sua ideia superficial acerca do futuro. Assim, essa representação mitológica da correlação de forças que foi às

ruas é uma analogia para o amplo espectro político presente nas manifestações, composto por distintos grupos, dos mais progressistas aos mais conservadores.

Nesse sentido, o objetivo dessa seção é lançar luz à autonomização de políticas de segurança restritivas e a limitação subsequente das possibilidades de ação coletiva, discutindo como a legitimidade da violência, enquanto reconhecimento da obediência dos sujeitos, convive com os desvios legais, sobretudo da instituição policial.

Uma das deliberações dos governos é a separação das formas de mobilização em legítimas e ilegítimas, posteriores às manifestações de junho de 2013. Para Della Porta (1999), a normalização de algumas formas de protesto é coextensiva à estigmatização de outras, notadamente tidas como violentas, agindo de forma a legitimar discursivamente as primeiras, em suas formas convencionais, como petições, demonstrações, em algum grau para atos de desobediência civil, como a ocupação de prédios públicos, mas nunca em atos de violência política.

É patente que há um tensionamento da legitimidade da violência nas manifestações, sobretudo enquanto reconhecimento da legalidade da instituição policial e das impressões dos sujeitos sobre as arbitrariedades institucionais nas ruas. Contudo, a atitude da polícia frente a ações de protesto parece sugerir que tanto a opinião pública quanto o Estado agora encaram protestos pacíficos como as únicas formas legítimas de demonstrar sentimentos de frustração. Para Jappe, os critérios da legalidade dos protestos dificilmente respeitarão "os parâmetros da "legalidade" concebidos precisamente no objetivo de condená-los à ineficácia" (Jappe, 2013, p.28).

Outro legado compartilhado das "jornadas de junho de 2013", é a falsa incriminação de protestantes. Uma das ações mais recorrentes da polícia nas grandes cidades brasileiras foram os falsos flagrantes, detenções corriqueiras das forças policiais mundiais para criminalizar as manifestações. O Estado, por sua vez, executou muitas prisões nos meses seguintes, com base em acusações e provas frágeis. Ademais, houve a tentativa de enquadramento jurídico de manifestantes como terroristas. A tipificação de crime de terrorismo no Senado brasileiro, já se deu em contextos como a Itália, na década de 70 (Della Porta, 1996), em que os manifestantes identificados como terroristas tornaram-se bodes expiatórios e na tipificação de leis anti-terrorismo, englobando às ações coletivas, amplamente utilizadas para criminalizar as alas mais à esquerda dos movimentos.

Isso posto, a criminalização das ações coletivas é uma possibilidade latente, dado o papel assumido pelos veículos de comunicação de massa mais vendidos, no Rio de Janeiro, por exemplo. A estratégia de dividir os movimentos em violentos e não violentos é igualmente eficaz nesse sentido, pois, como Jappe afirma:

“[...] a repressão violenta é um dos lados de uma estratégia de duas frentes nas quais os movimentos sociais são suprimidos. Para essa repressão ser bem sucedida, os movimentos devem ser divididos em legítimos e ilegítimos, e os

primeiros a convencerem a renegar os segundos – usualmente em troca de privilégios ou concessões (Jappe, 2013, p.4).

A suposta truculência das ações dos manifestantes que fizeram uso das táticas Black Bloc, nesse sentido, foi utilizada como uma estratégia retórica para justificar a repressão empregada pela polícia nas grandes cidades. Além disso, foge ao escopo desse artigo tratar das questões jurídicas que surgiram após o período intenso das manifestações, mas cabe assinalar, brevemente, que um dos efeitos da repressão policial foi o esvaziamento dos protestos, além de flagrantes implicações restritivas no direito constitucional de livre manifestação e de reunião.

Considerações Finais

De uma reflexão sobre a indissociabilidade do poder da violência, buscamos, no presente texto, lançar luz sobre argumentos comumente utilizados para a justificativa de atos violentos. Assim, o exemplo de protestos nas ruas oferece visões antagônicas sobre o fenômeno da legitimidade. Essa, enquanto manipulação retórica, é utilizada por ambos os lados em mobilizações: por manifestantes, que afirmam que enumeram as violências estatais sofridas, juntas às arbitrariedades policiais nos protestos e pelo Estado, quando acusa os participantes dos protestos de cometerem violências e depredações, referidas como atos de vandalismo. Já enquanto questionamento das excessos ocorridos nas mobilizações, o que torna algo legítimo acaba por levantar pontos importantes sobre as desigualdades presentes na nossa sociedade.

A perspectiva das forças policiais, representando o aparato repressor dos Estados, deve levar em consideração a sua militarização no Brasil, seu histórico de abusos aos direitos humanos e os relatos de violação presentes em junho de 2013, mas não circunscritas a esse episódio. Assim, se a polícia age com violação de direitos humanos e estratégias de tortura, o faz em desacordo com a Constituição, com as convenções internacionais de direitos humanos, e não legitimamente.

Como já sinaliza Della Porta (1996), a respeito das técnicas de policiamento na Itália e na Alemanha, desde a década de 70, é a legislação sobre ações coletivas e ordem pública, direitos policiais e cidadãos que afeta o policiamento de protestos. Para a autora, a falta de confiança estatal nos protestos democráticos, combinado com a ausência de confiança dos protestantes nas instituições democráticas, frequentemente aponta para escaladas de violência.

Ao sugerir um deslocamento operado nos discursos sobre a legitimidade da violência nas manifestações de junho de 2013, no Brasil, analiticamente, esperamos, através da discussão de conceitos chave como poder, força e violência e legitimidade, contribuir para uma perspectiva crítica do entendimento da violência estatal. Conquanto seja necessário insistir em uma perspectiva que perceba as polifonias das grandes mobilizações de massa, as

implicações jurídicas de um excessivo peso dado à repressão podem ser observadas em projetos de lei restritivos de liberdades e no direito de livre reunião.

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About the author

Simone da Silva Ribeiro Gomes is a feminist activist based in Rio de Janeiro – Brasil and psychologist, graduated in UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. She has a master degree in Social Psychology (2010) at UERJ – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro and in Sociology (2011) at Université Paris 7 – France. She is currently finishing her PhD in Sociology (2016) at IESPUERJ– Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos. She can be contacted at s.ribeirogomes AT gmail.com

Sobre a autora

Simone da Silva Ribeiro Gomes é militante feminista e psicóloga, residente no Rio de Janeiro – Brasil. Fez sua graduação na UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro e completou um mestrado em Psicologia Social (2010) na UERJ – Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro e outro em Sociologia (2011) na Université Paris 7 – França. Está actualmente completando um Doutorado em Sociologia (2016) na IESP-UERJ – Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Políticos. contacto email: s.ribeirogomes AT gmail.com

Voices from the seismic crater in the trial of The Major Risk Committee: a local counternarrative of “the L’Aquila Seven”

Pamela Pietrucci

Abstract

In October 2012, six Italian scientists with expertise in earthquakes and a government official who spoke to the public in their name were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to six years in prison. They had participated in a meeting of the Major Risks Committee (MRC) a week prior to the massive earthquake that struck L’Aquila in April 2009. The court held that they were negligent not only for conducting a grossly inadequate risk assessment, but also for uncritical complicity in the media operation that surrounded that meeting, wherein the government official misled the public with the reassuring and inaccurate claim that the swarm of minor earthquakes that had been plaguing the area was a favorable sign since seismic energy was being dissipated. An appeals court reversed the conviction of the scientists, upholding only the conviction of the government official. This essay provides a counternarrative of this controversial case that foregrounds the stories of the relatives of the victims involved in the trial, whose voices have often been silenced, distorted, or ignored both nationally and internationally. Giving space to the voices from the seismic crater is an opportunity to improve the public understanding of the controversial case of the L’Aquila Seven, while also producing a fairer representation of the local experience of the public communication of risk in L’Aquila before the 2009 earthquake.

Keywords: Local counternarrative, L’Aquila earthquake, L’Aquila Seven, public understanding of science, rhetoric of science, risk communication

Intro: Giustino Parisse – Earthquake survivor, journalist

Open letter, published in 2012 in the local newspaper “Il Centro”¹

I heard the news about the Major Risks Committee verdict just after 5pm, from the website of our newspaper. I was in our editorial headquarters. Alone. I decided, a few hours earlier to avoid attending the final concluding moments of the trial. I had the same kind of rejection that I felt when I refused to see my deceased children. For me, everything ended at 3:32am on April 6. What happened and what is happening to me does not have precise

¹ All the translations from Italian to English in this essay are mine. Whenever possible, I provide a link or a reference to the original Italian text. For the original article, see: <http://ilcentro.gelocal.it/pescara/cronaca/2012/10/23/news/gioire-no-ho-pianto-pensando-ai-miei-figli-1.5909311> Accessed on April 2016.

borders, and I have trouble making sense of it. I cried yesterday. Not tears of satisfaction. It was the same pain exploding in my stomach, preventing me from breathing. I saw again every moment of that night, when our house killed my kids. That scream “Dad, dad!” came back in my mind, invaded my flesh. And nevertheless, even after such a harsh verdict, I can’t represent those men, that now risk a jail term, as the killers of my children. In the last few months, even during the trial, I shook hands with some of them, and I didn’t find those hands dirty with blood. I saw fragile men perhaps aware of having made a mistake and for that mistake becoming involved in the vortex of a tragedy that ended up sweeping them away as well. No, I don’t feel like screaming my rage against them. That rage, I direct against myself. I am the reason for the death of Maria Paola and Domenico, and I will never forgive myself for that. Yes, I am also responsible for having trusted the Major Risk Committee (abbreviated MRC from now on), for having trusted the official science, a science that during that meeting stopped behaving as such. This is a first-degree verdict. It’s easy to realize that in the next stages of the trial everything can potentially change, melting away like snow in the sun. I will not be sorry for that. In the face of a verdict that will probably soon be archived, I don’t feel anything: no satisfaction, no bitterness, nor desire for revenge. When you have such a pain inside, all the other feelings do not matter anymore. This trial has been a defeat for everyone. It’s the State condemning itself. It is a State that on March 31 renounced its role of protecting its citizens, to adapt to the will of the politicians who needed to silence the disturbers. It’s for this reason that in L’Aquila we didn’t have a trial of science. Rather, we’ve had a trial of some experts that in front of the will of powerful politicians decided to “turn off” their brains and obey to the necessities of politics. It’s not necessary to condemn them today. I’m not doing it, and I hope that their internal torment – that is fundamentally different from that of us who lost everything – can be understood and respected. Verdicts have to be accepted, and I would have accepted it even in case of absolution. To me, even after this very heavy verdict, nothing changes. Now, I will witness endless debates about science having been condemned for not having predicted the earthquake. I am one of those that asked to start the investigations. I did it because I wanted to have a better account of the meeting of the MRC. Now, in 2012, it’s enough to read the Civil Protection Agency’s press releases to note even an excess of zeal, like the one from a few days ago, when they predicted the flooding in Rome. It’s better. When we have to deal with natural phenomena, especially those that are unpredictable, it’s better to alarm than to reassure. If that had happened in L’Aquila, perhaps I would have spent a few nights in the cold, but my children would still be alive. I’ve seen that in the verdict they speak about compensations. Since the very beginning I said that I don’t want any Euro for the death of my kids. There would be only one way to be compensated for what has happened to me: it would be the possibility to hug my kids again. It happened a week ago, but it was a dream. Then I woke up (Pariße 2012).

The Major Risks Committee trial in L'Aquila

In this trial everybody lost. We are at a loss, because we lost our homes and loved ones. The State is at a loss, because this episode showed that the State is not capable of acting to protect its citizens... we're all at a loss. *Giustino Parisse*. (Personal communication, August 2013)

In October 2012, six Italian scientists with expertise in earthquakes, along with a government official who spoke to the public in their name, were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to six years in prison.² Their crime involved their actions and failures to act in and around an organized meeting of the Italian MRC in L'Aquila a week prior to the massive earthquake that struck the town in April 2009.

A press release issued the day before the meeting stated that its purpose was to assess the swarm of small earthquakes that had been hitting the area and advise the public about their findings. They were supposed to “provide the citizens of Abruzzo all the information available to the scientific community on the seismic activity of the last few weeks” (Italy vs Major Risks Committee 2012, PM Memo 2010). In Judge Marco Billi's decision on the manslaughter charges, he held that the scientists at that meeting were negligent not only for conducting a grossly inadequate risk assessment, but also for uncritical complicity in the media operation that surrounded the meeting. This included the disastrously reassuring and inaccurate public statement from the Vice President of the Civil Protection Agency at the time, Bernardo De Bernardinis, that the scientific community had confirmed to him that the swarm of minor earthquakes that had been plaguing the area was a “favorable” sign since seismic energy was being dissipated in smaller events rather than in a single big event.³ That reassuring diagnosis that there was “no danger” of the big one hitting, and his recommendation that people just stay at home and drink a glass of good Montepulciano wine, helped to persuade many Aquilani that their traditional cultural practice of spending the night outside of their houses after serious shocks as a preventive measure was not only unnecessary, but also

² Among the six condemned scientists are: Enzo Boschi, former President of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV) in Rome; Giulio Selvaggi, former Director of the INGV's National Earthquake Centre in Rome; Claudio Eva, a Professor of Earth Physics at the University of Genoa; Franco Barberi, a volcanologist at the University of Rome “Roma Tre” and former President of the CPA and vice-President of the MRC at the time of the facts; Mauro Dolce, Head of the seismic-risk office of the CPA in Rome; and Gian Michele Calvi, Director of the European Centre for Training and Research in Earthquake Engineering in Pavia. The government official is Bernardo De Bernardinis, Vice President of the Civil Protection Agency.

³ Bernardo De Bernardinis' guilt sentence for spreading misleading information was upheld by the appeals court in the MRC Trial Bis.

superstitious.⁴ Many who were swayed by the ethos of science invoked by De Bernardinis decided to stay indoors after two moderate shocks hit the town on the night of April 5, and so they were killed or badly injured in collapsing buildings when the destructive quake struck in the early morning hours of April 6, 2009.

On October 22, 2012, Bernardo De Bernardinis and the six scientists who participated to that MRC meeting in L'Aquila were found guilty of multiple-manslaughter and injuries and all sentenced to six years in jail by the court in L'Aquila. The scientists and experts found the verdict shocking, not only because the judge found the seven defendants guilty of manslaughter and thus considered responsible for the deaths of some of the quake victims, but also because he decided to increase the length of the sentence by one third: from the four years requested by the prosecutors, to a total of six years.

The jail sentence immediately generated outrage and instantly mobilized the international scientific community to protest the implications of the verdict (Sturloni 2012). Commentators labeled this trial as a “witch hunt,” casting the citizens’ committee that pushed for the investigation and the prosecutors in L'Aquila as superstitious, pre-scientific, and ignorant as opposed to the enlightened scientific community that immediately stood by their colleagues on trial. Those commentators quickly interpreted the verdict as an attack on science, and framed the coverage of the trial proceedings as the unfair prosecution of a group of excellent scientists that were being penalized for not accurately “predicting” the earthquake and for failing to alert the local population.⁵

The narrative comparing the trial in L'Aquila to a “medieval trial,” an “attack on science,” and a “witch hunt” was widely present in both Italian and international mainstream media in the immediate aftermath of the verdict (Alexander 2014, Nosego 2012, Yeo 2014). The main misunderstanding revolved around the representation of the prosecutors’ accusations as a charge of missed alarm. An oversimplification of the motivations of the verdict, in effect, contributed to generating and consolidating the inaccurate narrative of the scientists being sentenced for not having predicted the earthquake, a task that is known to be scientifically impossible, as the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) also accurately highlighted in their protest letter to Giorgio Napolitano, the President of the Italian Republic at the time:

⁴ For a thorough analysis of this local folkloric-cultural practice traditionally enacted by the residents of Abruzzo and central Italy as a cautionary behavior in cases of perceived heightened seismic risk, see Ciccozzi (2013) and Pietrucci (2014).

⁵ In Italy, Corrado Clini, a former Minister of the Environment, went as far as comparing the MRC trial to the one that Galileo Galilei had to stand centuries ago. Internationally, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), wrote a letter of protest to Giorgio Napolitano, the President of the Republic of Italy, to “express concern over the recent indictments of six scientists and a government official by a prosecutor in L'Aquila,” judging the charges against the scientists both “unfair and naïve.” See: <http://www.aaas.org/news/aaas-protests-charges-against-scientists-who-failed-predict-earthquake> Accessed in April 2016.

Years of research, much of it conducted by distinguished seismologists in your own country, have demonstrated that there is no accepted scientific method for earthquake prediction that can be reliably used to warn citizens of an impending disaster. To expect more of science at this time is unreasonable. It is manifestly unfair for scientists to be criminally charged for failing to act on information that the international scientific community would consider inadequate as a basis for issuing a warning. Moreover, we worry that subjecting scientists to criminal charges for adhering to accepted scientific practices may have a chilling effect on researchers, thereby impeding the free exchange of ideas necessary for progress in science and discouraging them from participating in matters of great public importance.⁶

The “witch hunt” narrative also ridiculed the trial, demeaning the seriousness of its context and aims, and portraying it as an attempt to scapegoat the scientists for the effects of a natural catastrophe that obviously they could not have predicted. Most importantly, this portrayal of the trial as a fundamentally flawed institutional process and an embarrassing episode for the Italian judicial system in front of an appalled international scientific community, silenced the voices of the relatives of the victims that requested the investigation in the hope of clarifying the messages of the MRC on March 31, 2009, which deeply influenced their behaviors in the days immediately preceding the earthquake.

The aim of this essay is to suggest an alternative reading to the Italian national and international mainstream media coverage of the events that took place in L’Aquila by presenting the divergent narratives about the MRC meeting produced by the main parties involved in the trial. Such a reading pays close attention to the local discourse around the trial, and foregrounds the perspective of the citizens’ committee constituted by the families of the victims of the earthquake that demanded an investigation about the MRC meeting that eventually led to the controversial MRC trial in Italy.

This essay makes space for a local counternarrative of the MRC trial that has been either neglected or distorted by mainstream media during the trial proceedings. The constant misrepresentation of the stories of the local citizens involved in this high profile case has generated local unrest and continued grassroots engagement by the committee of the families of the earthquake victims that mobilized in protests, vigils, and sit-ins to support a fair representation of the issues at stake in the MRC trial, and overall justice and truth for the victims of the seismic event. I am writing this essay to make space to the stories and testimonies of those whose lives were forever changed by the L’Aquila earthquake. This essay, thus, voices the perspectives of the residents of the “seismic crater” involved in the trial, highlighting their experiences of the tragedy and putting those testimonies in dialogue with those of the scientists

⁶ For the entire AAAS letter see: <http://www.aaas.org/news/aaas-protests-charges-against-scientists-who-failed-predict-earthquake> Accessed in April 2016.

involved in this case, that have already received much attention nationally and internationally.⁷

In this essay, I tell the story of the MRC trial vis-à-vis the personal narratives of the relatives of the victims that emerged around the trial and that were often silenced at the national level, because of the hegemonic mainstream media coverage that amplified and supported the perspective of the MRC scientists, and at the international level, because of the language barrier. The narratives from the seismic crater that I am including here have never been fully translated in English, and as of today only small fragments of these testimonies have been included in the international coverage and scholarship about the case of The L'Aquila Seven, which has generated an ongoing international conversation among diverse publics of scholars, scientists, journalists, and activists interested in issues related to the public understanding of science and the institutional communication of risk.

Providing an English translation of these narratives is a valuable contribution to the conversations about the MRC trial. Making these narratives accessible to the international community will generate a better understanding of the first MRC verdict, and it will facilitate a more thorough assessment of controversial dimensions related to the first MRC Trial.

All oral histories, testimonies, and reflections that I am reproducing in this essay come from different sources (trial documents, including: the verdict, the prosecutor memo, the trial anthropologic consultation; stories shared with me via personal communication; narratives collected from local media publications) and they are a faithful reproduction of the original testimonies, in translation (I translated them personally, from the Italian to English). It is particularly important to make the voices from the seismic crater accessible to international audiences that have only heard the mainstream narrative of the MRC trial, often represented from the vantage point of the official science.

For this counternarrative, I selected some of the most poignant histories and testimonies that I retrieved between 2010 and 2013, and I arranged them in this essay as a sequence of fragments that tell the stories of the relatives of the victims in first person. My analytic interludes in between those fragments are my own commentary and contextualization of those narratives that is mostly intended to facilitate a coherent understanding of the story of the MRC trial for the readers that may be unfamiliar with the case.

⁷ “Seismic crater” is an expression that denotes the area affected by a seismic event, and in particular it identifies and restricts the area in which the seismic event generated damages to things and people. In the public discourse about L'Aquila quake the expression “cratere sismico” is often used to indicate the urban area of L'Aquila in which both people and buildings suffered the most damages. The expression “seismic crater” or simply “crater” is also often used by the residents of L'Aquila, with a more specific connotation to identify the community of people affected by the quake and still residing in the area.

The Major Risks trial and the public communication of science

Two years after the first ruling, a panel of three judges of the Italian Appeals Court acquitted the six scientists in November 2014, upholding the verdict for the public official only, with a reduced sentence of two years for negligence and imprudence in his public communication related to the aforementioned MRC meeting. In November 2015, the Italian Cassazione Court ultimately confirmed and made the appeal verdict final, saying the last word about the case of the MRC scientists in the Italian justice system.

The MRC trials generated a series of controversies in the public and technical spheres, extending the assessment of the case beyond the realm of the Italian judicial system. The first trial in particular, that is the object of this essay, because of its unprecedented conviction of the six scientists for manslaughter, spurred a heated international debate about the roles, duties, and responsibilities of scientific advisors in the public communication of risk.

The MRC communication debacle brought up a lot of questions about the problematic information that De Bernardinis communicated to the Aquilani, and cast serious doubts about the seriousness of the risk assessment conducted during the MRC meeting. The first MRC trial followed a public investigation and aimed to find out exactly what went wrong and who was at fault for the disastrous public messages circulated in L'Aquila in March 2009. The fact that De Bernardinis spoke on behalf of the scientists providing flawed information to the local residents reveals the intrinsic complications of a compartmentalized approach to the public communication of risk by exemplifying its potentially disastrous public impact.

In this case, De Bernardinis stated that he communicated what he thought had been discussed by the scientists during the MRC meeting. However, the scientists argued that what they said must have been misunderstood by the CPA official, as evidenced by the minutes of the meeting that are proof of what the scientists actually said in L'Aquila on the afternoon of March 31, 2009. The scientists also specified that since they did not consider public communication to be their job they did not get involved and did not double check what De Bernardinis ended up saying to the public in their name. In fact, they unanimously stated that *a posteriori* they found De Bernardinis' public communication very problematic. These events clearly illustrate the complications that can arise from operating under the assumption that there should be a strict distinction between the tasks of risk assessment and risk communication.

Reflecting about the MRC trials and the events of L'Aquila makes us painfully aware of the gap between science and citizens. Studying this case from a rhetorician's perspective shows that a productive way of processing this case after the end of the legal routine is to focus on highlighting the necessity to make steps towards bridging the gap between the scientists and the citizens. The scientists, as this case suggests, could benefit from learning to think about themselves as connected to the local community, and not artificially separated from it by their professional role. This change of perspective can make the

scientists more accountable for the ways in which their assessments get turned into management, policies, or recommendations for action in specific settings, even when they are not the ones in charge of communicating to the public.

Had the Italian scientists recognized their responsibility as citizens (and not necessarily as MRC experts) to communicate with their fellow citizens in L'Aquila and to explain clearly the outcome of their assessment to De Bernardinis, rather than imagining themselves as divorced from public communication and decision-making activities, they would have corrected errors in how their work was being portrayed by De Bernardinis, and they would have publicly reinforced the point that there was no new information that could offer reassurances of safety to those trying to decide whether to continue their traditional practices of sleeping outside or go back into their homes (Pietrucci 2014).

The perspective emerging from the testimonies of the relatives of the victims, in effect, shows that many local residents are convinced that the MRC experts fundamentally failed them. The scientists could have done more as public servants, and especially as citizens: they could have at least prevented their ethos from being misused to offer disastrous reassurances to the residents of L'Aquila and fellow Italian citizens. The testimonies that follow showcase this perspective, specifically.

Maurizio Cora – Earthquake survivor, lawyer

His wife and his two daughters died on April 6, 2009

On March 30, 2009, my wife, my daughter Alessandra -- who had a high fever that day -- and I, scared by an earthquake shock promptly left our house in Via XX Settembre 79, and we went to the Park of the Castle, where we stayed for a bit before going back home in the evening. In the Park, besides us, there were several other families, for the same reasons: the fear of the earthquake.

After a few days, I came to know about the meeting in L'Aquila, of an important Committee, that came to town to analyze the situation and, I believe, to evaluate possible responses to the ongoing seismic swarm. I came to know that the meeting lasted less than one hour, and it was concluded with a reassuring prognosis communicated to the Aquilani. I remember that, in those days, the local media reported that reassuring outcome, and I realized that me and my family had to get used to the shocks, and not be afraid, precisely because the seismic phenomena that we were experiencing were defined by the MRC as a simple and not dangerous seismic swarm.

I remember that to this definition they added a description, telling us that similar shocks of the same intensity or of lower intensity to the ones that had already happened were to be expected, however, those kind of shocks were not considered dangerous in any way, not for the people, nor for the buildings.

These reassuring messages coming from the official authorities, also reinforced by specific behaviors and decisions (such as the brief meeting, the kind of messages communicated, the calming attitude of the politicians and local authorities, the lack of organization of an emergency tent to potentially host the people in case of danger, and the lack of communication of specific advice to follow in cases of emergency) were all over the mass media during those days.

On the evening of April 5, 2009, after the shock happened around 11pm, that we assessed as similar, if not lower magnitude of the one happened on March 30, we got a little scared, and started talking about what to do. In particular, we evaluated rationally as serious and reliable (because they were coming from the experts that came in L'Aquila a few days earlier) the numerous reassurances that we had heard on the news. Thus, we decided to change our habit of going outside, convincing each other that we were not in danger, and ultimately deciding to stay indoors and spend the night inside. We made that decision because we were convinced -- and I want to highlight that we were convinced by the reckless messages communicated by the civil authorities -- that the shock we experienced was just another one similar to those that happened in the previous days, and thus not dangerous, as similar shocks had not generated any damage to my house or to any house in town before.

I want to reiterate once again that if those reassurances had not been issued, my family and I would have spent the night outside, as we and the other Aquilani have always done, and as our behavior after the shock of March 30 illustrates (PM Memo, 2010, p.111).

(Maurizio Cora, different testimony).

I remember my wife, saying: 'the MRC is so good, the experts expressed such a precise and timely diagnosis,' so yes, the outcome of the MRC meeting deeply influenced our behaviors. Before, we always instinctively went outside until April 6...That night, unfortunately, we started reasoning, and we reasoned in a way in which we would have never reasoned if it wasn't for the MRC meeting that we had been waiting for, after months of shocks. [...] Our behavior changed because we trusted those people that for us represented the official science in Italy. They used positive expressions and talked about a normal seismic swarm, and so our family felt reassured...so much that we encouraged my daughter Antonella, who was in Naples studying, to come back for the Easter break, because there was no danger, as we had been told by the MRC...and unfortunately Antonella came back and she died...she died in a very dramatic way. [...] My wife and my daughters were calm and reassured, my wife was a very rational person, and she trusted the MRC, like I did, too. I also always appreciated the CPA and the institutions in each expression and form, but unfortunately we were wrong, we were wrong this time, and we made a fatal mistake (Ciccozzi 2013, 67-69).

The local counternarrative: voices from the seismic crater

This story does not hide any attack to science. On the contrary, this is the demonstration of the high regard the civil society has for the opinion of experts.
A lesson from L'Aquila (Sturloni 2013)

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, during the days of the victims count, and the search for the last survivors to dig out of the rubble, a feeling of betrayal and disappointment started emerging among the survivors of the earthquake in L'Aquila. Antonello Ciccozzi, an anthropologist from the University of L'Aquila, in his expert consultation for the trial, draws attention to one among the many amateur videos from the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, recorded during the night of April 6, 2009. In this short recording, three young men, most likely students, are escaping their house in downtown L'Aquila nearby Piazza Duomo, which was slowly getting crowded with quake survivors after the 3:32am earthquake. As we can assume from the damage visible in the house on the verge of collapsing, the building's doors must have been stuck, thus the three students escaped from a window, by climbing down using bed sheets as a rope. In this video, one of the three terrified young men screams while running away from his house: "gotta tell it to the seismologists...those fools! There's nothing to worry about, uh?!" (Ciccozzi 2013, 175).

Ciccozzi notes that this spontaneous imprecation, coming from a man who had just escaped death, illustrates in a nutshell the significance of the claims made by the prosecution in the first trial. In this video, the first words from a quake survivor immediately after having escaped death are precisely a scream against the reassuring messages that they attributed to the "seismologists," or the experts of the MRC. This video shows a genuine expression of disappointment and sense of betrayal related to the information that the citizens had been exposed to after the MRC meeting. According to Ciccozzi, it also shows that the "amplification of the exposure to risk produced from the experts was not a collectively and spontaneously manufactured interpretation in the process of scapegoating the scientists during the trial," (Ciccozzi 2013, 175) rather, it was the actual effect of the persuasiveness of the reassuring messages that the people in L'Aquila received after the MRC meeting, as the spontaneous episode captured in the video illustrated.

Ciccozzi also reports that immediately after the earthquake tragedy the sense of betrayal and disappointment expressed by the young man in the video had become a shared feeling among the residents of L'Aquila. In their conversations, however, this sense of disappointment and betrayal about what they had been told by the scientists before the earthquake started to be translated into the idea of a "missed alarm." They started using the expression "missed alarm" to define the mistake that they were attributing to the MRC and the CPA.

Four months after the earthquake, with the beginning of the investigations concerning the responsibilities of the experts, the idea of a "missed alarm" consolidated as the explanation for what had gone wrong in L'Aquila before the

earthquake. This way of defining the responsibilities of the experts that circulated initially among the local residents, emerged as a conceptual shortcut to identify something that they felt had been managed in the wrong way, and then from the local common sense quickly migrated in the national media coverage of the post-earthquake situation.

The narrative of the “missed alarm” became dominant during the course of the trial on the mainstream media coverage of the event, unfortunately reinforcing a larger public misunderstanding of the stakes of the MRC trial. However, during the proceedings of the trial, the public and the relatives of the victims started realizing that the MRC’s responsibilities were of a different nature, and did not consist in having failed to alarm the people, but rather they regarded having provided, or letting stand without correction, misleading information.

Vittorini Vincenzo – Earthquake survivor, surgeon

His wife and his daughter died on April 6, 2009



Image by Roberto Grillo (Photographer from L'Aquila). Reproduced with permission.

I remember that in the days before April 5, 2009, specifically after the shock of March 30, our concerns about the endless series of quake shock were becoming more serious. After the magnitude 4 shock in the afternoon of March 30, my son Federico called me, scared, and told me: “Dad, this shock was so strong, from our window I saw the building in front trembling and the roof jumping!” My wife was also scared and she confirmed what Federico had just told me. Because she seemed very worried and scared, I told her to get Federico and to go outdoors. I was firm and suggested that she should advice our neighbors to do so, as well. They went out, to my in-laws, in the Belvedere neighborhood. That evening we decided to leave our cars parked outside, in the public street, and not in the parking lots of our condo, because we thought—if something happens, at least our cars are already outside. We did the same the day after. On the evening of March 30, I heard on the local TV channels that an urgent meeting was called for the following day, March 31. Claudia and I commented on the reasons for calling such a meeting, and we reflected on the hypothesis that perhaps there was a serious situation of immediate risk in town. As many other Aquilani, we were waiting to hear what the experts that participated to that meeting had to say. At the end of that meeting, on the night of March 31, 2009, the local and national TV stations reported on the meeting and showed the interviews released from the technicians and the politicians that had participated to the meeting. I noted a very reassuring tone: we were told that the situation was favorable because there was a constant release of energy and therefore it was absolutely not a situation that could lead to stronger shocks, let alone a devastating quake. Specifically, they said that we could expect shocks similar in intensity to those that had already happened, but not stronger. I remember, in particular, to have listened to the statements of Barberi, De Bernardinis, and Daniela Stati, from the CPA. We were all reassured by the news, me, my family, people that I was meeting daily and that commented on the earthquake situation. We often concluded saying, as a mantra, that at the end of the day, the more energy released, the better, and that a stronger shock than the one we had experienced was out of the question.

Now, that evening of April 5, 2009, my wife Claudia, my daughter Fabrizia, and I were all home. Around 11pm, after the first quake shock, I found Claudia and Fabrizia sitting on the couch, very scared. Claudia looked at me and asked: ‘What do we do? Do we go out?’ I responded: ‘Claudia, but was this stronger than the shock of March 30?’ She said: ‘But I’m still afraid...what do we do...should we go out?’ And again, I told her: ‘But Claudia, at this point the release of energy has happened! It’s like the experts said, there won’t be stronger shocks, so we can stay clam!’

Even my daughter Fabrizia, perceiving our worry, asked me: ‘Dad, is this going to collapse?’ because at school they did some earthquake prevention exercises. I reassured her with a smile telling her, that for sure, nothing was going to collapse.

Then I looked out of our windows to see if our neighbors were outside, but I did not see anyone, just several lights on in the houses nearby. All of a

sudden, I thought about when I was a kid. My father had taught us, in case of earthquake, to respond by running underneath the leading pillar of our house, and then he would ask us to check if the neighbors were outside, and in that case we would go out in the streets, too. We spent the night in our car, with foggy windows, while he stayed outside talking to the neighbors, smoking until dawn. While I was pondering about these memories, our friends called us. Laura and Ottavio asked us what we were going to do. They were afraid, too, but we reasoned together about those considerations reported on the news, that the experts said that the shocks were releasing energy, and that we were not going to have stronger shocks...So we decided to remain indoors, in our houses, and that we would be in touch in case of other shocks.

After all, the fact that the shock around 11pm was of lower intensity than that of March 30, made us consider the MRC's predictions reliable...we were convinced that no stronger shocks were going to happen. At that time, my brother from Bologna called me and told me that he had seen on TV about a strong shock, and suggested that I go outside with my family. I explained him what I had heard on TV those days, and I repeated to him all of our reasoning about earthquakes. I did not listen to his advice and I decided to remain home. We decided to sleep on the couch fully dressed, leaving our computer on, to monitor the INGV webpage, and the TV on channel TVUNO, where we heard that the schools were going to be closed on the day after. I didn't even think about taking Claudia's car out of the garage. Before 1am, Claudia and I were woken up by another shock. Fabrizia was still sleeping. Claudia, once again, asked me if we should go outside, and again I looked outside to see if there were people on the streets and I saw no one. Fewer lights were on than after the first shock, and thus I managed to convince Claudia to stay inside: 'Come on Claudia, there's no one outside... Fabrizia is sleeping, let's not wake her up! I guess it should be over for tonight! Let's see what Laura and Ottavio say.' We texted our friends, and they had decided to stay home, and to be in touch. My brother called me again from Bologna, because my other brother Stefano called him. I reassured him again, and we all went to sleep in our bed, around 2am. Then at 3:32am there was the big earthquake, and my house collapsed (PM Memo, 2010, 130-4).

A rhetoric of disastrous reassurance: "Reassurance-ism"

One year after the earthquake, the public attorney Fabio Picuti deposited the first prosecution's memo to the court, thus making official the charges against the experts. The prosecution's official charges against the experts did *not* regard a missed alarm. Rather, they had to do with having reassured the people, and with having provided reassurances that turned out to be disastrous for the many Aquilani who had trusted what the institutions communicated to them on March 31, 2009. According to Ciccozzi and the prosecution, the cultural perception of risk can increase or diminish the local vulnerability of a place. Ciccozzi explains that:

When defining the human responsibilities of a physical disaster, an unmotivated reassurance has the same weight of a building that is not built respecting the current anti-seismic security norms, because it augments the exposure to danger, and it amplifies the disastrous effects of a catastrophic event. In L’Aquila, people died for the unfortunate combination of 3 causes: (1) because an earthquake of magnitude 6.3 struck the town with surgical precision; (2) because some houses were not resistant enough to bear the shocks of the earthquake; (3) because many people believed to the unsubstantiated reassurances deriving from the information communicated after the MRC meeting about the alleged innocuous nature of the seismic swarm, reassurances that, it has to be highlighted, diminished the local perception of risk and increased the vulnerability of the place. Because it ended up increasing the vulnerability of the place, I define the reassuring diagnosis of the MRC a “disastrous reassurance,” namely a destructive agent (Ciccozzi 2013, 139)

Ciccozzi also explains what he and the prosecution meant with the term “disastrous reassurance,” specifying that a disastrous reassurance is also fundamentally different from a “missed alarm,” the formula that both the Aquilani and the media had been using to indicate the responsibilities of the MRC while its members were under investigation before the trial, and that also ended up generating the misunderstanding of representing the scientists as having been sentenced for not having been able to “predict the earthquake”:

A missed alarm is a crossroads without traffic lights (absence of information in presence of risk), a disastrous reassurance is a green traffic light that should instead be red (wrong information in presence of risk); conversely, a substantiated reassurance is like a traffic light that is green in the appropriate moment (accurate information when there is no risk); while an unnecessary alarm is a red light when there is no crossroads (wrong information in absence of risk). Similarly, a missed alarm is the absence of a sign that indicates “non-potable water” on a poisonous fountain; a disastrous reassurance is like a sign that says “potable water” on a poisonous fountain; a founded reassurance says “potable water” on a good fountain; and a false alarm says “non-potable water” on a good fountain. To sum up: *we have a disastrous reassurance when to a dangerous situation we associate a reassuring message* [Emphasis in original] (Ciccozzi 2013, 142).

According to Ciccozzi and the prosecution, talking about a missed alarm, as it had happened at the local, national, and international media levels, was inaccurate and it generated the misunderstanding of what had happened in L’Aquila between the end of March and the beginning of April 2009.

Following the prosecution’s reasoning, we can infer that a missed alarm happens when a disastrous event is not predicted or predictable. Thus a missed alarm is fundamentally different from predicting that a disastrous event will not happen, as it had been suggested by the reassuring messages issued by De Bernardinis and the local authorities after the MRC meeting. If a missed alarm

is often associated with the lack of capability or will to provide the relevant information, a disastrous reassurance instead can be associated with a mistake, or a deception.

Ciccozzi also notes that while we have a term that expresses the presence of an unnecessary alarm (such as that generated by Giuliani in Sulmona) – “alarmism” -- we do not have the complimentary term to indicate an unfounded reassurance. Ciccozzi believes that it is because of this lack of a defining term in the Italian vocabulary that the Aquilani had initially described the responsibilities of the MRC in term of missed alarm. Having no word in Italian to denote an “unmotivated signal of normality” as opposed to the “unmotivated signal of alarm” that is expressed by the term alarmism, the Aquilani used the approximation of the missed alarm, which was the closest concept to refer to the disastrous consequences of the pre-earthquake institutional communication.

A missed alarm indicates that something went wrong. If we think about words like “reassurance” or “calming,” instead, we realize that they do not have a connotation of “groundlessness.” The connotation of lack of motivation in the composite term “alarm-ism,” is given by the suffix “ism” added to the neutral word alarm. Ciccozzi, therefore, suggested the neologism “rassicurazionismo”-- that could be translated in the English to “reassurance-ism”-- to better define the disastrous reassurance that he and the prosecution claimed that had been communicated to the Aquilani after the MRC meeting:

“Reassurance-ism” is the only term that can fully describe the unprecedented communicative performance of the CPA and the INGV, which had its persuasive peak with the MRC meeting. Throughout that ceremonial ostentation of authority, they issued a disastrous reassurance according to which the seismic swarm was slowly, but innocuously, exhausting itself through a gradual and positive release of seismic energy (Ciccozzi 2013, 141).

In brief, according to Ciccozzi, a disastrous reassurance happens when a reassuring connotation is associated to a potentially dangerous situation. Therefore, according to the prosecution, it is necessary to distinguish a missed alarm, which consists in not providing information, from a disastrous reassurance, that in this case consisted in providing inaccurate and misleading information.

According to Ciccozzi, this distinction is necessary in order to understand the responsibilities of the MRC: “it was a disastrous reassurance because the MRC informed the residents of L’Aquila in a way that was superficial, (for what regards the risk analysis carried out), flawed (scientifically), misleading (for what regards the possibility of danger), and deadly (for what regards its consequences), saying that a catastrophe would not happen in those circumstances. In addition, explains Ciccozzi, not saying ‘be careful’ is the opposite of saying ‘be calm,’ which not only implies not saying ‘be careful’ (i.e. not prescribing cautionary behaviors) but it also amplifies it (prescribing imprudent behaviors)”(Ciccozzi 2013, 142).

In brief, according to the prosecution, the responsibilities of the MRC have to be identified not only in the lack of production of a meaningful message to communicate to the residents of L'Aquila, but also in their failure to correct misinformation that influenced the Aquilani to change their traditional behaviors in cases of perceived seismic danger. By reassuring people and defining the situation "normal," and even "favorable," the discourse of the CPA convinced many to ignore their consolidated cautionary habits in times of seismic risk, and unfortunately it persuaded many to stay inside in their houses on the night of April 6.

The earthquake has surely been a necessary condition of death for many Aquilani, but it was not a sufficient one: many people died because during the night between April 5 and 6 they decided to remain indoors, contrary to their local cautionary habits of going outside. Even after the two medium intensity shocks that preceded the deadly earthquake at 3:32am, and that usually would have triggered the reaction of spending the night outdoors or in their cars, many Aquilani stayed indoors because they trusted the reassuring diagnosis that had been communicated to them by the CPA and the local authorities on March 31.

The narratives that I have included thus far tell the same story of disastrous reassurance in several different ways and through several personal and dramatic stories. In this essay I have included a few of the most dramatic stories related to the MRC trial. However, it is possible to retrieve many other similar stories in the court documents, or just spending some time in L'Aquila asking about the people's memories of the days before the earthquake. The stories in this essay are among the most dramatic, and they are from some of the civil parties involved in the trial. Nevertheless, it is worth noting, that even in considerably less dramatic cases, this narrative of the disastrous reassurance emerges constantly among the earthquake survivors. It emerges among people whose experiences of the earthquake, in terms of damages and loss, have been different, yet the commonality among the many tales can be found in the sigh of relief caused by the messages of March 31, and from the reasoning dynamics that those messages generated among the Aquilani, and that convinced many that the best response to the seismic swarm was the "rational" decision to sleep indoors, and to stay calm and inside, despite the increased magnitude of the tremors.

I have one of those stories of my own, for example. I remember every word of the phone call I had with my mother on the evening of April 5, 2009. She told me about two strong quake shocks that had just happened, but she dismissed the possibility of going to sleep outside because she felt tired, cold, and because the MRC had clearly communicated on TV that 'there was no danger' and therefore she decided to sleep in her bed (in our conversation, I also agreed that it was a good idea to sleep inside that night, given that information). Out of sheer luck, my mom survived the earthquake, but too many other people did not, as we know from the many dramatic stories of the civil parties involved in the MRC trial, such as the one in the next paragraph.

Cinque Massimo – Earthquake survivor, pediatrician

His wife and his two sons died on April 6, 2009

On the night of April 5, 2009, around 11:15pm my wife Daniela called me (I was in Sulmona, working at the hospital that night). She told me about the strong earthquake shock in L'Aquila, and she said that her and the kids were scared, and asked me for advice. I reassured her, telling her to stay calm, to not be afraid, and to stay home and sleep with the kids in our bed, all together. I said those words because of the outcome of the MRC meeting in L'Aquila on March 31, or at least because of what I heard on the media about the outcome of that meeting: that there was no reason for alarm, that the shock represented a constant release of seismic energy, that there was no reason for stronger shocks to happen, because the situation was favorable precisely because of that constant release through smaller shocks. That was the last time that I talked to my wife. She died with my two boys when our house collapsed that night (Italy vs Major Risks Committee N 380/12 R. Sent).

The scientists' narrative

The accounts of the experts regarding their discussion during the MRC meeting, and those of the citizens of L'Aquila who told in court the stories of how the information that they heard framed as the "outcome" of the MRC meeting influenced their behaviors in the night of the earthquake, produced two very different narratives during the trial proceedings. The residents of L'Aquila told their stories in court, linking their behavior on the night of the earthquake to the "disastrous reassurance" that they had received from the institutions after the meeting of the MRC in L'Aquila. The experts, however, claimed throughout the trial that the disastrous reassurances that were communicated to the public were not an accurate representation of what they said during the meeting. In what follows, for fairness, I will discuss the MRC minutes and the controversy about their unofficial draft. I will then conclude by pinpointing how, until recently, some scientists' statements have contributed to exacerbating some of the misunderstandings about the trial.

The MRC minutes

The content of the official minutes of the MRC meeting in L'Aquila – not signed and made official until after the disastrous earthquake had already happened -- does not present a reassuring portrayal of the seismic situation in Abruzzo. On the contrary, the short minutes contain mostly hedged statements and emphasize uncertainty, in opposition to the concept of earthquake prediction that was proposed by Giuliani, and to which the scientists were called to respond during the meeting. A close reading of the minutes reveals the presence of several statements that emphasize uncertainty about the seismicity of Abruzzo.

Boschi, INGV President at the time, stated: “It is improbable that there will be an earthquake like the 1703 one in the short term, although we cannot exclude it in absolute.”⁸ Barberi also highlighted the extreme difficulty of temporal predictions of seismic phenomena and asked the rest of the group whether there were historical testimonies of seismic sequences preceding strong earthquakes. Eva responded that there were limited cases, given that small earthquakes were not recorded in the past. He also added that in the last few years several seismic swarms have been recorded in Italy, however they have not preceded big seismic events, like the swarm in Garfagnana. Eva specified: “obviously, L’Aquila being a seismic zone, it is not possible to state that there won’t be earthquakes” (Ibid). Boschi follows up by explaining that several small earthquakes cannot be considered a precursor phenomenon for stronger quakes, and that “it is impossible to make predictions” (Ibid). He also adds: “L’Aquila’s territory is in a seismic zone of Level 2, and thus it requires particular attention for the buildings, which need to be reinforced in order to be resistant to earthquakes” (Ibid). At this point Selvaggi and Barberi reinforced the idea that a seismic swarm cannot be considered a precursor to strong earthquakes. Then Barberi, prompted by Stati, the local CPA officer who asked whether they should have paid any attention to the statements of “whoever affirms to be able to make predictions,” responded:

Today we have no instruments to make predictions, and therefore every prediction has no scientific credential. The problem, instead, has to be seen in general terms, because the only defense against earthquakes has to be identified in the reinforcement of the buildings that need to be improved in their ability to withstand earthquakes. Another important aspect related to the aims of civil protection is the improvement of the preparation to manage a seismic emergency (Ibid).

In conclusion, we notice that the short minutes of the MRC meeting can hardly be interpreted as having a reassuring content. They are a quick report on what was said on March 31, 2009, and they mostly revolve around two related themes: the interpretation of the ongoing seismic sequence in Abruzzo as a seismic swarm, and the reflection about the non-predictability of earthquakes (contra Giampaolo Giuliani) supported by a quick analysis of seismic swarms, that according to the experts may, or may not precede a major seismic event.

The official version of the MRC minutes, as reported in court, was drafted by Dolce, passed to the other experts, and then signed off in L’Aquila on April 6. However, it is important to note that another version of the minutes circulated during the trial, contributing to the development of controversies around the negligence of the experts and of their connivance with the “media-operation” organized by Bertolaso. During the trial, we get to know that this draft version of

⁸ For the complete version of the MRC minutes see: <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2012/10/22/terremoto-dellaquila-verbale-integrale-della-riunione-della-grandi-rischi/390130/> Accessed in April 2016.

the minutes (Italy vs MRC 2012, p.100) was drafted by Salvatori Lorella, a CPA employee in charge of taking notes during the meeting and supporting the MRC as a secretary and a liaison with the press. Salvatori, a member of the CPA Department for the Management of the Emergencies, testified during the trial and reported that her notes from that day, which were drafted and revised into provisional minutes of the meeting, were an accurate report of the conversations of the experts that she witnessed during the gathering in L'Aquila. Salvatori's draft minutes are considerably longer than the official ones, consisting of six pages, and they are overall consistent with the version that was summarized and finalized by Dolce. However, one important discrepancy emerges between the draft minutes and the trial debates: in Salvatori's draft, there is a passage that was later omitted in the official version of the minutes, and it regards the key question of the "release of energy" through frequent small earthquake shocks interpreted as a positive sign. Specifically, from Salvatori's account it emerges that during the meeting Barberi posed the question to the other experts in these terms:

We know that Abruzzo is a high-risk seismic region. In the past earthquakes there have been seismic sequences similar to those that are happening today. What can you say about this? I have heard the Head of the CPA (i.e. Bertolaso) declaring to the press, even if he's not a geophysicist, that when there are frequent seismic sequences there is a release of energy that makes it more possible for a strong shock to not happen. What can you all tell about this? (Italy vs MRC 2012, 101)

Interestingly, of the two questions posed by Barberi according to Salvatori's draft minutes, only one was actually addressed by the experts: the first. To that question Eva responded with the observation, which is also included in the official minutes, on the lack of data about the seismic sequences of the past, and on the known seismicity of L'Aquila, that makes it "impossible to state that there won't be earthquakes" (Ibid). The omission of the passage mentioned above in the official minutes was investigated during the trial, along with a lack of a direct response from the experts to Barberi's question of the "release of energy" interpretation suggested by Bartolaso. The accounts of the experts are contradictory about this point: someone remembers the question while others don't; some of them remember considering the question superfluous, not relevant, or just addressed by the subsequent conversation about seismic swarms as not significant precursors of strong earthquakes.

In any case, it is worth noticing that a simple intervention and clarification from the experts could have prevented the dissemination of flawed information to the public, intervention that nevertheless never happened.

Blame and responsibilities

In a letter published in *Science* (Boschi 2013), Enzo Boschi expressed his frustration about the verdict of L'Aquila. Boschi's short commentary on the trial

clearly illustrates the problematic stance of the scientists in this case. First of all, Boschi's interpretation of the sentence continues to disseminate, for the international scientific public, a flawed perspective on the verdict reached in L'Aquila. He stated:

I have been sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment for failing to give adequate advance warning to the population of L'Aquila, a city in the Abruzzo region of Italy, about the risk of the 6 April 2009 earthquake that led to 309 deaths. I have been found guilty despite illogical charges and accusations that set dangerous precedents for the future of the scientific process (Boschi 2013).

As I have discussed above, a reading of the court documents shows that the experts have not been sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment for failing to warn the people in L'Aquila. Rather, they have been sentenced for having failed to communicate "clear and accurate information" (Italy vs MRC, 2012) to the authorities and the public, thus encouraging the imprudent behaviors that led to the deaths of several Aquilani during the night of the earthquake. From the trial proceedings, we learn that Boschi did not contribute directly in the production and dissemination of the reassuring messages. However, his letter to *Science* shows that Boschi did not contribute in debunking the flawed information that was communicated to the public, or in discussing with the CPA effective procedural strategies to manage and communicate risks to the local public, thus making it possible for the CPA to spread dangerous messages that endangered the local public in a situation of risk and general alert. In his letter, Boschi continued:

The judge's ruling claims that citizens of L'Aquila would normally rush outside upon feeling an earth tremor, but that they did not in 2009 because a Major Risk Commission (MRC) meeting in L'Aquila, one week beforehand, had given them a false sense of security. However, this meeting was run, not by the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), but by an arm of the Prime Minister's office: the Civil Protection Agency (CPA). An agreement between the INGV and the CPA states that the latter is exclusively responsible for communicating any state of risk. The INGV has always scrupulously adhered by that regulation. As a former President of the INGV, I never spoke to the media about the seismic situation at L'Aquila, and no relative of the victim suggested otherwise (Boschi 2013).

In this passage, Boschi shifts the blame for the questionable institutional communication practices adopted in L'Aquila exclusively on the CPA. He concludes:

In publishing an official map, seismologist have done all they currently can to protect society from earthquakes. I can hardly be blamed for the poor quality of

buildings or for people's failure to conform to anti-seismic laws—these are responsibilities of other authorities. The local CPA is responsible for accurate communication of risk and effective management of emergency situations. I did not disseminate false or imprudent information. My question is: what could I do to avoid conviction? I suppose I should have foreseen the earthquake! (Boschi 2013)

This final passage, again, repeats some of the misunderstandings about the trial discussed at the outset of this essay. While it is not difficult to align with Boschi and his perspective, which shifts the blame back to the CPA, and advocates for the innocence of the experts, it is more difficult to sympathize with his argumentative strategy of ridiculing the trial, a strategy adopted for the sympathetic audience of *Science* magazine. The stories of the Aquilani suggest a clear response to Boschi's question: of course, the scientists could not foresee the earthquake. However, they could have rectified the dramatically flawed communication of their findings spread by the CPA that had a disastrous impact on the lives of too many Aquilani.

Boschi's letter generated a response from a group of activists, science journalists, and scholars from different fields, but this rebuttal was denied publication in *Science*.⁹ In this response to Boschi, published online by science journalist Raniere Salvadorini, one important theme is highlighted at the end: the problematic relationships between science and politics in Italy that have contributed to generating the misunderstandings and miscommunication in the case of the L'Aquila Seven. The group of respondents to Boschi's commentary originally wrote:¹⁰

Beyond the judicial interpretation, the elements that demonstrate how a consolidated logic of compliance with political power marked the tragedy of L'Aquila are clearly evident. And the sentence reveals a theme: the sick relationship between science and politics. And it does so in a moment in which the political sphere is effectively absconding. Regarding this issue a serious reflection has never properly begun (ibid).

From the analysis of the array of different texts and testimonies discussed in this essay, it is possible to pinpoint two different mistakes on the part of the experts, which regard both their relationship with other citizens and the one with the world of politics. Specifically, this case suggests that a reformulation of

⁹ See: http://www.lettera43.it/ambiente/l-aquila-sentenza-grandi-rischi-science-censura-gli-scientziati-del-dissenso_43675119511.htm Accessed April 2016.

¹⁰ The group includes: the science writers R. Salvatorini, G. Milano, and I. Margottini; the scholars D. Alexanders, L. Mualchin, M. Buiatti, A. Zamperini, S. De Martino, T. Crespellani, G. Tognoni, M. Turchetto, M. Grandolfo, A. Stefanini, G. Lo Verso, M. Menegatto, L. baccaro; the activists of "No Grazie, Pago Io," A. P. Colasacco of the "Permanent Assembly of L'Aquila Citizens", and P. Adamo of the "Giuristi Democratici National Association."

the relationships between science, citizens, and politicians is a necessary endeavor.

Foregrounding the voices from the seismic crater in this counternarrative of the MRC trial shows us that bridging the gap between science and citizens does not only imply including citizens' in the production of scientific discourse (this is an important and widely discussed theme, but this is not the lesson learned from this case). Instead, this case teaches us that one way to bridge the gap between scientists and lay publics involves recognizing experts as citizens, too, with the moral responsibility to convey their expertise clearly to the affected publics and audiences.

In order to fully eliminate the gap between science and citizens, the scientists would benefit from learning to think about themselves as connected to the local community, and not artificially separated from it by their professional role (Miller, 2003). This change of perspective can make the scientists' more accountable for the ways in which their assessments get turned into management, policies, or recommendations for action in specific settings.

Had the Italian scientists recognized their responsibility as citizens to communicate with their fellow citizens in L'Aquila, rather than imagining themselves as divorced from public communication and decision-making activities, they would have corrected errors in how their work was being portrayed, and publicly reinforced the point that there was no new information that could offer reassurances of safety to those trying to decide whether to continue their traditional practices of sleeping outside or go back into their homes. Had they done so, our testimonies suggest, could have saved the lives of many on that terrible night in L'Aquila.

Outro: Giustino Parisse – Earthquake survivor, journalist

His two children and his father died on April 6, 2009

The magnitude of the seismic swarm's shock was moderate...at least until March 30, 2009, when the 4.1 MI shock happened. That shock represented for everyone a sign that the situation was not normal...that day changed the level of attention of many citizens...even from a journalist's point of view...I noticed that the citizens' interests increased considerably, because everybody was afraid that something serious could happen. In fact, our editorial staff was receiving constant calls from readers, friends, and citizens: everybody was worried about the shocks that were becoming constant and increasing of frequency and magnitude.

On March 30, when the 4.1 MI shock happened, I remember that I was alone in my house in Onna, in the kitchen. I felt the shock, and I immediately ran outside, where I found my mother, who despite her poor health, tried to reach me outdoors. I ran to our library, where my daughter was studying. She was there, scared because the shock had made a guitar fall from its wall hanger. [...] Outside in the streets I found my neighbors, too, they also ran outdoors scared by the shock. We stayed outside talking, for a bit. Then, after

a while and because of the cold, we decided to go back inside. I also called my wife, who was with my son, to check on them. [...]

I remember that on March 31, we kept our webpage dedicated to the earthquake news open until we received the news about the conclusion of the MRC meeting, precisely because a lot of people were waiting to hear the news from the experts. A press release arrived from the Region Abruzzo...the message that we received and published, with my editorial staff, was reassuring. I remember in particular the words of De Bernardinis that said that the scientific community confirmed that there was no danger because of a continuous release of seismic energy, and that it represented a favorable situation. After publishing such news, I felt reassured because the information was coming from reliable and official sources. That same evening, I went back home very late, and found my wife still awake. She asked me about the earthquake, and I told her that the MRC's experts said that we could all stay calm, because it was excluded that a stronger shock, compared to the one we had experienced already, would happen. Also considering that the shock of the previous day did not cause any visible damage to our house, we basically inferred, in light of those reassurances, that we were not in a situation of high danger inside our house. In our family conversations, those days, we rationally discussed about what kind of consequences we could expect from that ongoing seismic swarm, and we concluded that at the worst we could have had some minor damage to our newly-painted walls; the reality of the facts, however, is that we were a little scared, in particular my daughter, Maria Paola. She said, dissimulating her fear with a joke: "If something will happen, remember that I love you!"

On the evening of April 5, we were all home: my wife, my children, and I. We had dinner and around 10pm we went all to bed. Around 11pm, after the first strong shock, we all ran to the kitchen, we turned on our computer and checked on the INGV website the magnitude of the shock. It was a 3.9 magnitude shock. My kids exchanged texts with their friends, but we decided to stay inside instead of going outdoors because after all it was similar to the shocks perceived in the previous days, and considering what the experts told us, we just concluded that it was normal in the context of the ongoing seismic swarm. Around midnight I went back to my room and called back the Editor of my newspaper, confirming with him that there had been a strong shock and that people had perceived it. Around 1AM another shock happened, and I woke up to call the Chief Editor again, to tell him about this second shock. I went outside my room to make this phone call, and found my son up, who told me: "Dad, this earthquake is really getting to my nerves!" I reassured him, and I told him to go back to sleep. I did the same with my daughter Maria Paola, I went to her room and I told her to stay calm. She responded: "I think we are all going to die!"

Then I went back to sleep, and then everything collapsed, our house collapsed. My children died under the rubble of our house that night. I think that, had I not heard the reassurances of the MRC, perhaps my behavior after those two strong shocks would have been different that night. Even not

hearing anything would have been better than hearing those reassurances.
(Personal communication, summer 2013)

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About the Author

Dr. Pamela Pietrucci is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Communication Studies in the College of Arts, Media and Design at *Northeastern University*, in Boston. Email her at: p.pietrucci AT northeastern.edu

Why so serious? Framing comedies of recognition and repertoires of tactical frivolity within social movements

A.T. Kingsmith

Abstract

What makes something funny? That depends. When it comes to humour, we are all experts. We know what we find funny. Such ambiguity is one of the central reasons a phenomenological analysis of humour as a means for radical political subject formations has been neglected within the study of social movements. Yet in many contexts a joke can represent liberation from pressure, rebellion against authority, a subversive political performance. We might even say that given common social norms and linguistic signifiers, joke telling can tear holes in our usual predictions about the empirical world by creating disjunctions between actuality and representation. After all, those in power have little recourse against mockery. Responding harshly to silence humorous actions tends to in fact increase the laughter. As such, humour must be appreciated not just as comic relief, but as a form of ideological emancipation, a means of deconstructing our social realities, and at the same time, imagining and proposing alternative ones.

By informing this notion of humour as subversive political performance with one of the most instrumental approaches to social movement studies, Charles Tilly's repertoires of contention, this paper begins by framing the dangers of comedic containment, before theorising the creative and electronic turns in social movement studies through a lens of rebellious humour as a post-political act. The paper emphasises these contributions with two unique explorations of political humour: 1970s' radio frivolity by the post-Marxist Italian Autonomous movement, and present day Internet frivolousness by the hacktivist collective Anonymous. The paper then brings these interventions together to make the case that while humour can indeed serve as a control function, providing temporary recognition that disarms potentially conflictive situations and naturalises prejudice by denigrating certain marginalised groups within society, the authentic rage that humour expresses also has the potential to be transformed into meaningful acts of socio-political dissension.

Keywords

tactical frivolity; comedies of recognition; repertoires of creative contention; Autonomia; Radio Alice; Anonymous; subversive humour; the post-political; comedic containment

Introduction

A real comedian, that's a daring [wo]man. [S]he dares to see what h[er] listeners shy away from, fear to express. And what [s]he sees is a sort of truth about people, about their situation, about what hurts or terrifies them, about what's hard, above all, about what they want. A joke releases the tension, says the unsayable, any joke pretty well. But a true joke, a comedian's joke, has to do more than release tension, it has to liberate the will and the desire, it has to change the situation, (Trevor Griffiths, 1976, p.20).

In a 1945 essay, 'Funny, but not Vulgar,' George Orwell wrote: "A thing is funny when—in some way that is not actually offensive or frightening—it upsets the established order. Every joke is a tiny revolution." For Orwell, to be funny was to be subversive, to upset the established order: "You cannot be really funny if your main aim is to flatter the comfortable classes: it means leaving out too much. To be funny, indeed, you have got to be serious." Orwell saw humour as much more than a superfluous pastime of the working classes, in certain circumstances, being funny was a political performance, a way to challenge the structures of power in pervasively seditious ways. Yet this begs the question: *What exactly makes something funny?* When it comes to humour, we are all authorities, experts in the field. We know what we find funny. And perhaps this universal claim to tacit knowledge is the reason the phenomenological analysis of humour as a means for radical political subject formations seems to be neglected as a field of study.

In order to address this gap in the social movement literature, this paper will build its analysis starting from the notion of what Charles Tilly (1995) refers to as *repertoires of contention*—a set of protest-related tools utilised by social movements within a given timeframe that include assemblies, rallies, sit-ins, boycotts, strikes, as well as various artistic and performance manifestations—post-political acts that seek to upset the established order using radical, creative, and illicit means. It will engage both the creative and electronic turns in contentious frivolity through this lens of subversive humour in an attempt to address the central tensions, contradictions, and cohesions that have arisen in the turbulent relationship between comedic containment, dissident humour and radical politics. In doing so it will explore questions such as: *What are some historical precedents of political humour? How is humour an effective form of protest? What are some of its limitations? What groups have used humour in the post-political process? Why, in many cases, has humour been unsuccessful in inducing lasting change? Is it possible for radical, creative, and illicit forms of humour to uncover spaces outside the structures of power? And if so, what would these spaces even look like?*

This paper starts by introducing a phenomenology of humour through probing the origins of joke-telling, satirical politics, and the bilateral consequences of utilising hilarity to unite social groups. *Second*, it probes the limitations of humour today by exploring the insular, self-congratulatory connotations of

comedic processes of recognition and reconciliation as highly contingent, contextual, and cathartic territorialisations of radical political subjectivation.¹ *Third*, it addresses the origins of tactical frivolity, micropolitical subjectivity, and the creative use of avant-garde performance humour as an anarcho-political form of radical spectacle. *Fourth*, it discusses the 1970s Italian autonomists' utilisation of guerrilla communication, particularly *Radio Alice*, as a way to blend art, technology, humour, and radical post-politics. *Fifth*, it compares the mischievous hacks of Anonymous with previous groups and examines the electro-digital turn in the use of humour as protest in physical, and increasingly, virtual spaces. *Last*, it reflects upon the institutionalised responses to post-political performances of frivolity and explores some of the ways that radical social movements might use humour to invoke structural change. 'Why So Serious?' will do these things in an attempt to argue that while humour can be co-opted by the structures of neoliberal power through reenforcing the everyday subjectivities in which we find ourselves, humour is also a manifestation of post-political liberation, a carnivalesque realisation of our un-freedoms, a micropolitical changing of our ideological situation, which, given widespread persistency and continued neoliberal fatigue, has the potential to change our structural situation as well.²

A phenomenology of humorous politics

Simon Critchley (2002) coyly points out that a theoretical explanation of humour is not humorous.³ A joke explained is always a joke misunderstood. After all, joking is a specific and meaningful practice that requires a shared understanding regarding what linguistic or visual routines are funny—congruence between joke structure and social structure. As such, humour is strongly context-based, and what is considered funny will vary intersectionally across class, race, time, and gender. In performing a joke, we are always presupposing a social world that is shared, the forms of which the practice of joke telling are going to play with. We might even say that given common social norms and linguistic signifiers, joke telling can tear holes in our usual predictions about the empirical world by producing unexpected fissures between actuality and representation. Humour can rupture our everyday

¹ Territorialisation occurs in psychoanalytic theory to refer to fluid and dissipated (schizophrenic) nature of human subjectivity in contemporary capitalist cultures (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). In relation to the process of neoliberal subjugation, it points to the ways in which critiques of power are de/reterritorialised or de/re-framed as commodified cultural artefacts—think of the means through which the guerrilla street artist 'Banksy' from brought from the alley to the art gallery.

² While still unequivocally dominant, the on-going financial crisis, waves of austerity, and general civil unrest speak to the fact that Western neoliberalism is beginning to show ideological stress.

³ While there are many ways to define humour, this paper invokes the theory of incongruity put forward by Beattie, Kant, Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and others, arguing that humour emerges from the violation of what is expected or considered normal in given or familiar circumstances.

subjectivities by dislodging the reality in which we find ourselves. In this way, “humour...is a slap in the face of our pretentious lives in order to catch the attention of those capable of an expanding self-discovery,” (Marciniak, 2008, p.3). Humour is not just comic relief—it is a form of ideological liberation, a means of deconstructing our social realities, and, at the same time, creating, imagining, and proposing alternative ones.

“A true joke, a comedian’s joke, suddenly and explosively lets us see the familiar de-familiarised, the ordinary made extra-ordinary and the real rendered surreal, and we laugh in a physiological squeal of transient delight,” (Critchley 2002, p.10). Put another way, humour brings about a change of situation, an unanticipated surrealisation of what is seen as real. The constructedness of reality falls into the background of the everyday. For as Mary Douglas (1975, p.96) points out: “A joke is a play on form that affords an opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity.” The jarring nature of a joke makes visible the sheer contingency or arbitrariness of the social rites in which we engage. And by producing what Arthur Berger (1996, p.16) calls “a counterforce to power,” humour can invoke a consciousness of contingency that can change the situation in which we find ourselves, and can even have a critical function with respect to society. Jokes can soften the audience and render listeners more amendable to a critical perspective. By laughing at power humour can expose its contingency, it can help us to realise that valorised structures which appear to be fixed, such as *neoliberal capitalism*, are in fact conditional, and just the sort of thing that should be mocked, ridiculed, and contested.

If, like Kant, Schopenhauer, and Critchley, we take humour to be a perception of what is incongruous, political humour can be understood as a communicative resource that highlights and challenges the incongruities that originate in political discourse and action. Since criticism expressed in a joking manner is more difficult to refute with ‘rationality,’ politically charged acts of subjective and collective frivolity can bring to the fore inconsistencies and inadequacies in the decisions and acts manifested by the incompetence, recklessness, and corruption of our social, political and economic leaders. Authority and power can be eroded, as the invitation to laugh with one another appeals to all-human feelings and breaks down ‘official’ barriers between ‘us and ‘them,’ (t’Hart, 2007). As such, humour is a key component of what James C. Scott (1985) refers to as everyday *weapons of the weak*: rumours, gossip, folktakes, songs, gestures, jokes, and theatre of the powerless that insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity and the innocuous understandings of their conduct.⁴ For Scott (1992, p.137), such institutions of frivolity are particularly effective in situations where violence is used to maintain the status quo as they facilitate, “a veiled discourse of dignity and self-assertion within the public

⁴ In his text, Scott argues that opposition and resistance are in constant flux, and by focusing on visible historic ‘events’ such as organised rebellions, we easily miss subtle but powerful forms of everyday resistance that challenge the powerful just beneath the surface, ‘hidden’ in plain sight.

transcript in which ideological resistance is disguised, muted, and veiled for safety's sake."

Of course, it is important to recognise that not all humour is of a critical nature; many popular jokes are reactionary and thus simply serve to reinforce the current social consensus. Although humour appears to be a radical alternative to 'serious' discourse in the sense that it is organised in terms of contrary discursive practices, certain comedies of recognition seem, in practice, to overwhelmingly support and reaffirm the established patterns of orderly, serious conduct. According to Critchley (2002), such reactionary humour does not seek to criticise the established order or change the situation; rather, it simply toys with existing social hierarchies in a charming but benign fashion that reflects popular political thought. Moreover, this sort of banal humour functions as a comedic containment that goes about reinforcing and naturalising neoliberal ideological beliefs by denigrating a certain sector of society, for example, sexist or racist humour that ridicules the alleged stupidity of a social outsider. Thus the political references employed for the production of humour can also alienate those who do not conform to the norms and values of a specific community, which heightens social boundaries between in-group and out-group members. In other words, as Diana Popa and Villy Tsakona (2011) point out, at times, political humour is a double-edged sword that simultaneously facilitates social bonding between interlocutors who agree on the content and targets of humour, and enhances the gap between speakers who do not adopt the same stance towards what exactly constitutes humorous themes and targets.

Due to the nature of this double move of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, humour is not simply an empty vessel for emancipatory politics. Like any other political tool, its functionality depends on the ideology of the users. This is why, at times, humour can in fact constitute a control function, where resistance through joking provides a temporary relief that stabilises potentially conflictive situations, (Popa & Tsakona, 2011). As such, some social theorists on the political left regard certain forms of humour as an ineffective substitute for the political action necessary to dislodge the current structures of power, (Davis, 1993). Such ineffective substitutes are fruitfully theorised through an understanding of the colonial/neoliberal politics of recognition. For as Glen Coulthard (2014) points out, the political processes of recognition and accommodation—something given to an oppressed peoples by a dominant body—be it in a colonial space or comedic one (or both!), tends to be deployed in ways which leave the underlying socio-economic structures of power unchallenged.⁵ In other words, the ways in which a colonial government's

⁵ Coulthard's *Red Skin White Masks* (2014) argues that recognition is paternal and does not accord freedom in any meaningful forms. Following Frantz Fanon (1952), recognition functions as a field of power through which oppressive relations are produced and maintained. *Red Skin White Masks*'s central contention is that anti-colonial struggles must turn away from conciliatory liberal politics of recognition and, instead, seek freedom through a modular return to a politics of contention premised on self-actualisation, direct action, and the resurgence of

attempts to reconcile their violent histories by acknowledging any wrongdoings whilst simultaneously moving to 'appease' colonised populations through the recognition of land claims and the invitation of state-created 'self'-governments within the larger colonial system functions that perpetuate capitalism through a process that integrates/territorialises their critiques within the neoliberal framework of power: "the assumption that the flourishing of Indigenous peoples as distinct and self-determining entities is significantly dependent on their being afforded cultural recognition and institutional accommodation by a settler state apparatus" (2014, p.54).

Comedies of recognition as neoliberal subjugation

Seemingly progressive comedies of recognition function through a similar *reconciliatory logic of neoliberal subjugation*. Consider the political projects of American 'edgy-liberal' mainstays such as Jon Stewart (The Daily Show), Stephen Colbert (The Colbert Report), and John Oliver (Last Week Tonight). For a time during the presidency of George W. Bush, Stewart's Daily Show served as a bastion of satirical bite—undeniably at its best laying into the jingoistic lies of the Bush White House's "war on terror," the ludicrously botched case for the invasion of Iraq and the squalor of Bush domestic policy, from the workaday corruption of the Justice Department to the debacle of the federal response to Hurricane Katrina's destruction of New Orleans to the 2008 economic collapse. However, in the post-bush era, a liberal malaise set in. And while satirical targets during the Obama Administration have been no less plentiful—we have seen zero uptick in substantive economic reforms, a boom in fully unaccountable drone warfare, a steady metastasising of the national surveillance state, and a long-broken promise to close the detention centre at Guantánamo Bay—The Daily Show became increasingly rudderless and redundant as it turned towards a tv-friendly 'edginess' in its final years—demonstrating at worst an inability and at best an unwillingness to spew out a comparable amount of vitriolic, satirical, and unapologetic rigour when confronted with an equally repressive administration hailing from the other side of the aisle.

In a sense, the larger problem with such comedies of recognition is that they have breached the ill-defined boundary separating take-no-prisoners satire from the terminally chummy protocols of American celebrity culture. Instead of taking the political risks associated with laying into the hypocrisies and enforcement failures of, say, the Obama-era Securities and Exchange Commission, which is not likely to land you a gig as an amiable pitchman for a telecom ad campaign or your own cable-talk franchise, Stewart, Colbert, and Oliver continue to take shelter by relinquishing themselves to compulsively attacking their ideological opposite numbers in the compromised and truth-challenged sanctums of spaces like Fox News, (Popa & Tsakona, 2011). This is

cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of neoliberal subjugations.

easy sport and, perhaps more importantly, the quickest and most frictionless brand of watered-down 'edginess' on offer. After all, reactionary mainstays like Fox News are equally commercially invested in portraying enterprising Daily Show correspondents—together with their purported comrades in the mythical liberal media establishment—as irredeemable ideological hacks in their own right, so it's all one giant win-win in the market-savvy logic of celebrity branding. There are hidden costs to this re-enforcing and self-congratulatory liberal jesterdom. When someone like Stewart or Colbert manages to get a targeted interviewee like Condoleezza Rice—Bush's war and torture apologist Secretary of State—on their show, more often than not, they sit politely and obligingly idol, while Rice drones through the standard talking points on the 'gorgeous,' if at times messy, forward march of American-sponsored democracy in the Middle East.

Perhaps more reconciliatory than the self-congratulatory banter with Fox News or the lacklustre interviews with war criminals, the celebrity-satire nexus of Colbert and Stewart demonstrates an unquenchable elitist thirst for a fish-in-a-barrel blasting of the credulous plebs marooned in the hopelessly out-of-control American interior. This crude and at times ingenious comic tradition owes its most immediate roots to Sasha Baron Cohen's plodding practice of pseudo-documentary farce, but in recent years Daily Show correspondents have taken it up as their primary form of engagement. Apart from being self-referential and aristocratic-chic, the process has become tired, rote, and entirely formulaic: Assemble a group of buffoonish local culture crusaders (the more earnest and evangelical, the better) and ambush them with a fake-sympathetic interview that turns abruptly confrontational—subsequently edit deeply to achieve maximum humiliation for the interview subject and utmost smugness for their interviewer, repeat until all those who hold opposing views are entirely dejected, alienated, and othered by a conceited chorus of chuckles from the liberal intelligentsia. Of course as the countless interviews with Trump supporters have shown, such initiatives are richly mockable. Yet comedians like Eric Andre⁶ demonstrate that it is possible to deploy discourse in ways that do not simply reproduce an ideologically liberal position which cultivates difference, malfeasance, and discontent through the spewing of affluence. As such, it is important to ask: What sort of divisive agenda is initiated by relentlessly sending up the dimly lit worldviews of your self-designated cultural inferiors? The cumulative effect of these more broad-target broadcasts demonstrates the dividing and alienating processes of hegemonic comedies of recognition by reinforcing the ideological power and insular mindset of a self-aggrandised *civilised minority*—a permanently disenchanting elite of 'better-thinking'

⁶ On *The Eric Andre Show*, comedian 'nihilistic comedian' Eric Andre deploys deeply absurdist and surrealistic performances that paralyse the interviewee in a political moment. For example, in 2016, Andre attended both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions dressed in absurd, offensive costumes and confronted voters from both sides with jarring questions about race that served to both critique the interview process and electoral politics more generally.

Americans who claim to be assailed on all sides by the embarrassing crazes and religious crusades of the class of gullible dopes and hillbillies.

Such practices are part of an overarching strategy of *comedic containment*—an approach embodied best by the new poster child of comedy as recognition: John Oliver and his show ‘Last Week Tonight.’ Unlike Stewart or Colbert,⁷ Oliver has proven willing to take a side, to take the time to explain seemingly arcane political and economic topics and show their relevance to everyday life. As Thomas Crowley (2015) points out, Oliver and his team do impressive research, gleefully delving into the nuts and bolts of corporate malfeasance in order to directly call out big corporations: they have gone after the tobacco industry, the sugar industry, the test prep industry, the for-profit education industry, the prison system, and the military industrial complex, to name a few. However, like all forms of comedic containment, Oliver follows a formula: he notes the topic is dull but worth exploring. He then divulges into a detailed exploration of corporate greed by making explicit the human costs of companies’ insatiable thirst for profit. Despite the scale of the problems he has exposed, towards the end of the segment he steps back and suggests that these problems are specific to that industry. Furthermore, Oliver concludes by noting that said problems can be addressed with the proper blend of regulation and public outcry—segments on the police always end with calls for better training, more equipment, and the removal of ‘Bad Apples.’ As such, Oliver rarely raises the possibility that there may be a more systemic rot, even if that is what the sum of his episodes suggests. Like many other liberals held up by leftier-types as something more, Oliver’s politics, like Stewart and Colbert before him, represent a mainline centrism that is remade as radicalism through some empty signalling and a tough-talk exterior.

The Atlantic (2015) recently made the argument that comedians like Oliver are ‘the new public intellectuals.’ In light of this, we must ask: Whose interests does a development like this serve? If comedies of recognition have usurped the roll of public intellectuals, this means that instead of coming from academia or activism, the ‘truth-tellers’ who act as guides through our cultural moment will now go through countless stages of corporate vetting before they reach the public eye. When Coulthard (2014) criticises reconciliation efforts for leaving structural conditions intact, they depend on a false notion that the only change required is a narrowly symbolic/discursive shift. Comedic containment achieves this by creating a situation where all of those subjugated under neoliberalism develop faux-political attachments to the symbols of humorous cognition, the Stewarts’, the Colberts’, the Olivers’. Once political drives are co-opted through this process of internalisation—the ideological process through which we are led to believe that comedic recognition amounts to liberation—the structures of neoliberal subjugation need not undertake the actions required to transform the current institutional and social relationships. Humour rendered as a punching

⁷ Both Stewart and Colbert claim to be in the business of comedy, not politics, and therefore make clear that they do not want to take a side so much as restore sanity to the political debate—as Stewart and Colbert’s infamous 2010 ‘Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear,’ makes explicit.

bag which collects and dissipates all of our destabilising energies so that we can be lulled back into a deep sleep. However, with all this in mind the fact remains: humour is a multifaceted process. Think of the deeply inter-subjective nature of giggling, laughter is contagious. And while we must always keep in mind the ways in which comedies of recognition operate as zones of containment, the simple telling of a joke can recall us to what is shared in our everyday practices, making explicit the enormous commonality that is implicit in social life. As such, by linking interests to action through the practice of what Marjolein t'Hart (2007) refers to as framing,⁸ various social movements have successfully deployed humour as a means of bringing power relations to the surface, and this allows actors within anti-capitalist movements to seize comedy from the reconciliatory control functions of the state, and turn frivolity to a subversive repertoire of contention.

Tactical frivolity as a repertoire of creative contention

Pushing far beyond the hegemonic framework of comedic containment, insurgents have employed *wit as a weapon* throughout history because jokes can serve as an everyday form of communication that articulates discontent and visualises injustice in more subversive ways, (Speier, 1998). According to the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1965), humour has had a political impact in the West as far back as the late medieval and early modern periods.⁹ Carnivals, spectacles, and 'protestivals' all articulated an idiomatic *world turned upside down*, a seditious way for micropolitical subjects, shielded from the authorities by a veil of humour, to disregard established norms and hierarchies. Despite the risks that such events could get out of hand, as they did on multiple occasions, political protest was usually permitted in these ritualised settings.¹⁰ Or rather, the cost of suppressing this subversive humour was deemed too high, as repression itself might provoke an escalation of tensions. Likewise, as emphasised by Douglas (1975), in royal courts the ritualised position of a jester carried a sort of immunity. After all, 'fools' were not taken seriously and replying in a serious manner to a joke was usually considered bad practice. So while parallels could be drawn between the medieval jester and what Critchley (2002) might refer to as reactionary humourists that reinforce the status quo, these early manifestations of political frivolity demonstrate that there is indeed a

⁸ Framing is defined here a process where agents of a social movement define and articulate the position of actors involved through translating ideological beliefs into an existing, practical framework, giving events meaning so that they are connected with each other, (t'Hart, 2007).

⁹ A scholar in the USSR during the 1920s, the depth of Bakhtin's writings on frivolity were not widely known until they were rediscovered and published shortly before Bakhtin's death in 1975.

¹⁰ According to t'Hart (2007), Emmanuel Ladirie (1979) and M. Lane Brunner (2005) provide in-depth examples of revolts that followed from carnivalesque performances such as a 16th century uprising in Romans, France and an 1833 political protest against authorities in Dijon, France.

strong historical correlation between performance humour and contentious social micropolitics.

As Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh (2006) point out, a key development since the time of these early ritualised spectacles has been the formulation of what they call *repertoires of creativity*—or, modes of affective post-aesthetics and autonomous cultural production rooted in radical anarcho-political avant-garde movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Situationist International.¹¹ Playing off of Charles Tilly's (1995) notion of repertoires of contention, these fantasmic inventories of post-political creativity mark a momentous shift in how to conceptualise humour in social movements. During the medieval festival, wit as a weapon was strictly limited to those ritualised moments of formal performance art, and as such, the utilisation of frivolity outside of what was officially sanctioned as the festive would be quickly suppressed, (t'Hart, 2007). But by turning public spaces into performance stages through rendering everyday objects and situations surreal, these radically playful avant-garde imaginaries have transcended the official micropolitical jester by re-appropriating the fantasmic power of spectacle. This ontological repositioning of spatiality has enabled performative modes of intervention and occupation in public spaces that are unthinkable in isolation, providing a resonant instrument for challenging the prevailing ideological and discursive structures through what Chesters and Welsh (2006) refer to as the *tactical frivolity of resistance*.

True to its anarcho-political foundations of artistic innovation, practices of tactical frivolity are complex demonstrations of situational absurdity that express multi-layered cultural meanings, symbolically generated to be manifested in spectacular, imaginative and creative disturbances of the neoliberal order. For example, during the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle the dramaturgical presence on the streets played a significant role in terms of public space, with much emphasis being given to the slogan 'Teamsters and Turtles Unite,' reflecting the presence of union contingents and activists dressed up as turtles, (t'Hart, 2007). According to Chesters and Welsh (2006), entering such spaces is a step into another world, where carnivalesque performances reflect complex relations of trust, and symbolic coding inverts the meaning and sign value of the familiar. By combining street-theatre, festival, performance art, visuals, and what might be described as non-violent warfare, contemporary activists have managed to create a new language of civil disobedience. For Critchley (2008), by deploying a surrealist politics of humourist subversion that embodies the Situationist mantra: "it will be a laugh that buries you," where 'you' refers to those in power. Such tactical frivolities generate a language that exemplifies the effective foraging of horizontal chains of equivalence and a

¹¹ These avant-garde movements are often grouped together due to their autonomist nature and the fact that Dadaism, which arose out of the disgust of WWI, was a celebration of anti-art that laid foundations for the Surrealist anarcho-political thought, literature, visual art, philosophy, and social theory that reached the height of its popularity in the 1920-30s. Both of these then fed into the Situationist International's comprehensive critique of mid-20th century advanced capitalism.

collective will formation across diverse protest groups, all in order to put intense satirical pressure on the system by revealing how new forms of creative imaginaries are indeed possible.

In complimentary fashion to Scott's (1985) discussion of weapons of the weak, the creative repertoire of tactical frivolity reveals how humour is a powerless power that uses its position of weakness to expose those in power through forms of self-reflexive ridicule. According to Critchley (2008), when compared to the pious humourlessness of most manifestations of, for example, vanguard-Marxist nihilism, it is the exposed, self-ridiculing, and self-undermining character of tactically frivolous forms of protest that perform their powerlessness in profoundly powerful ways. Take the *Pink Bloc*, *Fluxus Billionaires for Bush*, the *Yes Men*, the *Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination*, the *Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army*, *Orange Alternative*, and countless other imaginative, aesthetic, affective, and self-organising groups rooted in the repertoires of creativity introduced by radical leftist anarcho-political art movements. Wielding feather dusters and water pistols, donning tuxedos and top hats, impersonating corporate executives and environment ministers, tagging, dancing, and jesting all within public spaces, such tactically frivolous groups have protested everything from authoritarian capitalism and G8 conferences to climate summits and European social forums, all with a marginal, defiantly subversive, and profoundly internationalist character that enables them to escape easily assimilation or dissolution. For Chesters and Welsh (2006), the work of these groups act as vectors of force that allows questions about boundaries of art, politics, and culture under neoliberal globalisation to be rethought and reframed.

Humorous vectors of force can take movements further than the ephemeral, contingent performances of marches, protests, actions, and occupations—what Hakim Bey (1991) refers to as temporary autonomous zones (TAZs): temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control constructed on the boundary lines of established regions—in order to construct more permanent spaces of autonomous revolt. Take the Zapatista movement: a revolutionary leftist political and militant group based in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico. From the beginning, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has resorted to ridiculing everyone, even themselves, in order to get their messages across. Public statements the organisation releases take the form of comic fables, and many of the Zapatista's gestures serve to turn revolution into a satirical battle of wit and magical realism, (Olesen, 2007). Moreover, Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos points to the importance of framing the debate, of changing the terrain of struggle—not just winning the struggle, but defining the terms as well.¹² Thus Marcos turns revolution into postmodern slapstick comedy that deploys tactical frivolity as a political opportunity that takes up the

¹² Subcomandante Marcos (1992), character, constructed persona, hologram, and 'colorful ruse,' was created by the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee of the Zapatistas, because "[the outsiders] can only see those who are as small as they are. Let's make someone as small as they are, so that they can see him and through him, they can see us."

clown for revolutionary advantage. Frailty and imperfection are often the basis for their humour, which frames the essence of revolt as a learning which takes place essentially through dialogue with others—well captured in the Zapatista catchphrase, ‘asking we walk’ (preguntando caminamos). Social and political change, then, is not just about some distant goal, but just as much about the method and the way to get there. Understanding that sets the Zapatistas apart from the more traditional revolutionary groups of Latin America in both past and present, which have often proceeded from a ready-made theory of where to go and how to get there.

Of course, as Critchley (2008, p.124) bluntly points out, “history is habitually written by the people with guns and sticks and one cannot expect to defeat them with mocking satire and feather dusters.” Yet as the history of anarcho-political activism eloquently shows, repertoires of contentious creativity are lost as soon as they exclusively reduce their repertoires down to violence. The successes of a political movement or action are dependent on a precedent revolution of the psyche. After all, to tear down a factory or revolt against a government is to attack the effects of subjugation rather than its causes, and as long as any attack is focused solely on effects, no structural political change is possible. It is rather the cultivation of a multiplicitious activism that deploys techniques of non-violent tactical frivolity that must be engaged if radical social groups are to pose serious challenges to the prevailing neoliberal order. For as Chesters and Welsh (2006, p.144) add, the epistemologies of thinking-through action and the return of a radical aesthetic within anti-capitalist repertoires expressed through the parallelogram of forces, “marks a return to desire as becoming, to the affective, to rhythms of speech, music, and modes of movement as important political terrain.” This extends repertoires of contention and creativity to new assemblages—carnivals against capitalism that strive to maintain open boundary conditions and continue to find different registers of antagonistic expressions through tactical frivolity, leading movements such as the Zapatistas (cited in Chesters & Welsh, 2006, p.145) to argue, “the revolution in general is no longer imagined according to socialist patterns of realism, that is, as men and women stoically marching behind a red, waving flag towards a luminous future: rather it has become a sort of carnival.”

Radio Alice and the frivolity of Autonomia

When supported by well-structured social imaginaries that are galvanised by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, according to Sidney Tarrow (2011), repertoires of creative contention generate radical micropolitical subjectivities that are *intersectional*, in that they refer to issues spanning multiple localities, *modular*, in that they are easily convertible from one circumstance to another, and importantly, *autonomous*, in that they are instigated by activists’ own initiatives. As a theoretical system, according to Sylvere Lotringer (1980, p.8), this notion of autonomy first emerged in Italy during the 1970s once carnivalesque affinities established by the Situationists as aesthetically anarcho-political critiques of the everyday came together with the

works of post-Marxist theorists such as Antonio Negri, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi to generate the notion of a *post-political autonomous*, or "the desire to allow difference to deepen at the base without trying to synthesise them from above, to stress similar attitudes without imposing a general line, to allow parts to co-exist side by side, in their singularity." By embracing this post-political moment, where the definition of the 'political' had become a problem in itself, the Italian autonomous movement, or *Autonomia*, generated an anti-hierarchical and anti-dialectical counterforce to power, and in the process, became one of the first groups post-1970s to mobilise tactical frivolity as a tool of resistance against the neoliberal state.

For Lotringer (1980, p.14), *Autonomia* was the only political group "simultaneously [making] use of the most abstract machinery (the techno-scientific intelligence) and of the masses' most traditional community ties." Due to these techno-foundations, and the fact that radio is intersectional, modular, and autonomous, *Autonomia* naturally gathered itself around a free radio movement, which included *Onda Rossa* in Rome, *Controradio* in Firenze, and most notoriously, *Radio Alice* in Bologna, giving it a diffusion throughout the country, (Lotringer, 1980).¹³ As a result, they attempted, through Radio Alice, to subvert the dominant mode of discourse and in so doing to show that it is not the only one possible. According to Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen (2007), from 1976 to early 1977, Radio Alice played a central role in the movement, taking control of the radio waves in an attempt to reinvent the medium of radio as a laboratory for the creation of a new *Mao-Dadaistic life*.¹⁴ Thus Radio Alice stands out as an important test case in the intermingling of radical anarcho-politics, experimental art, and tactical frivolity. Instead of the passivity that characterised the way capitalist states employed new medias such as television, Radio Alice sought to activate the audience by challenging the relationship between speaker and listener, democratising the radio by making it transmit as well as receive, (Rasmussen, 2007). The merging of frivolous ears and mouths transformed the radio into a carnivalesque celebration, where the egalitarian flows of voices and sounds were not empty, solemn utterances, but the playful fusion of everyday life and poetry.

Following on from Dada, Surrealism, and the Situationists, Radio Alice strove to abolish not only the separation between speaker and listener, artist and audience, but according to Rasmussen (2007), between art and life. For *Autonomia*, provocation, theatrical analyses, political action, and avant-garde

¹³ The political collective took the name Radio Alice from Lewis Carroll's Alice because they sought to subvert reality in the way it was in *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. They were especially interested in the politics of speech, and how speech itself reflects the worldview of the dominant reality. As a result, they attempted, through Radio Alice, to subvert the dominant mode of discourse and in so doing to show it is not the only one possible.

¹⁴ Inspired by de Sade, Dada and Surrealism, Deleuze and Guattari, and the Situationists, Radio Alice introduced Mao-Dadism, where 'dada' was the critique of the separation of art and life, of praxis and theory, and 'mao' was the materialist dimension transcending this structure.

creative experimentation all fused into heterogeneous praxis. The anarchical imaginations that had survived in art were to be released into the everyday. As Guattari (as cited in Goddard, 2012) points out, this is miles away from more traditional notions of both community and political radio because central to the unique micropolitics of Alice is the practice of interrupting serious political discussions with violently contradictory, unpredictably humorous, and poetico-delirious interventions. In this way, Radio Alice was not so much a counter-informant as a frivolous attacker of the neoliberal structuring of mass media. The audience was on the air and out in the streets, transforming everyday life as Alice's output jumped, without warning, from poetry to labour protests, prank calls to political analysis, cooking recipes to love declarations, and Jefferson Airplane to Beethoven. The seriousness of politics were displaced by this joyful militancy as people phoned in to request the sound of the grass growing. As Bifo (2009) recalls, the enemy was indeed buried in a roar of laughter that was impossible to co-opt because Alice refused to play by the traditional rules.

Infusing Mao-Dadaism, Lewis Carroll-inspired non-sense and a mixture of false and real news under the slogan: "let's spread false news that produce real events," the most infamous prank initiated by Radio Alice was the false edition of *La Repubblica*—a centre-left national daily newspaper—produced in conjunction with *Il Male*, a satirical magazine. Its front page splash featured the improbable 'arrest' of Ugo Tognazzi, a popular comic actor, as the grande vecchio (godfather) behind the Red Brigades, so ridiculing the press' obsession with framing anti-capitalist politics in terms of 'terrorist' conspiracy theories. This assemblage of radio and print point to the ways in which, for the Autonomists, radio constitutes but one central element of a whole range of communication means, from informal encounters in the Piazza, to the daily newspaper—via billboards, mural paintings, posters, leaflets, meetings, community activities, and festivals. In other words, similarly to Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatistas, Alice's project is less a question of the subversive use of a technical media form than the generation of a media, or rather post-media ecology that is a self-referential network for an unforeseen processual production of radial subjectivation amplifying itself by way of technical means. As Guattari (1996) points out, this is miles away from ideas of local or community radio in which groups should have the possibility on radio to represent their particular interests and from conventional ideas of political radio in which radio should be used as a megaphone for mobilising the masses. In contrast, on Alice, serious political discussions are interrupted by violently contradictory, humorous and poetico-delirious interventions and this is central to its unique micropolitics. It was even further removed from any modernist concern with perfecting either the technical form of radio—for example through concerns with perfecting sound quality—or its contents—the development and perfection of standard formats—even a brief engagement with the tapes of Radio Alice is more than enough to convey this last point!

All of these other approaches to alternative radio, that is the local, the militant and the modernist, share an emphasis on specialisation—broadcasters set themselves up as specialists of contacts, culture and expression, yet what really

counts in popular free radio are collective assemblages of enunciation that absorb or traverse specialities: “Alice looks around, plays, jumps, wastes time in the midst of papers illuminated by the sun, runs ahead, and settles down elsewhere...the practice of happiness is subversive when it becomes collective...to conspire is to breathe together,” (A/Traverso, 1980, p.132). Written by the collective of Alice’s affiliated journal, *A/Traverso*, according to Rasmussen (2007, p.42), ‘A’ stands for alteration, anonymous, alternative, a-socialism and millions of Alice’s’ who did not have a voice: “the first letter of a new alphabet for those who start screaming, communicating, talking about themselves without first having responsibility.” Words such as these personify the frivolous and playful desires of the movement. And it is these images of Radio Alice running, jumping, playing, activating, that most distinguishes popular free radio from the usual pacifying operations of mass media. For Guattari (as cited in Goddard, 2012), autonomous languages of desire invent a new everyday that leads straight to action. Alice begins by ‘touching,’ by provoking laughter, by moving people in humorous ways, and then it makes people want to ‘move out,’ toward those who speak and toward those stakes of concern to them. Thus Radio Alice, and by extension Autonomia, were not merely humorous conversations meant to mock and mimic the neoliberal order, they were also tactically frivolous micropolitical mobilisations, dissensions, fantasmic occupations of public and private spaces, strikes, practices of auto-reductionism, and the re-appropriation of the post-political nature of everyday life.

Overall, it is best to think of Autonomia as a decentralised network or archipelago of various types of localised autonomist social movements and organisations connected through the techno-bridges of free radio, rather than as one integrated social movement at the national level, (Lotringer, 1980). For Bifo (2009), such decentralisation leaves the forces of neoliberal order scratching their heads because they are unsure where the crack-up is coming from since Autonomia does not rely on pre-existing identities; rather, it only expresses its own movement of auto-referential self-constitution. According to Goddard (2012), this shift from fixed political subjectivities and a specified program is the key to this transformation to post-political politics and indeed to a tactically frivolous era, where politics blends with art to become an unpredictable, immanent process of becoming rather than the fulfillment of a transcendental narrative. This is why Radio Alice, as well as Autonomia more generally, are integral parts of the study of humour as a subversive post-political tool, by invoking the frivolity of avant-garde in tactical forms, Alice was the realisation of art as politics, the unleashing of desire, and the creation of self-affirming virtual and corporeal spaces of playful autonomy where the everyday existed outside the logics of the neoliberal order. As such, every social movement that has invoked humour as a political tool since Autonomia, is indebted not only to its realisation of Mao-Dadaism, which makes possible the fusion of art and life necessary to create a space for the post-political art of humour as everyday surrealisation, but also Radio Alice’s techno-scientific, post-Marxist re-appropriation of the mediums of large-scale communication.

Electronic repertoires from Autonomia to Anonymous

If the notion of repertoire can be defined as a locus around which varied performances are created, and as an improvisational set of tactical tools utilised by social movements within a given timeframe, then the conception of Charles Tilly's (1995) repertoires of contention features prominently in the study of humour as a post-political tool. Playing off of Tilly's initial theorisations, Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh (2006) infuse the carnivalesque affective aesthetics of anarcho-political art movements such as Dadaism, Surrealism, and the Situationists to point out the repertoires of creativity present in the post-politics of contention, while Sidney Tarrow (2011) highlights how such repertoires of creative contention tend to generate radical micropolitical subjectivities that are intersectional, modular, and autonomous in nature. Building upon these foundational links between social repertoires and the post-politics of humour, especially Tarrow's notion of the modular, Brett Rolfe (2005) continues that the importance of digital space as a site for contestation means that the tactically frivolous notion of repertoire must be expanded further to the practices of online direct action (ODA).¹⁵ As such, Rolfe (2005) puts forward what he calls an *electronic repertoire of contention*, which describes both the specific repertoire of an individual activist group practicing ODA, as well as the total collection of online tactics deployed within the digital space by various social groups.

Following from the sentiments of Autonomia, which insisted that mass media was the major method of social control within capitalist societies, the *Critical Art Ensemble* (2001) has pointed out that the importance of digital space as a site for contestation is increasing as the groups with which movements are contesting become more vested in the online realm.¹⁶ Or put another way, the nexus of power is becoming virtual, and to remain relevant, tactically frivolously spaces of protest must take this into account. In developing ODA as a form of tactical frivolity, Rolfe (2005) highlights that many online campaigns, such as those engaged by *Electronic Disturbance Theatre*, are essentially electronic perpetuations of existing performances, and thus inevitably continue to utilise the same approaches that have been honed offline. As such, the electronic repertoire of creative contention usually comprises of digital extensions of familiar routines: virtual protests, sit-ins, and blockades, as well as gripe sites, email bombs, web hacks, and computer viruses, (Lasn, 2000). Taking cues from Radio Alice, activist organisations like CAE, EDT, and *Adbusters*, as well as anarcho-political organisations such as *®TMark* (Registered Trademark), the *Electrohippies Collective* (Ehippies), *etoy.CORPORATION*, *Hacktivism*, *Cult*

¹⁵ Also known as hacktivism or cyberjamming, Rolfe (2005) defines ODA as a rapidly growing field that extends the notion of direct action into the 'virtual' world of electronic communication.

¹⁶ Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) is a collective of tactical media practitioners who encourage the use of any media that will engage socio-political contexts to create molecular interventions and semiotic shocks that could diminish the rising intensity of authoritarian culture, (CAE, 2001). The Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT) is essentially the next iteration of CAE.

of the Dead Cow, and many others—, have employed techno-scientific intelligence to pioneer creative new tactics of frivolous civil disobedience including site spoofing, viral-virtual culture jamming, and corporate data leaking, (Rolfe, 2005).¹⁷

Echoing the mantra of *Autonomia*, according to Graham Meikle (as cited in Rolfe, 2005), the key attributes of a creative repertoire of tactical frivolity in the electronic era include critical awareness, technical expertise, autonomous sub-grouping, an innovative and cooperative mindset, and a flexible agenda rather than an alignment to one specific ideological cause. Or put another way, virtual micropolitical tactical frivolity calls for what Umberto Eco (1967) refers to as *communications guerrilla warfare*, which includes the ingenious use of technology, tendency to reverse engineer equipment, and the desire to exploit systems. Over the past few years, a loosely associated rhizomatic of activist and hacktivist entities known collectively as *Anonymous* has emerged from the deep spaces of the Internet in order to take up this role. Initially, Anonymous developed out of *4chan*, the enormously popular site for sharing and commenting on images, and was primarily associated with the frivolous phenomenon of trolling: sowing discord on the Internet by posting satirical images and comments. According to Quinn Norton (2012), the driving force behind Anonymous was initially laughter, silliness, the sweet relief from the obligations of modern life's daily rhythms, or what the collective calls *lulz*. A corruption of LOL, or 'laughing out loud,' *lulz* can be witty or puerile, what makes them so important in understanding Anonymous is their anarchic, anti-capitalistic nature. They cost nothing, they transcend borders, and *lulz* decisively ridicule, reject, and exploit accepted social conventions.

In pursuit of the *lulz*, early Anonymous members, or *anons*, conducted massively choreographed pranks, widespread denial-of-service attacks, and complicated hacks in a chaotic, unpredictable, and a-political manner. And as Norton (2012) points out, what first pushed Anonymous in a political direction was essentially the only thing that could have, an attempt to interfere with their frivolity. According to Gabriella Coleman (2011), in 2008 Anonymous made its first openly political move by conducting a series of 'raids' known as *Project Chanology* against The Church of Scientology for attempting to sue various websites for hosting a video that satirises the organisation. From there, *anons* began to script, record, and circulate politically charged videos invoking much of the carnivalesque iconography, such as the Guy Fawkes mask—, for which Anonymous has become so well known.¹⁸ As Coleman (2011) highlights, due to

¹⁷ While there is unquestionable overlap from the first list of activist groups, for more information on these groups, their methods, and plenty of other insights outside the scope of this paper, see the Electrohippies (1999), CAE (2001), Dominguez (2002), Jordan (2002), and Rolfe (2005).

¹⁸ While a headless suited question mark is the oldest Anonymous icon to emerge from *4chan*, the Guy Fawkes mask, a stylised depiction of the 17th Century revolutionary popularised by the 1988 graphic novel, *V for Vendetta*, has become the group's most recognisable symbol.

Chanology's successes, the collective expanded its tactics of political frivolity, with operations against Hollywood (*OpPayback*), MasterCard, Visa, and PayPal (*Operation Avenge Assange*), coordinating a global day of action where over six thousand protesters across the Western world congregated in major cities to express political intentionality and consciousness, and even playing a key logistical role in aspects of the 2011 Tunisian Uprising that overthrew the government, serving as a catalyst for the larger Arab Spring (*OpTunisia*).¹⁹ Since then, anons played central roles in Occupy, breached Sony and Nintendo, and *LulzSec*, an anon affiliation, went on a hacking spree that targeted everything from the FBI and the US Senate, to law enforcement agencies and the CIA (Norton, 2012).²⁰

"I came for the lulz but stayed for the outrage," reflected one anon voicing a common sentiment in the wake of Anonymous' various carnivals of dissent, (Coleman, 2011, p.4). Whether advertently or not, by indirectly following in Autonomia's footsteps, Anonymous took the Mao-Dadaist rejection of the everyday separation of life and art and applied it to a post-political electronic repertoire in unprecedented new ways. What started out as a small operation, the likes of many of the other hacktivist groups listed above, turned into a worldwide movement that rattled the very foundations of the neoliberal order. Instead of free radio, the group used message boards and Internet Relay Chat, as well as more mainstream social media platforms, yet, similarly to Alice, Anonymous' intentions were frivolously malicious attacks on the neoliberal structures of mass media, fantasmic reoccupations of public and private spaces, the mobilisation of decentralised micropolitical self-affirming subjectivities, and the replacement of 'serious politics' with a joyful militancy that takes pleasure in laughter, all with that same autonomous, marginal, defiant, subversive, and profoundly internationalist character which enabled them to easily escape assimilation or dissolution. For Anonymous, and the dozens of other micropolitical groups occupying an electronic repertoire of creative contention, that sense of carnivalesque spectacle, of tactical frivolity, of lulz, serves as a release valve making the struggles of post-political engagement, from Autonomia to Anonymous and beyond, all the more endurable.

Challenging feverent fears and imagining frivolous futures

While there are clear ontological divisions between the anarcho-political protest groups, collectives, and organisations touched on here, they all share a creative repertoire of contention that employs micropolitical subjectivities of tactical frivolity, the playfulness of an everyday post-politics. However, as Critchley (2008) reminds us, to date history has indeed been written by the people with

¹⁹ Lulz Security, abbreviated as LulzSec, was an Anonymous affiliated black hat hacker group that executed a 50-day hacking spree ending on June 19, 2011, during which the group claimed responsibility for dozens of high profile, extensive, and carnivalesque public and private hacks.

²⁰ For further information re: these, and dozens of other hacks, see: *We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous, and the Cyber Insurgency* by Parry Olsen, (2012).

sticks, not water guns. And as humour, through its unifying spectacles of mimicry and provocation, leaves little space for institutionalised response, it should come as no surprise that the neoliberal state order tends to counter peaceful performances of frivolity with the same unrestrained violence that it is being mocked for in the first place. In Italy for example, the promise of Radio Alice was met with violent response by the state, which in 1977, closed down the station, and with support from the Communist party, drastically reduced civil liberties and imprisoned thousands of Autonomia members, (Rasmussen, 2007). As for Anonymous, in 2011 the FBI managed to secretly turn Hector 'Sabu' Monsegur, one of the most central anons, who then spent months helping law enforcement identify and arrest 25 of the groups' principal hacktivists, (Norton, 2012). Moreover, from the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army to the Critical Art Ensemble, there are countless examples of activists and assemblies being disciplined and displaced by unfettered state-sanctioned violence.

What drives neoliberalism's feverent fear of frivolity is the anti-hierarchical, self-referential, and autonomous nature of the carnivalesque, culminating in a global-do-it-yourself culture, an international milieu fostering opposition to market fundamentalism and committed to ecological sustainability, social justice, human rights, and radical post-political forms of expression and congregation. Motivated by the desire to formulate an alternative to the neoliberal order, the tactical frivolity of resistance, or what Graham St. John (2004) calls DIY tribalism can be contextualised by its opposition to the reach of capital into everyday life, and to the unchecked power of the state. As such, rather than disappear into the state-sanctioned 'protestivals' of the medieval jester, by finding their voice within the avant-garde, these counter-tribes take their carnivalesque grievances to global cosmopolitan centres, creating temporary autonomous zones- in the neoliberal heartland, which, if only for a moment, can jar populations out of their robotic capitalistic routines. For as St. John (2004) points out, the insurrectionary spectacle seeks lasting change, it ruptures the present with figurative vision, a post-political re-appropriation of human performance enabling the pursuit of new futures from the present. Such attempts to imagine new futures, to speak outside of policed bureaucracies, to give non-answers to empty questions, these sorts of frivolous politics are the greatest threat to a neoliberal order built on the 'serious' binaries of 'us and them,' 'terrorist and citizen,' 'political' and 'non-political.' After all, if the citizenry decides to eject, who will be left to pull the veil of (neo)liberal democracy over?

When asked by the functionaries of neoliberalism what they wanted, Autonomia replied: "nothing, we are not citizens, we do not belong to this society, and we will never accept your point of view, the point of view of totality. We refuse to play this game, that's all," (Rasmussen 2007, p.42). Perhaps unsurprisingly, a familiar post-political statement was made over 30 years later by select anons: "we just happen to be a group of people on the Internet who need—just kind of an outlet to do as we wish, that we wouldn't be able to do in regular society. That's more or less the point of it," (Coleman, 2011, p.5). As such, beyond the

practice of inducing laughter at the status quo's expense, Autonomia, Anonymous, and dozens of other distinct but frivolously interrelated groups are utilising micropolitical desire, spectacle, and non-violent warfare in an attempt to generate a space outside the given binaries of neoliberalism; a permanent autonomous zone of the everyday. However, these post-political attempts at autonomy via tactical frivolity are predicated on the key assumption that there is in fact an 'outside' to be realised. After all, apart from expanding the lexicon of the mass media and the consciousness of a few hundred thousand committed activists, what lasting and structural changes have radical anarcho-political avant-garde movements really accomplished in past the 40 years?

For a time, tactically frivolous collectives occupy physical and virtual spaces, bring in new and committed members, challenge prevailing ideologies and subjectivities, celebrate discontent, anti-hierarchies, mock, mimic, desire, and develop their repertoires of contention, but eventually the laughter is always silenced. Threatened by the post-political imaginaries generated via cognisant peoples dancing, singing, laughing, and criticising together, the state pushes back, jokesters become terrorists, and all but a select few devoted actors fall back into their routines. Every time a group tries to push outside the boundaries of neoliberalism and construct new assemblages of lasting autonomy, the system breaks their ranks by making it too costly to continue the struggle. For as Slavoj Žižek (2012a) points out: "carnivals come cheap—the true test of their worth is what remains the day after, how normal daily life will be changed. The protesters should fall in love with hard and patient work—they are the beginning, not the end." Essentially, the message of many of these groups is this—*the system is broken, we do not live in the best possible world, we are allowed, even obliged, to think about alternatives*. As such, Žižek (2012a) asks: "What new positive order should replace the old one the day after, when the sublime enthusiasm of the uprising is over?" It is at this crucial juncture that we see a break in the (il)logic of tactical frivolity. The authentic rage it expresses rarely transforms itself into a post-political program of permanent autonomous change, and as such, we are given the spirit of desire, contention, and revolt, but without the revolution.

Reacting to Paris protests of May '68, Jacques Lacan (as cited in Žižek, 2012a) reflected: "What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a new master. You will get one." And for Žižek (2012b), insofar as tactical frivolity stays the course of hysterically provoking the master without proposing a tangible new imaginary to replace the old order, nothing foundational will be changed. As such, it is not enough to reject the current order as a ruthless and exploitative form of neoliberal ideology. Radical anarcho-political avant-garde performances of non-violent warfare must begin to think seriously about what to propose instead of the currently predominant form of politico-culturo-economic organisation, and to imagine and experiment with alternative forms of everyday communities. The advent of global protest movements, groups, and collectives without a coherent program is not an accident. It reflects a deeper crisis without an obvious solution. For most, the solution until now has been to ignore the omnipresence of the neoliberal order. We feel free because we lack the awareness to articulate

our un-freedom. As Zizek (2012b) points out, all the terms we use today to designate our present reality: 'war on terror,' 'human rights,' 'green capitalism,' 'democracy and freedom,' these are all false terms, mystifying our perception of the situation instead of allowing us to think through it. This is precisely where humour can be most affective/effective. By rupturing our everyday subjectivity, by dislodging the reality in which we find ourselves, humour is a post-political liberation, a carnivalesque realisation of our un-freedoms, a dissentful changing of our ideological situation, which given frivolous persistency, has the potential to change our structural one as well.

Perhaps the post-political terrain is most fertile if we return to examples of Radio Alice, Project Chanology, and importantly, Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatistas. The frailty and imperfection of resistance under neoliberal subjugation forms the basis that connects their various humours—a tactical frivolity which frames the essence of revolt as an ongoing process that takes place through engagement—'asking we walk' transformed into 'laughing we walk' by connecting experiences and aims in humorous and human terms to create a point of reference for people locally and internationally. Everyone is familiar with the types of mistakes, doubts, and challenges that the social movements have always faced. We all know, from our daily lives, that existence cannot be 'planned', that the best results are often achieved by cooperation and discussion with others. While the danger of comedies of recognition are always present, social and political change lies in the ambiguities of humour, its ability to eradicate the spaces between 'us' and 'them' over shared moments of unmediated and unmitigated laughter directed strategically and contagiously towards the bastions of power. Humour is immediacy. It is not just some distant goal but a method to get there—an initiation of a spark of collective energy that does not entrench a ready-made theory of where to go, but initiates an infective eruption that can never be fully quelled. For every Radio Alice that is brutally repressed and every Lulzsec that is maliciously infiltrated there is a new post-media ecology that moves in to fill the space. Thus the post-political potentials of tactical frivolity should not necessarily be framed as a means to initiate a fully comprehensive alternative order to neoliberal capitalism, but as a persistent process through which social movements can delegitimise hegemonic power in order to clear (and re-clear) the stage for something else. Humour as a means, not end in itself.

Conclusion

In his volume *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905, 2003:161), Sigmund Freud wrote: "Humour is not resigned; it is rebellious [...] by making our enemy small, inferior, despicable, or comic, we achieve the enjoyment of overcoming them." Utilising these Freudian notions, Egon Larsen (1980) adds that tendentious jokes are first and foremost a way to make criticism possible against those in positions of power. Thus the joke represents a rebellion against authority, liberation from pressure, and a safety valve in which oppressed peoples preserve some sanity. Moreover, those in power have no appropriate

recourse against the mockeries and mimics. Fighting back makes them look even more ridiculous. As such, tactical frivolity is moving us towards a post-political realisation that the definition of 'political' has become a problem in itself. However, as this paper draws out, what results from political humour can be convoluted. Alongside Critchley (2002) and Coulthard's (2014) that humour can serve as a control function by reenforcing various comedies of reconciliation and containment—which provides temporary relief that disarms potentially conflictive situations and naturalises prejudice by denigrating certain sectors of society—the authentic rage that humour expresses struggles to transform itself into structural change—revolt without the revolution. Yet as the actions of the Autonomists and Anonymous make explicit, time and again, humorous vectors of force have proven their efficacy in empowering social movements to construct and reconstruct spaces of autonomous revolt. Hence the post-political potential of humour, while definite, is by no means a guarantee that transformation is forthcoming.

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About the author

A.T. Kingsmith studies and teaches political theory at York University Toronto. They also are affiliated with the androgynborg, a post-art collectivity based in Toronto. They can be contacted at atking@yorku.ca. For more of A.T.'s work, visit their website: <https://adamkingsmith.com>

What could it mean to mourn? Notes on and towards a radical politics of loss and grieving

David K. Langstaff

Abstract

Against and beyond the atomistic and pathologizing representations of loss and modes of grieving which currently predominate in the United States, “What Could It Mean to Mourn? Notes on and towards a Radical Politics of Loss and Grieving” offers an understanding of loss as a polyvalent, eminently multiplicitous, prismatic refraction of a multitude of histories, both living and spectral. Drawing upon the work of “autobiographical” narrative, queer theory, critical race studies, and autonomist Marxism, among other theoretical traditions, I suggest that loss opens up the possibility of recognizing and embracing the inescapable entanglement of socio-ecological existence (the impetus and directive of radicality). Probing the vast (and vastly uneven) matrix of loss and dispossession which is constitutive of modernity, and bringing this haunted landscape into conversation with our present conjuncture of ecological catastrophe, temporal flattening, and the attenuation of radical imagination, I suggest that the appearance of generalizing melancholia must be understood in relation to the coming end of the world. Yet rather than treating melancholia and ontological implosion as cause for political despair, I suggest that a depathologized take on melancholia may point toward a radical politics of mourning, toward forms of survival which are always in excess of the dispossessions through which they are given, and which hold out the possibility of genuinely ethical and transformative coalition. I offer a vision or reading of survival in and through a generative dialectic of ritualistic and ruptural mourning, a radical politics of mourning which throws the multiplicitous violence of modernity into stark relief and which precipitates new forms of gathering in dispossession, fugitive socialities which prefigure and enact a world-in-becoming.

Keywords: loss, politics of mourning, affect theory, autobiography, radical imagination, afro-pessimism, decolonization, black optimism, undercommons, fugitivity

for my mother, in memory of all that has been lost
for my sister, in praise of all that survives

[L]oss is not merely an emptiness but something more dimensional, something that fills the vacated space that's left by what used to be there. Loss...may be a name for what survives.

- Lee Edelman¹

For all of us
this instant and this triumph
We were never meant to survive.

- Audre Lorde²

Everything I love survives dispossession

- Fred Moten³

¹ Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or the Unbearable* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 47.

² Audre Lorde, "Litany for Survival," in *The Black Unicorn*, collected in *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* (New York: Norton, 1997), 255.

³ Fred Moten, "The Subprime and the Beautiful," *African Identities*, Number 11, Issue 2 (2013), 237-245, 242.

I.

There is no such thing as a singular loss, even if every loss simultaneously constitutes an irreducible singularity.⁴ In the imperial socio-cultural formation that is uneasily coextensive with the territorial boundaries of the US settler-colonial state, we are compelled to treat loss in isolation, to reflexively disavow any momentary lapses in self-possession this loss may have allowed us to indulge in. Especially over the last three and a half decades of neoliberalization, empire's relentless injunction to seek something called "happiness" has been advanced alongside discursive and material practices which have significantly eroded collective solidarities and imaginations, producing subjectivities which appear increasingly atomized, individualistic, and bereft of radical political consciousness.⁵ Loss thereby becomes severed from history, from the seamless fabric of socio-ecological entanglement within which it is woven,⁶ while

⁴ This essay was written sporadically, during those rare moments of leisure sandwiched in between waged work and unwaged political and reproductive labor, and without the scholarly resources, compulsory methodological rigor, or (putative and actually existing) intellectual community found in the academy. It was written by a committed radical organizer, who happens to believe that the production of emancipatory knowledge can, must, and has always existed beyond the walls of the capitalist university. No doubt these facts are reflected in both the essay's strengths and weaknesses. Intellectual labor and its products are, of course, eminently social processes, situated within a particular historical geography and building upon myriad forms of accumulated collective knowledge. This essay, as an overwhelmingly synthetic work, is especially indebted to far more original theoretical contributions within the "fields" and traditions of black studies, native studies, black feminism, affect theory, queer theory, Marxist feminism, autonomism, poststructuralism, and post-colonialism. The most potent of these insights, in turn, owe their intellectual harvests to the epistemological fecundity of communities in struggle. Thus, my greatest intellectual, affective, and spiritual debt – a debt which is unpayable, and ought to be – is to all those practicing survival in a thousand different ways. I would also like to extend my gratitude to: Lesley Wood, for her receptivity and support; Donna Willmott, who first planted the seed; Jeanne Hahn, for her ruthless critiques of everything existing; Maegan Willan and Paola Laird, my mentors in mourning; Seulghee Lee, who tells me that the generous reading is always the right one; my Sins Invalid family, for our shared experimentation in rituals of mourning that gesture beyond a landscape of absences; my sister, Rebecca, for holding me in love and survival, in loving survival; and, Megan Shaughnessy-Mogill, who helps me remember that there is so much more to life than mourning.

⁵ For an introduction to the history and politics of neoliberalism, see, *inter alia*, David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Sasha Lilley (ed.), *Capital and its Discontents: Conversations with Radical Thinkers in a Time of Tumult* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011). For a critique of the hegemonic injunction towards happiness, see Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). On the contemporary crisis of radical imagination, see Max Haiven, *Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power: Capitalism, Creativity, and the Commons* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁶ Karen Barad uses the concept of entanglement as a heuristic device for critiquing Cartesian dualisms and emphasizing the inextricable constitution of matter and meaning. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). As Fred Moten notes in a recent talk, the concept of "relation may actually be an impediment to thinking entanglement." Moten, "The Blur and Breathe Books," First Annual José Esteban Muñoz Memorial Lecture, Department of Performance Studies, NYU (March 2016).

mourning is driven underground, figured as an almost shameful act, a private affair to be closeted out of common decency.



Image: Erik Ruin, “Survivors,” silkscreen (2007)

But our grief is profoundly restless, and, in spite of the reigning politics of containment, it refuses the social and epistemological cages to which we have tried to consign it. For loss is not, in fact, monadic, even if every loss is marked by its essential uniqueness. Rather loss is eminently and immanently multiplicitous – a complex, polyvalent, historically contingent amalgam of significations, inextricably woven into (and constitutive of) the shifting fabric of socio-ecological relations, a prism which refracts a multitude of histories, both living and spectral. Indeed, loss has the potential to illuminate the very depths of socio-ecological relationality. As Judith Butler formulates it, in the dispossessions of loss “something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties of bonds that compose us.”⁷

It is, in fact, precisely the fracturing, the disorganization, the undoing of our subjectivities and the very pretence of self-possession so often precipitated by loss that opens up the possibility of a radicalized cognizance of our relations with others – or, more honestly, of a kind of socio-ecological entanglement which gives lie to the pretence of discrete individuation altogether. Butler continues:

⁷Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 22.

If I lose you...then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who “am” I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost “you” only to discover that “I” have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost “in” you, that for which I have no ready vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived of as *the tie* by which those terms are differentiated and related.⁸

In the loss of another, we suddenly come to awareness of the fact that our lives are not, and never have been, our own. This recognition of the irreducible entanglement of socio-ecological existence is, in our time, the beginning of radicality, its impetus and directive, its means and its end.

II.

The horizon of our social imagination with respect to the politics of mourning follows directly from the narrow conceptions of loss which currently predominate. Loss is understood as singular, discrete, neatly bounded in space and time. The nature of the loss which accompanies, say, the death of a loved one is treated as self-evident – nothing more, nothing less. Moreover, in keeping with the reigning cultural imperative to treat individual productivity and sovereignty as the quintessential metrics of moral virtue – a conflation effected as much through the racial/colonial production of “humanity” as an ontological position as through capitalism’s material transformation of labor-power into a commodity to be bought and sold⁹ – loss is construed as an obstacle to be overcome, a potential source of inertia, blockage, or fissure in the otherwise ceaseless churning of material life and the epistemological contiguity which underpins it.¹⁰ Grieving is thus seen as an instrumental process facilitating a

⁸ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁹ Marx powerfully analyzes the commodification of labor-power in *Capital Vol. 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1976). For the racialized production of the human, see, *inter alia*, Sylvia Wynter, “No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” *Knowledge on Trial*, Volume 1, Number 1 (Fall 1994), 42-73; Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); and Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). For a critique of the racialized character of individual sovereignty, see Lindon Barrett, *Racial Blackness and the Discontinuity of Western Modernity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

¹⁰ As Silvia Federici points out, the violent production of the worker by the European ruling classes during capitalism’s formative period “was not confined to the repression of transgressors. It also aimed at a radical transformation of the person, intended to eradicate in the proletariat any form of behaviour not conducive to the imposition of stricter work-discipline...For the same relation that capitalism introduced between land and work was also beginning to command the relation between the body and labor. While labor was beginning to appear as a dynamic force infinitely capable of development, the body was seen as inert, sterile

return to normalcy, one which is to be completed in a timely fashion. Indeed, according to the most recent iteration of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM V), grief becomes pathological (i.e. "complicated grief" or "prolonged grief") if "severe and disabling grief reactions...do not abate in the 12 months after the death of a close other."¹¹

In order to move beyond these impoverished understandings of loss and grieving, I sporadically return to one of the foundational texts from which these conceptions draw their intellectual lineage. Sigmund Freud's 1917 essay, "Mourning and Melancholia," articulates a conception of loss and grieving that has figured prominently in subsequent theorizations in disciplines ranging from psychoanalysis to philosophy to critical theory.¹² In the time which has lapsed since the writing of Freud's classic essay, his conceptions of mourning and melancholia have been advanced, critiqued, rejected, and built upon in myriad ways, yet his short text remains enormously influential in contemporary theorizations of loss and grieving.

For Freud, loss was more than a mere descriptor for the affective states which often accompany having an intimate relation torn asunder through death, separation, or abandonment; his conception extended to "the loss of some abstraction...such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on."¹³ Loss, thusly conceived, is an affective phenomenon that potentially encompasses far more than the intermittent, rare, or even exceptional mortal events with which loss is typically associated. Indeed, viewed in this light, we might extend the conception of loss to a whole host of social dislocations, from the loss of a cohesive identity to the loss of a homeland.

As this special issue of *Interface* centres on social movement auto/biographies, my exploration of the politics of loss and mourning draws in part on what would

matter that only the will could move, in a condition similar to that which Newton's physics established between mass and motion, where the mass tends to inertia unless a force is applied to it." Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004), 136, 140. For more on the modern subjective investment in work, see Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). For a concise critique of predominant conceptions of loss from a relational psychoanalytic perspective, see Marilyn McCabe, *The Paradox of Loss: Toward a Relational Theory of Grief* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002). On depression as a kind of inertia, see Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). On the ceaseless character of daily life under modernity, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982). The threat loss potentially poses to epistemological coherence is examined in further detail throughout this essay.

¹¹ Richard A. Bryant, "Prolonged Grief: Where to After Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition?" *Current Opinion Psychiatry*, Volume 27, Issue 1 (2014), 21-26. See also, McCabe (2003).

¹² Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *General Psychological Theory* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963), 164-180.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 164-180, 164.

appear to be my own autobiographical narrative (an appearance which, however, I believe this exploration reveals as deception). After all, the writing of this essay is, in some sense, a kind of ritual to mark the decade that has elapsed since my mother's death, a span of time which imparts a strangely ceremonious character to the anniversary of a distinctly unceremonious event: that chance of history which dispassionately brought my mother's lifetime of struggle around her physical and mental health – her struggle, that is, to find some way to live in this world – abruptly to an end. Over the years, I've often told those close to me that I lost my mother twice: once in life, and once again in death. When she was alive, Nina not only had to cope with severe degenerative physical illnesses,¹⁴ she also wrestled with histories of violence, trauma, and disempowerment, together comprising practical, corporeal, and affective struggles which increasingly expressed themselves through and were compounded by drug addiction¹⁵ and spiralling mental health.¹⁶



Image: Photo of my mother taken by “nursing home” staff for identification purposes, c. 2005

¹⁴ Specifically, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and a whole host of secondary conditions, from osteoporosis to cataracts to diverticulitis.

¹⁵ Primarily to nominally licit opiates and other prescription drugs, but also, for a time, to crack cocaine.

¹⁶ Concretely, cycles of severe depression and unrestrained mania, financial irresponsibility, habitual rages, selective memory, episodic psychosis, suicidal tendencies, etc.

One of the consequences of these material and psychic expressions of struggle was the creation of a household that was chronically unstable, abusive, and traumatic for her children, namely my sister and myself. Thus, when I lost my mother in the corporeal sense, that loss inevitably conjured up a host of other losses with which it was and remains inextricably entwined: the loss of a certain idealized (raced/gendered/classed/etc.) representation of childhood, parentage, family, and self, the loss of various intangible psychosomatic characteristics, desires, and so on. I became a case study in the multifaceted affective entanglements the *DSM V* pathologizes as “complex bereavement.” One loss slipped into another, and the world was irrevocably changed.

By thirteen my mother’s screams
have become ritual, though not yet
comfortable, in that peculiar sense
of the word – that comfort which derives
from the assurance of returns,
the repetition
of violence and the violence
of repetition.
Thirteen, and she screams
smashing her face against a butcher block table
again and again and again and again.¹⁷

With the slippage of these dispossessions across time and space as a backdrop, there are several observations I want to make regarding the loss of my mother. To begin with, just as Freud suggested, the concept of loss can be usefully applied not only to the corporeal loss of my mother through death, but to myriad losses of psychically potent abstractions (e.g. childhood) that were effected in the context of our entangled lives. What is more, these losses cannot be treated as entirely distinct, and most certainly cannot be meaningfully accounted for separately. To the contrary, these losses overlap and spill into one another – their very essences are mutually constituted. In other words, I cannot understand my mother’s death outside of the losses I suffered through her life, just as I cannot understand the injuries she effected in life outside of the loss brought about by her death. Loss is always multiplicitious, a polyvalent signifier which acquires meaning only through the particular set of relations by which it is constituted, and within the specific historical moment in which it is produced.

¹⁷ David K. Langstaff, “Ritual,” Unpublished Poem (30 October 2013).

Because loss is historically constituted, its meanings are not static or stable; they are dynamic, mutable, subject to the rhythms and vicissitudes of history. How I understand and feel about the loss of my mother, and the tapestry of losses with which her death is interwoven, has changed dramatically over time. Where once this tangle of dispossessions worked only at the periphery of my consciousness, with the passing of time they have come to constitute a driving force behind my revolutionary convictions and radical praxis. These changes have, in turn, not taken place in isolation, but rather in relation to historical events big and small, to friends, lovers, and communities, to political visions and struggles. If the meanings of loss are historically constituted, and we believe, as those working within radical left political traditions do, that we are collectively the authors of our histories (if not just as we please), then it follows that grief too forms a terrain of struggle, that the meanings of loss are open to contestation, and that a radical politics of mourning has the potential to be a transformative force in its own right. Placing loss within the movement of history can help us to discover something else in what survives: the radical potency of histories hitherto obscured by empire's elisions and distortions, the radical potentialities of futures prefigured in survival.

Unmoved by the banality
of my falsehood,
 I dream
a time or place before
 the world,
 pristine exteriority.

Then or there
 my mother plays
freckled joy, sun-soaked skin
 a child
unsullied by violence,
 outside
the relentless encroachment
of history or its absence.

I dream this lie
for survival,
knowing: even mapless

lovers need something
to hold onto.

Knowing, too,
secreted
in my deceit:
the seed
of an()other past,
an()other future.¹⁸



Image: Photograph of 1994 ACT UP march down Fifth Avenue on the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, from James Wentzy's documentary film, *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP* (2002)

III.

There was a time when I could only articulate my mother's life and death as a singular tragedy, a loss which somehow stood outside the broader currents of history, and which was perhaps all the more grievable for this exceptionalism. In time, however, my understanding and narrative underwent a qualitative shift. I began to see that the violence which had ravaged my mother's heart, body, and mind was something more than a tragedy, that, to borrow the searing words of Adrienne Rich, this

¹⁸ David K. Langstaff, "Antehistorical Fantasy," Unpublished Poem (1 November 2015).

way of grief

is shared, unnecessary
and *political*¹⁹

Whatever agency she may have exercised rightly or wrongly, my mother's struggles around mental health and drug addiction were not aberrant individual failings, but rather entirely comprehensible survivalist responses to sexual violence, domestic abuse, and compulsory dependencies upon men and the heteropatriarchal household. Nor were these instances of violence and disempowerment isolated or random, but rather the everyday face of heteropatriarchal domination.²⁰ Just as the endless obstacles to receiving essential, dignified medical care and access support²¹ – from the bureaucratic hurdles she had to clear to receive Medicaid, to the daily condescension and arrogant liberties taken by privileged doctors, to the ways in which her basic physical needs were pitted against the interests of her attendants (overwhelmingly working class women of color, whose racialized/feminized labor was itself a site of degradation, alienation, and exploitation) – were the everyday face of capitalism and ableism, of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy.²² Even her physical illnesses might have been in part or wholly the product of the capitalist organization of nature, as both lupus and rheumatoid arthritis have been linked to environmental toxification,²³ while the “treatments” deemed necessary by the medical industrial complex were

¹⁹ Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972* (Toronto: W.W. Norton Inc., 1973), 41. Emphasis added.

²⁰ For an introduction to the everyday face of heteropatriarchal violence, and liberatory resistance to it, see INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (eds.), *The Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology* (Boston: South End Press, 2006) and Ching-in Chen, Jai Dulani, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (eds.), *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* (Boston: South End Press, 2011).

²¹ Access support is a term coined by activists within the nascent disability justice movement, referring to the specific forms of collective support needed for the flourishing of individual bodyminds, understanding that humanity is comprised of a great diversity of bodies and minds, with a range of physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities to match.

²² Ableism, simply put, is a system of oppression which hierarchically orders a great diversity of human bodyminds, with the “able body” and “healthy mind” constructed as normative and all other bodyminds marked as deviant. Non-normative bodyminds are then dis-abled by social architecture and practices of exploitation and marginalization, violence and control, and even attempts at outright elimination, as evidenced by historic episodes from eugenics programs to the Nazi genocide. For an introduction to the politics of ableism and disability justice from the perspective of queer and gender non-conforming people of color with disabilities actively engaged in the struggle against able-bodied supremacy, see the forthcoming self-published, presently untitled, disability justice booklet by Sins Invalid.

²³ E.g. Jennifer F. Nyland and Wendy Hessler, “Recent exposure to fine particle pollution linked to lupus disease activity,” *Environmental Health News* (25 October 2010), available from: <http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/newscience/pm2.5-pollution-linked-with-lupus-activity>.

themselves agents which worked to destroy her body (for instance, decades of high doses of prednisone that ultimately led to osteoporosis). In short, my mother's long downward spiral was not simply a consequence of poor choices or bad luck; she was ground down by systems of violence, crushed under the weight of domination, exploitation, and exclusion.

Thus, in "my own" life, when I look to what "I" have lost, I don't see a litany of tragedies worthy of sympathy, I see the brutalizations and perversions of systems of domination. When I think of the loss of my friend Kirsten who was murdered, or the loss of a feeling of safety after being jumped and beaten or after being robbed by a friend at gun point, I don't see senseless acts of violence, but rather the logic of heteropatriarchy, the degradations of white supremacy, and the barbarity of capitalist immiseration. Even the creative psychosomatic patterns I developed in order to cope with these and other forms of violence bear the long shadow of white male socialization under racial heteropatriarchy (amongst other shadows cast), and the attendant losses of tenderness, of connection, of vulnerability, of playfulness cannot possibly be grasped without taking stock of these larger relations of domination.



Image: Unknown artist, mural titled "In Memory of Kirsten Brydum,"
Clarion Alley, San Francisco

The radical recognition of the impossibility of extricating loss from the broader socio-ecological fabric not only subverts the reigning isolationist imperative with respect to grief and posits mourning itself as a terrain of struggle, it also throws the entire concept of auto/biography – of discrete, internally coherent, individuated narration – into crisis. In recent years, critical race scholars have demonstrated the cultural centrality of autobiography as a genre in the modern development of the individuated and self-possessed liberal subject, which is also

to say the purported subjectivity of the white/settler.²⁴ On the one hand, these scholars have shown how autobiography as a genre has been both product and productive of modernity's material processes of marketization and atomization, as well as modernity's discursive construction and reification of the individual as epistemological category and political actor. The late giant of black studies, Lindon Barrett, put it thusly:

The "individual presence" groomed textually [by autobiography] in European modernity is the key feature naturalizing the epistemological and social protocols of capital accumulation, the diachronic episode and synchronic formation marking as fully the break between classical and medieval Europe and modern Europe and its permutations. The limited, modern notion of "individual presence" extrapolated into the universal certainty effectively twins human experience – in the complex feint – with the relays of property, mobile forms of ownership, and the contractual, remunerative, and exploitative arrangements of the cash nexus, and ideally the proposition of the individual figure, the modern civic agent, the subject of autobiography, appears to precede and exceed the modern episode and formation from which that individual emerges[.]²⁵

On the other hand, these scholars point to the role of autobiography in elaborating the modern racialized/colonial hierarchical structure of subjecthood – in other words, one's capacity to confidently and coherently narrate one's life as one's own signals and consolidates one's position within what Lisa Lowe has aptly termed the "colonial division of humanity."²⁶ Autobiography thereby "reiterate[s] a colonial division of humanity...even as the autobiographical genre develops the self-authoring individual out of the transatlantic conditions" of slavery, imperialism, and settler-colonialism.²⁷

Yet, as Butler has been quoted above, loss throws such pretensions to self-possession into chaos, exposing a fundamental "inscrutability" at the heart of interiority which leads us back to relationality, or perhaps more accurately to irreducible socio-ecological entanglement. In short, loss, in all of its disruptive force, has the potential to unsettle the very coordinates by which we gauge self, other, and world, to reveal their historicity, and thereby lay bare the complex of violence upon which modernity is founded.

²⁴ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 43-72; Barrett (2014), 44-71.

²⁵ Barrett (2014), 66.

²⁶ Lowe (2015), *passim*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 70

IV.

What, then, is the scope of what has been lost? How do we construct an affective and political accounting of the multitudinous dispossessions and appropriations which mark the history of our modern world? Is such an accounting even possible, or, more to the point, desirable?

It is tempting to speak of the cataclysms of settler-colonial usurpation and genocide, the tens of millions of Native American lives swallowed up by European capitalism's hunger for land and resources, the "clearing" of indigenous peoples to make way for settler states, economies, and subjectivities.²⁸ Or to speak of the tens of millions of Native African lives stamped out or subjugated in the attempt to transform people into so much cargo to be bought and sold, mere instruments to be employed in lucrative production and in service of white desire, the attempt to engage in a "hieroglyphics of the flesh" that enabled whites to take Africans "into 'account' as quantities."²⁹

The desperate fumbling for an accounting of modern dispossession could lead us to veritably endless enumeration: the colonial violence which, as Aimé Césaire observed, "oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack" of Western civilization;³⁰ the life-worlds extinguished in the fires of global coloniality, the eradication of whole systems of knowledge – ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the world – violence that Boaventura de Sousa Santos rightly names as "epistemicide[;]"³¹ the brutal advent of heteropatriarchy, signaled by the witch hunts in Europe and the gendered violence of empire, by the women and gender non-conforming peoples who were tortured, raped, and murdered so that a male supremacist capitalism could build a reliable waged workforce upon a foundation of unwaged reproductive labor, followed by centuries of daily violence and the relentless policing of sexuality and gender;³² the modern loss of

²⁸ For a succinct review of the demographic literature, see Amiya Kumar Bagchi, *Perilous Passage: Mankind and the Global Ascendancy of Capital* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 195-207. For an introduction to the global operations of settler-colonialism as structure, see Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016). On the concept of clearing, see Nicolás Juárez, "To Kill an Indian to Save a (Hu)Man: Native Life through the Lens of Genocide," *Wreck Park*, Volume 1, Issue 1 (2014).

²⁹ Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, Volume 17, Number 2 (Summer 1987), 64-81, 72. Emphasis in original. For a review of the relevant demography, see, again, Bagchi (2005), 195-207.

³⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972), 3. For a horrifying window into this colonial violence, see Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

³¹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the Global South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

³² *Inter alia*, Federici (2004); INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (2006); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Boston: South End Press, 2005); Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zed Books, 1986).

corporeality, sensuality, poetry, magic – the erotic, in Audre Lorde’s sense of the term³³ – through modernity’s cynical or paranoid subordination of the “low instincts of the Body” (and insurgent passions of the heart) before the orderly and productive “forces of Reason[;]”³⁴ the ruinous material and epistemological externalization and subordination of (extra-human) nature...³⁵ The ghosts of modernity seem to haunt us at every turn.³⁶

Yet, while the impulse to construct a definitive accounting of modern calamity is an understandable response to empire’s endemic elisions, disavowals, and forgettings, there is a sense in which even the presumption of being *able* to take stock of these multitudinous losses, to draw up a ledger of the extent and depth of modernity’s brutalities, is to engage in an act of epistemic violence and analytic hubris. Taking “the massive violence that preceded what has been called the [1992] rebellion or riots in the streets of Los Angeles” as an instantiation of the historic complex of (foundationally anti-black) violence he refers to simply as “the *disaster*,” Black Studies scholar Nahum Chandler asks, “how can we even hope to fathom the insidious pain, the psychic destruction...the torture, the physical and sexual convulsion, the horrendous unending repetition of violence upon violence that was, and remains, the violence of the [California v. Powell] verdict itself?” His answer: “We cannot pretend to *speak* of such things. We reach a limit; our limit. We cannot know, we cannot (only) name, here, in this domain. We, must be, responsible; only.”³⁷ Here Chandler echoes and is echoed by M. NourbeSe Philip when she speaks of “a story that cannot but must be told.” Her “not-telling” can only proceed by way of the edges and recesses of grammar and epistemology, “[t]hrough oath and through moan, through mutter, chant and babble, through babble and curse, through chortle and ululation[.]”³⁸ Philip and Chandler’s echoes, in turn, resonate in the insurgent black poet-theorist Fred Moten’s exhortation and lament:

³³ Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: The erotic as power,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom: 1984, 53-59).

³⁴ Federici (2004), 134, 137, *passim*.

³⁵ Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015).

³⁶ As Avery Gordon compellingly suggests, “[h]aunting is a constituent element of modern life...haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities...Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition.” Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8, 9.

³⁷ Nahum Chandler, *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2013), 1.

³⁸ M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 196.

they
can't even come close to

saying how fucked up it is,
with their anempathic
numbers, but they can say
that. they so attached

to it but they can say that.
o, say what they cannot can!³⁹



Image: Dungeon in Elmina Castle, Ghana, an infamous depot for the warehousing and sale of enslaved Africans during the transatlantic slave trade.

Perhaps it was the very impossibility of cataloguing such loss that led Walter Benjamin to summon an “angel of history”:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed: But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This

³⁹ Fred Moten, *The Feel Trio* (Tucson: Letter Machine Editions, 2014), 63.

storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward.⁴⁰



Image: Paul Klee, “Angelus Novus” (1920)

Yet even Benjamin’s anguished angel of history was cast towards a seemingly redemptive futurity, his wings caught in a maelstrom “we call progress.”⁴¹ All that had been lost promised to be redeemed by the perseverant march of history, and this promise has been the historical inheritance of the left. As the Guatemalan revolutionary poet Otto René Castillo once wrote,

it's beautiful to love the world
with eyes
that have not yet
been born.

And splendid
to know yourself victorious
when all around you
it's all still so cold,
so dark.⁴²

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 253-264, 257-258.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁴² Otto René Castillo, “Before the Scales, Tomorrow,” in Martín Espada (ed.), *Poetry Like Bread: Poetry of the Political Imagination* (Chicago: Curbstone Press, 1994).

For many of us today, however, futurity can often feel like a horizon on which the sun is setting, Utopia like a hope which is being exhausted by the political, ecological, and temporal transformations which mark our epoch. Politically, the radical imagination is reeling not only from three and a half decades of relentless counter-revolutionary attack, but also (and inseparably) from the dizzying social transformations produced by neoliberal globalization. While our times are far from placid or predictable, as evidenced by everything from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street to the Idle No More movement, there has been a growing sense, especially in the Global North, of political malaise – what the critical theorist Wendy Brown refers to as “left melancholia.”⁴³ Whereas half a century ago large swaths of society felt that they were on the cusp of revolution, today it seems that many feel, as Fredric Jameson is often quoted, that “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.”⁴⁴

There is more substance to this apocalyptic quip than many of us would care to admit. Even bracketing a variety of mounting political dilemmas and systemic contradictions one could enumerate – widening and deepening material inequalities, huge swaths of the global population deemed “supernumeraries” from the vantage point of capital, endless militarization and the ubiquity and banality of state violence, burgeoning neo-fascistic movements, ever more sophisticated geographical surveillance and control, the biopolitical domination that appears to run seamlessly through the fabric of daily life, and so on – we are faced with an unprecedented form of ecological crisis, in which capitalism threatens to destabilize the very climatic, biological, and geophysical basis for much of the life on this planet. How do we grasp the significance, in Naomi Klein’s words, of “the unbearable reality that we are living in a dying world, a world that a great many of us are helping to kill”?⁴⁵

⁴³ Wendy Brown, “Resisting Left Melancholia,” in Eng and Kazanjian (2003), 258-265.

⁴⁴ Fredric Jameson, “Future City,” *New Left Review*, Number 21 (May-June 2003), 65-79, 76.

⁴⁵ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 28.



Image: Edward Burtynsky, “Nickel Tailings No. 31, Sudbury, Ontario” (1996)

Timothy Morton coined the term “hyperobjects” to refer to things such as climate change, objects with such colossal geographies and temporalities relative to humans that they produce “a fundamental shaking of being, a *being-quake*.” According to Morton, humanity has entered a new phase of history “characterized by a traumatic loss of coordinates, ‘the end of the world.’”⁴⁶ Little wonder, then, that so many are struggling to find language for the enormity of the material and affective losses unfolding before us, but which some are only just now beginning to sense – like hairs standing in anticipation of the storm darkening upon the horizon.

Zadie Smith sees this struggle at work in the common recourse to positivist articulations of climate change at the expense of a more sensual register, one which might try to comprehend the dispossessions of the ecological climacteric through the affective dimensions of daily life, which might even have the courage to be honest about our ultimate inability to do so:

There is the scientific and ideological language for what is happening to the weather, but there are hardly any intimate words...In the end, the only thing that could create the necessary traction in our minds was the intimate loss of the things we loved...the day I went into an Italian garden in early July, with its owner, a woman in her eighties, and upon seeing the scorched yellow earth and

⁴⁶ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 19, 22.

withered roses, and hearing what only the really old people will confess—in all my years I've never seen anything like it—⁴⁷

The poet Ed Roberson speaks to this creeping recognition of unthinkable loss, to the desperate fumbling, the tragic groping towards the impossible which it predictably effects:

People are grabbing at the chance to see
the earth before the end of the world,
the world's death piece by piece each longer than we.⁴⁸



Image: David Walsh, “Blue Melt River, Petermann Glacier” (2009)

If ever there was an historical moment for which Butler’s notion of “precarious life” was an appropriate summation of our existential condition (if unevenly so), it is the one in which we find ourselves.

As if the unravelling of the world-ecological conditions for the reproduction of life were not enough, some have claimed that futural politics is itself threatened by the emergence of an historically unprecedented temporality, what Jonathan Crary calls the time of “24/7.” In this new 24/7 world, the boundaries between production and consumption, between work and play, even between sleep and wakefulness, become more and more porous, as labor and sociality become

⁴⁷ Zadie Smith, “Elegy for a Country’s Seasons,” *New York Review of Books* (3 April 2014). Emphasis in original.

⁴⁸ Ed Roberson, *To See the Earth Before the End of the World* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 3.

increasingly subsumed within the fluid circulation and relentless logic of capital:

24/7 steadily undermines distinctions between day and night, between light and dark, and between action and repose. It is a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience...*it is both of and after the disaster, characterized by the empty sky, in which no star or sign is visible, in which one's bearings are lost and orientation is impossible...24/7 announces a time without time, a time extracted from any material or identifiable demarcations, a time without sequence or recurrence. In its peremptory reductiveness, it celebrates a hallucination of presence, of an unalterable permanence composed of incessant, frictionless operations...the implacability of 24/7 is its impossible temporality.*⁴⁹

Similarly, Fredric Jameson contends that, while “[i]t is obvious that the deconstruction of postmodernity in terms of a dominant of space over time cannot ever, for the temporal beings we are, mean the utter abolition of temporality...[we are nonetheless witnessing something akin] to the abolition, or at least the repression, of historicity.” That is to say, what is dying is our “capacity to energize collective action,” to imagine and realize alternative futures. The absence of “a genuine historicity...is betrayed by apathy and cynicism, paralysis and depression.”⁵⁰

Some will counter that there is nothing truly new in the geographic and temporal disintegrations that constitute our age. To live within modernity, after all, is “to live a life of paradox and contradiction[,]” to know the terrible grip “of disorientation and disintegration, of life falling apart...[to] know the thrill and the dread of a world in which ‘all that is solid melts into air’.”⁵¹ And yet, when grappling with the reality of losses which operate at geographies and temporalities which absolutely exceed our historical imaginations, one cannot help but ask: could this be an instance in which the scale, depth, and completeness of catastrophe overwhelms the very possibility of mourning? Are we approaching some kind of asymptotic ruination, “the experience of pure destruction, of an infinite loss, without mourning, without dialectic”?⁵²

At the end of the world, what could it mean to mourn?

⁴⁹ Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2013), 17, 29. Much of Crary's argument is anticipated in Debord's conception of “spectacular time”: “The spectacle, as the present social organization of the paralysis of history and memory, of the abandonment of history built on the foundation of historical time, is the *false consciousness of time*.” Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970), 158. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁰ Fredric Jameson, “The Aesthetics of Singularity,” *New Left Review*, Number 92 (March-April 2015), 101-132, 120.

⁵¹ Berman (1982), 13.

⁵² Marc Nichanian, “Catastrophic Mourning,” in Eng and Kazanjian (2003), 99-124, 120.



Image: Still from Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia* (2011)

V.

For Freud, there were two basic psychological responses to the losses which all of us inevitably experience at various points in our lives: “the normal emotion of grief, and its expression in mourning,” and the pathological condition of melancholia.⁵³ At the risk of oversimplifying his theory, Freud seems to understand melancholia principally as the inability to grieve, an inability to “complete” the “work of mourning[,]” which consists of gradually withdrawing the libidinal energies cathected in the lost object such that the ego can become “free and uninhibited again.”⁵⁴ The melancholic, however, seems to be unable to detach their libidinal energies from the lost object, and thereby comes to identify with what has been lost. “In this way the loss of the object...[becomes] transformed into a loss of the ego” itself.⁵⁵ Melancholia is like an “open wound.”⁵⁶

Freud's formulation requires the lost object to be firmly relegated to the past. Yet what if the wound remains open because the originary psychic violence has yet to reach its conclusion? Saidiya Hartman has posed this question with respect to transatlantic racial slavery, which empire would like very much to consign to the past and passive category of tragic yet redemptive history, a dark but ultimately triumphant chapter in the progressive teleology of Western modernity. Against this historical instrumentalization and disavowal, this mythical tale of common strife and redemption, Hartman reveals the shaky

⁵³ Freud (1963), 164.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 166.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 170.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 174.

foundations of modernity's story of progress and raises the most terrible and necessary of questions:

the distinction between the past and the present founders on the interminable grief engendered by slavery and its aftermath. How might we understand mourning, when the event has yet to end? When the injuries not only endure, but are inflicted anew? Can one mourn what has yet ceased happening?⁵⁷

Hartman's question points to the urgency of a deeper interrogation of the radically uneven and incommensurable character of the colossal, multitudinous, ongoing losses which are constitutive of the modern world, and, further, of the apparently universal nature of the epochal spatio-temporal crisis signified by the shorthand, "the end of the world." Hartman is one the central interlocutors for several critical strands of thought within contemporary Black Studies that have unflinchingly critiqued the assumption that everyone can claim membership within "the world," or the "ontological totality" which posits humanity as a universal category, in the first place.⁵⁸ Their substantial differences notwithstanding, schools of thought such as Afro-pessimism, Afrarealism, and black optimism agree that anti-blackness is a fundamental antagonism – for some, *the* fundamental antagonism, non-analogous to all other violent dispensations – through which the modern world has *come into being*, and which structures *being in* the modern world.⁵⁹

Frank B. Wilderson III, perhaps the most well-known proponent of Afro-pessimist thought, argues that

[t]he ruse of analogy *erroneously locates Blacks in the world* – a place where they have not been since the dawning of Blackness. This attempt to position the Black in the world by way of analogy is not only a mystification, and often erasure, of Blackness's grammar of suffering (accumulation and

⁵⁷ Saidiya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Number 104, Volume 4 (Fall 2002), 757-777, 758.

⁵⁸ The concept of "ontological totality" comes from Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁵⁹ The tradition of Afro-pessimism is most prominently associated with the work of Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton, with thinkers such as Franz Fanon, Orlando Patterson, Saidiya Hartman, and Hortense Spillers as central interlocutors, and with thinkers such as Christina Sharpe and Ronald Judy often located within its milieu. Afrarealism is associated with the work of Joy James. Black optimism is associated with the work of Fred Moten. For surveys of these overlapping schools of thought, see P. Khalil Saucier and Tryon P. Woods, *On Marronage: Ethical Confrontations with Antiblackness* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2015); Jared Sexton, "Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word," *Rhizomes*, Issue 29 (2016), available at: <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue29/sexton.html>; Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism*, Volume 50, Number 2 (Spring 2008), 177-218; and, Fred Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 112, Number 4 (2013), 737-780.

fungibility or the status of being non-Human) but simultaneously also a provision for civil society, promising an enabling modality for Human ethical dilemmas...[In fact,] modernity marks the emergence of a new ontology because it is an era in which an entire race [black people]...stand as socially dead in relation to the rest of the world.⁶⁰

For Wilderson, modern racial slavery never ended, precisely because slavery is better understood as a form of social death – defined as being the object of natal alienation, general dishonour, and gratuitous (as opposed to instrumental) violence – and it is this ontological death which gives life to the world. In other words, blackness is a kind of anti-Humanity, “a position against which Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews its coherence, its corporeal integrity[.]” Blacks stand outside the world, even as they bring it into being. “No slave, no world. And...no slave is *in* the world.”⁶¹

Grappling with their own set of erasures, disavowals, and fallacious analogies, critical currents within Native Studies have sought to elucidate the centrality of indigenous positionality in the making of the modern world, in its violent incorporations and foundational exclusions. Just as critical theorists in Black Studies have worked to push analyses of slavery and modernity beyond narrowly economic materialisms and towards the study of ontological totality, indigenous scholars have sought to extend and deepen analyses of the logics of settler-colonialism that have tended to represent dispossession and genocide strictly in terms of the settler’s drive for land and material resources.⁶²

Building on the work of Afro-pessimists, Nicolás Juárez argues that “the violence of genocidal clearing...has come to define what it means to be Indian.” Settler-colonialism constructs indigenous territory as *terra nullius*, as a space which must be cleared by way of dispossession and genocide not only to facilitate the conquest of land and material resources, but more broadly to bring civilization and intra-settler subjective life into being.⁶³ Similarly, Jodi Byrd examines “how ideas of Indians and Indianness have served as the ontological ground through which...settler colonialism enacts itself...indigenous peoples in the new world...are the transit through which the dialectic of subject and object occurs.”⁶⁴ In each of these instances, indigeneity also comes to approximate a form of social death, insofar as the only mode of indigenous entry *into* the

⁶⁰ Wilderson (2010), 37, 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11. My emphasis.

⁶² For an introduction to some of the relevant contemporary scholarship, see Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (eds.), *Theorizing Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014) and Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁶³ Juárez (2014), 6.

⁶⁴ Byrd (2011), xix, xxv.

world, into civil society proper, is by way of a civilizing deracination, which is to say a kind of auto-genocide.⁶⁵

These critical traditions within Black and Native Studies throw into sharp relief the radically uneven character of the dispossessive violence which constitutes the modern world across time and space, and thus the impossibility of any radical politics of mourning which takes as its point of departure some *a priori* unity of historical subjects. This uneven geographical and temporal production, circulation, and distribution of loss is marked not only by massive quantitative inequalities but also by often incommensurable qualitative differences. In other words, not only are the burdens of loss and culpability for violence structured unequally along lines of (dis/)ability, race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, class, and other social geographies, but the very nature of these losses across space and time is often without analog. It is not simply that empire renders only some lives as “grievable,” as Butler has famously suggested,⁶⁶ but also that modernity structures the very (im)possibility of mourning, in Freud’s sense of a process which reaches conclusion and resolution.



Image: The names of murdered black women. Illustration by Tara Jacoby (2015)

In this vein, U.S. President Barack Obama’s designation of the November 13th, 2015 bombing of Paris as “an attack on all of humanity and the universal values we share”⁶⁷ foregrounded the cruellest of ironies, even as it was, in the same instant, the most banal rehearsal of a fictitious universalism intended to obscure

⁶⁵ Juárez (2014).

⁶⁶ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

⁶⁷ As quoted in Karl de Vries, “Barack Obama calls Paris massacre ‘outrageous,’” *CNN* (14 November 2015).

the radical unevenness of modern violence and dispossession (“*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins”).⁶⁸

Yesterday the fragility of power
was laid bare, momentarily
stripped of its shadowless pretence.
Today Humanity trembles, haunted
by the trace of its own
monstrous figuration.

Meanwhile Beirut is silently
burning
and Indonesia is
burning
and even these words are
complicit in the quotidian violence
which is sometimes
tragic
but always bearable.

Je suis Paris. Michael Brown
is not
my name, was never
the name I was given.
My name rests upon an edifice
of namelessness, of loveless naming.

For those who believe they possess
a home in Humanity’s conciliatory
embrace, who pronounce their names
true, rightful

⁶⁸ Benjamin (1968), 255. Emphasis in original.

for these hapless travellers, betrayal
is love's foremost condition of possibility.⁶⁹

If we take seriously the unspeakable depth and extent of violence which the aforementioned critical traditions in Black and Native Studies have worked to uncover, the inescapable brutality which is the condition of possibility for modernity, for the historical ontology we call “the world,” we cannot help but ask the questions: if it is true that we are approaching the end of the world, need we mourn its passing? What does the end of the world mean for those who have never been able to attain standing in it in the first place (had they sought it), whose ontological condition has been that of “radical homelessness?”⁷⁰

These are some of the questions which animate Moten's beautiful “black optimistic” appreciation and critique of Afro-pessimism, in which, “by way of the slightest, most immeasurable reversal of emphasis[,]” he turns the world upside down. While Moten is “in total agreement with the Afro-pessimistic understanding of blackness as exterior to civil society and, moreover, as unmappable within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject[,]” for Moten, it is not blackness that is the site of social death, but rather *the world*, or “civil society and the coordinates of the transcendental aesthetic – cognate as they are not with the failed but rather the successful state and its abstract, equivalent citizens – to be the fundamentally and essentially antisocial nursery for a necessarily necropolitical imitation of life.”⁷¹ Or, put more simply, “fuck a home in this world, if you think you have one.”⁷²

Blackness, in Moten's analysis and poetics, ought to be understood not so much as a site of abjection (even as its anoriginal emergence is given by way of modernity's most brutal violence), but rather as the very essence of social life, as fugitive being, “a movement of escape, the stealth of the stolen that can be said, since it inheres in every closed circle, to break every enclosure.”⁷³ Blackness is the mode of operation “that will produce the absolute overturning, the absolute turning of this motherfucker out...[that which] bears or is the potential to end the world.”⁷⁴ This radical movement in and towards the “generative dispersion

⁶⁹ David K. Langstaff, “Je suis Paris,” Unpublished Poem (14 November 2015).

⁷⁰ This turn of phrase is drawn from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, “Michael Brown,” *boundary 2*, Volume 42, Number 4 (November 2015), 81-87.

⁷¹ Moten (2013), 740.

⁷² Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn: Minor Compositions, 2013), 140.

⁷³ Moten (2008), 179.

⁷⁴ Moten (2013), 742, 739.

of a general antagonism that blackness holds and protects,”⁷⁵ is, as Césaire suggested, the (dis)order with which we are tasked:

What can I do?

One must begin somewhere.

Begin what?

The only thing in the world worth beginning:

The End of the world of course.⁷⁶

But allow me to return for a moment to the beginning. Earlier I noted that I’ve often experienced the loss of my mother through a kind of doubling – once in life, once in death. The world has told me that I should understand the first of these losses in terms of failure: my mother, in other words, failed to care for my sister and I in the ways each of us were made to expect of her – the maternity the world at once demanded of and robbed from her. But if we are to speak of her life in terms of failure, let us speak also of her magnificent failure to seek standing in and for the world that refused her. Let us speak of her queer, criminal, fugitive failures.⁷⁷ Her failure to hide her body from the surveillance of common decency, failure to recognize herself as invalid, as corporeality past due on its payment, failure to accept the solemnity of bad debt.⁷⁸ Her failure to properly sort the bodies from the no-bodies,⁷⁹ the crackheads and vagrants, white trash and fat ones from the self-evidently self-possessed, self-contained and self-determined. Failure to disavow the pleasures of her undercommon sociality,⁸⁰ passing cigarettes and raucous laughter at the edges of the hospital, clouds of bittersweet smoke in abandoned buildings, eroticisms of flesh that didn’t know its place. Her failure to contain her furies out of respect for the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 742.

⁷⁶ Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (Middletown: Wesleyan Press, 2001), 22.

⁷⁷ The notion of queer failure comes from Jack [then Judith] Halberstam, *The Art of Queer Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁷⁸ On bad debt, see Harney and Moten (2013), 58-69.

⁷⁹ I borrow this term from Denise Ferreira da Silva, “No-Bodies: Law, Raciality, and Violence,” *Griffith Law Review*, Volume 18, Issue 2 (2009), 212-236.

⁸⁰ On the undercommons, see Harney and Moten (2013).

necrophiles, failure to pretend that the world is a viable project, her failure to aspire toward what that world had refused her.

My mother failed to make a home in this world. And, by way of that failure, she taught me that this world was never ours to begin with. This willingness to depart from the world, to refuse standing in and for the world, is the condition of possibility for a radical politics of mourning.

VI.

To call for the end of the world, of course, is not to turn one's back on the terrible unfolding of socio-ecological catastrophe and the unpredictable death throes of a world coming apart under the weight of its own contradictions, for neither the earth nor social life, in all their irreducible beauty and irrepressible generativity, have ever been contained by the world. It is, rather, a radical recognition of the socio-ecological entanglement that the world must deny even as its existence depends upon it, and which the destabilizing force of loss can so readily reveal. It is the fullest embrace of the insurgent knowledge that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."⁸¹

Nevertheless, as the onset of the end of the world becomes more and more discernible, especially by way of an epochal world-ecological crisis⁸² which is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore, a gnawing anxiety is taking hold in civil society, or among those subjects who have hitherto laid claim, however incompletely or uneasily, to standing in the world. In some respects, these subjects are experiencing a loss they are unable to name, let alone reckon with, and have thereby stumbled upon a narrow stretch of common ground with those who have been the objects of modernity's most violent inclusions and foundational exclusions, insofar as each approaches mourning as a structural impossibility. Herein lies the possibility of coalition, albeit a possibility which has historically proven elusive. For we are all implicated (however unequally) in this vast matrix of loss produced by the modern world, this incalculable abyss from which the waxing tide of melancholia rises. As Moten sums it up in his passing address to the settler, "[t]he coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?"⁸³

⁸¹ Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in Lorde (1984), 110-113.

⁸² Cf. Moore (2015).

⁸³ Harney and Moten (2013), 140-141.

If it is true, to play off of Milton Friedman’s tired quip, that we are all (becoming) melancholics now,⁸⁴ am I suggesting that our fate is simply and ineluctably one of political morass, of damaged life, of sunken dreams? Must we resign ourselves to Freud’s pathology, that of humans marked by “painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, [and] loss of the capacity to love”?⁸⁵

Against such pessimistic diagnostics, queer theorists and critical race scholars have sought to move beyond representations of the melancholic as inherently pathological, instead positing melancholia as a site of socio-analytical fecundity and political generativity. David Eng and David Kazanjian, in the introduction to their scholarly compilation, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, suggest that melancholia in fact “offers a capaciousness of meaning in relation to losses encompassing the individual and the collective, the spiritual and the material, the psychic and the social, the aesthetic and the political.” Whereas Freud’s conception of “normal mourning” treats the past as “resolved, finished, and dead, in melancholia the past remains steadfastly alive in the present.”⁸⁶ Recalling Benjamin’s image of seizing “memory, as it flashes in a moment of danger[,]”⁸⁷ Eng and Kazanjian suggest that melancholia offers “an ongoing and open relationship with the past — bringing its ghosts and spectres, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present.”⁸⁸



Image: 2015 black-led protest against white supremacy and racist state violence

⁸⁴ The original quip – “we are all Keynesians now” – was attributed to the famous neoliberal intellectual in the December 31st, 1965 issue of *Time* magazine.

⁸⁵ Freud (1963), 165.

⁸⁶ David Eng and David Kazanjian, “Introduction: Mourning Remains,” in Eng and Kazanjian (2003), 1-25. I should qualify my oppositional placement of their perspective in relation to Freud’s by noting that Eng and Kazanjian see the seeds of their orientation within Freud’s own contradictions, doubts, and hesitations. *Ibid.*, 3, 3-4.

⁸⁷ Benjamin (1968), 255.

⁸⁸ Eng and Kazanjian (2003), 4.

In North America, the radical potentiality of unfinished mourning has been powerfully expressed by the historic upsurges in black and indigenous resistance of the past several years. The recent black rebellions, activism, and organizing often associated with, but hardly reducible to, the rallying cry, “Black Lives Matter,” have challenged the ubiquitous assault on black life with a potency not seen in decades.⁸⁹ As the poet Claudia Rankine puts it, “Black Lives Matter aligns with the dead, continues the mourning and refuses the forgetting in front of all of us.”⁹⁰ Closely connected in time and space, the wellspring of recent Native American resistance that has been most prominently associated with the Idle No More movement,⁹¹ but which continues in a variety of forms,⁹² evinces a radical mourning within and against genocide. The explosion of indigenous resistance everywhere bears the trace of unfinished and impossible mourning, or, as Tara Williamson (Gaabishkigamaag and Opaskwayak Cree Nation) intones, “[m]y heart’s been on fire a hundred times before[.]”⁹³



Image: Idle No More protesters demonstrate outside the British Consulate at College Park in Toronto, 2013.

⁸⁹ For background on this rallying cry, see Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” *The Feminist Wire* (6 December 2014). For an analysis of the more general black upsurge within which this rallying ought to be situated, see Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

⁹⁰ Claudia Rankine, “The Condition of Black Life is one of Mourning,” *The New York Times Magazine* (22 June 2015).

⁹¹ See The Kinq-nda-niimi Collective, *The Winter We Danced: Voices from the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement* (Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring Publishing, 2014).

⁹² For instance, in the widespread indigenous resistance to pipeline construction in the U.S. and Canada, most recently in the powerful inter-tribal coalition that developed in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline. Julian Brave NoiseCat and Annie Spice, “A History and Future of Resistance,” *Jacobin* (8 September 2016), available at: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/09/standing-rock-dakota-access-pipeline-protest/>.

⁹³ Tara Williamson, “Come My Way,” in The Kinq-nda-niimi Collective (2014), 31.

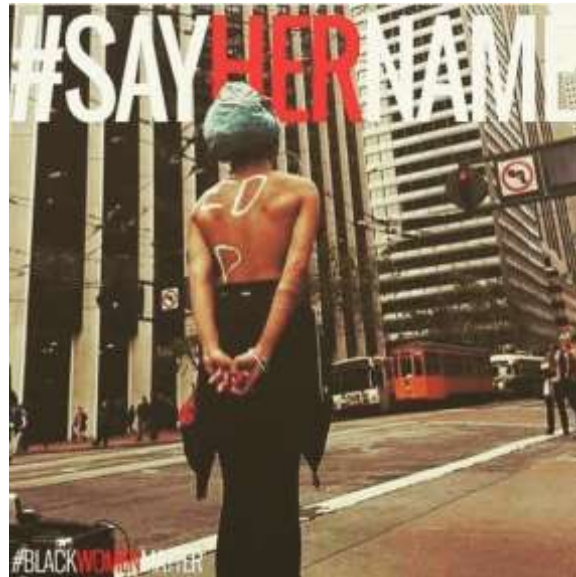


Image: Photograph from #sayhername #blacklivesmatter action in San Francisco, 2015

With its potential to animate histories of loss which are not yet past, to directly summon the spirits already haunting our worlds with their ghostly presence, melancholia might prove a powerful impetus for a radical politics of mourning capable of throwing the relations of violence which produce modernity's massively uneven geographies of loss into stark relief. Yet a radical politics of mourning must be more than a mere negation of the violence constitutive of loss; it must also find its power in the faith that often what survives *exceeds* what was lost. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney speak to this excess as it has been felt by those who “remain in the hold [of the slave ship], in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world, to trace the visionary company and join it.”⁹⁴ In the depths of unspeakable dispossessions (which must yet be spoken), they see a fugitive sociality, both a prefiguration of another world and a return to a world which was always there:

in the hold, in the undercommons of a new feel, another kind of feeling became common. This form of feeling was not collective, not given to decision, not adhering or reattaching to settlement, nation, state, territory or historical story; nor was it repossessed by the group, which could not now feel as one, reunified in time and space...This is modernity's insurgent feel, its inherited caress, its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh. *This is the feel that no individual can stand, and no state abide.*

⁹⁴ Harney and Moten (2013), 94. Harney and Moten's black optimistic notion of “fantasy in the hold” is in dialogue with Wilderson's Afro-pessimist ethico-analytical aspiration “to stay in the hold of the ship, despite...[his] fantasies of flight.” Wilderson (2010), xi.

This is the feel we might call hapticality...

Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here. *Hapticality, the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you*, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem. Or perhaps we could say these are now recomposed in the wake of the shipped. To feel others is unmediated, immediately social, amongst us, our thing...This is our hapticality, our love. This is love for the shipped, as the shipped.⁹⁵

In other words, returning to Butler once more, loss not only “delineates the ties we have to others...shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties of bonds that compose us[,]” it holds out the possibility of a liberatory (loving, desirous, uncontainable) sociality, an insurgent drive that runs beneath and beyond the depredations and dehumanizations of the modern world. Thus, in its most imaginative and generous incarnation, a radical politics of mourning offers us an opportunity to gather in and through dispossessions in hopes of (re)discovering what it might mean, to borrow a beautiful turn of phrase from the Martinican poet and theorist Édouard Glissant, “to consent not to be a single being.”⁹⁶



Image: Ancient artwork in Cueva de las Manos (Cave of Hands),
Río Pinturas, Argentina

⁹⁵ Ibid., 98, 99. Emphasis mine.

⁹⁶ Édouard Glissant, “One World in Relation: Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara,” *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 28 (2011), 4-19, 5, quoted in Moten (2013), 737-780, 745.

VII.

In a short exegesis on the politics of love, the autonomist Marxist theorist Michael Hardt distinguishes between “two faces of love,” two moments bound together in dialectical unity. On the one hand, there is the moment of the event, of the encounter, or, in more familiar terms, of “*falling in love*.” In a political reading, this is the love which “must be a revolutionary force that radically breaks with the structures of social life we know, overthrowing its norms and institutions.” On the other hand, there is the moment of the ceremonial, the lasting bond within a sequence of encounters, or, in more familiar terms, of “*being in love*.” In a political reading, this is the love which “must provide mechanisms of lasting association and stable social bonds and thus create enduring institutions...[a ceremony] that facilitates and organizes the return of joyful, beneficial social encounters.”⁹⁷ Drawing from Hardt, I’d like to suggest differentiating between two somewhat parallel moments within a broader radical politics of mourning: the mourning in ritual and the mourning in rupture.

The ritual of mourning is a procedure which has some legitimacy under our current regime – evidenced by the ubiquity of the funeral and other ceremonies intended to mark an individual’s passing from this life – even if this regime works diligently to deprive these rituals of the potentially transformative power of gathering in and through loss. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ritual as a “religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.”⁹⁸ In contradistinction to this understanding of ritual as the performance of preordained solemnity, a radical politics of mourning would emphasize ritual as a form of loving ceremony, transformative assembly, wellspring of resilience. As the French philosopher Marc Augé would have it, ritual ought to be a practice which moves against the repetition of sameness which plagues “the eternal present in which we now live[,]” that it is precisely our collective desire to depart from these relations that animates the widespread hunger for ritual characteristic of our present historical moment. For Augé, ritual is, on the one hand, “rooted in the past...at the same time it is focused on the future, and the emotion attached to its celebration is born of the feeling that it has succeeded in bringing something into being, that it has produced a *beginning*.”⁹⁹

However, whereas Augé seems to believe that transformative ritual has been progressively degraded, theorists whose production of knowledge is more meaningfully embedded within and sustained by communities in struggle –

⁹⁷ Michael Hardt, “The Procedures of Love / Die Verfahren der Liebe” 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts / 100 Notizen – 100 Gedanken, *DOCUMENTA* (13) (Kassel: documenta und Museum Fridericianum, 2012), 4, 6, 11-12.

⁹⁸ “Ritual,” *Oxford English Dictionary* website (accessed 28 September 2015). Available from: www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/ritual

⁹⁹ Marc Augé, *The Future* (London: Verso, 2015), 21.

from black feminists to indigenous scholars – have long recognized that radical rituals of mourning are multitudinous across the historical geographies of modernity. The transnational feminist scholar M. Jacqui Alexander, for example, probes the losses generated by transatlantic racial slavery, of the “overcrowded passageways...still packed centuries later with the scent of jostled grief so thick that no passage of human time could absorb it[,]” and the ways in which African cosmologies have “housed memories...necessary to distil the psychic traumas produced under the grotesque conditions of slavery.” For Alexander, it is to the sacred that we ought to turn for this variegated “healing work, that is, spiritual labor,” for this liberatory reconstruction of “a terrain that is both exterior and interior.”¹⁰⁰

Yet whether one turns to the secular or the sacred, or troubles these distinctions altogether, we have no shortage of radical rituals of mourning to which we might turn for insight and inspiration, or in which we have already found ourselves rehearsing sometimes improvisatory songs of different worlds. From days of remembrance for transgendered lives lost to (racialized) heteropatriarchy to candlelight vigils for black lives lost to (heteropatriarchal) white supremacy, there can be no question that radical ceremonies of mourning are already with us. Moreover, often these rituals are implicit and quotidian, open secrets moving beneath and against the surface of everyday life. For, as Harney and Moten observe, given “the state’s monopolization of ceremony, ceremonies are small and profligate; if they weren’t everywhere and all the time we’d be dead. The ruins, which are small rituals, aren’t absent but surreptitious, a range of songful scarring, when people give a sign, shake a hand.”¹⁰¹ Our task is to continue to uncover, protect, and (re)invent these rituals, to expand the space for their flourishing, to inflect ceremonies that seem to have forgotten what or why they have lost with a transformative invocation of ghosts, to gather in dispossession to sing praises of all that survives.

¹⁰⁰ M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 288, 293, 312, 287-332.

¹⁰¹ Harney and Moten (2015), 83.



Image: Micah Bazant, “Free CeCe and Support Trans Women of Color” (2013)

This past year, while working with the disability justice-based performance project, Sins Invalid, I had the fortune of joining this brilliant and fiercely tender group of artists and activists in the construction of precisely this kind of transformative ritual of mourning.¹⁰² Part performance, part ceremony, “Disability Liberated” brought together scholars, students, activists, and broader community to give voice to a conspicuous silence one encounters even in otherwise radical critiques of the prison industrial complex – namely the virtual absence of analyses or practices exposing and challenging the intersections of policing, imprisonment, and ableism, in spite of the glaringly disproportionate number of people with disabilities subjected to police violence or locked up within prisons and other sites of incarceration.¹⁰³ To quote from our description of the event’s origin, purpose, and ethos:

Disability Liberated is not a passive grieving, but a furious mourning, an elegy to all that we have lost, and a promise to fight like hell for all that survives.

¹⁰² Sins Invalid is a disability justice-based performance project, and has been at the forefront of developing disability justice as an analysis and framework for movement building. For more on the analysis, practices, and principles of disability justice, see www.sinsinvalid.org.

¹⁰³ The most notable scholarly exception to this tendency is the important book which inspired our convening: L. Ben-Moshe, C. Chapman, A. Carey (Eds.) *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Disability Liberated was born out of collective struggle. We sought first and foremost to pay homage to the countless disabled lives that have been lost to the violence of able-bodied supremacy, whether that loss be corporeal – souls robbed of their very embodiment by state, vigilante, or, too often, intimate violence – or the loss of freedoms through incarceration in prisons or other disciplinary institutions. Our understanding of able-bodied supremacy has been formed in relation to intersecting systems of domination and exploitation...

Disability Liberated keeps these connections front and center, drawing upon the legacies of cultural and spiritual resistance within *vodou* that confronted and subverted colonial powers along a thousand underground paths, igniting small persistent fires of rebellion in everyday life...We know that there has always been resistance to all forms of oppression, as we know through our bones that there have simultaneously been disabled people visioning a world where we flourish, that values and celebrates us all in our diverse beauty.

Disability Liberated is an intervention into a landscape of absences. For if the ruthless violence of able-bodied supremacy were not bad enough, we also find ourselves confronted with the myriad ways in which ableism renders this violence invisible...Just as we can trace the origins of the police to slave patrols, the coercive warehousing of people with disabilities and the rampant violence visited upon us today is rooted in eugenics, forced sterilization, and outright genocide...

While we grieve what has been lost, we also celebrate we who remain, and struggle towards what is yet-to-be. Disability justice is a vision and practice of this yet-to-be, a map that we create with our ancestors and our great grandchildren onward, in the width and depth of our multiplicities and histories, a movement towards a world in which every body and mind is seen as valuable and beautiful.

*We unwrap our tongues, we bind our stories, we choose to be naked
we show our markings, we lick our fingers, we stroke our bellies
we laugh at midnight, we change the ending
we begin, and begin again.¹⁰⁴*

In an effort to ground our ceremony in place, to anchor the sensuousness of bodyminds gathered together to grieve, we constructed a physical altar to honor those countless disabled lives claimed by ableism, the carceral state, and their gatekeepers. As we placed keys as symbols of the forced confinement these lives were subjected to, I thought of my mother, whose last days were spent in a so-

¹⁰⁴ “Disability Liberated: Mourn the Dead and Fight like Hell for the Living,” *Disability Liberated* at the Disability Incarcerated Conference and Symposium, UC Berkeley (8-9 March 2015). The last italicized section of the text was excerpted with permission from Aurora Levins Morales, *Kindling: Writings on the Body* (Cambridge: Palabrera Press, 2013).

called nursing home, because a world which deemed her life unworthy left her no other choice. And I felt myself swept into the river of sorrows, the blood that winds unevenly through the historical geography of modernity, here in rivulets and there in cascades. Yet I also felt, if only for a moment, a deep sense of love and gratitude for the fact and manner of our gathering, a passing glimpse into a world beneath and beyond, a world-in-becoming.



Image: "Disability Liberated" altar to lives claimed by ableist/carceral violence

"Disability Liberated" is just one example amidst an expansive and variegated landscape of transformative mourning ritual, even if this landscape often feels distant or obscure. And, just as volcanic eruptions and seismic shifts form and re-form the geophysical landscape, so too is the landscape of ceremonial mourning (re)constituted by moments of rupture and upheaval. The activist-scholars Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini conceptualize rupture as "[a] break, actual or in the imaginary, with previous ways of being, seeing and relating change," "a shift in people's imaginations from which new social relationships emerge."¹⁰⁵ If it is true, as Marx suggested, that the sedimented "tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living[.]"¹⁰⁶ then ruptures are the quakes which create fissures in this sediment. History is

¹⁰⁵ Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini, *Occupying Language: The Secret Rendezvous with History and the Present* (Brooklyn: Zuccotti Park Press, 2012), 29; Marina Sitrin, *Everyday Revolutions: Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 40.

¹⁰⁶ Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (1852), quoted from www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm (accessed 3 August 2015).

cracked open, and the apparent dead weight of geological time comes alive with historicity and potentiality.

In moments of ruptural mourning, ghosts which have been consigned to the world of the dead and forgotten come alive in fundamentally unpredictable and uncontrollable ways; history “flashes up,” and, in this flash, relations of violence that have hidden themselves in the shadows are laid bare; a kinetic improvisation animates bodies and spirits; and, in its most beautiful manifestations, this mournful social poesis is the (re)discovery of hapticality, “the touch of the undercommons...the feel that what is to come is here...the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you.”¹⁰⁷

In the United States, we are living through a time in which ruptural mourning has returned as a powerful social force. In the wake of the non-indictment of Michael Brown’s killer, followed shortly by the murder of Freddie Gray, black communities from Ferguson to Oakland to Baltimore rose up in defense of and with love for black life, against the machine which makes “the condition of black life...one of mourning,” against the daily indignities and the “random manglings, the gashing of heads and brains blown out over the river as the body seeks to escape.”¹⁰⁸ The watchdogs of white supremacy, of course, were quick to denounce these rebellions as “senseless violence,”¹⁰⁹ but if there was any kernel of truth to such statements, it was that black communities had gathered in refusal of the “common sense” that treats the destruction of black flesh as “tradition,” as “heritage.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ The notions here of improvisation and social poesis are inspired by, though not necessarily equivalent to, those found throughout Fred Moten’s body of work.

¹⁰⁸ Rankine (2015); Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 67.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Brendan Bordelon, “Missouri Gov. Warns Against ‘Senseless Violence’ in Anticipation of Ferguson Grand Jury Verdict,” *The Corner* (11 November 2014).

¹¹⁰ Coates (2015), 67.



Image: Iconic photograph of participant in Ferguson Rebellion returning police tear gas¹¹¹

Giving ourselves over to moments of ruptural mourning, however, is far easier said than done. The reflexive reenactment of hegemonic socialities, even for the most avowedly “militant” among us, is perhaps power’s greatest asset. It was, I believe, precisely this fact that Benjamin had in mind when he declared that, “[i]n every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.”¹¹² Moreover, for many communities (for whom hegemony has never been a tenable bargain) the impediments to generalized rupture have less to do with the lure of acquiescence than with the more immediate threat of, and incessant subjection to, material violence and repression. In other words, in many communities, insurgent drives are regulated not so much through the dull enticements of conformism as through the state’s menacing reminders of all that yet stands to be lost (stolen).¹¹³ These dual recognitions trouble any simple assumption of a necessarily generative dialectic between ruptural and ritualistic mourning.

I think back, for instance, to an experience I had while working with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in the occupied West Bank of Palestine.¹¹⁴ My comrades and I had been participating in weekly demonstrations in Nabi Saleh, a village known for its history of resistance to

¹¹¹ Notwithstanding the fact that this was clearly an act of self-defense, this participant has since been charged with assaulting a police officer. See Kim Bell, “Ferguson protestor who threw back tear gas cannister [sic] in iconic photo is charged,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (26 August 2015).

¹¹² Benjamin (1968), 255.

¹¹³ For an examination of the latter mechanism of social control as it manifested specifically under the Nazi regime, but which draws out more general historical implications, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). For the violent regulation of black agency in the antebellum and postbellum U.S., see Saidiya Hartman’s masterful *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹¹⁴ For a chronicle of these experiences, see the blog I maintained at the time: <https://memoryagainstforgetfulness.wordpress.com/>

Israeli settler-colonialism since at least the 1967 *Naksa* (setback/calamity).¹¹⁵ These regular protests were most immediately in resistance to the relentless encroachment of Zionist settlement, but of course were grounded in a more general refusal of settler-colonial dispossession, military occupation, and incremental genocide. The day after one of these demonstrations, when the various stripes of international solidarity activists were absent and media documentation was minimal, Israeli soldiers murdered Rushdi Tamimi, a 31 year old Palestinian man from the Nabi Saleh community. The soldiers shot him in the stomach and the leg, then prevented him from receiving timely medical treatment while his sister and other villagers watched helplessly.¹¹⁶ He died later in a hospital in Ramallah, the latest in a long line of martyrs Nabi Saleh was forced to claim.

As Israeli bombs rained down on the Gaza strip – at the time, the latest in Israel’s string of assaults on Gaza, euphemistically named “Operation Pillar of Defense” – we joined the throngs of friends, family, neighbours, and other Palestinians who recognized Rushdi’s face as their own for a mourning ritual that stretched from Ramallah all the way back to Nabi Saleh. With the number of dead mounting in Gaza, and the seemingly unbearable character of Palestinian daily life, there was talk of being on the cusp of a third *Intifada* (shaking off). Feeling the depth of sorrow and rage coursing in and through the streets of Ramallah, it seemed that ruptural mourning could not help but split the earth and let loose the righteous spirits of dead and dispossessed.

¹¹⁵ The *Naksa* is generally understood in relation to, and as an extension of, the *Nakba* (catastrophe), the Palestinian description of the 1948 Zionist ethnic cleansing of some 800,000 Palestinians through and upon which the State of Israel was founded. On the latter, see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006).

¹¹⁶ An edited video taken by his sister can be watched here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTmPach1Yjg>



Image: Photograph of Rushdi Tamimi's mourning procession, taken by author (2012)

And yet, though Palestinian demonstrations and skirmishes waxed and Israeli military forces flexed their muscles, the dream of rupture failed to materialize. Why, one cannot help but ask, does one moment of grief thrust open the floodgates of history, while another settles into a mournful ritual of resilience and survival? What complex historical valences transformed the deaths of Michael Brown, or Emmett Till, or Mohamed Bouazizi into catalysts of ruptural mourning when countless other deaths were not?

These are not questions I have answers to – perhaps they have no definitive answers, or perhaps to seek them is itself an injustice – but as I write these words, as I reflect on the uncountable, un-accountable life and lives presently being devoured by our necrophilic regime, the ecological cataclysm which is unfolding before our eyes and through the narrow scope of our vision, I hear the song of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, who knew that “survival is the beginning of resistance.”¹¹⁷ He harmonizes with Audre Lorde, who recognized black survival as “triumph,” as obdurate dance tracing an unmappable journey “between nightmare and the possible.”¹¹⁸ At the same time, I remember and hold onto the prophetic wisdom of Moten and Harney: “That we survive is beauty and testament. It is neither to be dismissed, nor overlooked, nor devalued by or within whatever ascription of value. That we survive is invaluable. It is at the same time insufficient.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence* (New York: Archipelago, 2011), 67.

¹¹⁸ Audre Lorde, “On My Way Out I Passed over You and the Verrazano Bridge,” in *Our Dead Behind Us*, collected in Lorde (1997), 403-406, 403.

¹¹⁹ Moten and Harney (2015).



Image: Widely circulated photograph of Michael Brown

If it is true that we must survive, our survival must also be something more, is and has always been something more: a survival which dreams, dreams which unsettle the sleep of the waking world, worlds awakened in and through survival.

At the end of the world, what could it mean to mourn?

VIII.

the flights of this journey
mapless uncertain
*and necessary as water.*¹²⁰

The violence of modernity and the spectres of loss linger and loom large – within us, among us, and between us. In and through each seemingly singular dispossession, a prismatic window into an incalculably vast, eminently multiplicitous, inescapably uneven landscape of grief, in which we are all differentially, unequally caught and implicated. A fiery red moves across its peaks and valleys like a stain, for this is a world upon which the sun is setting. Beneath and beyond its necrophilic terrains, we gather in and through dispossession – subterranean holding, ceremonies of and for life, another world that wells up and breaks through in eruptions of rage and hapticality.

¹²⁰ Lorde (1997), 406.

Envisioning or remembering a radical politics of mourning presents us with no easy answers. How do we approach collective relations of loss, violence, and grief without collapsing its stark inequalities and irreducible multiplicities? While moving through a world in which some lives are deemed grievable while others are not, a world in which the wail of grief becomes language colored “[b]y who pays what for speaking?”¹²¹ Can we forge a multitude¹²² in mourning without recourse to the violence of false analogues or universalisms, a multitude which is constituted by singularities, but which is a formation entirely in excess of their aggregation? Could such a multitude create and sustain mournful rituals which are at once returns and beginnings, which make possible a survival which is always something more? Could this multitude give itself to ruptural mourning? Could it take its multiplicitous grief to the streets while remembering that it’s not simply, as Moten and Harney point out, “about taking the streets; it’s about how, and what, we should take to the streets.” Could it ask itself “[w]hat would it be, and what would it mean, for us to jurisgeneratively take to the streets, to live in the streets, to gather together another city right here, right now?”¹²³ If these questions have answers, we will find them together in movement. *Caminando preguntamos* (walking, we ask questions), as the Zapatistas are fond of saying.

Staring unflinchingly into the crucible of slavery and colonialism, into the multiplicitous dispossessions wrought by modernity’s twin evils, Édouard Glissant sang praises of a new form of “errantry” that might animate a “poetics of Relation.” Though this errantry moves in and towards the horizon, they are not driven by a hunger for mastery, appropriation, or domination:

one who is errant (who is no longer traveller, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this – and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides.

Errant, he challenges and discards the universal – this generalizing edict that summarized the world as something obvious and transparent, claiming for it one presupposed sense and one destiny...The thinking of errantry conceives of totality but willingly renounces any claims to sum it up or possess it...

This is why we stay with poetry...at the bow there is still something to share: this murmur, cloud or rain or peaceful smoke. We know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Audre Lorde, “Coal,” in *Coal*, collected in Lorde (1997), 6.

¹²² On the notion of the multitude, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹²³ Moten and Harney (2015), 86.

¹²⁴ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 20, 9.

Perhaps Glissant glimpsed something of the spirit of our mournful multitude, a manner of finding each other, of holding one another in and through dispossession, a perpetual casting off towards a utopian horizon or decolonial home.

At the end of the world, what could it mean to mourn?



Image: Fernando Martí, “Frontera”

A gnarled question
 pressing, searing
the possibility
of
 gathering anew

 gathering
 wits, flesh,
seeds, spirit life

such that we might
sow
(something more)
tender, heretical
than a harvest yet-to-come
No exorcism
convened to vanquish
ghost songs
lives lost, life
stolen
Instead: celebration
spectral harbingers, patient
embers sporadically lighting history
aflame
No militia
shouldering duty
like vessels
heavy with rain
(even if a storm must shake
the very firmament of our being
must cast our sails adrift, must
lay our hearts
and flesh
down with skeletons
tracing the irreducible history
of water and iron)
Ours must be a genuine act of creation
not waters plied
by wood and metal

but waters gathered
tentatively
held openly as sacred
waters
weaving the disparate
(ephemeral formation)
waters gently reminding
our tired bones
that they too
shall return;¹²⁵

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¹²⁵ David K. Langstaff, "Falling Together," Unpublished Poem (July 2015).

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About the author

David K. Langstaff is a radical organizer, writer, and restaurant worker who grew up in North Carolina and who has been involved in movements struggling for collective liberation for the past decade. He has worked within organizations and coalitions including, but not limited to, the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), Sins Invalid, Block the Boat, the Stop Urban Shield Coalition, the Third World Resistance Contingent for Black Power (#3rdworld4blackpower), International Solidarity Movement (ISM), and Olympia BDS. He recently moved from Oakland, CA to Detroit, MI, where he organizes with Detroit Eviction Defence. He can be reached at undercommoner AT gmail.com.

Lotte per il diritto alla casa nello Stato spagnolo: la *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*. Campagne, successi e alcune chiavi di riflessione¹

**Luca Sebastiani, Borja Íñigo Fernández Alberdi,
Rocío García Soto**

Riassunto

In quest'articolo in primo luogo narriamo l'emergere dei nuovi movimenti spagnoli per il diritto alla casa nel contesto delle politiche abitative neoliberiste e della bolla speculativa alimentata negli ultimi due decenni. In secondo luogo trattiamo alcune delle più interessanti esperienze storiche di lotta per il diritto all'abitare, per rivolgerci finalmente al caso della *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) e di altri gruppi affini che si oppongono agli sfratti. Ripercorriamo l'irruzione della PAH nello scenario pubblico, le sue campagne ed i vari aspetti del suo funzionamento. Analizziamo i suoi principali punti di forza e prestiamo particolare attenzione alle seguenti questioni: 1) la sua forma organizzativa inclusiva ed aperta; 2) la sua capacità di mettere in discussione la narrazione egemonica sulla crisi economica grazie alla costruzione di un discorso alternativo; 3) un approccio creativo e tatticamente intelligente alla tecnopolitica e ai mezzi di comunicazione; 4) l'importanza delle dinamiche micropolitiche interne, che attraversano tutte le precedenti dimensioni e costituiscono un punto di connessione tra le pratiche affettive della Piattaforma e la sua capacità di trasformazione sociale.

Parole chiave: *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*; *Stop Desahucios*; bolla immobiliare; movimenti per il diritto alla casa; Stato spagnolo.

o. Introduzione: contesto, metodologia e obiettivi del testo

Le lotte per il diritto alla casa e contro gli sfratti hanno assunto ad un ruolo centrale nel contesto dei movimenti "indignati" sorti a livello globale negli ultimi anni. Nel caso spagnolo, le loro rivendicazioni sono state popolarizzate da attori collettivi come la *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* ("Piattaforma di persone con problemi d'ipoteca", a partire da ora: PAH), i gruppi *Stop Desahucios* ("Stop Sfratti") ed altri collettivi affini. Tuttavia la PAH, nonostante sia stata rafforzata dal sorgere del 15M spagnolo, deve la sua origine a esperienze, elaborazioni teoriche e decisioni organizzative precedenti al recente

¹ Ringraziamo Graziano Mazzocchini dell'Università Federale di Minas Gerais per la sua revisione della traduzione in italiano. Altresì, siamo grati ai/alle due revisori/e anonimi/e di *Interface*, che con le loro osservazioni hanno contribuito a migliorare la qualità del presente articolo, e al collettivo *EnMedio* per avere messo a disposizione delle foto.

ciclo di mobilitazioni globali.

Con questo testo² ci proponiamo una duplice finalità: da una parte, vogliamo ripercorrere i principali eventi nella storia della Piattaforma, contestualizzando la sua irruzione nello scenario della crisi economica, sociale e di legittimità istituzionale nello Stato spagnolo. Dall'altra, ci concentreremo su quelli che consideriamo essere i suoi principali punti di forza, argomentando che non si tratta di componenti separate, ma piuttosto interconnesse e profondamente articolate l'una con l'altra: 1) una forma organizzativa aperta ed inclusiva, accompagnata da un repertorio di lotta più "pragmatico" che "ideologico"; 2) una grande capacità di mettere in crisi la narrazione egemonica circa la crisi economica, i suoi responsabili e le sue vittime; 3) un approccio creativo e tatticamente intelligente all'uso delle tecnologie d'informazione e dei mezzi di comunicazione; 4) la valorizzazione politica dell'elemento affettivo ed emotivo, che attraversa tutte le precedenti pratiche ed ha svolto un compito fondamentale di connessione tra le dinamiche interne della PAH e la sua grande capacità di trasformazione sociale. È in virtù della sua abilità nell'articolare efficacemente questi piani che la Piattaforma ha rappresentato, se comparata con altre esperienze, un chiaro esempio di successo, ottenendo un'amplissima proiezione pubblica -ragioni che giustificano la sua scelta come caso di studio-.

La struttura dell'articolo sarà la seguente: dopo questa introduzione, ripercorreremo le politiche dell'abitare nello Stato spagnolo, dal regime franchista fino all'attualità, contestualizzando la recente crisi immobiliare come

2 L'articolo si iscrive nel progetto di ricerca "Processi emergenti ed *agencies* del comune: prassi della ricerca sociale collaborativa e nuove forme di soggettivazione politica" (bando del 2014 del *Programa Estatal de Fomento de la Investigación Científica y Técnica de Excelencia*, riferimento: CSO2014-56960-P). Il lavoro sul campo, iniziato a novembre 2015 e svolto dagli autori insieme ad Aurora Álvarez Veinguer, Antonia Olmos Alcaraz e Ariana Sánchez Cota (dell'Università di Granada), è consistito finora in circa un anno di osservazione partecipante -o, per meglio dire, "osservazione partigiana" (Baer, 1997: 133-141)- negli spazi di attivismo -assemblee, azioni collettive, incontri sociali, etc.- della PAH di Barcellona e del gruppo Stop Sfratti-15M di Granada (<https://afectadosporlahipotecagranada.com>). Inoltre, con la PAH di Barcellona sono state realizzate quattro storie di vita e quattro interviste-conversazioni (sostenute nel tempo attraverso diverse sessioni), mentre con Stop Sfratti sono state svolte dodici interviste e due gruppi focali, ciascuno di essi composto da 4/5 persone e sviluppato in quattro sessioni di un'ora e mezzo. Le caratteristiche degli interlocutori riflettono, in termini generali, la pluralità esistente nei citati movimenti dal punto di vista socio-economico, demografico e dell'esperienza attivista. Va detto inoltre che uno degli obiettivi del progetto è quello di stimolare pratiche di ricerca "collaborative" (Lassiter 2005; Rappaport 2007 e 2008; Holmes e Marcus 2008), "doppiamente riflessive" (Dietz 2011; Dietz e Álvarez Veinguer 2015) e "decoloniali" (Lander 2000; Walsh 2007; Suárez-Krabbe 2011). Riconoscendo il fatto che i movimenti sociali (e più in generale i gruppi subalterni) sono produttori di una conoscenza valida ed utile (Cox e Fominaya 2009), stiamo cercando di sperimentare forme di ricerca più orizzontali, non "su" ma "insieme a" e "con" i soggetti implicati (Mato 2000), orientate alla trasformazione sociale. Le prossime fasi della ricerca prevedono la realizzazione di laboratori collettivi di co-analisi, dove i materiali di campo verranno socializzati e discussi insieme ai membri dei due collettivi, nell'intento di generare saperi utili per le loro stesse lotte. In virtù dell'impegno preso, in questo testo non citeremo esplicitamente frammenti dei materiali di campo, ma ciò non toglie che quanto affermato si nutra abbondantemente della nostra esperienza attivista e di ricerca.

conseguenza di una bolla speculativa alimentata nei due decenni precedenti (sezione 1). Quindi, tratteggeremo le principali caratteristiche delle passate esperienze di lotta per la casa, in modo da poter risaltare alcuni elementi di continuità e rottura (sezione 2). Posteriormente, dedicheremo l'attenzione all'emergere storico della PAH, così come alle sue principali campagne e rivendicazioni (sezione 3). Nella sezione 4 discuteremo approfonditamente i punti di forza anticipati sopra, analizzandoli nella loro stretta interconnessione. Infine, concluderemo con un riepilogo delle principali argomentazioni (sezione 5).

1. Le politiche dell'abitare nello Stato spagnolo, dal regime franchista fino allo scoppio della bolla immobiliare

Se all'inizio degli anni cinquanta la grande maggioranza della popolazione spagnola viveva in affitto, la creazione nel 1957 del Ministero della Casa rispose al proposito del regime, ben espresso nelle parole del ministro José Luis Arrese, di fare della Spagna "un paese di proprietari anziché di proletari". Con questo obiettivo, furono elaborate politiche a favore della proprietà privata e dell'acquisto di immobili: durante la tappa "sviluppista" degli anni sessanta, la casa da bene di prima necessità che era divenne un bene d'investimento, per trasformarsi finalmente in uno degli assi centrali della crescita economica spagnola (Colau e Alemany 2012, 35-36; Gaja i Díaz 2015, 2). Come esempio di questa tendenza, fu implementato un ambizioso programma per la costruzione di 3 milioni di abitazioni in 15 anni (Suárez 2014, 72).

Dopo che la morte di Franco (1975) e la "Transizione" alla democrazia sfociarono nella promulgazione della Costituzione Spagnola (1978), iniziò una tappa di crescita ancora più veloce. Avvenimenti come la privatizzazione del settore bancario durante gli anni Ottanta, l'entrata nell'Unione Europea (1986) e la posteriore adesione all'Eurozona (1999) generarono un afflusso massiccio di investimenti stranieri, rendendo l'economia particolarmente dipendente dal mercato globale. Durante il periodo 1996-2007, conosciuto come il "decennio prodigioso" del settore della costruzione (Gaja i Díaz 2015, 2), dapprima il governo di José María Aznar e poi quello di José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero operarono un'ulteriore deregolamentazione del mercato immobiliare, approvando leggi che liberalizzavano gli affitti, facilitavano la rivalutazione e l'edificabilità dei terreni al di là dei Piani regolatori municipali e favorivano la realizzazione di mega-progetti urbani (Naredo e Montiel Márquez 2010, 37). Gli investimenti pubblici per tutelare il diritto alla casa delle fasce meno abbienti furono ridotti (Veciana et al. 2013, 6) e, allo stesso tempo, l'acquisto privato di case divenne fiscalmente deducibile mentre tutto il resto fu lasciato ai meccanismi di regolazione del mercato.

In ogni caso, non si trattava solo di una questione economica: le politiche neoliberiste colonizzarono anche l'immaginario della cittadinanza. Nella narrazione egemonica³ il sistema creditizio spagnolo era considerato

3 Intendiamo la nozione di narrazione o racconto (a volte parleremo di discorso) come

stabilissimo e l'investimento immobiliare veniva definito un'attività a basso rischio (Suárez 2014, 72-82). Per queste ragioni, l'affitto era disincentivato, oltre al fatto che essere proprietario⁴ era divenuta una dimostrazione di status sociale -un vero e proprio rito di passaggio (Colau e Alemany 2012, 66-67)-. Poiché l'entrata nell'Eurozona, stabilizzando la moneta, aveva fatto scendere i tassi d'interesse, il settore immobiliare per mantenere i propri margini di profitto avrebbe dovuto incrementare il volume della vendite: per questo banche e casse di risparmio ampliarono la durata dei piani di ammortamento dei prestiti e fecero aumentare i prezzi delle case. Furono aperte succursali bancarie ovunque, incentivando gli agenti commerciali affinché fossero più produttivi e ammorbidendo i criteri per valutare la solvenza dei debitori in modo da collocare nel mercato una maggiore quantità di mutui. Con questo atteggiamento aggressivo l'inflazione immobiliare crebbe, così come aumentarono il sovraindebitamento delle famiglie e la stipula di contratti con clausole vessatorie (Colau e Alemany 2013, 14). Si calcola che tra il 2000 e il 2005 il prezzo delle case aumentò del 180% (Aguilar Fernández e Fernández Gibaja 2010, 685) e tra il 2005 e il 2009 del 50%, a fronte di un aumento medio del 30% nell'Eurozona. In un anno furono costruite più case in Spagna che nell'insieme di Francia, Germania e Regno Unito (Colau e Alemany 2013, 23); a fine 2005 il rapporto di case per famiglia divenne il più alto al mondo: 1.54 (Aguilar Fernández e Fernández Gibaja 2010, 685). Addirittura nel 2007, dopo lo scoppio della crisi dei mutui *subprime* (ad alto rischio) negli Stati Uniti, la promozione immobiliare continuò ad aumentare (Veciana et al. 2013, 6). Nel settembre 2008, dopo il crollo dell'ente *Lehmann Brothers*, la ministra della casa Beatriz Corredor ancora affermava: "è un buon momento per comprare casa" (Mangot Sala 2013b, 44).

Da quanto detto si potrà intuire la devastante gravità con cui la crisi internazionale si scatenò nell'economia spagnola. Come prima conseguenza, molti cantieri furono paralizzati e il prezzo della casa crollò rapidamente. Il tasso di disoccupazione aumentò in modo vertiginoso dapprima nel settore della costruzione -che così come era cresciuto sproporzionatamente ora si sgonfiava- per poi estendersi a tutti gli altri ambiti: passò dall'11% del 2008 al 27,2% del

una pratica sociale, capace di strutturare la realtà sociale e allo stesso tempo di essere performata da questa, intrecciata dentro relazioni di potere/sapere che può contribuire a legittimare, riprodurre o sovvertire (Foucault 1991 e 2009; Fairclough e Wodak 1997; Van Dijk 2001). Per quel che riguarda la nozione di egemonia, cfr. Gramsci (1981c, 36 e 287); Laclau e Mouffe (1987) ed Eagleton (2003, 220-221). Un discorso è egemonico quando forma parte del "senso comune" sociale e culturale, quando si trasforma nella "concezione del mondo diffusa in un'epoca storica tra le masse popolari" (Gramsci 1981b, 327). Questo senso comune non è "rigido e immobile" (Gramsci, 1981a, 140), ma è continuamente soggetto alla lotta di diversi gruppi sociali che aspirano a naturalizzare la propria visione del mondo: "la lotta per l'egemonia ideologica-politica è, quindi, sempre una lotta per l'appropriazione di quei concetti che sono vissuti 'spontaneamente' come 'apolitici', perché trascendono i confini della politica [...] Questa lotta non si limita a imporre determinati significati, ma cerca di appropriarsi dell'universalità della nozione" (Žižek 2010, 15-17).

4 Nel presente articolo per riferirci a persone indeterminate utilizzeremo indistintamente il genere maschile od il femminile, salvo quando specificato in altro modo.

2013 (Barbero 2015, 272). Numerosi enti finanziari si trovarono sull'orlo del fallimento -molti di essi vennero poi salvati con fondi pubblici (Barbero 2015, 271)-. Contrariamente all'idea che si era affermata nell'immaginario collettivo i prezzi delle case erano crollati: appartamenti il cui valore era stato quotato attorno ai 200 o 300 mila euro ora potevano valerne 80 mila (Suárez 2014, 75). Molti di quelli che avevano contratto un mutuo nella fase rialzista del boom speculativo, ora si ritrovavano con una casa il cui valore era inferiore a quello dei loro debiti. Per l'insieme della società, le conseguenze più evidenti della crisi furono l'aumento della povertà e della disoccupazione, l'insolvenza di migliaia di cittadini e una raffica di sfratti. Si calcola che, tra l'inizio della crisi e i primi mesi del 2013, furono avviati circa 400.000 procedimenti per reclamare il pagamento del debito (*ejecución hipotecaria*) da parte delle banche (Domingo Utset 2012, 43-49; Veciana et al. 2013, 10) e vennero effettuati 350.000 espropri forzosi (*lanzamiento hipotecario*; cfr. Macías 2013, 45; Colau e Alemany 2013, 29-31; Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014)⁵.

La normativa che disciplinava i mutui ipotecari⁶ stabiliva che una persona (o famiglia) debitrice avrebbe potuto essere oggetto di una domanda giudiziale da parte del creditore anche a fronte di un solo mancato pagamento -ciononostante le banche erano solite aspettare fino alla terza mensilità (Suárez 2014, 79)-. Una volta presentata la domanda per reclamare il saldo del debito, non esiste "tutela giurisdizionale effettiva", dato che il giudice non ha la facoltà di intervenire in merito alle ragioni sostanziali del mancato pagamento (per esempio la sopravvenuta disoccupazione); quindi, nel caso in cui i debitori o i loro fideiussori non paghino subito la parte dovuta, l'appartamento viene messo all'asta. Se l'asta rimane deserta -cosa che succede nel 90% dei casi in un contesto di crisi- la banca si aggiudica l'immobile per il 50% del valore stimato per l'asta (il 60% da luglio del 2011). Con il cambio di titolarità dell'immobile, inizia il procedimento che darà luogo allo sfratto, espropriando la parte debitrice dell'immobile, anche con la forza, se necessario. La specificità della normativa spagnola sta nel fatto che la famiglia, una volta sfrattata, continua ad essere titolare di parte del debito -la differenza tra il prezzo di aggiudicazione dell'immobile ed il debito rimanente, che non viene mai prescritto, più gli interessi di mora e le spese legali (Domingo Utset 2012, 43-45; Mir García et al. 2013, 53)-. Si tratta di norme particolarmente dure se comparate con quelle di

5 Non tutti i paesi coinvolti dalla crisi vissero le stesse conseguenze: per es. in Italia, la minore entità numerica degli sfratti fu dovuta al fatto che la crisi si manifestò principalmente come crisi del debito pubblico e non come bolla immobiliare (Lastrico 2015, 37). D'altro canto, il sistema bancario italiano non concesse mutui così facilmente come quello spagnolo. Sulle ragioni più specifiche della crisi spagnola e sul peso in questa della bolla immobiliare, cfr. Royo (2014) e Ortega e Pascual-Ramsay (2012).

6 Non entreremo qui nel merito delle successive modifiche apportate alla normativa spagnola da parte del governo del Partito Popolare, soprattutto tra il 2012 e il 2013. Diremo soltanto che nessuna di queste riforme ha fornito risposte efficaci né ha adottato le principali misure proposte dalla PAH ed appoggiate dalla cittadinanza. Per maggiori informazioni, cfr. Mangot Sala (2013b), Álvarez de Andrés et al. (2014), Cano ed Etxezarreta (2014), Romanos (2014) e Barbero (2015).

altri paesi europei o degli Stati Uniti, dove gli sfratti generalmente si risolvono mediante il condono di parte del debito o la consegna della casa -la cosiddetta *datio in solutum* o dazione in pagamento (Domingo Utset 2012, 45; El Huffington Post 2012)-.

In conclusione: lo scoppio della bolla immobiliare rappresentava, per la società spagnola, il risveglio da un sogno che, diventato ora un incubo, iniziò a far sgretolare i miti e la narrativa del decennio prodigioso. Una crescente delegittimazione coinvolgeva la classe politica, che non solo si era dimostrata incapace di prevedere ed affrontare il terremoto finanziario, ma inoltre era stata protagonista, lungo la fase espansiva della bolla immobiliare, di numerose pratiche clientelari, scandali di corruzione e casi di connivenza con gli eccessi del mondo imprenditoriale e finanziario (Gaja y Díaz 2015, 5), i quali soltanto ora iniziavano ad essere conosciuti e fatti oggetto della riprovazione sociale.

2. Prima della PAH: esperienze di lotta per la casa a partire dagli anni Settanta

Nello Stato spagnolo, durante gli ultimi anni del franchismo furono costituite associazioni di quartiere (*asociaciones de vecinos*) nelle principali città, approfittando degli stretti margini di manovra lasciati dall'approvazione della legge sull'associazionismo del 1964 (*Ley de asociaciones*). Una rivendicazione centrale del movimento fu il diritto ad una casa *dignitosa*: dato che la percentuale di proprietari era sempre più alta, si metteva l'accento sulla necessaria qualità abitativa, includendo aspetti come l'accesso ai servizi pubblici, i diritti sociali e lavorativi, la lotta contro la speculazione (Lastrico 2015, 38. Cfr. Gonzalo Morell 2010; Martínez e Muntada 2011). Questo movimento popolare, particolarmente vigoroso verso la fine degli anni Ottanta, anche se non scomparve si indebolì nei decenni posteriori.

Altro attore rilevante fu il movimento *okupa* (da *ocupación* che significa occupazione). Nato a metà degli anni Ottanta, era composto perlopiù da collettivi molto identitari, legati alla tradizione libertaria e anarchica. È interessante notare che durante gli anni Novanta, alcuni settori optarono per rompere il loro isolamento ideologico e per dare vita a realtà "ibride" e più aperte alla diversità -è il caso di alcuni centri sociali come il "Can Vies" di Barcellona (Mir García et al. 2013, 55; Veciana et al. 2013, 15)-. All'inizio del nuovo millennio, durante l'apice del movimento altermondialista e le posteriori mobilitazioni contro la guerra d'Iraq, alcune attiviste praticarono un'ulteriore rottura con la militanza tradizionale, la quale dette luogo a un rinnovamento del discorso e delle esperienze di lotta. Si mettevano in risalto l'importanza dei conflitti locali (Mir García et al. 2013, 55) -come diceva il famoso slogan "pensare globale, agire locale"- e la precarietà come condizione paradigmatica, di lavoro e di vita, della generazione cresciuta all'epoca della globalizzazione neoliberista. Dentro questo contesto si svilupparono esperienze come *Miles de viviendas* di Barcellona -il cui obiettivo era "divulgare" l'occupazione di case,

trasformandola in uno strumento di lotta riappropriabile da chiunque⁷- o l'*Ateneu Candela* di Terrassa -frequentato da persone di diversa origine: militanti dei movimenti *okupa*, gruppi di solidarietà internazionale, collettivi contro la precarietà e per la *free culture* (Mir García et al. 2013, 55)-. In spazi come questi si sviluppò l'esperienza delle *Oficinas de Derechos Sociales* (ODS), un'organizzazione in rete composta da diversi nodi urbani (Madrid, Siviglia, Malaga, ecc.) vicina alle esperienze del post-operaiismo, dello zapatismo o del movimento per un'altra globalizzazione (Arribas Lozano 2012; Veciana et al 2013, 18; Mangot Sala 2013a, 60), che pure si occupò di questioni legate al diritto alla casa.

Nel mezzo delle mobilitazioni contro la guerra d'Iraq (2003) sorse un altro potente attore collettivo a livello statale: il *Movimiento por la Vivienda Digna* ("Movimento per una casa dignitosa", a partire da ora MVD). Si trattava di una realtà molteplice e plurale, che si articolava attraverso varie strutture - associazioni dei movimenti di quartiere, partiti e sindacati di sinistra, iniziative apartitiche della cittadinanza, reti e assemblee contro la precarietà (cfr. Aguilar Fernández e Fernández Gibaja 2010)-. Se agli inizi l'MVD aveva adottato stili abbastanza "tradizionali", la crescente integrazione di giovani precarie e studenti apportò certi elementi di rinnovamento del discorso -introducendo un ragionamento teorico sulla precarietà-, nel repertorio delle azioni collettive -che divennero meno convenzionali e più creative (Flesher Fominaya 2015, 4)- e nelle forme di comunicazione -mediante l'introduzione abbondante delle tecnologie IT, ai tempi consistenti soprattutto in catene di mail e messaggi SMS (Haro Barba e Sampedro Blanco 2011, 159)-. Per queste ragioni, l'MVT non fu esente da tensioni e dibattiti interni, sebbene ciò che più colpisce è la velocità con cui iniziò a perdere forza dopo un'irruzione così promettente⁸. È nell'ultima fase dell'MVD che nacque un altro attore importante, il quale può essere considerato precursore della PAH: *V de Vivienda* (un gioco di parole tra la parola *vivienda*, equivalente a "casa", e il noto film "V per Vendetta", in spagnolo *V de Vendetta*), da ora in avanti "V".

V prese forma nel maggio 2006, grazie a un appello alla mobilitazione lanciato su Internet, il quale dette luogo a una serie di proteste e denunce della politiche pubbliche sulla casa (Colau e Alemany 2012, 87; Romanos 2014). Sebbene il movimento fosse nato a Barcellona, fu capace di estendersi a molte città spagnole e di coinvolgere numerose attiviste giovani e precarie, che condividevano difficoltà di accesso alla casa in virtù degli alti prezzi dell'affitto e dell'acquisto. Tuttavia, neanche quest'esperienza fu capace di raggiungere l'insieme della cittadinanza spagnola, dato che di fronte ad una società "maggioritariamente proprietaria, che vedeva come il suo patrimonio si rivalorizzava anno dopo anno con l'aumento dei prezzi degli immobili, un

7 Quest'obiettivo, come vedremo, sarà raggiunto dalla PAH con molto più successo.

8 Non entreremo nel merito delle ragioni della sconfitta del MVD, anche se, con Flesher Fominaya (2015, 5), consideriamo riduttivo attribuirlo alla sua "radicalità", "intransigenza" e incapacità di tessere alleanze, così come sostengono Aguilar Fernández e Fernández Gibaja (2010).

movimento che rivendicava un affitto sociale e più accessibile rappresentava una minoranza” (Colau e Alemany 2012, 89). Nonostante questa mancanza di successo, V fu efficace nel rinnovamento dei linguaggi e delle pratiche attiviste, facendo un ampio uso delle tecnologie IT e organizzando brillanti campagne di comunicazione (Mangot Sala 2013a, 60). Spesso, poi, intraprese pittoresche e rumorose *performance*, facendo uso di costumi e dando luogo ad azioni “con senso dell’umorismo e dell’ironia, in un ambiente festivo ed allegro” (Pérez Balbi, 2015: 157)⁹. In quest’esperienza possiamo cominciare a riconoscere alcune delle forme organizzative e di funzionamento posteriormente sperimentate tanto dalla PAH come dal 15M¹⁰. Durante gli ultimi mesi d’esistenza di V, lo scoppio della bolla immobiliare rappresentò una svolta decisiva. Il crollo del settore edilizio, insieme alle conseguenze sociali a cui abbiamo accennato, disegnarono un nuovo scenario nel quale i miti della proprietà sembravano iniziare a sgretolarsi. Tuttavia, il movimento doveva sapersi reinventare: in questo contesto V svolse un seminario dal titolo “Non lasceremo che le banche ci caccino di casa” (ottobre 2008), considerato da molti il seme che generò la PAH.

3. La *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*: irruzione nella scena e principali campagne

Il 22 febbraio 2009, dopo una riunione tra attivisti e persone soggette a problemi d’ipoteca, nacque a Barcellona la PAH (Colau e Alemany 2013, Mangot Sala 2013b, Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Non va sottovalutato il lavoro previo che dette origine alla Piattaforma: in particolare, i suoi fondatori avevano sviluppato un’analisi politica condivisa che partiva dalla considerazione dei limiti del MVD e di V. Era il momento di intendere che il contesto socio-economico stava cambiando velocemente e che era necessario riformulare il proprio discorso, per incentrarlo non tanto sulle difficoltà di accesso dei giovani precari ad un’abitazione, quanto piuttosto sul rischio delle famiglie sovraindebitate di rimanere senza casa. In conseguenza di ciò, le famiglie che avevano contratto un mutuo ipotecario vennero identificate come il nuovo “soggetto politico emergente” (Mir García et al. 2013, 57; Mangot Sala 2013a, 61) e furono messe al centro delle prime rivendicazioni, tra le quali segnatamente: lo stop agli sfratti, una legge sulla dazione in pagamento retroattiva e la promozione di affitti a tariffe sociali¹¹. Grazie a questa capacità di

9 Pensiamo per esempio a “Supervivienda” (Supercasa), eroe anonimo mascherato con un costume giallo e nero, e con il numero 47 stampato sul mantello (facendo allusione all’articolo della Costituzione Spagnola relativo al diritto alla casa), che era solito irrompere nelle iniziative elettorali dei candidati alle elezioni municipali di maggio 2007 (Mangot Sala, 2013b). Altro esempio è l’azione “Non avrai una casa nella tua fottuta vita”, svolta il 6 ottobre 2007 di fronte alle sedi delle giunte comunali di diverse città, dove i partecipanti gridavano collettivamente il citato slogan, con l’obiettivo di abbattere il record del rumore.

10 Inoltre, personaggi rilevanti per la PAH come Ada Colau e Adrià Alemany furono in precedenza militanti di V (Mangot Sala 2013a, 60).

11 Alcuni autori hanno considerato le rivendicazioni della PAH “moderate” per il fatto di

anticipazione rispetto allo scenario economico-sociale, la PAH fu capace di trasformare le proprie istanze in un obiettivo appoggiato da ampi settori sociali (Macías 2013, 45-46). Non a caso, la crescita dell'organizzazione fu velocissima: dapprima si estese al resto della Catalogna, per poi diffondersi attraverso 200 nodi locali a tutte le province spagnole durante il 2013 (Colau e Alemany 2013; Mangot Sala 2013b; Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014). La genesi delle piattaforme locali fu variegata: per esempio, se a Barcellona ci fu una relazione molto stretta con l'esperienza di V, a Murcia l'iniziativa fu presa da un gruppo di persone sotto processo di sfratto. A Madrid, dopo anteriori e fallimentari tentativi, il movimento 15M si incaricò di creare e diffondere la Piattaforma (Mangot Sala 2013a e 2013b). Più in generale, va detto che, con l'irruzione del 15M nel maggio 2011, la costruzione della Piattaforma ricevette una forte spinta. Le sue rivendicazioni divennero più visibili e in molte città si produsse un'importante sinergia e interconnessione (Adell et al. 2014; Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014; Romanos 2014, 297). In altri luoghi, come Granada, si costituirono gruppi "Stop sfratti" con obiettivi e forme di lotta simili, con i quali la PAH stabilì una relazione più o meno stretta a seconda dei casi. In definitiva, la PAH "è anteriore al 15M ma si sviluppa ampiamente nello scenario post-15M" (Mir García 2014, 94). Ripercorreremo ora le principali campagne della Piattaforma:

- "Questa banca inganna, truffa e butta persone in strada" (aprile 2009). Orientata a visibilizzare l'esistenza della PAH e a segnalare le banche come le principali responsabili della crisi, questa prima campagna consistette nel riempire di adesivi le vetrine di quelle succursali che si negavano a intavolare trattative con i loro clienti sotto minaccia di sfratto (Colau e Alemany 2013, 60; Mangot Sala 2013b, 275).

- "Stop Sfratti" (novembre 2010). Questa campagna fu un primo esempio di successo, dato che riuscì ad estendersi al resto dello Stato spagnolo e a coinvolgere non solo attiviste della PAH, ma anche del movimento *okupa* e del 15M (Flesher Fominaya 2015, 7). Il suo obiettivo era quello di impedire materialmente l'esecuzione degli sfratti, attraverso l'interposizione pacifica di persone tra la casa oggetto del procedimento e l'arrivo dell'ufficiale giudiziario. Iniziò con molte incertezze, dato che non esisteva una prassi di resistenza allo sfratto da parte delle famiglie: "Non esisteva nell'immaginario delle persone. La maggioranza abbandonava la casa sui propri piedi una volta realizzata l'asta, nel timore che da un giorno all'altro si presentasse la polizia per sloggiarli" (Colau e Alemany 2012, 127). Il primo sfratto fu respinto il 3 novembre 2010 in un

non mettere in discussione direttamente la proprietà privata dell'abitazione (Lastrico 2015). Per ciò che ci riguarda, invece di ragionare sulla maggiore o minore "radicalità" in termini astratti, consideriamo che la Piattaforma, combinando rivendicazioni "di minore entità" -che possano permettere il raggiungimento di piccole vittorie, sebbene parziali- con una pratica sociopolitica che si è dimostrata capace di mettere in discussione il significato globale della crisi e i limiti della democrazia rappresentativa, ha prodotto trasformazioni molto più rilevanti che altri movimenti teoricamente più "radicali" (in questo stesso senso, cfr. Flesher Fominaya 2015).

comune della provincia di Tarragona (Colau e Alemany 2013; Mangot Sala 2013a e 2013b; Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014). Poco a poco, la campagna si trasformò in un caso paradigmatico di successo (Veciana et al. 2013, 20-21). Con l'irruzione del 15M, poi, si sarebbero moltiplicate le vittorie, impedendo sempre più sfratti e raggiungendo una gran quantità di accordi favorevoli alle persone debitorici¹². Ad oggi, la PAH ha impedito 2.045 sfratti (cfr. <http://afectadosporlahipototeca.com>).

- “Opera sociale della PAH” (dicembre 2011), che parodiava nel titolo le opere sociali realizzate dalle fondazioni delle casse di risparmio (specificamente si rivolgeva all'ente *La Caixa-Catalunya*). Consisteva nel recupero di appartamenti vuoti, proprietà di banche come frutto di uno sfratto (Macías 2013, 48), con l'obiettivo di alloggiarvi le persone che erano rimaste senza casa (Mangot Sala 2013a). Una volta che la casa era stata recuperata venivano svolte azioni pubbliche di pressione, per spingere la banca a legalizzare la situazione esistente e concedere un affitto a un prezzo sociale (Colau e Alemany 2013, 62). Grazie a questa campagna, molte famiglie senza esperienza previa di lotta naturalizzarono pratiche di disobbedienza civile -come è l'occupazione di una casa- anteriormente considerate impensabili e patrimonio di movimenti più ideologizzati come gli *okupa* (Suárez 2014, 85). Ad oggi, la PAH ha rialloggiato 2.500 persone (cfr. <http://afectadosporlahipototeca.com>).

- La campagna della Proposta di Legge di Iniziativa Popolare (*Iniciativa Legislativa Popular*), a partire da ora ILP, avente l'obiettivo di convertire in legge le rivendicazioni storiche, e quindi di promulgare la dazione in pagamento retroattiva, la moratoria degli sfratti e la riconversione degli appartamenti sfitti in affitti sociali. L'ILP fu lanciata in ottobre 2010 insieme ad altri soggetti sociali e sindacali, e dopo una raccolta di firme che ne ottenne una quantità tre volte superiore a quella richiesta legalmente (1.402.854), seguita da alcune peripezie legali, fu infine ritenuta ammissibile dalla Presidenza del Congresso dei Deputati (aprile 2012). La decisione di promuovere una campagna di raccolta di firme perseguiva, tra l'altro, l'obiettivo di “strutturare il movimento e articolarlo lungo un asse di lavoro che permettesse di condividere obiettivi e accordare calendari” (Colau e Alemany 2013, 33). Quest'iniziativa, oltre a far sì che la maggioranza della cittadinanza prendesse posizione a favore delle proposte della PAH, permise inoltre di far conoscere, rafforzare ed estendere le piattaforme già esistenti (Colau e Alemany 2013, 34).

12 Da quel momento in poi, la partecipazione di decine o, in alcuni casi, centinaia di persone nelle azioni per fermare collettivamente uno sfratto, sarebbe diventata una pratica comune e normalizzata. L'ottenimento di “piccole vittorie” su questo fronte produceva un *empowerment* nelle persone con problemi d'ipoteca, dava loro respiro e generava una situazione di ottimismo sociale necessaria per perseguire gli obiettivi a più lungo termine (Domingo Utset 2012, 47-50; Huerga 2015, 62; Flesher Fominaya 2015, 7).

Un momento centrale della campagna fu il 5 febbraio 2013, quando Ada Colau - allora portavoce della PAH- fu convocata dalla Commissione Economia del Congresso dei Deputati per illustrare la proposta d'ILP. Arrivato il suo turno, qualificò come criminale l'intervento di chi l'aveva preceduta, il segretario generale dell'Associazione bancaria spagnola Javier Rodríguez Pellitero, invitato in qualità di esperto sul tema. Il video del suo appassionato intervento divenne virale, e nel giro di pochi minuti fu *trending topic* nelle reti sociali, per poi essere trasmesso nei mezzi di comunicazione *mainstream* (Colau e Alemany 2013; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Con iniziative come l'ILP, la PAH era riuscita a porre al centro dell'agenda politica le proprie rivendicazioni. La sua influenza fu tale che il Partito Popolare, inizialmente contrario a che il Congresso dibatesse la proposta, dovette cambiare idea ed accettare la discussione in plenaria.

- La campagna dell'*escrache*, che nacque il 13 febbraio 2013 come proseguimento di quella sull'ILP con lo slogan "Ci sono vite in gioco". La pratica dell'*escrache* proviene dall'Argentina degli anni Novanta: a fronte dell'impunità legale ottenuta dai torturatori della precedente dittatura militare, questa pratica si poneva l'obiettivo di segnalare i colpevoli con l'obiettivo di generare, se non altro, il loro screditamento sociale (Flesher Fominaya e Montañés Jiménez 2014; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Posteriormente, nello stesso Paese fu utilizzata per puntare il dito contro i responsabili della crisi economica del 2001, durante i fatti conosciuti come *corralito*. Nel caso della PAH, l'*escrache* aveva una doppia sfaccettatura, dato che si poneva il duplice obiettivo di "informare e persuadere" (Colau e Alemany 2013, 81). Era necessario generare pressione verso i deputati che osteggiavano l'ILP, affinché rettificassero la loro posizione (Romanos 2014, 298). In una prima fase, questi furono invitati alle assemblee pubbliche ed interpellati nelle reti sociali o attraverso lettere aperte, in cui era loro richiesto l'appoggio all'approvazione dell'ILP. In un secondo momento, di fronte al loro rifiuto o alla loro indifferenza, furono organizzate proteste rumorose attorno ai loro domicili, aumentando la pressione e invocando che questi, invece di votare in accordo con la disciplina di partito, lo facessero ascoltando la voce della loro coscienza e della cittadinanza (Colau e Alemany 2013, 67; Mangot Sala 2013a; Pérez Balbi 2015). Nonostante la criminalizzazione dell'*escrache* da parte del governo, la campagna continuò a riscuotere l'appoggio popolare (Colau y Alemany 2013; Mangot Sala 2013a e 2013b): un sondaggio di *Metroscopia* dell'8 aprile mostrò che il 78% degli spagnoli -e il 70% dei votanti del PP- considerava l'*escrache* una manifestazione della libertà d'espressione (Mangot Sala 2013b).

Alla fine, l'ILP fu discussa nel Congresso, ma non fu convertita in legge a causa dell'opposizione del PP¹³. Ciononostante, la campagna ottenne almeno due risultati: in primo luogo, fu capace di mettere all'ordine del giorno del dibattito

13 Va detto che, in un primo momento, anche il Partito Socialista ed altri partiti nazionalisti centristi della Catalogna e dei Paesi Baschi si erano opposti all'ILP, per poi cambiare posizione sotto gli effetti della pressione popolare.

pubblico la questione degli sfratti, trasformando quel che pareva essere un dramma individuale in una questione sociale e politica (Flesher Fominaya 2015, 11); in secondo luogo, mise in discussione l'idea liberale di democrazia rappresentativa, evidenziando come la maggioranza dei membri del Congresso si fosse opposta alla volontà popolare (Flesher Fominaya 2015, 13).

- Per quel che riguarda il periodo più recente, vogliamo sottolineare alcuni aspetti: in primo luogo, la sospensione provvisoria dell'esecuzione degli sfratti (ma non del procedimento di espropriazione) stabilita con la Legge 1/2013 (e rinnovata con un posteriore Decreto Legge valido fino a maggio 2017), che ha riorientato le priorità della PAH e dei movimenti per la casa, facendo sì che le lotte dell'ultimo periodo ruotino attorno, soprattutto, all'accesso alle forniture dei servizi basilari (come l'acqua, l'energia elettrica, il gas), e contro l'interruzione della loro erogazione nei casi in cui fosse impossibile pagarli. Questa fase politica, apertasi approssimativamente a partire dal 2013, ha visto il "riflusso" del movimento indignato -con le sue *acampadas* e assemblee nelle piazze pubbliche-, sebbene il ciclo di lotte sia poi continuato con minore intensità e sotto altre forme (cfr. Portos 2016). In questa fase sono nati, ed hanno assunto una certa rilevanza, attori come "Le marce della dignità" e le "Maree cittadine" -per es. la "Marea Verde", composta da professori e studenti dell'istruzione pubblica, o la "Marea Bianca", composta dai professionisti del settore della salute-, le cui rivendicazioni sono più specifiche ed in generale sono dirette contro i tagli ai diversi settori dello stato sociale da parte del governo. In questa più recente stagione, la PAH ha saputo consolidare il proprio peso e si è confermata come l'attore sociale di riferimento, per quel che riguarda il diritto alla casa, nel contesto dello Stato spagnolo. Infine, va sottolineato un ultimo accadimento: la vittoria delle coalizioni "del cambiamento", insediatesi nelle principali città spagnole (come Madrid, Barcellona, Valencia, Saragozza) dopo le elezioni amministrative di maggio 2015, fatto che ha aperto nuovi scenari nella relazione tra il movimento e le istituzioni municipali -generando sinergie ma anche tensioni ed accalorati dibattiti interni-. È in particolare il caso di Barcellona, dove è avvenuta la vittoria elettorale della coalizione guidata dell'ex portavoce "storica" della PAH, Ada Colau.

4. Principali punti di forza: un approfondimento

In questa sezione ragioneremo sui principali punti di forza della PAH. Per facilitare la nostra argomentazione delineeremo quattro elementi principali: 1) l'apertura ed inclusività organizzativa, associata a forme di lotta pragmatiche; 2) la capacità di produrre una narrazione efficace, credibile ed alternativa a quella egemonica; 3) un uso creativo e tatticamente intelligente delle tecnologie d'informazione e dei mezzi di comunicazione; 4) la rilevanza accordata alla dimensione micropolitica, affettiva ed emotiva, che attraversa in modo trasversale i precedenti aspetti. È importante chiarire che i citati elementi, lungi da essere concepiti come indipendenti l'uno dall'altro, vanno pensati invece

nella loro reciproca interdipendenza ed articolazione. Vediamoli più da vicino:

Forma organizzativa e pratiche di lotta

Anziché essere un'organizzazione tradizionale con incarichi gerarchici *top-down*, la Piattaforma è un'"organizzazione di organizzazioni" in rete. In questo senso, i suoi minimi comuni denominatori sono: l'apartiticità (intensa come indipendenza dai partiti, non come loro rifiuto), la non violenza, l'autofinanziamento delle attività, l'appoggio reciproco, la deliberazione assembleare e la libertà di sviluppare strategie locali autonome (Colau e Alemany 2013). Una caratteristica degna di attenzione è la facile replicabilità delle piattaforme (Colau e Alemany 2013), dato che esistono protocolli organizzativi e d'azione standardizzati e scaricabili presso la pagina web (Veciana et al. 2013, 23; Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014, 9), che è stata definita un vero e proprio "repositorio aperto" (Sanz Cortell 2015). Grazie a questa replicabilità, le principali caratteristiche della PAH poterono essere velocemente adottate e trasposte in altri contesti e luoghi (Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014, 5).

Bisogna poi risaltare il carattere aperto ed inclusivo della Piattaforma: il riferimento ideale dei suoi appelli è la gente "normale", "semplice", "della strada" (Mangot Sala 2013a, 78). Essendo meno "incasellata" politicamente, la PAH può attrarre con più facilità persone con diverse collocazioni sociali e politiche (Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014, 13), molte di esse senza esperienze precedenti di partecipazione in spazi di attivismo.

Anche l'estrazione sociale ed educativa delle partecipanti è particolarmente variegata: si va da piccoli imprenditori, magari del settore della costruzione, che hanno visto svanire i loro sogni di successo per entrare nelle file dei disoccupati, a settori popolari di estrazione più tradizionalmente operaia, così come sono presenti dipendenti pubblici, studenti e ricercatori solidali, pensionati, professionisti -specialmente avvocati- che offrono gratuitamente le loro competenze, eccetera. La presenza di persone di nazionalità straniera, in particolare originarie di paesi dell'Africa Settentrionale o dell'America Latina, è pure importante -anche se, salvo il periodo iniziale della crisi, oggi giorno la partecipazione di cittadini spagnoli è maggioritaria, ruotando attorno al 70% (Colau e Alemany, 2013: 9; Suárez, 2014:78)-. Per tutte queste ragioni, ed in comparazione a precedenti esperienze di lotta, esiste una maggiore proporzione di persone giunte alla Piattaforma per problemi concreti d'ipoteca anziché di attivisti di più lungo corso.

La composizione eterogenea delle assemblee riflette questo innovativo aspetto: alle riunioni partecipano, oltre alle persone coinvolte in problemi d'ipoteca, tanto attivisti (non coinvolti) provenienti dal movimento *okupa*, da *V de Vivienda* o dal movimento altermondialista e contro la guerra così come altri "di seconda generazione" (Mir García et al. 2013, 58), che si sono uniti alla PAH durante il 15M o attraverso qualcuna delle sue campagne. Se tra gli "attivisti" di lungo corso il livello di politicizzazione in senso "progressista", "alternativo" o "anticapitalista" suole essere alto, tra le altre persone non sono rari i casi di chi

prova disinteresse verso la politica ufficiale, o di chi si sente abbandonato da questa¹⁴.

Per quel che riguarda le forme di lotta, è da sottolineare il grande pragmatismo della Piattaforma: infatti, lungi da adottare posizioni restrittive riguardo al repertorio delle azioni collettive considerate legittime, essa combina pratiche partecipative più tradizionali con forme d'azione diretta non violenta, lotta "di strada" e disobbedienza civile (Flesher Fominaya 2015, 16). Nell'ambito della prima categoria di azioni menzioniamo: negoziazioni con banche, raccolte di firme, contatti e dialogo con governi locali o regionali, associazioni di notai, giudici, avvocati, fabbri ferrai, pompieri, medici, psicologi, assistenti sociali, giornalisti, eccetera. Nella seconda categoria: bloccare sfratti, organizzare proteste, manifestazioni e marce rivendicative, occupare fisicamente banche o abitazioni sfitte, e così via (Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014; Romanos 2014; Barbero 2015; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Quel che è più interessante, le pratiche di disobbedienza civile non sono teorizzate a partire da un discorso "ideologico", ma sono intese dalle stesse attiviste come una forma di "autotutela di diritti" (Macías 2013). Nel discorso della PAH, la legittimità di queste pratiche non si basa su di un'analisi teorica chiusa, ma su di una legalità considerata superiore, quella dei diritti fondamentali a cui nessuna legge può sovrapporsi: è in primo luogo "un obbligo morale di fronte a una legge ingiusta" (Mir García et al. 2013, 58). Da questo punto di vista, la PAH è l'attore collettivo che meglio ha saputo "divulgare" e "generalizzare" pratiche di disobbedienza civile e sociale, anteriormente patrimonio degli "specialisti", affinché fossero riappropriate e replicate in prima persona dalle persone protagoniste delle proprie lotte (Macías 2013, 46); addirittura pubblicò un Manuale di Disobbedienza Civile nel contesto della campagna "Opera Sociale".

Una narrazione alternativa a quella egemonica

Vincolando il dramma delle famiglie sfrattate a un discorso più ampio sulla realtà sociale e storica spagnola, la PAH è stata capace di produrre trasformazioni nell'immaginario collettivo e di generalizzare una diversa comprensione della crisi, dentro una "cornice d'interpretazione"¹⁵ alternativa.

14 Anche se non sapremmo quantificare la loro presenza ci sembra rilevante, anche fosse solo dal punto di vista della performatività del discorso, l'affermazione di Ada Colau che molti elettori del Partito Popolare partecipano alle assemblee della PAH. In un altro caso notorio, la Piattaforma s'impegnò per fermare lo sfratto di una consigliera comunale del PP di un paese nella provincia di Alicante.

15 Con l'espressione *frame* o "cornice" facciamo riferimento allo schema interpretativo della realtà sociale adottato dalle persone, basato sulle loro rappresentazioni e valori (cfr. Goffman 1974). Come sostiene Lakoff: "I *frame* sono strutture mentali che conformano il nostro modo di vedere il mondo [...] Cambiare *frame* è cambiare il modo in cui la gente vede il mondo. E' cambiare ciò che s'intende per senso comune" (2007, 17). Dato che la politica è, tra altre cose, "un'attività di lotta per il senso", la necessità di intervenire per trasformare i *frame* si sostiene nell'idea che "i fatti sociali diventano 'dati politici' solo quando sono incorniciati dentro determinati discorsi o pratiche di produzione di significati" (Errejon 2011, 122).

Fin dall'inizio dell'esperienza della PAH, i suoi principali protagonisti avevano identificato come una necessità il compito di "reinterpretare la realtà e ricostruire un racconto della crisi alternativo a quello ufficiale, con cui sentirsi identificati. Una narrativa che spieghi le cause strutturali che ci hanno condotti fin qui. Non siamo responsabili della crisi né di aver perduto l'impiego" (Colau e Alemany 2013, 49). Si trattava di "capovolgere l'immaginario popolare" (Colau e Alemany 2013, 60).

Prendendo Gramsci come ispirazione, Decreus et al. affermano che, affinché la lotta politica di un collettivo possa avere successo, questo dovrà evitare di occupare il luogo che gli è stato assegnato dall'avversario (2014, 145). Da questo punto di vista la PAH, anche se non poté scegliere il terreno di lotta, riuscì efficacemente a sottrarsi alle definizioni e ai *frame* che le furono affibbiati dall'oligarchia spagnola. Allo stesso tempo, seppe associare le sue rivendicazioni a una cornice profondamente radicata nel senso comune e nell'esperienza quotidiana di ampi settori della cittadinanza. Insieme al 15M (o forse come conseguenza di questo, e senza dubbio in connessione con questo), riuscì ad articolare un'identità socio-politica ampia attorno all'opposizione "noi/loro", laddove "loro" -il "fuori costitutivo" (Laclau e Mouffe 1987)- sono "i banchieri", "i politici corrotti", "quelli che stanno in alto" e "noi" siamo "il popolo", "la maggioranza sociale", "quelli che stanno in basso" (cfr. Howarth e Stavrakakis 2000, 5; Mouffe 2007; Errejon 2011; Decreus et al. 2014, 147).

Questa capacità controegemonica (cfr. Jiménez 2013) si manifestò chiaramente nella "battaglia del linguaggio" (Colau e Alemany 2013, 50), dove la PAH mise i propri avversari in condizione di vedersi obbligati, se non a parlare nei suoi stessi termini, come minimo ad accettare molte delle sue problematizzazioni e metafore¹⁶. Prendendo sul serio la performatività politica del linguaggio (cfr. Fairclough 2003), la PAH riuscì a mettere in discussione il vocabolario neoliberista per proporre un altro alternativo. Detto in altro modo: esercitò efficacemente il *potere di dare un nome* (Lakoff 2007, 10). Concretamente, popolarizzò termini precedentemente sconosciuti, o addirittura estranei all'ordine del pensabile, come: "dazione in pagamento", "condono", "affitto sociale", "truffa dei mutui ipotecari", "mutui spazzatura" (Mangot Sala 2013a, 75; Adell et al. 2014, 12). Costruendo la sua lettura alternativa della crisi, indicò che questa non era dovuta all'irresponsabilità dei cittadini che avrebbero vissuto "al di sopra delle loro possibilità" -come segnalavano le élite-, ma a una "truffa" organizzata dalle banche e dalla classe politica. Trasformò il senso comune di termini quali "violenza", "democrazia" o "interesse generale". Infatti, il concetto di "violenza" non fu associato alle classiche rappresentazioni di gruppi di manifestanti "belligeranti" ed "estremisti", ma alla violazione di domicilio realizzata dalla polizia come conseguenza di un'ordinanza di sfratto. I suicidi intrapresi da persone sfrattate che non poterono sopportare più la loro tragica

16 Condividiamo la considerazione che gli attuali movimenti sociali costituiscono veri e propri "laboratori" di creazione metaforica (Romano 2015, 43). Non è questo lo spazio per approfondire l'importanza delle metafore nella lotta politica: rimandiamo a Lizcano (1999) e Lakoff e Johnson (2007).

situazione furono rinominati “omicidi”, e fatti oggetto di cori in appassionate manifestazioni, mettendo in discussione la violenza sistemica e strutturale della normativa spagnola sui mutui ipotecari. “Democrazia” non fu intesa come il sistema dei partiti o le elezioni ogni quattro anni ed “interesse generale” fu adoperato in senso opposto all’uso fattone dalle élite, che ricorrevano a questa nozione come pretesto e giustificazione per realizzare ulteriori tagli alle politiche sociali: “Quando l’interesse generale sarà anteposto ai dettami del mercato allora ci sarà democrazia” (Colau e Alemany 2013, 10). Fu messo in dubbio il ruolo degli “esperti” procedenti dal mondo della finanza (per es. il citato Rodríguez Pellitero), che vennero descritti come personaggi lontani ed estranei all’“interesse comune” (Colau e Alemany 2013, 21), senza autorità né legittimità per parlare di un tema sul quale è molto più esperta la gente comune, che ha un mutuo e che vive quotidianamente la difficoltà di arrivare a fine mese¹⁷. In questo stesso senso, l’“Opera Sociale della PAH” non era un “ufficio occupazioni” -espressione che rimanda a un orizzonte ideologico ascritto a una corrente politica ben definita-, ma una pratica di “presa” o “recupero” di appartamenti che le banche avevano lasciato vuote (cfr. Díaz Parra e Candón Mena 2014, 8).

In termini più generali, un importante *topos* discorsivo che ha caratterizzato la narrazione della PAH è stato quello che rimanda alla questione della *dignità* e della *giustizia sociale*, particolarmente sentita in un paese dove, da un lato, la crisi aveva generato inaccettabili livelli di povertà e disuguaglianze, e dall’altro, i potenti personaggi individuati dalla cittadinanza come i colpevoli dell’attuale situazione (politici, banchieri, grandi imprenditori), non solo non erano perseguiti penalmente per i loro sperperi e le loro corrottele, ma spesso neanche si sentivano in dovere di rendere conto della proprie responsabilità di fronte all’opinione pubblica.

In conclusione, la PAH incoraggiò la produzione di un forte critica -e una successiva reinterpretazione- della narrazione egemonica, delegittimando le élite politiche e finanziarie, e spostando gran parte della società a favore dell’ottenimento di soluzioni nei termini delle sue stesse rivendicazioni e proposte (Domingo Utset 2012, 47; Flesher Fominaya 2015, 16). Da un punto di vista più ampio, contribuì a una *ripoliticizzazione* di larghi settori popolari e di cittadinanza, smentendo l’idea consolidata che, dopo la Transizione alla democrazia, ci sarebbe stato soltanto “il trascorrere di un tempo piano in cui ci sono solamente gestione e sfumature, in un senso e nell’altro, di un ordine che presume di essere eterno” (Errejón 2015, 18).

17 Possiamo confermare per nostra stessa esperienza che le assemblee della PAH di Barcellona e Stop Desahucios-15M Granada sono frequentate da persone incredibilmente esperte in materia di mutui ipotecari. Questi saperi, per il fatto di essere prodotti da un luogo non accademico non sono meno validi: è piuttosto vero il contrario, dato che come ricercatori universitari molto spesso ci siamo sentiti totalmente “inutili” e “prescindibili” quando si trattava di contribuire su questi temi.

Approccio alla tecnopolitica e ai mezzi di comunicazione

La PAH seppe muoversi molto bene nella geografia “ibrida” articolata dagli spazi digitale/comunicativo e urbano/materiale (Álvarez de Andrés et al. 2014, 4; Díaz Parra e Candón Mena 2014, 2), compatibilizzando le lotte “in strada” con l’agire autonomo nelle reti sociali e senza per questo negarsi la partecipazione ai mezzi di comunicazione ufficiali. Come è stato osservato, fu capace di “combinare in modo chirurgico la strada e la rete” (Monterde e Toret 2014). È opportuno sottolineare che l’intervento attraverso questi diversi spazi è indicativo di un approccio poco “dottrinario” e particolarmente pragmatico -si prenda in considerazione l’ostilità (non senza fondamento) di numerosi gruppi *okupa* verso i mezzi di comunicazione ufficiali (cfr. Roig Domínguez e Sádaba Rodríguez 2004)-.

Analizzeremo l’uso delle tecnologie IT fatto dalla Piattaforma, in primo luogo, come spazio di comunicazione autonoma fuori dal controllo dei poteri comunicativi (Castells 2012, 28-29). Le citate tecnologie sono risultate utili sotto diversi punti di vista: in primo luogo hanno permesso di incidere nell’agenda mediatica *mainstream*, quando alcune notizie inizialmente taciute dai mezzi tradizionali, dopo essere divenute *trending topic* nelle reti dovettero essere recuperate e diffuse -è il caso dell’intervento di Ada Colau presso la Commissione Economia del Congresso, citato sopra-. Quest’interazione tra le notizie “virali” create dai movimenti sociali e l’agenda informativa ufficiale, osservata anche in altri casi (cfr. Monterde e Postill 2013), rimanda alla capacità delle reti sociali di reinterpretare le priorità informative mediante il loro uso critico da parte delle utenti e di “generare interpretazioni alternative della realtà, cornici comuni di significati (Díaz Parra e Candón Mena 2014, 5. Cfr. De Miguel Álvarez 2003). In questo senso, alcuni studi realizzati hanno mostrato che l’uso di *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *YouTube* fatto dalla stessa Piattaforma, dai suoi simpatizzanti o da personaggi pubblici ha svolto un ruolo fondamentale, in virtù della loro “istantaneità che eccede il racconto istituzionale” (Pérez Balbi 2015, 155), contribuendo alla risignificazione della crisi (Pérez Díaz et al. 2013, 38). È opportuno aggiungere la gran capacità della PAH di produrre materiali digitali attraenti e di grande qualità (Sanz Cortell 2015)¹⁸.

Si deve menzionare anche l’uso dei telefonini *smartphone*, per la loro importanza come “elementi articolatori di spazi virtuali e fisici attraverso *Twitter* e lo *streaming* in diretta” (Monterde e Postill 2013). Questa riflessione ci sembra molto pertinente nel caso di collettivi come la PAH o degli attuali gruppi Stop Sfratti, dove diversamente dai movimenti altermondialisti del decennio anteriore, essendoci una percentuale minore di attivisti “giovani” o di lunga traiettoria, è anche minore la presenza di *cyberattivisti*. Invece è maggiore la presenza di persone “comuni” che, sebbene non siano esperte in

18 Si faccia caso per es. al video di “Festa in Bankia” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjZwwM-voKU>), un’azione “artista” consistente nell’irruzione repentina di una comitiva festosa dentro una succursale del suddetto ente bancario, per festeggiare con tanto di musica e coriandoli i clienti che avevano deciso di chiudere il loro conto corrente.

tecnologie IT, usano i loro telefonini portatili quotidianamente in vari modi. Tralaltro, la trasmissione di video in *streaming* attraverso questi apparati permise di documentare in diretta episodi di violenza poliziesca (Haro Barba e Sampedro Blanco 2011, 166), favorendo non solo la diffusione di una narrazione alternativa a quella dei *media* ufficiali, ma anche riducendo il rischio di essere oggetto di maggiori misure repressive¹⁹. Facendo riferimento ai movimenti altermondialisti degli inizi del millennio, Juris parla di *computer-supported social movements* (Juris 2004, 347): per parafrasare la sua espressione, ci appare pertinente aggiornarla con quella di *mobile-supported social movements*.

Infine, non è questo lo spazio per analizzare in modo dettagliato le diverse funzioni svolte dalle tecnologie IT dentro la Piattaforma²⁰, sebbene risaltiamo il loro importante ruolo come mezzi di comunicazione interna (per esempio: gruppi di *whatsapp* per coordinare informazioni, convocare assemblee, fermare sfratti o compiere altre azioni), e a volte addirittura come mezzo di sfogo dei malesseri al di fuori degli spazi assembleari ufficiali -ma non come strumento deliberativo-.

Per quel che riguarda i mezzi di comunicazione ufficiali, la PAH sviluppò una riflessione esplicita: seppure criticando la loro “mancanza di coraggio e impegno politico” (Colau e Alemany 2013, 19) e l’interesse a trattare gli sfratti in un modo sensazionalista senza andare alla radice del problema, fu pure cosciente del fatto che per guadagnare egemonia culturale “era fondamentale lavorare con i mezzi di massa” e partecipare ai dibattiti televisivi. C’è di più: “consapevoli del fatto che inoltre potevano offrire storie umane, hanno optato per far sí che gli stessi protagonisti si incaricassero di trasmettere le loro storie, ma non di sconfitta quanto piuttosto di superamento personale” (Sanz Cortell 2015). Allo stesso tempo, la PAH seppe riconoscere l’esistenza di “giornalisti cerniera” (Sanz Cortell 2015) su cui contare personalmente, “giornalisti che fanno bene il loro lavoro, onesti, la maggioranza” (Colau e Alemany 2013, 72-90). In questo modo, ottenne una presenza costante nei *media* e il mantenimento di una rilevante “tensione comunicativa” (Colau e Alemany 2012, 104). Van Dijk afferma che, quanto più potente è un gruppo sociale, maggiore facilità ha di accedere al discorso pubblico e maggiori sono i generi e i contesti discorsivi in cui può muoversi (1993, 256). Capovolgendo l’ordine di questo ragionamento, si può dire che la PAH è stata capace di far valere i propri mezzi autonomi e allo stesso tempo di approfittare le opportunità offerte dai formati comunicativi

19 Parlando di repressione, non vanno dimenticati né i numerosi fermi ed arresti praticati dalla Polizia Nazionale contro attivisti anti-sfratto (specialmente durante le azioni), né l’approvazione da parte del Congresso, nel 2015, della nuova “Legge di Sicurezza Cittadina” (ribattezzata *Ley Mordaza*, “Legge Bavaglio”), una misura condannata anche dall’ONU, il cui obiettivo principale è sanzionare amministrativamente, mediante multe da 600 a 600.000 euro, le diverse pratiche di lotta sperimentate dai movimenti sociali degli ultimi anni -ad esempio l’occupazione di filiali bancarie, pratica tipica della PAH, costituisce una delle fattispecie più rilevanti- (cfr. The New York Times, 2015).

20 Per approfondire gli usi militanti delle tecnologie IT in un contesto analogo, cfr. Razquin Mangado (2015).

mainstream, ciò che le ha permesso di accumulare maggiore influenza sociale e potere d'agenda.

Inoltre, non bisogna sottovalutare l'importanza comunicativa dei diversi artefatti usati dalla PAH durante le sue campagne, molti di essi realizzati in collaborazione con il collettivo attivista "EnMedio" (<http://www.enmedio.info/>). Elementi grafici di facile riconoscimento quali le magliette verdi (come simbolo di speranza), i cartelli esagonali "Stop Sfratti" e quelli rotondi "Sì è possibile, però non vogliono" utilizzati durante la campagna dell'ILP (cfr. figura A), o l'artefatto con la forma di un "5" gigante usato per rappresentare le 5 rivendicazioni della PAH durante le elezioni politiche del 2015 (cfr. figura B), hanno ottenuto un impatto visivo notevole nello spazio pubblico durante le diverse azioni (cfr. Suárez 2015; Sanz Cortell 2015)



Figura A: Artefatti utilizzati durante la campagna della ILP (fonte: Enmedio).



Figura B: Artefatto utilizzato durante la campagna "Las 5 de la PAH" (fonte: Enmedio).

Come conseguenza di questa forte proiezione pubblica, la Piattaforma ha potuto conseguire un ampio appoggio popolare. Per esempio, un'inchiesta realizzata da

Metroscopia in novembre 2012 mostrò che il 94% della popolazione spagnola appoggiava una moratoria degli sfratti e l'86% la dazione in pagamento (Mangot Sala 2013b); un altro sondaggio di marzo 2013 -nel mezzo della campagna degli escrache- mise in evidenza che l'81% delle persone intervistate dichiarava fidarsi della PAH più che del governo (11%) o dei partiti dell'opposizione (24%) (Mangot Sala 2013b). In questo stesso senso, segnaliamo il "Premio del Cittadino Europeo 2013" concesso dal Parlamento Europeo alla PAH per il suo impegno a favore dei diritti umani. Crediamo che grazie anche a questa straripante legittimità popolare la PAH, in comparazione ad altri movimenti con una minore influenza sociale, sia stata sottoposta a un livello di repressione più basso (Mangot Sala 2013b, 70-71)²¹.

Pratiche micropolitiche, emozioni ed affetti

Se gli sfratti, inizialmente sperimentati in modo solitario dalle persone coinvolte nel problema, poterono finalmente essere vissuti come una questione collettiva, una situazione "che si condivide con altri, per cui si lotta insieme e si esigono soluzioni ad ampio raggio" (Domingo Utset 2012, 47), ciò fu dovuto alla capacità della PAH di costruire al suo interno spazi di appoggio mutuo, fiducia e cure. Le piattaforme offrono un esempio molto interessante di logiche "micropolitiche" (cfr. Deleuze e Guattari 2014; Guattari e Rolnick 2006) o "infrapolitiche" (cfr. Scott 2003), generalmente relegate al terreno "personale" e "privato" dalla politica ufficiale, che non dubitiamo prendano in considerazione "altri modi di politicizzazione dal basso" (Colectivo Situaciones 2012).

Un ruolo centrale dentro questo ragionamento è occupato dagli affetti: per capire la loro importanza, è necessario ricordare che le persone che giungono alla PAH generalmente lo fanno come ultima risorsa, dopo essersi diretti alle reti familiari e ai servizi sociali (Colau e Alemany 2013, 44-45). Tendono ad arrivare "troppo tardi", con una situazione molto grave sulle spalle e pervase da sentimenti di "colpa", "sconfitta", "frustrazione", "vergogna" (Colau e Alemany 2013; Ramis-Pujol 2013; Ruiz Peralta 2013). Bisogna ricordare che, in una società dove la proprietà è allo stesso tempo una forma di controllo e un simbolo di prestigio sociale (Ruiz Peralta 2013, 9-10), perdere la propria casa comporta una profonda stigmatizzazione. Inoltre, l'esperienza dello sfratto (imminente o già prodotto) spesso mette alla prova e disarticola severamente le relazioni affettive e familiari delle persone coinvolte. Così, la durezza della situazione vissuta e la possibilità di condividere la sofferenza con persone nelle stesse condizioni, fanno sì che la PAH appaia in primo luogo come una catalizzatrice di emozioni che hanno bisogno di essere esteriorizzate ed ascoltate (Colau e Alemany 2012). Lì si costruiscono spazi e pratiche di cura, empatia e fiducia, attraversate dalle citate logiche micropolitiche; è specialmente il caso di quelle

21 Questa osservazione si basa nella nostra esperienza personale, come attivisti tanto per il diritto alla casa come di altri movimenti precedenti. Di fronte alle pratiche rivendicative di attori, come la PAH ed i vari gruppi Stop Sfratti, con una forte legittimità sociale, le autorità sembrano più propense a "chiudere un occhio".

dinamiche più informali che si svolgono ai margini delle assemblee, con una partecipazione più ridotta e “faccia a faccia”. Pensiamo, per esempio, ai punti d’informazione per i nuovi arrivati, alle piccole azioni d’appoggio mutuo che consistono nell’accompagnare una famiglia alla banca per negoziare, aiutarla a riempire moduli legali o fare da intermediari con i servizi sociali del comune. Rifiutando un approccio assistenzialista, la PAH esige che siano le proprie persone coinvolte in problemi d’ipoteca a portare avanti il proprio caso, prendendone le decisioni principali -anche se appoggiate dal gruppo- (Colau e Alemany 2013, 47). Dentro la piattaforma, esse incontrano altre persone accomunate dalla stessa problematica, con cui non solo parteciperanno a sessioni di formazione sui mutui ipotecari o ad azioni di protesta, ma condivideranno anche preoccupazioni, desideri e tesseranno reti di solidarietà. Come affermano Colau e Alemany: “La PAH offre radicamento e appartenenza. Le persone riprendono il destino delle loro vite. E nel processo conoscono, apprendono, e diventano più forti. Assumono responsabilità. Si corresponsabilizzano. Le emozioni si connettono. Si forgia una voce collettiva. Nasce la solidarietà” (2013, 48). Da negative e individuali, le emozioni iniziali di disperazione o rassegnazione diventano positive e collettive, segnate da un messaggio pieno di speranza: *Si se puede* (Mangot Sala 2013a, 79-86). Si genera un (auto)empowerment emotivo, dato che la sofferenza è socializzata e risignificata: “Non sei più solo/a” (Ruiz Peralta 2013, 14)²². Prevalgono emozioni affettive come l’allegria, l’orgoglio, l’auto-efficacia e l’autostima, “connesse a un impegno positivo verso persone, idee e luoghi” (Perugorría e Tejerina 2013, 433). Ma questo (auto)empowerment è anche strategico (Macías 2013, 47), dato che socializza conoscenze, strumenti d’azione (Mir García et al. 2013, 57), concetti giuridici e finanziari prima sconosciuti e necessari per far fronte alle banche (Contreras 2013, 14). Attraverso questo processo, molte persone intraprendono un processo in cui il senso di colpa iniziale è eliminato e finiscono per allontanarsi dall’identificazione col discorso egemonico (Gibson-Graham in Ruiz Peralta 2013, 16), per trasformarsi in soggetti politici che si riconoscono parte di un processo collettivo²³.

Dunque, il discorso della PAH si differenzia alquanto dall’intendimento “novacentesco”, “razionalista” e “logocentrismo” della politica tipico di molte organizzazioni alternative -sembrano definitivamente lontani i tempi in cui la Rivoluzione appariva come una necessità dettata dalle forze della Ragione e

22 L’empowerment emotivo si riflette nelle azioni di protesta pubblica, dato che nella PAH si lotta con determinazione ma anche con allegria: “Nelle proteste si fanno rivendicazioni, certo, ma si balla, si canta, si lanciano coriandoli e si ride” (Sanz Cortell 2015).

23 Per descrivere il tipo di relazione che si stabilisce tra le persone con problemi d’ipoteca dentro la PAH, ci sembra pertinente l’adozione del concetto di “intimità pubblica”, coniato dal *Colectivo Situaciones* e definito in questo modo: “Per molti anni la sfera pubblica comportò la rinuncia all’intimità e viceversa [...] Un’intimità (ciò che sentiamo nel profondo) diviene pubblica (di tutte e per tutte) quando avvertiamo che ciò che sperimentiamo ha una sfaccettatura comune che ci vincola agli altri. Una sfida che contraddistingue molte delle pratiche contemporanee è proprio quella di individuare ed utilizzare questa dimensione comune a partire dalle esperienze di vita che, in generale, consideriamo ‘private’: le passioni e gli affetti”.

dalla Storia-. Non stiamo dicendo che gli spazi d'attivismo precedenti fossero scevri dalla presenza di emozioni e sentimenti (cfr. Sitrin 2013; Belli e Díez García 2015); tutt'altro, spesso queste emozioni sono state utilizzate da parte di alcuni attori come strumento per invogliare alla partecipazione, rafforzare le lotte (Brown e Pickerill 2009) o -ben più tristemente- manipolare i partecipanti. Ma un'altra cosa è, come fa la PAH, rivendicare espressamente la produttività politica degli affetti e concedere loro un luogo esplicito nelle pratiche quotidiane. Per dirlo con le parole dei principali protagonisti, "pensare" e "sentire" devono camminare insieme: "Contro il gioco sporco e le cloache del sistema, la forza della ragione e del cuore" (2013, s.p.), o: "Anche se siamo di cuore caldo agiamo con la testa fredda" (2013, 91). Le emozioni, pertanto, non rappresentano una realtà "da intendere meglio" per poter così meglio "gestirle", "allontanarle" dalla sfera politica o, al limite, usarle in modo subliminale, né entrano in contraddizione con la razionalità. Sono piuttosto una parte costitutiva della stessa pratica politica (Ancelovici e Emperador 2016). L'importanza data alle pratiche micropolitiche ha garantito alla PAH capacità d'attrazione, efficacia e sostenibilità nel tempo, permettendo che a partire da questa dimensione si potesse agire e produrre modificazioni ai diversi livelli della vita quotidiana delle persone, così come sul piano delle grandi narrazioni sociali. La PAH non solo ha saputo allacciare questi due tipi di processi "micro" e "macro", ma li ha anche posti in una relazione di auto-potenziamento reciproco. Come sostengono Perugorría e Tejerina: "Passioni ed emozioni, così come ideologia e interessi, spingono le persone a mobilitarsi e agire insieme (Goodwin et al. 2001) [...] Emozioni e cognizione non sono mutuamente esclusive, ma piuttosto si rafforzano mutuamente" (2013, 432). In questo senso le pratiche micropolitiche della PAH ci sembrano avanzare, perlomeno un poco, verso la creazione di spazi di attivismo *emotivamente sostenibili* (cfr. Brown e Pickerill 2009, 30)²⁴.

5. Riflessioni conclusive: le ragioni di un successo

In questo articolo, dopo un'opportuna contestualizzazione delle politiche abitative nello Stato spagnolo, delle ragioni della bolla speculativa immobiliare e dei precedenti movimenti per il diritto alla casa, abbiamo incentrato l'attenzione sull'irruzione della PAH. In primo luogo, abbiamo fornito informazioni riguardanti le principali rivendicazioni e campagne politiche, così come abbiamo sottolineato analogie e differenze rispetto alle esperienze di lotta anteriori. Posteriormente, abbiamo analizzato i principali elementi di forza del suo agire dai punti di vista "organizzativo", "narrativo", "comunicativo" ed

24 Parlando di micropolitica, non vogliamo sottovalutare l'importanza dei corpi e della loro materialità affettiva, dato che la dimensione corporale è un altro aspetto da tenere in considerazione dentro le pratiche di questo collettivo (cfr. Brown e Pickerill 2009, 30; Butler 2011; Sitrin 2013; Beasley-Murray 2015). Ciò è particolarmente vero se si prendono in considerazione i rischi fisici che le attiviste affrontano durante alcune manifestazioni pubbliche - per non parlare sotto questo stesso profilo di quel che comporta essere cacciati dalla propria casa, intesa come il luogo fisico in cui si è vissuti durante anni-.

“affettivo”. Vogliamo insistere sulla necessità di concepire questi elementi in una stretta interconnessione. In realtà, salvo che per fini meramente esplicativi, ci risulta difficile scindere i diversi aspetti nella concretezza dell’esperienza quotidiana. Per esempio, sarebbe arduo e poco utile differenziare gli aspetti organizzativi da quelli politici, quando le campagne rivendicative sono pensate allo stesso tempo come strumento per l’ottenimento di obiettivi politici e per il rafforzamento della Piattaforma. Viceversa, la predisposizione al pragmatismo organizzativo e all’inclusività è pensata in stretta relazione con l’esigenza di coinvolgere le persone “comuni” e dotare l’azione politica di maggiore efficacia. In modo simile, le pratiche tecnopolitiche e comunicative che abbiamo illustrato giocano un ruolo centrale tanto per un funzionamento “interno” efficace della Piattaforma, così come per garantire visibilità “pubblica” al suo discorso. D’altro canto, senza l’uso creativo delle nuove tecnologie e l’intelligenza tattica rispetto alla presenza nei media ufficiali, la PAH non avrebbe potuto diffondere in modo capillare la propria narrazione alternativa, riuscendo a farla diventare controegemonica. Infine, per quel che riguarda l’elemento micropolitico, esso attraversa trasversalmente tutti gli ambiti d’azione: l’ottimismo e la speranza generate dalle pratiche di cura ed affetto attive negli spazi più “intimi” trovano il loro corrispettivo, sullo scenario “pubblico”, nella centralità accordata alle passioni dentro la lotta politica -in altre parole, il sentire è considerato un sostegno fondamentale dell’agire e del pensare-. Allo stesso modo, la narrazione alternativa prodotta dalla PAH in termini collettivi non sarebbe stata possibile se, dapprima, i valori del neoliberalismo non fossero stati messi in discussione dai suoi membri a un livello individuale -e questo processo di risignificazione del “fallimento” personale, come abbiamo visto, possiede una componente emotiva centrale-.

Naturalmente, siamo coscienti che questi elementi soggettivi, seppur importantissimi, non sarebbero stati sufficienti se contemporaneamente non si fosse data una situazione relativamente eccezionale dal punto di vista delle condizioni storiche, socio-politiche ed economiche, senza le quali non si sarebbe posta la possibilità di uno sgretolamento della narrazione egemonica, né si sarebbe prodotta la struttura di opportunità che ha permesso l’emergere delle lotte sulla casa come questione centrale nel dibattito pubblico.

In conclusione, la PAH rappresenta un chiaro esempio di successo nell’ambito delle lotte per l’abitare, probabilmente il maggiore nell’attuale contesto europeo. Viviamo in un periodo in cui le politiche di austerità neoliberaliste hanno inflitto forti attacchi al diritto alla casa in numerosi paesi dell’UE (specialmente in Europa meridionale), generando resistenze e tentativi di articolazione di risposte efficaci da parte degli attivisti²⁵. Speriamo dunque che il nostro contributo possa risultare utile in un dibattito tra persone interessate non solo a conoscere meglio queste lotte, ma anche a contribuire in modo attivo al loro

25 Per esempio, negli ultimi mesi si è assistito in Italia al risorgere di iniziative e tentativi di coordinamento delle vertenze per il diritto alla casa e contro gli sfratti, come la rete “Abitare nella crisi” www.abitarenellacrisi.org/wordpress/ (cfr. Avallone 2016).

rafforzamento.

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Note biografiche degli/delle autori/autrici

Luca Sebastiani: Dottore di ricerca in Antropologia Sociale e Diversità Culturale e Master in Scienze Sociali Applicate (Studi Migratori, Sviluppo e Intervento Sociale) presso l'Università di Granada. Dottore in Scienze Politiche presso l'Università di Bologna (specializzazione in Storia). Fin dalla gioventù ha partecipato a diverse organizzazioni politiche e movimenti sociali alternativi, in particolare il movimento altermondialista e contro la guerra in Italia e il 15M spagnolo. lucaseba AT ugr.es

Borja Íñigo Fernández Alberdi: Dottore in Antropologia Sociale presso l'Università di Granada. Master in Antropologia ed Etnografia presso l'Università di Barcellona. Sta sviluppando la sua tesi nell'ambito del progetto di ricerca "Processi emergenti ed *agencies* del comune: prassi della investigazione sociale collaborativa e nuove forme di soggettivazione politica". correboa AT hotmail.com

Rocío García Soto: dottoressa in Antropologia Sociale presso l'Università di Granada. Master in Antropologia ed Etnografia presso l'Università di Barcellona. Ha fatto ricerca nell'ambito del progetto: "Costruendo differenze nella scuola. Studio delle traiettorie delle ATAL in Andalusia, del loro professorato e del loro alunato". Attualmente sta sviluppando la sua tesi dentro il progetto "Processi emergenti ed *agencies* del comune: prassi della ricerca sociale collaborativa e nuove forme di soggettivazione politica". rociogarso AT hotmail.com

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Fighting (for) gender equality: the roles of social movements and power resources

Ruedi Epple and Sebastian Schief¹

Abstract

Social movement activists are highly interested in incorporating experiences of their forerunners into their own strategic considerations and decisions. They examine whether previously implemented strategies have been successful or not and seek to understand why social movements have succeeded or failed to result in change. In this regard, the context in which social movements emerge and operate must be considered. As well, activists must determine whether countermovements exist and, if so, what strategies the latter have implemented that may thwart or further their own goals. This article discusses these issues by analyzing the interaction between the social movements for and against gender equality, using the example of the struggle between the women's rights movement and its countermovements to establish or remove Offices for Gender Equality (OGEs) in Switzerland. Based on the results of a Coincidence Analysis (CNA), it is shown how this conflict has shaped the political balance of power in Switzerland, and, in turn, how political structures and processes have been modified. The implications of our findings for social movements are discussed.

Keywords: gender equality, social movements, Switzerland, coincidence analysis

Introduction

Zita Küng, a former secretary of the Swiss Women's Rights Organization (Organisation für die Sache der Frau, OFRA) has recently stated that the women's rights issues need a new boost (Avanzino, 2015). During the 1970s, the OFRA was one of the major organizations involved in the feminist movements in Switzerland (Küng 1979). Zita Küng's opinion is not unusual. Many young women in Switzerland and elsewhere agree wholeheartedly. Michèle Roten, for example, belongs to a new feminist generation in Switzerland (Roten 2011a, 2011b). In other European countries, representatives of a new feminism (e.g., Anne Wizorek in Germany and Laurie Penny in the UK) have called for renewed

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discussions on sexism, gender equality, and gender issues in general (Fargahi 2015; Landolt 2015).

The statements of younger and older representatives and supporters of feminism reflect that the progress of achieving gender equality in Europe in the 21st century has been slow. Even though the women's rights movement has been able to accomplish various major political goals, recent debates indicate that the implementation of practices to achieve gender equality still leaves room for improvement.

A few facts with respect to the situation in Switzerland illustrate this point. First, the proportion of female executive managers in Switzerland is still below the European average (Kohli 2012). Second, an unexplainable, gender-related discrepancy in pay still exists (Bundesamt für Statistik, BfS, 2012; Kobler 2015). Third, the division of work, whether it be paid labor or related to unpaid housework, family care, or voluntary community activities, is still heavily gendered (Epple, Kersten, Nollert, and Schief 2014, Epple, Kersten, Nollert, and Schief 2015; Gasser, Kersten, Nollert, and Schief 2015).

The static implementation of only formally accepted gender equality has been accompanied by conflicts that have tested already achieved progress. For example, the right to an abortion within the first three months of pregnancy was challenged by a popular petition (*Volksinitiative*) in Switzerland. Although the petition did not call for abolishing the existing law, it sought to make the funding of elected abortions a private issue. This, however, would have resulted in abortions becoming a privilege of wealthy women once again (Bundesrat 2012; Föhn 2011).

Comparable political developments can be observed all over Europe. In some countries, gender equality has been assigned a high priority and actively promoted. In others, the call to promote or take action in favor of gender equality has been rejected. In fact, some countries have even pursued reforms to hinder it (Kriszszán et al. 2009).

We postulate that social change emerges from conflicts between social movements, as is reflected in the case of our study on the development of gender equality. This conflict has neither abated in Europe overall, and especially not in Switzerland. Indeed, the issue of gender equality in Switzerland remains highly controversial and disputed.

In this contribution, we analyze the conflicts related to gender equality by way of example in Switzerland, namely, as they emerged in the development of the Swiss Federal Offices for Gender Equality (hereafter: OGEs). These offices were established in several of Switzerland's 26 subregions (cantons) in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The OGEs have been vitally important for the women's rights movement and gender equality issues in Switzerland. During the 1970s and 1980s, they were a central institutional heritage within the women's rights movement. Since then, they have become symbols of the institutionalization of the women's rights movement. Today, the offices have the

important task of ensuring that the constitutional mandate of gender equality is put into practice (Scheidegger 2008).

The struggle to achieve gender equality in Switzerland is hallmarked, for example, by the fact that not every canton has implemented an OGE. In addition, there have been various and repeated political attempts to retrench the offices, either by closing them, privatizing them, reducing their funding, reorganizing them or by overwhelming them with new demands and duties. The political forces driving such direct or indirect attacks on the OGEs are made up of individuals who are convinced that the offices are not or no longer necessary. In their opinion, the aim of gender equality has been more or less accomplished (Epple 2012; Interessengemeinschaft Antifeminismus 2011).

We hypothesize that the fights for and against the OGEs reflect the political balance of power in the field of gender equality. The fights against the offices have led the above-mentioned feminists to conclude that new efforts are necessary to uphold and improve gender equality. In our analysis, we first address the question of if and when a *new type of social movement* appeared in the field of gender equality (Hutter and Kriesi 2013; Kriesi 1996). Secondly, we examine whether any countermovements opposed to the women's rights movement have been able to change the balance of power of the social movements to the disadvantage of gender equality. Because Switzerland is a confederation of relatively autonomous yet still rather homogeneous subregions (cantons) with different configurations, it represents a suitable example to conduct our comparative analysis.

In the following, we first outline the major theoretical concepts we have drawn upon to develop our research questions. We then present our research hypotheses underlying our analysis, the data and methods used, and our empirical findings. In the last section, we state and discuss our conclusion.

Concepts

In order to better understand how the conflict related to the OGEs is linked to the changes in the balance of power, we first describe the conceptual pillars of political systems, namely, polities, politics and policies. Then, because a major driver of social change emerges from the conflict between social movements and their countermovements, we describe the different movements related to our research question and how they have led to social change. Finally, we explain the concept of state feminism in order to understand the processes of state intervention for the sake of gender equality.

Policy, politics, and polity

Policy, politics, and polity are three terms used to describe the three most important underlying dimensions of political science (Prittwitz and Wegrich 1994). Policy refers to content of ideas, goals, or any related plans of action that are adopted or implemented by an individual or social group, such as formal

political programs or lines of arguments. Politics refers to the actual processes, procedures, activities, and affairs involved in managing states, governments, or organized social groups. For example, politics is concerned with assessing, debating, or promoting opinion, and typically leads to political decisions. Polity refers to organized political systems. It includes, for example, governmental organizations and institutions, the rule of law, codes of practice, and the political culture of an entity.

Social movements and social change

According to Cox and Nilsen (Cox and Nilsen 2014; Nilsen and Cox 2013), social change is an outcome of conflicts between social movements originating from the top and the bottom levels of society. Movements from the bottom give voice to the demands of groups possessing little power or authority within a larger society. Movements from the top stem from and are aimed to promote the interests of elite members of society. Typically, the latter attempt to protect their privileges that may be at the heart of demands underlying movements from the bottom. The cycle of protests of the so-called *new social movements* (NSM) during the late 1960s can be interpreted as marking a phase of social movements that aggressively promoted social change in line with interests rooted from the bottom (Giugni 1999). However, at the beginning of the 1990s, this bottom-rooted phase of protests was replaced by another period dominated by the social movements from the top. Pushed by these movements, a neoliberal conversion of society took place during that period (Nilsen and Cox 2013). Yet, social movements from the bottom remained active during this period and used their remaining power to influence the social developments (Epple and Schär 2015).

The alter-globalization (global justice) and the national-conservative movements represent two major social movements that influenced social change emerging during this period (Hutter and Kriesi 2013; Kriesi 1996). They defined the political scope in the phase of neoliberal societal conversion, a social change triggered from the elites of the society (Brand and Wissen 2003).

Kriesi (2001) has shown how the social movements described above can be differentiated according to inclusion and exclusion dimensions of conflict. In contrast to new social movements, the influence of the national-conservative movements is not restricted to the arena of protest; instead, the actors exploit an institutional arena to pursue their goals. Hutter and Kriesi (2013) label this phenomenon as the *paradox of the populist right*. They believe that national-conservative movements, grounded in political institutions dominated by political elites, mobilize their activities predominantly within these institutional arenas in order to distance themselves from the political left. Moreover, their activities are in line with an ideological affinity to authority, law, and order (Hutter 2012; Hutter and Kriesi 2013).

Social movements operate in a *field of force* (Nilsen and Cox 2013, p. 71; Roseberry 1996, pp. 75-76). The field of force is defined by different political

actors, their resources, and the public support they receive. Politics are always based on conflicts and the balance of power. The field of force creates a balance of power within public politics (Wissel 2010). Social movements may create alliances with political parties (Rucht 2004) or become parties themselves over time (e.g., the Green Party).

Politics are influenced by social movements, too. Switzerland's underlying political system consists of federal and centralist elements that are influenced by representative and direct democratic factors. These elements are based on the balance of power as it existed in the 19th century. The institutional compromise of the 19th century was functional even though the political balance of power changed. It has therefore survived until today (Epple 1988, Vatter 2014). The balance of power influences policies as well. Switzerland's social policy, for example, has been influenced by diverse political paradigms, programs, and powers (Studer 1998).

We can now incorporate these general considerations in our analysis of the mechanisms underlying the balance of power with respect to gender equality. As in other European countries, the women's rights movement in Switzerland had its second wave during the cycle of protests of the new social movements. Political actors had to acknowledge the demands of gender equality (politics). Because countermovements were stronger at that time (Hardmeier 1997), the women's rights movement was then able to achieve previously unreachable goals (Banaszak 1996). In 1971, Switzerland introduced women's suffrage. Only some years later, an article on gender equality was written into Switzerland's federal constitution. The gender equality article was retained in the constitution after its renewal in 1999 (Rielle 2010a, 2010b). Moreover, most of the cantons implemented offices for gender equality (OGE) during the last quarter of the twentieth century (politics) (Scheidegger 2008). The altered balance of power also led to a change in policies. A majority of the voting population voted in favor of the right to abortion within the first three months of the pregnancy (Rielle 2010c). Social policy reforms made some concessions to address the demands of the women's rights movement (Studer 2012). Since the 1990s, however, countermovements against the women's right movement (e.g., the national-conservative movements and the anti-feminist movement) have been gaining ground.

According to Jessop (2007) and Hay (2002), social movements are strategic-relational actors. They relate to actions of other powers and to contexts within the fights that take place. The existing geographical and temporal contexts are a result of former fights. The former balance of power is, so to speak, inscribed into the actual context. As such, the contexts are selective and offer actors with diverse strategies a variety of opportunities for action (Jessop 2004). As Tilly and Goodin (2006) have pointed out, context is a highly relevant factor in political analysis, and this applies here, too. In our research, the contexts were the cantons, each of which demonstrated an affinity or adversity to gender equality (Bühler, Brun, and Steinmann 2001).

Major changes in the balance of power happen during cycles of protest. They lead to concessions, adjustments, and compromises between social movements and their allies with respect to the triad of politics, polities and policies. As well, there are *ceasefire lines* (Nilsen and Cox 2013, p. 81) or *social fixes* (Sum and Jessop 2013, pp. 246-250). Certainly, a ceasefire can be broken or terminated. Moreover, social fixes settle social and political conflicts only provisionally (and not permanently) because some political forces may be excluded or left behind, or the societal circumstances prevailing at the time of the implementation of the ceasefire change. New crises may arise; new conflicts may erupt (Nilsen and Cox 2013; Sum and Jessop 2013). If a countermovement should develop, even a backlash is possible (Mansbridge and Shames 2008).

State feminism

Our research is affiliated with research on state feminism. State feminism defines the relationship between the women's rights movement and the Swiss Offices for Gender Equality (OGEs). According to McBride and Mazur (1995) the starting point of the research on state feminism was grounded in the common skepticism that evolved during the second wave of the women's rights movement about "policy machinery for the advancement of women" (pp. 2-3) and "feminism from above" (p. 10). A major reference of research on state feminism and the OGEs is linked to the *Research Networks on Gender Politics and the State* (RNGS) (Mazur and McBride 2006; McBride and Mazur 2013; RNGS 2010). The network's research rejects the view that the state is a monolithic entity dominated by men. Instead, the RNGS defines the state as "the site or location of a variety of internally differentiated structures and processes" (McBride and Mazur 1995, p. 11). The state's heterogeneity left room for the women's rights movement to access state institutions to campaign for gender equality within a setting that was adverse to gender equality.

In a nutshell, research on state feminism has shown that the women's rights movement has succeeded in resolving several conflicts concerning gender equality. Substantial reforms have been developed, and actors have established themselves in this policy field (*dual response*) (McBride and Mazur 2010, pp. 242-250). The skepticism in the beginning stages of the women's rights movement has not been borne out (Outshoorn 2010). In this regard, Banszak (2010) states that reforms have been generated by *femocrats*² of the policy machineries for gender equality as well as by feminists working in other state sectors. A connection between movement and state must exist for these reforms to be successful.

The circumstances underlying the push to achieve gender equality have changed over the last twenty years, for example, as can be seen in neoliberal reconfigurations of the welfare state (Banaszak, Beckwith, and Rucht 2003) or the re-orientation of gender equality policy on diversity and gender

² An Australian term for female government officials who advocate feminist policies.

mainstreaming (Kantola and Outshoorn 2007). With respect to gender equality, these changes represent ambivalent outcomes (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007).

In some countries, women's rights movements were weakened and countermovements evolved (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007). A particularly strong development of this kind took place in Australia (Sawer 2007). Owing to changes in the balance of power, state feminism has been weakened in some countries. However, the prevalence of such cases is outnumbered by those in which women's rights movement and state feminism gained support (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007).

Policy analyses on state feminism have generated contradictory findings regarding the balance of power. On the one hand, some case studies have found that countermovements have had an impact (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Sawer 2007). On the other hand, some scholars have claimed that the strength or weakness of countermovements has had no impact on state feminism (McBride and Mazur 2010).

We think that such discrepancies can be explained, at least in part, by a failure to take into account the balance of power, in general, and the strength of the countermovements in particular. We agree with Goertz and Mazur (2008) that it is important to examine a negation, absence, or the opposite of a basic concept (Goertz and Mazur 2008). As such, we have incorporated this approach into our considerations by symmetrically scrutinizing the women's rights movement and the countermovements. In other words, we have analyzed strengths and weaknesses of both sides as well as the outcomes or lack thereof.

State feminism is effective if the women's rights movement and the OGEs are operative and effect changes together (Goertz and Mazur 2008). The research in the field of gender equality has been enriched by inquiries focusing on the political balance of power (Wissel 2010), which, in turn, has influenced politics, policies and polities. The change of perspective has conceptual and methodological consequences.

Switzerland has not been part of the research network on state feminism. Instead, research on OGEs has had a different focus. Scheidegger (2008), for example, conducted a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) to show that a shift of power in favor of the women's rights movement within the cantonal executive bodies in combination with a progressive order of sexes lead to an implementation of an OGE. Cantons with good financial situations also represented a more favorable precondition for establishing OGEs. A definite implementation of OGE, an active gender equality policy, and a durable representation of women in the cantonal executive bodies were the preconditions necessary to continue and sustain OGE operations (Scheidegger 2008). Scheidegger's research is important for our purpose in light of the extensive data collected. Moreover, we adapted the configurational comparative method used by Scheidegger. According to Seitz (2010), the cantonal political culture has had a major impact on conflicts related to the OGEs. Therefore, for

our research, we also incorporated the concept of political culture as a context variable and used Seitz's data for our analyses.

In our research, we have drawn from knowledge generated by analyses of social movements related to the struggle for or against OGEs. For example, Schulz, Schmitter, and Kiani (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of research on the women's rights movement since the year 1968. Epple's (2012) overview of the movements in the field of gender equality showed that efforts to achieve gender equality had been consistently met with resistance, the type of which changed over time: In the beginning of the struggle for women's suffrage, resistance was publicly organized (Hardmeier 1997). Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, resistance could be characterized as a loosely organized and decentralized counterdevelopment (Rucht 1991). Only in the last couple of years have the political powers working against gender equality started to organize themselves again. Nowadays, the women's rights movement and state feminism must contend with national-conservative movements, an anti-feminist movement, and a critical men's movement (Epple 2012). These political powers are a vivid and organized expression of the countermovements seeking to bridle women's rights movement activities.

Model and hypotheses

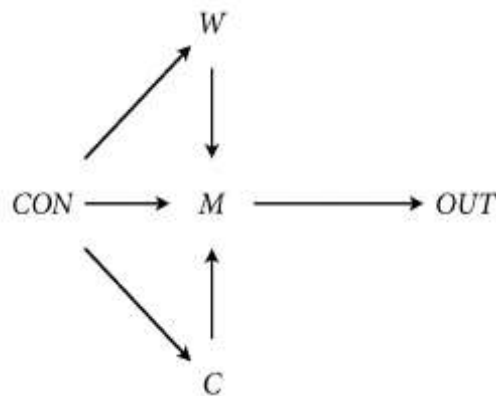
Starting from the concepts presented above, we postulate that the implementation of OGEs as well as their retrenchment are a result of conflicts between social movements and a shift within the political balance of power. In contrast to Cox and Nilsen, we do not use the directional terms *movement from above* and *movement from below* but prefer to use the broader terms *social movements* and *countermovements*. As such, we regard the implementation and the retrenchment of OGEs as outcomes of the balance of power between the women's rights movement and its countermovements (i.e., national-conservative movements and an anti-feminist movement).

For our model, we took into consideration that the balance of power is influenced not only by the conflict between the women's right movement and its countermovements but also by the contexts in which they are embedded. The balance of power is, therefore, a social mechanism (M) that linked to context (CON) and outcome (OUT) (Mahoney 2001; Mayntz 2004; Pawson 2000). The social mechanism is not to be understood as a deterministic connection that automatically proceeds from context to outcome. In contrast, because the outcome is influenced by historical-concrete movements (W) and their countermovements (C) as strategic-relational actors, the outcome might be different – depending on strategy and strength – in comparable contexts.³

³ For methodological reasons, we needed to test the effects of C in step one and of W in step two. Because Switzerland has only 26 cantons, we also had to address the problem of limited empirical diversity (Berg-Schlosser and De Meur 2009). For further explanations, see the methodical appendix.

We tested and specified the model (Figure 1) in two steps. In a first step, we analyzed the implementation of OGEs (IMP) and the influence of the women's rights movement (W) for the cut-off year 1995 (Figure 2, model specification 1). In a second step, we analyzed the retrenchment of the OGEs (RET) influenced by the countermovements for the cut-off year of 2007 (Figure 2, model specification 2). The selection of these cut-off years are in line with the existing research on state feminism. The period between 1995 and 2005 is said to be the decade where OGEs underwent major changes (Kantola and Outshoorn 2007).

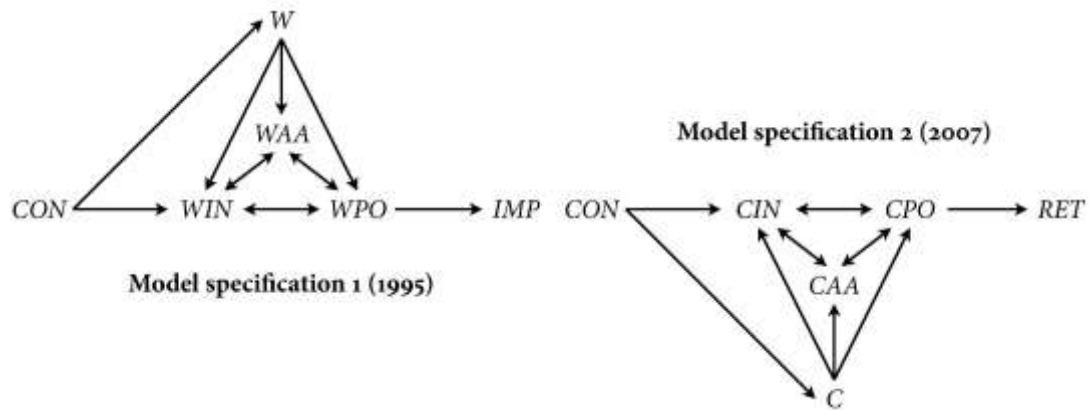
Figure 1: Basic model



Note: The implementation or retrenchment of the offices for gender equality are a result of the balance of power. The balance of power is influenced by the women's rights movement (W) and its countermovements (C). They are both influenced by other powers and by the context (CON). The balance of power mediates as a social mechanism (M) between context and outcome (OUT).⁴

⁴ According to QCA conventions, the existence of a factor is designated by upper casing, whereas its absence is designated by lower casing.

Figure 2: Model specification



Note: Although the models for 1995 and 2007 are comparable in their basic structure, they differ with respect to the factors related to the strength of the movement. Moreover, the social mechanism of the balance of power is separated into corresponding factors (see description of strength of movements above). Of course, context influences the factors *W* and *C* as well as the remaining factors related to a movement's strength.

Based on these considerations, we developed the following hypotheses: Our first hypothesis (H1) is that the implementation of the OGE was a result of the change of the balance of power in favor of the women's rights movement. Our second hypothesis (H2) is that OGE was a result of the change of the balance of power in favor of the countermovements.

Hypothesis 1 is in line with the academic literature on state feminism, because it explains the implementation of a policy machinery for the advancement of women as a reaction to strong and active women's rights movements as well as international endeavors (McBride and Mazur 2013). Because the consensus of the existing research on this relationship externally validates our model regarding the implementation of OGEs, we incorporated it in Hypothesis 2.

Because the women's rights movement as well as the countermovements are strategic-relational actors (Hay 2002; Jessop 2007), they are influenced not only by their rivals but also by the context. Therefore, the context assumes a very significant role in our model. It is known, for example, that a canton's political culture concerning gender equality is also very important (Seitz 2003). Voting behavior concerning gender equality mirrors voters' historical memories (Seitz 2014). To expand the range of our hypotheses, we assumed that the influence of the women's rights movement existed in contexts with an affinity to gender equality (H3), while the influence of the countermovements would be found mostly within contexts that were adverse to gender equality (H4).

Using the same basic model for the women's rights movement and for the countermovements, for our fifth hypothesis (H5), we postulated that the *new type of social movements* (Hutter and Kriesi 2013; Kriesi 1996) has followed the same mechanisms as the movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Recent research on the movements of the new cycle of protest has shown that the new type of social movements has followed a different mechanism. The political line of conflict has been positioned between inclusion and exclusion. The involved actors did not restrict themselves to the arena of protest but used the institutional arena. This is a major difference in comparison to the so-called *new social movements* (Hutter 2012; Hutter and Kriesi 2013). Hence, Hypothesis 5 is not in line with these recent claims in the literature. A new type of movement as understood by Kriesi could only be found if our model were well suited to explain the power of the women's rights movement and the implementation of the OGE, but less suited to explain the power of the countermovements and the retrenchment of the OGE.

Methods

An essential characteristic of our basic model is its chain-like structure. Because we expected that the outcomes implementation (IMP) and retrenchment (RET) of the OGE could not be explained by mutually independent causes but rather by causally interconnected factors, we could not use the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) for our data analysis. The QCA is better suited for analyses of structures with exactly one outcome and mutually independent causes (Baumgartner 2013, 2014). We therefore decided to apply the new statistical method of Coincidence Analysis (CNA) because it has no restrictions concerning the analysis of causal chains. CNA is a Boolean method of causal data analysis (Baumgartner 2009a, 2009b) that is related to the commonly used method QCA (Ragin 1987, 2008; Rihoux and Ragin 2009; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). Like QCA, CNA searches for minimally sufficient configurations for outcomes. CNA analyzes the same kind of configurational data as QCA (see, for example, Tables 6 and 7) and starts from the same underlying theory of causality (Gasser and Epple 2013; Mackie 1974).⁵ Our factors and their operationalization are listed in Table 1.

⁵ For further description of the methods and operationalizations of the indicators, see the appendix.

Table 1. Factors and operationalization

Shortcut*	Factor	Operationalization
POL or pol	Gender equality favorable or adverse context	Regional acceptance rates of gender equality issues in corresponding referenda
PER or per	Periphery or centrality of a context	Index based on the contrasts between rural and urban regions and on the contrasts between Protestant and Catholic regions
LAT or lat	Italian/French-speaking or German-speaking context	Affiliation of a canton with a language culture
WPO or wpo	Political potential of the women's rights movement	Index of support of gender equality within the female electorate
CPO or cpo	Political potential of the countermovement	Index on decline of gender equality within the male electorate
WIN or win	Intersection between the women's rights movement and the state	Index estimating the amount of allied female parliamentarians and employees of the cantonal administration
CIN or cin	Intersection between the countermovement and the state	Index estimating the amount of allied male parliamentarians and employees of the cantonal administration
WAA or waa	Course of action of the women's rights movement	Index based on women's rights movement activist events
CAA or caa	Course of action of the countermovement	Index based on parliamentary initiatives and on signatures in support of popular petitions
IMP or imp	Implementation or no implementation of offices for gender equality (OGE)	Cantons that implemented an OGE in 1995 or later or did not implement OGE at all
RET or ret	Offices for Gender Equality retrenched or not retrenched	Cantons that abolished, privatized, reorganized, or financially restrained the OGE or cantons without these restrictions

* According to QCA conventions, the existence of a factor is designated by upper casing, whereas its absence is designated by lower casing.

Results

The results are presented in two steps. First, we present the analysis for the implementation of the OGE. In order to enable a comparison, we also provide the analysis of the non-implementation of OGE. Second, we present the results of analyses of the retrenchment and the non-retrenchment of the OGEs. For both steps, we first discuss the underlying empirical model and its quality. The model's quality is defined by three indicators: 1. the existence of combinations of factors explaining the outcome and indirect factors (solution formulas) leading to the outcome, and the parameters of fitness, 2. the consistency score, and 3. the coverage score. Then we provide our results from both steps of our hypothesis testing.

Implementation (IMP) of OGEs in 1995

The CNA for the implementation of OGE (Table 2) found combinations of factors directly explaining the outcome IMP as well as indirectly through the strength of the women's rights movement, as measured by three factors (WPO, WAA, and WIN). With consistency scores of the solutions between 0.75 and 1.0, the minimum requirements were satisfied. The coverage scores were also good, which indicates that the model includes the most relevant causal factors.

Table 2. Results: Implementation of OGEs in 1995

	Complex Solution Formulas (csf)		Out	Con	Cov
S1:	WAA + per + POL	↔	WPO	0.94	1.00
S2:	WIN*WPO*per + WPO*PER	↔	WAA	0.75	1.00
S3:	WAA*per + wpo*per + lat*POL + PER*POL	↔	WIN	1.00	0.91
S4:	WIN*wpo + WAA + LAT + POL	↔	IMP	1.00	0.93

Note: OGE implementation (out: IMP) is conditional on four equifinal paths (see row S4): First, it is influenced by two gender equality-favorable contexts, featuring high acceptance rates of gender equality-related issues (POL) and the Italian or French language culture (LAT). Moreover, it is influenced by the women's rights movement expressed by either *aggressive* action (WAA) or a major intersection between the movement and the state (WIN*wpo). The influence of the intersection is connected to the absence of political potential (pol). The solution formula for OGE implementation reached a perfect consistency score (Con) of 1.0, which means that all cantons with the described path implemented an OGE. The coverage score (Cov) is acceptably high (0.93), but it also points to the fact that our solution formula was not valid in all cantons that implemented an OGE.

The CNA for the non-implementation of OGE (imp) (Table 3) also shows acceptable coverage and consistency scores for both the outcome imp and the

weakness of the women’s rights movement (win, wpo, waa). The scores ranged between 0.8 and 1.0 and, hence, were slightly better and more balanced than those of the analysis of the implementation (IMP). The consistency and coverage scores of the model for the implementation (IMP) and the non-implementation (imp) confirm the quality of the models.⁶

Table 3. Results: Non-implementation of OGEs in 1995

Complex Solution Formulas (csf)		Out	Con	Cov
S1: win*waa*PER	↔	wpo	1.00	0.91
S2: win*per + wpo	↔	waa	1.00	0.82
S3: LAT*waa*per + PER*pol	↔	win	1.00	0.87
S4: lat*win*waa + WIN*waa*WPO*pol	↔	imp	0.92	1.00

Hypothesis 1: The implementation of the OGE is a result of the change of the balance of power in favor of the women’s rights movement.

The results presented in Table 2 (see row S4) show that four different paths were found that could explain the implementation of OGEs (IMP). Two of them point to the influence of contexts that are favorable to gender equality, namely, high regional acceptance rates of gender equality issues (POL) and an Italian- or French-speaking language culture (LAT). The other paths related the outcome to the strength of the women’s rights movement, that is, the movement’s *aggressive* courses of action (WAA) and the large intersection between the state and the movement (WIN*wpo). The influence of WIN was connected to the absence of a political potential of the women’s rights movement (wpo). It seems that political potential is not necessary for the impact of the intersection.⁷

These results are in line with Hypothesis 1. There is an impact of the women’s rights movement on the implementation of OGEs. Based on our analyses, we can state that it was the *aggressive* course of action of the movement (WAA) that exerted an influence on the implementation of OGEs. It was an influencing factor in three out of five cantons, and the single influencing factor in one out of

⁶ The results of the CNA for IMP are not unambiguous. The analysis for WIN generated two optimal models with comparable consistency and coverage values. For reasons of parsimony, we selected one of the variations.

⁷ The interpretation of the results of the analyses is based on conclusions drawn within the QCA framework to explain the impact of logical remainders. There is no reason to assume that an impact of WIN necessarily needs the absence of political potential of the women’s rights movement.

five cantons (Berne, St. Gallen, and Luzern). In two out of five cases, it appeared together with other contextual conditions.⁸

The second path explaining the influence of the women's right movement was of minor relevance: Only the results for the canton of Argovia (Aargau) showed that the implementation of an OGE was a result of a big intersection of the movement and the state. There was no direct impact of the third factor, the political potential of the movement (WPO). No path was found leading to the implementation of OGE including WPO.

Hypothesis 3: The influence of the women's rights movement exists mostly in contexts with an affinity to gender equality

The results of our analyses do not contradict the third hypothesis. A high regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues (POL) as well as a French- or Italian-speaking language culture (LAT) constitutes a good precondition for the implementation of OGEs (IMP). In most cantons, the conditions mentioned above existed in parallel with an *aggressive* course of action in the women's rights movement. In a few cantons, (e.g., Basel-Landschaft or Valais), POL and LAT were sufficient conditions for IMP. We did not expect this result, because our theoretical model assumed that contextual conditions would always influence the outcome through the balance of power.

Contextual conditions work not only on the implementation of OGE but also on the factors accounting for the strength of the women's rights movement. Paths leading to a big intersection between the state and the movement (WIN) (see row S3 of Table 2), a high political potential of the movement (WPO) (see row S1 of Table 2), or an *aggressive* course of action (WAA) (see row S2 of Table 2) are primarily instantiated in central contexts (per) or in contexts with a high regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues (POL). These paths show the expected causal chains leading from the contexts via the impact of the women's rights movement on the balance of power to the implementation of OGE.

Contrary to Hypothesis 3, these chains were found to exist within contexts advocating gender equality (per, POL, LAT) as well as in those marked by adversity to gender equality (PER). Thus, strong political potential may lead to an *aggressive* course of action of the women's rights movement within a peripheral context (WPO*PER) (see row S2 of Table 2). This was true for the cantons Luzern, Fribourg, and St. Gallen. In St. Gallen and Luzern, the movement's *aggressive* course of action was the decisive factor for the implementation of OGEs. A different constellation emerged for the cantons Fribourg and Jura. In these cantons, the high regional acceptance rates of gender equality issues (PER*POL) led to the large intersection between the women's rights movement and the state (WIN) (see row S3 of Table 2).

⁸ Technically speaking, the implementation of the OGE is overdetermined. Each of the factors alone would have been sufficient for the implementation.

Non-implementation (imp) of OGEs in 1995

The CNA for the analysis of the non-implementation of OGE (imp) also revealed an interplay between contextual conditions and a weak women's rights movement (Table 3). The results do not contradict Hypotheses 1 and 3. A comparatively large and closed group of ten cantons located in eastern and central Switzerland did not implement OGEs. These cantons are exclusively German-speaking (lat), and they exhibited a low regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues (pol) (see row S4 of Table 3). Under circumstances like these, the women's rights movement could only rarely gain ground, as was the case in the above-mentioned cantons of Luzern and St. Gallen. There, political potential and the preconditions for *aggressive* courses of action of the movement were lacking. An intersection could not be established between the state and the movement. In Luzern and St. Gallen, an intersection has still not been established, which points to the importance of *aggressive* courses of action in those contexts.⁹

In summary, contextual and movement specific factors had an impact on the implementation or non-implementation of OGEs. Cantons having a high regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues, a French- or Italian-speaking language culture, and/or a strong women's rights movement showing *aggressive* courses of action facilitated the implementation of OGEs. *Aggressive* courses of action were especially important where there were difficult structural circumstances for the OGEs. In some cantons, despite a weak women's rights movement, the contextual circumstances in favor of implementing an OGE led to the latter being implemented. In those cases, factors that were not integrated in our model (e.g., the influence of the media or neighboring cantons) may have had an impact.

Retrenchment (RET) of OGEs in 2007

The CNA for the retrenchment of OGEs revealed combinations of factors that directly explained the outcome OGE retrenchment (RET). As well, the CNA indirectly explained the outcomes via two out of three factors for the strength of the countermovements (CPO, CAA) (Table 4). However, the solution formula for the strong backing of the women's rights movement within the political bodies and the administration (CIN) was only weakly supported (see row S3 of Table 4). Although the required consistency score was reached, the coverage score of 0.6 was not sufficient. Thus, the quality of the empirical model for the retrenchment of OGE was worse than that for the implementation of OGE.¹⁰

⁹ As is the case for the implementation of OGEs in parts of the cantons favoring gender equality, the non-implementation of OGEs is overdetermined in the cantons described above.

¹⁰ As was the case for the implementation of OGEs, we were unable to find unambiguous solutions for every factor. For CAA, the CNA revealed two solution formulas that fared equally

Table 4. Results: Retrenchment of OGEs in 2007

	Complex Solution Formulas(csf)		Out	Con	Cov
S1:	pol	↔	CPO	1.00	1.00
S2:	cin*LAT*per + pol*per + CIN*lat*POL	↔	CAA	1.00	0.80
S3:	cww*LAT*per + CAA*lat*per	↔	CIN	0.83	0.63
S4:	CIN*caa + lat*per + LAT*pol	↔	RET	0.90	0.82

The weaknesses of the solution formulas were even more prominent in the case of the control test for the non-retrenchment of OGEs (Table 5). Here, we could only find a solution formula for the lack of an *aggressive* course of action of the countermovements. All other results were either redundant (see row S1 of Table 5) or failed to attain sufficient coverage scores (see row S3 and S4 of Table 5). The control test for the non-retrenchment of OGEs pointed to the weaknesses of our theoretical model of the analysis of the countermovements. The low coverage scores suggested that we may have failed to incorporate important factors related to the retrenchment of OGEs.

Table 5. Results: Non-retrenchment of OGEs in 2007

	Complex Solution Formulas (csf)		Out	Con	Cov
S1:	POL	↔	cpo	1.00	1.00
S2:	LAT*CIN + lat*cin*POL + PER	↔	caa	0.82	1.00
S3:	LAT*CAA + lat*caa*POL + LAT*PER	↔	cin	1.00	0.64
S4:	lat*cin*PER + CAA*PER	↔	ret	1.00	0.50

The results for the analysis of the retrenchment of the OGE were not as robust as those for the implementation of OGEs. Nevertheless, because the consistency and coverage values were sufficient, we could interpret the solution formulas for the outcome RET (see row S4 of Table 4) and the factors political potential (CPO) (see row S1 of Table 4) and *aggressive* course of action (CAA) (see row S2 of Table 4). Therefore, we cautiously employed the solution formulas to test the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 5: The ‘new type of social movements’ has followed the same mechanisms as the movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

well with respect to the fit parameters consistency and coverage. For theoretical reasons, we selected one of the solutions.

We used our basic model for the women's rights movement and the implementation of OGEs for the analyses of countermovements and the retrenchment of OGEs. Thus, we were able to test Hypothesis 5, which postulates that our model is valid for both kinds of movements. Compared to the results for the women's rights movement, our theoretical model was found to be less valid for the countermovements. We therefore rejected Hypothesis 5.

This finding supports Hutter's and Kriesi's (2013) idea that we were dealing with a new type of movement. As such, our basic model explaining the women's rights movement of the 1980s and 1990s does not seem to be suitable for describing these new types of movements.

Hypothesis 2: The retrenchment of the OGE is a result of the change of the balance of power in favor of the countermovements

The model for the retrenchment of the OGE featured three paths leading to retrenchment (RET) (see row S4 of Table 4). Two of them reflected the effects of contextual influence, and the third reflected the influence effects of countermovements on the balance of power. The latter showed that the large intersection between the countermovements and the state in combination with *non-aggressive* courses of action of the countermovements led to OGE retrenchment (CIN*caa). Other factors related to the strength of the countermovements did not exert a direct impact.

In light of our results, we can accept Hypothesis 2, which states that countermovements influence the balance of power and are thus linked to OGE retrenchment. However, the results of our analysis also showed that the influence of countermovements is different from that exerted by the women's rights movement. Whereas the key aspect of the women's rights movement was an *aggressive* course of action, the intersection with the state was the cardinal aspect for the countermovements. This finding is also in line with Hutter and Kriesi's (2013) statement that the new type of movement uses the institutional arena more than the arena of protest. The path leading from the influence of a countermovement to OGE retrenchment via the institutional arena was only the second most important one. The influence of context was more important.

Hypothesis 4: The influence of countermovements is to be found mostly within contexts that are adverse to gender equality.

The solution formula for the retrenchment of OGEs showed two paths with contextual influences (see row S4 of Table 4). The combination of German-speaking regions in a nonperipheral context (lat*per) as well as French- and Italian-speaking regions with a low regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues (LAT*pol) led to OGE retrenchment. The first path was found to exist for the cantons Zürich, Bern, Zug, Basel, and Argovia (Aargau). The configuration of the second path was only evident in the canton of Valais (Wallis).

This result is surprising and contradicts Hypothesis 4, which stated that countermovements and the retrenchment of OGEs were more likely to be found in contexts adverse to gender equality. The only finding in line with this hypothesis is the low regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues in the canton of Valais. Other than that, the fact that the most important path of the retrenchment of the OGE was valid for non-peripheral cantons is clearly contradictory to our expectations.

Likewise, the finding of an indirect contextual influence of countermovements' *aggressive* courses of action and the intersection between the movements and the state were surprising and contradictory to our expectations (see rows S2, S3 of table 4). It appears that the influence of the central (per) context is far greater than of the peripheral one (PER). Within those indirect paths to OGE retrenchment, we found both a low (pol) and a high regional acceptance of voting templates on gender equality issues (POL).

The results concerning the contextual influence on the strength of the countermovements and OGE retrenchment are clearly contradictory to hypothesis 4, stating that retrenchment of an OGE was more likely to occur in contexts adverse to gender equality than in those advocating gender equality. Since the analysis of OGE retrenchment was based only on cantons that had an OGE, these results cannot be explained by the non-existence of OGE within cantons marked by adversity to gender equality.

A key to understanding the results can be found in the analysis of the political potential of the countermovements (see row S1 of Table 4). Political potential (CPO) was neither part of the paths leading to the outcome OGE retrenchment, nor did it influence the strength of the countermovements. Political potential was a completely isolated factor in our analysis. It was perfectly determined by a low regional acceptance rate of gender equality issues (pol). There were neither causal connections between political potential and *aggressive* courses of action (see row S2 of Table 4), nor between potential and OGE retrenchment (see row S4 of Table 4). In other words, in contexts where countermovements had a strong political potential, *aggressive* courses of action were not pursued to retrench the OGE. On the contrary, OGEs were retrenched within contexts that were actually unfavorable for the countermovements. This is once more a clear sign that the development and effects of the countermovements followed a different course than that exhibited by the women's rights movement.

Non-retrenchment (ret) of the OGE in 2007

The cross-check test for OGE non-retrenchment (Table 5) generated partly acceptable consistency and coverage scores, thus supporting the results described above. On the one hand, there was a connection between a context favoring gender equality and low political potential of the countermovements (see row S1 of Table 5). On the other hand, countermovements *aggressive* courses of action did exist in contexts adverse to and in favor of gender equality (see row S2 of Table 5).

Conclusion

The starting point of our research was the hypothesis that social change is driven by conflicts between social movements and their countermovements. The political balance of power is influenced by those conflicts, leading to political changes within certain contextual circumstances. Here we tested this hypothesis by analyzing the roles of the women's rights movement and its countermovements, using the example of the conflicts about the implementation of Offices for Gender Equality (OGE) in Switzerland.

We found that movements and countermovements struggled with each other, responding as strategic-relational actors to their contexts. By influencing the balance of power, they were responsible for the implementation or retrenchment of an OGE. More specifically, we found that the implementation of an OGE was spurred on by actions of the women's rights movement or by favorable contextual circumstances. The women's rights movement was especially important in those contexts where the circumstances were rather adverse to gender equality. Thus, OGE retrenchment and implementation was influenced by the context and the movements.

Our basic assumption was linked to the question of whether we could find a *new type of movement* emerging within the conflict about OGEs. The results clearly showed that these movements existed. First, the results of our analysis showed that the basic theoretical model more adequately explained the influence of the women's rights movement on OGE implementation than it explained the influence of the countermovements on OGE retrenchment. Secondly, we understand the countermovements to be part of national-conservative movements, sharing the *political paradox* of the political right. The question of gender equality is one of several questions within the national-conservative context. Countermovements often exploit taboo-breaking in order to create media resonance. This type of action is often exhibited by populist movements dominating national-conservative cycles of movements (Decker 2006; Kemper 2011; Ociepka 2005; Priester 2012).

The women's rights movement and its countermovements have differed widely from one another not only in terms of their respective aims but with respect to the approaches they take and the strategies they have used. In our analysis, it appears that the aim of the countermovements was obviously not to achieve political aims by using a high political potential. If that had been the case, OGEs would have been retrenched in cantons where those movements had a high political potential. The fact that OGE retrenchment took place exactly where this precondition was not satisfied suggests that the countermovements adopted political strategies that differed from those used by the women's rights movement.

For the countermovements, success in achieving political goals did not appear to be as decisively important as attracting and driving public attention by intentionally breaking a taboo within unfavorable political circumstances for the

countermovement. A countermovement's aim may be, to achieve electoral success; alternatively, it may be to advocate and gain support for a counterhegemonic project. Especially in contexts where gender equality is advocated and supported, countermovements' *aggressive* courses of action may be provocative enough to attract the media's attention, which is an important aspect of the strategy implemented by these movements. If the countermovements want to advance a counterhegemonic project, they must begin to be active in areas where the women's rights movement has reached a dominant-hegemonic position. The bundling of power within the contexts adverse to gender equality is left to the media.

Our findings showed that the women's rights movement, as typified in the 1970s and 1980s, and the countermovements, belonging to a new type of movement described by Kriesi (1996), followed a different pattern. The latter are situated on the right side of the political spectrum; they prefer to operate in institutionalized political arenas and apply methods typical for populist movements, for example, breaking taboos (Meyer 2002; 2003; Schröder and Mildemberger 2012).

The results indicated that a suitable explanation model for the countermovements needs to integrate other factors not incorporated into our basic model. A possible improvement of the theoretical model of OGE retrenchment would be to include, in addition to the context and the strength of the countermovements, fiscal policy indicators and the role of the media.

Our findings have several strategic implications for understanding social movements resulting. First, a social movement cannot solely rely on lobbying within state institutions. In our case, the major changes in the political balance of power leading to the implementation of an OGE were related to a women's rights movement taking *aggressive* courses of action outside the state institutions. An institutionally anchored state feminism depends on a non-institutionalized women's rights movement to undertake *aggressive* actions. This is exactly how the need for a new boost in the women's rights question mentioned at the beginning of this article should be understood.

Second, the women's rights movement must deal with a loosely organized and decentralized countermovement as well as political powers that embrace a new political logic that is in line with a new cycle of movements. We think that the standstill in the progress of achieving gender equality can be better explained by the national-conservative cycle of protest than by the countermovements' attacks on the OGE. At the time of this writing, the topic of gender politics is not – with a few exemptions – at the top of the agenda of the movements dominating the actual cycle. However, it is warranted to assume that the question of gender equality will become more salient if countermovements continue to gain political influence. The activities of anti-feminist fractions of these movements have demonstrated what may happen if the national-conservative movements focus more intensely on the question of gender equality. The retrenchment of OGEs will not only create attention but it will also test the *ceasefire lines* previously acknowledged by the women's rights

movement and the countermovements. Instead of assigning state feminism the responsibility to protect and uphold the accomplishments made in realm of gender equality, it should be explicitly commissioned with the task of developing and implementing policy that will push gender equality forward. This would curtail stagnation in the efforts to promote gender equality as well as prevent setbacks to progress that has already been achieved.

Methodological Appendix

As mentioned in the article, we used the Coincidence Analysis (CNA), a new method related to the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The advantage of using the CNA is that it permits an analysis of causal chains. Because CNA is a rather new method, in this appendix we describe the method in more detail and explain how different factors were operationalized and which data and resources were used.

The QCA eliminates redundant elements from solution formulas (i.e., causal models) on the basis of the so-called “Quine-McCluskey optimization” (Quine 1959). This optimization algorithm was developed for the purpose of simplifying the syntactic expression of Boolean functions as required by, for instance, mathematical logic or electric circuit theory. It was not developed for causal data analysis (Baumgartner 2014). In contrast, CNA implements an optimization algorithm that has been tailored for the causal analysis of configurational data. The difference between the two methods has far-reaching consequences for the maximal complexity of the causal structures that can be revealed¹¹.

Operationalization and data

In our study, the choice of data was bound to our specified research models. Because we had a limited number of cases (26 cantons), we selected six conditions and one outcome. Three conditions concerned the context; we assumed that the conditions in these contexts remained stable during the period from 1995 to 2007. The other conditions measured the power of the women’s rights movement and the power of the countermovements, respectively.

Conditions of context

A first contextual condition was measured by the regional (cantonal) acceptance rates of gender equality issues as assessed by corresponding referenda in Switzerland (POL or pol) (Hermann 2006), a measure also used in a gender equality atlas for Switzerland (Bühler, Brun, and Steinmann 2001). This indicator was based on the results from cantonal referenda spanning 50 years (from 1959 to 2004). Based on the handbook of Swiss confederation popular votes (Linder, Bolliger, and Rielle 2010), we used an analysis of results of the referenda on gender equality, women’s right to physical integrity, retirement age for women, and maternity insurance (Epple 2012b). The analysis revealed that the aggregate positions of the cantons concerning gender equality had not changed very much compared to the Swiss average over 50 years. However, it also revealed that popular opinions in the cantons differed with respect to

¹¹ For a detailed description of the methodological and procedural details of the CNA see (Baumgartner 2009a, 2009b, 2013).

whether gender equality or social policy issues were to be voted on. Differences emerged, for example, between the language regions of Switzerland and between more rural and more urban cantons. For our purposes, we used an index that combined the scales of gender equality and social policy votes (Epple 2012b).¹²

The second contextual condition corresponded to an index measuring the degree of periphery or centrality of a context. The index was based on the contrasts between rural and urban regions as well as confessional contrasts (PER or per) (Bolliger 2007). The contrast between rural and urban regions was drawn on the basis of the extent of urbanization prevailing in 2006 (Meili, Diener, Herzog, de Meuron, and Schmid 2006). The proportions of Catholics and of people working in agriculture and forestry contributed a historical dimension or path dependency to the index (Mahoney and Schensul 2006; Tilly 2006). The peripheral, predominantly Catholic and agricultural cantons were opposed to the predominantly Protestant, industrial, and urban cantons of the center (Wecker 2014). Our index measured a peripheral social structure which was dominated by a milieu dominated by Catholic and rural traditions. According to Seitz (2014), the Catholic tradition has been replaced by a national-conservative one. This replacement should not be misunderstood as a weakening of the impact of Catholic or rural traditions; the impact e.g., within the voting of rural and urban cantons can still be found.

The differentiation between more rural and more urban contexts seems to be a plausible one. Our center vs. periphery distinction is compatible with that described by Hermann Heye, and Leuthold 2005, although it was created differently. According to our index, the German-speaking cantons of the eastern and central regions of Switzerland are peripheral and voting behaviors in these regions share commonalities. According to our index, the French-speaking cantons Fribourg, Valais, and Jura are also peripheral. However, due to the diverse political cultures existing within the different language cultures of Switzerland, the voting behaviors in French-speaking cantons do not always match those in German-speaking cantons. Nevertheless, because of their position within the French-speaking part of Switzerland, they nevertheless can be interpreted as periphery: Fribourg and Valais are rural, Catholic cantons, have big German-speaking minorities and border on German-speaking Switzerland. The canton of Jura has a history of being periphery, as it was a part of the majoritarian German-speaking canton of Bern for a long time (Schwander 1971).

The third contextual condition measured the affiliation of a canton to a language culture (LAT or lat)¹³ (Gal 2006). It is a well-known phenomenon in gender studies and political science that the opinion on gender equality in the French-

¹² This and all other indexes were tested for reliability (Cronbach's alpha), using the average of z-standardized values.

¹³ We decided to add the bilingual cantons of Fribourg and Valais (Wallis) as well as the Italian-speaking canton Ticino (Tessin) to the French-speaking part of Switzerland.

speaking part of Switzerland differs very much from the one in the German-speaking part (Bühler et al. 2001; Kriesi 1996b; Seitz 2014). The three contextual conditions presented so far had a different impact on the women's rights movement and its countermovements.

Hermann et al. (2005) have pointed out that differentiations on the cantonal level, like the ones we created with the contextual conditions, should not be strict. Because the conflict about OGEs took place at a cantonal level, we had to analyze the contexts on that level. We were aware of the restrictions connected to that choice and took this into account in interpreting the results of our analysis.

Strength of movements

The strength of the women's rights movement and the countermovements were measured by their political potential, the intersection between the movements and the state, and their courses of action. The concept of intersection is based on the concept of state feminism, as developed by Banaszak (2010). Her research on the women's rights movement in the US showed the importance of the intersection between women inside and outside of political organizations and formal administrative institutions. We assumed that such an intersection would exist for the countermovements as well.

The political potentials of the women's rights movement and the countermovements were measured by an index on support or decline of gender equality within the female and male electorate (WPO/wpo and CPO/cpo). For that reason, the Swiss Electoral Studies (SELECTS) data sets for the national elections from 1995 and 2007 were used to calculate the proportions of men and women who supported issues that are more traditionalist or modernist, respectively. We assumed that the positions of persons on issues related to topics about issues such as equal opportunities for foreigners and Swiss nationals, the preservation of traditions, the Swiss army, and law and order could be used as an indicator for their position concerning gender equality (Epple 2013; Longchamp, Imfeld, Tschöpe, Müller, Rochat, and Schwab 2015).

The strength of the intersection between the state and the women's rights movement and its countermovements was measured by an index estimating the combined amount of allied parliamentarians and employees of the cantonal administration (WIN/win and CIN/cin). We used information and data generated from the Swiss federal establishment census (1995, 2007) as well as data on the seating of the cantonal parliaments (1995, 2007). The index included the number of women occupying seats of political parties demonstrating an affinity to gender equality (the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party) or the number of seats of men occupying gender equality adverse parties (national-conservative parties). In cases where data on cantonal election results were lacking, we used the federal election results. In the case of Appenzell-Innerrhoden, we needed to estimate the numbers due to a lack of both data sets. The index also took into account the aforementioned political

potential, which was based on an estimation of the relative proportions of male and female employees of the cantonal administrations.

The index on the intersection between the state and the movements is a proxy variable. We include the *toeholds* of the movements within the parliaments and the cantonal administrations. In the case of the women's rights movement, the index includes factors used by the literature on state feminism, like proximity to the political left or to the OGE (Mazur and McBride 2006). Our index builds on a wider perspective which assumes that the intersection between the state and the movements is not only based on parliamentarians and the *policy machinery for the advancement of women* (McBride and Mazur 1995) but also on supporters within cantonal administrations. We estimated the strength of the support within the cantonal administrations. The estimation assumed that a movement's political potential was also represented within the administration. In the case of the analysis of OGE implementation, we expected that this measure would slightly overestimate the political potential of the women's right movement and slightly underestimate the political potential of the countermovements.

The estimation of the political potential and the intersection equalized gender and attitudes towards gender equality. We were fully aware of the fact that this was a rough indicator, and, as such, that it might not acknowledge the populations of male voters who advocated gender equality or female voters who did not advocate gender equality. In order to rectify this bias, we decided to include only those voters who had expressed strong attitudes toward gender equality. Only voters who answered all questions with "yes" or "no", respectively, are included. We therefore measured the amount of people on both ends of the political spectrum. We assumed that this measurement would be appropriate for estimating the relative strength of a movement within a canton. Between the two extremes, there were many different constellations of gender and positions about gender equality. We therefore hoped to follow the zone guidelines of Goertz and Mazur as much as possible (Goertz and Mazur 2008).

The *aggressive* actions of the women's rights movement and of the countermovements (WAA/waa and CAA/caa) were estimated by their activities and parliamentary initiatives. In the case of the women's rights movement, we drew from data on activist and activation events (Giugni 1999; Kriesi, Levy, Ganguillet, and Zwicky 1981). For the countermovements, we drew from the data summarized by Scheidegger (2008) and Seitz (2010). Moreover, we considered the number of collected signatures in support of certain popular petitions as an indicator of action (Institute of Political Science at the University of Bern 2011). For methodological reasons, we were unable to take activation events of the countermovements into account.¹⁴

¹⁴ Although we had data on the countermovements' activation events (Giugni 1999; Hutter and Giugni 2009), the activation events pertaining to gender equality were very rare. Moreover, the methods of data collection changed over time. In particular, important information about the

The three indicators above measured the respective abilities of the women's rights movement and of the countermovements to influence the balance of power. If a movement was able to rely on all three measures, the influence was substantial. This would be the case, for example, if the countermovements had a high political potential within the electorate (CPO), relied on a strong backing within the political bodies and the administration (CIN), and took *aggressive* action (CAA). The influence of the women's rights movement would be low if there was a lack of political potential (wpo), a weak backing within political bodies and the administration (win), and no *aggressive* action (waa). Combinations of factors indicated intermediate strength.

All indicators concerning the movements were taken from measurements at two points in time (1995 and 2007). We interpreted the year 1995 as being the turning point between OGE implementation and OGE retrenchment. The year 2007 was also a turning point, as has been borne out in research on state feminism (Kantola and Outshoorn 2007). 1995 followed the peak of the women's rights movement in Switzerland, the culmination of which was marked by the women's strike of June 14th 1991 (Schulz, Schmitter and Kiani 2014: 219). Therefore, the strength of the women's rights movement was measured rather conservatively. The cycles of protest in the 1970s and 1980s had already waned. The women's rights movement still did comparatively well (Hutter and Giugni 2009). Measuring the strength of the countermovements in 2007 tended to generate underestimates of strength because the cycle of protest of the countermovements had not reached a zenith by 2007 (Hutter 2012, 2012b; Hutter and Kriesi 2013).

Outcomes

Our analysis was based on two outcomes:

1. The model for 1995 explained the implementation of OGEs. The outcome *implementation OGE* (IMP) was true for all cantons having an OGE in 1995. All cantons that implemented OGE later or not at all lacked this outcome (imp) (Scheidegger 2008).
2. The model for 2007 explained the retrenchment of OGEs. The outcome *OGE retrenchment* (RET) was true for all cantons that abolished, privatized, reorganized, or financially restrained the OGE. Cantons without those restrictions lacked this outcome (ret) (Seitz 2010).

Dichotomization

When we conducted our analysis, the CNA had thus far been constrained to analyzing dichotomized data. Therefore, the data needed to be dichotomized,

locations of countermovements' activation events was not reliable (as verified by Swen Hutter, personal communication, April 25, 2013; see also Barranco and Wisler 1999).

which obviously resulted in a loss of information.¹⁵ With the exception of POL, IMP, and RET, whose values were determined qualitatively, all factors were dichotomized by using the weighted Swiss mean. This procedure was adequate because the cantonal as well as the national level had influenced the implementation or the retrenchment of OGEs (Baumgartner and Epple 2014). Because the constitutional mandate of gender equality was mandatory for all cantons, the reasons for the differences between the cantons had to be explained by the deviations of the cantons from the national context. Therefore, we measured the deviation of the cantons from the national mean. Our goal was to find *local explanations* as defined by Amenta and Poulsen (1994).

A dichotomization based on the national mean was in danger of arbitrarily separating cantons which deviated only slightly from one another, simply because they happened to be located on different sides of the national mean. Following the newer developments in QCA research, we double-checked for such arbitrary separations in our data. Whenever this occurred, we shifted the cutoff to the next bigger gap (Rihoux and De Meur 2009).

Data processing

We conducted our CNA using the open source software R (Ambuehl et al 2015). In light of our theoretical model and its specifications, we treated the context factors POL, PER, and LAT as exogenous factors within the analysis of IMP. The other factors were assembled in a set $\mathbf{S} = \{WPO, WIN, WAA, IMP\}$ of endogenous factors or potential outcomes. Moreover, we presupposed a causal ordering according to which IMP could not be a cause of WPO, WIN, and WAA (Baumgartner and Thiem 2015a). Our data did not allow for modeling any of the factors in \mathbf{S} with perfect coverage or consistency scores. For that reason, we searched for solution formulas with the maximal coverage and consistency scores afforded by the data (i.e., for optimal solution formulas). To this end, we successively lowered the threshold scores for consistency and coverage until CNA delivered solutions – making sure that the consistency score never fell below 0.75. In this manner, we found Boolean solution formulas with the highest possible consistency and coverage scores for every element of \mathbf{S} .

The causal modeling of configurational data is not always unambiguous, and often there is more than one model with identical consistency and coverage scores for a given data set (Baumgartner and Thiem 2015b). Unfortunately though, QCA research has not addressed the issue of model ambiguities. Instead, authors using QCA typically select a model featuring a minimal amount of alternative causes that best fits their theoretical expectations. In case of our data, we also encountered model ambiguities, which are made transparent within the analyses. In the main test, we only presented those models that came closest to our theoretical expectations or were preferable for pragmatic reasons

¹⁵ Although the CNA is comparable with a QCA crisp set analysis, a fuzzy set CNA is not yet available.

(e.g., model parsimony). For the calculation of the empirical model of OGE retrenchment, we proceeded in the same manner.

Following the usual practice of QCA research, in particular including the so-called negation guideline of Goertz and Mazur (2008), we performed an additional CNA for the outcomes of non-implementation and the non-retrenchment of OGEs (Rihoux and De Meur 2009).

These analyses of the negative outcomes were based on a theoretical model that resulted from the model for the positive outcomes provided in Figure 2 (see article) after negating the ultimate outcomes and all factors that appeared as intermediate links in causal chains leading to the positive outcomes. The generation of models for negative outcomes allowed for conclusions on dependencies between the factors under scrutiny that could not be drawn from the models for the positive outcomes alone.

Table 6: Truth Table Implementation 1995

POL	PER	LAT	WPO	WIN	WAA	ent	no.of. cases	cases
1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	Zürich, Basel-Stadt
0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	Bern
0	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	Luzern, St. Gallen
0	1	0	0	0	0	0	9	Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden, Glarus, Appenzell Inner- and Ausserrhoden, Graubünden, Thurgau
0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	Zug
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Freiburg
0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	Solothurn
1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	Basel-Landschaft
0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	Schaffhausen
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	Aargau
1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	Tessin
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	3	Waadt, Neuenburg, Genf
0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	Wallis
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	Jura

Table 7: Truth Table Retrenchment 2007

POL	PER	LAT	CPO	CIN	CAA	RET	no.of.cases	
1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	Zürich
0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	Bern, Zug
0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	Luzern
0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	Obwalden, Nidwalden
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	Freiburg
1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	Basel-Stadt
1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	Basel-Landschaft
0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	Appenzell Ausserrhoden
0	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	St. Gallen, Graubünden
0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	Aargau
1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	Tessin
1	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	Waadt, Genf
0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	Wallis
1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	Neuenburg
1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	Jura

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About the authors

Ruedi Epple is a lecturer in social sciences at the Division of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He obtained his Ph.D (1987) at the University of Frankfurt, Germany. His main research interests include the political system of Switzerland, social movements, and social work history.

Sebastian Schief, Dr, Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, University of Fribourg, Switzerland. His areas of research include international comparative research on precariousness, welfare regimes, social policy, gender equality, economic sociology. Recent publications: Gasser M., Kersten S., Nollert M., Schief S. (2015) Geschlechtsspezifische Ungleichheiten in der Arbeitswelt: Kantonale Muster der Zeitungleichheit. *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 41 (1), 9-31. Schempp D., Schief S., Wagner A. (2015) Determinants of Detraditionalization of the Division of House and Family Work in Swiss Couple Households. *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 41 (1), 33-57.

On Oakland's Decolonize/Occupy moment 2011-2013

John Hayakawa Torok

Wall Street is the physical site of a vanished wall built by enslaved Africans to protect colonial settlers against resistance from Manhattan's indigenous peoples. To "occupy" Wall Street is thus in physical and symbolic terms to challenge the power of both capitalism and colonialism/racism. Occupy Oakland's strong focus on both labor solidarity and antiracism reflected this double consciousness. The particular struggles throughout the history of labor and race relations in the City of Oakland, and its location in the San Francisco Bay Area where there have been radical movements going back at least to the 19th Century, help account for both the intense repression of Occupy Oakland and the liveliness of the local post-Occupy projects.

The Occupy Wall Street slogan "We are the 99%" is a metaphor for political reality. While the U.S. has formal elections, the mass of the people have lost control of their government to concentrated corporate and financial capital. That reality led to the collective cry of pain in the Decolonize/Occupy moment. That the highly-concentrated corporate media was tone deaf to this critique should surprise no one.

Representative democracy in the United States is the best democracy that money can buy. "Wall Street" is of course a metaphor for American and global capitalism. The phrase "Occupy Wall Street," rather than "Washington," implies a criticism of the absence of people power even though the U.S. routinely has elections. In 2011 the Wall Street "occupation" captivated the imagination of thousands of Americans who occupied hundreds of public squares throughout the United States.

In the Bay Area, "Occupy Wall Street" work continues today even if the intensity of the first year is well past. Thousands are proud former participants of the port shut downs supporting long-shore workers and port truck drivers (November 2011, and December 2011 [west coast]) From these two mass demonstrations, Occupy Oakland became the primary Occupy voice for unorganized and organized workers in the United States. Occupy Oakland also has a powerful anti-racist focus built on some local history we will discuss later. These features of Occupy Oakland inspired other activists across the country and indeed worldwide.

Occupy Oakland and Occupy Wall Street both drew inspiration – and some philosophy and participants – from the global justice movements associated with the Seattle protests of 1999 and that continued into the 2000s. Occupy Oakland and Occupy Wall Street further drew inspiration from resistance against austerity in places like Spain and Greece and Portugal, and similar rebellions in South America, including the earlier Argentinian uprising of the

19th and 20th December 2001, the Venezuelan revolution, and from the popular youth-led rebellions that overthrew dictators in Tunisia and Egypt.

The port city of Oakland, the former terminus of the transcontinental railroad, has a history of populist mobilizations that goes back more than a century. Features of this history shaped Occupy Oakland. In 1894, Oakland's railroad workers and others went out to support the national Pullman strike. In 1896 Jack London took to socialist speechifying in City Hall Park, and running in 1903 and 1905 as a socialist candidate for Mayor. The 1920s and 1930s saw dock, longshore, shipyard, cannery and packinghouse workers in working class Oakland repressed by a business-dominated city leadership. However worker organization was facilitated from 1933 on by section 7(a) of the National Industrial Recovery Act. In 1946, downtown Oakland department store clerks, predominantly women, seeking unionization went out on strike. Rank and file Teamsters honored their picket line. The downtown business power structure then persuaded Oakland's elected officials to order the police to break the picket. That violent repression backfired when first streetcar workers went out in sympathy and then the County American Federation of Labor called a general strike. The "work holiday" lasted 2 1/2 days.

Oakland's C.L. Dellums, at the 1925 founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters ("BSCP") urged the Pullman porters and indeed all workers to "fight or be slaves!" The BSCP union hall became a center for West Oakland's Black community life, and Dellums later served with the Bay Area NAACP. In Spring 1934, longshore workers struck the waterfront but the management began recruiting Black and Mexican strikebreakers. Union militants then met with Dellums and other leaders, unionized those Black workers who had worked a year on the waterfront, and had them serve on the strike committee. From then on West Oakland's black workers played an increasingly significant role in the Bay Area labor movement and then in Oakland's civic culture. Oakland's Black population grew from 3% in 1940 to over 20% in 1960. It was in this Black labor, internationalist, and civil rights milieu that scholar Cedric Robinson as well as Black Panther Party founders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale grew up.

In 1967, Oakland's Black Panther Party (BPP) developed its Ten Point Program, and began to focus on armed surveillance patrols against racialized police brutality. In response to this widely felt grievance and a newly proposed gun regulation, they marched with arms onto the Sacramento State Capitol floor. They also founded the Free Huey movement after BPP founder Huey Newton was charged with murder for the death of an Oakland police officer. These actions made it the 'go-to' organization for Black low income folks, and other youth, as well as for the white New Left. The BPP challenged Oakland's white political power structure by running its leaders as candidates for political office with the newly formed California Peace and Freedom party. Its anti-capitalist and revolutionary nationalist ideology had wide appeal and continues to resonate in Oakland city and Bay Area politics today.

For many in Oakland mere survival is resistance. Widespread poverty followed both de-industrialization and the decommissioning of some large military facilities that earlier supported the city economy. Oakland is now known for its violent crime rate. The city is the seat of Alameda County which is one of the top two county contributors to the California's prison population via the school to prison pipeline. Oakland's police department remains notorious for its racist brutality against the town's brown and black populations, its corruption, and its excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators.

Occupy Oakland not Occupy Wall Street

To "Occupy" Oakland, then, has a different meaning than to "Occupy Wall Street." Actually existing political organization and non-profits, often including those lead by people of color or formed by or to serve non-whites promoted a perception that the leadership core of Occupy Oakland were predominantly privileged white young people whose very presence promoted gentrification. The lamestream media amplified this narrative as one key mechanism to delegitimize the activist work on Oakland's streets. While I followed that media, I was always skeptical of this ideological construction of Occupy, a mystification which also incidentally well served the real forces behind gentrification, outside investors and commercial real estate developers.

The young activists in their twenties who set the tone for the U.S. "Occupy" uprising grew up with personal electronic communications devices. They are highly networked. They have instant access to news of social justice struggles and their repression not only in this country but all over the world. Occupy Oakland often expressed solidarity for people's anti-austerity and pro-democracy struggles elsewhere. We thus engaged routinely in internationalist mass political education on Oakland's hard streets. I am grateful for what I learned from the young activists. I often miss their generational presence in my continuing work.

Occupy Oakland further engaged hundreds of other issues and campaigns in its General Assembly (GA) at Oakland's City Hall amphitheater. The GA met daily in the first weeks and several times a week in the first months of the occupation. Dozens if not hundreds of other Occupy assemblies convened in smaller cities and towns across California, as well as in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, and San Francisco. As I wrote at the time, wide-ranging political discussions and broad participation in and around the GA enabled the work of the liberatory imagination. The imaginative work also continues.

At the core of the Occupy Oakland GA was direct democracy. If you showed up you could join in the conversation, propose a topic for discussion, make a proposal, argue, and vote. Formal proposals required at least three individuals to bring it to the facilitation committee to be put on the GA agenda for discussion and decision. Either consensus or modified consensus was sought

once that proposal was thoroughly discussed at GA. Marina Sitrin named the decision-making form “horizontalism” based on the assemblies in the Argentinian rebellion beginning December 19 and 20, 2001. Like them Oakland's horizontalism contrasts with the top-down hierarchical decision-making of most U.S. institutions.

Consensus process was cumbersome as its premise is allowing everyone physically present who is so moved the opportunity to speak. It thus involved a lot of listening and required willingness to learn from the diverse perspectives those present brought with them. Even so the participatory decision-making in the Oakland public square often worked surprisingly well. This contrasts with the professional political class in electoral office wholly bought up by the special interests whose money they need to run election campaigns. It is these interests that the 1% term points to, interests someone once referred to as malefactors of great wealth. The GA consensus process posed an alternative, and often an empowering, vision and practice of shared governance by, for, and of the people.

Oakland General Assembly participants were told early and often that most of Occupy Oakland's work was not there in the GA but in other groups and committees. We were all encouraged to join at least one such entity outside of the GA. Most people took this to heart. Like the other Occupy groups we encouraged autonomous action. While decentralization at first allowed explosive growth it also meant that as time went by the participants could drift away to autonomous projects and groups. Tensions emerged, cliques formed, and the center did not hold. Although Occupy Oakland's quorum requirement moved down from 100 to 70 people, quorum has very rarely been met since early 2012. Nonetheless a small GA continues to meet today.

The political dialogue around the Oakland encampment whether inside or outside the General Assembly nonetheless informed and inflamed thousands of participants. We formed numerous groups and committees that were both issue and project focused. Some that are still going are highlighted below. We thereby taught or further developed hundreds of people's organizing skills through the participatory democracy of the GA and the related direct action. It is too soon to tell how embers in people's consciousness and practice will affect politics in the Bay Area and beyond.

In sum the Decolonize/Occupy moment highlights how from the perspective of the people there is a democracy deficit. For the ruling class, by contrast, the surplus of democracy is terrorism. Democratic Mayor Jean Quan's administration ordered the Oakland Police Department, with the cooperation of federal, state and local law enforcement through the federally-funded counter-terrorism fusion center, to remove the Occupy Oakland encampment. This police operation almost killed Iraq War veteran and peace activist Scott Olsen. Dozens of others were beaten, arrested, incarcerated, and hundreds were tear-gassed and otherwise brutalized. Images of Oakland's repression circulated globally.

Bay Area community outrage at the police assault on Occupy Oakland brought thousands out for the next General Assembly (“GA”) in front of Oakland’s City Hall. Some three thousand participants consensually shut down Oakland’s port a week later on November 2, 2011 in response to the police action. While protesting police terrorism and protecting civil liberties was the impetus, labor solidarity soon emerged as the political focus for that first port shutdown protest. Workers from Longview Washington’s ILWU Local 21 who were fighting to retain unionized jobs at an export grain terminal, came to Occupy Oakland seeking solidarity. They got it.

Alameda County organized labor, through the AFL-CIO’s Alameda Labor Council, formally endorsed Occupy Oakland’s November 2 “Day of Action” by resolution and urged unions and their members to participate. The Labor Council’s barbeque at the plaza fed thousands of participants late in the day and into the early evening. Occupy Oakland’s November 2, 2011 mass protest, tens of thousands strong, was the largest protest seen in town since the 1946 Oakland General Strike.

Perhaps the particular class conscious character of the Oakland Decolonize/Occupy moment came to be seen by the American state and capitalist ruling class as the most dangerous of the local movements. We await the labors of a future historian to declassify all the relevant documents to show this. It signifies something that while Oakland is only the forty-seventh largest U.S. city, nearly one in ten of all the recorded Occupy protest-related arrests nationwide occurred here.

Oakland’s elected officials and administrators viewed citizens and residents as terrorists. There was a proposal to expand real-time anti-terrorism surveillance designed for the Port of Oakland to the entire city of Oakland. Funded by the Department of Homeland Security, and subcontracted to a security-intelligence company SAIC that we hear is known in its industry as NSA-West. This suggests again a deficit of democracy. Oakland’s mayor and city council have instantiated “the citizen as terrorist” for a broader American public.

As noted earlier, in Oakland our Occupy moment has a much stronger focus on racism than other cities. Oakland’s history of police terrorism against Black/Latina/o communities framed Oakland’s occupation. Oakland occupiers renamed the plaza in front of City Hall after Oscar Grant, and named the library and class space after Raheim Brown, both young African American men murdered by police. Events were also held at Lil Bobby Hutton, or DeFremery Park, renamed for the first Oakland Black Panther Party victim of police murder in the late 1960s.

The Justice for Alan Blueford Coalition formed after the May 2012 Oakland police murder of Skyline High School senior Alan Blueford. The focus on racial injustice was further reflected in the Occupy4Prisoners group which challenged the American gulag archipelago, or what Michelle Alexander named The New Jim Crow. The carceral state remains an important focus. Solidarity for the

California prisoner hunger strike, and the current national prisoner work strike, reflect this focus. Former Occupy Oakland participants have become quite active in both the local Black Lives Matter chapter, and in the remarkable and powerful work of the Anti Police-Terror Project, which is itself a project of the Onyx Organizing Committee. Lastly, the Qilombo, an autonomous Black Power community center, builds community among people of color and co-conspirators in downtown Oakland. With these projects some of Occupy Oakland's former participants foreground the racial state.

Other entities that stayed active for some years include the Coalition to Stop Goldman Sachs, Foreclosure Defense Group, and Decolonize Oakland. Strike Debt Bay Area, formed with some San Francisco activists, continues to challenge the power of finance capital over national and global economy and the manufacturing of debt to advance servitude. The Omni Oakland Commons, a collective of collectives, is seeking the purchase a former night/social club in the formerly Italian American neighborhood of Temescal to establish a permanent community commons space. Occupy the Farm, which has made a movie, remains active. The Community Democracy Project which promotes participatory budgeting also remains active. There was an effort to localize Decolonize/Occupy work by creating popular assemblies in Oakland neighborhoods. The Occupy Brooms Collective active in North Oakland was one such group. Prominent among these efforts was the Biblioteca Popular Víctor Martínez protesting the disinvestment reflected in the city's abandonment of a Carnegie library building in the Fruitvale area. The Biblioteca built a community library and garden, and thus local community, on the grounds of the shuttered structure in this predominantly Latina/o neighborhood. These groups engage in a complicated dance of anti-austerity work, subscribing to anti-gentrification ideas and restoring the commons while challenging the project of profit-oriented developers.

The safer spaces group formed during the encampment because of the ways in which heterosexual and cis male supremacy was expressed in the public square. Queer/feminist critique articulated a need for a woman and/or queer only space and part of the encampment was designated safer space. Feminist formations emerged as well, among the Oakland Occupy Patriarchy and Offensive Feminists. These sought to foreground and develop a practice of feminist and queer politics. Moreover part of the collective that produced the materialist-feminist LIES Journal was based out of Oakland. Another project that emerged from this tendency was The Tsega Center, named for an encampment comrade later murdered by her intimate partner.

Occupy Oakland's hallmark diversity of tactics philosophy along with a modified consensus process that required a quorum of 100 humans and if consensus could not be reached by them, a ninety percent vote of participants to pass a resolution, enabled broad unity on the actions agreed upon. Moreover it gave Occupy Oakland the capacity to have dozens of left sectarian groups, socialist, anarchist, communist and so forth, work together democratically that otherwise

might have continued their seemingly perpetual fights over the political line. Attempts by any such groups to dominate the political line at General Assembly usually lead to people leaving and thus the meeting losing quorum.

The question of diversity of tactics was a key debate often repeated. Although not always understood by participants in the conversation, especially by some who repeatedly argued a narrow non-violence position, the central question regarded targeted property destruction – named by the state as vandalism – through smashing or tagging the local property of the most egregious transnational corporate offenders of the recent past. A special focus was the large banks responsible for the 2008 financial crisis and the depression that followed. The publicly discussed “violence” contemplated was limited to such property destruction. We called it “smashy-smashy.” No one I am aware of argued for “Second Amendment solutions,” armed insurrection, or anything even close.

I observe, though, that to reduce Dr. Martin Luther King’s philosophy and social justice contributions, as Mayor Quan’s administration and the police propaganda apparatus does, to the mere injunction “do not vandalize” is, to use George W. Bush’s wonderful coinage, to utterly “misunderestimate” Dr. King’s philosophy and contributions. My sense is the majority of Occupy Oakland’s participants did not think property destruction particularly useful but nonetheless saw it as an understandable tactic. However a handful undertook the internal policing of those with whom they disagreed. Ironically their “non-violence” action involved physical assaults by individuals against other individuals perceived by such self-volunteered “police” as “vandals.” Proponents of a “non-violence” plank at the GAs to promote such internal policing also found their attempts to pass their position stymied by the meetings repeatedly losing quorum.

There is a history to the diversity of tactics discussion that comes out of last century’s global justice protests against the World Trade Organization. A key document that may be heard as summation is the Saint Paul’s Principles of 2008:

1. Our solidarity will be based on respect for a diversity of tactics and the plans of other groups.
2. The actions and tactics used will be organized to maintain a separation of time or space.
3. Any debates or criticisms will stay internal to the movement, avoiding any public or media denunciations of fellow activists and events.
4. We oppose any state repression of dissent, including surveillance, infiltration, disruption and violence. We agree not to assist law enforcement actions against activists and others.

These principles were proposed to the Occupy Oakland GA and discussed in November and December 2011. The value of this approach is that it allows groups who otherwise might fight one another on this or that political line to work together to achieve common goals through diverse actions and despite both much divergent philosophy and many different tactical approaches.

Oakland is historically a center for Black cultural life on the West Coast. It remains one of the most diverse cities in the country. Not surprisingly, then, it is a site where a strong critique of the term "Occupy" itself emerged. United States imperial occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Israeli occupation of Palestine, as well recognition of American settler colonialism on occupied indigenous peoples' territories, prompted reflection on this question. As noted the "race" question also emerged in the Occupy Wall Street discourse in the first weeks.

My participation in Occupy Oakland was limited by a full-time day job in San Francisco. My specific job in unemployment insurance reminded me daily of the condition and struggles of waged workers affected by the depression. I am further a rank and file union job steward in my workplace. But as I have no family responsibilities I have more leisure than most people who work a forty-hour workweek. I was thus there many evenings and weekends usually for the Oakland General Assembly in addition to numerous protest actions and some cultural events. I also observed the San Francisco GA twice.

I entered the physical space of the Occupy Oakland encampment, however, after first experiencing Occupy Wall Street virtually. A former Brooklynite and New York area community and student activist, I started using Facebook during a year I was unemployed after filing a Berkeley dissertation. My newsfeed reflected my former New York comrades' posts on the emerging movement there. I further followed Occupy Wall Street developments in autonomous media generated by and around Occupy Wall Street and its progeny. However I did not then nor do I now use Twitter. My background as the child of a Japanese migrant and a 1956 Hungarian refugee, and prior years of anti-racist organizing focused on the Asian American community in the New York metro area was some baggage I carried with me into the Decolonize/Occupy moment. Additionally, I brought what I learned over a dozen years in Critical Race Theory, a legal intellectual movement, to the Occupy Oakland conversation.

Within days of the October 10, 2011 start of Oakland's occupation, I wrote an essay entitled "The Occupy/Decolonize Moment" based on alternative media, my news feed, and personal observation as sources. It was published first on October 19 on the Occupy Oakland website then elsewhere. The key race critique passage is:

The decolonization critique of [Occupy Wall Street] has two components. The first is stated in the slogan, "Take Back Wall Street: Occupied Since 1625." The major premise is that the economic and social development of the present U.S.

order originates in white settler colonization. A minor premise is that the invention of racism served as ideological justification for both conquest and enslavement and that racism still prevails in Occupied America.

The second component is based on experiences, and criticism based on those experiences, by people of color participants in the Occupy general assemblies. This part of the critique centers how male, heterosexual, class, and especially white racial privilege exclude the histories and experiences of women and queer people of color in articulating the uprising's politics.

Thus, a call to "Occupy America" obscures the histories of colonization and resistance that U.S. indigenous and people of color communities often carry with them. The slogan "Occupy Everywhere" also unfortunately evokes colonialist projects. The phrase "Occupy Together" – used by an unofficial online coordination project – avoids this danger by inviting everyone's participation.

The Queer People of Color/People of Color group formed early in Occupy Oakland. This was where I spent most of my time outside of the General Assembly when I was in Oscar Grant Plaza in the first weeks. Proposals for indigenous solidarity and then to change the name of Occupy Oakland to Decolonize Oakland came through this group. Ultimately members of this group changed their name to Decolonize Oakland, and that group then later declared autonomy from Occupy Oakland. The Decolonize Oakland name change debate remains a contested chapter in Occupy Oakland's trajectory.

Some white activists dismissed race-identity based politics. Some people of color activists wrote off white activists who dismissed the politics of races and racisms. Some male activists dismissed gender-based and feminist politics. Some heterosexual activists dismissed lesbian-gay—bisexual-transgender and feminist politics. These arguments led to much learning but also much hurt. Those who identified with the politics of these margins sometimes withdrew from the Decolonize/Occupy work.

Determining what exactly the role of the state was in promoting fissures and fragmentation in Occupy Oakland is a project for a future historian. Certainly many anticipated a state role, questioning whether the positions and actions some participants took were articulated by agent provocateurs. Hopes were disappointed and dialogue closed too soon. Since I have no Twitter account, I missed the Twitter flame wars that I suspect caused hurt feelings and later depression in some participants. The intensity of conversations clearly could lead participants to withdraw.

I sensed that the life experience of some of the younger and most active activists in Occupy Oakland meant that they did not know how to talk with employed workers or across race and class lines. I should mention my service as worksite job steward in the public sector agency where I work means I have only just begun learning to talk. High unemployment in the young activists' cohort, or

their experience only in precarious employment, may further have had something to do with this.

The young activists were sophisticated about the politics of gender and sexuality, often having been trained primarily in the historically white precincts of American secondary and higher education. As Occupy Oakland continued they learned to listen and speak across other vectors of difference with varying degrees of success. Moreover, some lacked access to – although many quickly learned about – the historical political race consciousness that comes from long participation in community-based anti-racist work. Others were already quite inspired by the local history of radical anti-racist and anti-subordination social movements.

Nonetheless the utopian aspirations and anti-capitalist critique articulated by many occupiers often made an impression on many workers and the underemployed or unemployed of all different backgrounds. Most workers, especially those with the unwaged care work of families, had limited or no time and thus lacked capacity in most cases to participate in the drawn out Assembly process. Many – including my relatively poorly-compensated state worker union sisters and brothers – still repeatedly provided material support in the form of food and other aid.

The discourse of the 1% so shapes Americans' consciousness that it is unusual to find thinkers who do not subscribe. The dominant capitalist and individualism ideology is hegemonic. Mass culture reinforces that ideology through its communications media platforms and through the vast majority of other forms of cultural production. As a slogan "We are the 99%" points towards class analysis. However its use may have reinforced an American exceptionalism that class is the analytic that dare not speak its name.

Somebody commented that the reason we call it the American dream is that you have to be asleep to believe in it. Most Americans who work for a living do not think of ourselves as workers. One 1960s Bay Area radical even wrote of our being trapped in the sunlit prison of the American dream. Somebody else observed that most Americans think of themselves not as the poor or the working class but rather as temporarily embarrassed millionaires. The very concept of the middle class may be the walls and the bars of our sunlit prison.

The Democratic Party's 2012 electoral strategy to reclaim the White House reinscribed a dominant myth about the so-called middle class and social mobility in America. The reality I see every day on the Oakland and San Francisco streets, that I hear every day on the unemployment insurance phone lines, makes me extremely skeptical about this perception of America as description. It may be aspiration. But as Glen Ford succinctly put it, it sure seems that Barack Obama was not so much the lesser but rather the more effective evil.

We need change we can rely on rather than change to believe in. Among U.S. leftists, there is often a dialectic between hope and depression. As already noted the work for change continues in Oakland. Many of us though too soon returned to the flat atmosphere of daily waged and unwaged work and survival too soon forgetting what we had won. An English poet wrote about his participation in an earlier revolution: "Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive ..." That phrase sums up nicely my feeling about Oakland's Decolonize/Occupy moment.

A version of this essay was presented Oct. 12, 2013 at the World Association of International Studies conference, Adrian College, Michigan. It has been shared with some Occupy Oakland comrades.

About the author

John Hayakawa Torok participated in the following Occupy Oakland committees and working groups: Queer People of Color/People of Color Committee, Research Committee, Labor Solidarity Committee, Privacy Working Group, and Livable Wage Assembly. He attends most of the weekly General Assembly meetings. Information on those and other meetings and events can be found at www.occupyoakland.org The author is a rank and file worksite shop steward at his California state civil service job in San Francisco. He is a member of SEIU Local 1000. He is also a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Research on Social Change, Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, University of California, Berkeley. He can be reached at: seuioooJohn AT yahoo.com.

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Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboga (trans. Janet Biehl), 2016, *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*. London: Pluto Press (320 pp., paperback, £15.00)

Review author: Patrick Huff

Kerstin Jacobsson (Ed.), 2015, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge (322 pp., hardcover, \$124.95)

Review author: Bojan Baća

Dario Azzellini (Ed.), 2015, *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*. London: Zed Books (360 pp., paperback, £13.29)

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Peter Waterman, 2014, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist*. Helsinki: Into Publishing (466 pp., ebook, free)

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Shaazka Beyerle, 2014, *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*. London: Lynne Reinner Publishers (261 pp., paperback, \$25.00)

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Book Review: Michael Knapp et al., *Revolution in Rojava*

Review author: Patrick Huff

Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboga (trans. Janet Biehl), 2016, *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*. London: Pluto Press (320 pp., paperback, £15.00)

Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan is a comprehensive and accessible survey of ongoing struggles for peace and freedom in the embattled region. In recent years images of Kurdish female fighters taking on the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) have made international headlines. Syrian Kurdistan is known for strong patriarchal traditions, and the spectacle of armed women smashing IS certainly raises eyebrows. Unfortunately, much of the popular media coverage stops there, treating women in struggle as curiosities and failing to delve deeper. *Revolution in Rojava* commits 320 pages, arranged in 15 concise chapters, to a timely and necessary intervention. The volume covers a wide range of topics, including political organization, women's liberation, social economy, ecological challenges, the healthcare, and the revolutionary justice system. Ultimately the book offers in-depth descriptions and cogent analyses of a society, a culture, engaged in a profound act of democratic reconstruction.

The three co-authors bring a wealth of intellectual and grounded practical experience to the book. Michael Knapp, a historian, and Ercan Ayboga, a Kurdish activist, co-founded Tatort Kurdistan (Crime Scene Kurdistan), which monitors German arms traffic to the region. Knapp is a member of NAV-DEM, Democratic Society Centre of Kurds in Germany, a national level body organized on principles of democratic confederalism that coordinates 260 civil society associations. Anja Flach, an ethnologist, spent two years living alongside Kurdish female guerrillas in the mountains of North Kurdistan. Her two previous German language books are based on this experience. *Revolution in Rojava* includes a foreword by David Graeber, anthropologist and Occupy Wall Street alum, and an afterword by Asya Abdullah, co-president of Rojava's Party of Democratic Unity (PYD). Readers will find the book's glossary a helpful guide through the alphabet soup of acronyms peppering the text. Full disclosure: I recently co-organized an academic workshop in which Ayboga and the book's German to English translator, Janet Biehl, participated.

Graeber's foreword critiques "the loser left," self-styled radicals that have secretly stopped believing in the possibility of revolution (p. xiii). What Graeber calls "cool-kid clubbism" is one version of this tendency, those who prefer existence in a radical niche to actual radical politics (p. xiv). Knee-jerk anti-imperialists are another case in point: their argument is that the United States is

an imperialist power; and Kurds have forged tactical battlefield alliances with the U.S; thus the Kurds are unwitting or intentional agents of U.S. imperialism.

The book clarifies the notional idea of Kurdistan, which existed long before the borders of the present states in which it lies. Today Kurdistan's subaltern geography exists in political superposition, running roughly from Eastern Turkey through Northern Syria and Iraq to Western Iran. From the perspective of central Kurdistan the geographic frame of reference shifts. Thus the Kurds call these areas Bakur (North), Rojava (West), Basûr (South), and Rojhilat (East), respectively. Rojava, a culturally diverse area, is home to Kurds, the majority ethnic group, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Turkmen, Chechens, Armenians, and a few smaller groups. They practice a variety of faith traditions, including Sunni Islam, Aramaic Christianity, Chaldean Eastern Catholicism, and Ezidism. Ezidis, ethnic Kurds, practice an ancient monotheistic but non-Abrahamic faith.

Asya Abdullah offers a brief but thoughtful sketch of the philosophy of democratic autonomy. "Our society is diverse, like a mosaic, and the monistic state principle is entirely unsuited for it and cannot be implemented no matter how much force is exerted," she writes (p. 266). She suggests the vacuity of the homogenizing modernist state project and points to the necessity of accepting rather than repressing the reality of difference. The revolutionary impetus came from the Kurds but they recognize that democratic autonomy must be for all the peoples of the region.

Chapter three provides an overview of the theory and practice of democratic confederalism, the Rojava revolution's guiding ideology. Subsequent chapters explore its implementation across multiple domains of social life. In 1978 Abdullah Öcalan and a small cadre of revolutionaries founded the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), at the time a national liberation movement ideologically informed by Marxist-Leninism. In 1984 the PKK launched a guerrilla war against the Turkish state. The Syrian government, motivated by its Cold War rivalry with Turkey, allowed the PKK to operate in its territory. By the early 1990s corruption and internal fractionalization plagued the PKK. With the Soviet Union's collapse and subsequent regional political realignments, Syria was no longer a safe haven. Öcalan was pushed to leave. In 1999, after an international manhunt that seems straight out of a John le Carré spy novel, Öcalan was captured in Kenya and rendered to Turkey to face the death penalty, later commuted to life in prison. Öcalan has spent the last 17 years mostly in solitary confinement. Despite these significant challenges the period of the 1990s and early 2000s was also a time of earnest self-critique on the part of Öcalan, the PKK, and partisans of the wider Kurdish freedom movement. The PKK and much of the Kurdish freedom movement in Rojava and beyond now explicitly reject the quest for a state of their own and have instead set about building democratic autonomy in accordance with Öcalan's theory of democratic confederalism.

In addition to his own practical and hard won knowledge and wisdom Öcalan constructed his theory of democratic confederalism from an array of sources,

prominently including the work of libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin. Öcalan's radical reassessment of revolutionary theory and practice led his research all the way back to the Neolithic period, 10,000 years ago. The Neolithic saw a profound and enduring transformation in human livelihoods as settled agriculture began to supplant nomadic hunting and gathering and, to Öcalan's lament, the subjugation and enslavement of women to patriarchal authority. As the authors note, Öcalan's analysis is informed by a tradition in socialist thought famously expressed in Friedrich Engels' notion of ancient matriarchy and primitive communism. However, there is a crucial difference between Öcalan and Engels' ideas. "[I]n Öcalan's view, the emergence of hierarchy, class rule, and statism was not inevitable but forced" (p. 39). In other words, the emergence of the patriarchal state was a political project rather than a necessary stage in human social evolution. Öcalan views this transformation from egalitarianism to hierarchy as initiating ruptures between men and women and humanity and nature.

Part of why Öcalan views the Neolithic revolution as relevant to contemporary political questions has to do with his adoption of Fernand Braudel's concept of the *longue durée*, history's long-term processes and enduring social institutions. In Öcalan's analysis the Neolithic is relevant precisely because we are all still living in social structures that emerged there and came to full fruition in the Bronze Age some 5,000 years ago. Öcalan's term *statist civilization* references these enduring authoritarian structures. *Capitalist modernity* refers to the current configuration of statist civilization. To these Öcalan juxtaposes *democratic civilization* and *democratic modernity*, an enduring current of resistance running through history and its contemporary configurations. Some pertinent examples of the current of democratic modernity can be observed in the council democracy of the Paris Commune of 1871, the council system of Soviets before Lenin's Bolshevik Party crushed them, the workers' councils of the 1918 German uprising, the syndicalist organization of the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s and, of course, those being organized today in Rojava.

It is to Rojava that we shall now turn. The territory of Rojava is divided into three administrative cantons, Afrîn, Kobanî, and Cizîrê. Within and across these units a complex and rhizomatic web of commune, neighborhood, village, district, and regional councils have been developed. Boards consisting of mandated and recallable delegates operate at each level from base communes to the regional council to integrate and coordinate activities. Commissions of five to ten people exist at each level and focus on eight issues of collective concern: women, defense, economics, politics, civil society, free society, justice, ideology, and health. A parallel and autonomous women's council system exists alongside the general system. In addition each commission in the general system must have a male and female co-chair. Social movements, trade unions, and democratic political parties all participate in the council system through delegates. In 2014 the three cantons adopted an overarching political and legal framework called the Social Contract and within this framework each canton created democratic-autonomous administrations (DAAs). This system resembles a conventional constitutional order with its tripartite division of

powers in the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. The DAAs are formally distinct from the popular council system but, at least for the time being, practically dependent on it for implementation of decisions. The DAAs were created out of the necessity of interacting with the outside world. Without these formal structures international institutions that only recognize states would deny the cantons desperately needed aid, food, medicine, and the like. As the authors note, it remains to be seen whether the DAAs and the democratic council system will be able to coexist in the long-term. From an anti-state perspective the DAAs may constitute a serious contradiction for the goal of a stateless society.

Revolution in Rojava makes clear the democratic revolution is a woman's revolution and it is reconfiguring virtually every dimension of social and cultural life in Rojava. To be sure the emancipation of women in Rojava is far from complete, the old patriarchal structures and mindsets linger on, but the women's movement has made some truly astonishing advances. This did not happen overnight but is the culmination of a trajectory of struggle beginning with the organizing efforts of PKK militants in the late 1980s and 1990s. The movement's current configuration can be traced to the founding of Yekitiya Star in 2005, recently renamed Kongreya Star, as an umbrella organization for the women's movement in Rojava. The authors note that the term *star* is a reference to Ishtar, an ancient Mesopotamian goddess (p. 64). A key dimension of Kongreya Star's organizing work involves educating women in the movement's theoretical perspective called *jineolojî*, women's science. As Knapp and colleagues explain, "[j]ineolojî also wants to develop the vision of a good life and the councils are putting it into practice; theory and practice are always in communication" (p. 71). *Jineolojî* is essentially an applied or practical sociology guided by a feminist ethical framework. Perhaps one of the most important accomplishments of the women's struggle so far has been in the institution of the principle of dual leadership. Leadership positions in mixed gender situations must consist of male and female co-chairs and all decision-making bodies must have at least 40% female membership. Women are also at the forefront of the social economy as they create and manage cooperatives of all sorts. Women perform a valuable role on peace committees, which are integral to the new justice system as it focuses on communal consensus and restorative justice rather than issuing punishment for crimes.

But despite Rojava's incredible and inspiring achievements the future of the revolution remains precarious. Potential internal contradictions and external threats make even medium term predictions nearly impossible. Syria is suffering from one of the most brutal wars in recent memory. The forces arrayed against Rojava's revolutionaries are many and varied. The threats run the gamut from the Turkish and Syrian states to various right-wing Islamist groups. And, of course, there is the international rivalry between the United States and Russia that is directly influencing the course of the war. Even though the U.S. has offered limited support to the Kurds no one seems to see it as anything more than a strategic consideration that will be discarded as soon as the Kurds become inconvenient. The future is hazy but it seems clear that the democratic

movement in Rojava offers the best alternative to endless authoritarianism and war in the region. Echoing revolutionaries past, *Revolution in Rojava* concludes with a stark choice for Syria and, ultimately, the world: communalism or barbarism.

About the review author

Patrick Huff is a social anthropologist and Associate Lecturer in the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies, Birkbeck, University of London. His research interests include social movements, radical politics, feminism, and political economy. His most recent publication concerns the theory and practice of solidarity among anarchists of color. He recently co-organized *Revolution in Rojava and Beyond: Perspectives on Democratic Transformations*, a workshop at the University of Sussex. He is an active member of Brighton Kurdistan Solidarity, and can be reached at pathuff123 AT gmail.com.

Book review: Kerstin Jacobsson (Ed.), *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*

Review author: Bojan Baća

Kerstin Jacobsson (Ed.), 2015, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. London and New York: Routledge (322 pp., hardcover, \$124.95)

Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe is Kerstin Jacobsson's latest edited volume on urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe, and it is yet another valuable instalment in her research agenda on the specificities of social movements in the post-socialist, (post)transition setting. In the first two volumes, which she co-edited with Steven Saxonberg (*Beyond NGO-ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (2013) and *Social Movements in Post-Communist Europe and Russia* (2014)) Jacobsson successfully challenged the notorious "weak civil society" thesis used to describe the "post-socialist condition." She brought rich and detailed empirical evidence to counter the influential thesis, revealing a vibrant civil society and various forms of citizen-led mobilizations. In *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, instead of simply providing additional case studies that fill the gaps in research on post-socialist civil societies which have generally neglected urban grassroots movements, Jacobsson takes a bold step, inaugurating post-socialism not simply as an area studies problem, but rather as a critical standpoint in social movement studies. Rather than treating the region as Europe's "other," the authors in this volume approach their empirical material as "an excellent opportunity to test and develop social movement theory" (p. 2), and thus avoid the ever-present theoretical biases and orientalist treatment of the region as one with a "backwardness" that needs to "catch up" with its Western neighbors. Rather, urban grassroots movements of the post-socialist region of Central and Eastern Europe (which includes countries in both Southeast Europe and post-Soviet space) are analyzed with nuance, taking into account the ambivalence, hybridity and liminality of the "post-socialist condition" and the distinct historical development, cultural specificities, and the unique socio-political transformation and economic restructuring of each society. Instead of treating the region as a repository of case studies for uncritical application of Western theoretical models, the contributing authors use the empirical realities of grassroots urban movements in Europe's semi-periphery to re-calibrate social movement theory.

Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe offers two dense theoretical chapters (introduction and conclusion) and ten case studies that put forth analyses of urban grassroots movements without privileging high-visibility popular mobilization, broadening our knowledge of actually existing civil society

and social movements in the post-socialist landscape of Central and Eastern Europe. In the theoretical chapters, Jacobsson offers an extensive literature review on urban movements in the region (and beyond) and discusses the variegated terrains and forms of urban activism taking place in post-socialist contexts. She underscores “the importance of embedding the urban movements studied in a larger framework of an overall civil society in which also other actors such as NGOs operate, taking into account also the role of the state and public authorities impinging upon it” (p. 278). In other words, Jacobsson convincingly argues that the best way to understand the recent development of the post-socialist, post-NGO-ized civil societies is to focus on the urban contexts within which these “serve as spaces for agency and as bases where the exercise of active citizenship can be revitalized” (p. 279). Instead of studying high-visibility, large-scale, mass mobilizations, Jacobsson emphasizes the necessity of exploring diverse forms of *low-key* urban struggles happening on smaller scales that *politicize* issues related to everyday life and, in the process, transform “ordinary citizens” into activists. She synthesizes a much needed critique of the limitations and biases of dominant theoretical models in social movement studies, whose concepts and generalizations are based on the historical experience of affluent Western European and North American democracies and, subsequently, offers a re(de)defined conceptual apparatus for “capturing” empirical reality of movement-related activities that go beyond the so-called “third sector.” Social movements in the region are shown to be grassroots-driven, embedded in the informal sphere of everyday life and, for that reason, appear as low-visibility, small-scale collective struggles “related to everyday life in the neighborhoods or connected to the sub-cultures,” with predominantly peaceful action repertoires (p. 14). Jacobsson concludes that “the distinctive post-socialist experiences could, rather than an expression of ‘otherness’, then be seen as a resource available for urban movement scholars globally to freely use and explore” (p. 282).

Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe includes ten detailed case studies by experts on the region to substantiate Jacobsson’s theoretical claims. Drawing on both European and U.S. paradigms in social movement studies, the authors use predominantly ethnographic, interview-based methods to offer in-depth analyses of eight post-socialist civil societies. In a chapter on the playfulness of resistance, Beatriz Lindqvist explores how creative public performances in Vilnius served as resistance to dominant neoliberal individuality and enacted alternative lifestyles to dominant symbolic codes. Ioana Florea analyzes the ideologically ambiguous heritage protection movement in Bucharest that defended “urban identity” of the city, while at the same time excluding marginalized groups that did not fit into its middle-class cultural value system. Olena Leipnik investigates the overlooked activism of the elderly, by analyzing motives and values in five cases of civic engagement in Ukraine where seniors struggled to count as social actors. Sabrina Kopf scrutinizes the “anti-political” bike activism in Belgrade as a local manifestation of the “right to the city” movement, and describes cyclists’ struggle against neoliberal urban planning and their demands for their equal share of public

space. Bojan Bilić and Paul Stubbs deconstruct the underpinning ideology and biases of the “urban” signifier in post-Yugoslav political activism and protest politics. Elena Tykanova and Anisya Khokhlova explore two distinct cases of grassroots mobilization against the neoliberalization of public spaces in St. Petersburg by focusing on how civil society actors protect public space against top-down urban planning, and the ways in which they frame/legitimize their claims to contested spaces. Karine Clément convincingly exposes mechanisms that transformed local grassroots initiatives into a large-scale, mass mobilization around universalist political demands in contemporary Russia. Dominika V. Polanska looks at the role of alliances and brokerage between squatters’ and tenants’ organizations in Warsaw and how these grassroots movements announced a new phase in the development of Polish civil society. Alexandra Bitušiková investigates how transactional networking among grassroots movements in Banská Bystrica democratized urban governance on the local level. The final empirical chapter is written by Jolanta Aidukaitė and Kerstin Jacobsson, and analyzes the positive effects of Europeanization on grassroots activist communities in Vilnius.

These case studies show that urban grassroots movements in the region cannot be easily classified as contentious or non-contentious, but instead occupy a liminal position by often employing both radical and non-radical repertoires while simultaneously vacillating between being service providers and political claim-makers. More importantly, these ten case studies bring to the fore processes of “political becoming” (political subject-formation) among traditionally apolitical social actors. As Jacobsson posits, “individuals participating in mobilizations typically develop a new sense of individual and collective agency and empowerment, which is of particular importance in post-authoritarian and low-trust societies” (p. 279). By focusing on a non-normative conceptualization of civil society, Jacobsson’s book offers valuable insights into actually existing, “vernacular” civil societies occupied by both progressive and regressive urban movements. Overall, the detailed and rich empirical material on urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe presented in this volume “yields insights that are useful for theory building even on more general issues such as agency, resistance, citizen-making and political becoming” (p. 283).

Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe is not important only for scholars interested in social movements, but provides a good starting point for urban studies and civil society studies scholars who are interested in the post-socialist landscape in a region characterized by rapid economic (neo)liberalization, profound state reforms and abrupt transnational integrations. The analyses provided in this volume offer new understandings of how social actors re-think and re-gain political (collective) agency in post-socialist urban spaces that are often negatively affected by privatization and marketization, neoliberal ideology and institutions, urban restructuring, and the general incapacity of public authorities to meet the daily needs of ordinary citizens. By studying urban grassroots movements within these contexts, Jacobsson and her collaborators present “a much-needed corrective to the (still)

predominant picture of a weak, passive and NGO-ized civil society in the region” (p. 16). Despite the volume’s meticulous focus on contemporary urban movements across post-socialist spaces, what remains wanting is a *diachronic* analysis of both urban and rural grassroots movements in the region. Overall, the book offers both theoretical tools and empirical evidence that should guide future research and prevent researchers from omitting or, worse still, misunderstanding collective actions taking place in the region. By eschewing the generality with which social movements in the post-socialist space have been treated in scholarly literature thus far, *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* broadens our view on and understanding of urban grassroots movements.

About the review author

Bojan Baća is a PhD candidate in Sociology at York University, Canada. He received his BSc in Political Science from University of Montenegro and his MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University. His doctoral research – based on extensive archival and ethnographic research in Montenegro – explores the relationship between socio-economic/political transformation and civic engagement in post-socialist societies and, more broadly, the role of activist citizenship and contentious politics in democratization processes. He can be contacted at bojan.baca AT gmail.com.

Book review: Dario Azzellini (Ed.), *An Alternative Labour History*

Review author: Gerard Kester

Dario Azzellini (Ed.), 2015, *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*. London: Zed Books (360 pp., paperback, £13.29)

Initiatives for worker self-determination have emerged all through history. First in reaction to feudalism, then to industrialist exploitation, and now to global financial capitalism. In the first decades of the 21st century a number of self-management projects appeared on the scene, either factories occupied and taken over by workers, or communal projects. Recuperated enterprises or ‘factories without bosses’, where workers took over the management of failed private firms, rapidly grew in number. The value of *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*, edited by Dario Azzellini lies in the detailed description of innovative cases of worker-managed enterprises in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, Italy, Greece, France, Turkey, Egypt and the United States. It is no wonder that an author who is also film maker is excited about these examples of worker organization. Azzellini’s volume approaches each case with enthusiasm, showing the rebellion of workers against the nefarious consequences of neoliberal financial capitalism. In this book, as in several of his earlier publications, Azzellini has become a staunch reporter of the ‘occupy, resist, produce’ movement, describing worker resistance that is often heroic. Going by the title of the present book one expects to expand one’s knowledge about the future of these recuperated enterprises and indeed the authors’ aim is, as he writes in the introduction, to advance scholars’ and workers’ understanding of, and appreciation for, the historic significance and necessity of self-administration, workers’ control, collective decision making in assemblies and workers councils (p. 4). Yet, the lack of a conceptual and theoretical framework on the labour history of worker control and workplace democracy makes *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy* descriptive rather than analytic.

The cases described in Azzellini’s book rise from below which make them genuine but at the same time vulnerable. A number of these recuperated companies, writes Azzellini, also embrace the idea of a social form of ownership, as “common property”, managed directly and democratically by those most affected, also by others than only the members of a particular workplace. Not only productivity but also things like health, education, ecology, sustainability and solidarity are taken into account. These projects have the potential to play a role in building a broad-based social movement and an impetus to a wider political vision; they can become an impetus for the imagination of an alternative vision of the economy. Analysing a wide variety of worker control

experiences in recuperated enterprises, Azzellini maintains that what he terms new social relations are developed and practiced in the recuperated workplace, including affection, reliability, mutual help, solidarity and equality. He goes on to say that workers of recuperated factories consider themselves part of a broader movement (pp. 95-96). However, one immediate challenge in the cases described was the recovery of employment rather than ideological motivation. In a chapter on the experience in Uruguay, writer Anabel Rieiro summed up what may happen next: individual survival under corporative collective management, or a political step towards transforming into a different type of society, generating alternative political space for the realisation of democratic labour relations. Rieiro concludes that it is neither the recovery of the enterprise nor the act of making it viable again that automatically generates political subjectivities conducive to transformation as people are chiefly concerned with individual survival (pp. 291ff). Rieiro rightly demystifies the romantic revolutionary spirit Azzellini tries to evoke in his generalising comments. Aline Suelen Pires' recent study of recuperated firms in Brazil confirms Rieiro's observations. Pires concludes that the leading motivation in the cases she studied was not resistance to capitalism or socialist revolution but a fight to keep jobs and support the family (Pires 2016). Initial enthusiasm dwindles sooner or later and recuperated firms eventually grow into more or less traditional capitalist firms, with growing wage differentials, financial incentives, hierarchy, hiring contract workers who are excluded from the original community. Workers' initial sense of involvement and bonds of solidarity appear to weaken in the long run. *An Alternative Labour History* fails to analyse this process.

Spread over the introductory chapter and several following chapters is some conceptualisation or classification, for instance, on the concept of social ownership (pp. 69-70) and a short section on "common features" and "common challenges" (pp. 91-97), but reference to major theories of worker control and self-management - for example the classical texts of Branko Horvat and Jaroslav Vanek among many others - is conspicuously absent. The history included in the volume is limited to the cases of Chile under Allende, Austria after the First World War, and Japan after the second. Here Azzellini pays for the lack of theory. His choice of cases does not appear to have a logic. It is difficult to comprehend that there is only a single paragraph (pp. 15-16) about Yugoslav self-management. True enough, party control was a major problem there, but for several decades worker self-management in Yugoslavia was a true laboratory of worker control at workplace level in the so-called "basic organisations of associated labour." Workers were in full control of the management of their workplace and of the policy of their enterprise. In a book on the labour history of worker control it is an oversight to simply ignore that experience.

Even more difficult to comprehend is that Azzellini ignores the studies of factory occupations in the 1970s in Europe which show much more similarity with the challenges faced by the recuperated firms about which Azzellini writes. Whether spontaneously introduced or by created by government initiative, these firms sooner or later did not survive. The occupied factories were often already

bankrupt firms, taken over by workers to keep employment and not because the workers were ideologically motivated for self-management. Even when recuperated firms extended their existence for a long period of time it was generally only a minority of workers who internalised self-management values – mostly the workers who played key roles in the occupation or take-over of the firm, and who were elected to represent the entire workforce. In my own research of the self-managed Drydocks (5000 workers) in Malta I concluded that after a period of 20 years, there was a cultural gap between, on the one hand, the elected representatives who had evidently internalised self-management as a way of life, and on the other hand the rank-and-file workers including the shop stewards, who had fallen back on adversarial labour relations in the very firm of which they were themselves the masters (Kester 1980, 1986). It is difficult to develop self-management in the cultural environment of a global capitalist system, and indeed the Drydocks was privatised again after 25 years self-management. Even more eloquent is the fate of the kibbutzim in Israel. More than fifty years ago the initial principles were internal democracy, self-management, avoidance of hired labour, and relative equality in distribution of rewards. But eventually liberalisation policies undermined these principles, collective ownership changed to private ownership with inheritance rights and salary distribution is in accordance with the contribution to the kibbutz economy (Achouch 2016).

Recuperated firms remain isolated cases with a completely different style of labour relations. For the learning process to cope with that organisationally as well as culturally, little or no support structure was available to workers in recuperated firms. They failed to organise themselves, establish alliances, find appropriate legal formats and most importantly, to set up a common supporting structure to provide education and training, to conduct research and evaluation or to assist in marketing and financing. How to assure that spontaneous take-overs escape the fate of similar experiences in the past? Azzellini mentions the need for support by political parties and unions, the lack of legal forms for worker control, and of financial support (p. 91), but does not elaborate. There is no well-reasoned analysis of the factors which have led to the eventual defeat of workers control of recuperated enterprises in the past and, therefore, the book offers no contribution to overcome the difficult and complicated challenges to make self-management a durable social movement. Why, for instance, is the conceivability of substantive trade union support not explored? Azzellini writes that autonomous workers are able to question and to achieve much more than unions because unions represent – by their own logic – employed workers only (pp. 11-12). Even when he adds that only a small minority are different, he underestimates the potential importance of the role of trade unions in supporting and developing alternative labour relations. This may appear from descriptions in various chapters in *An Alternative Labour History*. Moreover, in labour history – supposedly the leading theme in Azzellini's book – trade unions did support Worker Councils in a number of countries; these were seen as the start of an attack on the power foundations of production relations and on capital ownership structures. In the 1970s the French trade union leader

Edmond Maire published his trade union vision in a book in which he argued that the road of trade union struggle should lead to worker self-management (Maire 1976). Recently, a major icon of trade union studies, Richard Hyman, pleaded a trade union launch for a struggle for a genuinely alternative economy. The struggle for the democratisation of work and of the economy requires a new, imaginative – indeed utopian – counter-offensive, a persuasive vision of a different and better society and economy, an alternative to the mantra of greed, he wrote (Hyman 2015). It is precisely here that trade unions have a golden opportunity: to give the principle of democracy new ideological content, to elaborate it and relate it to the economy. It is a pity that *An Alternative Labour History* misses this perspective completely.

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About the review author

Gerard Kester (now retired) was associate professor at the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and director of the African Worker Participation Development Programme. He conducted numerous research projects on the democratisation of labour relations in Asia, Africa and Europe and published the results in academic books and in manuals for trade union education and policy. Contact: gerardensonjakester AT ziggo.nl

Book review: Peter Waterman, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*

Review author: David Featherstone

Peter Waterman, 2014, *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement: Itinerary of a Long-Distance Internationalist*. Helsinki: Into Publishing (466 pp., ebook, free)¹

In 1968 eight British Communists in Prague signed a letter to the Communist Party of Great Britain's *Morning Star* (the party's newspaper) which argued that they "totally condemn the present occupation of Czechoslovakia". It asked for support for "the Czechoslovak Communists' appeal to us to mobilise support" and to "Condemn the action of the five powers and demand the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops". This action took place during the repression of Alexander Dubcek's "socialism with a human face" which challenged top-down Stalinist socialism with a commitment to political participation and democratisation. As Jiří Pelikán, the reforming Head of Czech Television during the Prague Spring, argued in an interview with *New Left Review* in 1975, "the demand for freedom of expression, particularly in Eastern Europe" was "not at all just an intellectual's demand", but rather "the basic condition for the workers and peasants to take part in politics" (Pelikán 2011: 46-47).

One of the co-authors of the letter, along with Brian Bicat, and Monty Johnstone, who had "tried to dissuade embarrassed Russian tank crews in fluent Russian" (Hobsbawm 2007), was Peter Waterman. Waterman was then working for World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Prague and his account of the Soviet invasion of Prague from the point of view of a young "official" working for a Communist-led international trade union federation is one of the gems in his autobiographical account of a life as a "Long-Distance Internationalist". Waterman recalls discussing the events with Pelikan who he knew from International Union of Students (IUS) in the 1950s. Pelikan went on to become a leading left Czech dissident in exile. Waterman later returned to the UK, studied at Birmingham, became something of an expert in African labour, and in 1970 finally broke with the Communist Party.

Waterman will be better known to readers of this journal as an acclaimed scholar and activist of labour and social movement internationalism, who has had a role in many different left projects and publications including *The Newsletter of International Labour Studies*, the World Social Forum and, of course, *Interface*. *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* gives a fascinating sense of Waterman's background and political

¹ http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/from_coldwar_communism_to_the_global_emancipatory_movement/

and intellectual trajectories. It is a valuable contribution because such autobiographical accounts of intellectual and activist figures are relatively rare. Through the text Waterman gives important insights into the struggles that go into shaping intellectual positions and exchanges, and of the pressures exerted on them by various forces, and institutional dynamics both academic and political.

The first part of the book charts Waterman's experience of growing up in a Communist Jewish family in the East End of London. It gives a clear and vivid sense of the dynamics of such a family and also gives vignettes of friends who he grew up with, including Raphael Samuel, a celebrated social historian and one of the founders of the journal, *History Workshop*. Samuel's father was a Polish Communist who was manager of Collett's bookshop between 1942 and 1952. Samuel was involved in the Yiddish Workers Theatre movement and Waterman describes him as "a convert from talmudic Judaism to talmudic Marxism" (p. 22). His mother Ray worked with the Scottish Communist MP, Willie Gallacher, and wrote two semi-autobiographical novels. Waterman was an early member of the Young Communist League (YCL) travelling to Berlin and Bucharest in the 1950s for international communist festivals. He gives a vivid sense of his early tutelage as an activist in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) including being schooled in anti-imperialism by Ben Bradley – one of the Meerut prisoners (see Pennybacker 2009: 160-167). This was something which was later to impress comrades in India.

Waterman's involvement in the YCL and international communist networks through the International Union of Students took him to Prague, for the first stint in the last 1950s, when he worked in the city. He goes on to account for his rather shocked encounters on his return with what he wryly terms the "Actually-Existing Working Class" in the British army. This experience led him to realise the extent to which the working class comrades he had met in the CPGB were far from typical British workers! After serving in the army he studied African Studies at Birmingham, becoming interested in questions of African labour which would become a key area of expertise. In the early 1970s he travelled with his young family to work at the Northern Nigerian university, Ahmadu Bello in Zaria lecturing on 'World Contemporary History'. He recalls that in this environment – smoking grass and discussing Frantz Fanon – he was finally "making my tortuous way from the old left to the new" (p. 155).

His account, especially of his time in Czechoslovakia is enlivened by a stream of jokes, which draw attention to the ways in which official politics was negotiated, ridiculed and endured. The highlights of these are the sardonic Czech jokes from the 1960s: "Is it possible to build socialism in one country? Yes but it's better to live in another" (p. 55). These texture an account which could easily have reduced life as a communist official to a dull rendering of meetings or diktats. By contrast his account of his many years spent at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague doesn't always succeed in being quite so animated or textured. Though arguably this speaks to the way that academic life doesn't necessarily lend itself to vibrant narrative.

The ISS was, as Waterman notes, “the earliest European institute of ‘development’ studies” (p. 165) and he also notes that its establishment was shaped by links with returnees from the Dutch colonial project in Indonesia. Such linkages, as Uma Kothari has argued, were absolutely foundational to the formation of development studies in various contexts (Kothari 2005). It is clear that from the outset Waterman had a healthy scepticism of the whole endeavour of development and also of participation. He recalls that the left at ISS “might have made the most noise” and been “self-confident, energetic and polemical. But it was never a coherent body or project” (p. 167).

He notes his emergent position as a spontaneous workerist in the 1970s, though noting that he “never identified with full blooded *operaismo* as it shaped up in Italy in the 1970s” (p. 167). He gives a clear sense of the role of international dialogues at ISS, though certainly doesn’t romanticise them as with a discussion of faltering attempts to develop links with South West Africa People’s Organization. He also gives a sense of his early recognition of and engagement with feminism at ISS (though one feels that this hasn’t always informed the style of writing in *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement*, especially in the first part where there is much recounting of sexual conquests, as much as it might). There is extensive material here on the internal politics and dynamics of ISS, including the events which led up to his being forced out of the department of Labour Studies. That the account of ISS is linked into an account of his midlife crisis and the disintegration of his marriage to Ruthie Kupferschmidt makes for something of a bleak read. It also gives a sustained sense of how a committed political intellectual work can rub up awkwardly with broader academic institutional configurations and the stresses of living with these tensions. There was much I empathised with in this account.

What I found more compelling than the discussion of ISS politics was the account of his engagement with the emergence of ‘shop floor internationalism’ and the activities of the Transnational Information Exchange. There is also a very interesting discussion of the process producing *The Newsletter of International Labour Studies* with processes of pasting and print setting which startle a reader schooled in the internet era of internationalism. This discussion also gives important context for the emergence of Waterman’s influential analysis and championing of a ‘new labour internationalism’. It gives a clear sense of the significance and prescience of this set of interventions. *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* also gives some very interesting sense of his intellectual biography and trajectories especially in relation to the emergence of his influential arguments about ‘social movement unionism’ (Waterman 1998).

One of the left political projects that has been influenced by Waterman’s ideas on internationalism and social movement unionism has been the World Social Forum (WSF). In characteristic fashion Waterman has been both an insightful proponent and critic of the Forum. Indeed it is interesting here that he argues that his long-term partner, Peruvian feminist activist Gina Vargas, was much more at home in the spaces and style of the forum. His discussions of the Forum

here add to his already published writings on the Forum in interesting ways. He contributes particularly useful reflections on the WSF as globalisation from below arguing that this “has to be seen as an aspiration to be achieved by the Forum process, not a reality already existent and represented” (p. 246). He also makes important points about the limited extent of WSF-union relations. Thus he argues, “I was certainly more *at home* in the WSF than in the traditional international union organisations” because “the traditional unions do not welcome” – “discussion, debate or even dialogue” (p. 248). He observes, however, that despite “the ‘open space’ at the Forums the WSF-union relationship was one of informal mutual instrumentalisation rather than of dialogue” (p. 248).

In the conclusion Waterman develops some useful reflections on the broader thematics of cosmopolitanism and internationalism and in particular takes on and critiques Sidney Tarrow’s account of ‘rooted cosmopolitans’ (Tarrow 2005). He usefully challenges Tarrow’s need to root left cosmopolitan cultures in a rather un-problematised account of place. By contrast he argues that “rather than qualifying, or joining together, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘rootedness’” he “would still rather see us work out the possible meanings of a *post-nationalist* internationalism – ‘a new global solidarity’. This would be one which surpasses *internationalism* and is free of debts to cosmopolitanism. What we need is to re-imagine solidarity” (p. 271, emphasis in original). In this regard one of Waterman’s enduring contributions is his challenge to the limits of internationalism envisioned as articulations between discrete left traditions in particular countries (see also Featherstone 2012). *From Coldwar Communism to the Global Emancipatory Movement* is a vivid account of a life of internationalist activism underlines the importance of striving for post-national internationalist horizons.

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About the review author

Dave Featherstone is Senior Lecturer at the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences at the University of Glasgow. He is the author of *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (Zed Books, 2012) and *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: the Making of Counter-Global Networks* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008). He can be contacted at David.Featherstone AT glasgow.ac.uk.

Book Review: Robert Ogman, *Against the Nation*

Review author: Ina Schmidt

Robert Ogman, 2013, *Against the Nation: Anti-National Politics in Germany*. Porsgrunn: New-compass.net (129 pp., paperback, \$14.95)

Against the Nation is a detailed exploration of the anti-national approach that has developed in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, taking similar approaches from the US as its point of departure. Based on societal and political developments, Robert Ogman provides a close analysis of two specific movements, namely “Never again Germany” (*Nie wieder Deutschland*) and “Something better than the Nation” (*Etwas Besseres als die Nation*). The author discusses the interconnections connecting nations, nation-states, and nationalism that these movements represent and illustrates how anti-nationalists developed a new, leftist perspective towards the nation (for more on this, see Hoffman 2006). Ogman argues that the described developments, on the one hand the changes in the approach towards the nation and on the other hand the rise of racial motivated violence, caused changes within the political perspectives of the left. These changes resulted eventually in the establishment of anti-national movements, which broke with the traditional perception of the nation, nation-states and nationalism and developed new ones.

Against the Nation offers a comprehensive description of the developments and the ideology of anti-national movements, which the author weaves into the historical, political, and societal context of Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall 1989. The text describes these movements based on first hand materials, but stays on a descriptive level and does not ever formulate a particular research question, which means the book might well serve as reference or background volume. *Against the Nation* elaborates on a phenomenon not frequently discussed, and especially not in English (Legard 2013; cf. Schlembach 2010). All in all, the book provides an insightful contribution about a relatively little discussed subject and is surely important not only for activists and scholars focusing on the political left in general, but also addresses readers interested in these issues ranging from international relations to sociology to psychology.

Ogman takes a detailed look at the foundation and the approach of Never Again Germany and Something Better than the Nation, and analyzes them from the perspective of an outside observer. He explains that his research interest was sparked by the “U.S. left’s failure to counter nationalism and anti-Semitism within the movement and society more broadly” (p. 12). To highlight the rise of these movements, Ogman first describes the general approach of the radical left towards the nation following the anti-globalization movement born at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999. Ogman describes the position of leftists from the U.S. in 1999, who perceived the nation-state as a “bulwark”

against globalization, interpreting the latter as destroying culture and oppressing the national society (p. 18). He argues that one particular, binary-laden interpretation of the opposition towards globalization led to a stronger focus on the national state as a counterweight towards the processes of globalization, which, when targeting the institutions of capitalist coordination on the inter-state level rather than the capitalist society, can result in nationalism.

The opposition against capitalism that eventually can lead to nationalism constitutes one basic feature that contributed to the rise of anti-national movements, the other being the underlying anti-Semitism found in some streams of the radical left. The anti-imperialist and internationalist ideology of Marxism and Leninism led to a rejection of the “colonial power” Israel and support for Palestine, which eventually resulted in Anti-Zionism that often had fluid boundaries with anti-Semitism (Van Hüllen 2015). More recently, the far-left critique of capitalism, especially in the context of the Occupy movement, provoked an opposition towards the “Zionist control of Wall Street” (p. 23) and therefore attracted like-minded people, even though the movement distanced itself from such tendencies. With respect to these overlaps of political right and left, Ogman refers to a position “beyond right and left” (p. 24), which assumed a collective unity beyond political perspectives, but in effect also attracted members of the right and far right. Having established this backdrop, Ogman describes efforts by left-wing groups to counter these right-left overlaps that emerged unintentionally out of a personalized binary or reductionist critique of capitalism, efforts which he says failed. It is this failure which Ogman establishes as the background context for his book.

Later, Ogman turns to the understanding of the nation in Germany, which he says has shifted since 1989 from a post-national to an affirmative ethnic-national identity. Significant political changes include, for example, the establishment of the *Jus Sanguinis* (right of blood), implementing that German citizenship could only be acquired to people which could proof that they are of German descent (p. 41), or the requirements imposed by the Aliens Act (*Ausländergesetz*) which significantly influenced that state’s treatment of immigrants. Ogman also refers to a “spike of racist violence in Germany” (p. 45), which coincided with the emergence of far right and neo-Nazi and nationalist parties and organizations and the sharp cutback on the right to asylum.

Against the Nation then turns to a close description of the first anti-national movement in Germany, Never Again Germany. Relying mostly on first-hand sources, the author describes the development of the movement in 1990, when its basic position consisted of the rejection of German reunification, as well as opposition towards an anticipated further expansion of Germany and towards the re-emergence of nationalism. Never Again Germany perceived nationalism as a social structure of modern capitalist society, arising from the logic of the market economy and international conflict of nation-states. The second movement which Ogman details is Something Better than the Nation, which

was made up of intellectuals, activists, and artists who travelled in a caravan through Germany and organized discussions, concerts, and public meetings in order to take a stand against racism and nationalism. In their view, nationalism originated in society as an interactive dynamic between the various levels of state and society. While the initial movements faded away in the beginning of the 1990s, other anti-national groups and their successors, like the alliance “... ums Ganze!” (... *about the Whole!*) or the anti-national magazine *Straßen aus Zucker* (Streets from Sugar) are active to this day. They base their ideology on the same ideas as the original movements but they have shifted their focus to international solidarity and political mobilization (Assoziation Dämmerung 2016).

The two anti-national movements documented by Ogman established an absolute, concrete, and negative universalism. In their view, the struggle against nationalism must address the basic structure of the capitalist society. Theoretically, anti-national movements based their view of nations on Benedict Anderson’s work, which claims nations are best understood as imagined political communities. They also leaned on Eric Hobsbawm’s viewing nations as a result of nationalism and not vice versa, which eventually led to a complete rejection of the nation-state as a special form of political rule.

Throughout *Against the Nation*, Ogman uses a descriptive rather than an analytical approach. He establishes a solid foundation for his analysis, describing and explaining the general background of the current leftist stance towards the nation in the US, and then shifts to concrete historical developments in Germany which led to the rise of anti-national movements, before turning to German anti-national movements. He concludes with general reflections about nationalism in the global economic crisis today and offers a new outlook on anti-national approaches. *Against the Nation* is an important volume, however the line between the author’s own interpretations and conclusions and the arguments taken directly from the material is blurry sometimes.

Considering the present situation in Europe, the topic of this book is of critical importance today. *Against the Nation* offers a background from which one can analyze and understand the positions of the political left and far left in Europe during the so-called ‘refugee crisis: leftist positions towards the nation-state are crucial for their approaches towards refugees. Today, direct anti-national references might, for example, be found in the call for open borders and claims for more generous asylum rights, which had already been voiced in the 1990s by anti-national movements. Ogman provides insight into how the developments on the left and the right are interconnected and dependent on each other, and documents developments on the political right in order to understand the rise of anti-national movements.

Against the Nation is a starting point for scholars interested in the German far left, their stance towards the nation with all its backgrounds, and their ideology and way of acting, as well as those seeking to understand the far left stance on nationalism and nation-states in general.

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About the Author

Mgr. Ina Schmidt is a PhD candidate at the Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic in Security and Strategy Studies. Her main focuses are far-right subcultures, extremism, and social movements. Contact email: 417345 AT mail.muni.cz

Book review: Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU (eds.), *Political Violence in Context*

Review author: Andrew Kettler

Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU (Eds.), 2015, *Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu*. Colchester: ECPR Press (324 pp., hardcover, \$99.99)

Political Violence in Context: Time, Space and Milieu (2015) will become an essential work for the study of both the emergence and decline of political violence within social movements. Editors Lorenzo Bosi, Niall Ó Dochartaigh, and Daniela PISOIU offer a an inherently dialectical collection that exposes different structures for understanding violent developments within diverse temporal, spatial, and social contexts of myriad social movements. The work explores political violence in Northern Ireland, Italy, China, Japan, the United States, West Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. The collection is at times frustratingly vague regarding the specific meanings the authors assign to questions of temporality, spatiality, and the radical milieu, but the editors can be applauded for engaging difficult and sometimes provocative analyses of how political violence emerges from both context and contention. Their scholarship follows on the work of Stathis Kalyvas' *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (2006) and the essays collected within Martha Crenshaw's *Terrorism in Context* (1995).

The authors define political violence as the many type of actions that aim to influence different state and social actors through the symbolic, physical, or psychological damage caused by violent means. Rather than take either a completely structural approach to how political violence materializes, or focus upon individual acts of violence as examples of idiosyncratic or deviant behavior, *Political Violence in Context* defines both structure and contingency as vital for understanding the advent of violent passions. For the authors, structure provides the possible catalog of choices for a violent actor. Agency, then, is the actual choice to pursue violent means from the limited possibilities that structural contexts provide in any space, time, or milieu. Essentially sidestepping an analysis of ideological forces, the editors instead choose to focus on the importance of fluctuating relational networks as their primary analytical lens for studying the emergence of extralegal violence. In doing so, the editors attempt to move beyond both the structural analyses of critical theory and the idiosyncratic examinations that resisted those Marxist and Frankfurt School structures. However, despite their attempts, the work relies on theoretical repertoires that retain a sense of determinism through the ascension of arguments that assert causal violence is stimulated by relational networks.

Political Violence in Context is a collection of essays encompassing work from scholars of all standing. This mixture is a positive for the collection, as the

numerous perspectives provide readers both the historiographical standards of the field and the emerging theories of younger scholars. To introduce the work within the established scholarship on political violence, the first chapter serves as a formal introduction into the social science literature on extralegal violence and terrorism. From the outset, then, the editors establish their position between the structure of critical theory and studies of idiosyncratic and particular causes of political violence. Their position is inherently dialectical. They define their terms between poles of thesis and antithesis, rather than from a *sui generis* position. However, the place they establish between these two fields is itself a contradiction, as the editors, and the contributing authors, write in conjunction with the macro, structural and theoretical thesis, rather than towards the idiosyncratic antithesis. The editors specify that they will “contextualize” the ascension and declension of political violence in different times, spaces, and milieus. Nevertheless, their reliance upon structural and relational theories rests upon a cacophonous tenor of systematic determinism for understanding violent actions.

Beyond these initial concerns regarding questions of agency and structure, the entire collection offers inquisitive scholars many new pathways for future research and brings up numerous novel questions to engage their own scholarship. The authors featured in the work seek out the how and when of political violence through an analysis of context, essentially disregarding what they define as the ‘false particularization’ that would be investigated with questions of why violent actors choose to act. This concern with the predictability of violent action out of relational contexts often becomes burdensome to the micro-historical case studies collected within the edition. The collection compliments rational actor theory, but also finds the ironic burden of often arguing against structure through the inherent use of a Marxist structuralism established deep within the theoretical contributions asserted as the collection’s historiographical background. For example, within the introduction to the section on temporality, Lorenzo Bosi’s reliance on mechanisms and processes does little to remove the reliance of “stages of development” that he finds as flaws in earlier studies.

As a whole, the volume highlights the role of “contention” as essential to understanding where and how political violence emerges. Violence arises, in many of the case studies analyzed, when police repression is too burdensome, or inflated beyond the proper punishment for the initial crime the group in question may have committed. These forms of general repression within the “cycle of contention” causes increased levels of violence through the resistance of groups to unreasonable forms of state power. In Northern Ireland specifically, these forms of police repression acted as triggers that ignited further violence within nationalist movements.

The first section, on time, centers less upon questions of temporal consciousness, and more upon the diachronic changes that occur within political movements. The authors specifically attend to where and when violence emerges, as opposed to how actors conceptualize their sense of time.

The second section, on space, looks at where violence emerges in diverse urban and rural areas, what types of violence occur in different places, and which spatial relationships lead to the decline of violence within political movements. The third section looks at how the radical milieu, essentially the ideological force of the movement within the civilian populous, supports or resists political movements as those movements enter and exit periods of violent exchange with the state.

The first section begins with a short piece by Lorenzo Bosi. He describes how different actors contend with each other over how to control and alter unfolding patterns of linear time. The focus in this short essay is upon the differential “mechanisms” and “transformative events” that can alter, speed up, or slow down conceptions of linear time within social movements. However, Bosi’s initial foray into questions of atemporality and the different temporal consciousness that can occur through transformative events is not convincingly followed up in the four chapters found later within the section, which instead emphasize different diachronic processes through the essential backdrop of linear time.

Bosi cites numerous historiographical touchstones for studies of temporality in social movements to better acquaint the reader with questions of revolution, event, and rational actor theory. These include William Sewell’s *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (2005) and Marshall Sahlins *Islands of History* (1985). These signposts are helpful to guide the reader through the multidisciplinary morass within which studies of temporality and extralegal violence are carried out. The following chapters in this section include essays by Donagh Davis on how delegitimizing mechanisms of repression created changing levels of contention within the violent processes of the Easter Rising in Northern Ireland, Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd comparing different multi-temporal trajectories as causal within violent political movements in Northern Ireland, Basque territory, and Macedonia, Patricia Steinhoff and Gilda Zwerman contextualizing the different temporal connotations of the repressive power of legal cultures in Japan and the United States. The section ends with Lorenzo Zamponi on changing temporal consciousness of specific events within public memories of Marxist student movements in Italy and Spain in the 1960s and 1970s.

The second section begins with an essay by Ó Dochartaigh which summarizes the importance of the state to the making of modern forms of spatial consciousness. The uneven application of spatial power, for the writers in this section, emerges from the different terrains and relational proximities that inherently existed under the territorial canopy of state apparatuses. The essay by Luis De la Calle, explores the environmental contexts that defined the types of violence applied as forms of resistance during the Peruvian Civil War from 1980 to 1995. Aurélie Campana follows with an analysis of the spatial controls attempted by the Chinese state against Uighur clandestine groups in Xinjiang after 1990, which led to the emergence of everyday resistance due to an intensive form of panoptical repression. In the next essay, Jake Lomax searches

the work of Kalyvas to analyze the spatial roots of the Invisible Commandos within a politically threatened suburb of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire after contested elections in 2010. The final article in the section, by Jovana Carapic, focuses on the survival aspects of “armed urbanism” and gang behavior in different spatial settings within Central America and the United States.

The third section opens with a piece by Daniela Pisoiu, which proposes to avoid deploying milieu as an umbrella term for ideology, morality, ethics, popular support, and historical background. This attempt is generally unconvincing, and the use of “radical milieu” by the rest of the authors is also vague and inexact. Jérôme Drevon follows with an essay on multiple waves of radicalization caused by changing relational networks within Salafi ideological groups in Egypt during the 1970s. Ó Dochartaigh writes about changing roles of civilian support for both the mass mobilization and decline of violence during the troubles in Northern Ireland. Luca Falciola summarizes the changing levels of acceptance of Marxist violence in Italy of the 1970s. Finally, Stefan Malthaner shares his insights on idiosyncrasies within the emerging violent political movements in Egypt of the 1980s and 1990s.

The collection ends, regrettably, without a conclusion. The assemblage of essays asks more questions than it answers, is relatively light on ideological causality, and could be critiqued for dodging controversial questions about the propensity for violence in different types of religious movements. However, the work offers depth to difficult questions of how violence emerges through a theoretical perspective that remains essential for creating public policy to mediate violent movements. *Political Violence in Context* essentially examines violence through structural terms by locating the growth of violence as inevitably occurring out of deterministic relational contexts, temporal contingencies, and contentions between local alternative spaces and the state. As a corrective to a field that had turned heavily to the micro, *Political Violence in Context* asserts the macro. But, in asserting such macro terms for the goals of future policy, the editors could not avoid the palimpsest of Marxist determinism.

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About the review author

Andrew Kettler is a Ph.D. Candidate in the History Department at the University of South Carolina. He has recently published articles regarding the nature of race and odor in *Senses and Society* and *The Journal of American Studies*. He has circulated numerous book reviews relating to his historical interests in the slave trade, colonial Latin America, and the five senses. Andrew's dissertation, "Odor and Discipline in the Americas," focuses on the importance of an aromatic subaltern class consciousness in the making of Atlantic era resistance to racialized olfactory discourses. Contact: kettlera AT email.sc.edu

Book Review: Shaazka Beyerle, *Curtailing Corruption*

Review author: Valesca Lima Holanda

Shaazka Beyerle, 2014, *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers (261 pp., paperback, \$25.00)

Making politics more open and transparent is one of the main challenges for civil society. In *Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice*, Beyerle puts together an interesting text that describes and analyses different approaches to fight corruption around the globe. To that end, she uses a mixed methods approach and a variety of case studies. From Latin America to Asia, this book sharply dissects social movements and civil society strategies to abolish corruption in different social contexts. Going beyond geographic boundaries, the author lays out an important analysis on theories of new social movements.

This book could be valuable for academics interested in understanding social movements' capabilities and strategies in contemporary politics. It may also be useful to activists involved in anti-corruption movements, since this book presents both an analysis and a detailed account of anti-corruption movements' emergence, development and goals.

The idea of nonviolent resistance is the core of *Curtailing Corruption*. Beyerle offers elaborate descriptions of anti-corruption movements, which implement non-violent strategies to tackle the corruption and lack of accountability of power holders.

The author sets the scene by offering a few useful characteristics of corruption nowadays. Corruption affects citizens' trust in politicians; and, as she explains in the conclusion, anti-corruption movements help to empower local citizens and encourage confidence in politics. Beyerle also makes an important clarification regarding the meaning of corruption: the real meaning of corruption, she says, has to do not only with personal gain, but it has also implications for human rights. In that sense, beyond being a criminal activity or an act of egoism, human rights activists argue that corruption is an act of oppression and must be abolished.

Despite efforts to fight corruption, impunity permeates all cases included in this book. It is interesting to observe, as the author develops the narrative, how top-down approaches to preventing corruption are ineffective most of the time, and only when social movements join in does the political scenario start to change. Beyerle includes strong analysis and explanations for the need for reform to come from *outside* institutions; as in many other contexts, those on the inside cannot see corruption or are benefiting from it (her case studies make these situations clear and contextualised, as in the case of Indonesia).

Curtailling Corruption includes contemporary and vivid case studies. Through them, the author builds her argument and reinforces it: efforts against corruption include active citizens' participation, as popular intervention may make corruption risky and difficult for those practicing it, a conclusion Beyerle shares, and which supports other academic work, such as Kaufmann (2005).

After two initial chapters addressing the current debates on anti-corruption movements and some analysis on contemporary politics, the author moves to case studies, which make up the bulk of this work. It is possible to observe that *Curtailling Corruption* is the result of an extensive fieldwork, as the author visited and interviewed social actors in distinct countries.

It was great to see the richness of the cases and the level of engagement anti-corruption movements promoted in their communities. But one could ask: was it that easy to fight corruption in the contexts presented in the book? That was one thought that did not leave me while reading the book. Beyerle provides a full account of each country's social and political contexts, which gives the reader gets a sense of what was happening internally and what motivated citizens to act the way they did. Despite the fact that the countries analysed have huge differences in income, size, population and corruption practices, it was clear that local actors opted for similar strategies. The challenges, however, were not as clear as the processes of fighting corruption. The case studies are well-selected and interesting, but after seven full chapters describing and analysing the movements it gets a little repetitive and tiresome. A summary of cases, as in the section "Highlights from Five Cases: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Kenya, Mexico, Turkey" could have made the reading easier and more enjoyable.

The downside is that the book includes only successful cases. Besides that the author gives the feeling that the challenges described were simple, it seems that every case ended positively. It should have been possible to show how and why anti-corruption movements have been successful but also fail sometimes. This flaw does not disqualify the chosen cases and analysis, but a comparative chapter on social movements in countries which tried to fight corruption but were unsuccessful would have made this book even more interesting.

Beyerle makes a strong case for supporting active citizens' participation in day-to-day political activities, and argues that these practices have a strong impact on local governments. The case studies include urban and rural resistance against corruption and suggest that successful experiences should be shared outside academia. The message is clear: politics of information and transparency are shaping the way social movements and social actors act to fight corruption in their local contexts. A stronger analysis would include movements that failed in a comparative perspective. Criticism notwithstanding, *Curtailling Corruption* is a must-read for everyone interested in social movements and anti-corruption movements.

References

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About the review author

Valesca Lima Holanda is a Ph.D. student and teaching assistant in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at University College Dublin in Ireland, where she teaches comparative local government and occasionally lectures on Latin America. Her research interests are participatory democracy and social housing. Contact: valesca.lima AT ucdconnect.ie