Prefigurative Politics: Perils and Promise

PhD Dissertation

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Abstract. Many recent social movements have been characterised by their commitment to direct democratic decision-making procedures and leaderless, non-hierarchic organizational structures. This political tendency also implies the search for autonomy from existing political institutions and practises. Movements seek instead to embody in the political action itself the social relations, ways of collective decision-making and values that are ultimately desired for the whole society. This prefigurative approach to social change is often criticized for being naiive or marginal. This thesis argues first that this is not the case, but that prefigurative politics is misunderstood due to its differing view on questions of strategy, organisation and ultimately the possibility of fundamental societal change. The dissertation first outlines the often implicit strategy or vision of change underpinning prefigurative politics. It then identifies as the key challenge for prefigurative movements their ability to avoid reproducing oppressive forms of power, 'power-over.' This understudied aspect is investigated through extensive ethnographic field research with the unemployed workers movement, MTD Lanús in Buenos Aires, and the Zapatista movement in Mexico. The thesis concludes that it seems impossible to completely avoid reproducing old forms of power. Often key individuals in the movements end up in a paradoxical position whereby, in an effort to ensure the group's prefigurative nature, these individuals enjoy non-prefigurative influence. The findings imply that the state and corresponding political forms and practises are not the only source of hierarchic pressures. As such, it would be more useful to view prefigurative political action as desirable, yet impossible.

Contents

Abbreviations

AGM: Alter-Globalization Movement

AGTCAP: Trade Organization of Self-managed and Precariarized Cooperative Workers (*Asociación Gremial de Trabajadorxs Cooperativistas Autogestivxs y Precarizadxs*) - Argentina

ALBA: Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*)

ANIPA: National Indigenous Plural Association for Autonomy (*La Asociación Nacional Indígena Plural por la Autonomía*) - Mexico

AULE: Agrupación Unidad Para la Lucha Estudiantil - Argentina

ARIC: Rural Associations of Collective Interest (*Asosiaciones Rurales de Interes Colectivo*) - Mexico

AT: Argentina Trabaja (social program) - Argentina

BAEZLN: Support Communities for the EZLN (*Bases de apoyo del EZLN*)

MAREZ: Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (*Municipios autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas*)

CCC: *Corriente Clasista y Combativa* - Argentina

CCRI-CG: Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee – General Command of the EZLN

CGT: General Confederation of Labour of the Argentine Republic (*Confederación General del Trabajo de la República* Argentina)

CIOAC: Independent Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Indians - Mexico

CNC: National *Campesino* Confederation - Mexico

COMPA: Coordinadora de Organizaciones y Movimientos Populares de Argentina - Argentina

CTA: The Argentine Workers' Central Union (*Central de Trabajadores de la Argentina*)

CTDAV: *Coordinadora de Trabajadores Desocupados Anibal Verón* - Argentina

FLN: National Liberation Forces (*Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional*) - Mexico

FPDS: Frente Popular Darío Santillán

FPDS-**CN**: Popular Front Darío Santillán – National Current (*Frente Popular Darío Santillán -Corriente Nacional*) - Argentina

FPV: Front for Victory (*Frente para la Victoria*) - Argentina

FTV: *Federación Tierra y Vivienda* - Argentina

GJM: Global Justice Movement

INI: National Indian Institute – Mexico

INEGI: National Institu**t**e of Statistics and Geography **-** Mexico

JBG: Good Government Council (*Junta de Buen Gobierno*)

MTD Lanús: Unemployed Workers' movement of Lanus (*Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados de Lanús*)

MTD Solano: Unemployed Workers' movement of Francisco Solano (*Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados de Francisco Solano*)

OCEZ: Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (*Organizacion Campesina Emiliano Zapata*) - Mexico

PL: Proletarian Line (*Linea Proletaria*) - Mexico

PRI: Revolutionary Institutional Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) - Mexico

UU: Union of Unions (*Union de Uniones Ejidales*) - Mexico

Introduction

Arguably there have always been people that want to change the world. Similarly, the debate as to how it can and should be done has a long history. Recently, however, social movements have increasingly been demarcated by their orientation to democracy inside the movement itself and the rejection of traditional political processes whereby they refuse to articulate clear political agenda. Indeed, this seems to suggest that the idea of 'changing the world without taking power' (Holloway 2002a) has grown in popularity, as will be discussed shortly. This implies a prefigurative view of revolution, whereby movements seek to embody in the political practice itself those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are ultimately desired for society at large (Boggs 1977, 100). Prefiguration differs from ideologies that see social change as a moment in the future. Revolution becomes an 'act of the presence' (Schlembach 2012, 241). "Movement actors try to change the world by putting their ideals into practice in the here-and-now, by insisting that they make decisions democratically as a way to develop viable structures for a more democratic world"(Maeckelbergh 2009a). Consequently, the state loses its significance as the central locus of political action and vehicle of social transformation. The movements become difficult to view through the traditional revolution/reform dichotomy as they seek autonomy from the state and hierarchic political organizations, such as the party.

This dissertation investigates the potential and problems associated with this autonomism. More specifically, given the emphasis on constructing more democratic decision-making structures and egalitarian social relations, the viability of the movements is assessed precisely regarding their prefigurative potential. The research question guiding the dissertation is thus: "How far do autonomous movements succeed in prefiguring an egalitarian form of social organization, characterized by democracy and the absence of hierarchy?" Every social movement has a specific political and social context that provide specific challenges and constraints. How far can autonomous movements avoid carrying into these new experiments and movements the hierarchies, inequalities and patterns of power of their context? Or does power sneak in through the back door, as Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy (1915) famously suggested, or as Jo Freeman (1972) observed in her work on the feminist movement? Despite some relevant work on prefiguration, (Maeckelbergh 2011; Polletta 1999; Yates 2014) the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'(Breines 1980; Leach 2005; Saunders 2009) and democracy in social movements (Blee 2012; della Porta 2005a; 2005b; 2012; Polletta 2004; 2005), to date no work has systematically addressed the potential of prefiguration in recent movements. The dissertation seeks to do that by looking at two established movements, the Zapatistas in Mexico and Argentine Frente Popular Darío Santillán. A combination of participant observation and qualitative interviews along with document analysis was used in order to address the research question. Given the prominence of autonomism and prefigurative politics, and the huge impact the rejection of the party organization and the 'state route' has for those attempting to change our societies, it is important to

look at these questions. In addition, the cases themselves are very salient for much of the autonomist theory and discourse. Consequently, it is important to assess them critically in order to 'de-romanticize' much of what has been written about them. This allows us to see more clearly the challenges facing those that seek to prefigure a better world.

Before establishing the context of the project and outlining the thesis, it is necessary to state that this thesis is driven by a commitment not only to social science but also by a political conviction for advancing social change. The purpose herein is thus not only to accumulate knowledge, but critical knowledge that serves those seeking to change the world. In this light, the thesis has sought to contribute to the emerging field of 'Movement relevant theory' (MRT) (Bevington and Dixon 2005) – "social movement theory that seeks to provide 'useable knowledge for those seeking social change'" (Flacks 2004, 138; cited in Bevington and Dixon 2005, 189). This devotion has taken the thesis down many roads, including one of critiquing the very notion of MRT itself. By identifying the incompatibilities between social movement (SM) theories and autonomist movements, the thesis calls for a new approach to studying autonomist movements, particularly regarding their 'success.' However, to first establish the context and the topicality of the question it is necessary to carry out a brief overview of recent movements.

Context

From the Arab revolutions to the Occupy movements and the recent protests in Brazil and Turkey, there has been an upsurge in popular protests in the past five years. Naturally, protests have varied in nature by country and context, but one striking feature is the rise of social movements that defy easy categorisation and reject conventional modes of political engagement (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2013). This seems to suggest that the nature of popular protest is changing. Some analysts have emphasised the movements' 'politics of space' – the occupation of a public space and the creation of autonomist experiences within it (Dhaliwal 2012a; D. Harvey 2012) whereas others have highlighted the 'anti-political' character of the movements – the wish not to make demands and the refusal to engage with political parties (Nigam 2012, 171). Instead the movements have been characterized by direct democratic practices and the conscious rejection of traditional forms of political organization, lack of clear ideology as well as the rejection or inability to articulate clear political agenda (EIU 2013; Razsa and Kurnik 2012). Indeed, as Paul Mason has argued, 'autonomism' seems to have become the guiding logic of these movements (2012, 144). This passage of a letter from a group of occupants at Cairo's Tahrir Square to those of Occupy Wall Street demonstrates this logic in recent movements (Schlembach 2012, 241–2):

> So we stand with you not just in your attempts to bring down the old but to experiment with the new. We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatised and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios and police 'protection'…What you do in these spaces is neither grandiose and abstract nor as quotidian as 'real

democracy;' the nascent forms of praxis and social engagement being made in the occupations avoid the empty ideals and stale parliamentarism that the term democracy has come to represent.
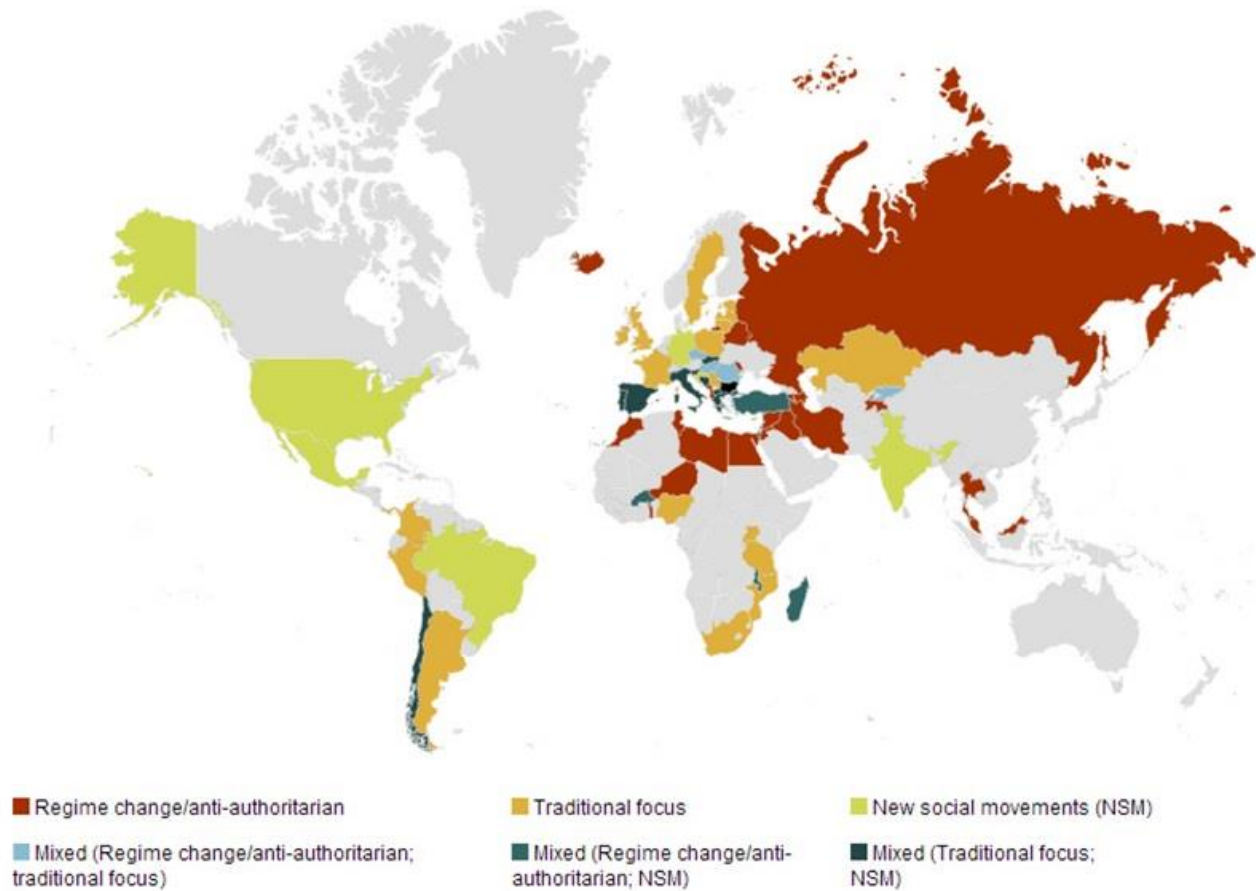
Figure 1 - Protests and uprisings, 2009-2013. Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit 2013

Along with others that have highlighted the importance of prefiguration for Occupy and Indignados (Juris 2012; Razsa and Kurnik 2012; Rohgalf 2013; Yates 2014), Donatella della Porta has identified the same logic in her study of these movements (2012, 276):

> Another conception of democracy is prefigured by the very camps built in squares, transforming them into public spheres made up of 'normal citizens'...This prefiguration of deliberative democracy follows a vision profoundly different to that which legitimates representative democracy based on the principle of majority decisions.

Yet, most of both mainstream media and academia seem not to understand this logic.[1] Autonomist tendencies in recent movements have come under heavy criticism from many respected theorists. To give some examples, Paul Mason writes about the 'revolution' in Egypt: "Even after two years of riots, crises, scandals and crackdowns, Egypt has produced no large liberal or leftist party that is simultaneously against Islamism, and in favour of a rapid completion of the revolution"(Mason 2013).

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[1] This is not atypical. Katsiaficas made a similar argument regarding the *Autonomen* in Germany: "the invisibility of autonomous movements is shaped in part by the inability of major social theorists to understand them" (1997, 23). Breines too, argues that due to an 'organizational bias' analysts of the New Left were unable to look at the new left "through its eyes, eyes that did not accept certain conceptions of politics" (1980, 420).

Indeed, autonomous movements are often criticized for this lack of demands and a clear political program. Lucia Fraser, for one, argues that "popular opposition fails to coalesce around a solidaristic alternative, despite intense but ephemeral outbursts, such as Occupy and the Indignados, whose protests generally lack programmatic content" (2013, 121). For her the two movements were not a 'credible challenge' to the 'malefactors of wealth' (Ibid, 122). Similarly, the Marxist David Harvey has criticized the Occupy movement for not having demanded democratic control over society's surplus and for 'fetishizing horizontality'. Occupy activists themselves argue that this indicates an instrumental view of political activity which is simply incompatible with Occupy (Gunn and Wilding 2014).[2] Another commentator on the Brazilian protests in June-July 2013 argued (Saad Filho 2013):

> If the movement were united, if it had a clear working-class character, and if it were led by left organizations, Brazil could be moving toward a revolutionary crisis. But this is not happening: there is no revolutionary party able to mobilize and lead the working-class, no perception that the state must no longer be dominated by bourgeois class interests, and no shared programme for social, economic, and political transformation.

Similarly, writing in The Guardian, philosopher Slavoj Žižek sees the emergence of movements lacking a coherent program as a manifestation of a more fundamental crisis. For him, "the situation is like that of psychoanalysis, where the patient knows the answer (his symptoms are such answers) but doesn't know to what they are answers, and the analyst has to formulate a question. Only through such a patient work a program will emerge" (2012).

At the same time, theorists of autonomous movements themselves speak quite harshly of the 'traditional left.' Katsiaficas for example states that "the entire corpus of Leninism - particularly its one-point perspective that denied multiplicity of perspectives within the revolution - needs to be reconsidered in all its permutations" (1997, 300). Esteva goes further to assert "the historical vision that sustained the image of a future integrated world, ruled by reason and well-being, is ready for a museum, along with the ideology of progress which offered a guarantee of unity. These dogmatic positions, encased in a body of rigid and closed doctrine, have become more and more untenable in the current circumstances of the world" (2001, 59). It seems that the prevalence of autonomism is due to disillusionment with traditional politics. Naomi Klein, an activist and well-known scholar of the 'alter-globalization' movement, argues that activists these days are not so naïve as to believe that change will come through electoral politics. "All over the world, citizens have worked to elect social democratic and workers' parties, only to watch them plead impotence in the face of market forces and IMF dictates"(Klein 2001).

Yet, this debate is not entirely new. Indeed, prefiguration and direct action are important for anarchist theory and practice (Franks 2003; Maeckelbergh 2009a; Suisa 2010; Yates 2014) leading many to argue that contemporary movements are characterized by a kind of 'anarchism of fact'

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[2] For the theoretical and practical origins of Occupy, I recommend: Gessen and Taylor 2011; Graeber 2013.

whereby their practice corresponds with anarchist theory while the activists do not necessarily self-define as such (Epstein 2001; Graeber 2002). Direct action and prefiguration are seen as different aspects of the idea that "the form of our action should itself offer a model, or at the very least a glimpse of how free people might organize themselves, and therefore what a free society could be like" (Graeber 2013). Therefore, the recent movements can be seen in the context of the debate between Marxists and Anarchists started by Marx and Bakunin themselves in their arguments over the methods of revolution exemplified by the anarchist argument elucidated by James Guillaume, a friend of Bakunin's: "How could one expect an egalitarian society to emerge out of an authoritarian organization? It is impossible" (Bakunin 2004, 4).

This tension was also present in the New Left organizations. For example, Breines looked at prefiguration (community building) and strategic thinking as opposites in the New Left in the US (Breines 1980). By the same token, Carl Boggs who coined the term prefiguration in 1977 argued that Marxism had not produced a theory of the state and political action that would allow democratic and non-authoritarian revolution. For him, the prefigurative tradition – including 19th century anarchists, syndicalists, council communists, and the New Left – constituted "the most direct attack on statist Marxism"(1977, 100). Just as Marx and Bakunin fought over the method, and the division was visible in the New Left, more recently the 'alter-globalization' movements have been quarrelling over the question.[3]

The movements mentioned here can be seen as part of this challenge to neoliberalism and global capitalism (Shihade et al. 2012). The Zapatistas in the state of Chiapas in Mexico, the Landless Peasants Movement (MST) in Brazil, World Social Forum, the 2001 popular uprising in Argentina, and the institutionalized radical movements in countries like Bolivia and Venezuela are seen as hugely influential for this 'alter-globalization movement' (AGM). In turn, Maeckelbergh and Fominaya have highlighted the continuity between AGM and the Indignado movement in Spain (Flesher Fominaya 2014; Maeckelbergh 2012). Indeed, especially the Zapatistas have been viewed as particularly influential in this regard. To take just one example, Mentinis argues (2006, 58):

> The Chiapas rebellion seemed to offer exactly what was missing from world politics; the re-inciting of the imaginary of the revolutionary transformative activity, a discourse and practice that brought together an analysis of global capitalism together with an emphasis on local autonomy, and idealised ideas about the indigenous world – and all this presented in Marcos' elegant prose, which produced an irresistible myth.

Zapatistas also inspired the worldwide Indymedia movement of independent and alternative news outlets and immigrant movements in the US (Dellacioppa 2011). For Raúl Zibechi, one of Latin America's most well-known social movement theorists "Zapatismo shed light on a new way of doing politics beyond the state…" (Zibechi 2010, 1). Indeed, for John Holloway, the main theorist of

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[3] See for example: Eschle 2004; M. Hardt 2002.

autonomism referred to in this dissertation, Zapatismo helped us move decisively beyond the 'state illusion,' the centrality of the state in views of radical societal change (2002b, 157). Some have even talked about the Zapatistas 'recovering' or 'reopening' history for the Left in the time of the 'End of History' (Ceceña 2001).

The Zapatistas continue to influence contemporary movements. In May 2014, in a meeting honouring the assassination of a Zapatista teacher, the legendary spokesperson of the movement, Subcomandante Marcos, announced that he will cease to exist as Marcos and will instead adopt the name of the fallen comrade, Galeano (ROAR 2014). This prompted the BBC, for example, to announce that: "Mexico's Zapatista rebel leader, Subcomandante Marcos steps down" (BBC 2014). This indicates a typical lack of understanding of the movement, given especially the fact that Marcos is not officially the 'leader' of the movement and hence has no position to 'step down' from. Yet, those more acquainted with the movement were also trying to get past Marcos' enigmatic prose, arguing that "If we read Marcos' last communiqué — and the first of Galeano — we will see that the change is not only one of names. It is also one of strategy and content"(Oikonomakis 2014).

Be that as it may, the wide coverage of the event points to the continued significance of the Zapatista movement. The Occupy Wall Street movement, for example, posted a link on their Facebook page to the article cited above, stating: "It was the Zapatistas who gave us courage to say: 'We have no leader. We are all leaders!' If you don't know much about this, the most influential movement in the last 30 years, we encourage you to learn as much as you can"(Occupy Wall Street 2014).

This Zapatista message so influential to contemporary movements is aptly articulated by Subcomandante Marcos: "The seizure of power does not justify a revolutionary organization in taking any action that it pleases. We do not believe that the end justifies the means. Ultimately, we believe that the means are the end"(Marcos 2001). Consequently, the movement has not sought to seize power or to become a vanguard of the revolutionary process (Ceceña 2001, 42; Lynd and Grubacic 2008, 9). Zibechi argues that Zapatistas, MST and the *Piqueteros* in Argentina all contributed to the understanding that "it is possible to fight and win without formal structures or designated leaders - without a vanguard party, without the political leaders - and that the organization does not have to be a tombstone that weighs down on the popular sectors"(2010, 2). For others the movements helped to see revolution as a protracted process rather than a moment in time (Neill 2001, 52).

This thesis subjects the logic of prefigurative social change to an assessment. The point is not to argue outright, as many Marxists or the mainstream media do, that prefiguration is naïve and that the movements should develop a clearer 'programme' for social change. The objective, rather, is getting to understand how the protagonists themselves anticipate social change and find the most suitable way to assess their success in their own terms. This would allow us to see the movements 'through their own eyes' (Breines 1980, 420). This approach, however, does not mean that we should accept as truth whatever the movements say or be unrealistically positive about their chances of success or the

actuality of the movements. Quite the contrary, the thesis looks at the Zapatista movement and elements of the *Piquetero* movement in Argentina in an effort to 'de-romanticize' these influential experiences. As Bevington and Dixon argue in their proposal for MRT: "Movement-relevant scholarship should not, and indeed cannot, be uncritical adulation of a favoured movement"(2005, 191). Moreover, "a critical response from some movement participants to one's research does not necessarily negate the movement-relevant character of such work"(Ibid, 199).

Looking at these long-term experiences of prefigurative politics should allow the dissertation to draw attention to the focal points of the challenges and strengths of autonomism. Given the emphasis on the day-to-day construction of new social relations and alternative political organization that prefigurative political action implies, and the view of revolution as a long term process, these questions are best addressed by observing social movements with a longer history. Regarding the cases, as the thesis will argue, the academic engagement especially regarding the Zapatista experience has shied away from more critical questions.[4] Movements and activists elsewhere have been greatly influenced by the Zapatista 'model' and there is a debate about how to implement it elsewhere.[5] Even though the Zapatistas themselves do not promote the 'implementation' of what they are doing elsewhere, the lack of critical engagement with the local and community level processes in the Zapatista movement is very problematic, given that the very essence of their idea of social change 'from below' is precisely in the prefigurative processes in the communities, and in the search for democratic forms and egalitarian social relations.

This dissertation thus focuses on the social relations in the movements. Given their discourse on equality and hierarchy, the thesis seeks to assess whether and to what extent the movements have succeeded in creating an alternative to past movements and surrounding society in their own experiment. In order to do so, the focus is on evaluating the equality between different groups and individuals within the movements and observing processes of decision-making at the community level.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one outlines a theory of autonomism. It begins by briefly outlining the key terms used in the thesis. The concepts of autonomy or autonomism and prefiguration are useful for understanding the logic of many of the current movements. Moreover the movements of the case studies identify themselves as autonomous and their discourse clearly points to prefigurative thinking.[6] The chapter

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[4] This point will be developed more extensively in the case study chapter.

[5] Most visible is the experience of the Indymedia movement and the debates about 'implementing Zapatismo' therein (Wolfson 2012).

[6] It is important to note that autonomy is not seen as actually existing or complete, but rather a process and an '(im)possibility' (Böhm et al 2010). It would thus perhaps be more correct to characterize the movements as 'autonomist' rather than 'autonomous', but as what are referred to here are movements operating widely according to the same logic as those studied by Sitrin (and oftentimes the same movements), I have chosen to use the term 'autonomous' when referring to the movements while acknowledging this paradox, to follow Sitrin's concept as well as movements' self-identification.

focuses mainly on the theory of John Holloway, identifying some of the points of convergence and disagreement between the practice of movements and the 'Open Marxist' theory of Holloway in order to identify the driving logic and view of social change characterizing autonomous political action. In addition to drawing widely from particularly the Zapatista experience, Holloway's theory represents an example of movement-relevant theory, given that it has been widely circulated and debated by activists, despite its exclusive focus on theory. This is exemplified by the debate in the World Social Forum of 2005 titled: 'Can We Change the World without Taking Power?'[7] Particular attention is paid to the notion of 'power-to' as per Holloway and what it may imply practically for the movements. The chapter concludes summarizing the identified 'strategy' of autonomism and the consequent challenges to it. The strategy of negation and reaffirmation faces both external and internal challenges. The latter, and specifically the potential to maintain a self-reflexive process of addressing inequalities within autonomous movements is identified as a challenge specific to autonomism and an important focus for research. This is also an understudied aspect of prefigurative movements, which is curious due to the fact that this idea of social change is precisely 'from the bottom up' and that is where it should first be evaluated.

Having an understanding of prefigurative political action, the thesis proceeds to evaluate the potential of existing social movement theories for studying prefigurative movements. The second chapter finds, similarly to Breines' work on the New Left, that the contentious politics framework encompassing the Resource Mobilization and Political Opportunity approaches suffers from what he calls the 'instrumental' or 'organizational bias,' whereby "they assume not only the efficacy but the necessity of certain kinds of instrumental politics or certain kinds of organization"(Breines 1980, 420). These approaches are undoubtedly useful for studying movements with more clearly definable aims, especially policy-oriented ones, and perhaps for the general role of social movements. Yet, the understanding of strategy merely as short-term choices fails with prefigurative politics as its strategy is one of more long term social change and based on the assumption that ultimately change can only come through action and organization that in itself is in harmony with these aims.[8] Regarding the more culturally oriented North American scholarship, some work on the so called 'free spaces' is potentially useful for understanding the role of autonomist movements in social change (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995; Hirsch 1990a; Polletta 1999). However, the 'free' nature of these spaces is assumed, without a critical engagement as to the power relations within.

On the other hand, the second chapter engages with European social movement scholarship,[9] via the New Social Movement (NSM) framework. Despite NSM's sensitivity to the fact that movements

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[7][Holloway's most famous book is called *Change the World Without Taking Power.*] For a transcript of a debate at the World Social Forum 2005, see: Holloway and Callinicos 2005.

[8] For an overview of the strategy of prefiguration, refer to: Maeckelbergh 2011.

[9] Today, the distinction between European and North American scholarship is perhaps somewhat blurred. However, generally RMT and POS developed in North America whereas NSM in Europe.

increasingly operate in the 'private' sphere, the argument put forward is that NSM tends to reduce prefigurative movements to a 'retreatist' position and 'life-stylism' whereas the case of the movements themselves clearly points to a desire to create alternative political organizations and spread them. The assumptions about post-material concerns are also problematic. Some of the literature, particularly Offe, correctly identifies many movements as having shifted from politics to 'metapolitics' where the critique the movements pose is not just one of the content of politics but of the very way politics is conducted (1985). However, it is not enough to see this as merely a critique, but as Maeckelbergh, for one, argues, the movements are engaged in efforts to construct alternative ways of doing politics (2011). The chapter puts forward the argument that these central assumptions in the literature hinder our ability to understand and properly evaluate these movements, subsequently arguing that none of these theories provide us with an adequate understanding of autonomous social movements. In addition, the types of questions asked – the fact that they focus heavily on movement emergence and mobilization – are identified as problematic, given their relative irrelevance for the movements themselves. This problem raises questions of the state of social movement studies as a whole, particularly regarding the purpose of producing knowledge about social movements. Bevington and Dixon argue:

> Activists are reading academic social movement histories. But rather than reading the dominant social movement theory, they are generating theory largely outside of academic circles. This is important and valuable. Yet we also want to argue for the value of academic social movement theory that is useful to movements. Thus, at a time when academics are retreating from a vital role for social movement theory, we seek to explore an alternative approach: movement-relevant theory (Bevington and Dixon 2005, 186).

Accordingly, the chapter proceeds to an overview of the way in which social movement success is assessed and puts forward the argument that the way in which the movements' success or failure is evaluated should be better tied into the to what they seek to accomplish. Marginalizing or deeming autonomous movements as failure due to their inability to produce policy outcomes does not reflect the more fundamental desires of the movements themselves. Consequently, the chapter highlights these general problems in the literature deriving from the powerful biases identified not only in the media but in the study of social movements itself.

Chapter three returns to the challenges facing autonomous movements, proposing a methodological framework for assessing their potential. The first chapter has argued that while Holloway's theory captures very well the prefigurative impulse of autonomous movements, his work does not deal with the practical problems facing movements in the day-to-day processes of prefiguration. To address this void, the thesis draws from the literature on the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' and 'Tyranny of Structurelessness' given their focus explicitly on the problem of hierarchy and elitism in social organizations. The problem with the literature therein is the tendency to equate formal democracy with the lack of oligarchy, as argued by Leach (2005). The argument is that we have to look at the community and everyday level to see whether formal democracy also means the

absence of informal hierarchy. Consequently, for a movement to 'pass the test of hierarchy,' it needs to show not only democratic structures, but also democratic processes. In this regard, the thesis benefits from Donatella della Porta's work on deliberative democracy which focuses precisely on the processes of democratic decision-making in social movements and provides the thesis with useful indicators to direct the focus of the field work (della Porta 2005).

The focus on the neglected aspect of democratic processes at the level of the community and the quotidian calls for a field-work-based approach. Participant observations allow the researcher to witness what actually goes on within the group and reduces the dependency on existing literature by the movements themselves and (often very sympathetic) academics. However, mere observations do not guarantee correct inferences regarding the motivations and interpretations of the people themselves. Through qualitative interviews the researcher can pursue important themes further and explore the 'why' questions of particular events. This combination of ethnography and interviews is used by most of those who have studied prefiguration or democracy in movements.[10]

The chapter then puts forward a two-phase approach to studying power in prefigurative movements. In the first instance it is necessary to identify the 'starting point' of the movements regarding the political and social traditions. This is necessary given the process-oriented nature of prefiguration. The lack of hierarchy is not assumed, but rather the focus is on identifying whether an on-going process aimed at doing away with inequalities and improving democracy is taking place. In the second phase of the case studies, the formal decision-making arrangements are reflected upon before moving onto the investigation as to potential informal hierarchy or elitism. Given the assumption that informal hierarchy and elites will likely persist, the combination of ethnography and qualitative interviews is an approach that allows for the researcher to see beyond the formal democratic structures to the informal processes taking place.

The chapter ends with a consideration as to the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, concentrating on questions of access, validity, representativeness and the position of the researcher. Looking at the two well-known cases of autonomism of course raises questions about generalizability. However, these cases offer a good foundation for assessing the potential and problems of prefiguration and autonomism more generally. Given the theoretical (academics) and practical (activists) prominence of the two movements, Zapatistas and *Piqueteros* represent 'crucial cases' for autonomism. Eckstein defines a crucial case as one "that must closely fit a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory's validity, or conversely, must not fit equally well with any rule contrary to that proposed." He adds that "in a crucial case it must be extremely difficult, or clearly petulant, to dismiss any finding contrary to the theory as simply 'deviant' (due to chance, or the operation of unconsidered factors)" (Eckstein 1975: 118; cited in Hammersley 1992, 181).

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[10] E.g.: della Porta 2005a; 2005b; McCowan 2010; Yates 2014.

In essence, thus, if there are big problems with autonomous practice in these cases, you can expect it elsewhere too. Moreover, the important differences as to the context of the two movements make for a better foundation to 'generalize to the theory' (Yin 2003) of autonomism. The easy argument to dismiss the potential of autonomism is to argue that it might work in a largely self-sustaining *campesino* community of indigenous people (such as the Zapatista base communities), but it could not work in the urban environment with less self-sufficiency and a stronger integration to the state. Contrasting these two experiences is a way of controlling this claim.

The fourth and fifth chapters then deal with the cases of the Zapatistas and FPDS, respectively. The chapters find that, to a large extent, in both cases the formal arrangements are in accordance with the measures identified as necessary to prevent the emergence of hierarchy and domination. Yet, in both cases influential core groups of activists can be observed. The case studies point to a tension between the principles underpinning the movement and democratic decision-making. This seems to be due to differing desires between movement members. The more active, and hence more influential, members seem to view this as a problem of political consciousness, leading to a situation whereby a core group emerges in the movement to make themselves responsible for promoting the principles of the movement and raising consciousness. In the meantime, the organizational arrangements themselves, particularly relating to the ability to participate and hence contribute to healthy and continued rotation of roles of responsibility, are not always adequate. Consequently, viewing the problem as solely one of political consciousness is pushing the responsibility to the individuals whereas there are problems the movements should tackle. Overall, while the activities of these core groups are generally in accordance with building collective power (such as promoting gender equality) and the movements' principles, in that they guarantee more equal relations, the role of these core groups in the movements is a non-prefigurative one as it is certainly a form of conventional power and at odds with collective decision-making.

What is at stake?

Ultimately the question of the potential of prefiguration is a question of strategies of social change. Prefiguration is seen as a response and an alternative to Trotskyism and Leninism, approaches "where an organisation or vanguard is considered necessary to bring about revolution 'from the outside', deferring communism for an unspecified period of readjustment" (Yates 2014, 2); and poses a critique of the authoritarianism of past attempts at state socialism (Ibid, 3; Graeber 2002; Maeckelbergh 2009b). Given this context, the fact that the movements have not managed to avoid hierarchy by avoiding the state route problematizes the prefigurative critique of past social change. Despite the fact that many in the movements are very aware of the 'impure' nature of prefigurative

experiments, the theories of social change tend to neglect this aspect.[11] Moreover, overall it seems as if ultimately autonomist movements will be able to achieve the kind of social change they are looking for when it happens on a larger scale, due to the difficulty with self-sufficiency in a capitalist society. When we consider the nature of the state and political action therein, it seems as it is impossible to maintain complete autonomy from state and capitalism. However, this and the fact that hierarchy seems to linger does not necessarily mean that movements should then abandon prefiguration completely. The recent moves by Argentinian movements in their attempts to construct 'grassroots' parties indicates that indeed movements might be able to combine the prefigurative and more conventional modes of political action by seeking to democratize the very way in which they interact with official institutions. This option deserves more attention, especially given the continuing tensions between the two camps.

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[11] As exemplified by Holloway's work.

Chapter 1. Autonomism as a strategy for social change

In theorizing the logic of autonomism and prefigurative political action this chapter will put forward the argument that the idea of social change driving the movements can be understood through Holloway's notion of building 'power-to.' The chapter will begin by defining the key terms of social movement (SM), social movement organization (SMO) and prefiguration. This will pave the way for a discussion as to different theoretical understandings of autonomy. The best place to start theorizing what autonomism means is to look at the differences between autonomist movements and their more statist counterparts. These differences can be seen most importantly not only in the locus of social change (social relations vs. institutions) but also in the concept of revolution itself and in revolutionary subjectivity. These differences fundamentally derive from a distinct understanding of power as a social relation. The chapter argues that the significance of autonomy is best understood through prefigurative politics, as it implies a rejection of capital, the state and "the hierarchic template bequeathed to them [movements] by established politics," as Sitrin puts it (2012, 5).

This discussion will draw from Marxian theory which "is valued precisely for its breadth and depth of analysis, as well as its practical orientation toward social struggles. As 'an argument about movements, and an argument within movements,' Marxism simultaneously offers a theorisation of power structures, popular agency, and social transformation in conjunction with related strategic questions" (Dhaliwal 2013). Yet, autonomism poses considerable challenges to many of the dominant assumptions and practices in Marxist theory and movements. Consequently, state-centred practices and theories of social change have met increasing resistance from within Marxian ranks themselves. As will be argued in this chapter, the 'Autonomist' and 'Open Marxist' theories that have been developed to address some of the perceived shortcomings of 'structural' or 'orthodox' Marxism characterize a move towards focusing not only on exploitation but all forms of domination. This theoretical move, particularly the work of John Holloway, captures to a large extent the principles and practices characterizing autonomous and prefigurative political action. His theory, moreover, has been inspired by the Zapatista and *Piquetero* experiences and thus has sought to theorize the logic guiding the movements that the thesis focuses on. His work has been very influential for the recent movements, and widely circulated and read among activists themselves (Shukaitis et al. 2007, 13). Indeed, Holloway has been dubbed the 'philosopher of the Zapatistas.' Additionally, as Roos argues, Holloway's work corresponds well with more recent movements (2013):

> *Crack Capitalism* [Holloway's book] prefigured exactly the type of social struggles that were to transpire in the coming years. By 2011, the mass mobilizations of the *Indignados* in Spain, the enormous anti-austerity protests in Greece, and the global resonance of the Occupy movement had made it unmistakable that autonomous forms of horizontal self-organization and direct-democratic models of decision-making had largely replaced the traditional Left as the main source of resistance to the capitalist onslaught on our human dignity — and, indeed, on our very lives.

Holloway's theory and the idea of 'power-to' not only provide a good basis for understanding movement practice but a way to connect the notions of prefiguration and autonomy to one another. Through interplay between his theory and movement discourse and practice the strategy of autonomism is theorized as one characterizing a simultaneous rejection (negation) of existing hierarchic social relations and the construction (reaffirmation) of alternatives to them through the experiments in alternative social relations beginning at group level.

Holloway's theory, however, suffers from the omission of considerations beyond negation. Therefore it is necessary to look at the work of other scholars and the movements themselves to identify the implicit thinking of how social change will be brought about through autonomism. Through this analysis challenges to autonomism are identified. These challenges are both general to all movements in terms of how they survive in their context and interact with other actors, defend themselves from the state and other actors as well as how the spread and promote the autonomist experiences. These challenges are broadly conceptualized as external ones. The chapter will argue, however, that in the case of prefigurative movements there are challenges that are specific to them and have to do with the idea of harmonizing the means with the aims. These 'internal' challenges include the possibility of creating economic alternatives to capitalist social relations, the tensions at the movement level, having to do with maintaining prefiguration in the relations between different groups. The chapter, argues that the main challenge facing prefigurative movements, given the logic of social change 'from below' has to do with the construction of alternative, more equal social relations free of 'power-over' within the groups. This is the challenge that the thesis will seek to explore.

While Holloway's work explains adequately the prefigurative impulse underpinning the movements, his theory is hindered by its lack of reflection as regards practical challenges and the organizational arrangements that could tackle them.

There are some recent works inspired by the prefigurative and consensus-oriented practices of the Occupy (and related) movements. Young and Schwartz, for one, (2012) consider the potential of prefigurative politics in wider processes of social change. They conclude that prefiguration should be combined with the active building of counter-institutions and reforming existing ones. Brissette (2013) too studies the tensions between strategic and prefigurative thinking and practice in the Occupy Oakland case. Her argument coincides with Young and Schwartz in that she too views prefigurative politics as ultimately insufficient on its own, and should be accompanied by more 'strategic' political action. Cornell (2012) contributes to this debate by focusing on the limits of consensus decision-making procedures, similarly in the Occupy case. He warns against the myth of the transformative power of consensus arguing that consensus decision-making cannot alone change external social relations.

However this welcome interest in prefigurative politics and the challenges has still not been directed to the questions of the power inside the prefigurative experience itself, in terms of tackling

social and political traditions of inequality inside the organizations themselves. As such, it will be necessary to draw from the literature dealing with questions of democracy and the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' in SMs.

Definitions

Social movement

It is commonly held that "social movements arise only when aggrieved groups cannot work through established channels to communicate new claims into the political process of authoritative decision making" (Kitschelt 1993, 14). Political protest has probably always existed, but mounting collective challenges in a coordinated and sustained manner is the business of SMs that developed in parallel to the development of the modern state and the printing press (Tarrow 1998; Tilly 2004).

Yet, what exactly characterizes an SM is not a consensual matter. Like most concepts in social science, SM has been defined in varied and ambiguous ways (Opp 2009, 33). Opp reviewed the literature trying to find common ground: "Most conceptualizations include the following elements: change-oriented goals; some degree of organization; some degree of temporal continuity; and some extra-institutional (e.g. protesting in the streets) and institutional (e.g. political lobbying) behaviour" (2009, 37). Mario Diani synthetized similarly in his famous analysis of the concept: "A social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity"(1992, 13).

Let us problematize. Where Diani's definition seems not to require SMs to carry out extra-institutional activity, Opp's definition in fact seems to require institutional behaviour. I argue that this blurs the line between pressure groups and political parties on the one hand and SMs on the other. This point will be elaborated shortly. Moreover, as Melucci has pointed out, collective identity cannot be assumed but is often rather the result of SM activity than a pre-existing mobilizing factor (Melucci 1995: 43). His definition reads: "a social movement [is] a form of collective action, (a) based on solidarity, (b) carrying on a conflict, [and] (c) breaking the limits of the system in which action occurs' (1984, 825). All the three definitions acknowledge the temporal continuity of SMs which is what differentiates SMs from a spontaneous riot or single issue, one-off protest (Tarrow 1998). Solidarity, moreover, is not necessarily an argument for a shared identity. In addition, Melucci's emphasis on breaking the limits of the political system highlights the extra-institutional aspect of SMs, which distinguishes an SM from a pressure group or a political party. As McCarthy and Zald, key scholars of SM studies, iterated: "...they [SMs] differ from 'full-blown' bureaucratic organizations […] they have goals aimed at changing the society and its members; they wish to restructure society or individuals, not to provide it or them with a regular service" (1987, 123).

Indeed, some of the most influential SM scholars specifically highlight the difference between SMs and more conventional forms of political engagement. Sidney Tarrow, for example, distinguishes

established forms of political action such as lobbying, market relations or interest groups from SMs, due to the latter's function of representing people who otherwise would not have access to other political resources and are hence forced to resort to contentious political action (1998, 4). Tarrow links SMs firmly to the field of contentious politics: "The irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, riots, strike waves, and revolutions is contentious collective action"(2011, 7). He argues that: "movements characteristically mount *contentious* challenges through disruptive direct action against elites, authorities, other groups, or cultural codes" [Italics in original] (Ibid, 9). Despite movements' use of other forms of political action, such as lobbying, legal challenges and public relations, continuous challenges continue to be movements' most characteristic actions (Ibid, 10).

This is not just a matter of semantics. What is the difference between an SM and an interest group if not precisely the element of extra-institutional activity? The usefulness of the concept of SM is questionable if it is equated to interest groups. This is particularly visible in the case of prefigurative movements, given their focus on direct action and the common rejection of lobbying due to its non-prefigurative nature. It is true, of course, that in the course of collective action, movements often produce other types of political organizations, such as political parties, labour unions or interest groups (Melucci 1995, 43). For the purposes of this thesis social movements are viewed as collective challenges for or against a social order (however well-defined) that are extended beyond a single event and that engage in extra-institutional political activity. However, in order to avoid conflating SMs with other forms of collective action, it is useful to bring down the level of analysis by introducing the distinction between a social movement and a social movement organization (SMO).[12]

Meyer and Tarrow offer a distinction by defining SMOs as organizations that "aim at political mobilization toward authorities or others" (1998, 19).[13] Movements are not unitary actors (Meyer 2003, 8). In fact, they are typically represented by more than one SMO (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1219). "They include organizations, but are not themselves organizations"(Rucht and Neidhardt 2002, 22). An SMO, then, is one of the organizations that, along with other SMOs and other groups, constitute the network of the social movement. SMOs are responsible for the organization and mobilization in and for the movement. SM membership is flexible, and can even include organizations that are not necessarily extra-institutional. For instance, the groups of the 1970s ecology movement that developed into political parties are still seen, to varying extents, as part of the wider green movement which now consists of interest groups, SMOs and Green parties (Rootes 2000). SMOs often develop along with the cycles of protest, and often end up becoming political parties or interest groups (Melucci 1995, 43). Diani (1992, 15) elaborates:

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[12] NB: although the terms are used relatively interchangeably in the thesis.

[13] The point about mobilizing against another party in society is debatable in the case of autonomous movements, as indicated by Sitrin above.

> By saying that political parties may be part of social movements I do not mean to suggest that 'social movements' is a broader theoretical category of which several types of organizations (interest groups, community groups, political parties and so forth) represent as many sub-types. Far from it. Rather, I suggest that the features of the processes I have described as a social movement do not exclude that under certain and specific conditions some political party may feel itself as part of a movement and be recognised as such both by other actors in the movement and by the general public.

To give examples, The Wobblies were an SMO as part of the international labour movement; the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee an SMO of the civil rights movement; the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan an SMO of the white supremacy movement and so forth (Lofland 1996, 1). Yet, there is an unfortunate tendency in the literature to equate SMOs with interest groups. While I acknowledge that the wider SMs might indeed include several types of organizations, I question this tendency in the literature. For example, in a special issue of Mobilization on SMOs, the editors acknowledge that: "all of the authors who contributed to this special issue adopt an inclusive view of SMOs, regarding them as any civil-society organization that aligns its 'goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement those goals'" (Caniglia and Carmin 2005). To equate SMOs with interest groups rejects the possibility of radical political change, given that it assumes a limited interest restricted to the institutional sphere. This dissertation, conversely, assumes the position that an SM may consist of some institutional elements, but for an organization to be considered an SMO, it needs to engage in extra-institutional or unconventional political activity. Moreover, it is necessary to highlight at this point, that for analytical purposes, the focus of this thesis is indeed on SMOs and not on SMs generally. SMOs are the conscious drivers of the movement's project around which most of movement activities are arranged and organized. Therefore, to focus on the day to day prefiguration of alternative social relations and autonomy, it is necessary to have a clearly delimited unit of analysis, and due to the flexible membership of SMs, it is analytically necessary to focus on an SMO.

Regarding the case studies in this thesis, the Zapatistas and MTD Lanús can be viewed as part of the 'movement of movements' that goes with various names, such as 'alter-globalization' (AGM), 'anti-globalization,' 'Global Justice,' or 'anti-capitalist' movement.[14] This 'movement of movements' includes many groups world-wide, ranging from revolutionary and reformist parties, and interest groups such as ATTAC to autonomist movement organizations such as the ones in question here.[15] In addition, the Zapatistas could also be viewed as part of an indigenous movement both in Mexico and more widely, or even part of the feminist movement given their focus on issues of gender equality.[16] Similarly, MTD Lanús can be viewed as part of the 'Independent Left' in Argentina, and through its membership in FPDS and the ALBA[17] to the wider anti-imperial, anti-patriarchal and anti-neoliberal

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[14] See for example: Eschle 2004; Kingsnorth 2004; Midnight Notes Collective 2001; Notes From Nowhere 2003.
[15] For an overview, refer to: Eschle 2004; M. Hardt 2002.
[16] All of these points will be discussed in the case study chapters.
[17] The ALBA is an umbrella organization for Latin American social movements. They describe themselves as follows: "The Articulation of Social Movements towards ALBA is a proposition for an anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal and anti-patriarchal

movements, all of which host organizations of many kinds. In addition, it belongs to the wider *piquetero* movement that included also party-oriented elements.

As will be clarified in chapter three, identifying the limits of the membership is perhaps not as difficult in the cases of this project as it might be for other movement organizations as the Zapatistas and the *piqueteros* live in quite clearly defined communities and their work and daily life is clearly organized and defined through their membership of the movement. The people in both cases strongly identify themselves as part of the movement. In Chiapas, the Zapatistas live in 'base communities' and in Argentina the people work daily in the movement and are recipients of the unemployment benefit that the movement has acquired through demands to the authorities. In addition, they participate in the protest and other activities of the movement.

Ultimately, however, we could question whether it is appropriate to use the term 'social movement' at all with groups from the Global South, due to potential incompatibilities deriving from the Western origin of the term.[18] In this vein, the thesis will contribute to challenging any essentialist definitions. SM theory should not be constrained merely to certain kinds of movements, especially when these movements are increasingly uncommon. Neither should SM theory be left merely to analysts of particular movements and particular places.

Prefiguration

This thesis deals with a specific set of SMOs. It feels somewhat unattainable to define clearly and conceptually what these organizations are about. In the end, any word or concept can only go so far in describing and analysing political practice guided by a sensibility rarely clearly articulated or even acknowledged. Thus, the terms here have multiple and overlapping significances. For example, in the Argentinian context, there are other concepts that have been employed to make sense of the practice. Concepts such as horizontality, self-management, affinitive politics, *compañerismo* and solidarity overlap with the notions of prefiguration and autonomy and it is difficult to analytically separate them as they are in many ways inseparable for activists.[19] These practices and notions seem to form part of a general impulse and drive to do things differently, rather than easily distinguishable analytical concepts. However, the concepts of autonomy and prefiguration provide the widest basis for an analytical understanding of this distinct form of political action and a vision of social change. Moreover, in both cases the movements identify strongly with autonomy; while MTD Lanús as part of FPDS makes explicit use of the term prefiguration, the Zapatista discourse and practice indicates a commitment to prefigurative politics, as will be discussed in the case study chapter.

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continental integration, driven by grassroots movements organized and capable of popular mobilization, fighting for equality, freedom and true emancipation of the region" (ALBA 2014).

[18] This consideration is linked to the use of the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy that shall be discussed more exhaustively on pages 84-85.

[19] For an example, refer to Sitrin's key definitions including the *horizontalidad,* autonomy and *autogestión,* (2012, 4).

As explained in the introductory chapter, prefigurative groups seek to embody in the political practise itself those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are ultimately desired for the whole society (Boggs 1977, 100). While the literature on prefiguration is predominantly associated with 'Leftist' movements, it has to be noted that the notion of prefiguration itself is not restricted to a particular political orientation (McCowan 2010, 5). Indeed, one could see Islamist movements in the prefigurative light due to their implementation of Sharia law in their areas of control and the fact that the religious code defines both the means and the aims of the organizations. However, the preceding discussion should have made clear that this dissertation does indeed deal with 'progressive' movements belonging to the socialist tradition. As such, Boggs in his seminal work on prefiguration argued that the prefigurative thought is primarily concerned with three things: opposing hierarchic relations of authority; criticising political organizations that reproduce this hierarchy; and a "commitment to democratisation through local, collective structures that anticipate the future liberated society" (Boggs 1977; McCowan 2010, 4). In practice, thus, the movements intend to embody these personal and antihierarchical values in the relationships and political forms within the movements (Breines 1980, 421).

Indeed, the two movements the thesis focuses on place much emphasis on prefigurative politics and autonomy.[20] In effect, then, the struggle against capitalism and repressive state institutions is fought at the level of 'everyday' social relations that become subject to reconstruction. FPDS explains their project in the following way: "With respect to the goal in time, we call it socialism, likening it to the idea of creating a society without exploiters, but agreeing that it will be the people themselves who will as protagonists of these changes give contents to these ideas" (FPDS 2010a). The prefigurative focus is explicit: "We think of our own social and political constructions as prefigurative of a new society" (FPDS 2010a). Similarly, the analysis of the Zapatista practice and the notions of *preguntando caminamos* ('walking while asking') and *mandar obedeciendo* ('lead by obeying') in the case study chapter will indicate clearly their view of revolution as a prefigurative process. Thus, for these movements social change is something that is advanced in the present by seeking to construct, at however small scale, prototypes for a better society.

While the movements in question here generally seem to desire the same things as past or current more state-oriented movements in that they are explicitly anti-capitalist and for socialism, the focus on the everyday is not the only point of divergence. In fact there are several theoretical and practical points of difference that require clarification in order to understand autonomism. The best place to start is at the debates that have gone on between autonomist groups and their more traditional counterparts within larger movements such as the alter-globalization movement.

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[20] It is worthwhile to note that while MTD Lanús has clearly articulated their commitment to prefiguration, and use the term in their early documents (MTD Anibal Verón 2003), the Zapatistas do not explicitly use the term but their discourse and practice indicates a clear dedication to prefigurative politics. This point will be discussed in the case study chapters.

The nature of autonomous movements

Divisions within the 'alter-globalization' movement

The question of the role of the state in social transformation has long divided those seeking to overcome capitalism. It is arguably the most important difference between anarchist and Marxist theories of social transformation. More recently, however, the focus on seizing state power en route to more fundamental change has met increasing resistance from within Marxism. The works of Autonomist Marxist Antonio Negri and Open Marxist John Holloway have been particularly influential in this regard (Negri 1991; M. N. Hardt and Negri 2001; Holloway 2002a; 2010a). Indeed the question of whether the state can be utilized as an avenue for social change has been central to AGM. For example, the first World Social Forum (WSF) of 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, was characterized by a division into two 'camps.' The state-oriented tendency was represented by both social democratic tendencies of the likes of ATTAC and the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) and the more revolutionarily orientated groups such as Globalize Resistance. These groups seek to root the movement's identity in the working class organization and Marxism and frequently make calls for more unity and organization that are perceived by the other tendency within the movement as having marginalizing effects. The second tendency encompasses various direct action groups, People's Global Action, and the movements studied here. These groups share "an emphasis on direct action and civil disobedience; on non-hierarchical, decentralised, self-organised modes of activism centred on affinity groups; on participatory, inclusive and consensus-based decision-making procedures; and on 'prefiguring' ways of living and acting in a transformed world" (Eschle 2004, 69). Generally the latter tendency is reluctant to engage with political parties or institutionalized labour unions.

The same division is encountered in many national contexts. For example, the *Piquetero* movement, influential in organizing the anti-IMF protests and the uprisings of 2001-2002, has been divided along the lines of those who seek to institutionalize and those who seek autonomy from the state and political parties in an attempt to construct alternatives (Agatiello 2004; Dinerstein 2003a; Garay 2007; C. Katz 2007, 2). Esteva (2001) tells of similar 'cultural clashes' in the International *Encuentro* organized in Chiapas by the Zapatistas themselves where some had huge expectations as to producing a concrete platform of action and an organization as a result of the meeting and where other were more interested in sharing thoughts and experiences. Similarly, referring to prefigurative politics in the Indignado movement, Shidade et al. recount this tension (2012, 9):

> These attempts have been met, as always, by the voices of those who demand leaders, efficiency, and some form of hierarchical decision making structure. This is in keeping with the cleavages that divide not only the Spanish 15-M movement, but also Occupy movements in the US and other contemporary movements in the West/Global North. It was also a common tension in the Global Justice Movement where some institutional Left actors dismissed autonomous protesters as 'swarms of mosquitoes' and were anxious to get down to what they saw as the business of real politics.

Despite some influential institutional movements, such as the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela and the Movement for Socialism (MAS for its Spanish acronym) in Bolivia, the autonomist tendency seems to have become more influential among contemporary SMs, particularly in Latin America (Chatterton 2005, 545–546; N. Klein 2001; Ouviña 2004). Alongside the Zapatistas and the Argentinian unemployed movements, the indigenous movements in Ecuador, the Mapuche in Chile and the Brazilian Landless Peasants' movement (MST), to name but few examples, have been characterized by a search for autonomy from political parties, horizontal and participatory processes of decision-making, and the search for social justice based on race, ethnicity, gender or exclusion from political processes or economic welfare (Prevost et al. 2012, 5–6).

A similar shift appears to have taken place in the Western context (Sunkara 2011):

> For a new wave of Western activists, rejecting Stalinism meant resigning Marxist analysis and "Old Left" patterns of organization in favour of post-operaismo and anarchism. John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power* replaced Vladimir Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. To this audience the Zapatista Army of National Liberation's (EZLN) 1994 rebellion in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas took on, disproportionate to its actual import, the significance the Petrograd rising had to earlier generations.

Indeed, despite the internal disagreements in the movements, as per above, the overarching logic seems to be that of autonomism (Flesher Fominaya 2007). Maeckelbergh for example argues that while not all of AGM can be defined as horizontal, the decision-making spaces for the movement as a whole certainly are (2011, 10). This prevalence of autonomism is evidenced by the lack of political parties, clear agendas or demands approaching from the movement, and the absence of 'official' spokespeople or other representatives (Eschle 2004, 69). Movements such as Occupy and Indignados have largely eschewed manifestos and clearly defined political aims, and have not sought to become the vanguard in society (Scerri 2013, 111).

Consequently, many observers of contemporary movements have argued that the influence of anarchism seems to have taken precedence over Marxism on movement practice (Rodriquez Araujo 2002; Barker et al. 2013).[21] Whether we call this development 'new anarchism'(Lynd and Grubacic 2008), 'anarchism-of-fact'(Graeber 2002), or 'anarchist sensibility'(Epstein 2001); the fact remains that – despite the diversity of theoretical influences and organizational experiences – much of the activity of movements involved in the anti-capitalist tendency seems to resonate with anarchism. Referring to the tactics of non-violent direct action used by the EZLN and the Brazilian Landless Peasant's movement (MST), Graeber argues: "However you choose to trace their origins, these new tactics are perfectly in accord with the general anarchistic inspiration of the movement, which is less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it"(2002). Yet, instead of the Anarchist black

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[21] For an extended discussion regarding the debates between Anarchists and Marxists in movements and the same argument presented here, see: Lynd and Grubacic 2008.

flag, people tend to rally around the shared principles of self-organization, spontaneity, creativity, direct action and the rejection of both the capture of the state and reform as aims (Epstein 2001).

Indeed, if we view one of the fundamental differences between Marxism and Anarchism as one where Marxism has tended to focus much on the economic forms of oppression and domination (i.e. exploitation), while Anarchism has generally focused more on domination as a wider concept that encompasses also other sources of oppression (May 2009, 11). it is easy to see the affinity between autonomism and anarchism. In essence, then, different forms of domination might be related but not reducible to one specific form of domination. For example, gender domination might be related to exploitation but not reducible to it (Ibid, 12). Exploitation is perhaps the most important form of domination, yet not the only one that the movements are struggling against. This shift, I argue, explains much of the commonality between autonomism and anarchism. Yet, as the movements themselves do not self-identify as anarchists, and given that their rejection of the state seems much less absolute than that of the anarchists as will be discussed later in the chapter, it is not adequate to define the movements as anarchists per sé. Moreover, among other things, autonomism seems to bring with it a rejection of any guiding ideology. Instead, inclusive decision-making procedures are used with the aim of working out differences, consequently allowing for the co-existence of many ideological standpoints within movements.

This rejection of ideology has led some to argue that a definition of autonomism is problematic. For example, Hernan Ouviña explained in an interview with the author that autonomism as a comprehensive idea or ideology of social change does not exist (Ouviña interview 2014). Of course, the focus on good practice and the rejection of those forms of politics that are not seen as compatible with the principles of equality and participation can take many forms depending on the context (Notes From Nowhere 2003, 119). It could even be argued that practices of this kind have existed for at least as long as people have been trying to evade the state, and there is thus something quite 'natural' to them.[22] In addition, the orientation to autonomy seems to have different theoretical and historical origins in different places.[23]

Yet, I agree with David Graeber's argument that this orientation on practice is the ideology of autonomism. Referring to AGM, Graeber asserts: "in North America especially, this is a movement about reinventing democracy. It is not opposed to organization. It is about creating new forms of organization. It is not lacking in ideology. Those new forms of organization are its ideology" (2002, 70). Consequently, to identify what type of social change the movements of interest here want to advance can be deduced from their practice and structures. This is because it is in the everyday

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[22] James C. Scott's account of the state-evading peoples of South East Asia represents a persuasive account for this case (2009).

[23] The origins of this thought in the respective movements will be discussed in the case study chapters.

practices of construction that one can see the underlying principles guiding the prefiguration of alternative social relations.[24]

Autonomist notions of power, revolution and revolutionary subjectivity

The eschewal from programs, manifestos and clearly defined aims and the reluctance to become a vanguard needs to be related to the perceived failures of past revolutionary movements. To illustrate, the renowned anthropologist, James C. Scott explains (2012) that every major revolution had resulted in a state more powerful than the one preceding it, and one that had the capacity to extract more resources from its people and exercise more control over them. This led to a project where he offers an anarchist critique of the works of Marx and Lenin. Referring to communist revolutions, Scott explains: "If I were asked to condense the reasons behind these failures into a single sentence, I would say that the progenitors of such plans regarded themselves as far smarter and farseeing than they really were and, at the same time, regarded their subjects as far more stupid and incompetent than they really were" (2012, 343). For autonomists, conversely, "the most revolutionary thing we can do is strive to create new social relationships within our own territories - relationships that are born of the struggle, and are maintained and expanded by it," as one of Latin America's most influential autonomists, Raúl Zibechi elucidates (2010, 4). He cites an interview with a coordinator of the Landless Workers' movement in Brazil: "The question of power is not resolved by taking the government palace – that is the easiest thing and has been done many times – but transforming social relations"(2007, 56). Puneet Dhaliwal captures this logic well by distinguishing between a social and a political revolution. He explains the preference for social revolution by arguing that a political revolution ('storming the Winter Palace') may replace the government or change its form, yet the underlying capitalist social relations can only be changed through a social revolution that changes the social, political, and economic foundation of society (2012b, 266).

Of course, socialist 'revolutions' have intended to change these social relations from 'above' – but it seems that the autonomists no longer believe in the viability of this approach. Instead, the different view of power they have is explained by Holloway: "the real forces for social change are not where they appear to be. They are not in the institutions nor in the parties but in the daily contact between people, the daily weaving of social interactions that are not just necessary for survival but the basis of life" (Holloway 2010b). For him, and indeed for the movements, the change happens rather by changing these patterns of interactions between us that form the social relations underpinning any given order. This difference between autonomous movements and statist movements has much to do with differing notions of revolution and power.

Any introductory course in Political science will almost inevitably begin by defining politics as being about power. Typically power is then explained as the 'capacity for A to make B do something

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[24] This is the approach that scholars have taken to study the *Indignados* (Maeckelbergh 2012; Flesher Fominaya 2007).

he would not have otherwise done.' The movements, however, seem to have a very different notion of power, one more akin to the work of post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault, who essentially sees power as a "multiplicity of relations of force" - for Foucault, power "is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere"(1998, 63). The Foucauldian notion of power holds that "it's not a thing that one person or a group can wield in isolation; it's a process that is deeply embedded in a complex set of social relationships" (Notes From Nowhere 2003, 389). The movements seem to share this understanding of power. FPDS states explicitly: "The society we want, in this idea of building people's power, will not start the day we take the state apparatus, the day one takes some power, among other things because we do not see power as an object but as a relationship that we build, that we make, we build in a fraternal fashion, whereby new values are bound to arise" (FPDS 2006b [my translation]).

For Zapatistas, too, power seems to be about claiming dignity and self-control over their lives, not having a seat in government (Notes From Nowhere 2003, 388). Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash summarize the relationship between autonomy and people's power in their book Grass-roots Postmodernism (1998, 42): "the struggle for autonomy seems to be but the new name of an old notion of power: people's power, exercising unprecedented impetus in its contemporary forms at the grass-roots."

This democratic construction of people's power and prefiguring of alternative social relations, horizontality as it is also called, is likened to a search, a continuous process of constituting new social relations, that destroy the values of capitalism and that generate a new subjectivity (Thwaites Rey 2004, 48). This implies an active reflection as regards avoiding the reproduction of the old forms of social relations (Sitrin 2012, 4). In this regard, Argentinian activists often highlight that the revolution needs to be 'integral' which suggests for example that the role of women needs to be taken into account in the organization itself and that economics no longer belongs to the 'private sphere.' Indeed, since the 'social worker' of Italian Autonomia, at the heart of the idea of autonomy is the refusal to separate politics from economics and everyday life from politics (Notes From Nowhere 2003, 111).

This notion of people's power or horizontality corresponds well with Holloway's concept of 'power-to' that shall be discussed shortly. This notion of power shifts the focus on democracy which implies an interstitial process of change as opposed to the traditional view of the totalising blow dealt through the state (Dhaliwal 2012b, 269). "Radical democracy is not an existing institution, but an historical project which can only exist as a never-ending horizon. It is not about 'a government' but about governance"(Esteva and Prakash 1998, 159). Or as Holloway summarizes; "If the revolution is not only to achieve democracy as an end, but is democratic in its struggle, then it is impossible to pre-define its path, or indeed to think of a defined point of arrival"(Holloway 1998, 165). Revolution is thus about creating the conditions that would allow us to come together and collectively find out what kind of society we want to live in and how we can get there (Graeber 2013). There is no moment of Revolution with a capital 'R' but rather the democratic and prefigurative and continuous process of revolution with a small 'r.'

In practice this view of revolution as a process means increasing importance of educational efforts.[25] This raises the question of the compatibility of education and prefigurative political action as education usually implies some sort of authority. Moreover, 'educating the masses' is a traditionally vanguardist activity which would not be compatible with the idea of prefiguration which relies on the desire to create more equal social relations. In this regard, both movements seem to be drawing from popular education inspired by Freire's critical pedagogy.[26] Critical pedagogy can be seen as a practical response to the theoretical dilemmas of combining educational efforts with anti-hierarchic principles. Moreover, the inclusive nature of decision-making processes in these movements also has an educational element to it, best captured by the Zapatista desire to educate people in 'being government.' The aim therein is not to prepare for the revolution, but the process itself is the revolution. Motta has dubbed this the 'pedagogical turn (Motta and Cole 2013).

Autonomism and subjectivity

Among other differences between autonomous movements and Marxist movements is the problematization of the revolutionary subjectivity. We Are Everywhere, a collective product of alter-globalization activists and scholars, asserts that the agent of social change is "not a homogenized band of revolutionary proletariat, but a diverse band of marginal people – vagabonds, sweatshop workers, indigenous peoples, illegal immigrants, squatters, intellectuals, factory workers, tree-sitters, and peasants"(Notes From Nowhere 2003, 24). And indeed, recent years have seen an increase in movement activity by those outside of the organized working class, the very movements that this thesis focuses on being exemplary of this development. Indeed, in the anti-capitalist tradition dominated by Marxist theories, both the Zapatista and the *Piquetero* movements are not conventional in the sense that the first is composed mainly of indigenous peoples whereas the latter is predominantly a movement of unemployed workers. The changing conditions of the economy have not gone unnoticed for the groups either. In referring to the aforementioned economic changes, the FPDS outlines: "This subject [of great revolutionary changes] can no longer be limited to the formally employed working class, but covers a range of social sectors that are direct or indirect victims of capitalism […] we say that the subject is plural or multi-sectorial, and we call it working people, oppressed, or 'those from below' (FPDS 2006b). The 2005 'Sixth Declaration of Lacandon Jungle' is perhaps the most important document of the Zapatista movement. It was the last declaration before a long period of silence. In this document, the movement called people to join the 'Other Campaign' that was launched in the beginning of 2006. The 'Sixth' demonstrates a similar understanding of the revolutionary subjectivity (EZLN 2005):

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[25] For a study on education in social movements, see: Martinez 2011.

[26] For Zapatistas, see: Baronnet 2008. In the case of FPDS, in a conversation with the author, Ezequiel and Mariano of MTD Lanús said that Freirean pedagogy is indeed what they are 'trying to do' (Lanús, 12 July 2012). Furthermore, the FPDS training manual for popular educators draws heavily from Freirean thought and critical pedagogy (FPDS 2009).

We are inviting all indigenous, workers, *campesinos*, teachers, students, housewives, neighbours, small businesspersons, small shop owners, micro-businesspersons, pensioners, handicapped persons, religious men and women, scientists, artists, intellectuals, young persons, women, old persons, homosexuals and lesbians, little boys and girls - to participate, whether individually or collectively, directly with the Zapatistas in this NATIONAL CAMPAIGN for building another way of doing politics, for a program of national struggle of the left, and for a new Constitution[…]but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico [capitals in the original].

Among other things, Holloway's theory corresponds well with this notion. He argues that instead of searching for the 'hero with true class consciousness' revolution as a concept should rather begin from the confusions and contradictions tearing all of us apart. For him, "There is no pure, revolutionary subject" (Holloway 2002c, 46).

The growth of autonomist thought in contemporary movements is a very significant shift. Due to the prevalence of the rejection of the party, both reformist and revolutionary among current movements, it is important to understand the challenges of autonomism. Is it actually possible to avoid reproducing power and hierarchy in these movements and experiments? Ultimately the question is one of huge importance given that the more autonomism spreads, the more it means a large scale abandonment of the political sphere to other actors, with very tangible implications. Indeed, if we are to replace Lenin's *What Is To Be Done* it is quite important to know what dangers and possibilities this entails. But at this point one might ask; what has all of this got to do with the notion of 'autonomy'; and why has it become such a central term for so many movements? The chapter will now proceed to look into different conceptualizations of autonomy in an effort to explain its significance for SMs.

The concept of autonomy

The word autonomy derives from the Greek words 'auto' meaning 'self' and 'nomos' meaning 'custom' or 'law.' The word is commonly understood as independence and particularly that of states or regions. Autonomy can also be understood as an individual notion, to mean "liberty to follow one's will; control over one's own affairs; freedom from external influence, personal independence" ("Autonomy, N." 2014). The individual understanding of the word underpins the neoliberal ideology. However, the notion of autonomy for movement actors is certainly a collective one. As Katsiaficas illustrates: "clearly autonomy has a variety of meanings. Western philosophy since Kant has used the term to refer to the independence of individual subjectivity, but as I use the term in this book, autonomy refers mainly to collective relationships, not individual ones" (1997: 17). The anticapitalist scholars of the Notes from Nowhere collective argue similarly in opposition to the individual notion of autonomy underpinning liberalism (2003, 109–110):

Refusal is only a real weapon if it is collective, with the combined creativity and strength that implies. Autonomy can never be about simple individualism, as we have been encouraged to believe. Autonomy is not about 'consumer choice', whether wearing brands or boycotting them, choosing to drive an SUV or a biodiesel bus. No amount of 'ethical consumerism', self-help, no amount of therapy, no retreat inside ourselves will allow us to make the jump. Autonomy is necessarily collective.

So autonomy is collective. But what do the movements want to be independent from? In an article on the notion of autonomy, Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer argue that, given the importance of autonomy for contemporary movements, it is surprising that the literature lacks a substantial examination of the concept (2010, 18). In an effort to address this void, the authors survey the literature and outline three main strands of conceptualizing autonomy. The first current involves activities of self-valorization of labour as theorized mainly by the likes of Antonio Negri. This understanding has been inspired by Italian Autonomia and the attempts therein to liberate workers from the capitalist work relationship. "The implication is that 'self-valorization' contributes to a project of liberation from capital because it facilitates the creation of autonomous spaces disconnected from the capitalist labour process" (Ibid, 20).

The second current, conversely is one which the authors associate with both the theory of Holloway and Zapatismo. Movements engaged in this activity seek autonomy from state-related groups such as unions and parties. The underlying assumption is one of 'practical negativity,' which seeks to deconstruct state power. The thinking is that autonomy from capital is not enough. Since the state is a form of capitalist social relations, to change the world, one cannot engage with state structures (Ibid, 20–21).

The third category of conceptualizations the authors identify is the rejection of colonial domination and developmental dependency. The practices therein are associated with 'defensive localization' and "emphasizes autonomy from universalizing knowledges dominated by the hegemonic imaginary of the North" (Ibid, 22). So when the first current can be seen as a form of affirmation (building the potential of labour through self-valorization) and the second as a form of negation (Holloway's theory), the third current acts through a process of preservation. "That is, this approach builds on autonomy by preserving existing practices that are threatened" (Ibid, 23).

Conversely, in her extensive overview of the notion of autonomy as political practice Mabel Thwaites Rey views the theories of Holloway and Negri as both representing the political stance of immediate and complete rupture with capitalist social organization, be they political or a production-related, with private property and bourgeois democracy. She explains that the view of these authors is that the struggle for state power ultimately reproduces this very power (2004, 23). This is the political stance that most seems to correspond with the movements that this thesis investigates. However, as Böhm and others correctly point out, these different discourses of autonomy are in no way mutually exclusive, but in fact there is a lot of common ground between them (2010, 23). This is particularly visible in movement practice. Indeed, while the theoretical conceptualizations overlap, the movements do not have a clear articulation of what exactly autonomy means for them.

In this regard, Thwaites Rey brings in an important dimension of autonomy through the notion of social and individual autonomy. She refers to Castoriadis, the Greek-French Philosopher whose work has dealt extensively with autonomy. For Castoriadis, an autonomous society is characterized by the appearance of a being that questions his/her own law of existence, of societies that question their own

institution, their representation of the world. This notion of autonomy can be understood as the opposite to heteronomy as "subjection to the rule of another being or power" ("Heteronomy, N." 2014). For Castoriadis the Greek society was the first in which the people were aware that their laws and institutions were of their own making and not deriving from an external imaginary such as tradition, god or historical necessity (Castoriadis and Curtis 1997). At the same time, though, Castoriadis reminds us that there is no society without myth, and there is an element of myth to all projects of social transformation. He warns us against this presence, given that it is always the translation of heteronomous traditions, outside the principles of autonomy (Thwaites Rey 2004, 21). For Thwaites Rey this view of autonomy implies "a radical restructuring of the ways of thinking and acting in the present, starting from putting into question all institutions and meanings, in order to build full emancipation" (2004, 20). She assigns this thought also to the Open Marxist Werner Bonefeld, whom she cites: "The first principle of the revolutionary transformation is the democratization of society, i.e., self-determination against all forms of power that condemn Man to a mere resource, restoring the human world for Man himself […] Social autonomy, in short, means social self-determination in and through organizational forms of resistance that anticipate in their method of organization the purpose of the revolution: human emancipation"(Thwaites Rey 2004, 21–22).

I would argue that these different theoretical notions of autonomy are not mutually exclusive, and that there is a much stronger affinity between them that might appear on the surface. One can see the three conceptualizations of autonomy (from capital, the state, hegemonic discourses) identified by Böhm et al in play in both of the movements investigated here. The search for the autonomy from the state is obvious in the attempt to maintain independence from political parties, trade unions and state related politics in general and the discourse that indicates no desire to take over the state. At the same time, both the *Piqueteros* and the Zapatistas are engaged in collective projects that seek self-sufficiency and to defy the logic of capitalism by cooperative arrangements and 'work without bosses.' These projects are not geared towards making a profit but rather to building self-sufficiency and the collective good. Simultaneously, it is not enough to see their search for autonomy merely as attempts at evasion from the state and capital. For example, the Zapatistas are often seen as a fusion of Marxist-Guevarism and indigenous tradition.[27] In this sense, their project involves an element of 'defensive localization,' and for them the hegemonic discourse that they make constant references to is neoliberalism and 'bad government.' Yet, they do not draw uncritically from their tradition, as indicated, for example, by the continued questioning of the traditional role of women in indigenous communities. Consequently, this self-reflexive and critical approach to all sources of hierarchy is better viewed through the Castoriadian understanding of autonomy. This will become evident when discussing questions of identity later in the chapter.

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[27] E.g: Gilbreth and Otero 2001; Neil Harvey 1998a; Henck 2007; Lorenzano 1998.

Similarly, the theoretical distinction between autonomy from the state, capital and hegemonic discourses does not apply neatly to the theory of John Holloway either. As will become evident shortly when the chapter discusses his theory, Holloway does not only advocate autonomy from the state, but he does it for a particular reason. He promotes the building of 'power-to' as opposed to 'power-over.' Consequently, he is not promoting mere autonomy from the state, but rather autonomy from all relations of domination, state being one of them. His theory is thus useful for understanding autonomous movements due to its sensitivity to the desire for autonomy from unequal and hierarchic social relations. It thus ties the state to capital and autonomy to prefiguration. The following passage from his Crack Capitalism illustrates this: "If capital is the negation of self-determination, then the push towards self-determination or autonomy must be fundamentally different in its forms of organisation. If our struggle is not asymmetrical to capital in its forms, then it simply reproduces capitalist social relations, whatever its content."(Holloway 2010a, 39) Moreover, Holloway too acknowledges the foundation of prefigurative political action in a set of principles (2010a, 43):

> Comradeship, dignity, amorosity, love, solidarity, fraternity, friendship, ethics: all these names stand in contrast to the commodified, monetised relations of capitalism, all describe relations developed in struggles against capitalism and which can be seen as anticipating or creating a society beyond capitalism.

Böhm and others, however, view Holloway's work as promoting 'practical negativity' whereby autonomy or the search for it, implies "the ability to say 'no' to existing forms of power and domination, which powerful bodies, such as the state, seek to impose on you." The negation contributes to pulling apart existing structures of power (2010, 21). The authors argue that in many cases the movements' practical negativity has been absorbed by the state and become part of the official state-based discourses, where the citizens are encouraged to seek independence from relying on state resources and to develop autonomous services (Ibid, 25). The authors acknowledge the antagonism in the demands for autonomy, in that they contain both the element of opening new spaces of resistance and radical practices as well as the presence of the danger of incorporation of the calls of autonomy into the projects of hegemonic projects (Ibid, 28). "…autonomy cannot be completely fulfilled. This is because capital, the state and discourses of development continuously seek to 'recuperate' autonomy and make it work for their own purposes" (Ibid, 27). Yet, these practices of autonomy are rarely completely hijacked by existing institutions. Rather, autonomy remains a site of political struggle (Ibid, 28). Thus, based on this '(im)possibility of autonomy' where movements cannot escape the social, economic, cultural and political relations that they are embedded in, the authors question both Negri's theory of viewing autonomy as a positive social force, "which immediately creates new ways of being" and Holloway's idea "that autonomy is a 'practical negativity' that can refuse state power" (Ibidem).

Yet, movement discourse and practice as well as Holloway's thought actually indicate a more nuanced understanding of autonomy, more akin to that of the authors. In the words of an Argentine

autonomist activist interviewed by Sitrin: "There's no reason to believe that we can actually be autonomous within a given geographic space or at any given time. The notion of a noncapitalist community lacks believability. That was a 'hippie' experience that clearly won't work. As long as capitalism exists, we'll continue to dwell within it" (Sitrin 2006, 115). Similarly, while Holloway's work might come across as an argument that autonomy by avoiding the state, he acknowledges that 'power-over' penetrates 'power-to' – that relations of domination are present everywhere, and thus autonomy is a practical impossibility (Holloway 2009, 21). Talking about horizontality as the rejection of vertical structures and the idea that everybody should be involved in the decision-making on an equal basis, he acknowledges that "informal patterns of leadership often grow up even where there are no formal structures," (Holloway 2010a, 43–44) consequently viewing horizontality more as a process against verticality rather than an actually existing condition.

In this regard, as Sitrin identifies, continuing self-reflection is very valuable for these movements in order to break from past ways of organizing (2012, 4).[28] Following this logic, it seems that conceptually speaking the most comprehensive way of seeing autonomy as per these movements is the practice of seeking the abolition of domination in social relations. Capitalism and the state imply hierarchic social relations, and so do traditional forms of political organization in the Marxian tradition. In political practice, thus, autonomy can be seen as an alternative and response to both liberal democratic capitalism and authoritarian socialist resistance to it. Autonomy can be conceptualized as a prerequisite (however impossible) for prefiguring alternative social relations (Robinson 2010). Or, as the autonomist Notes from Nowhere collective puts it: "autonomy is our means and our end" (2003, 107). There is a desire to do things differently. To be able to do that, movements require autonomy to be able to decide for themselves exactly what that implies. Conversely, one could view democracy and prefiguration as a prerequisite for autonomy in the sense that only by deciding collectively and struggling to maintain collective decision-making can we guarantee that the movement does not get dominated by outsiders.

In summary, thus, my research into the movements has led me to argue that autonomy is best viewed through the notion of prefiguration. By that I mean that in order to prefigure political processes and forms which correspond with the desired aims and principles of the movement – those being equality and self-determination captured by the term 'dignity' – movements seek autonomy from all instances that do not allow this prefiguration, those being capital and the state as well as oppressive traditions. In a sense, thus, their practice seems to be guided by a kind of a prefigurative and democratic impulse which leads them to challenge and seek autonomy from all instances, organizations and practices that might eliminate complicate their self-determination, understood in a

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[28] The recent Zapatista school materials for foreign activists indicate a very harsh collective self-critique of the movements practices, particularly in terms of different sources of hierarchy and inequality. Moreover, as the interviews in the chapter on MTD Lanús indicate, the activists view self-reflection as important so as to avoid reproducing clientelist structures.

collective and democratic sense. It is due to this observation that I view liberatory prefigurative politics as necessarily autonomous.

Yet, in that they seem to be well aware of the paradoxes therein as captured by Mabel Thwaites Rey: "Autonomy is not a state that is reached and established definitively, but an incessant and renewed search, a permanent battle, an endless horizon" (2013, 9). As will become evident shortly, Holloway's theory is in agreement with this view.

It is important to acknowledge at this point, that the function of Holloway's theory in this thesis is not to provide an all-encompassing theoretical framework. (Nor is there any particular scholar who could claim exclusive authority on autonomous movements.) Rather, his theory is useful, because through an engagement with his ideas, the thesis introduces the main difference between autonomous movements and more statist SMs. Holloway's theory is also particularly influential. Consequently, the debate on his work is lively, and will be useful to point our focus to some of the key contradictions. Yet, to identify the practical challenges facing movements that seek to prefigure social change, the thesis will later draw from other scholars who have focused more specifically on questions of power, inequality, hierarchy, oligarchy and other related problems of democratic organization. Therefore, the question of whether we can and should 'change the world without taking power' has served as inspiration for this thesis. Yet, having identified the crucial question as one of avoiding the reproduction of power relations in a prefigurative experience, the thesis will turn elsewhere to build the remaining theoretical blocks.

Theory of John Holloway

The state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.[29]

The above quote, although by the fin-de-siècle anarchist Gustav Landauer, is indicative of the autonomist view of social change. Holloway illustrates this: "the force of our struggles has to be understood in the context of the dynamic of the struggle between capital and labour. The key for understanding this dynamic is the fact that capital depends on labour for its existence. If capital is unable to convert people's activity into labour for capital, then it ceases to exist" (Holloway 2009, 22 [my translation]).

Open Marxists such as Holloway view capitalist social relations reproduced in the everyday activity of people. Consequently these ordinary everyday practices should also potentially be generative of anti- and post-capitalisms, as a group of autonomist geographers put it (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 488). To understand the foundations of this theory, it is in order to start from Holloway's earlier work and the development of 'Open Marxism.'

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[29] Cited in: Buber 1958

Open Marxism and the context of Holloway's theory

The theoretical tradition of Open Marxism (OM) emerged out of the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE)(Bonefeld 1992, 50). Open Marxism is perhaps best understood as a response to two theoretical traditions; 'Structural Marxism' and 'autonomist Marxism.' The 'openness' of OM can be seen as a response to the perceived closed nature of in particular the structural Marxism of Louis Althusser which they accused of inadequate attention to social action and the consequent inability to explain the processes by which social life is constituted and the "human values affirmed/revoked through those conditions" (Psychopedis 1991, 76; Bieler and Morton 2003, 470). OM theorists see a fetishization of social reality especially in the separation of economics from politics; with the 'state' and the 'market' viewed as separate entities (Bieler and Morton 2003). 'Openness' implies a critical attitude towards the Marxist categories of analysis, with a particular focus on fetishism (Bonefeld et al. 1992). In addition, this openness can be seen to mean a view of social change as an open-ended process. This view derives from the adoption of Adorno's negative dialectics (1973). "[N]egative dialectics [is] a restless movement of negation that does not lead necessarily to a happy ending" (Holloway et al. 2009, 7). Marxism is a theory of struggle. For Open Marxist, as a result of the structural Marxism of Althusser and others: "Marxism, from being a theory of struggle, becomes transformed into a theory of the objective conditions of struggle"(Holloway 1994, 40). They thus emphasise a reading of Marx as a critique not only of bourgeois economy but of its concepts, meaning a critique of fetishized forms and concepts. However, "the critique of fetishism does not entail a division of a social world into appearance (fetishistic forms) and essence (human content). Rather, human relations subsist in and through these forms" (Bonefeld 1994, 50). For OM, Marx's work was a critique not only of bourgeois political economy but also of the notion of political economy as such (Bonefeld et al. 1992). Consequently, OM attempts to 'de-fetishize' both the 'market' and the 'state' (Burnham 2001, 104).

The adoption of negative dialectics is perceived as an attempt to rescue dialectics without the Hegelian synthesis or affirmation. (Holloway et al. 2009). For Adorno, Hiroshima, Auschwitz and Stalin had demonstrated the failure of enlightenment and modernity. He argued forcefully against teleology and stated that the only way to conceive dialectics is negatively, since happy endings cannot be guaranteed. The possibility of synthesis and positive endings are ruled out (Ibid, 8). Embracing negative dialectics puts OM in opposition not only to Althusser's structural Marxism but also to Negri's autonomism, both of which reject dialectics as Hegelian remnants in Marxian thought. Holloway and others accuse them of 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' (Ibid, 5)[30] and argue

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[30] The position of Hardt and Negri might not actually be so incompatible with that of OM as H&N indicated in an interview: "It is worth repeating that if by dialectic you mean simply to emphasize the web of relatedness of material reality (a` la Bertel Ollman), then we have no argument against it. But if you mean by dialectic instead, a teleological movement that can only recognize differences as contradictions and then recuperate every difference in a final unity − and this is how we

that to abandon dialectics altogether is to abandon the central Marxian notion of movement through negation. "Life becomes a positive concept rather than the struggle against the negation of life. There is in general a positivisation of thought. Struggles are seen as struggles for, rather than being principally struggles against"(Holloway et al. 2009, 5). This is perhaps what Böhm, Dinerstein and Spicer mean when they question the idea which they attribute to Negri, that autonomy could be theorized as "a positive social force, which immediately creates new ways of being"(2010, 28).

In essence, the OM critique of structural Marxism is one which discards the idea of labour as something that exists merely in capital. Similarly, the autonomism of Negri and Tronti is rejected for the view of labour as existing merely against capital. Instead, for OM capital is not seen as a logical entity but rather something dependent on labour, or more specifically upon the human relations in the alienated form of capitalist social relations. "For the structuralists, class struggle unfolds within the framework of the capitalist structures and is determined by the objective logic of capitalist development. Class struggle is treated as a derivative of structural development" (Bonefeld 2004, 1). The autonomists conversely are criticized for granting capital a subjective 'cajoling capacity' or a 'bewitching power'(Ibid, 2). Moreover, Open Marxists see that autonomists such as Negri attribute labour with the capacity to somehow stand external to the perverted world of its own creation. (Ibidem).

Effectively, then, OM takes issue with both of the aforementioned approaches as they in effect disarticulate the struggle/structure dichotomy. The separation between economics and politics similarly reproduces fetishized forms of thinking (Bonefeld 1992, 115). Instead, OM puts forward a view of the state and capital both as products of alienated labour. "The presence of labour in and against capital is understood as labour's constitutive power that exists in a mode of being denied in the capitalist form of social reproduction" (Bonefeld 1992, 50). "Capital is not a thing, but a social relation, a forced transformation of people's activity into labour: an alien activity shaped by the requirements of producing profit" (Holloway et al. 2009, 6). This might be Marxism 101, but in practice Structural Marxism and Autonomist Marxism of Negri have been accused by Open Marxist as attributing subjectivity to capital. To put forward these arguments, Open Marxists draw from Marx's view of capital "as the form assumed by the conditions of labour" (Marx 1972, 492; Bonefeld 2004).

In this vein, in 1978 Holloway and Sol Picciotto argued for a materialist theory of the state that seems to have informed Holloway's later and more influential work. They posit that the economic does not determine the political superstructure but rather they are both forms of social relations, forms that the basic relation of class conflict in society takes (1978, 15). The political is neither autonomous nor completely dependent upon the economic. Rather both have their foundation in the material social

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understand Hegel – then we do have a problem." It seems, thus, that what Hardt and Negri too are opposed to the very same Hegelian synthesis that OM denies (Brown and Szeman 2005, 381).

relations of capitalism. Changes in the economy derive from the antagonistic relationship of capital and labour. But labour is not independent of capital or vice versa. Capital is labour in its alienated form. Hence, labour exists both in and against capital which is an alienated condition of labour. The potentiality for social change derives from capital's dependency on labour for its existence - capital cannot exist independently of labour, cannot free itself from labour. Autonomization is only possible for labour (Bonefeld 1994, 47). Indeed, bringing back the following quote from Gustav Landauer captures this logic: "The state is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently."[31]

To Change the World without Taking Power – Social change according to Holloway

Holloway's most famous book, Change the World Without Taking Power (2002a) builds upon this foundation. Perhaps in an effort to distance himself somewhat from Marxian jargon, Holloway makes a distinction between 'done' and 'doing', broadly speaking corresponding with capital and labour, respectively. These notions are almost inseparable in Holloway's work from the notions of 'power-over' and 'power-to'. "Power, in the first place, is simply that: can-ness, capacity-to-do, the ability to do things. Doing implies power, power-to-do" (2002a, 18). Consistently with his earlier work, 'done' is the alienated form of 'doing:' "when the social flow of doing is fractured that power-to is transformed into its opposite, power-over" (Ibid, 19). 'Power-over' represents a more traditional understanding of power as a relation of power over others, the capacity of A to make B do something. This form of power turns most of the people into 'done-to' as those who have 'power-over' through their relation of domination over others turn our capacity-to-do into incapacity-to-do (Ibid). "The existence of power-to as power-over means that the vast majority of doers are converted into the done-to, their activity transformed into passivity, their subjectivity into objectivity" (Ibid). While Holloway acknowledges that his terms correspond with the notions of *potentia* and *potestas*, he refuses to adopt them due to his view that power-over is power-to in its alienated form and consequently the two are not separate phenomena but exist in an internal antagonism (Ibid, 23). In relation to the autonomy, Holloway sees the drive towards self-determination as "quite simply the development of our power-to-do, the drive of power-to against and beyond power-over" (Holloway 2005: 238).

From this theoretical basis, Holloway's arguments against the 'state route' derive from two reasons. The first centres on the notion of 'betrayal.' State Communism failed to deliver a genuine reign of freedom. Social-democratic parties fared no better; "although increases in material security have been achieved in some cases, their record in practice has differed very little from overtly pro-capitalist governments, and most social-democratic parties have long since abandoned any pretension to be the bearers of radical social reform" (2002a, 12). Holloway argues that both of these approaches

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[31] Cited in: Buber 1958 (no page numbers)

attribute to the state a false autonomy, viewing it as an instrument of class rule. The state is seen as external to the capitalist class. In his view, the state is "a form of social organization which negates self-determination…directing out anti-capitalist anger towards winning the state means channelling our activity into the logic of power, and the logic of power is the logic of reconciliation with capital"(Sitrin 2005). Movements get directed to learning the language of power and building the party organization that can win state power through electoral or revolutionary means (Holloway 2002a, 12).

Secondly, and more importantly, Holloway argues that a state-orientated view fetishizes the state, abstracting it from the web of power relations that it is a part of. He argues that the capitalist social relations were never bound by national frontiers (Ibid, 14). States' actions are limited and defined by the fact that it is merely a node in the web of social relations. This web is centred in the way work is organized. Consequently, for Holloway, the capitalist organization of work means that the need to maintain the system of capitalist organization that the state belongs to seriously limits state's capacity to act. "Concretely, this means that any government that takes significant action directed against the interest of capital will find that an economic crisis will result and that capital will flee from the state territory"(Ibid, 13). Further, he argues that for a revolution to be successful, it needs to be international (Ibid, 15) and makes the claim that the state has been privileged as a site of the struggle. Due to this privilege, movements and struggle for social change transform into defence of state sovereignty (Ibid, 16). And even if these struggles are successful, and state control is achieved, it is still merely a crack in capitalism, given that there are 200 states in the world (Holloway and Callinicos 2005).

If the world cannot be changed through the state; how does Holloway think it can be done? He does not provide many answers. In fact, he ends the book by explicitly arguing that Leninists used to know how to change the world, we no longer do. "Asking we walk" he says, referring to the Zapatistas (2005, 215). Yet, his theory is not one of mere negation. Corresponding with the arguments put forth by Böhm et al and the autonomist activists, Holloway argues that "Negativity, our refusal of capital, is the crucial starting point, theoretically and politically. But mere refusal is easily recaptured by capital, simply because it comes up against capital's control of the means of production, means of doing, means of living" (Ibid, 208). Referring to the Zapatista [and *Piquetero*] notion of 'dignity,' Holloway argues that revolutionary politics is the "explicit affirmation in all its infinite richness of that which is denied […] meaning by that not just the aim of creating a society based on the mutual recognition of human dignity and dignities, but the recognition now, as a guiding principle of organisation and action, of the human dignity which already really exists in the form of being denied, in the struggle against its own denial"(Ibid, 212). Thus, the struggle for that which has been denied is inevitably negative and positive; negative since the affirmation of it can only take place against its own denial, and positive because it is the affirmation of that which already exists although in the form of being denied. Pure negation is not enough to overcome the separation that capitalism implies. The

most practical that Holloway gets is when he talks about the need for strikes not only to withdraw labour but show alternative ways of doing. The examples he uses are free transport and different healthcare work, university protests that not only disrupt but demonstrate a different experience of study (Ibid 2005, 213). Consequently, revolution consists of both rejection (negation) in terms of refusing to accept the social relations that do not allow dignity, and of (re)construction (affirmation) through the search for this dignity.

For Holloway, the aim of revolution is to transform the ordinary, the everyday life. Consequently, it is from this ordinary everyday life that revolution has to spring from. The idea of revolution is to bring about a society in which we are not led, but one in which everyone assumes responsibility. In this regard, he thus rejects the idea of revolutionary 'heroism' as it maintains the divisions between private and public and those who lead and those who are led (Ibid, 211). His notion of revolution is thus clearly prefigurative. Arguing in opposition to Marxist-Leninism, Holloway states that instrumentalism ultimately means engaging with capital on its own terms. Thus effectively we would accept that "our own world can come into being only after the revolution." Moreover, he views that instrumental notions of revolution subordinate the multiplicity of struggles to the Struggle (labour vs. capital) (Ibid, 214). Instead, for him, struggle (with a small 's') implies the reaffirmation of social doing, the recuperation of power-to (Ibid, 209). Regarding this affirmation, Holloway uses the term 're-taking the means of doing.' He purposefully chooses not to use the term 'means of production' given the tradition of attaching this notion to state control where the workers themselves are still not in charge of the means of production and the separation (fetishism) implied by the notion of property is still obscured (Ibid). For him, the question is not who owns the means of production, but rather how to break the whole fetishized process of property (Ibid). This could be extended to the question of the state. It is not about who controls the state, but for him the state is a form of social relations that reproduces 'power-over' and thus cannot be used to deliver 'power-to.'

To elucidate: "The experience of shared struggle already involves the development of relations between people that are different in quality from the social relations of capitalism"(Holloway 2005, 208). In more concrete terms, he views that "weaving of friendship, of love, of comradeship, of communality in the face of the reduction of social relations to commodity exchange: that is the material movement of communism" (Ibid, 211). The strength of Holloway's work lies in the distinction between 'power-over' and 'power-to.' If we look at these terms through his notions of doing and done, they seem to broadly correspond to labour and capital as the alienated form of labour. However, as his discussions indicate, these concepts are wider, and allow dealing not only with economic exploitation but other forms of domination in the same vein (Holloway 2002a). In this, Holloway's work allows for the theoretical foundation for perceiving revolution in prefigurative terms. His notion of revolution is an 'integral' one, whereby the idea is to tackle all sources of domination and separation ('power-over'), whether they have to do with class, race or gender, through a practice of negation and affirmation. In addition, his notion of revolution is free of essentialisms

regarding the revolutionary subjectivity, as previously argued. Rather, for him begins from the confusions and contradictions of capitalism in all social contexts, and in all of us (2002c, 46).

The appeal of Holloway's theory is clear when relating it to the changing composition of social movements. They are no longer characterised as much by the organized working class but increasingly by a multiplicity of different oppressed groups. When the goal is to avoid 'power-over,' and to build 'power-to', the revolutionary project should not prioritize the struggle against one particular source of domination (e.g. exploitation) over others (e.g. patriarchy, racism, and homophobia). This is perceived to be the problem of past movements. Subcomandante Marcos iterates, in the past vanguardist movements, the indigenous people were often seen as a backward sector preventing the forces of production and homosexuals were seen as potential traitors (Marcos 2001). Indeed, theoretically the notion of 'power-to' and its recuperation as the drive for self-determination against any form of oppression is attractive.

Yet some significant challenges exist for applying Holloway's theory in relation to the movements studied here. Firstly, given the somewhat poetic nature of Holloway's work, it is hard to pin down exactly what 'power-to' looks like. What is the 'social flow of doing' which Holloway seems to equate with power-to? In accordance with negative dialectics, Holloway is reluctant to engage in specific terms with this question. He argues that there are "no clear rules about how these principles should be translated into organisation…" (2010a, 43). Moreover, like certain forms of Post-anarchism (Day 2005) 'Autonomist' and 'Open Marxists' alike are highly suspicious of building even relatively permanent institutions (Barker et al. 2013, 19–20). For movements themselves, institution-building is somewhat inevitable given that they are necessary for managing collective resources.

Secondly, as Mentinis has correctly pointed out, the Zapatista movement at least is not as categorically opposed to the state as Holloway: "[…] although Holloway develops an analysis of the state as a capitalist institution…he avoids discussing the fact that the Zapatistas do not oppose the state, while he praises the movement for not wishing to take power" (2006, 60). The CTD Anibal Verón that MTD Lanús was part of before the establishment of the FPDS indicated a similar view of the state: "We are not completely against the state; we are constructing 'from below' something different to this repressive state" (Dinerstein 2003a, 179). So in this light, the movements differ both from anarchism and Holloway's theory. Nevertheless, if we view autonomy in the way introduced above, as prefiguration and the freedom from domination, the question of the state actually becomes irrelevant for the moment. Thus far, the movements have not gone down the institutional route. But I believe this to be due to the fact that at least until now that would have meant giving up on the principles underpinning their prefigurative project.

Holloway, conversely, argues that "it is absurd, for example, to think that the struggle against the separating of doing can lie through the state, since the very existence of the state as a form of social relations is an active separating of doing"(2005, 214). Yet, while Holloway acknowledges that all social relations are characterized by the antagonism, and thus there is no purity of autonomy to be

found even in relative independence from the state, his rejection of the state represents an implicit synthesis given that he does not adequately account for the tensions outside of the state. However, if we were to take Holloway's theory to its logical conclusion, we can see that in fact the state should not be perceived as necessarily or inevitably a corrupting form of social organization. After all, according to his theory, the state and capital are merely forms of social relations. In that sense, it is not impossible that in some moment in the future there is a way to engage with the state in a way that does not require the movements to give up prefigurative political action.

Thirdly, relating to the suspicion of institutions, Holloway's theory is anti-identitarian. He refers to Adorno in viewing dialectics as "the consistent sense of non-identity" (2005, 8). Identity is "perhaps the most concentrated (and most challenging) expression of fetishism or reification. The breaking of the flow of doing deprives doing of its movement"(Ibid, 57). He argues that identitarian thought takes things as they are, not how they could be, or how we would will them to be. "There is no room for the subjunctive in the scientific discourse of identitarian thought. If we are excluded, then our dreams and wishes and fears are excluded too" (Ibid, 61). Holloway thus views identity as definition, which by nature excludes and flattens contradictions. Instead, he sees subjectivity as a rebellious and constant negation of identity (Ibid, 71).

Yet, when it comes to identity, it is not straightforward to see the autonomous movements in this light. As with the state, the movements themselves do not seem to reject the nation outright, quite the contrary. This quote illustrates the EZLN position (Von Werlhof 2001, 152):

> We are the product of 500 years of struggle...We are the heirs of the real founders of our nation, we, the ones without possessions...invite all of you to join this call as the only way not to starve in the face of the insatiable thirst for power of a dictatorship which lasts more than 70 years...of sellers of the fatherland...who are taking away from us everything, absolutely everything.

The Zapatistas talk about recovering the 'national' and initially justified their struggle as against 'misgovernment' making reference to the nation's right to choose its leaders under article 39 of the Constitution (Ceceña 2001, 27). As regards the *Piqueteros*, Holloway's anti-identitarian theory promotes not the affirmation of labour but rather labour's opposition to its classification as labour. This is hardly applicable in the case of the *Piqueteros* who fought hard to be considered workers despite being unemployed. Yet, looking at the nature of their demands and the pooling of resources for collective use indicates a process of redefining the concept and practices of 'worker.' As they argue (Notes From Nowhere and Sitrin 2003, 474):

> The slogans we're organized under are Work, Dignity, and Social Change. In respect to work, dignified work is not going back to a factory to work 16 hours and be exploited. We want to generate different projects, projects without bosses, where the workers themselves, the same *compañeros* decide what to do with the production. We think that dignity as well as social change has to be built by us. It's not something we demand from the government. We are regaining dignity from having organized ourselves, from fighting capitalism.

In this light, the movements would perhaps agree with the Argentinian autonomist scholar and a former activist of the FPDS, Miguel Mazzeo, who cites Dinerstein: "The class struggle is a struggle over the political, social, economic, cultural, and organizational identities in and against capital as a fundamental social relationship forms." Dinerstein continues; "Neither class nor nation have entity outside the relationship nor outside the historical process that determines them. The class is in the nation and the nation emerges from the struggle" (Mazzeo 2011, 12 [my translation]). According to Mazzeo, thus, to reduce nation to its capitalist version would be to certify the 'end of history' (2011, 12). Thus, without resorting to romanticism of communities, indigenous or otherwise, the project of the movements can be seen as a process of rejection and reconstruction whereby movements pursue a form of 'selective conservatism' – a critical form of the 'defensive localization' discussed before – building from already existing potentiality for collective action and sentiments without falling in the traps of hierarchic elements of tradition. The family, the nation, or any source of identity is a battlefield between capitalist and autonomist social relations. FPDS puts this quite concretely (2010a):

> We think of our own social and political constructions as prefigurative of a new society. Thus we have the vocation to promote here and now new values, new social and work relations, new forms of struggle and political action, new forms of relationships between women and men, between children and parents, new cultural manifestations.

Indeed, the anti-identitarian rejection of the nation and other sources of identity[32] can be argued to constitute another form of universalism, given that it leaves us with a kind of internationalism. In this regard Staunton Lynd has made the argument that this thinking is dogmatic. "Rather than affirming the ability of human beings to find common ground despite their differences, it calls for rejection of experiences that all human beings share. Everyone begins life as part of a family, learns one or more particular languages, and belongs, at least for a time, to a specific community. Modern technology denies us so much in the way of tactile, flesh and blood moments of commonality, I believe we reject and ridicule such opportunities at our peril" (Lynd and Grubacic 2008, 158). As the case studies will indicate, especially the Zapatistas actively use existing sources of collective identity, such as the family, community and indigenousness as a basis for mobilization while subjecting them to self-reflexive criticism.

Thus far, the chapter has argued that the most suitable understanding of autonomy is through prefigurative politics whereby autonomy is sought from hierarchic social relations. Movement practice thus includes elements that fall into the three main understandings of autonomy as argued by Böhm et al. In this regard, Holloway's theory provides a good foundation despite some of the apparent tensions between his ideas and movement practice as explained above. That is because his theory allows for seeing the relation between prefiguration and autonomy. At this point the chapter will summarise based on the preceding discussion what could be seen as the 'strategy of

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[32] Hardt and Negri for example, view the family as a form of a 'corrupt common'(2001).

autonomism.' This will be followed by a brief account of the challenges for this project of social change that will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Autonomism as strategy

Claudio Katz's critique of Latin American autonomism identifies an important problem: "The rejection of parties also persists among authors who propose 'changing the world without taking power.' They dissent from political organizations that defend the need to conquer state power, but without ever clarifying how a post-capitalist society lacking governmental forms would emerge" (Katz 2007, 25). Even though there is a tendency to avoid 'recipes' there are many indications of an implicit logic to social change according to autonomist scholars and movements. However, due to Holloway's theory largely remaining at the level of the negation (Hudis 2003) it is necessary at this point to draw from other scholars.

The autonomous collective of anticapitalist scholars, Notes from Nowhere elucidates a widely shared view of autonomous political action. They argue that it is necessary to construct alternative institutions and cultural and economic projects which are based on co-operative and collective models. Secondly, this building of 'dual power' that they view as key to the success of autonomism needs to be accompanied by a simultaneous confrontation of the oppression of the system (2003, 393). This view of social change corresponds with Holloway's general ideas of negation and reaffirmation. As he maintains: "Keeping the balance between resistance and reconstruction, between saying no to 'power-over' and building our collective 'power-to' at the same time, is key to the success of our movements. In other words, we say no by constructing our yeses"(Notes From Nowhere 2003, 392).

While others have talked about the outward nature of prefigurative politics (Maeckelbergh 2011; Yates 2014); the best account of the strategic potential of prefigurative political action comes from Dhaliwal. He differentiates between direct and indirect ways in which prefiguration can contest hegemonic social relations. Firstly, direct disruptions of normality, such as strikes (against capital), election boycotts (against the legitimacy of the state) and blockades of parliament (disrupting the operation of the political system) can 'block' or 'resist' the flows of capital and state power (2012b, 268). Secondly, the more indirect challenge to the state and capital is posed by prefiguring collective arrangements alternative to the logic of the hegemonic institutions, thus drawing power away from the state and capital and towards local communities. This action, consequently can demonstrate to others "the spuriousness of the dogma that 'there is no alternative' to the existing hegemonic social order. A radical politics of space can thus propel broader practices of resistance to the existing hegemony" (Ibid, 269). This is likely what Holloway meant when he highlighted the need for direct action in the form of strikes that promote alternative forms of doing.

Given that the movements rarely articulate very explicitly their view of wider social change, it is useful to follow Flesher Fominaya's proposition, in looking at the practise of autonomism "to tease out those underlying principles and practises that distinguish an autonomous movement...to

define what has deliberately been left undefined by autonomists themselves, but which in practise has developed into a coherent political approach based on specific principles and forms of practise"(2007, 337). In this regard, the notion of 'building' seems very important for the movements. The Zapatistas talking about 'building the world anew.' The FPDS similarly stress 'constructing People's power.' Or as an FPDS activist says: "We are building power, not taking it" (Notes From Nowhere 2003, 396). Essentially, the movement organizations then confront the state and capital while building alternatives to it (Shantz 2003, 469). There are elements of auto-valorisation in terms of engaging in those practices that can be seen as opposite to the profit logic of capitalism as well as revitalizing those practices that have been lost in the capitalist valorisation process. The movements are seeking to construct forms of dual power, but not in the traditional Marxist sense with the assumptions of the essential subject and agent of revolutionary change. Their attempts can be seen as a modification of Gramscian notions of a counter-hegemonic historic bloc with two crucial differences. The movements seek not to be leaders in this bloc (nor are they actually the industrialized sector of the working class). Rather the process is one of construction from the bottom up while allowing for a diversity of identities and positions. Secondly they seek not to take over the existing institutions as the conventional reading of Gramsci would have but are instead seeking to construct their own alternatives with other groups both in their national societies and internationally.[33]

The strategy thus seems to imply a disengagement from the state and capital by seeking self-determination. At the same time, mere disengagement is not seen as adequate. The movements are in the process of constructing alternative institutional and social arrangements that can prefigure a new, more democratic society. The aim is not to take over the existing institutions but to create alternatives to them. In the Zapatista case, the movement's 'Good Government Councils' (*Juntas de buen Gobierno*) are built in opposition to the 'Bad government' and in logic opposed to it, as will be explained in the case study chapter. These institutions, when movement-wide (not just one movement organization) tend to take the network format, and are not necessarily restricted to the state, recognizing the need to build links between different nodes of resistance to the globally dominant force of capitalism. The Zapatistas organized the famous meetings in Chiapas in the 90s and more recently two rounds of the 'little school' where they invited activists and academics among others to learn from one another. Moreover, building network-like coalitions consisting of multiple different groups and identities with the disposition that homogeneity is not necessary for unity. Rather, they embrace diversity and multiplicity. As the Zapatistas say, "we are all the same because we are different" (CCRI-CG EZLN 1996). The FPDS, in turn, self-defines as 'multi-sectorial,' encompassing groups of unemployed workers, students, workers, peasants, intellectuals, artists and women's groups. In effect, the idea is to create anti-hierarchic relations both within and between different groups. In

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[33] FPDS has engaged in this debate (2006a).

sum, institutions are not rejected outright, which runs contrary to the theory of Holloway. But what are the challenges and potential of this approach? This is what the chapter will now turn to.

Challenges to autonomism

There are many challenges to autonomism that require attention. For analytical purposes these challenges will be divided into two broad categories; external and internal challenges – the former being the relationship with the state and the latter the movements' own practices of self-government, following the argument by Sara Motta (2013a, 15).

External challenges

The external challenges have to do with the state and other actors in society. These challenges can be argued to affect the success of all movements, not just autonomous ones. It is often argued that theorists of autonomous movements ignore the difficulties posed by the state (Claudio Katz 2005). Some argue that not engaging in the formal arena of politics can effectively allow movement opponents to reorganize and then re-establish their domination (Barker et al. 2013, 21). Moreover, the problem inseparable from the external actors is the lack of resources for autonomous movements (Thwaites Rey 2004). As regards the cases, there is an important difference between the Zapatistas and the *Piqueteros*. As a rural movement, the former find it easier to achieve higher level of autonomy from state resources while maintaining a basic level of subsistence due to self-sufficient economy and access to means of production while the latter have very few chances to survive without state subsidies for the unemployed. Thus we can assume the building of autonomy to be more difficult in an urban environment. Zibechi (2010) looked at this in the context of El Alto in Bolivia and discovered communities that were actively autonomous and distinct urban phenomenon and not mere reproductions of rural communities from where many of the inhabitants came from. However, the environment in which the communities in Zibechi's study established themselves were largely ignored by institutions and institutional actors and an absence of state services, whereas the context of the Argentine movements is quite different with active levels of party clientelism, *Punterismo*. What is interesting, though, is the hypothesis that with rising levels of unemployment it is easier to form communities since fewer people commute elsewhere for work and more people face similar problems with simple subsistence and services. This potentially destroys some of the fragmentation of an urban capitalist setting.

Moreover, the relationship with the state may very well interfere with the internal dynamics of the movements. For example the Argentinian state has introduced regulation for the 'recuperated' factories and in that way has managed to introduce managerial logic. In their work on these factories, Hirtz and Giacone argue that the training of certain workers in management produced a division into those specialized in management and those that perform manual work and led to the destruction of horizontal organization (2013, 98). They argue that the expansion of autonomy in Argentina during

the uprisings of 2001 and 2002 was followed by a cycle of control. The institutionalization of the occupied companies included not repressing their development but rather forcing them to compete in the market, hence directing all their efforts at maintaining productivity. In the process the anti-systemic elements such as direct democracy and solidarity that had developed in the process of struggle were largely abandoned (Ibid).

In addition, reactions from other sectors in society also pose problems to autonomists. These reactions might include calls to squash resistance and 'secure' the society or, in the worst case, increasing support for authoritarian movements in an attempt to 'restore order'. In the case of Argentina, for example, Chatterton has noted that popular movements have increasingly become defined as 'domestic terrorism' (Chatterton 2005, 558).[34]

Regarding external actors, another challenge exists. There is an implicit assumption that in order to ultimately succeed, the autonomous experiments need to spread. For a social revolution to advance, we can assume that people need to know of these experiences of rejection and reconstruction. Movements should seek to avoid turning into isolated 'bubbles' of autonomy but to build links with other organizations and actors in society so as to spread the logic and form networks of solidarity that may help in terms of resistance and self-defence. The AGM slogan 'Another World is Possible' is precisely about making visible and convince others of the "desirability and possibility, of the justice and practicability of a social life based on liberty" as the famous anarchist Berkman put it almost a hundred years ago (1929, 200–201). In many ways the recent 'politics of space' as per the Occupy movement and many others can be explained as an attempt to show the viability of alternative social relations.[35] This more 'external' challenge is of course inseparable from the internal challenges of creating a viable alternative inside and between movements themselves that can serve to demonstrate to others the practicality of different way of doing things.

At a more general level, the implicit view in autonomism is captured by the Uruguayan Raúl Zibechi when he argues that social change entails weaving social relations among the oppressed. With the decline of dominant social relations, the new relations give birth to a new world until "society takes the form of a sea of 'new' social relations amid a few islands of the 'old' social relations – essentially, statist relations" (2010, 4). Graeber echoes this by contending that social change is a matter of building on what people are already doing, expanding what he calls 'zones of freedom' "until freedom becomes the ultimate organizing principle"(Graeber 2013).

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[34] For a sobering account of the potential problems in case of 'victory,' see: Graeber 2008.
[35] For a good analysis of space, social relations and prefiguration, see: Dhaliwal 2012b.

Internal challenges

Autovalorization

One could also approach the assessment of the autonomous projects from the point of view of the sustainability of the auto-valorization projects, as the attempts to build alternative economic models of production where the profit logic is rejected and the relations of production organized collectively and equally and for the purpose of collective good. As discussed above in relation to the occupied factories, there too the tensions deriving from the state and the context are inseparable from the challenges facing the movement's auto-valorization projects. In this regard, it is possible that the movements end up serving the function of a 'Band-Aid' on the ever withdrawing neoliberal state. However, at the heart of the attempts at creating alternative economic relations is the creation of alternative social relations. The idea, for example in Buenos Aires is the concept of *trabajo sin patron* ('work without a boss'). This emphasis on the creation of alternative forms of power that do not oppress or dominate implies that the challenges specific to autonomous movements are in these quotidian experiences of constructing the alternative. There are many dimensions to this.

Firstly, movements might not even be prefigurative in anything but discourse. It is possible that they do not 'practise what they preach' but only utilize the discourse of horizontality or dignity to gain support both inside and outside the movement. It is also possible that the movement as a result of collective decision decides to give up on the prefigurative element of its project. Similarly, many theorists and activists have warned against glorifying autonomy or self-management. Especially we should avoid promoting the return to pre-capitalist structures. In this regard, Mabel Thwaites Rey reminds us that many groups have tried autonomy before in many kinds of isolated communities, and these communities did not die out having been attacked by the state but simply because people actually chose to leave due to the quality of life being much better elsewhere (2004, 46). Thirdly, many of the autonomist practices have their origin in material necessity rather than a commitment to a noble idea of social change.[36] It is thus possible that when these needs are met, the movement dwindles. It is useful to distinguish need from virtue and avoid falling in love with micropolitics, of networks or the assumed purity of the life of peasants, indigenous people or the subaltern *Piqueteros* (Mazzeo 2011, 13). The point we are making here, is that one should approach these movements with a sober attitude so as to assess them for their true potential and actuality rather than a romantic vision.[37]

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[36] Similarly, Scott has argued that anarchist principles are active in the aspirations and political action of people who have never heard of anarchism or anarchist philosophy (2012, xii).

[37] This point applies especially in the case of MTD Solano in Argentina, a *Piquetero* movement that in the literature has often been treated as an ideal experience of autonomy and one which had a somewhat 'purist' approach to social change, withdrawing to the neighbourhood in order to maintain their autonomy. According to activist accounts, the movement has now largely demobilized, pointing to problems with their approach to autonomism. More of this in the case study chapter.

For movements that can be identified as clearly driven by the vision of a wider social change and commit to prefigurative politics certain significant problems have to be tackled, problems that are specific to prefigurative movements. Viewing social change as the construction of 'people's power' or 'power-to' brings with it the most fundamental problem. Namely, how 'free' actually are these 'free zones'? Is the 'sea of new relations' in fact any different from the 'island of statist relations'? Since the focus of social change is pushed to the everyday social relations that are supposed to prefigure an alternative, freer society characterized by equality, solidarity and the like, how far are these experiences actually achieving that? Are they worth spreading; or do they in fact reproduce the old forms of domination or create forms of their own? Ultimately this question is the most important, given the wholesale abandonment of instrumentality, official politics and consequently much of the political action aimed at helping others.

Limits of 'power-to' at the level of the social movement

Regarding the construction of alternatives, the challenges exist on two levels. Corresponding with the analytical distinction between a social movement and a social movement organization, one could focus on the challenge for the 'movement' as opposed to SMO. By this I mean the prefiguring of equitable and democratic relations between different groups belonging to a wider movement, in essence the focus would be on how to create political processes and forms that make sure bigger organizations do not dominate over smaller ones (Thwaites Rey 2004). A further challenge awaits potentially successful autonomous movements. Given that so far autonomous movements have not been hugely successful in terms of incorporating large parts of society the theory has not had to seriously engage with the inevitable tensions regarding the limits of 'power-to' and non-hierarchic political action more generally. Until what point can movements avoid resorting to power in the conventional sense? In particular, what are movements going to do with the middle classes and those who stand to lose much from a more equitable society? Can they be incorporated without power-over? Holloway's theory and autonomism generally largely seems to rely on the changing of inter-personal relations as a means to advance social change more widely. There are limitations to this approach. For example, how to organize the relations between groups of people so as to avoid 'power-over' – where exactly is the boundary between representation and 'power-to'? In addition, ultimately many interpersonal inequalities, such as those deriving from gender inevitably seem to require changes not only in inter-personal relations but societal structures more generally. As an example, abortion, illegal in Argentina apart from cases of rape, has a very concrete influence on gender equality within the movement. Similarly, Zapatistas in Chiapas may change their inter-personal relations, but until the wider social relations of land ownership are not changed in order to allow women to inherit and work the land, it is only so far these inter-personal changes can go in guaranteeing gender equality.

However, given that prefiguration is a notion of social change 'from the bottom up,' it makes more sense to start from 'below' and focus first on the promise and perils of prefigurative political action at the level of the SMOs.

Limits of 'power-to' at the level of the social movement organization (SMO)

What is problematic with Holloway's work, as he himself has acknowledged, is the lack of consideration when it comes to what kind of organizational arrangements are capable of delivering 'power-to' and what are the challenges for them (Holloway and Callinicos 2005). Nineham's critique of autonomism gathering people's energy without giving it direction seems quite well placed (Nineham 2006). What is missing from Holloway's work is a consideration of the dialectic of consciousness and organisational form at different stages of class struggle. How to create de-fetishized existences; and what kinds of challenges are associated with these attempts? In this regard, most of the blame probably lies with negative dialectics - it has been argued that with this theory we remain at the level of 'mere first negation' (Hudis 2003) or glorifying the struggle (Rooke 2002; Löwy 2002). The reluctance to define very clearly the types of strategies and organisations that might be capable of challenging and transcending status quo is somewhat understandable, as it runs the risk of creating another dogma and consequently reproducing centralisation, exclusion and hence 'power-over.' Indeed, this synthesis is exactly what is rejected in negative dialectics. Subsequently, negativity tells us not how to change the world, but how not to do it (De Angelis 2005, 237). Consequentially, negative dialectics tends to lead to valuing spontaneity over institution-building. Spontaneity, however, cannot be assumed to be freer from fetishized social relations either.

Due to this omission of institutional and organizational considerations by scholars of autonomous movements, the institutional arrangements are left for activists themselves to figure out. This is fair enough. However, Holloway's work is full of references to Zapatismo and to a lesser extent, the *Piqueteros*, and particularly MTD Solano. While he strongly warns against romanticism, his lack of critical engagement with Zapatista autonomous governance comes across as tacit endorsement, contributing to Zapatismo itself becoming this dogma without adequate consideration as to its particularities, or, more importantly, its deficiencies.

Esteva and Prakash identify the problem by asking (1998, 168): "How do 'the people' ensure that the principle of 'command by obedience' is nourished at the centers' [sic] of their new social organizations"? Yet, the authors themselves proceed to outline the institutional arrangements of the Zapatistas as exemplary of possible solutions. This indicates an important problem with the literature. These authors too seem to take the Zapatista experience at face value, and despite defining democracy as a process, they tend to then outline the Zapatista formal arrangements to highlight their egalitarian nature, without actually investigating the content of those processes.[38] As will be argued at

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[38] Mentinis (2006) identifies the lack of critical engagement with the Zapatista movement as a significant problem.

the end of the following chapter, there is a fundamental difference between democratic structure and democratic content and processes. Formal democracy is not a guarantee against informal hierarchy. Moreover, the uncritical engagement with autonomous movements runs the risk of autonomism becoming a new glorified dogma and ideology without the appropriate critical engagement with its practice. It is important to investigate whether these movements indeed are able to produce something more equal and more inclusive than the existing arrangements; this is the crucial contribution that they potentially make. Following this line of thought, I would argue that it is impossible to have purely prefigurative political action without engaging in debates about institutional designs. In the end, how can a movement seek to build the future in the present without consideration as to what this world would look like?

Löwy poses an important question in his critique of Holloway's work (2002) "How can people so deeply enmeshed in fetishism liberate themselves from the system?" Indeed, the movements emerge from societies characterized by many forms of domination, how can a movement in its organization manage to eliminate them? The assumption here is that they cannot, at least right away. To think then qualitatively about the difference between democracy as it is conventionally understood and 'power-to,' Holloway argues: "democracy is always power-over in so far as it addresses people as beings" (2003). Power-to exists when "there is a common project, a common doing and the issue is how to form a mutually-recognitive We-Doer. This is not the problematic of (bourgeois) democracy" (Ibid). The form of democracy which seems consistent with Holloway's idea of 'power-to' should rely on inclusive and consensual decision-making that does not reduce people to objects or things (representatives vs. the 'people').

Yet, this is not without its challenges either. Consensual decision-making is not necessarily devoid of power. People have very different capacities to articulate their arguments and to persuade others. The way in which the debates are carried out can favour a particular type of person as opposed to others. The end of the following chapter will pick up on this and continue these considerations.

Assuming that instantly defetishized existences are impossible to create, the movements will be viewed as prefigurative if they identify the problems with domination and actively seek to eliminate them. In this regard, a problem that has emerged from my case studies pointing to problems both with Holloway's theory and prefigurative political action more generally is one of consciousness and participation. Namely, the following chapters will identify different ways in which movements can seek to eliminate hierarchy in their organization. In particular, the works of Jo Freeman, Darcy Leach and Donatella della Porta will serve this purpose. However, the many safeguarding measures identified both by the movements in their pursuit for equality as well as by scholars working on these questions can only function if there is an active membership that fulfils these functions. In effect, thus, everything hinges on participation. As the case studies will show, this is a problematic aspect, not only due to obstacles to participation but also due to the lack of commitment on behalf of much of the membership. Consequently, the question of participation becomes a question of political

consciousness. This is a weakness in Holloway's theory. In an interview with Holloway, I referred to a group of people in FPDS that I had identified as working to improve the conditions in their neighbourhood without having very clear political consciousness of the work of the movement as a whole. I asked him if he thinks it is possible to contribute to social change without having very far reaching political ideals. To this Holloway responded: "I think so, yes, yes. I think consciousness is very much overrated. Yes, I think you can, I think people do. The important thing is the collective doing, say, to improve social situation" (Holloway interview 2013).

I find this problematic. As the case studies will indicate, it seems that some form of consciousness in order for the membership to understand the role of democratic arrangements in prefigurative political change. For movements that consist of politically conscious and motivated individuals, problems of participation are much less likely. With good participation a movement can keep guard against hierarchy through rotation, open decision-making procedures, training to tackle imbalances of resources and other ways. However, in places such as Chiapas and Buenos Aires where many of the membership have joined the movement due to material necessity, participation is harder to achieve. The active members seem to view this as a problem of consciousness. At the same time, however, autonomism cannot solely depend on enlightened altruistic individuals but should guarantee mechanisms that allow us to transcend that dilemma.

The importance of self-critique and self-reflection has been highlighted by other autonomist scholars and activists (Sitrin 2012, 4).[39] For example, Chatterton and Pickerill argue that new hegemonic discourses in autonomous social centres were due to a lack of self-critique (2010, 481):

> …it was rarely asked why these kinds of organising principles were used over more conventional ones, what this meant for shaping the values and activities of the group, and how they would connect with other groups. As a result, issues such as unequal power relations, individualism and informal hierarchies, the function of sharing and cooperation in social relationships and exchange, and meeting fatigue were under scrutinised or left to fester.

Similarly, Blee's book on democracy in social movements showed that inequality often falls within the already existing fault lines of racial, gender and educational inequality (2012).

Yet, the search for self-critique and consciousness can take non-prefigurative forms. The principles underpin the practice of the movement – as will be identified in the case study chapters – can become subject to 'conscienticizing' the membership. In this regard, particularly problematic is the role of those who generally agree with the movement's goals without committing some of its ideals; for example those who think traditionally about the role of women in Chiapas. It is difficult for the movements to not resort to some form of coercion to make sure its membership commits to all of the ideals. Consequently, this can easily lead to a situation whereby some members of the movement become guardians of its principles. This naturally introduces a feature of hierarchy and inequality

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[39] The activists of MTD Lanús also highlight the importance of self-reflection in order to avoid reproducing political clientelism.

which in itself is not purely prefigurative. In this regard, in the practice of the movements one can see a constant tension and interplay between the ideals and principles of the movement and the practice of decision-making.[40]

Conclusion

The objective of this project is thus to highlight some of the potential problems of autonomism and think about solutions to them. In this regard, the thesis will look at two well-known autonomous SMs in an effort to see how their prefiguration is working in practice. As has been argued in this chapter, Holloway and others shy away from more practical and institutional questions, perhaps in fear of creating another dogma. I believe we cannot afford not considering the concrete practical institutional and organizational problems and seek solutions for them. By looking at the most influential experiences we should be able to dig up the achievements and strengths as well as the problems, shortcomings and tensions of prefigurative political action. This, however, does not imply any form of structural determinism or that these problems would always surface everywhere since that would essentially undermine the effect of human agency. Still, there are undoubtedly many lessons that can be drawn with caution from Buenos Aires and Chiapas to be aware of elsewhere as well. Movements do not emerge from a vacuum, and thus we can expect them to have different 'starting points' regarding the process of 'autonomization.' Consequently, and understanding the paradox of autonomy, we should not assume them to be pure and free of inequalities. This will probably never be possible. But ultimately the project of autonomism fails as soon as self-reflection ends. Movements need to constantly engage in self-critical assessment in terms of institutional arrangements and other potential sources of hierarchy and inequality within the movement. This is the only way to ensure that the process continues. "The contestation of hierarchical social relations and re-articulation of horizontal social relations, then, is never complete and finalized, but is a constant struggle and negotiation" (Dhaliwal 2012b, 262). In order to see how movements might potentially keep the flame of autonomism burning, the last section of the following chapter will draw from the literature on the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' as well as from works dealing with 'deliberative democracy' in an effort to identify the potential problems. In this regard, the chapter will put forward different indicators of hierarchy and make a case for how they are best to be researched in social movements. First, however, the thesis will engage with the mainstream social movement studies in an effort to promote more 'movement-relevant' work.

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[40] In a discussion with Hernan Ouviña he used the example of a group of young participants of a popular education program that had democratically decided to get rid of one of the members. In this case the principle of solidarity and *compañerismo* were more important as the more experienced activists overruled this decision despite they youths' complaint about it being 'undemocratic' (Buenos Aires, January 2014).

Chapter 2. Social movement theory and Autonomism

This chapter will explore the usefulness of social movement (SM) theories for studying prefigurative social movements. On this point, one could join Marina Sitrin in arguing that the dominant SM study framework of contentious politics does not suffice when one tries to understand the prefigurative, autonomous SMs, "because of these movements' choice not to focus on dominant institutional powers (such as the state), but rather to develop alternative relationships and forms of power" (Sitrin 2012, 13). One could then put aside the whole framework of SM theory, following her example and that of Richard Day in his book on the 'newest social movements' (Day 2004; 2005; Sitrin 2012). However, I disagree with this choice. Ultimately, I think that it is important to engage with the mainstream SM studies, in the hope of contributing to a push towards more movement relevant work. Not engaging with the majority of the work in SM studies only contributes to further 'ghettoizing' movement relevant work. This chapter thus continues the challenge of some of the fundamental assumptions in the literature that hinder our ability to understand and properly engage with the potential of these movements (Motta 2009; Maeckelbergh 2011).

Forty years ago social movement studies did not exist as a coherent discipline (McAdam et al. 2005, 1). The discipline emerged out of the analysis of the mobilizations of the 1960s. When scholars in North America predominantly sought to answer the question of how movements mobilize, in Europe SM theory was interested in why social movements mobilize - focusing their attention to the potential of the new protests, resulting, in their view from the development of a post-industrial society or a post-material society (Foweraker 1995, 2). Two different traditions of SM studies thus developed, led by the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) in the US and the New Social Movement (NSM) theory in Europe. Where RMT can be seen as response to the then conventional social psychological view of protest as irrational and pathological, NSM has its context in a critique of the then dominant Marxist theories. NSM theory developed to explain the distinctive nature of the wave of collective action since the 1960s (Sutton and Vertigans 2006).

The chapter will focus on the theories in these traditions one by one, beginning with the RMT and approaches that have developed as a response to it, namely the work focusing on Political Opportunity Structures (POS), and some of the cultural variants of the aforementioned theories. Part two identifies a number of limitations for theorizing and assessing autonomous movements. Namely, the assumptions of rationality and strategy, the assumption of the homeostatic role of SMs in wider society and the organizational biases favouring organizations most effective for reformist desires sit uneasily with prefigurative politics. In the meantime, however, some of the more 'cultural' work on the notion of 'free spaces' or 'safe havens' helps us understand the potential role of prefigurative movements, while the work therein tends to assume the 'free' nature of these spaces and the true prefigurative potential has not been properly investigated.

Part three will then look for compatibilities between NSM and autonomism, arguing that despite some points of convergence, many works within NSM tend to reduce autonomist movements to 'life-stylism,' consequently neglecting the prefigurative political construction of alternatives. In essence, the argument put forward here is that the understanding of strategy as necessarily short-termist, and the assumptions of rational courses of action that follow, the (more) North American theories suffer from organizational and institutional biases whereby prefigurative movements are marginalized since they seek to avoid the institutional route. Conversely, NSM tends to reduce these movements to a retreatist position of 'life-style' or at best to a 'metapolitical' critique of existing institutions and representative democracy while failing to account for the practical construction of alternative political organization that prefiguration implies.

Part four of the chapter highlights another more general problem in the literature, namely the focus of research and the types of questions asked. The weight in research has largely been on questions of emergence and mobilization whereas movement relevant theory would require more exploration as to the chances of movement success and the outcomes of their activities. Moreover, the research on movement outcomes is similarly biased towards the institutions, focusing on policy outcomes, effectively ignoring autonomous movements. Part five thus returns to the challenges for autonomous movements as per the previous chapter in order to identify more concretely a suitable approach for studying the outcomes of autonomism and prefiguration.

Part 1. North American social movement theories

Resource and Opportunities

The conventional wisdom long into the 1970s was that collective action was either pathological, irrational activity(Bon 2004) or a result of grievances as most famously exemplified by Ted Gurr's 'relative deprivation' argument (Gurr 1970). In response to this, the Resource mobilization theorists argued that many aggrieved people never rise up and engage in collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1973; Oberschall 1973). McCarthy and Zald (1977) argued that there are always grievances in society, but that "to focus and organize the discontent into a social movement, it is necessary for a core group of sophisticated strategists to organize to harness those disaffected people, to attract money and supporters, and to capture the media's attention, forging alliances with those in power and creating an organizational structure" (Ebaugh 2010, 7). The argument is then that the rise and decline of movement activity is dependent upon the movements' ability to mobilize resources as well as their perception of the chances of success rather than from changes in the level of grievance (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 25). Seeking to show that collective action is not irrational, the scholars, many themselves activists of the civil rights movement, emphasized the extent to which social movement action, like traditional political action, requires organization and funding. RMT thus:

emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1213).

Scholars such as Tilly, Tarrow, McCarthy and Zald sought to show that social movements can be rational, purposeful, and organized political actions and thus they should be studied as such (della Porta and Diani 2006, 14; Tilly 1979, 197; McCarthy and Zald 1977), as opposed to irrational or hysterical behaviour or a set of deviant individuals. Movements are better viewed as an established way of doing politics (Tilly 1979, 26).

It is important to see the development of RMT in light of the challenge to pluralism posed by Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965). Olson contested the then dominant assumption that groups in society will be proportionately represented in politics. He showed instead that small groups suffer less from 'collective action problems' consequently allowing them to dominate in politics. Olson's theory relies on assumptions of rationality and he argues that people need selective material incentives to participate in collective action - if not, they would have no incentive to get involved as successful outcomes of mobilization means that they will get the public goods anyhow and participation can only incur costs on them. If groups only focus on achieving public or collective goods, people have a disincentive to get involved. Because of this 'free rider problem' the distribution of society's resources is not automatically proportional to group size. However, the assumptions regarding rationality underpinning Olson's theory and inherited by RMT and its successor, POS, make them hard to reconcile with autonomous social movements. We will return to this point after a brief overview of the POS and the cultural critiques of RMT.

Political Opportunity Structures (POS)

RMT has been faulted for ignoring political context and historicity. While RMT focuses much more on the internal resources, the POS approach has brought in a focus on the external factors, like changes or differences in the political and institutional environments of social movements (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 25). POS arose from the argument that RMT fails to account for contextual factors. Eisinger is seen to be the first to articulate these challenges. "The manner in which individuals and groups in the political system behave, then, is not simply a function of the resources they command but of the openings, weak spots, barriers, and resources of the political system itself"(Eisinger 1973, 12). POS is supplementary to RMT as most political opportunity theorists treat both resources and political opportunities as critical for SM mobilization (McVeigh et al. 2006, 25–6). Most American scholars of social movements thus started to incorporate political opportunities or political processes into their analyses. According to Tarrow people use the opportunities offered by the system to create an ideologically and socially favourable ground for future movements. He uses as an example Gorbachev's reforms of Soviet Union that stimulated independent initiatives that went much beyond the intention of stimulating more open discussion, ultimately triggering democratization

movements in Eastern Europe (2011, 157–8). For him the notion of 'cycles of contention' is central, signifying times of heightened confrontation resulting from the perceived weakness of the authorities, created by a movement or otherwise creates political opportunities for other groups and challengers. These cycles end in reform, repression or sometimes revolution (Tarrow 1989).

Political opportunities are also used to explain variation in movement methods. Kriesi (1996) argued that the difference between movement 'action repertoires' in Switzerland derives from the differences in direct democratic procedures between the cantons. Similarly, Kitschelt's (1986) study of anti-nuclear movements in four countries highlighted that the relative openness of states to inputs from non-institutional actors and their capacity to effectively implement policies explain different strategies for movements. For him, this approach explains why in Sweden, a system more open to political input, the movements tend to adopt relatively assimilative strategies; whereas in France, where the established channels of representation offer fewer chances for voicing discontent, the movements a much more confrontational, 'outsider' strategies. His key explanatory factor is thus POS as a combination of resources, institutional arrangements and historical contingencies of movement activities, which either aids or restrains the development of protest movements. Indeed, for POS scholars, what makes the difference between success and failure of movements are access to institutions; stability of political alignments and the possibility of coalitions; elite access and alliances; elite conflict, and level of repression (Caniglia and Carmin 2005; McAdam 1982; 1998; Tarrow 1998; Rucht and Neidhardt 2002, 9). POS shares the same assumption with RMT that "[p]rotesters are rational, instrumental, policy-oriented people who seize opportunities by lobbying, and forming coalitions with political elites" (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 28). As will be discussed shortly, this assumption conflicts with prefigurative politics. However, the chapter will first introduce the cultural responses to RMT and POS before putting forth a critique of the assumptions underpinning all of them.

The 'cultural turn' and framing approaches

The aforementioned theories have been argued to focus too exclusively on macro-level explanations and hence being less able to explain individual or micro-level factors (Opp 2009, 204); and that the focus on rational and structural explanations comes at the expense of adequately taking into account questions of emotions, identity and culture. In particular, Elisabeth Jean Wood's analysis of the civil war in El Salvador highlights the limits of rational approaches, specifically the free rider problem, by presenting evidence collected through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork (Wood 2003). Her work showed how many of the *campesinos* took a deadly risk in supporting the rebels without any 'selective private incentives' that would have allowed them to gain more than those who chose not to lend their support. She explains this motivation through the notion of pride and 'pleasure of agency' – "They did so….because they took pride, indeed pleasure, in the successful assertion of their interests and identity…" (Ibid, 18).

Indeed, many scholars share these criticisms. As, Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans have argued, political opportunities and organization are not enough to explain the emergence of movements. "Mediating between political opportunities and organizational strength are people and their hopes and fears"(2009, 28). For them, the subjectivity of the actors plays an important role in making resources usable and allowing for collective action. It helps groups and individuals frame injustice and the likelihood of change (Ibid).

This notion of 'framing' is central to the 'cultural turn' in North American SM studies. The 'framing approach,' has provided scholars with a way to "link ideas and the social construction of ideas with organizational and political process factors" (Marks and McAdam 1996, cited in: Kitschelt 1993, 33). The RMT scholars, McCarthy and Zald point out that (1977,1215): "people's grievances and sources of discontent are often defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations." Framing is the attempt to bring back the questions of grievance (Buechler 2000, 195; Olesen 2005, 30). The cultural turn is influenced by social constructionism in seeking to explain better why people participate, drawing from the idea that movements can engage in activities of 'meaning production' for forming the cognitive basis for collective action. This 'signifying work' functions through a 'frame alignment process' – "a social movement is always reforming its ideological profile in order to encompass the aspirations of its potential supporters"(Foweraker 1995, 12–13). Supplementary to RMT and POS, the pioneers of the framing approach themselves framed it in the following way: "Perhaps the occurrence, intensity, and duration of protest cycles are not just a function of opportunity structures, regime responses, and the like, but are also due to the presence or absence of a potent innovative master frame and/or the differential ability of SMOs to successfully exploit and elaborate the anchoring frame to its fullest" (Snow et al. 1986, 477). The benefit of the framing approach is its perceived ability to link the study of social movements more firmly into the structure/agency debate (Westby 2002, 287). Consequently movements are not seen completely captive to contextual factors and structures but they can also be active shapers and creators of new frames (Tarrow 1992, 197).

Despite the fact that cultural theories stress the relative nature of rationality and variations in the perceptions of reality, arguing that threats and opportunities are socially constructed and/or framed, framing tends to be understood as a strategic process (Westby 2002, 288). This understanding is somewhat problematic, given that it neglects the possibility of strategy and the perceptions of opportunities and chances of success as equally culturally conditioned. People do not act collectively merely out of instrumental reasons, but also because they identify with others involved, or because they wish to express their anger or indignation (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 34). While framing tackles one of the problems with rational approaches, namely the role played by political

entrepreneurs,[41] in its strategic emphasis it still does not adequately account for experiential or ideological reasons or the effect of social pressure in making the difference for people's choice to get involved in protest activity, or any political activity for that matter. Corresponding with Wood's argument for the 'pleasure of agency,' electoral studies, for example, have shown that individuals take part in electoral activities for multiple reasons: not only due to strategic reasons, but also to avoid feelings of guilt or social pressure, and because it can be fun (Riker and Ordeshook 1968, cited in: Bonchek and Shepsle 1997). Similarly, movement participation can be its own reward (Foweraker 1995, 17). SMs do not function only as a means to an end, but also provide people with a source of authenticity and identity. Or as Melucci famously argued: "The movement....is the message" (1984, 830, Cited in: Rucht and Neidhardt 2002, 21).

Regardless of these criticisms early on, the dominant SM literature tends to rely on the assumptions of rational actor and cost-benefit analysis. Even when the cultural factors have been brought in, through the introduction of 'framing analysis' (Snow et al. 1986) - the influence of culture has been reduced to a 'tool-kit' available for the movement organizations, neglecting the effect culture might have on the actors themselves (Polletta 1997). Concerning the role of ideology, Polletta has argued that certain frames, such as 'civil rights' or 'Black Power' in fact limit movement repertoire and tactics by ruling out strategies that are seen as incompatible with the overarching ideology. Movement decisions are thus not guided solely by strategic questions of attracting rank and file support, funding and freedom of expression but also by the normative commitments of the activists (Ibid, 438). In the case of the movements under study here, the prefigurative frame can be seen as limiting the sphere of decisions to be taken by effectively ruling out instrumental strategy which divorces means from aims. We will return to this point shortly as the chapter proceeds to a critique of the underlying assumptions of the theories introduced so far.

Part 2. Prefiguration and (American) social movement theory

Rational actor assumption

Sidney Tarrow, one of the most influential SM scholars, explains collective protest as an "outcome of a calculus of risks, cost and incentive" (Tarrow 1989). McCarty and Zald, the pioneers of RMT make use concepts that have an obvious business ring to them: 'advertisement', 'professional cadre', 'selective material incentives', 'accounting', 'membership service', and 'preference demand'. People, or membership, are seen as a resource that needs to be mobilized for the movements' aim (1977). Given the logic of prefiguration, whereby at least the movements' discourse indicates that they are precisely trying to break away from the logic of using people as means to an end, as indicated

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[41] Similar arguments were made by Wagner regarding Olson's theory (Wagner 1966).

above, it is difficult to see how this reflects what the movements are trying to do.[42] These movements explicitly reject hierarchy, seeking instead to minimize representation and implement collective decision-making, and to precisely break with the division into those who rule (or mobilize) and those who follow. The argument about the incompatibility between the movements and SM studies has been made by other scholars regarding the global Indymedia movement (Pickard 2006, 320) and the direct action network (Sturgeon 1995, 37).

There is a more fundamental problem however. RMT is based on the view that movements need to acquire resources and establish advantageous relationships of exchange with other groups in order to succeed in reaching their goals (Costain 1992). Consequently, organization and leadership are deemed necessary precisely due to movements' goal-oriented nature and thus has to make the strategic choices in order to achieve its goals (Foweraker 1995, 16). The powerful bias in the literature has to do with how each of these terms is understood. Maeckelbergh summarizes in her critique of the conventional understanding of strategy in light of prefigurative politics: "This dominant view has assumed that strategy necessarily has to involve hierarchical and fixed organizational structures in the pursuit of a predetermined and singular political goal"(Maeckelbergh 2011, 6). As already mentioned, the Olsonian rational actor and cost-benefit analysis assumptions underpin the North American theories of collective action. When looking at the movements of interest here, it is difficult to see their activity entirely in this light. To elaborate, as will be discussed in chapter five, many of the Zapatista *campesinos* that were originally part of the movement or 'rode the bandwagon' have demobilized to receive government social programs and other forms of material support. Yet, the movement's 'official' line, and a result of collective decision-making is not to receive government aid in any form or shape.[43] Moreover, as a member organization of the 'autonomous' current of the *Piquetero* movement in Argentina, the Frente seeks autonomy from the government, which in practical terms has meant bearing the brunt of repression where other movement organizations have received lucrative deals from the state in terms of resources for collective work, unemployment benefits and food for communal eateries.[44] In both cases, the ideology of prefiguration and autonomy seems to rule out closer relationship with the government as it is seen as detrimental to the self-determination of the people in the movement as it is perceived to maintain dependency and unequal social relations. To assume, thus, that a movement is a mere reflection of material (or other) needs is inadequate.

However, I am not assuming movement membership in either case to be driven solely by ideological or sentimental motivations. Rather, prefiguration implies a different approach to strategic questions. In the case of the AGM, Maeckelbergh has made the argument for the 'strategy of prefiguration,' which "takes prefiguration as the most strategic means for bringing about the social

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[42] The case studies will engage more critically with the practice itself. But for now we will assume that their discourse reflects their intentions.

[43] Barmeyer's work (2003; 2009) deals much with this aspect.

[44] The case study chapter will further discuss this.

change they desire" (2011, 2). For her, the understanding of power and inequality as ever-permeating in social settings is pertinent for understanding the strategic element of prefiguration (Ibid, 10):

> If the goal is to create more inclusive political structures, and power is assumed to always exist and to perpetually centralize and lead to hierarchy, then any strategy for achieving the goal of more horizontality has to be aimed at creating structures that continuously limit this centralization. The aim can no longer be to create a moment in the future after which power and inequality will disappear.

Similarly to the argument put forth in the previous chapter, Maeckelbergh explains that the strategy of the AGM involves two mutually dependent practices; confrontation with existing institutions and developing alternatives to them (Ibid, 15).

At this point it is necessary to reiterate that the mainstream literature fails to differentiate between strategies based on more immediate goals that can be achieved within the existing system from more fundamental aims based on the assumption that these cannot be achieved without radical transformation of the social system as a whole. Prefigurative movements can be seen as representing the thinking that only practice outside of these institutions (or based on logic different to their functioning) will be able to advance this transformation. Prefigurative movements assume that in questions of hierarchy and power no compromises can be made in the process. Correspondingly, what might seem to external observers as the most beneficial thing to do, e.g. accepting material concessions from the state, might not be viewed as such by prefigurative movements if they deem that concession to create or maintain dependency and as such contribute to the continuation of an unequal power relation. Thus, their rejection of the state and political forms associated with it can also be seen in this strategic light. In light of the conventional understanding of what strategy entails, the other problematic assumptions that the chapter will now proceed to are not too surprising.

Organizational bias

> Whenever we examine evaluations of organizational efficiency we find the same bias against segmental structure. According to this powerful bias, centralized, bureaucratic organization with a pyramidal chain of command is efficient, rational, proper, and a sign that the organization is mature and effectively able to mobilize its members and accomplish its objectives (Gerlach and Hine 1970, 13).

This quote by Gerlach and Hine indicates a strong bias in favour of a particular kind of organization. For many SM scholars, "social movements are inevitably political, and must develop a political project if they are to prosper" (Foweraker 1995, 62). This might be a fair assessment. The problem, however, is how the term 'political' is to be understood. Conflating 'political' merely with the institutional leads to an organizational bias and the assumption that to 'prosper' is to change laws and maintain a steady membership. Indeed, bureaucratic organizations are seen as more successful at gaining access to established political channels, achieving recognition as legitimate representatives of the movement, and at maintaining interactions with other actors in society (Caniglia and Carmin 2005, 203). Consequently, referring to the non-violent direct action movement, Sturgeon explains the inadequacy of the dominant RMT- based theory (1995, 37):

Given its emphasis on the need for elite resources, stable movement leadership, and hierarchical movement organizations, resource mobilization theory leaves decentralized, antihierarchical movements like the direct action movement invisible or by definition pronounces them failures.

The same way strategy has been conflated with demanding reforms from the state as opposed to more radical change, the word 'organization' has been associated with hierarchical and fixed structures that are best suited for aims within the state (Maeckelbergh 2011). As Sturgeon argued, movements that do not fall into this template are then viewed as either immature or failed. Or as Tarrow has argued, without specifying what movements he is referring to: "some movements are largely a-political, and focus on their internal lives or those of their members" (2011, 8). This suggests a false dichotomy inapplicable to autonomous movements whereby SMs are effectively viewed either as 'strategic' (reformist) and thus potentially efficient, or merely 'cultural' and thus apolitical. Movements that precisely try to avoid becoming part of the political system are seen as falling solely into the 'private' and thus not political. I would not go as far as Sitrin (2012),[45] to claim that autonomous movements choose not to focus at all on the official institutions, but legislative and institutional outcomes most definitely are not the primary objectives of these movements. These assumptions effectively serve to purge the understanding of movements from more radical ideological connotations. This point will be returned to later on.

Reformist and homeostatic assumptions

The reformist premise hinted at above follows naturally from the limited notion of strategy. The suppositions identified above indicate an implicit assumption in the literature regarding the role and function of SMs in society more widely. This implicit homeostatic functionalism views SMs as carrying out a kind of 'corrective' duty whereby previously excluded groups get included in the polity or some other problem in the system is corrected and inevitably harmony ensues. The dominant view sees SMs as formed by groups that have previously been excluded. The movements then become interest groups capable of inclusion in the institutionalized political process (Sturgeon 1995, 38). Thus movements are viewed as influential through big mobilizations and their time is limited. When this time is over, some leave for being tired, some choose to get involved in mainstream politics. Meyer argues: "taken together, this process of decline composes political institutionalization as the polity and members of a social movement implicitly negotiate a more routinized and less disruptive relationship, one that can be maintained over a long period of time" (Meyer 2003, 11). Thus a cycle of protest is generally seen as ending with increased institutionalization of SMOs and patterns of political reform (Landman 2008, 172).

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[45] After all, the Zapatistas have consistently tried to get the San Andrés accords implemented which would mean changing the legal status of indigenous communities. And the *Piqueteros* similarly campaigned for laws to do with the unemployment benefits and the official status of cooperatives in which they work.

The homeostatic assumption is particularly visible in discussions regarding the relationship between democracy and SMs. Movements are often seen as important motors in bringing about or enhancing democracy. Tarrow for one, argues, that "democracy expands, not because elites concede reform or repress dissent, but because of the insistent expansion of participation that occurs within cycles of protest" (1989, 347–8). According to this line of thought movements bring in new constituencies to the democratic system, as "political parties and interest groups pick up and absorb the impulses created by social movements" (Rucht and Neidhardt 2002, 23). This indicates a view of social movements as playing an adjunct function in a representative democracy. As will be argued shortly, for the movements themselves democracy is much more than representation and their democratic practices should be seen in the light of a 'metapolitical challenge' directed at the very notion of representative democracy.

The preceding discussion has highlighted the points of convergence characterizing the relationship between these SM theories and prefigurative political action. These theories are undoubtedly useful for understanding the structural and contextual reasons for mobilization and the political openings that facilitate different kinds of movements,[46] and fare well for assessing movements based on single issue questions and that have no desire for radical change going beyond addressing problems in the existing institutional framework. However, the movements in question for this thesis are not seeking a harmonious relationship with the existing institutions since they want to see a world beyond capitalism and representative democracy. They would rather that the cycle of protest and movement activity ends with something more fundamental than an inclusion in the system, the logic of which they are opposed to. Despite, as explained in the beginning of the chapter, people like Sidney Tarrow (1989) acknowledge that cycles of protest do sometimes end in revolutions rather than reform, the notion of revolution too has to be subjected to critique to rid it from the same statist and hierarchic assumptions that characterize the terms 'strategy' and 'organization.'[47] As it stands, the understanding of these key terms is deterministic and biased towards particular kinds of organizations. It might very well be that the function of prefigurative movement too is ultimately homeostatic. Yet, this cannot be assumed but should rather be investigated. Alongside its main focus, the thesis will be able to speak to this in the discussion chapter. Before getting there, however, it is useful to engage with some of the discussions that have emerged out of the cultural critiques to RMT and POS. After this the chapter will look at the NSM theories separately in an attempt to use them for understanding autonomist movements.

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[46] For example, Neil Harvey's book (1998a) is a brilliant POS account of the Zapatista uprising. Similarly, Gordillo (2010) uses POS to explain the changing political landscape in Argentina and the consequent rise of the *Piquetero* movements, highlighting the role played by the unemployment benefits that were won as concession from the government.
[47] The prefigurative understanding of revolution will be discussed in the next chapter.

Autonomous movements and 'free spaces'

Many scholars have not been content with RMT and POS's somewhat deterministic position on the capacity of the actors and the lack of cultural considerations. These more social constructionist scholars in the US, however, did not draw from the New Social movement studies of Europe since that would have meant accepting the distinction between 'new' and 'old' SMs. They opted instead to study the cultural origins and determinants of social movements more generally (Polletta 1997, 432). Some of this literature, namely the discussion on 'free spaces,' offers some insight as to understanding prefigurative groups in the dynamics of social change.

Rochon, for example, views movements as both social and political phenomena that can alter both daily patterns of behaviour and transform public policy. Rochon is interested in the ways in which cultural values are diffused into society (Rochon 2000. He argues that the most change social movements can create is in culture. The idea of the 'critical community' is important. "Broad cultural change begins with the creation of new ideas within 'critical communities' that develop around particular social problems, analyses, or potential solutions" (Rochon 1998, 22, cited in: Meyer 2006, 284). For Rochon these critical communities refer to academics and intellectuals. However, when it comes to the processes in both Argentina and Mexico, it does not seem as if the critical community fed their knowledge into the social subjects who then put these ideas in action, but rather quite the opposite whereby the academics are still struggling to make sense of the movements there. Moreover, these movements and autonomism generally can be better understood through the Freirean idea of praxis whereby theory does not come before action but the two are in a mutually interacting process.

Beyond critical community, the notion of 'free space' could potentially be used in the case of prefigurative movements. Consider the following oft-cited definition by Evans and Boyte:

> Put simply, free spaces are settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where ordinary citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision. There are, in the main, voluntary forms of association with a relatively open and participatory character – many religious organizations, clubs, self-help and mutual aid societies, reform groups, neighbourhood, civic, and ethnic groups and a host of other associations grounded in the fabric of community life…democratic action depends upon these free spaces, where people experience a schooling in citizenship and learn a vision of the common good in the course of struggling for change (Evans and Boyte 1986, 17–18, cited in: Hirsch 1990a, 214).

For Hirsch, these spaces [he calls them 'havens'] are good for recruitment as they allow the development of radical ideas and tactics (1990b, 216). Jo Freeman (1975) too talked about the importance of 'free social spaces' and the role they played in the development of the women's movement. To elucidate, the idea of these havens, or 'free social spaces' is that they are social settings in relative isolation from the dominant order, where the subaltern groups can question the ideas of that order and develop alternative meanings, transform traditional cultural signifiers and construct new cultural forms. In a simple form they can be meeting places, or 'liberated zones' offering a place of retreat and preserving and developing oppositional culture and group solidarity (Fantasia and Hirsch 1995, 145–6). Meyer also makes a reference to the idea of 'safe spaces' within mainstream institutions,

arguing that women following on the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s established habitats in unlikely places, including the Roman Catholic Church and the U.S. military. "In addition to being safe places for particular ideas or constituencies, such habitats can also serve as venues to promote particular policies"(2003, 10).

Similarly, Couto uses Scott's famous notion of 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1990) to argue for the role of narratives that can be sustained even when there is no movement and can be the decisive factor in the mobilization (Couto 1993). Indeed, Scott's powerful ethnography of village relations in Malaysia showed a remarkable difference between 'onstage' and 'offstage' behaviour of the poor vis-à-vis the rich. "…to the extent that the deference expressed in public, power-laden situations is negated in the comparative safety of offstage privacy, we can speak unambiguously of false deference"(Scott 1985, 25).

Yet, considering the above discussion, it is hard to see the qualitative difference between 'free spaces' and conventional understanding of civil society generally. Additionally, as Polletta points out, many of these supposedly traditional spaces have actually been actively created by movements themselves, and in that sense did not predate mobilization (1999, 12). More importantly, however, there is nothing automatically liberating or radical about a 'free space.' Polletta elucidates: "people's physical or social separation from mainstream institutions doesn't guarantee the emergence of a mobilizing collective action frame. What is crucial is the set of beliefs, values, and symbols institutionalized in a particular setting" (Polletta 1999). This becomes quite visible when looking at the 'free space' of Fantasia and Hirsch. They looked at the role of the veil in the Algerian independence war. "Traditional cultural form had become, in a real sense, an oppositional cultural form, to the extent that it was employed in opposition both to the French administration and to women's traditional position in Algerian society" (1995, 159). It may be that the militant women were on a par with the men, as the authors argue, but in the long term, it is hard to make a case for female liberation in the context of Algeria if the veil as a by-product became expected of the women in society at large. In a similar vein, Motta refers to Scarritt's findings on the revolutionary influence of Evangelical Christianity in highland Peru, where the author found that "while it contributed to the community's ability to challenge some political forms of dominant power and build sociability and collectivity, it also reinforced conservative norms of family life and gendered social relationships"(Motta 2013b, 13).

This highlights the argument that I want to make here. That is, it is entirely possible that relations of resistance (Scott's 'hidden transcripts') are in themselves also relations of domination. The 'havens' can as well be places of maintaining the dominant order, in the most 'natural' things, such as female oppression. Indeed, prefigurative politics means that movements aim in their spaces to tackle relations of power and inequality. Creating relations of gender equality is arguably one of the most difficult tasks. We cannot assume that the 'free spaces' have managed to do this. Polletta's work speaks to this question. She makes a useful distinction between different types of 'free spaces',

identifying one as the prefigurative – "Explicitly political and oppositional (although their definition of 'politics' may encompass issues usually dismissed as cultural, personal, or private), they are formed in order to prefigure the society the movement is seeking to build by modelling relationships that differ from those characterizing mainstream society" (1999, 11). She rightly argues that prefigurative groups are difficult to maintain, not only due to the tension between egalitarian decision-making and the need to sometimes make quick decisions responding to environmental demands, but also because our societies have many taken-for-granted assumptions regarding class, race, gender, expertise, and authority. Consequently, she argues, even when formal exclusions do not exist, social inequalities can "infect deliberations" (Ibid, 12). Indeed, with this Polletta has identified the key question and challenge with prefiguration. She unfortunately has left the question unanswered, her later work (2004) dealing mainly with the strategic benefits of participatory democracy. Thus, similarly to the previous chapter where we looked at scholars of autonomous movements who discussed the logic of alternative social relations in 'free zones' that spread, we are again in a point where people have identified the potential role of these spaces in wider social change as well as the internal problems of prefiguration. Yet, the potential has not been assessed.

Regarding the relationship between prefigurative spaces and the rest of the society – one of the challenges identified in chapter one – Polletta argues that mainstream literature treats cultural factors as important only when other political opportunities emerge. She explains this view (1999, 15):

> Cultural challenge is effective only when social, political, and economic structures have become unstable, that is, when repression has been relaxed, when political realignments have created a 'structural potential' for mobilization, or when a structural 'crisis' has bankrupted old ideas and made people receptive to new ones…Aren't political and economic structures themselves shaped by cultural traditions and assumptions? And can't social movements contribute to destabilizing the institutional logics that inform everyday life?

She argues in response that movements can alter their chances of success by aiming for changes in widely held beliefs, for example in the legitimacy of repression (Ibid, 15). These questions are interesting, and would require more research in the case of autonomous movements. However, the question identified as more important for the thesis is about how to maintain these spaces, how to push them further, and how to identify and minimize infection by social inequalities. In this regard, the spaces might be relatively free from direct external domination, and in that sense enjoy some autonomy. However, the assumption guiding this thesis is that it is much more difficult to shake off different traditional patterns of power and hierarchy. Before putting forward an approach for studying this in the context of movements, it is necessary to critically relate the NSM theories to prefigurative movements. There too, many incompatibilities will be found.

Part 3. New Social movement theory

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, while developing simultaneously to RMT and through the analysis of movements of the 1960s, New Social Movement theory comes from a

different geographical and academic context. As an articulation of Marxism's perceived failure to explain the movements of the time, NSM, as the name implies, highlights the changed character and composition of social movements that according to them derived from wider changes in society. Touraine located this in the transition from industrial to post-industrial society or 'programmed society'(Touraine 1981). This is related to a wider shift in social sciences to argue that modernity has ended and that people in the developed western societies were more driven and motivated by post-material values such as desire for community, self-realization and personal rather than professional satisfaction (Inglehart 1977). The time of 'grand narratives' was perceived over, meaning that we could no longer assume the primacy of the working class as the driver of revolutionary changes in society. The work of the likes of Offe, Melucci, Castells, and Pizzorno along with Alain Touraine argued that qualitative changes occurred in society and social movements that undermined Marxism's capacity to explain collective action in Europe (Castells 1978; 1983; Melucci 1989; Offe 1985; Pizzorno 1968; Touraine 1971). When 'Old' social movements are seen as more focused on questions of material redistribution and tend to be driven by the working class, 'new social movements' are perceived as being more concerned about immaterial questions of representation, values, and recognition. NSM scholars often talk about 'symbolic challenges' of the movements, as well as the turn towards the 'private' as opposed to the 'public' as a site of struggle, as exemplified by the slogan 'the personal is political' of the student and feminist movements of the late 1960s.

Given that many of the movements in the 1960s shared characteristics with current prefigurative movements, and NSM's attention to these qualitative differences between them and 'Old' movements, NSM as an approach can explain many of the elements of prefigurative movements. For example, as Böhm et al point out, NSM theorists Offe and Scott have recognized the value autonomy has begun to have for movements (Böhm et al. 2010, 18). However, NSM too is characterised by many presuppositions that do not sit well with prefigurative logic. The chapter will first give a brief overview of the theory before engaging with it more critically.

The NSM approach can be seen as more structural, as it focuses on the macro-level changes in society, emphasising the questions of post-material or post-industrial society and the consequent perceived change in subjectivities. There are, of course, differences between the many scholars working on these questions, but there are important similarities that allow us to look at the approach more widely. Buechler has carried out an overview of the most important works and identified the following as common themes/arguments (Buechler 1995). He argues as follows. First, alongside instrumental political activity, NSM highlights symbolic activity in civil society or the cultural sphere. Second, promoting autonomy and self-determination is seen to be more important for movements than maximizing power or influence. Third, conflicts are seen as fought increasingly over questions of post-material values as opposed to conflict over the distribution of resources. Fourth, NSM tends not to assume interests and identities to be structurally determined, but rather a fragile process. Fifth, grievances and ideology are seen as socially constructed rather than structurally determined. Lastly,

rather than assuming that centralized organization is key to successful mobilization, NSM recognizes "a variety of submerged, latent, and temporary networks that often undergird collective action" (Ibid, 442). The chapter will shortly identify to what extent these characteristics can be found in autonomous movements.

According to Kitschelt, these new movements in Western democracies emerged in a situation in which new demands that inspired important constituencies were not taken upon by the existing channels of interest intermediation (Kitschelt 1993, 14). The post-war generation largely had its material needs satisfied. Post-material values lead to an emphasis on self-realization and participation which collided with the materialistic political and social system. The NSM approach sought to explain this through its social constructivist theory focusing on changes in identity, lifestyle and culture (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2009, 29). Indeed, NSM sees movements' novelty in their orientation towards culture and civil society as opposed to the economy and the state (Polletta 1997, 442). In addition, as Escobar and Alvarez have argued, some theorists insist that all movements challenged the state's economic and political models and challenged the authoritarian and hierarchic nature of politics (1992, 2). Offe has perhaps best captured this by arguing that there has been a shift from politics to 'metapolitics'(Offe 1985) Della porta and Diani summarize this view: "From this point of view, social movements affirm the legitimacy (if not the primacy) of alternatives to parliamentary democracy, criticizing both liberal democracy and the 'organized democracy' of the political parties" (2006, 239). In this regard, Melucci correctly views the importance of democratic organization for autonomous movements (1989, 60):

> The organizational forms of movement are not just 'instrumental' for their goals, they are a goal in themselves. Since collective action is focussed on cultural codes, the form of the movement is itself a message, a symbolic challenge to the dominant codes.

Yet, for prefigurative movements this metapolitical challenge is not a mere symbolic challenge; not a mere critique of existing institutions and demands towards changing them. Rather it involves concrete experiments to construct alternatives to them and to spread them. The chapter will return to this point after a more critical take on NSM.

Prefiguration and NSM - Critique of new social movement theory

Post-material concerns

The first criticism has to do with the distinct character of the so called 'new movements.' It has been argued by many scholars that the distinction between old and new movements is not useful (Marks and McAdam 1996). For example, Cohen and Rai argue that the distinction has long outlived its usefulness since it underestimates the continued salience of class as well as how the terrain of economic struggles has shifted to a global arena (Fitzpatrick 2002). Similarly Della Porta and Diani highlight the lack of evidence when it comes to the argument that material and redistributive questions have lost their significance even for contemporary nonworking-class movements (2006, 61).

Moreover, as Lucia Fraser has argued, it is very hard to separate the material issues from identity based ones. For example, struggles for racial and gender justice are inseparable from questions of redistribution (1997, 3).

The difficulty of separating material from non-material issues is particularly visible in the case of autonomous movements in Latin America. Yet, the NSM theory has been used much in the context of Latin America whereas its US counterparts have been almost completely ignored. According to Foweraker this has to do with the "bold methodological assumptions which offend a sense of cultural context." At the same time, applying NSM would mean accepting that wide societal changes have taken place in Latin America the same way they have in Europe and the US (Foweraker 1995, 2). This is another question, however, and one that cannot be addressed here. What is more important is the argument about the concerns of the movements. While it is undoubtedly so that new actors have emerged and the state centric paradigm of the past has been shaken, movements like the *Piqueteros* and the Zapatistas, despite not being from the traditional working class, definitely are also about material concerns. In this sense Calderon et al. are both correct and incorrect when they argue that "[…] the social movements of twenty-five years ago had strong state/political orientations and that, in contrast, many of today's actors are searching for their own cultural identities and spaces for political expression, political or otherwise"(1992, 23). Movements that on the surface seem concerned merely with cultural and identity based questions yet have a solid material foundation to their struggles (Escobar 1992; Motta 2009; Roper et al. 2003). Foweraker echoes this view in his book on social movement theory in the context of Latin America where he asserts that demands for material resources and rights do not necessarily come from separate groups (1995, 81). To take just one example closer to the topic here, for the Zapatistas the struggle for cultural identity and rights is inseparable from material questions. This is because for them their cultural identity is strongly linked to collective ownership of land, which is at odds with the government's plans for the development of the area which promotes private land ownership in order to facilitate development projects.

The argument has also been made that old movements too had extra-institutional characteristics before going through the 'life cycle' (Tucker 1991). In this regard, Tarrow argued that NSM challenges to existing social movement theories, "have paled as these movements went through life cycles much like their predecessors" (Tarrow 1998, 202, cited in: Sutton and Vertigans 2006, 103). Sutton and Vertigans echo by arguing that NSM mistook features of the formative stage of movement development for the emergence of a distinctive new type of post-material social movement, thus failing to take into account what they view as a cyclical process of movement formation (2006, 103). This, for me, indicates a teleological view whereby implicitly extra-institutional movements are viewed as 'immature' and not serious. To understand movements that try to avoid this, this criticism of NSMs is not necessarily very valid. It is of course possible that movements end up developing into something else, but to view movements like the Zapatistas, that after thirty years still refuse to

develop into something that would resemble a more 'mature' stage in this view does not pay adequate attention to the logic by which they precisely seek to avoid 'maturing.'

New social constituencies

A related critique has to do with the perceived characteristics of new movements is that the actors involved tend to be from different social groups as opposed to the working class of the 'old movements.' In Europe the constituency most involved in movements has been argued to be the so called 'new middle class'(Buechler 1995; Della Porta and Diani 2006, 9). This might hold true for Europe and North America. In Latin America, the strongest movements have been composed of the 'excluded' such as the unemployed (*Piqueteros*), indigenous (Zapatistas) or *campesinos*/rural workers (MST in Brazil) (Ouviña 2004). Indeed, the constituencies are different from the 'old' in that they are not the organized working class. Yet, there is a qualitative difference, and an important one, when comparing new movements in the West and those in Latin America. Not only are the constituencies different, given that they are composed of those traditionally excluded as opposed to students and the 'new middle class' in the Western context, the Latin American movements, the movements are driven much more by material concerns, as argued previously. Moreover, the movements in the Latin American context are at a different level when it comes to experimenting with new forms of 'counter-power.' The Zapatista and *Piquetero* projects are not separated from the daily life of the membership. Instead they are creating new political processes and social relations where the political, the personal and the economic amalgamate. By contrast, many of their western counter-parts structure their activity around summit meetings and big demonstrations without much day-to-day activity, not to mention living and working together and managing all the mundane problems that come with it (Ouviña 2004).

Anti-hierarchical *organization*

Although NSMs are diverse, scholars have noted that they tend to be characterized by loose networks, anti-hierarchical structures and participatory democracy. Indeed, these are characteristics of autonomous movements. Still, there are two important qualitative differences between movements of the 1960s and 1970s and contemporary autonomist movements. Firstly, not all movements characterized by the aforementioned tendencies placed similar importance to prefiguration. Some movements, like the environmental movement, have more definable aims. As Kitschelt correctly identifies (1993, 27):

> For movements engaging in the politics of social identity, such as most women's groups, means and ends, processes of mobilization and objective, cannot be clearly differentiated. To a large extent, the objective of the movements' practices is embodied in the process itself. In such groups, not only the orientation toward point decisions but the interdependence between process and goals inhibit instrumental organization in ways instituted by parties and interest groups. Maybe for this reason, there are many ecology parties, yet hardly a single successful women's party [emphasis added]."

For him, this is because for environmental groups, the questions of self-organization, consensus and consciousness-raising are important, but at the same time they are not seen as fundamentally necessary for goal attainment [and the goal can actually be defined in some way]. Whereas for movements that have to do with social identity, he argues, the goal and the process are inseparable, consequently making prefiguration a fundamental question. This is not just the case for movements of social identity, but indeed for new revolutionary movements of the prefigurative type.

Secondly, there seems to be a difference between past movements that were prefiguratively oriented and contemporary ones. Breines' work on the New Left movements in the US showed that while the SMOs themselves were riven with the tension between 'strategy' and 'community' (prefiguration), the movement as a whole was fundamentally anti-organizational (1980, 422). Similarly, as will be discussed in the following chapters, in some cases feminist groups went as far as to attempt abolishing any structures. The movements today have learnt from these experiences that only served to create informal hierarchies as opposed to formal ones (Freeman 1972). Indeed, as Maeckelbergh argues, it seems that the movements of the 1960s believed that if they "just found the 'right' way to make decisions inclusively, often referred to as 'participatory democracy', then inequalities between people would effectively disappear" (2011, 10). As the first chapter has discussed, the current movements do not think this way, but rather for them prefiguration is a process with no clear endpoint. In a similar vein, the movements are clearly not 'anti-organizational' given that they place much emphasis on constructing organization.[48] Yet, their understanding of the meaning of organization seems to be free of the hierarchic and centralized connotations discussed before.

Self-limiting radicalism and 'life-style' politics – the 'retreatist' assumption

The most significant problem with NSM regarding its applicability to autonomist movements has to do with the assumption of self-limiting radicalism. Let us explain this. NSMs are seen as eschewing the idea of implementing grand ideological programs through acquiring state power. Instead their role is seen as defending civil society against state or market encroachment (Sutton and Vertigans 2006, 103).[49] In addition, NSMs are seen to construct new social identities[50] in way of an expressive politics which promotes individual self-realization and autonomy rather than assimilating the movement's desires to mainstream politics. For Sutton and Vertigans, movement members are thus, "living out the lifestyle changes they sought for the future […]" (2006, 103). While this view acknowledges the prefigurative element to movements, it assigns it entirely to the 'private.' Amory Starr captures this problem well in her review of Buechler's (2000) book: "The section on 'social politics' misses the

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[48] Zapatistas members refer to the movement simply as the 'organization.' One of the most oft-repeated *Piquetero* chants emphasises the need for struggle and organization.

[49] This is a reference to the Habermasian concept of the lifeworld: (Habermas 1981)

[50] This would be mainly associated with Melucci's work.

beat entirely, positioning non-state-oriented movements as addressed only to the microphysics of daily life. In very different ways movements such as squatters, Zapatistas, and queers aim at structural political change by asserting autonomy over the everyday lifeworld" (Starr 2002, 100). Maeckelbergh also highlights the problem with this view. Referring to the alter-globalization movement, she argues that prefiguration is not 'cultural' or inward-looking, so much as driven by the ideal of building their own community. Rather, prefiguration is outward-looking in that it has the political goal of transforming governing structures on a global scale. The idea is to show through movement practice that it is possible (Maeckelbergh 2011, 14). This is perhaps best captured in the slogan 'Another world is possible' that the movements as part of the wider alter-globalization movement are trying to demonstrate in their distinct organizational forms. Thus, the retreat from official politics is not merely a retreat to an individualized lifestyle but implies attempts to construct political alternatives to existing institutions and ways to relate to others.

Consequently, in different ways, the NSM, POS and RMT approaches all view movements of the prefigurative kind as apolitical, thus neglecting the movements desire to construct concrete political alternatives where protest activity is coupled with a particular sensitivity to tackling different forms of power and inequality at the 'micropolitical' level and which include active attempts to spread the logic beyond the immediate context.[51]

Indeed, along with Maeckelbergh, Motta has made similar assertions in that the attempts to develop autonomous and self-governed communities are not a retreat from the political in the rejection of the party and state forms and representational politics. Rather "they are attempts to reinvent the meaning of political struggle and social change based on popular rationality, struggle, and experience"(Motta 2009, 51). While RMT and POS tend to see these movements either as immature or marginalized, the NSM approach underestimates their desires by reducing them to a form of symbolic or personal resistance. Offe's argument about the 'metapolitical' nature of some of the new movements captures this logic. However, this metapolitical challenge is not to be viewed as a mere critique or demand for reforming the institutions or a symbolic message. Instead, for the prefigurative movements it implies an active construction of alternatives through an open-ended process.

Based on this conversation, I would argue that the NSM approach has much more potential for understanding movements of prefigurative and autonomous tendencies than the RMT and POS theories. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the NSM precisely starts with the assumption that there is something qualitatively different about 'new' movements. Yet, the assumptions of post-material and identity based concerns of the movements are not exhaustive. Similarly, the participatory nature of the movements is not a detail but rather the very essence of these movements, characterizing the practical element of the 'metapolitical' challenge the movements seek to pose. In addition, the

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[51] For a lengthier discussion on this, see: Yates 2014.

Latin American context is different in terms of the constituencies of the movements and the more community-based nature of them. This poses different challenges to the movements, especially regarding the construction of democratic practices that break with social traditions of domination.

In sum, none of the theories stands out as directly applicable to autonomous and prefigurative social movements. To use these theories for work on these movements, they should pay more attention to different notions of strategy, organization and the relationship between the internal characteristics of the movement and the process of social change. In essence, scholars should become better acquainted with prefigurative politics to be able to assess it according to its potential to carry out social change, as opposed to judging movements using criteria that does not apply to them. The thesis will next propose a way to assess the potential of autonomist movements. First it will be necessary, however, to outline the current state of SM studies regarding the assessment of movement 'success' or outcomes.

Part 4. Social movements and 'success'

When one aims to contribute to movement relevant research, the obvious thing to do would be to study what makes social movements successful. What are the outcomes of movements? What tactics work best to bring about desired change? Is it possible to maintain a prefigurative organization and yet bring about fundamental social change? What are the challenges therein and what can we learn from past movements that have tried to do this? These are the questions that have inspired this thesis. Yet, SM studies as a whole have largely neglected the aspect of movement influence. As Uba has summarized, "there is broad consensus on who takes part in political actions and what causes political protest, but we know relatively little about the impact these actions have on public policy"(Uba 2005, 383). This highlights the two most important problems with SM literature. First, most of the literature focuses on mobilization and origins of protest, at the expense of movement outcomes, 'success' or impact (Giugni 1998; 2008; Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly 1999). Secondly, when they do look at movement impact, the focus is heavily on policy outcomes. This does not capture the activity of the prefigurative movements that intentionally try not to implement policy changes, at least not as their primary goal.

The lack of outcome studies is perhaps explained by the fact that measuring social movement impact is not easy. The existing literature is inconclusive (Uba 2005, 386). Due to the many factors at play, it is difficult to persuasively demonstrate that the movement played a role in determining the outcome (Amenta et al. 1994; Earl 2001). As Tilly illustrates: "multiple causal chains lead to a plethora of possible effects in a situation where influences other than social movement activity necessarily contribute to the effects" (1999, 268). It is also possible that the movement and the outcome are both results of the same demand emerging from societal issues or changes (Meyer 2006). Yet, most literature assumes that "anything that happened somewhere close in time to a collective action campaign constitutes a result of it" (Amenta and Young 1999, 37). This dealing with outcomes

has been greatly influenced by the work of William Gamson (Meyer 2006, 283) through his extensive attempt at assessing SM outcomes carrying out a comparison of 53 American SMs between 1800 and 1945 (Gamson 1975). Gamson measured movement impact in terms of the (a) acceptance of the SM as a valid representative of its constituency which (b) in turn is seen to have legitimate interests and (c) new gains by the beneficiary of the SMO (Ibid). Thus a successful group either gains recognition as an actor or gets some of its policy demands met, or both.

Indeed, given the biases explained before, it is not too surprising that the literature since Gamson has generally found that large, bureaucratic and reformist organizations are most likely to succeed (Giugni 1998; Halebsky 2006). Despite Piven and Cloward's influential *Poor People's Movements* (1979) finding that decentralized and informal organizations are more disruptive and harder to contain and thus associated with success, the fact remains that success is mostly viewed in policy terms. This view considers success in terms of expenditure or regulation in an already established policy area like welfare or environmental regulation. Protest movements can also create new categories of policies, instituting payments or other benefits to a newly recognized political constituency or push for the introduction of regulation in a previously unregulated area (Meyer 2003, 15).

It is hardly necessary to highlight the incompatibility of this approach with prefiguration, especially since the typology presented here views co-optation as success. For a movement that calls itself autonomous becoming part of the system that the movement opposes is the opposite of success. Moreover, the focus on policy changes does not capture the whole picture. Of course certain policy changes might be beneficial for the movement and might be actively sought by autonomists. However, given the emphasis on prefiguration, the emphasis of their struggle is elsewhere. Therefore, to assess these movements in the light of their policy effect is like judging Checkers with the rules of Chess.

Moreover, when studying movement outcomes, Max Haiven and Alex (2013) have pointed out that we should more actively challenge the assumed linearity and binary nature of success and recognize that there are various outcomes between not-success and not-failure. The authors also highlight that success should be seen in movements' own terms (2013: 486) and that the binary view of success/failure enforces the dominant social order (2013: 484).

Indeed, when studying the effect or influence of a social movement, it would be much more useful to think in terms of two questions. First we need to define what success means and secondly when we can say it has taken place. This implies that success means different things for different movements. As Sitrin puts it: "success can be determined only by those who struggle, those who are fighting or organizing for something" (Sitrin 2012, 204). We should work harder to conceptualize the study of movement outcomes – they should be specific to the type of movement and what they actually want to accomplish.

There are some examples that use this approach well. Halebsky for example studies anti-superstore resistance in the US (2006). He conducts a comparative case study of six cases where two

were categorized as successful, meaning the movement managed to stop the construction of the superstore altogether. In two places the movement was partially successful since the supermarkets were constructed in a different site. In two places the construction went on despite opposition. This case is of course much more straightforward than assessing a prefigurative movement whose aims are much more difficult to define in the first place. But the principle is the same; movements need to be evaluated in terms of what they want to achieve. Similarly, McVeigh et al. studied the civil rights movements and argued that the mere passing of the law is not an adequate measure of solving the issue. "Hate crime legislation without diligent enforcement, represents at best a partial victory, yet the legislation remains controversial and enforcement of hate crime legislation is uneven to say the least"(2006, 25). Consequently, they argue that a much better measure for the conditions on the ground is hate crime reporting. The point made here is that each movement, or category of movements, needs a measure of its impact that relates to the aspirations, the strategy and the context of the movement.

Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of different SM theories for studying prefigurative movements. While the theories are indeed useful in some respects, all of them suffer from a similar problem. Namely, the theories seem to assume universal forms of social movements, one with either reformist aims or aims only in the private sphere. In this the literature fails to account for the diversity of movements and consequently a diversity of desires and aims. While the assumptions made undoubtedly apply to a wide range of movements, they do not apply in the case of the movements studied in this dissertation, as the chapter has shown.

Indeed, we might be able to use SM theories to explain systematically the factors that contribute to the emergence of these movements or perhaps even in light of the prefigurative 'frame.' However, here we are not interested necessarily in explaining the causes and determinants of the Zapatista uprising or the *Piquetero* mobilization as much as we are in their potential and problems. NSM, and particularly the work of Offe has helped us to see these movements through their 'metapolitics.' Similarly, some of the cultural work is useful for understanding the potential role of prefigurative experiences as prefigurative 'free spaces.' However, an analysis of movement discourse and more movement-oriented theory is needed to identify precisely what it is that drives the movements and how they understand their task. And "[t]his reorientation should be premised neither on a romantic notion of the everyday as an autonomous place 'free' from relations of domination nor on a pessimistic analysis that theorizes territorialized resistance as equivalent to particular, localized marginality"(Motta 2009, 51). As argued above, movement relevant theory calls for more studies of the potential of movements, and this potential should be identified in terms of both the movements' aims and how they view change can be brought about. As was argued in the previous chapter, the challenge for prefigurative movements is twofold. "Prefigurative strategy involves two crucial

practices: that of confrontation with existing political structures and that of developing alternatives, neither of which could achieve the desired structural changes without the other" (Maeckelbergh 2011, 15).

This thesis will focus on the latter. The emphasis on the development of these alternatives is pertinent, given that despite work into the notion of prefiguration and democracy in social movements (Breines 1980; Della Porta 2005a; 2005b; 2012; Maeckelbergh 2011; Polletta 1997; 1999; 2004; 2005; Schlembach 2012; Yates 2014) no study has actually been carried out on the challenges and potential of prefiguration within the organization. Yet, this is a challenge specific to prefigurative movements and one that requires much more focus given the salience of prefiguration in the movements of today.

This chapter has hopefully negated the assumption that autonomous and prefigurative experiences are automatically marginal or 'immature.' Neither should they be seen as automatically emancipatory. Indeed, prefiguration is the ideology of practice. Thus it should be studied in practice, not in relation to under-defined or assumed goals. Prefiguration succeeds or fails in the day-to-day interactions of the people in the movement. This project, with its emphasis on the practical tenability of prefiguration contributes further to 'movement-relevant theory' and helps to serve those who are actively involved in movements. Indeed, if the theory and practice of autonomous movements see social relations as the foundation for constructing and maintaining any seemingly objective institutions and societal arrangements, as will be argued in the following chapter, then the institutions such as state and capital do not have power outside of the human relations underpinning them. Thus studying movements that do not see power as located in a place or in an institution and consciously seek to construct alternative forms of collective power outside of these institutions calls for focusing not on the official institutions (policy outcomes, influence over politicians, co-optation of SM leadership etc.) but rather on the transformations and challenges in the everyday construction of alternatives.

Thus far a single study has not combined these elements in their approach to prefigurative autonomous movements. The movements do pose a 'meta-political' challenge to existing institutions but they are not just critiquing, but putting in new practices of democracy, as Maeckelbergh and Motta have shown. Maeckelbergh's work on the alter-globalization movement in Europe is interesting as it identifies the key question and looks at it in the European context. Yet, one of the fundamental differences between the European and Latin American context is that the people of the *Piquetero* and Zapatista movements live and work together on a daily basis. It is of course challenging to organize the anti-summit mobilizations and the 'villages' of activists therein "intentionally as a chance to practice, to try out, various ways to organize a community in a more inclusive, sustainable, and egalitarian way" (Maeckelbergh 2011, 2). However, these are more temporary experiences, and based on people voluntarily coming together for a common cause. The real challenge lies in the construction of more permanent experiences where the totality of the collective existence is reflected upon. The work of Motta and Maeckelbergh or Polletta has not systematically investigated the potential of these

new forms of organization to break away from old patterns of social relations in the 'day-to-day' of the movement.

The literature that has offered most potential for capturing the logic of autonomism does not draw much from the existing social movement literature.[52] It seems that much of SM scholarship seems to have lost its significance for movement activists. This point has been raised by Richard Flacks in his review of the influential *Dynamics of Contention* project of McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow. He forcefully asks the authors what purpose this new proposed guideline for the research of contentious politics serves. In his opinion it neither serves those that need to be empowered nor those in power. "The big trouble with McTT's latest work is that it takes us still further away from the public relevance that social movement studies must have in order to make sense" (Flacks 2003, 102).

Given the emergence of recent movements that seem to share many characteristics with autonomous movements, as discussed in the introduction, this is a problem that raises questions about the state and the usefulness of the discipline as a whole.

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[52] Maeckelbergh and Motta for example, do not draw from the SM literature. Katsiaficas's (1997) work on European autonomist movements is another example.

Chapter 3. Challenges to autonomism and the methodological approach for studying them

Introduction

As argued in the previous chapters, the two key sites of contradiction with prefigurative struggles are the relationship with the state, and the movements' own experiences of self-government (Motta 2013a, 15). These are what I have characterized broadly as 'external' and 'internal' challenges, respectively. The dissertation deals with the internal challenges of the movement, and more specifically the challenges and potential of avoiding the reproduction of power and domination within the social movement organization. The research question that has emerged through the project is thus; how far do autonomous movements succeed in prefiguring egalitarian and participatory social organization? This is an understudied aspect of autonomism. Chapter one theorized on the 'strategy' of autonomism. John Holloway's theory was largely used as it provides the most comprehensive understanding of what prefigurative and autonomous movements seek to do. Yet, as explained in chapter one, his theory lacks in consideration as regards the practical challenges of constructing 'power-to.'

This chapter thus picks up the task of considering the tensions and problems in attempts to prefigure horizontal social organization devoid of hierarchy and inequality. In this regard some of the literature on the 'Iron law of oligarchy' will be useful. Similarly, the work of Jo Freeman on the feminist movement and informal elitism helps to direct the attention to particular points of focus. In addition, the work of Donatella della Porta contributes to constructing the indicators of hierarchy (or lack thereof) given the similarities between deliberative democracy and prefigurative decision-making. These discussions in the first part of the chapter serve to narrow and focus the following case studies. Yet, acknowledging that prefigurative social change is a process, we cannot assume the movements to be instantly free of power relations nor can we assume them to have failed if power relations do manifest themselves. Consequently, it seems necessary to relate both of the cases to their 'starting points' by identifying different political and social relations that are likely to create obstacles for prefiguring egalitarian social relations and political forms. The approach to the case studies will thus be one of two phases. In the first instance, it is necessary to analyse the context and history of the movement in order to detect sources of inequality and hierarchy that might carry on to the movement due to social and political traditions. The second phase then looks at the movements' practice in light of both avoiding the reproduction of these hierarchies and the development of new forms. Given the crucial difference between formal and informal oligarchy as shall be elucidated in the first part of this chapter, the case studies shall first look at the formal structures of the movement in light of democracy. This shall then be followed by an investigation as to potential informal hierarchies.

The second part of the chapter argues that participant observations and interviews provide the most suitable way for exploring the potential and the challenges of autonomism as they allow the researcher to see how the decision-making and social relations within a movement manifest themselves in the quotidian. This approach is not devoid of its challenges which will be discussed at considerable length in the third part of the chapter. The discussion includes an outline of the case selection, the role of the researcher, questions of validity and representativeness of the ethnographic fieldwork.

Part one – tensions and challenges for prefiguring alternative social relations

While it may be so that "no movement can relate all means and ends" (Yates 2014, 14) especially if there are multiple stand-points in the movement itself, the notion of horizontality is central to prefigurative politics. Maeckelbergh elucidates (2011, 10):

> The practice of horizontality is believed by many movement actors to be the best way to create equality, because horizontality means actively creating practices that continuously challenge inequalities – both structural and inter-personal. Rather than assuming that equality can be declared or created through a centralized authority that is legitimated to rule by the people, movement practices of horizontality rest on the assumption that inequality will always permeate every social interaction. It, therefore, becomes imperative to acknowledge that these inequalities exist and to set up structures that hold each person responsible for continuously challenging inequalities at every step of a democratic decision-making process. The assumption about power that is built into practices of horizontality is that power always centralizes, and so structures and procedures are needed to continuously challenge this centralization. Horizontality is the process of continuously decentralizing power.

As previously argued, this process of horizontality is key to the 'success' of autonomism and prefigurative politics. This thesis will thus focus on this aspect of these movements. An assessment of the horizontal challenge is best achieved through observations of the decision-making procedures in the movements. In this respect, it will be necessary first to draw from the literature that has explicitly addressed questions of democracy, elitism and oligarchy in social organization. This will facilitate the tightening of the emphasis in way of identifying potential problems.

As outlined in the preceding chapters, while many authors have touched upon this theme, nobody has carried out research into power in prefigurative movements. Moreover, as will be argued shortly, there is a tendency to assume that the absence of formal hierarchy equals the absence of hierarchy altogether. Following the work of Jo Freeman and Darcy Leach – the argument put forth here is that the absence of formally exclusionary practices or institutional arrangements is merely the first step in that it guarantees the absence of formal hierarchy. It does not, however, guarantee the absence of informal hierarchy that can be equally powerful if not even more so given that it can go on unaccounted for. Through theorizing and identifying the challenges to autonomism at the level of the social movement organization and the day-to-day activity therein, the thesis will put forward an approach to assess how well these movement organizations manage to avoid reproducing power

relations in their projects. This will lay the foundation for the following chapter which puts forward the methodological framework with which the case studies were carried out.

Informal elites and the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'

Regarding democracy in social and political organizations, the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' has to be considered. Zald and Ash argue that the influential Weber-Michels model "predicts that a movement organization will become more conservative and that its goals will be displaced in favour of organizational maintenance" (Zald and Ash 1966, 327). Having studied the German Social Democratic party, an organizational manifestation of the international labour movement, Robert Michels concluded that when a movement is faced by the choice between organizational effectiveness and internal democracy, the former would prevail. This would be due to bureaucratization and specialization of the active key members of the movement, eventually leading to a centralized oligarchy that seeks to maintain its power (Michels 1915). However, the organization studied by Michels was not explicitly prefigurative, and thus arguably placed less existential importance on democracy. The discussion on oligarchy still offers many insights as to the dynamics of centralization and oligarchization that are useful to survey.

But what is oligarchy? In her review of oligarchy in SMOs, Clare Saunders argues that most literature has failed to adequately define the concept, due to the assumption that it is understood in light of its Greek meaning (the rule of a few) (2009, 156). Saunders makes good headway towards operationalizing oligarchy, making the crucial distinction between formal and informal oligarchy. She defines oligarchy as "ruling power that belongs to a low proportion of SMO membership" (Ibid). Let us accept this definition tentatively.

Many movements have tried to avoid oligarchy. For feminist movements especially the question of avoiding the reproduction of power has been a key question for long, so for any social movements that seek to create inclusive and egalitarian forms of co-existence, learning from the feminists can be very useful (Eschle 2004). Indeed some of the 1960s and 70s feminist movements were hesitant to accept any official structures in their belief that these would eventually lead to domination. Structurelessness, however, merely led to the emergence of informal hierarchies. Freeman's influential *Tyranny of Structurelessness* (1972) made the argument that: "all groups create informal structures as a result of the interaction patterns among the members" (Ibid, 2). Lack of structures can only prevent the emergence of formal elites, not informal ones who tend to be groups of friends and hence much more difficult to penetrate and hold to account. This is because if we assume that the decision is a collective product and not taken by particular individuals, it is difficult to hold those more influential responsible for it. Indeed, if informal elites are combined with the myth of structurelessness they are free to roam large leaving decision making to their whim. Freeman defines an elite in the following way: "Correctly, an elite refers to a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group,

and often without their knowledge or consent" (1972, 2). Thus, for Freeman, structures are inevitable, and informal ones are more difficult to hold to account. Thus they should be formalized so that all the members can take part in the decision-making. Moreover, given the fact that formal structures do not prevent the emergence of parallel informal elites,[53] in order to avoid elitism, movements ought to commit to the following principles in their organization: 1) delegation; 2) accountability of delegates, and ultimate power with group as a whole; 3) distribution of authority; 4) rotation of tasks; 5) allocation according to rational criteria (as opposed to likes/dislikes); 6) equal access to information; 7) equal access to resources of the group (and skills and information) (1972, 4–5).

Movements have come a long way since Freeman's times. As the case study chapters will show, there are now formal structures in place, ones that correspond well with her recommendations. Moreover, as discussed in relation to Holloway's anti-institutional stance, the movements are not seeking 'structurelessness' but rather try to develop democratic structures where power-over is minimized. It seems that movements have learned from previous experiences to have formal organization so as to limit the inevitable emergence of hierarchies and elites. But this is not to say that there are no problems with these things. And if it is indeed so that there are tendencies for informal hierarchies to emerge, it is necessary to identify how they might go unchecked even in an environment where the preceding safeguards are in place.

In her work, Saunders seeks to address the question of whether smaller social movements are able to better "work horizontally using prefigurative politics to create an ideal democratic setting, or do they too have some democratic weaknesses" (2009, 151)? She argues that the continued support for Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy is largely due to the vague conceptualizations of oligarchy, which for her: "involves a decision-making cadre which excludes the majority" (Saunders 2009, 156). Based on this she calculates the oligarchy score which "divides the number of people in the main organizational decision-making body - whether it be a president (one person), an executive committee (five people) a thematic group (ten people) or an assembly (number specified in the questionnaire) - by the total number of members" (Ibid). She looks at 208 organizations of the Global Justice Movement.

Saunders finds that, accordingly with Michel's theories, larger organizations tend to be more oligarchic. Yet, this is not a necessary development. To illustrate this point, Saunders moves on to contrast Indymedia with ATTAC which self-defines as "an international movement working towards social, environmental and democratic alternatives in the globalisation process" (ATTAC 2014) Indymedia, conversely describes itself as "a collective of independent media organizations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage. Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth" (Independent Media Centre

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[53] Freeman argues: "A structured group always has a formal structure, and may also have an informal one. An unstructured group always has an informal, or covert, structure. It is this informal structure, particularly in unstructured groups, which forms the basis for elites" (1972, 1).

Website 2014). She characterizes these organizations, both forming part of the Global Justice Movement, as 'large and ugly' (ATTAC) and 'large but beautiful' (Indymedia). She argues, thus, that ATTAC suffers from a democratic deficit while Indymedia has managed to be relatively efficient yet at the same time participatory (2009, 164). She focused on three national Indymedia organizations (Italy, Basque country and the UK) all of which were allocated an oligarchy score of 1, "which means that all members get a say in the decisions regardless of organizational size"(Ibid, 165). She argues that Indymedia has managed to avoid oligarchy due to its conscious attempt to avoid hierarchical decision-making (Ibid). Indeed, it is not too surprising that ATTAC is not very democratic in its organization and that Indymedia is, since the former is a traditional organization that believes in change through the formal institutions that operate using hierarchic structures and emphasizes 'organizational efficiency' whereas Indymedia is guided largely by the Zapatista-inspired idea of prefigurative politics (Wolfson 2012). Indeed, Saunders summarizes in her conclusion: "Formal left-wing organizations can only hope to create the type of revolution they are seeking through hierarchically controlled organizations with a largely passive rank-and-file that follows a clearly defined chain of command" (2009, 169).

Accordingly, Saunders finds that small organizations are not necessarily 'beautiful'. In fact, less than ten percent of small organizations had the kind of measures in place as identified by Freeman in order to avoid the emergence of informal hierarchies. In this regard, Saunders argues that the way for groups to avoid hierarchy is to be aware of what she sees as the inevitable emergence of power structures and to struggle against them (Saunders 2009, 168). Again, critical self-reflection is key.

While Saunders' work is an important addition to the literature and speaks powerfully to the biases in the literature, it does not give us the tools to investigate the absence of all forms of oligarchy in social movements. Her measure of oligarchy remains at the level of the quantitative and the formal. For example, using this measure we have no idea of the quality of the deliberation that goes on within the organization. The approach does not allow us to see how many actually take part in discussions and the quality of the discussions therein. Consider a hypothetical situation. An organization is officially assembly-based, but only tenth of its membership participates in deliberations where half of them dominate the discussion and ridicule any opposition. The majority of the membership knows that a group of powerful individuals will manipulate and threaten their way to a decision of their liking and have thus given up participation in the decision-making of the movement. In Saunders' measure this organization would appear as completely participatory since it is formally assembly-based. Hence, while she talks about informal oligarchy, and talks about the need for rotation, transparency, openness, inclusiveness, plurality and accountability, her measure does not allow us to see how these things actually work, and whether they have prevented the emergence of an informal elite. The absence of it can only be assumed.

In order to move beyond the formal element of oligarchy, ethnographic research is necessary. In this regard the work of Darcy Leach is very applicable. She argues, that "treating oligarchy solely as a

feature of organizational structure neglects the possibility that a powerful elite may operate outside of the formal structure" (Leach 2005, 312). Leach's work is a revision of the 'Iron Law' in the contemporary setting. She refers to the fact that the informal and decentralized network structure of NSMs has been identified by many scholars, and many have studied the history of the 'participatory impulse' of recent movements. Yet, she identifies, as we have done in this thesis, that while many have noted the use of decentralized and participatory structures in SMs and identified the common problems therein, nobody has investigated systematically the circumstances and the structures that discourage an oligarchic concentration of power (Ibid, 315). Leach goes further than Saunders by conceptualizing oligarchy as "a particular distribution of illegitimate power that has become entrenched over time" (Ibid, 316).

The author argues, thus, that it is not enough to treat oligarchy in structural terms, as the majority of the literature has done, but rather a two-step approach is needed. "First, one must show that the majority is not structurally prevented from ruling—that is, that the group has a democratic structure of one kind or another. Second, one must show that within this structure, power is in fact distributed broadly enough that no minority (formal or informal) can effectively maintain ruling control"(Ibid, 317). The following table from Leach's work will help to guide the fieldwork (2005, 323).

Table 1. Legitimate and Illegitimate Forms of Formal and Informal Power

	Formal Power	**Informal Power**
Legitimate	*Authority:* *exercised by:* officeholders w/delegated decision-making authority. *how exercised:* making and enforcing decisions in keeping with formal mandate. *majority goes along: willingly*, because they recognize the authority as legitimate and have consented to its delegation.	*Influence:* *exercised by:* non-officeholders empowered by group norms to exert disproportionate influence, but with no delegated decision-making authority. *how exercised:* use of logical persuasion and non-material rewards. *majority goes along: willingly*, because they agree (private acceptance/conversion) and/or they want approval or acceptance (social identification).
Illegitimate	*Coercion:* *exercised by:* improperly-appointed officeholders or non-officeholders who do *not* have delegated authority to make and enforce decisions. *includes:* use of material sanctions/rewards (money, jobs, physical harm …) without or beyond the scope of formal mandate. *majority goes along: grudgingly*, not because they agree or feel authority is legitimate, but simply to win material rewards or avoid material sanctions (public compliance).	*Manipulation:* *exercised by:* non-officeholders who exert disproportionate influence without having been entrusted with that right by the norms of the group. *includes:* emotional or covert manipulation including agenda setting, withholding information, use of non-material sanctions (ridicule, shaming, guilt) *majority goes along:* either *unknowingly* (because they are unaware of deceit) or *unwillingly* (because they want to avoid non-material sanctions).

Leach differentiates, thus between legitimate and illegitimate power both formally and informally. The following quote illustrates (2005, 326–7):

> Thus, a situation of illegitimate authority is either when decisions are made or enforced by people who have not been granted that formal power, or when those who do have legitimate authority either overstep their jurisdiction or use means that are not officially sanctioned to squelch dissent or maintain their

positions. Similarly, a sense of illegitimate influence would arise when (a) decisions are disproportionately influenced by people who are not considered to have that right by the group, or (b) when those who do have that right exceed the scope of their mandate, either by usurping decision-making power or by using means that are not considered appropriate to affect decisions. Another way of saying this is that authority becomes illegitimate when it becomes coercive, and influence becomes illegitimate when it becomes manipulative.

Importantly, Leach specifically distinguishes between 'power-to' and 'power-over' (Ibid, 327):

Note that the model also incorporates the positive, transformative aspects of power. Power-over, a term often used for the more directly causal and unilateral aspects of power, can be found in this model either as authority (both legitimate and illegitimate) or as illegitimate influence. Legitimate influence is more akin to power-to—a socially functional means of personal and collective accomplishment that does not impinge on the freedom or agency of others.

Leach's work thus offers the most suitable framework for practically approaching the question of oligarchy. It is directly applicable to the question at hand, identifying 'power-to' as legitimate form of power, as influence, whereby some may persuade others logically or with non-material rewards and where the majority goes along willingly. She argues that in order to establish the presence of oligarchy, one can either show the absence of a formally democratic structure "or one can show that an oligarchy exists despite a democratic structure" (Ibid, 329).

Indeed, as all of the aforementioned authors acknowledge, formal democratic arrangements do not in any way guarantee the absence of oligarchy or an elite. Neither informal nor formally democratic organizations automatically escape oligarchization. Freeman, for example, argues that "A structured group always has a formal structure, and may also have an informal one" (1972, 1). From Saunders' work we have learnt that movements can potentially minimize oligarchy if they are conscious of the likelihood of power's resurgence. However, her work remained at the level of the formal which is where Leach's work became necessary as it delves into the question of informal oligarchy.

While Leach's work offers great potential for studying oligarchy, she merely puts forward this way to address the question of how and when democratic organizations may be able to avoid hierarchy without carrying out the study herself. This thesis is thus a step beyond her work, in studying those movements that explicitly seek to avoid the emergence of an elite, and have the formal arrangements in place to do so. Indeed, by doing so, this work can contribute further to the question of how oligarchy can be avoided, given that it will use Leach's framework of "an adequate and consistent way of determining whether it has been avoided in different kinds of organizational settings" (2005, 333). In order to address this question, the thesis argues, ethnographic methods combined with qualitative interviews is the appropriate approach. However, before considering the advantages of this approach, the thesis will draw from Donatella della Porta's work on deliberative democracy in Global Justice movements. This will allow a construction of a more set of more concrete factors regarding horizontality that will be focused on in the case studies.

Deliberative democracy and focus of group decision-making in prefigurative movements

The parallel between deliberative democracy and autonomism is that in both instances the idea is to guarantee a just process. The notion of deliberative democracy is based upon the idea that a fair procedure (of decision-making) should guarantee a just outcome (Bohman 1998, 412). In essence, prefigurative movements intend to do precisely this. When dealing with progressive movements that value equality, the principles of deliberative democracy and consequently the challenges faced by it are bound to be related to those of autonomism. In her work, della Porta essentially sought to answer a question very related to the one at the heart of this thesis (2005b, 339): "Already in the past, movement appeals for direct and participatory democracy concealed elitist, manipulative experiences. Is there uncritical reproduction of the same mistakes in today's movements too? Otherwise, what solutions have been elaborated in order to solve past problems?" She found that deliberative democracy was valued by activists in the global justice movement. Yet, she encountered concerns and complaints about "the persistence of opaque mechanisms, stressing, however, as general norm the need to construct visible public spheres" (Ibid, 348). She argues that unstructured assemblies were vulnerable to domination by small minorities that often made use of the weaknesses of direct democracy by way of open manipulation. Similarly, she identified that people's 'speech' resources are not equally distributed resulting in the better organized and most committed dominating the floor. Moreover, she argues that solidarity links tend to exclude newcomers"(Ibid, 337).

When looking at informal hierarchy in movements, Della Porta's seven indicators for deliberative democracy are very useful. She draws widely from the literature in identifying the following: 1) preference transformation; 2) orientation to public good; 3) rational argument; 4) consensus; 5) equality; 6) inclusiveness; and 7) transparency (2005a, 74). Let us draw from each of these concepts and categories one by one to see what they imply for fieldwork and the observations therein.

Preference transformation

Preference transformation implies that people may change their interests through the process of discussing decisions. In terms of changing the social relations, active participation in decision-making should contribute to changing political awareness and transcending personal interests. People's priorities and interests should shift more towards a collective conception of what is the right course of action. However, the transformation should not be forced in a movement that emphasises people's self-determination. For the ethnographic field work this means paying attention to the reasoning guiding the decision-making process. In addition, preference transformation is an important function since it assumes deliberation aimed at constructing consensus rather than assuming pre-defined interests that are voted on. In practical terms, prefigurative decision-making should imply that people are willing to listen to others and look for solutions whereby people's positions can be transcended and a solution that everyone agrees to can be found.

Orientation towards the public good

Orientation towards the public good is perhaps somewhat 'a given' considering that we are talking about a movement where decisions are taken collectively. It is not without its problems, nevertheless. Even though there might not be one 'true' public good, orientation to the public good is certainly more constructive than justifying positions based on self-interest. Of course activists are not assumed to be without self-interest, but the point is to minimize their influence through the process of making decisions for the collective good, and justifying them accordingly. A related question has to do with what constitutes 'public'. Following Fraser's (1997) arguments, there should be no predetermined definitions of what can and cannot be brought into discussion. For example, in the case of the Zapatistas, the traditional role of women requires some challenging of the limits of the 'public' and the 'private'. To address gender problems, we must look at what is considered private and what public. For example, if the roles inside the home are seen as 'private' matters while due to those roles the women are unable to participate in 'public affairs,' this implies significant problems for the idea that the organization should in itself address sources of inequality. Observing these limitations will undoubtedly shed light as to the power dynamics in the groups.

Rational argument

Decisions should be based on rational argument and persuasion due to reason. In this regard, social movements are perhaps not the best place to look for the fulfilment of this characteristic of deliberative democracy, as rightfully pointed out by della Porta (2005b) People involved in movements dealing with issues of inequality and social justice are not likely to maintain a very objective and dispassionate attitude towards these questions. Moreover it is possible that the more experienced, more educated, and those more used to the setting and the discourse of decision-making become privileged. In this vein, the movement's educational efforts should be studied with regards to the potential for bringing the membership's capacities more to a par. But the point of rational argument remains that in a horizontal setting decisions should be based on persuasion according to commonly shared criteria (rational or otherwise) and not on manipulation or threats.

Consensus

This is perhaps the most problematic aspect of collective action without resorting to domination. On the one hand, majority decision-making is a form of domination, that of the majority over the minority. On the other hand, consensus decision-making may serve to reverse the dynamic, by introducing an effective veto of any minority over the decision-making of the whole group. This seems to be the focal point of criticism for the theory of autonomy – at which point does collective decision-making become domination? If the rules to the decision-making procedure were agreed upon by all parties consensually before the decision-making process, are the resulting majoritarian decisions a form of domination or not? This is an aspect that the work will focus on in terms of drawing from the practical experiences of the long-term activists in these movements that seek

consensus when possible. This is one of the likely tensions in prefigurative political action whereby movements can easily get trapped in between two forms of domination. Yet, the orientation to consensus, while acknowledging it might not always be practically achievable, ensures that people articulate their preferences in ways that recognize the viewpoints of others and seeks grounds for inclusion rather than disagreement. Again, like with rational argument, the process should be one of persuasion and not manipulation and the issues should be open to continued debate rather than resorting to assumed entrenched positions and interests (much like party politics).

Equality

For progressive social movements with a democratic and anti-capitalist orientation, equality is of course a key concern. For deliberative democrats, democracy requires equality. "All citizens must be empowered to develop those capacities that give them effective access to the public sphere" (Cited in: della Porta 2005, 74). Everyone should have an equal chance to affect the decisions taken. This means, of course, that everyone should have an equal say in the collective decision-making procedure. However, as discussed already, we cannot of course assume that people enjoy an equal capacity to do so, based on their education or ambition, or for being afraid of being criticized. For the movement to actively promote equality in decision-making (as a way to reject the reproduction of 'power-over'), this implies the need for educational projects and the rotation of important roles, something that both movements under study are actively involved with. Of course, rotation in itself introduces problems in that it might not always guarantee the best and most efficient decision-making. Moreover, it is possible that criteria or prerequisites are devised for those willing to assume a role of delegated responsibility. These criteria may or may not be a product of collective decision-making. Yet, movements that reject the separation between those who lead and those led should seek to prefiguratively reject the development of a group of 'specialists.' We can thus expect tensions therein as well.

Inclusiveness

In addition, in deliberative democracy "all citizens with a stake in the decisions to be made must be included in the process and be able to express their opinions"(della Porta 2005a, 74). In this regard, we would assume for a prefigurative movement to be actively attempting to ensure maximum participation of the membership. And this should go beyond the formal in that the obstacles to taking part in decision-making should be actively sought out and tackled. These obstacles may derive from 'private' roles and responsibilities and other sources of time constraints. In addition, this is related to the capacities to take over rotational roles of responsibility. Prefigurative movements should encourage and facilitate rotation.

On top of the who of inclusiveness, horizontal democracy should also consider the what of inclusiveness.[54] Inclusiveness should account for what constitutes the 'political'. Indeed for many social movements the notions of 'politics' and 'the political' are wider than for conventional politicians, encompassing "a broad array of power relations embedded in the cultural, social, economic, and quotidian as well as the 'conventionally' political spheres. Politics, in short, permeates all social relations" (Escobar and Alvarez 1992, 325). Essentially, then, we can see power operate in social movements by looking at firstly, who is involved in the decision-making process and who is not and why; and secondly what issues are discussed and considered acceptable for public debate.

Transparency

For deliberative democrats, transparency is pivotal. Joshua Cohen for example argues that deliberative democracy is "an association whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members" (Cohen 1989, 17, cited in: della Porta 2005, 74). For movements too transparency is a crucial feature in creating an inclusive and democratic decision-making process. It seems logical to assume that public deliberation could help prevent informal hierarchies from arising and help maintain equality between members due to everyone having access to the same information. Thus, in a prefigurative movement, one would expect to observe a membership that knows how and where particular decisions have been taken and access to all the relevant information needed to actively take part in the process.

Yet, based on the discussions earlier in this thesis, we cannot assume all of these things to fall nicely into place. In that regard, what makes a difference between a prefigurative movement and a non-prefigurative one is self-reflection. Thus, it is assumed that movements will have the tensions we have in our societies, but the point of prefigurative politics is to attempt to tackle these. In order to do so, it needs to be aware of potential hierarchies.

It could be argued, that by using a theoretical framework informed by western understandings of individuality and subjectivity – such as the SM literature, and della Porta's work on deliberative democracy – the thesis risks a bias given that the Zapatistas is a movement composed largely of indigenous Maya. Indeed, it is tempting to argue that the framework is fundamentally inconsistent due to differences between the indigenous view of the individual as fundamentally a part of community, and thus represents yet another case of 'imperial epistemology' (Mignolo 2005). Consequently, the analysis should perhaps be 'decolonized' for 'cognitive justice'.[55]

Yet, I believe that the use of this framework of analysis is justified for three reasons. Firstly, as the case study chapter shows, the Zapatistas themselves fundamentally challenge their own tradition. The discussions internal to the movement that will be analysed in chapter 4 indicate that the role of

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[54] For a good discussion on inclusive democracy, see: Fotopoulos 1997.
[55] As famously argued by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014).

the individual vis-à-vis the community has been actively challenged, particularly when it comes to the role of women. Secondly, while we risk universalizing a western conception by using this framework, it would be equally problematic to assume an essential indigenous subjectivity as something static and unchanging. It would be problematic to argue that the indigenous never feel themselves as individuals. Similarly, prefiguration faces different challenges depending on the context. Although indigenous collectivity may provide a particularly fertile ground for this kind of political activity, it may also pose challenges due to the strong community control over an individual. Thirdly, and most importantly, the influence of the Zapatista experience on Western activists merits an in-depth analysis to unearth potential problems there that might complicate the adaptation of Zapatismo in a different context.

Two-phase approach to case studies

Along with the discussion above, the principles derived from della Porta's work serve as guidelines for focusing the fieldwork observations and interviews. As movements do not emerge from a vacuum, nor is autonomy and prefiguration actually assumed to be complete or perfect; the project makes the assumption that forms of hierarchy will persist in these movements. Consequently, to account for this, one has to begin by a brief historical analysis that seeks to identify the social and political traditions that may influence the prefigurative action. This will be done in the beginning of both case studies. Without making too far-reaching structural arguments, one can identify the likely focal points for problems that can guide the research process further. This will be carried out using movements' own literature as well as secondary material. The aim at this phase will be to identify potential sources of inequality and domination in the movements' respective contexts. In addition, this part of the case studies will serve to highlight the origins of the movements and locate their prefigurative and autonomous impulse to their context.[56]

By the end of the first phase, the project will have identified the different groups and individuals within the movement that are likely to be in a more disadvantaged position. In Chiapas the role of women is particularly problematic, and the elderly people traditionally enjoy more leverage over collective decision-making. In Buenos Aires, conversely, those who had been involved in the movement since its inception are potentially dominant. These will serve as the key points of reference when observing the relations of power within the movement. The second phase of the research will then begin by looking at the formal aspects of democracy in the movements in relation to what traditions the movements officially reject and their compatibility with challenging hierarchy. The bulk of the investigation, however, has to do with looking for potential informal elites. This phase will draw from the above discussion on elitism, oligarchy and deliberative democracy. As the chapter will now proceed to argue, for this purpose the ethnographic fieldwork and interviews are crucial.

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[56] For the set of questions that will guide this phase of the case studies, refer to Appendix 2.

Part two. A methodological approach to studying autonomous movements

In an effort to study the potential of autonomism, I carried out fieldwork in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Chiapas, Mexico. The first round of field work took place between 29 June 2012 and 20 September 2012. This round could be seen as answering the questions: what is the logic driving these social movements? Does it correspond with what I had assumed based on the literature on them? After the first round of field research this logic started to clarify and it became more visible where the key challenges to prefigurative social change lie. The aim in Argentina was to update myself as to those movements that are still active given that much time had passed from the heydays of 2001 and 2002. At the end of the fieldwork I identified FPDS as corresponding with the political ideas important for the thesis. I carried out some initial interviews with activists of MTD Lanús and we agreed that I can return to spend a more extensive time with them in 2013.

In Mexico it proved difficult to gain direct access to the movement. In September 2012 I thus had to resort to a second option which was to go out to Zapatista communities through a local human rights organization, the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre (FRAYBA). I thus spent two weeks in a Zapatista community of San Marcos Aviles in September 2012. Upon my return to Chiapas (7 July 2013 – 27 September 2013) I first spent another two weeks working through FRAYBA in July 2013, this time with Zapatista members in a communal project in the community of 21 de Abril. I did a further two week tour in August-September 2013 in the community of Acteal which hosts another social movement, The *Abejas* ('Bees'). The movement campaigns for indigenous autonomy and aims broadly comparable to the Zapatistas. I also attended the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Zapatista civilian authorities, spending four days in Oventic, one of the five centres. In between these tours much of the time spent in Chiapas was wasted in trying to negotiate access directly with the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, the civilian authorities of the Zapatistas. The plan was to teach English in the Zapatista communities but we were not granted access. Hence, the field research in Chiapas was far from ideal. Yet, at the same time by going to different places within the movement I was able to acquire a better overview of the movement, especially as regards the relationship between the *Junta*s and the communities. Moreover, while in Mexico I carried out expert interviews with local academics and attended a conference on peace building in the local context, and multiple events related to Zapatismo, all of which contributed greatly on my understanding of the movement. In addition, the time spent with the *Abejas* allowed for a very productive comparison a prefigurative and a non-prefigurative group in the same broad context. The important difference between the *Abejas* and the Zapatistas is that the former is not explicitly prefigurative. Correspondingly, the organization is largely run by a small group of men with women completely excluded from decision-making. This was a very useful experience for me in terms of observing the very concrete differences, especially concerning the role of women.

In Buenos Aires, conversely, I was given full access to the movement and encouraged to talk to and interview everyone as well as go work in different projects. This resulted in working with the movement all the weekdays, attending demonstrations, workshops, celebrations and going to the homes of the activists for the ten weeks spent in Buenos Aires during the second round of the field work (23 April 2013 – 1 July 2013). I carried out interviews with 25 members of the movement widely representing the most important demographics of the membership. There is thus an imbalance between the two case studies, with much less access and time spent with Zapatista membership in Mexico. Much of this can be compensated for by the analysis of the materials the Zapatista membership prepared for the 'Little School' in August 2013 whereby almost 1,500 activists and sympathizers spent time in the Zapatista communities studying (with) the movement that way. These materials, more than 300 pages in total, are a self-critical collective product that allow me to investigate the roles between the different groups in the movement, and more importantly, look for the silences in those things that are not considered problematic, particularly regarding the role of women in the movement. In addition, I carried out interviews and discussed with key academics who know the movement well, to compensate for my lack of direct data.

Case selection

What can we hope to establish by focusing on these two social movement organizations? Case study research is usually criticized for its case selection. Indeed, by having chosen to focus on two relatively well established and long-standing experiences of autonomism, namely the Zapatista movement in Mexico and MTD Lanús as part of the Frente Popular Darío Santillán in Argentina, one could be accused of having a 'biased sample.' However, the aim here is not to seek findings generalizable to a wider 'universe' of social movements. The selection of cases is not intended to be a representative sample of a wider population, akin to the quantitative method. The purpose is thus not to make causal arguments about contextual factors, as that would largely remove the agency of the movements themselves. The effect of these contextual factors are nevertheless considered in the case study chapters and the discussion that follows them, and the dissertation as a whole seeks for commonalities in the challenges faced by the movements without aiming for universal generalizations.

Nonetheless, noting that generalizability is not the same as validity or reliability (Stroh 2000, 23), it is possible to conduct research that, despite not being universally generalizable, serves to inform those who are involved theoretically, practically or both, with prefigurative social change. Indeed, as has been argued by Robert Yin and many others, formal generalization is just one way to gain knowledge.[57] While it is commonly held that case studies are only good to generate theory or

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[57] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, vol. 3 (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2003), 32–33; (Flyvbjerg 2006, 10)

hypotheses, Flyvbjerg argues that the generalizability of case studies "depends upon the case one is speaking of, and how it is chosen" (2006, 8). In this he agrees with Yin when the latter argues that the best way for case studies to create knowledge of relevance is analytic or theoretical generalization. In analytical generalization, "the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory" (2003, 37). The point of the case study is thus to expand and generalize theories and in that are more akin to the logic behind experimentation than surveys since "they are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Snow and Trom 2002, 164). The example Yin uses to illustrate this type of research is Jane Jacobs work on New York city which through its engagement with the broader concepts of urban planning such as the role of sidewalks, neighbourhood parks etc. contributed to the theory on urban planning and as such served to guide the research on other cases and became a significant contributing to the study of urban planning (Yin 2003, 38).

The logic underpinning generalization to theory is that the cases to be studied should be chosen precisely according to their relevance to the theory in question. In this regard, Flyvbjerg states that critical or crucial cases are particularly suitable for testing theories (2006, 14). This argument is famously put forward by Eckstein. He argues that "crucial cases" provide the most definitive type of evidence on a theory. He defines a crucial case as one "that must closely fit a theory if one is to have confidence in the theory's validity, or conversely, must not fit equally well with any rule contrary to that proposed." He adds that "in a crucial case it must be extremely difficult, or clearly petulant, to dismiss any finding contrary to the theory as simply 'deviant' (due to chance, or the operation of unconsidered factors)" (Eckstein 1975: 118, Cited in: Hammersley 1992, 181). As an example of a crucial case research, Flyvbjerg cites a study of the 'affluent worker' by John Goldthorpe et al. where the authors deliberately investigated a case that was as favourable as possible to the theory that when the working class reaches middle-class status, they would dissolve into society and lose their class identity and conflictuality. The logic was that if this theory could be seen not to work in the favourable case, it would most likely be false for intermediate cases (Flyvbjerg 2006, 9). The same logic could be seen as underpinning the very study by Robert Michels' that led to his Iron Law of Oligarchy. He chose horizontally structured grassroots organizations with strong democratic ideals, following the logic, according to Flyvbjerg, that "if this organization is oligarchic, so are most others" (Ibid, 230).

Yet, this thesis uses more than one case study. In this regard, Firestone's work is useful for understanding the role of the two cases. Similarly to the above authors, he analyses three types of generalization (sample to population; case to case; analytical) and argues that qualitative case studies offer most potential through analytical generalization "because there are more ways to make links between cases and theories" (Firestone 1993, 22). He argues correspondingly that analytical generalizability can be improved through identifying threats to generalizability within cases, using critical or deviant cases to extend or explore existing theories. In relation to multiple cases, he argues

that "multicase studies can use the logic of replication and comparison to strengthen conclusions drawn in single sites and provide evidence for both their broader utility and the conditions under which they hold" (Ibid). He argues, it is particularly important is to provide theoretically relevant diversity (Ibid).

The case studies here can be considered as following this logic whereby some of the fundamental differences (city vs. country; *campesino* vs. unemployed worker; indigenous vs. *mestizo* and so on) provide theoretically relevant diversity, as per the difficulty of prefiguration. This is due to the assumption that the more cohesive indigenous agricultural community would provide a more suitable environment for prefiguration. Moreover, these cases can be seen as 'crucial' in the sense that if you can see big problems with autonomous practice there, you can expect it elsewhere too. The experience of both Argentinian autonomous movements and the Zapatistas has been very influential for activists and movements elsewhere. Critical cases are chosen according to theory (Hancké 2009, 69). For any work dealing with autonomism the two movements here are fundamental. Similarly, the actual performance of these movements has consequences for the arguments for autonomism as a whole.

Indeed, the aim is not to argue for universal tendencies. Ultimately, we should expect different challenges in different places, deriving from the particularities of power and capitalism in these places. Moreover, prefigurative movements imply active processes, shaped by actors who are themselves conscious (at least to some extent) of these structures. Consequently, the objective is not to argue for a deterministic conclusion, but rather to identity focal points of contradiction and explore ways in which movements may or may not seek to address them. For this purpose the choice of the two crucially different movements should provide a good foundation. If the findings seem to suggest similarly in both cases, despite the differences, as they indeed seem to do, we can be relatively confident that what we are witnessing something that does not require one or two specific contextual conditions. However, there are other strengths and weaknesses that come with the ethnographic method that need to be considered.

Method – strengths

Ethnography

Ethnography is a method traditionally associated with anthropology. The method is mostly linked to participant observation as the "study of others in their space and time"(Burawoy 1998, 25) whereby the researcher gather data participating in the daily life of the natural setting of those studied; "watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities"(Brewer 2000, 59). Indeed, given that prefiguration shifts the focus from the formally 'political' to the everyday life, (Motta 2013a, 10) it is hard to conceive of a better method for studying its potential. However, despite some influential works (Scott 1985; 1990; 2009; Shehata 2009; Wood 2003), ethnography is rarely used in political science (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004). Joseph et al's (2007) survey of two top political science journals, AJPS and APSR revealed that only one article

used ethnographic methods, out of the total 569 and 369 articles respectively. Yet, ethnographic methods are particularly suitable for capturing the day-to-day constitution of political practices (Ibid, 2), as it looks at things as they unfold rather than reading their supposed conditions or outcomes (Tilly 2007, 248).[58] Indeed, for the study of the everyday, ethnography is fundamental (Joseph et al 2007, 6).

> Ethnography is best suited to explore things that cannot be observed directly because they do not have a physical presence in the world, and yet they shape it in very real ways: the implicit assumptions, operating principles, relations among concepts, categories of thought and understanding, all of which people take for granted and do not make explicit—in short, the "structuring structures" of daily life (Shehata 2009, 180).

It is worthwhile to note that there is a difference between ethnography as a method and as a research design. In the anthropological circles it is seen that for an ethnography one needs to spend at least a year with the group studied. Hence, this study is clearly not an ethnography in the anthropological sense, whereby the researcher spends a lengthy period of time with a group of study, intending to 'become native,' following the classics such as Malinowski (1922), Mead (1928), and Evans-Pritchard (1940) to name a few. Yet, it is widely acknowledged that it is often difficult, due to time and funding constraints, to spend a long period 'in the field.' In these situations, one cannot conduct a fully-fledged ethnography in the traditional sense. But it is still possible to apply ethnographic techniques (Fetterman 1998, 480).

What people say vs. what they do

The greatest strength of ethnography is due to the ability for the researcher to contrast what people say (and what is said about them) with what they actually do. Indeed, focusing on this difference, ethnographic methods are needed to be able to move beyond the existing literature on the movements. It has been argued, that for instance when it comes to the Zapatistas, much of the literature tends to take the movement discourse at face value. Almost only critical accounts of the movement come from non-academic sources such as Anarchist activist writings (Mentinis 2006). It is possible that the movements do not in reality differ in any way from past movements. Similarly, it is perceivable, that despite rhetoric, a difference between leaders and 'rank-and-file' exists in autonomous movements. This might manifest itself in the assembly being a mere rubber-stamping function used to inform the membership of decisions taken elsewhere. It is also possible that genuine debate exists in assemblies but decisions are then controlled by informal elite that has managed to marginalize the opposition or has pushed the opposition completely out of the movement itself. Thus it is not enough to take the literature's account on the movements, nor the official institutional arrangements within them, as sufficient evidence for addressing inequality and domination within the movements.

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[58] For a good discussion about the potential of ethnography in political science, see: Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004; Joseph, Mahler, and Auyero 2007; Wedeen 2010.

Indeed, in their analysis of the potential for ethnography in political science, Joseph et al. identify that the difference between the official rhetoric and the everyday can be highlighted with ethnography (2007, 2). The authors refer to institutional politics, but there is no reason to believe that the same logic would not apply to social movement discourse. Ethnography thus allows for the researcher "to 'get under the skin' of a group or organization to find out what really happens - the informal reality which can only be perceived from the inside"(Gillham 2000, 11). Indeed, as Gillham outlines: "it is not what people have written on the topic…It is not what they say they do. It is what they actually do (which may also be reflected to some extent in records)"(Ibid, 46). In essence, ethnography is good for investigating 'preference falsification' (Wedeen 2010, 262) – the incentive to misrepresent privately held preferences in fear of social or political repercussions (Kuran 1995). For instance, Scott's powerful ethnography of village relations in Malaysia showed a remarkable difference between 'onstage' and 'offstage' behaviour of the poor vis-à-vis the rich, "to the extent that the deference expressed in public, power-laden situations is negated in the comparative safety of offstage privacy, we can speak unambiguously of false deference" (1985, 25). As argued by Wedeen (2010, 262), ethnography allows for the researcher to look for these 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1990). Assuming that power reproduces itself in autonomous movements, we have reason to assume that preference falsification will have reproduced itself too. Consequently, this is likely to influence the way in which people respond to questions in interview and conversational situations. If we assume that there is indeed an elite, this elite might set the parameters of the 'official' or public 'transcript.'

Moreover, it is not only 'preference falsification' due to fear of persecution that might influence what people say. It is well acknowledged in the literature that people often mislead, evade or put up fronts in interview situations (Fine 1993, 271). Ultimately a researcher can never be completely sure if people are telling the truth. Consequently, alongside interviews, ethnography is needed to investigate possible informal hierarchies. Ethnography allows for exploring the crucial difference between formal and informal forms of hierarchy. Participant observations thus allow us to move beyond the reliance on the formal level where we take as given what the movements say or what often sympathetic academics say.

Openness of the method

Another strong suit of ethnography has to do with its somewhat flexible nature. This flexibility allows for testing new ideas, change strategy and direction of research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 24). One might also discover new data sources or come across unexpected findings that lead to changing the theory or emphasis of the research (Snow and Trom 2002, 154).

In this regard there is some tension between more anthropological and political approaches to ethnography. Political scientists often view ethnography as merely a way to collect 'raw data' for already established theories (Wedeen 2010). Conversely, anthropologists tend to view ethnography as a process where in the course of the research the inquiry becomes more focused on a specific set of

research questions (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 3). This view can be summarized as follows: "…you do not start out with a priori theoretical notions (whether derived from the literature or not) - because until you get in there and get hold of your data, get to understand the context, you won't know what theories (explanations) work best or make most sense" (Gillham 2000, 2). However, I believe that it is inevitable that the researcher develops some theory even before field research – how else would he or she know where to look for interesting phenomena? The fact that the researcher is interested in a particular set of phenomena (and not, say, getting to know a cultural group) already implies some theoretical and contextual consideration.

This thesis is thus somewhere in between these two positions. While no very dramatic changes have taken place[59], the research design has in no way been a straightforward choice or something that predates the fieldwork. In fact, many of the methodological choices and the theoretical understanding of prefigurative politics have only fallen into place before or during the second round of fieldwork. Indeed, I would argue that if one conducts field research and comes back with the theoretical framework intact, he or she is likely not to have conducted the research properly. Curiously, case studies are widely perceived to suffer from a bias towards verifying theories, that people have the tendency to look for evidence that validates their theories (Flyvbjerg 2006). I would argue that the case is quite the opposite. Unlike with the survey method with standardized questions, the people studied through ethnography can talk back, or even shout back and it is very difficult to ignore behaviour that does not correspond with hypotheses and assumptions or if people identify different motivations and values that guide their behaviour. In this regard, as a product of the literature on the Zapatistas and *Piqueteros* where criticisms are few and far between, I was expecting to encounter quasi-utopian social groups with a purely egalitarian social organization rather than what I end up reporting in the case studies.

My experience is not uncommon. Flyvbjerg has shown that many who have conducted in-depth case studies "typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points" (2006, 235). I join him in seeing this as a positive characteristic of case studies. Indeed, we should seek to falsify our preconceived notions through engagement with the 'field.' However, one needs some theoretical understanding to be able to collect the right kind of data, for it to inform the fieldwork (Yin 2003, 28). Yet, the sobering effect of ethnography comes from its "capacity to depict the activities and perspectives of actors in ways that challenge the dangerously misleading preconceptions that social scientists often bring to research…" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 23). Regarding this project, the first round of fieldwork helped to clarify and identify the theory in order to systematize and better focus the second period 'on the ground.' In addition, the fact that I went to

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[59] This is probably due to the fact before the first field work period I had not defined very clearly the theory – at that time I was still looking for answers in the SM literature.

Buenos Aires three times allowed for some longitudinal research which gave me the opportunity to observe the development of some important conflicts within the movement, as will become evident in the case study chapter.

Interviewing

While participant observation often includes serendipitous informal interviews that are recorded in field notes (Mills et al. 2009), these informal conversations and observations do not necessarily provide the opportunity to understand completely the motivations and dynamics of the group. Yet, a fieldwork-based approach is advantageous in that it allows for triangulation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 24; Snow and Trom 2002, 150). This can be achieved through comparison of cases, the use of different observers of the same situation or through different ways to collect data. In this regard, while the approach here is not necessarily a comparison, the findings from both cases will feed into the general discussion on challenges of prefiguration. More importantly, however, interviews were carried out in order to pursue further the themes that emerged as important. Observing the activities does not necessarily explain why people do them. Neither, can we assume that everyone has the same motivations or understanding of the activity they participate in. Some might not even be interested in the political aspect or care about prefiguration. We also cannot assume people's motivations from their structural position as unemployed or landless indigenous peasant. Through interviews I sought to address these aspects. In addition, for the difference between movement discourse and practice, I analysed the written materials produced by the movements. In Mexico, due to the lack of direct access and the inability to carry out interviews with the membership, the analysis of the 'Little School' materials effectively supplement for interviews in terms of what people say about their activity. This proposes some problems that will be discussed shortly.

In terms of the types of interviews, I decided to carry out semi-structured interviews. These relatively unstructured interviews seek to strike a balance between flexibility and structure (Gillham 2005, 70). The flexibility in the interview situation means that the absence of formal structure gives greater freedom for respondents to answer accurately and in depth (Brewer 2000, 66). This should help to avoid restraining the interviewee's meanings with formality (Ibid). Yet, while the aim is to create a conversation-like situation, it is pertinent to cover the important themes. Carrying out these "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess 1988) I thus had questions that I wanted to cover, but I did not always cover them exactly in the same order. Most of the time after a while we would have covered most of the important topics. However, if this was not the case, I did as is typical in semi-structured interviews, which is to ask supplementary questions at the end of the interview if important topics had not been covered spontaneously (Gillham 2005, 71).

The benefit of qualitative, semi-structured interviews is to avoid forcing people's responses to particular characteristics. This further contributes to the researcher's confrontation with his/her biases (Stroh 2000, 198). Moreover, this format allows for pursuing themes that emerge from the interview

moment itself. Fundamentally, the aim is to be able compare responses of different participants while "simultaneously seeking to fully understand their unique experiences" (Mills et al 2009, 296). Yet, scholars highlight the need to ensure that ultimately the same questions are posed to everyone; that the kind and form of questions developed ensures topic focus; that supplementary questions are used to stitch up any holes, and that the same amount of time is allowed for all interviews (Gillham 2005, 71).

The method of relatively unstructured interviews is viewed by many ethnographers as an important way to access the 'inside'. They view it necessary to develop close relationships with the respondents before the interviews, and by combining the method with observation (Brewer 2000, 67). This is what I did. Interviewees were approached based on their role in the organization that I had derived from observations. I first made initial contact, often talking informally about their work in the organization. I then organized for a time to carry out an interview later. In some of the contacts there was an element of 'snowballing' whereby a 'key informant' would say I should interview somebody they know and they would introduce me (O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994). While this helps build rapport, it introduces the risk of relying on the accounts of a particular group of people. I was conscious of this, and actively sought to address any imbalances of the demographics of the interviewees. These considerations will be elaborated on in the case study chapter.

The setting for the interviews was almost every time the workplace of those interviewed, so as to not introduce a more official setting and to make sure the interviewees were comfortable. At the beginning of the interviews I reviewed informed consent, and started by obtaining background information and demographics, all of which serves to ease any tension (Mills et al. 2009, 298). I used a small digital recorder to document the interviews. This of course adds a certain serious element to the interviews. However, justifying this in terms of not wanting to lose anything and not wanting to focus on taking notes but rather pay attention to the interviewee quickly made people forget about the presence of the recorder when they warmed up, as Gillham argues usually happens (Gillham 2000, 69). Moreover, I would start with easier and less threatening questions first and move onto more sensitive topics both at the end of the interviews and at the end of my stay in Buenos Aires. These things helped me establish the rapport necessary for effective interviewing (Brewer 2000, 66). At the end of my stay in Buenos Aires people were used to me; they knew I would not disclose the information to others in the movement. The interviews at the end my of stay proved to be very decisive due to all of these factors, and people started to confide in me, providing very sobering accounts of the reality in the movement, proving quite fundamental for the overall findings.

The methodological approach adopted is naturally not devoid of challenges. The chapter will now turn to considering the limitations of this approach.

Part three. Challenges of the method
Access

Ethnography is a method where the tool of the research is the researcher himself. This means some kind of a role needs to be assumed, this usually implies negotiating a balance between an 'insider' and an 'outsider'. The best role, according to Brewer includes a bit of both, giving the researcher the opportunity to participate while simultaneously reflecting critically on what is going on.(Brewer 2000, 59–60) In practical terms, there are varying locations on the scale between a complete participant and a complete observer – 'complete participant', 'participant-as-observer', 'observer-as-participant', and 'complete observer' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 82). The role that one can take on depends on both questions of access as well as one's personal characteristics. In the two places I assumed a rather differing role. In Argentina I was much more 'participant' as the context is more familiar to me and I could relate more to the activists and vice versa, having had similar experiences back in Europe. In Argentina access was also much easier for me, and I effectively spent the time working daily in different projects of the movement. In Mexico, conversely, the Zapatistas have not been very keen to allow researchers into the communities, which in my case meant having to go in as a human rights observer through a local NGO. In Mexico I was also unable to conduct interviews with the membership. Yet, naturally, being a white European male with a weird accent effectively rules out the role of complete participant in either case. Moreover, in Mexico especially due to differing gender roles, there was difficulty developing rapport with women, a problem noted in the literature (Punch 1994, 87). In both places, I ended up spending more time with males, which inevitably means that some of the female perspective is lost. Conversely, in both cases people were aware of my sympathy for the movements and dedication to social change. This is a factor that cannot be overstated in relation to its significance for establishing rapport. In Buenos Aires for example, I was often asked whether I am also a 'revolutionary.' Had this not been the case, I am sure that I would have encountered much more suspicion. Moreover, having some activist history myself, I tend to dress and behave in a way not unlike those in Buenos Aires. In Mexico, the cultural gap is wider. Yet, working through FRAYBA creates trust as it is based on ideological sympathy and solidarity with the movement. Moreover, people in the communities that FRAYBA works with are used to foreign volunteers and hence likely more approachable than people in other communities had I gone by myself.

In addition, the difficulty of access to the Zapatista base communities and the easiness by which I gained access to the movement in Buenos Aires provide evidence of power dynamics in both cases that will be discussed in the respective chapters. In field research situations, gatekeepers are widely acknowledged as playing an important role in granting or denying access (Punch 1994, 86). Indeed, introducing the researcher to the setting always provokes some kind of reaction. Yet, this is not necessarily all negative. As Hammersley and Atkinson argue: "…instead of treating reactivity merely

as a source of bias, we can exploit it. How people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations" (1983, 15).

Validity through reflexivity

Related to one's role in the community studied, traditionally the validity of ethnography has often been seen (at least before the 'interpretive turn'[60]) as deriving from the ability to 'go native' following the classic works of Malinowski (1922) and Mead (1928). Having reviewed most of the classic ethnographies, Davies argues that there is a tendency among ethnographers to view the validity of their findings as dependent upon the ethnographer becoming a part of the group studied (2008, 104). I see complete participation in these cases as a practical impossibility. Moreover, the naturalist foundation for validity has been problematized. Ethnography's authority in terms of representing social reality in a straight-forward way has largely been rejected (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 13). Instead of seeking to 'become native,' ethnographers seek to uncover their 'package' and be reflexive in terms of their standpoint (Davies 2008, 104). Davies proposes alternative criteria: "what I argue here is that ethnographic methods may produce valid knowledge without complete participation and total acquisition of local knowledge by ethnographers so long as they honestly examine, and make visible in their analysis, the basis of their knowledge claims in reflexive experience" (2008, 104). Moreover, complete inclusion is not always desirable (Gottlieb 2006, 61). Samer Shehata elucidates, in relation to his study of shop floor culture in Egypt: "Not fitting easily into already established categories and my unwillingness to play by the rules of the game made these categories, and the class structure of which they are a part, more apparent" (2009, 179). Indeed, the researcher's potential collision with some of the 'natural' ways of doing things might be productive for unearthing the assumptions and practices underpinning the social organization.

Indeed, if one of the advantages of the field work is not to rely solely on other people's accounts, and to be able to see whether the organizational arrangements of the movements actually function the way they do, the problem still remains how to avoid having a biased account. I agree with Fine, that in ethnography it is impossible to ever be completely objective (Fine 1993, 286). Two people looking at the same scene can easily see different things – our preconceptions guide what we find important and what we observe in the first place. Julia O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layder's *Methods, Sex and Madness* (1994), for example, makes a powerful argument for how it is impossible to divorce common sense assumptions from research. Yet, they and others who argue similarly do not promote the complete abandonment of aiming for objectivity.[61] While objectivity might ultimately be unattainable, abandoning it completely would be like conducting surgery in a sewer, as they put it (O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994, 28). In this regard scholars argue for reflexivity as the main

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[60] E.g: Geertz 1973; Gottlieb 2006.
[61] Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 17; Wedeen 2010, 263–4.

way in which ethnographers seek validity and reliability (Delamont 2004, 214). Challenging further the classic assumption of 'going native' it is debatable to what extent the 'field' remains 'natural' when the external observer enters it. I agree with Gillham's statement: "A research investigation is not neutral; it has its own dynamic and there will be effects (on individuals, on institutions) precisely because there is someone there asking questions, clarifying procedures, collecting data. Recognizing this is part of doing good research. Ignoring it is bad 'science'" (Gillham 2000, 7). He adds: "you don't deal with the 'observer effect' by denying it: you look out for the probable influence of your presence" (Ibid 47). In the case of this research, I have already discussed some of the likely effects my person had on the research setting. Moreover, I think people in the movements were trying to 'paint me the beautiful picture' as one of the last interviewees in Buenos Aires argued, probably since they knew I am interested in democracy and decision-making.[62] Indeed, it has been acknowledged by case study researchers that people have a tendency to hide actions and attitudes they consider undesirable (Punch 1994, 91). The reflexive considerations will be further continued in the case study chapters.

In sum, although we can recognize the ways in which the 'field' and ourselves change when entering it and that it is pertinent to take into account the power-laden and transformative aspects of all research, this " is not an excuse to shy away from explanation or theorizing," as Wedeen puts it (2010, 263–4). Following this discussion, and especially Davies' proposition of making one's standpoint explicit in drawing conclusions, the case study chapters will seek to make very visible the thought process and the observations that any arguments are based upon. To highlight the choices I have made along the process is also why I have chosen to write this chapter in the first person.

Representativeness

While we might not view the representativeness of the cases vis-a-vis the 'population' of SMs as a necessary prerequisite for generating knowledge of potential for use elsewhere or theoretically, case studies should seek internal representativeness. When trying to tease out possible informal hierarchies, it is useful to remember that "even the most homogenous group will contain varying perspectives, and ethnographers should be aware of alternative perspectives, even those to which they may not have access, for example due to their gender" (Davies 2008, 97). To create as a balanced account as possible, one needs to seek to include everyone's voices. Even if it might not be possible to ever create a truly 'representative' account of any social phenomenon, representativeness certainly serves as a good guideline and aim, and there is no reason to abandon it despite its apparent practical impossibility.

Stroh recounts how in the beginning of his research he listed factors that seemed important for the project, and made sure that he had interviewees from each category (2000, 201). In this project, thus, I

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[62] For example, the way in which one of the key interviewees related the decision-making in the movement changed drastically as we became more familiar and he increasingly gave up on the 'official story.'

chose to focus on the relations between the different categories of people within the movement, some of them based on assumptions about generally strong sources of identity (e.g. age, gender, income, education, past experience of political activity) whereas some of these categories derived from the fieldwork itself (e.g. length of participation in the movement; whether one is a member of the decision-making bodies; the different work people do in the movement; and ideological differences). With this in mind I carried out interviews with the membership aiming to represent all of the categories adequately. Furthermore, in order to get the most representative panorama of the movement, it seemed crucial to find those who no longer participate in the movements' activity. Similarly, ideally in a democratic movement 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1985) should not exist, but it is reasonable to assume that power relations might have factored in some decisions to leave the movement. Interviewing people of different positions within the movement and being as open as possible regarding the way in which the conclusions were reached should tackle some of the problems with partiality through a more reflexive approach.

Achieving a representative account is practically quite difficult. For example, key 'informants' can exclude others in the group of study. In Buenos Aires, I became quite familiar with a group of people in the early phase of my research, and I became associated with them. Their relationship with other members of the group started to define the perception by others of me as 'one of them' and consequently I had to work to shake off any assumptions that might come with that, especially since there was conflict between these groups of people. Moreover, in both cases it was very difficult to get access to past members. Hence one potentially important voice is effectively silenced in Mexico and quiet in Argentina. This problem will be addressed by using other accounts on the movements, in order to estimate the experiences of those who no longer take part in the movements.

Research and power – the ethics of ethnography

Due to the intensive nature of the relationship with the research setting and the extended period spent with the research group, ethnography implies particular ethical issues that need to be considered (Jones 2014). As ethnographers, we have a responsibility to safeguard our subjects of study who have granted the privilege to peak into their world and share it with them, however momentarily.

Moreover, ethnography can have political significance, and it is not always necessarily positive for those studied. In this regard, I agree with Hyatt and Lyan-Callo when they say that as ethnographers, we have a "particular responsibility to engage with our ethnographic subjects as partners and collaborators and even as their co-activists in bringing about social change and social justice" (Hyatt and Lyan–Callo 2003, 134). Indeed, from its inception this research project has been driven by a commitment to critical theory. However, throughout the course of these three years, my understanding of what that means has changed quite significantly. At a point in my research I came to lean towards a notion of critical theory as having to do not only with the content of research but also the way in which it is produced. Yet through some practical considerations as to how to carry out

research regarding power in prefigurative movements, I have had to problematize this approach to researching movements. Let us first explain the approach, before problematizing it in the context of this dissertation.

As Hammersley outlines: "many recent versions of critical ethnography also depart from orthodox Marxism in presenting critical theory as the outcome of collaboration between researchers and oppressed, rather than the former bringing to the latter a theory that will dispel their ideologically generated ignorance and/or confusion"(Hammersley 1992, 102). Some thus argue, that for research to truly serve emancipatory purposes it should reject the understanding of the academic as somehow external to power relations and being in a privileged position as regards knowledge production. Motta and Nilsen's idea of 'prefigurative epistemologies' is particularly persuasive in this regard, (Motta 2011) along with the Participatory Action Research framework that builds on Freirean theory (Fals Borda 1996). Similarly, Hale (2006, 97) argues that the group studied should shape each phase of the process of research. Mato (2000) argues for 'studying with' the subaltern, not 'studying them.' Concrete examples of this kind of work include the work of the Autonomous Geographers Collective,[63] and Jennifer Martinez's PhD dissertation with the Urban Land Committees in Venezuela (Martinez 2011).

I was unable to carry out my research in this way – mainly because this has been a learning process for me, and it is impossible in the end to go back and include the subjects of the study in the process of devising of the research questions if one has not done so to begin with. These problems are not uncommon, however. Martinez talks about the difficulties PhD students face when trying to carry out movement- relevant research, mainly due to the institutional requirements and expectations (Martinez 2011: 19). The Autonomous Geographers Collective reported lamenting not thinking about certain things before the project and consequently ending up reproducing the dichotomy between activists and academics (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010). In my case, this understanding of critical theory has developed during the research process, and consequently I was not able to harmonize the distinction between the 'time of solidarity' and the 'time of writing'(Routledge 1996, 402). Correspondingly, Kalra distinguishes between ethnography as writing – the research product – and practice - the field research, participant observations. In practice it is possible to do much solidarity work: participating in the campaigns, providing help with any activities, publicizing the movement's material and other information about the movement etc. Conversely the writing is bound by various conventions (Kalra 2006) As an example, Kalra mentions Goode's (2004) doctoral thesis with the *sans papiers* in France. Goode engaged in much solidarity work but the academic product was not directly related to improving the conditions of those studied (Kalra 2006, 466).

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[63]For an overview of the project, see: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-23-0957/outputs/Download/fe11acfd-e8d0-4676-b7f9-25911adcd123

Similarly, during the 'practice' half of the ethnography, I engaged in as much solidarity work as I could. In Chiapas the human rights observations serve the purpose of defending vulnerable communities. In both places my pictures were used for the movements' purposes, I attend solidarity marches and kept a blog to publicize the movements' struggles in both places. In Buenos Aires, I paid my membership '*aporte*' and worked in different projects of the movement. I also took part in doing an art project in commemoration of the 11-year anniversary of the two movement 'martyrs' in June 2013. Related to the event, I took part in an art project which I turned into a small documentary. Indeed, as Kalra suggests that ethnography focusing on participation might be "the most significant contribution that can be made by ethnographers to a political process" (2006, 456).

While many of the abovementioned scholars promote a methodological approach that aims at eliminating or at least minimizing the distinction and power relation between the academic and the 'research subject,' and while I find this approach somewhat appealing, it is necessary to problematize this idea in the context of this research.

Indeed, if we assume that hierarchy exists, we cannot assume that collective knowledge production between the academic and the movement would be free of the effect of this hierarchy. If one was to follow some of the more radically 'movement-relevant' methodologies, such as PAR, on top of having the academic peer review process, the work would have to be reviewed by the movement. In effect, thus, the research would be subjected to the force of the assumed informal elite, potentially resulting in more 'clean' and romanticized accounts of egalitarian and directly democratic movements that in reality might be something different altogether. Indeed, as Schell has argued, intra-organizational politics may easily lead to a bias (1992, 12).

Consequently, I was unable to be completely open about the specific research question that I was investigating and what I was expecting to find, that being an informal hierarchy within the movement. This is partially due to the nature theory development in this project. As noted by Fine, ethnographic methods often rely on 'grounded theory' in the sense that ethnographers often do not know what they are looking for until they have found it (Fine 1993, 274). In my case I started with the idea of looking at participation in the movement which I would have then related to material outcomes for the membership. At first contact I thus explained that I am interested in democracy and participation in the movement. Hence, while I was completely open about my role as a researcher, I was only asked twice for my specific research interest later on (that being power and hierarchy) to which I responded honestly. This does not change the semi-covert nature of my research, which bothers me.

Yet, all research is always secret in some ways, as Roth has argued, because the subjects can never know absolutely everything (Fine 1993, 277). Had everyone been completely aware of the specific research question, this would have undoubtedly influenced the way in which people answer the questions in the interviews as well as the kinds of activities they would allow me to see. At the same time, informed consent is viewed as an important element of field research as it is a way to protect powerless and vulnerable groups (Thorne 1980). I reviewed consent in each interview – and

told them if there is anything they do not want me to say, just say not to use it. Acknowledging the power I have in this regard, I have to be very sensitive with my treatment of the movement in the way I write about them, so as not to harm those who have honestly explained me the problems within the movement and their take on who is in charge. Consequently, my field notes and photos were kept in encrypted and hidden folders on my computer. Moreover, even though I have not been explicitly asked to anonymise any of the findings, I will do so for any publication.

In sum, the political commitment of the research is explicit. Yet, it serves to guide the questions asked rather than the findings. Critical social science can be sympathetic to the movements and desire social change, while not letting that hinder the findings. Ultimately, failing to address the research question adequately would be a disservice to the movements as well as others that aspire to autonomism. Looking at these established experiences of autonomism will help us assess the viability of prefigurative and autonomous political action as a whole. While these movement themselves are not trying to 'indoctrinate' anyone but rather stress the context of their experiences, their practise is still hugely influential and sometimes even tried to implement elsewhere as a template.[64] Moreover, elsewhere in the thesis I have highlighted the problems with the academic engagement with these movements and the consequent degree of romanticization of them.

In this regard, there are some benefits to this approach. Firstly, since the topic is something as sensitive as trying to identify whether the movement has developed informal hierarchies, it does not seem very easy to do that completely openly nor in a collective process. Moreover, activist theorizing may end up reproducing the accepted wisdom, "to be embedded in unreflected cultural constructs, and a limited conceptual armoury" (Barker and Cox 2002, 4). It is reasonable, thus, to see how well prefiguration actually works, and the difference between academic and movement accounts on the one hand, i.e. what people say, and what they actually do. The aim here is then not to produce this 'activist theorizing' (Geoghegan and Cox 2001), which attempts to explain both how the structures that activists grapple with work and how 'best practise' activism can change it" (Barker and Cox 2002, 4). The emphasis here is at evaluating the practise, but not in the strategic way of identifying pre-set goals or aims, but focusing rather on the practise itself, as is fitting due to prefigurative understanding of political change.

This is hugely important given the emergence of recent movements seemingly influenced by this logic. The question of power in prefigurative movements, despite its sensitive nature and potential negative feedback from the movement itself, is undoubtedly one of the most important questions for movements of this kind, being the central piece of their view of social change. The argument put forward here is that PAR and other more movement-(co)directed methodologies do not provide a very good foundation for addressing the issue of power. Instead, the only way to assess these experiences

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[64] Most visible is the experience of the Indymedia movement and the debates about 'implementing Zapatismo' therein (Wolfson 2012).

critically is to not buy into the assumption of purity of the movement. Indeed, movement relevant theory cannot be uncritical of a favoured movement (Bevington and Dixon 2005, 191). And a potentially critical response from the movements does not negate the movement relevant potential of this type of research (Ibid, 199).

Conclusion

The chapter began by tightening the focus for the case studies. The first part thus argued that Holloway's theory needs to be complemented with work concerning more directly with questions of hierarchy and elitism in social movements. In particular, the difference between formal and informal hierarchy and the corresponding measures was found crucial. Consequently, the first part drew from Donatella della Porta's work in using the indicators of deliberative democracy to hypothesize what one would assume to observe in a movement that is seeking to prefigure democratic alternatives to existing politics.

The second part of the chapter then put forward the method for the second phase of the case studies, that being participant observations combined with semi-structured qualitative interviews with document analysis. This approach is the most suitable for observing hierarchy in the everyday social life since it gives the researcher the opportunity to move beyond relying on the identified formal arrangements that may only guarantee the absence of a formal hierarchy without a guarantee for eliminating informal hierarchy. Ethnography, furthermore, is the only method that permits the researcher to observe social relations in the natural setting of the group. Triangulation between interviews, documents and observations, moreover, allows for contrasting between what people say and what they actually do. Moreover, interviews provide the opportunity to pursue further the themes that emerge as important.

In addition, the chapter considered the challenges to the adopted approach. The case studies chosen run the risk of a bias. However, given their theoretical prominence, they should provide a good basis for generalizing analytically, given their 'crucial' nature for autonomism. The imbalance between the case studies and the other factors influencing the research deriving from access and the role of the researcher were also contemplated. In this regard, the work places much emphasis on reflexivity to account for different factors that may influence both how people behave as well as how I perceive their behaviour. Moreover, it was deemed important to seek representativeness of the different groups within the organizations.

In order to proceed, the dissertation will first look at the historical sources of inequality deriving from both the social context and the political organizations and traditions therein. In the process the prefigurative nature of the movements will be showed in more detail. In the second phase of the case studies, the movements' 'official' organizational arrangements will be viewed in the light of hierarchy before proceeding into investigating the existence of potential informal elites.

Chapter 4. Zapatismo and the challenges of autonomism

It is the morning of 27 July, 2013, our 11th day in 21 de Abril, an abandoned Zapatista community in the region of Morelia that has been deserted due to paramilitary harassment. We – 44 Zapatista shift workers from the region of Oventic, all male, I, and two other observers from FRAYBA – have been working hard constructing a fence around the territory which is 200 hectares in size (Picture 1). Only to walk around the whole of the hilly terrain takes about two hours, so the task is enormous.

The day before many of the younger Zapatista men have shown that they are becoming increasingly tired of the work, both physically and emotionally. Indeed, the work is heavy. We fell trees that are split and cut into poles of 2-3 meters in length. These poles are then lifted and propped up in the deep holes dug every five meters to form the fence. Barbed wire is then stretched in three lines across the poles to complete the fence. Our work is complicated by the fact that as soon as a new part of the fence is mounted up, in the night the people from the neighbouring village allied to ORCAO, a paramilitary organization, break parts of it. They cut the wire, take the poles for firewood or just throw them away (Picture 3-4). Only between 24 - 31 July we observed 79 fence posts that had been knocked loose, thrown off or carried away. The work of us observers is to document these actions and provide the information for the *Junta* to put pressure on the municipal authorities in their negotiations.

The leader (coordinator) of the group, an ex-EZLN insurgent, Artemio of his *nom de guerre*, is pushing the men hard trying to get as much of the fence done as possible before their two-week shift in 21 de Abril is over. The long work days and fatigue has made especially the younger men in the group very unhappy. They have very poor food with them given that they are far from home. Moreover, the monotonous daily rations of beans and tostadas (toasted corn tortillas) have been cut down because the *Junta* ordered the men to share their food with us. Many have had diarrhoea due to the bad quality of the river water that we drink. On top of this it is very hot during the day. Generally the mood has gotten very sombre, especially since yesterday was the third consecutive day that the work had gone on well beyond the agreed 2:30pm.

Thus, this morning I wake up when my fellow observer comes to tell me about a 'mutiny' of the young Zapatistas (Picture 2). They are not going to go to work unless Artemio guarantee them that they will actually finish work at the agreed time. He conceded and the rest of the time the work group stuck to the agreed working hours.

This experience serves to illustrate many of the problems in the Zapatista movement. Firstly, the movement is largely dependent on NGOs like FRAYBA for materials and support. Secondly, the construction of autonomy is demanding for the membership that has often had to sacrifice potential material prosperity since the movement rejects any state support. Participation in the movement is also very time-consuming and hard work, like the case of these shift workers illustrates. Thirdly,

practices of 'power-over' linger on. In this regard, especially the hand of the military elements is still visible in the overall management of the movement. Fourthly, the movement's dispersion geographically made necessary the regional coordination through the *Juntas*. The *Juntas* enjoy considerable power over the individuals and communities in the movement. Moreover, the absence of women in this case speaks to the continuation and persistence of strong gender roles and inequality within the movement. Yet, the 'mutiny' shows that the movement's principles of *mandar obedeciendo* and the discourse of democracy provides tools for those in the movement, such as the young and women to challenge remaining hierarchic practices and the democratic void.

To make these arguments, the chapter is structured as follows. To investigate the potential of the prefigurative element of the Zapatista movement, it is necessary to begin by explaining the conditions that led to the uprising of 1994. In particular, the legacy of past movements in Chiapas and the state's responses to them help understand why the movement took the form it did. The Catholic Liberation theology, independent peasant and indigenous movements as well as Maoist groups all mobilized to address land issues and the inequality of the indigenous Mayan peasants in Chiapas. The Zapatista movement can be viewed as a convergence of these movements. Yet, as a reaction to their perceived failures and due to the indigenous peasant's disillusionment with their ability to deliver the change they desired, the Zapatista movement sought to take further the democratic and community-control impulse of the previous movements and saw increasing autonomy from Mexican political system and the armed struggle as the only way to change. The historical analysis of the contextual factors and past efforts to address the core issues underpinning the Zapatista mobilization also help to define the movement's 'starting point' regarding the prefiguration of alternative social organization.

Yet, before the chapter moves into its chief focus, that being the assessment of prefiguration in the movement, it is useful to walk through some of the more external challenges the movement faces as they are not separable from the potential of prefiguration. In this regard, the case study argues that the Zapatista project faces a demanding environment of counter-insurgency that combines direct repression with co-optative social programs to tempt the movement membership. In addition, the dependency on NGOs, following the Zapatistas' decision to reject any material support from the Mexican state, poses difficulties for building autonomy. Similarly, the movement's ultimate success is viewed as conditioned by the extent to which they manage to mobilize other elements of the Mexican civil society. In this regard, the movement continues its efforts to create solidarity and coordination with other civil society actors in Mexico, but these efforts have largely been unsuccessful.

The bulk of the chapter deals with the prefigurative element of Zapatismo. The beginning of Part two of the chapter reflects on the institutional arrangements on a more formal level. They are found generally compatible with the measures and principles necessary for prefigurative decision-making. The phase two moves beyond this formal level of 'what they say they do' to investigate 'what they actually do', where the aforementioned problems are identified. Before concluding, the chapter

contrasts the findings from the Zapatista movement with the observations of the *Abejas* showing that the former is still making much head-way in challenging many of the traditional practices.

The importance of Zapatismo

Accounts of the Zapatista uprising of 1994 typically start by relating it to the NAFTA agreement between the Mexican, US and Canadian governments that for the Zapatistas represented a 'death sentence to the indigenous' in the state of Chiapas in Mexico (Kovic 2005, 22). They would continue to explain that consequently when the agreement entered into force, 1 January 1994, poorly armed peasants rose up to occupy seven important municipal seats in Chiapas. While, the Zapatistas themselves first articulated their struggle as a continuation of 500 years of resistance to colonialism and oppression of indigenous peoples,(EZLN 1993) the oft-celebrated uprising quickly began to represent hope not only to its indigenous protagonists but for many leftists well beyond Chiapas and Mexico. Consequently, the movement has been attributed theoretical significance well beyond its immediate context.

Indeed, some have argued that there are probably more papers and books that have been written about the Zapatistas than there are actual Zapatista members (Ryan 2009). The movement has been hugely influential for contemporary political imaginary.[65] It is seen as a powerful symbol of resistance to neoliberal order and "an invitation to develop alternatives to the logic of global capital" (G. A. Collier and Collier 2005; Stahler-Sholk 2007). The movement has also been praised for its contribution to democratization (Olesen 2005), and the understanding of democracy (Gilbreth and Otero 2001; A. Starr, Martínez-Torres, and Rosset 2011; Lorenzano 1998) in the Mexican context and for its ability to re-appropriate the powerful symbolism attached to the Mexican revolution (Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert 1998a). Moreover, they have contributed to challenging racism and indigenous marginalization (Castillo 2008; Gilbreth and Otero 2001; Jackson and Warren 2005; Neil Harvey 1998a; Weinberg 2000). They have also championed gender struggles, (Olivera 2010; Speed, Castillo, and Stephen 2006) and played an important role in the collapse of the patronage network of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) that had dominated Mexican politics from the revolution until 2000 (King and Villanueva 1998, 117; Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 26; Gilbreth and Otero 2001). The Zapatistas have also been congratulated for their innovative tactics and use of the internet (Cleaver 1998) and their consequent ability to mobilize a multitude of other social actors for the cause nationally and internationally (Barmeyer 2003, 134; Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 26; Swords 2007; Weinberg 2000).

The overall sentiment seems to be that Zapatistas represent something new. Whether we call it 'dignity' (Holloway and Peláez 1998a) or 'postmodern revolution,'(Callahan 2005; Cleaver 1998;

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[65] Several scholars regard the Zapatistas as the first uprising of the twenty-first century and consider it to be pointing to new civilization horizons: (Ceceña and Barreda 1998)

Langman 2005; Nugent 1995; Tormey 2006) the movement defies easy categorization due to its somewhat flexible approach to struggle and its origin as a hybrid of Marxism and indigenous traditions. Consequently, a plethora of theoretical approaches have been used to explain the movement, ranging from Gramscian, (Kanoussi 1998; Machuca 1998) poststructural, (Neil Harvey 1998b; N. Harvey and Halverson 2000) autonomist or Open Marxist(Ceceña and Barreda 1998; Cleaver 1998; Holloway 1998; Holloway and Peláez 1998a; Lorenzano 1998) to non-academic radical leftist accounts, as outlined by Mentinis (2006). Yet, these accounts often fail to pay adequate attention to the variety of developments that led to the rebellion. More problematically, however, these accounts have tended to shy away from a critical engagement with the movement, especially when it comes to the dynamics at the community level. In fact, quite often the debate concerns how well we might be able to 'apply' Zapatismo elsewhere.[66] The movement's secretiveness and the hope it has come to represent for revitalizing the political Left has led to a situation where practically the only criticisms of the movement come from non-academic leftists (E.g.: Grupo Socialista Libertario 2014; Proyect 2014; Sunkara 2011; Wildcat 2012). As Mentinis articulates: "If there is an aspect of the Zapatistas that has been almost untouched so far by critical considerations, it is the internal workings of the indigenous communities" (2006, 142). Given the Zapatista direct democratic discourse of 'leading by obeying' and changing the world 'from below,' this void is striking. Before we think about how to take Zapatismo elsewhere, it is necessary to see how Zapatismo actually works at home in Chiapas. This thesis will thus seek to address this gap. But, to understand how the movement came to be the way it is requires some historical analysis.

Part 1. Material and political origins of Zapatismo

The Mexican government's initial response to the 1994 uprising was to depict it as the work of a group of 'professionals of violence' that had exploited the indigenous for their own political gain.[67] In response, many authors emphasised the economic origins of the conflict, Zapatismo's ties to previous movements in the region, and the widespread popular discontent that fed into the movement (G. Collier 2005; De Vos 2002; Neil Harvey 1998a; Montemayor 2009; Weinberg 2000). Montemayor, for example, argues that due to the tight family structure in the indigenous areas, it would have been impossible for a group of outsiders to go unnoticed. Furthermore, they would have needed the active support of this network for protection, food and money (Montemayor 2009, 47). To be able to understand why people chose to support the organization, it is necessary to understand the economic and political conditions preceding the uprising and the perceived failures of past organizations struggling to address the problems before the Zapatistas.

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[66] See for example: (Andrews 2011; Holloway 2010b; Wolfson 2012; Raúl Zibechi 2010; Zugman 2005)

[67] (Montemayor 2009)

Carlos Tello Diaz puts forward the most sophisticated argument in support of the government's position. He argues that the EZ as based on the ideas of the urban guerrillas of the 1970s – and hence not by the indigenous themselves. (Tello Díaz 1995)

Rich land, poor people

Retrospectively speaking, it is not surprising that the rebellion took place in Chiapas. It is one of the most resource-rich states in Mexico, being the first in coffee production, second in cattle, and third in corn production. The state has important petroleum sources, and reserves of natural gas and produces 40 percent of the country's hydroelectric power, (Ramonet 2009, 12) and almost twenty percent of Mexico's total electricity (Kingsnorth 2004, 12). Yet, the people of Chiapas are one of the poorest and with highest marginalization (Millán 1998, 65). Consequently, Chiapas is sometimes described as 'a rich land, a poor people '(G. Collier 2005, 16).

The socio-economic problems of the state were worse in the predominantly indigenous areas that were to become heartlands of the uprising. In the highlands indigenous Mayans make up 70 percent of the population, and in the canyons of the Lacandon Jungle around 75 percent (Olivera Bustamante 2011, 40).[68] In the areas of the Zapatista uprising, eighty percent of the people do not have drainage, piped and drinkable water, electricity, and hospital systems (Montemayor 2009, 70). Furthermore, many of the indigenous are illiterate, and only about a half of the men speak Spanish with only a tiny portion of women knowing the language. Prior to the rebellion, only 11 percent of adults had moderate incomes of at least $3,450 per year (vs. 24 percent nationally); less than half of households have running water (67 percent nationally)(G. Collier 2005, 16). Still in 2000, the infant mortality rates of the Lacandon region were at 40.55 where the national average is 24.9 and for the state of Chiapas, 31 (Gómez Lara 2011, 79).[69] Yet, the plight of the indigenous was for themselves most fundamentally a question of land.

Land

Land is at the heart of the Zapatista struggle. The membership of the movement were largely landless peasants in a region where access to land, coffee and corn cultivation forms the basis of income and survival for the majority of the one million Indians.(Neil Harvey 1996, 187–8) Before the uprising 30 percent of land was controlled by large landowners, while 100,000 peasants were landless.(Henck 2007, 61) The struggle for land had been the main source of social imbalance in the state for quite some time, with communities complaining about their dispossession to no avail.(Montemayor 2009, 70) Even though constitutionally large landownership was forbidden, large land owners and ranchers controlled the best agricultural land, and when they needed to expand, subsistence peasants were often evicted (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 20). It is unsurprising, thus,

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[68] The figures are from INEGI – Mexican National Insititute of Statistics and Geography.
[69] Her figures are from CONEPO – the Mexican National Council on the Population.

that during the uprising and shortly after an estimated 148,000 hectares of land were 'recuperated,' by the movement and others encouraged by their example (Inclán 2009).[70]

Neoliberalism and the end of land reform

The already difficult conditions worsened and peasant hardship intensified throughout the 1980s, mainly due to neoliberal reforms (Inclán 2009, 85). With this shift to neoliberal economics the government sought to 'modernize' the economy and no more land was to go to 'inefficient' peasant production (G. Collier 2005, 88). 'Plan Chiapas' was put in place to drive development through hydroelectric power and petrol (Weinberg 2000, 35). Demographic growth, the construction of hydroelectric plants, and the inability to get through land petitions,[71] petroleum extraction and the volcano eruptions of 1982 and 1986 all contributed to the displacement of Chol, Tojolabal, Tzeltal and Tzotzil Maya people towards the canyons of the Lacandon Jungle (Montemayor 2009, 113). In these areas the displaced joined those who in the 1950s and 1960s had been encouraged by the government to colonize the jungle. Consequently, scarcities produced conflict between farmers, cattle ranchers, squatters, loggers and the indigenous *campesinos* (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 19).

Through neoliberal reforms, local corn market suffered due to cheap imports, peasant credits and the parastatal marketing agencies that had aided farmers were cut back and privatized. Many vital services were similarly cut back. Rural poverty and migration increased (A. Starr, Martínez-Torres, and Rosset 2011, 107).

In the meantime, Mexico was experiencing an oil boom which overvalued the currency causing a decline in the viability of agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to the GDP halved from 14 percent to seven between 1965 and 1982 (G. Collier 2005, 94). Most devastating for the farmers in Chiapas, however, was the dismantling of the coffee marketing board INMECAFE and the fall of world market prices by 50 percent after 1989. The coffee growing sector is one where 70% of the producers were small growers on plots of less than two hectares (Neil Harvey 1998a, 176–80). "Throughout Chiapas […] the hard-won gains of peasants who had taken out loans to finance coffee production evaporated as banks foreclosed on loans and took over land, cattle, or other collateral"(G. Collier 2005, 106). Forty percent of the hard-hit coffee cultivated lands were in the highlands and the Jungle regions – areas that would become the core of Zapatista membership (Montemayor 2009, 109–110; Neil Harvey 1996). The final nail to the coffin, however, came in 1992 with the reform of the Article 27 of the Mexican constitution that effectively opened the countryside to private investment

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[70] This is a conservative estimate. Some estimate it at 250,000 hectares: (Hesketh 2013, 225)

[71] Seventy-nine communities had to wait more than 20 years to get the land that they had asked for. Worst cases lasted up to 53 years (Montemayor 2009: 117). The justice system clearly took the side of grand landowners and ranchers – for example, during the government of Castellanos Dominquez (1982-88) certificates of immunity were given to protect 1,142,881 hectares of predominantly pastoral land. (Montemayor 2009: 117).

consequently threatening the indigenous system of collective land ownership (Holloway and Peláez 1998a, 162).

At the same time, these reforms made it increasingly difficult for the ruling PRI party to maintain its resource-distribution-based clientelist network that had been the cornerstone of regime stability (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 18). By suspending land reform in 1992, President Salinas de Gortari "not only deprived many peasants of their hopes of ever farming their own land but also compromised the peace that held sway in the countryside for most of the twentieth century"(G. Collier 2005, 36). Given that Chiapas had the most unresolved land disputes in the country (Hesketh 2013, 225) it is not at all too surprising that the rebellion took place where it did. With the pouring in of cheap US corn further undermining the peasant economy, and the revision of article 27 making land disputes practically impossible, basic survival of the *campesinos* was at question. While some in the highlands region sought to improve their chances by migrating to the city, in eastern Chiapas "the impoverished had no place to turn and little to lose by joining the Zapatista rebellion" (G. Collier 2005, 123–124).

But the movement did not emerge out of thin air. To understand the nature, timing and composition of the organization, one has to know of the political context, namely the PRI corporatist regime and the Zapatistas' predecessors in campaigning against it.

Revolution and PRI Rule

In Mexico, the importance of the Revolution (1910-1917) cannot be overstated.[72] While it is impossible to recount in detail the events of the revolution here, the fate of Emiliano Zapata is naturally important given the EZLN's proclaimed allegiance to the agrarian reformer and commander of the Liberation Army of the South.[73] Zapata's movement's demands were not just agrarian reform but also autonomy at the municipal level (Neil Harvey 1998a, 119). His army was based on self-organized communities in Morelos. These communities not only provided a space for organization but functioned as centres of self-government independent from state and the ruling classes (Ibid, 121) As Zapata and Villa lost, and this autonomy of the communities was lost as a by-product.

Yet, in order to control the rebellious peasant population, land reform was carried out by President Cárdenas during the 1930s, propping up the rule of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), which for 70 years, until 2000, acted as the 'heir of the Revolution'. The PRI corporatism was largely based on land reform (Van Der Haar 2005) whereby mass peasantry was incorporated into agrarian committees that were tied to the PRI through the National Campesino Confederation (CNC). As with labour unions, (Holloway and Peláez 1998a; Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert 1998a) independent organizations would be denied resources if they were not willing to subordinate their

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[72] For a good introduction to the Revolution, refer to: Easterling 2013
[73] In its first declaration, EZLN cites Zapata and Pancho Villa as an inspiration (EZLN 1993).

demands to the conditions imposed by the state (Neil Harvey 1998a, 55) In practice, the institutionalization of clientelism destroyed the right for associational autonomy and in this authoritarian state land and capital continued to concentrate in private hands (Neil Harvey 1998a, 56).

Understanding revolution as the social and political reforms from the 1917 constitution and implemented over decades, it has been argued that it never arrived in Chiapas (G. Collier 2005, 29). Indeed, the government was forced to grant concessions to the large landowners that had fought against them during the revolution (Neil Harvey 1998a, 48). The landowners had *de facto* autonomy in governing Chiapas, ensuring the continuation of the *latifundio* [large estate] system and sought to minimize the effect agrarian reform would have on their class interests (Neil Harvey 1998a, 54).

However, in the indigenous regions of Chiapas, the state slowly consolidated its presence, making use of indigenous power structures. The bosses of the local agrarian committees acted as the hand of the CNC (and thus PRI) in the communities by assuming *cargos* – traditional roles of responsibility where the person in charge is appointed by the community to serve their best interest. The *ladino* (of Hispanic origin) landowning elite began to see the utility of this approach. Using the INI (National Indian Institute) modernization resources for personal benefit these new brokers "were therefore essential to the success of the state in establishing its presence in highland Chiapas" in the 1950s (Neil Harvey 1998a, 57). In practical terms, the PRI regime thus used a combination of coercion and co-optation to secure votes. The *caciques* (local indigenous bosses) would make ties with influential landowners, business people, and union bosses in order to guarantee votes from the people they oversee. For example, licences for transportation and business were granted according to political loyalty. Even basic judicial matters, such as divorce would be used to isolate those who support opposition parties (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 24). The result was the 'comunidad revolucionaria insitucional' where community life was politicized and penetrated by the state and the party.[74] By the 1970s whose who dissented from the ruling cliques were being forcibly expelled on the pretext that they were 'enemies of tradition' (Neil Harvey 1998a, 57).

However, with the hardship explained before, the PRI rule became increasingly contested. In the end EZLN was the most successful channel for this discontent, but they did not politicize the people. Much of this had been done by Maoists, the Catholic Church and independent peasant and indigenous organizations (Henck 2007). Consequently, it has been argued that the novelty of the EZLN is thus not in its constituency or its material base, but "to be found in its political organization, strategy, and objectives" (Neil Harvey 1998a, 226). Thus, to understand where its organization, objectives and strategy come from, one needs to be familiar with the movements that came before the EZ.

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[74] 'Institutional revolutionary community' – this is a play with words referring to the PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party) (Rus 1995).

Past movements

Liberation theology

When the Zapatista uprising happened in 1994 the Mexican government initially accused the Liberation theology inspired diocese of San Cristobal headed by popular Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia of mobilizing and manipulating the indigenous peasants (Montemayor 2009, 50). The church had indeed been politically very active in Chiapas. The more democratic nature of the growing Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches[75] pushed the Catholics to adopt similar practice to keep their hold of the population (G. Collier 2005, 26). Having himself participated in the Medellin Council of 1968 that is seen as the starting point of the Liberation Theology (LT) movement, Ruiz Garcia promoted that the Church adopt the 'preferential option for the poor'(Neil Harvey 1998a, 63).

LT is an umbrella term for many movements that started to emerge in Latin America in the 1960s to struggle against poverty (Villa-Vicencio 2007). Gutierrez's 1973 *A Theology of Liberation* is commonly seen as the formative study of the idea. Interestingly, Gutierrez drew his inspiration from the life and work of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, the 'Defender of the Indians' who worked with the indigenous of 16th century Chiapas (Rowland 2007a, 3). Emphasising Jesus' practical example of living and working with the poor; "[t]he defining characteristic of liberation theology is that it is a lived praxis in solidarity with the poor and oppressed"(Bennett 2007, 39). This means popular education projects, anti-poverty campaigning and grass-roots struggles against oppression (Rowland 2007b, 304). Yet, to understand the structural determinants of poverty and power relations, LT drew heavily from Marxist theory. In the process, Gutierrez himself became opposed to 'naïve reformism' arguing that the Church should make itself one with the poor in the revolutionary cause. Gutierrez writes: "only by overcoming a society divided into classes . . . by eliminating the private appropriation of wealth created by human toil, can we build the foundation of a more just society" (Gutiérrez 1983, 46; cited in: Villa-Vicencio 2007, 187).

Importantly, in order to advance the cause of liberation, LT seeks less hierarchical relations between the church and the congregation. Often services are in fact talk-shops conducted by laymen and the approach is the understanding of contemporary setting through the poor's reading of the bible (Villa-Vicencio 2007).

In accordance with the idea of liberation theology, the church under Ruiz promoted "broad-based community participation in problem solving and in the analysis of economic and political oppression"(Neil Harvey 1998a, 64). In addition, seeking to build an autochthonous church, some two thousand indigenous catechists were trained (Ibid, 63). It was these catechists that revived the tradition of *mandar obedeciendo* or 'rule by obeying' in the indigenous communities. This notion can be understood as "the principle that those who lead should be effectively subjected to rule of those

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[75] The protestant churches were opposed traditional leadership. Their presence in Chiapas grew from less than five percent in 1970 to 21 percent in 2000. (Kovic 2005, 21)

whom they claim to lead"(Holloway and Peláez 1998b, 17). This would later become one of the most important principles for the Zapatistas, as will be discussed shortly.

Nevertheless, the catechists often ended up reproducing the *caudillismo* [strong man rule] that the practice is supposed to avoid (Neil Harvey 1998a, 64). In addition to revitalizing the democratic practices of decision-making, LT in Chiapas has been acknowledged for the 'cognitive liberation' conducive to the EZLN insurgency through their efforts to develop peasant consciousness and perceptions of grievance and opportunity (Howard and Homer-Dixon 1996, 22).

Maoists and other 'northern' activists

Alongside Ruiz's Church and the LT catechists, the Maoists groups in Chiapas before and during the development of the EZLN played an important role in the mobilization and the form it eventually took. The most powerful independent organization in the Zapatista core areas was the political current that grew out of the Popular Politics (PP) Maoist party that began in the North of the country, and which in Chiapas organized into *ejido* [collective land ownership arrangement] unions and credit and marketing organizations. As many other organizations from the 'North,' PP grew out of the student struggles of 1968 when students inspired by Maoist teachings decided to go live and work with the 'masses' to help them organize in a non-violent manner in the struggle for socialism. Similarly to Zapatismo, the Maoists valued organization 'from the ground up.' Their objective was for the empowered people to take ownership of their own destinies without a direct challenge to the government (G. Collier 2005, 74). The Maoists were the movement closest in theory and practice to LT, and first came to Chiapas offering to help the catechists in organizing and educating the peasants and the indigenous around the time of the San Cristobal Indigenous Congress of 1974 (G. Collier 2005, 75). The Church refused the help, but some priests chose to cooperate with the Maoists. PP sought more organic links to the community, thus taking over the ARICs that begun as a government development program. They soon grew more powerful than the church, controlling the Union of Unions and ARICS, two of the most combative organizations and helped organize 26 communities resisting relocation in the Lacandon jungle (G. Collier 2005, 76). In 1976, PP joined with other nonviolent groups to form the Proletarian Line (Neil Harvey 1998a, 82).

Unhappy with church influence and the perceived *caudillismo*, the Maoists promoted the division of community assemblies into smaller assemblies that would as working groups propose things back to the community-wide meetings. They also attempted to build horizontal relations among members of each community rather than just vertical links between leaders or delegates (Weinberg 2000, 35). One can see, thus, that the Maoists were already experimenting with the kinds of democratic processes that the Zapatistas became known for.

Independent Indigenous and peasant organizations

In addition to LT catechists and the Maoists, some *campesino* movements active in Chiapas before and during the Zapatista uprising deserve our attention. The Indigenous Congress of 1974 was

an important watershed in indigenous struggles, catalysing grass-roots organizing in central highlands and the Lacandon (Neil Harvey 1998a, 79). The delegates to the Congress called for land reform, respect for indigenous cultures and denounced arbitrariness and corruption of government institutions.[76] They were determined to be independent: to be 'of and for the Indians'(Ibid, 78).

One of the two most important groups, CIOAC operated on the premise that peasants were part of a rural proletariat that should be organized into labour unions (G. Collier 2005, 70). Conversely, OCEZ focused on questions of land reform, helping peasants prevent evictions and relocations of *ejidos* and to gain titles to contested lands (Ibidem.). "Trenchantly opposed to the ruling party's national peasant union, OCEZ spread Zapatista ideology throughout Chiapas during the 1980s"(Ibid 2005, 72). While CIOAC was linked to the Communist Party, OCEZ was independent and autonomous and relied on kinship ties, the very same way Zapatistas would (Weinberg 2000, 35).

Influence of previous movements on the Zapatistas

Zapatistas have clearly been formed to some extent by all the movements that have been discussed. Both the CIOAC and the Union of Unions ended up making deals with the government, exchange the toning down of militancy for land or credit, prompting Zapatista accusations of 'selling out'(G. Collier 2005, 78). ARICs, similarly, seems to have compromised with the government in 1989 to receive recognition for its land claims and the control of food subsidies near the clandestine headquarters of the EZLN. Marcos argued that "in return for money, ARIC leaders agreed to promote support for the ruling party amongst their followers" (Ibid). In addition, the ideologue of the Maoist PP even became an official for the Salinas government (1988-1994) (Ibid, 78–79). In essence, the Maoist ended up lobbying for credits and higher crop prices at the expense of land reform (Weinberg 2000, 35). Consequently, the radicalized peasants facing eviction or unable to secure land titles grew unhappy with the Maoists. In 1983 the last people of the Proletarian Line were expelled from the canyon region and the Union of Unions broke down due to infighting and leadership struggles. This left a vacuum that would be filled with the cadres of the EZLN established the same year (Montemayor 2009, 107). The coffee crisis (1989) further contributed to defection into the Zapatista camp from organizations that had promoted peasant coffee production as a way of gaining government credits and assistance in marketing (G. Collier 2005, 106).

In addition, the de-radicalization and the in-fighting of previous organizations had left the indigenous peasants largely 'vaccinated against organization' (Neil Harvey 1998a). With the Maoists typically fighting over who represented the 'mass line' and their decisions perceived by the peasants as indifferent to their needs, the latter became disillusioned with ideology and suspicious of any organization. Consequently, only a movement that is largely subordinated to its members would be able to garner support.

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[76] All of which the Zapatistas went on to demand in 1994 (Collier 2005).

In the meantime, repression of independent peasant organizations intensified during the term of Governor Castellanos Dominquez, 1982-1988. Peasants who occupied land and demanded increases in price guarantees for corn were repressed militarily. Leaders and supporters of peasant organizations, such as CIOAC and OCEZ were massacred or incarcerated (Olivera Bustamante 2011, 33). This repression, combined with the economic factors identified earlier, helped to legitimize the guerrillas (Henck 2007, 60; Olivera Bustamante 2011, 33). Indeed, unlike the aforementioned organizations, peasants increasingly perceived armed struggle as the only viable option. Indeed, Subcomandante Moises of EZLN explains that the indigenous first tried the official unions and organizations and nothing happened. Participation in independent organizations only led to imprisonment and killings (Moises 2008). In addition, taking up arms can be seen as necessary to remove the struggle from the arena of corrupt Mexican politics and law (G. Collier 2005, 80). The struggle for autonomy can be seen as a continuation of the attempt to break away from the traditional form of *campesino* mobilization, namely making demands of authorities (Neil Harvey 1996, 204).

Simultaneously, while clearly influenced by some of the liberation theology practices in the communities, the EZ offered a way of unifying beyond religious differences, instead focusing on common indigenous identity and class (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 55). Indeed, given the competition between different religions in Chiapas, and the multi-faith composition of many of the Lacandon settler colonies (Neil Harvey 1998a, 64) where much of the movement's support would come from, a secular movement was the only possible alternative (G. Collier 2005, 56). Moreover, the Zapatista commitment to community control over the organization undoubtedly has to do with the reproduction of strong man rule in many instances as well as the perceived 'selling out' of previous movements by their leadership.

Women's organizations

In addition to the aforementioned groups, it is important also to note the growth in women's organizations working in Chiapas before the uprising (Castillo 2002).[77] Indeed, the role of women had begun changing in Chiapas. This was partially due to the non-traditional roles women often had to take on in the colonizer communities.[78] Liberation theology also played a role in this growth. While it does not explicitly promote reflection on gender issues, it has been argued that the activity and the analysis of social inequality and racism carried out in LT courses and workshops led indigenous women to question the inequalities they faced in their own communities (Castillo 2002; Harvey 1998a, 223–224). However, it was only with the public appearance of EZLN and the 'Revolutionary Women's Law' of the organization that indigenous women began to raise their voices publicly to demand respect for their specific rights as women (Castillo 2002). The Zapatista women were the first

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[77] For an account of important events in gender struggles in Chiapas, refer to: (Pérez Sales, Santiago Vera, and Álvarez Díaz 2002, 135).

[78] We will return to this point.

to move away from mere supporting roles in the organization; the organization promoted the equal incorporation of women in its ranks and transforming male dominated assemblies (Neil Harvey 1998a, 223–224). EZLN "became the first guerrilla movement in Latin America to advocate and prioritize gender demands within their own political agenda"(Castillo 2008).

In sum, many of the elements in Zapatismo can be viewed in their relation to past movements. The practice of *mandar obedeciendo* was revitalized by LT catechists and the Maoists despite their perceived failure to commit to it. Similarly, the Maoists were committed to the kind of democratic ideals that the EZLN would become known for. Indeed, Harvey argued that the one thing the predecessors of the EZLN had in common was their opposition to *caciquismo* or rural bossism (Neil Harvey 1998a, 36). Indeed, from many of these movements, Zapatismo inherited the desire for community control and their opposition to rural bossism. Similarly, the parallel between liberation theologists and Zapatismo is apparent when citing Gutierrez: "The project of crafting a new and different society includes the creation of new human persons as well, who must be progressively liberated from whatever enslaves them"(1983, 192). Indeed, the idea underpinning LT seems to correspond well with the logic of prefigurative politics that has been discussed at length in this thesis. Yet, despite the membership being religious, the movement is not based on religion. Similarly, the perceived failure of non-violent strategy and the increased repression led many to think that armed struggle is the only way to address the material and political issues that had fed into their discontent. Yet, at its establishment in 1983, the EZLN was quite a different organization from what it is now. It is important to highlight the transformation that took place as it is perhaps the most defining feature of the movement.

'Community in arms' – or, when Marcos met Moises

The EZLN was first established as part of the FLN, a clandestine urban guerrilla movement that spread from the capital to poorer parts of Mexico to form nuclei of revolution (Henck 2007). Marcos himself came to Chiapas in 1984 to join the FLN Guevarist *foco* (nucleus) that had been formed in 1983. Marcos himself and others frame the establishment of the EZLN as self-defence of the *campesinos* against the landowner's paramilitaries (De Vos 2002; Neil Harvey 1998a). The original EZLN was a mix of *mestizo* elements from the city and local indigenous *campesinos*. At first the movement was very small; in 1986 there were still only Marcos and 11 indigenous remained living in the mountains. Marcos took over the recruitment. Impressing the Union of Unions and its president, Francisco Lopez, the EZLN started to grow. The first indigenous members of the EZ were members of Slop, a peasant organization whose name stands for 'root' in Tzeltal. Slop had been set up by Bishop Ruiz along with Father Pablo Iribarrén to counterbalance the Maoist influence in the region (Henck 2007, 91).

The growth of EZLN happened in a time of increased repression and the co-optation and fragmentation of independent organization. Yet, what was most decisive to the growth of the

organization was the fact that it was different from other organizations in a crucial way. Namely, in the context of communities tired of failure, manipulation, leadership rivalries, and ideological disputes, an organization that would avoid imposing another political line on the communities was the only possible alternative (Neil Harvey 1998b). In this regard, most authors point to an early transformation from a guerrilla *foco* inspired by 'Guevarism'[79] to a kind of 'community in arms' that went on to propose bottom-up democratization rather than taking state power (E.g. Gilbreth and Otero 2001; Lorenzano 1998).[80] In this process, thus, (orthodox) Marxism lost and the group was no longer clearly defined ideologically. Harvey explains: "this 'defeat' proved to be decisive, and the EZLN grew rapidly as a result. Fathers recruited sons, sons recruited brothers, cousins and uncles. Between 1988 and 1989, the number of armed combatants grew from 80 to 1,300. Or as Marcos explains:

> Something happened that saved us. Saved us and defeated us in those first years. And what happened is sitting here to my left, that is Lt. Col. Insurgent Moises, Commander Masho, Commander Ismael and many other compañeros who converted the EZLN, from an orthodox foquista guerrilla movement, to an army of the indigenous (Becerra 2008, 23).

This crucial new element was the subjection of the armed elements to community control – "the political decisions remained under the control of the indigenous communities" (Neil Harvey 1998a, 168). Thus many peasants of *ejidos* belonging to the ARICs joined the Zapatistas, who began to organize their own committees of clandestine government and purchase arms (Neil Harvey 1998a, 167). Consequently, the EZLN incorporated itself into the communities that had chosen to join the struggle, in the process adopted elements of the "community-based democratic culture and their conscious construction of communal alternatives." By 1988 the group had changed enough to abandon vertical, military-like command (Lorenzano 1998, 143).

This Zapatista vision for social change will become clearer when we return to discuss some of their principles. However, at this point the chapter will first discuss the more general and 'external' challenges to Zapatismo. In order to do it is necessary to fast forward through the most important developments since the uprising of 1994, especially given the perceived shift of their project through an increased focused on *de facto* implementation of autonomy and disengagement of the political

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[79] Guevara laid out his theory of revolution that became understood as 'Guevarism' in his *Guerrilla Warfare* (1961). His main argument is three-fold: 1) popular forces can win over a conventional army; 2) insurrection can create the conditions for revolution; 3) countryside is the most important area for the revolutionary insurrection. In his writings Guevara repeatedly stresses the importance of Guerrillas' respect for the rules and traditions of the people in the zone of the fight and deems it essentially for the guerrillas to gain the support of the local population. However, the difference between his ideas and Zapatismo is evident in that he argues, for example, that nothing can be done to social relations at the beginning of the 'war' (1961: 39) and his objective and the moment of fundamental transformation is the take-over of the state. In addition, and importantly for the question at hand, Guevara views the guerrilla as "a sort of guiding angel who has fallen into the zone, helping the poor always and bothering the rich as little as possible in the first phases of the war"(39). While seeking to build close relations with the peasants in the area, the guerrilla ultimately *leads* and *indoctrinates* the peasants. The Guerrilla brings the knowledge to the people and leads them towards victory. Zapatismo, reverses this dynamic as will become evident. In their organization, at least officially, the communities decide what the Guerrillas do.

[80] For the developments following Marcos himself (Henck 2007).

system. This discussion will help to understand the 'starting point' regarding the prefiguration of more egalitarian social relations.

From 1994 to current moment – changes and challenges

After the 12-day armed campaign where the Zapatistas were clearly inferior to the government but crucially supported by national and international mobilizations against violent solution, EZLN and the Government began negotiations mediated by Bishop Ruiz. Inviting indigenous representatives from around Mexico, the movement tried to make the question a national one rather than specific to Zapatistas and Chiapas. The 1996 San Andres Accords were to grant considerable autonomy to the indigenous. Yet, the government never moved onto implementing the legal changes that the accords implied. The 2001 Indigenous Rights Bill, the law that was finally passed through the parliament hardly resembled the original accords, framing the indigenous issue instead as a socio-economic problem. This implied more of the same: implementing development policies that paid no heed to collective indigenous rights and the continuation of *mestizaje* (Inclán 2009; Mora 2007).[81] The Zapatistas, in turn, rejected any further dialogue or cooperation with the political class of Mexico.

Following the disappointing constitutional reform of 2001, the Zapatistas moved into *de facto* implementation of indigenous autonomy that was supposed to have been guaranteed by constitutional reform as per the San Andres Accords (Inclán 2009, 85; Mora 2007, 65). The movement had already established 38 autonomous communities in 1994 (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 51). But in 2003, a new community structure was introduced. The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (JBG) or 'good-government councils' were to coordinate the Zapatista municipalities that were now divided in five regions each with their respective *Caracoles* hosting the JBGs – La Realidad, Morelia, La Carrucha, Roberto Barrios and Oventic. The JBGs are in charge of the coordination of the health, education and agricultural authorities that were to build services to parallel those of the state (Mora 2007, 69).

It is hard to estimate the current support of the movement. Based on my experiences in the communities, as well as those of Barmeyer[82] the movement has suffered some significant defections since the uprising, with villages often now hosting more than half ex-Zapatistas. Based on years of field work in the region he estimated the membership in 2008 at roughly 80,000 people in hundreds of

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[81] *Mestizaje* is the idea of one Mexican identity that had served as the political framework for the assimilation and suppression of indigenous cultures and languages. Montemayor explains: "today we commend the prehispanic culture, but we disqualify or disown present indigenous cultures. We applaud the historic Indian but not the real and present Indian." (Montemayor 2009, 121). Before the Indigenous Congress of 1974 both the government and the intellectuals saw the indigenous as a regressive sector that needed to be 'developed' – for modernization or for turning them into an organized working class. While Maoists highlighted the revolutionary potential of the peasantry (Collier 2005: 67). ethnicity was seen as a form of 'false consciousness' (Collier 2005: 62; Montemayor 2009: 121). Challenging *mestizaje* is central to the new Zapatista radical democratic ethic (Rajchenberg and Héau-Lambert 1998b).

[82] Barmeyer case studies indicated that in some areas, perhaps in places with most confrontation, the movement has lost significant parts of its support base as indigenous people no longer saw the relevance of making sacrifices to a struggle that they became to see as unviable (Barmeyer 2008, 508).

villages (Barmeyer 2008, 510–511). Given that the protests in December 2012 gathered 30,000 Zapatistas to San Cristobal, Barmeyer's estimate is probably not far off the truth.

The most important success of the uprising has perhaps been the *de facto* land reform and that the government was forced to restart the land reform process in Chiapas (Harvey 1996; Iribarren 2012). By 1998, some six percent of the state's private holdings had been 'recuperated.' People were evicted by the army and state police in some areas but generally the occupations were too widespread to be dealt with by force (G. Collier 2005, 175). Yet, according to Barmeyer, in some places much of the land seized from large landowners was taken back with the help of the Federal army. The smaller ranches remain in the hands of the Zapatistas, creating support for paramilitaries by those who have lost their land, in accordance with Mexican government's counter-insurgency strategy (Barmeyer 2003, 133–134).

Militarization, para-militarization, and competing hegemonies

The post-uprising situation in Chiapas can be characterized as very tense, beginning with heavy militarization and later para-militarization of the state.[83] Whether we call this 'low intensity war' (Montemayor 2009, 271) or a 'war of attrition'(Pérez Sales, Santiago Vera, and Álvarez Díaz 2002; Neil Harvey 1998a), the Mexican state has used a combination of repression and social programs in an attempt to divide and contain the Zapatista movement.[84] In addition, legal titles to land were handed selectively to divide the independent peasant organizations while excluding the Zapatistas. These Agrarian accords significantly eroded the Zapatista base (G. Collier 2005, 176). At first, the government's approach to the situation was much more one of militarization[85] but this showed its limits with the massacre of Acteal in 1997[86] and the increasing international attention that it produced (Ibid, 175). The para-militarization, conversely, is portrayed by the government as a result of conflicts inside the communities, and thus unconnected to the government (Gómez Lara 2011, 70). However, these conflicts are often fought in places of importance for the government's projects of 'ecotourism' or its vision for development. Such is the case of the conflict over the tourist centre of Agua Azul which the OPPDIC, a paramilitary organization favours and the Zapatistas oppose (Ibid, 73). Similarly, the construction of the motorway from San Cristobal to the important tourist attraction of Palenque has been halted due to local Tzotzil people's opposition to the construction through their

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[83] A human rights report systematically shows the links between Mexican state activity in Chiapas and the School of the Americas' training programs, particularly the *Psychological Operations Field Manual* (Pérez Sales, Santiago Vera, and Álvarez Díaz 2002).

[84] For an overview of these practices, refer to: Leyva Solano and Burguete Cal y Mayor 2011; Pérez Sales, Santiago Vera, and Álvarez Díaz 2002.

[85] Since 1994 there are around 60,000 troops in Chiapas, mainly in the Lacandon region. This militarization has brought with it the occupation of new lands, prostitution, drug addiction and general terror that they cause for the population (Gómez Lara 2011, 25).

[86] Massacre of Acteal in 1997 was carried out by paramilitaries, leaving dead forty-five *Abejas*, members of a pacifist organization aligned with the Zapatistas (Inclán 2009, 87).

community (Ibid). Multinational companies also have an interest in Chiapas, and particularly the biodiversity of the Lacandon Jungle (Ibid, 73–4).

However, these conflicts dividing the communities are not entirely caused by the rebellion but rather the already existing communal tensions are exacerbated by the efforts of the Mexican army and state (Neil Harvey 1998a; Washbrook 2005). The situation is extremely complex. In both of the communities that I spent time in the *partidistas* (supporters of political parties) or paramilitaries were in fact ex-Zapatistas.[87] The situation currently in Chiapas is in a state of 'stalemate'(G. A. Collier and Collier 2005) with competition of hegemonies between the Zapatista authorities and Mexican state institutions (Barmeyer 2008). The state and the autonomous institutions often coexist in villages and towns. For example, the army does not stop Zapatista vehicles.[88]

The struggle for autonomy is thus complicated in material terms, as will be elaborated shortly. But accordingly with Böhm et al.'s discussion this struggle for autonomy is also fought over discourse (2010). The government has tried to hijack the language of rights. For instance, the human rights of one ethnic group, the Lacandones or the language of environmental protection is used as a pretext for evicting communities in economically important places (Stahler-Sholk 2007). Moreover, the government social development program OPORTUNIDADES is indicative of a shift towards appropriating the concept of autonomy in highlighting social responsibility – to develop the capacities of the poor. Mora explains: "…the program is less about developing the poor through economic distribution than about socializing the poor to think about themselves in new ways, for example, as active, rational, and responsible for solving their own problems" (2007, 68). Consequently, the most apt term for this process taking place in Chiapas is what Olivera Bustamante calls 'counter-insurgent developmentalism' which implies co-optation materially but also ideologically. She indicates that with the social programs comes a change in attitude and mentality, to receive and receive. Indeed, this creation of dependency is convenient for political parties to maintain a steady support base. In comparing the *partidistas* to the Zapatistas, Olivera Bustamante argues that the former produce less and less and actually in many cases the Zapatistas sell them their cooperative products (Interview 2013). Consequently one can see elements of all the notions of autonomy (from the state; capital and developmental discourse) as per Böhm and others (2010) and how the conflict is fought on all these fronts. One of the most challenging aspects for the Zapatistas is the state's counter-insurgent activity that has been outlined before. This also plays an important role in difficulty to create self-sufficiency and material independence that will be discussed now.

Indeed, the Zapatistas have sought to build material independence from the state. In 1996, the movement's civilian steering committee made a decision to no longer accept government 'alms' -

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[87] Ryan had a similar experience whereby a community he had been working in for a water project had become the 'enemy' by defecting from the movement and joining a paramilitary organization (Ryan 2011).
[88] Conversation with a Zapatista member, 21 de Abril, Morelia, Chiapas. August 2013.

be they support such as teacher's salary, subsidized goods   or health projects – as these things had become seen as deliberate attempts by the government to co-opt movement members (Barmeyer 2008). This has been one of the main reasons for declining membership as constructing autonomy meant material sacrifices in the absence of state resources (Mora 2007, 70). Collier summarizes: "In many areas, rank-and-file Zapatistas reaped few rewards and much hardship from loyalty to their movement. Some renounced their Zapatismo and rejoined the PRI"(2005, 176). Meanwhile the remaining Zapatistas have become more resolute in their efforts to construct independent alternatives (Ibid, 176).

In their attempt to create an autonomous economy the Zapatistas have sought to reverse the logic of neoliberalism. The movement has set up cooperatives of many kinds, ranging from handicrafts, boots and clothing to transportation and coffee cultivation. Young unemployed people receive training with the aim of running these cooperatives. Moreover, the movement places much importance on agroecology which is combined with an indigenous worldview, in order to decrease dependence on imports of food and pesticide (Starr et al. 2011, 107). The movement has used support from sympathetic NGOs and solidarity organizations to set up an independent health system, education and the aforementioned collective enterprises (Barmeyer 2008, 514). In the process, however, the movement has become dependent on NGO support (Ibid, 517). This is not perceived as detrimental to the autonomy of the movement as government support since it allows for the communities to use it for self-development and the autonomous authorities decide when, where and what the NGOs do (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 57). Indeed, especially given that the government uses social programs selectively and in order to contain resistance, NGO support is a better alternative. Yet, given that NGOs equally form part of the global capitalist system and face pressures for funding themselves, this dependency in the long term is a problematic factor for Zapatista autonomy. Moreover, the search for autonomy from the state does not guarantee autonomy from the market. Richard Stahler-Sholk argues that the desire for autonomy from the state leaves the indigenous communities without resources and vulnerable in front of market forces (2007, 48). For Olivera Bustamante this is the most problematic aspect of the Zapatista struggle; as long as the movement does not have a completely self-sustaining economy, they will depend on the market and hence not be autonomous (Interview 2013).

Some have argued that given this difficult environment, the Zapatistas' future depends on their ability to articulate this local resistance into a national movement (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 61; Swords 2007). In this regard the movement has tried hard. International *Encuentros* have been organized in Chiapas as has been discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly the movement's invitation of the indigenous representatives to the negotiations was an attempt to build a coalition of forces. The culmination of these attempts was the 'Other Campaign' launched in 2005 to transform the political framework of the country as a whole in conjunction with other civil society organizations. The objective, in short, was "to design a national program of anticapitalist struggle and reestablish ways of doing politics that are antimaterialistic, honest, and of service to others"(Castillo 2006, 115). Yet, the

campaign is largely perceived as a failure due to internal divisions and the tension between local projects and national political agenda (Castillo 2006; Mentinis 2006, 61). The Zapatistas alienated many potential allies by excluding anyone who would support political parties (Castillo 2006, 128). Yet ultimately it is difficult to see the Zapatista project surviving without spreading it and forming alliances with other actors working for similar aims, be they national or international. Recently the movement has restarted these efforts by organizing the 'Little School' gatherings in 2013-2014 that represent attempts to build links with activists in and beyond Mexico and undoubtedly helped the movement financially as well.

Potential problems of prefiguring Zapatista autonomy

Along with these more external challenges to the movement, the Zapatistas face the internal trials of prefiguring egalitarian social organization, as identified in the previous chapters. In this regard, the likely sources of inequality and power relations for the Zapatistas derive from political practices of *caciquismo*, gerontocratic power in indigenous communities, potential class differences as well as the hierarchy of the military organization of EZLN itself. Moreover, the long-standing exclusion of women from all public political participation poses a significant challenge.

Caciquismo **as the concentration of political, economic and religious power**

Caciquismo implies a concentration of political and economic power whereby elites compete for control over Indian labour and land (Neil Harvey 1998a, 36). As discussed before, it often made use of the indigenous tradition for political purposes. We can thus expect problems there. Yet, in this regard, it is not unimportant that most of the Zapatistas are from the lowland regions of the Lacandon jungle. These areas saw massive waves of immigration that broke with traditional community organization. The colonizer communities were young and multi-ethnic and often multi-faith. They thus relied much less on tradition whereby "the hierarchical system of civil and religious posts was replaced by more horizontal forms of internal organization" (Neil Harvey 1998b, 64). These communities were committed to *mandar obedeciendo* already before the EZLN – officeholders were thus held into account by the community assembly which would remain the maximum authority (Neil Harvey 1998a, 65).

Moreover, unlike elsewhere in the Maya region, these communities did not have political institutions of gerontocratic nature (e.g. a council of elders) (Baronnet 2008). This does not mean that the elderly were not powerful, though. According to Harvey the communities were very young but elders still held some sway, especially as healers in the absence of good health services. Rather than completely rejecting native traditions, the colonizers "reworked them in a new discourse of liberation and struggle" (1998a, 64). When dealing with discourse and tradition, it is unlikely that these new frames of how the traditions should or should not be interpreted should be uncontested. It is thus necessary to maintain vigilance as per the potential of gerontocratic rule.

Caciquismo being the concentration of economic and political power it is necessary to keep an eye out for any coincidence of the two. Collier argues that the indigenous communities are in no way automatically egalitarian: "As economic and political forces have transformed peasant farming, indigenous and peasant communities have become less egalitarian, demarcated by class and by national political affiliation" (2005, 9). He explains how during his years in Chiapas he witnessed a shift from network-based to class-based politics in which individuals use wealth as a route to power instead of the traditional route of complex set of community obligations that used to form the basis of the reciprocal relationships within communities. In the process the poor became more expendable and the rich more unaccountable (Ibid, 120).

Nonetheless, the Zapatista heartlands, the eastern parts of Chiapas, were never completely integrated to the federal state, remaining remote and underdeveloped (G. Collier 2005, 27). Consequently, the party system and the network of caciques were never as powerful in the region as they were elsewhere. Subsequently the Zapatista membership perhaps does not have much experience of this political practice, but it is safer to assume that there is a tendency for this kind of practice to penetrate any social organization, given its cultural prevalence in the region more widely.

The hierarchy of the EZLN

Despite the apparent commitment to prefiguration a problem specific to the ZM is of course its history as a military organization. Regardless of the official shift to civilian command through the establishment of the JBGs in 2003, it is reasonable to assume that some remnants of hierarchic organization remain. This is especially true given the lengthy period of time that the military commanders were in charge of all affairs. It is necessary, thus, to pay special attention to the current role of the general command of the EZLN and its relationship with the *Juntas* and the base communities.

Gender inequalities

The almost complete exclusion of women politically and economically in Chiapas creates a difficult starting point for prefiguration. For example, Pérez Sales et al. argue that women were normally not able to voice their opinion due to their lack of access to political spaces. To organize politically as a woman was often seen as a threat to tradition. Women also lacked education and voice in marriage arrangements and inheritance (2002, 9). According to Mercedes Olivera Bustamante, a feminist scholar and human rights activist in Chiapas, the greatest human rights abuse against women is land ownership (Interview 2013). Given the importance of land for subsistence and basic income in Chiapas the question of a land ownership is a very important one. For example, the official figures for the Lacandon region (figures thus excluding autonomous communities), 93 percent of the 83,000 lots are owned by men (Gómez Lara 2011, 104). Of the women in the Lacandon, 94 percent list their work as household duties (Gómez Lara 2011, 95). Similarly, in the Highland region 89 percent of women are housewives (Olivera Bustamante 2011, 61). Some of the communities where there is strong

Zapatista presence are also most exclusive to women outside the movement. Land ownership of women in the municipality of San Andrés Larrainzar is at 1.5 percent and Altamirano 4.4[89] whereas the region's overall female land ownership is 9.94 percent and municipalities with the highest number of landowning women have as many as 25 percent women (Olivera Bustamante 2011, 90). This suggests that these might be particularly conservative places regarding the role of women. For Olivera Bustamante the inability to own land means that women have to be mediated by men, and thus cannot exercise their citizenship freely. There are very few chances for independent decision-making (Interview 2013). For prefiguration it is thus pertinent for the movement to be conscious of the persisting gender inequality and actively seek ways to tackle it.

At this point the chapter has outlined the material and political origins of the ZM. The above discussion has then introduced the focal points of the assessment of prefiguration. In addition, it is necessary to observe other loci of authority, such as education, and seek to identify the potential of informal elites therein by looking at how the education is delivered, and how sets the curriculum. Similarly the understanding of what constitutes 'private' and 'public' is significant for observing the potential of addressing hierarchy, particularly in gender terms. Relatedly, the possibility of taking part in public affairs naturally facilitates or hinders the prefigurative potential. In order to assess how the Zapatista movement is doing in this regard, the chapter will first look at the Zapatista institutions. After this 'formal' overview, the chapter will discuss potential informal power and obstacles to equality and inclusiveness in decision-making.

Part 2, Assessment.
Phase one – Zapatista principles and institutional arrangements

Formally the Zapatista approach to social change can be summarized with the following quote: "to create the power to solve their own problems and to do so democratically" (Starr et al. 2011, 102). This is how it is commonly understood. The search for autonomy is not framed in terms of a separatist claim for independence but as a right for everyone to govern themselves (Marcos 2003a). The establishment of the *Junta*s marked a shift further towards self-governance that is articulated as a critique of state practices that are perceived to create dependency and passivity (Mora 2007, 70). A Zapatista member of the Autonomous municipality of '17 de Noviembre' articulates the importance of autonomy: "for us, autonomy is the heart and soul of our resistance. It is a new way of doing politics. It is part of the construction of democracy, justice and dignity" (Mora 2007, 64). Observers and analysts of the movement typically argue that rather than trying to take over the state, the Zapatista organizational model is prefigurative whereby the movement attempts to construct new kinds of social relations as a lived experience of creative experimentation (Hesketh 2013, 227–8).

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[89] San Andres is the official municipality where the Zapatista *Caracol* of Oventic is located. Similarly, Altamirano is the official municipality where another of the five *Caracoles*, Morelia is located.

Similarly, participants of the Zapatista festival 'Dignified Rage' celebrating the 15th anniversary of the uprising summarize the discussions at the event for the Zapatista journal Rebeldia:

> The organizational forms, increasingly horizontal and collective, not only prepare social movements for the overthrow of capitalism, after which you could create a different world, but begin to be themselves new forms of doing politics, another form of organizing life itself, another form of participation within the community to which one belongs. Some participants defined as the germ of that other world (Plata and Caldera 2009, 53).

Formally, thus, the movement articulates its struggle in prefigurative terms and is understood as such by sympathetic academics and observers. In this regard, the movement draws from the idea of *mandar obedeciendo* and the concept of *cargo* as a political role of responsibility which is doing an unpaid service to the community. The Zapatistas do not, however, draw entirely uncritically from tradition, as will become evident especially when it comes to looking at the role of women in the movement. Instead, the struggle for autonomy is linked to ethnic traditions that are in a constant state of transformation and adaptation to changing circumstances (Baronnet 2008, 116).

Institutionally speaking Zapatista autonomy consists of building a 'good government' as implied by the name of the 'Good Government Councils.' Collier relates this to the traditional organization of communities based on the allocation of *cargo*s. The roles are filled by rank-based leaders who are to "obey the will of their constituencies, who subordinate themselves to the needs of their followers"(G. Collier 2005, 121). To make sure leaders obey the will of the people the Zapatistas have devised seven principles of *Mandar obedeciendo* (ZM 2013a, 22). The need for the principles is explained by Doroteo, an ex-member of JBG in La Realidad: "We think that we have to do it like this, that it is a kind of an obligation not to commit the same errors that instances of the bad government commit, and not to carry on their same ways, then what will regulate us are the seven principles" (ZM 2013a, 22). Yet, the following principles are never completely opened up and explained. This is both an asset and a problem. Flexibility naturally allows for adapting to changing circumstances and addressing possible new challenges. Yet, the vague nature of these principles is much like religious scripture in that it will require for someone to interpret it, potentially making way for a dominant interpretation. The following discussion is my understanding of the principles based on an overview of the principles of governance (Fernandez 2010) and the discussion in the *Escuelita* materials (ZM 2013a; ZM 2013b).

1. To serve, and not self-serve (Servir y no servirse)

To serve as an 'authority' or in any *cargo*, is a responsibility and one should work out of consciousness for the benefit of the people and not personal gain. This is perhaps best formulated by the slogan "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves." For this reason Zapatista promoters and those in positions of responsibility do not get paid for it but the community instead takes care of their needs and work load back home for them.

2. To represent, and not replace (*Representar y no suplantar*)

The community has the ultimate decision. Leaders can propose but not impose or decide on behalf of the people that have delegated them.

3. To construct, and not destroy (*Construir y no destruir*)

This can be interpreted in the way of constructing the power of the people whereas creating divisions and centralization of power is a way of destroying. Legitimate authority constructs 'power-to' whereas 'power-over' divides and thus destroys.

4. To obey, and not command (*Obedecer y no Mandar*)

The people ultimately are the ones who decide what the movement does or does not do. Those in positions of responsibility do not make laws or give orders.

5. To propose, and not impose (*Proponer y no imponer*)

People in leadership positions can propose course of actions but ultimately the people decide. This would imply that leaders cannot impose their decision even if they think it is 'in the interest' of the community or beneficial to them.

6. To convince, and not conquer (*Convencer y no vencer*)

This is perhaps the clearest indicator of the deliberative nature of Zapatista democracy. The point of collective decision-making moments is that people argue and seek to convince others of what they think is the best course of action and take decisions consensually as far as possible.

7. To descend, and not ascend (*Bajar y no subir)*

This seems to imply that those in positions of responsibility should seek not greater influence over others but always maintain a firm base in the community and in ensuring participation and horizontality.

When contrasting this with della Porta's indicators for deliberative democracy, the similarities are striking. The principle of convincing naturally ties in with della Porta's preference transformation. Zapatistas promote the 'culture of listening' and 'speaking one's heart' which are oriented towards understanding the points of views of others and coming to a mutual understanding instead of sticking to perceived and preconceived interests (Starr et al 2011, 114). Similarly, regarding the second of the seven indicators given by della Porta, the Zapatista principle 'for everyone everything, for us nothing' could not be a much clearer indication of the orientation to public good. Moreover, the principles as a whole are there to make sure that the debate about right practice and right decisions is carried out with regards to what is good for the community or the group as a whole. Whether justifications for particular positions are given using rational criteria is a question that is difficult to answer due to lack

of access to decision-making moments. However, it is hard to see how else the persuasion could happen. Regarding consensus, again, the principles of persuasion and proposal are indicative of this. In practice, though, consensus is an aim that is not always reached. In situations like this the majority wins but the decision is revised and returned to if needed in order to address the initial concerns of those who were left in the minority (Moises 2008). Thus the Zapatista democracy is not pure deliberative democracy but rather consensually oriented direct democracy.

When it comes to equality, officially everyone has the right (and the responsibility) to take part in decisions at the community level. Moreover, the delegates of the *Juntas* rotate and are chosen by communities in a general assembly. The movement is actively seeking to overcome any potential inequalities in capacities to take part in government, stressing the notion of 'being government'(Starr et al. 2011). The autonomous education is also catered towards this. The education is said to be participatory and dialogical so as to prepare the students for roles in the community as well for the community decision-making (Shenker 2012, 436). Moreover, according to Shenker who has conducted one of the most extensive studies of the autonomous education, they are successful in maintaining the community values of reciprocity, group work and equality through practising these things in their operation, not explicitly teaching them (2012, 436). Furthermore, watchdog functions are provided by the Vigilance commission that inform communities as to what is happening at the *Junta* level as well as observe all issues people bring up with the *Junta* (Starr et al. 2011, 106).

Regarding inclusiveness, the principles of *mandar obedeciendo* clearly dictate that all those influenced by the decision should be party to its taking. In practice, too, the Zapatista democracy seems more ascending than descending as will become evident shortly. Decisions corresponding with the community are taken in an assembly and municipal level decisions in a general assembly at that level. Moreover, Zapatistas are committed to pluralism, or 'a world in which many worlds fit' (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 50). Importantly, the *Juntas* have no permanent staff which implies there should be no unaccountable bureaucracy with power (Starr et al. 2011, 105). In principle, thus Zapatista governance seeks inclusiveness. Yet, as the discussion in the second phase will show, there are significant practical obstacles to participation, especially for women.

Transparency, the remaining element of deliberative democracy as per della Porta, is quite problematic. For her this means transparency of the decision-making in the movement. In the Zapatista case, there seems to be transparency for those involved but not so much towards the outside. Thus it is quite difficult to say what the role of the CCRI and the EZLN generally is on the Zapatista democracy. Typically at this point authors make a reference to the consultations of all the communities during the negotiations with the government (e.g. Holloway and Peláez 1998b; King and Villanueva 1998). As will become evident further on, the military elements clearly enjoy quite a lot of influence over the *Juntas*. Similarly, it is hard to assess how much actual oversight the communities have over the *Juntas*. But the fact that the delegates are revocable by community members suggests

that at least theoretically, when a decision, goes contrary to community interests, the delegates can be revoked.

Yet, I am afraid that along with equality between the different elements within the movement and the abovementioned principles in practice are much more problematic than the literature suggests. I am quite hesitant as to the following statement by Starr et al: "Openness, information flow, and genuine deliberation are protected by Zapatistas through the use of community consultations with no time limits […]"(2011, 114). Through the elements of deliberative democracy, especially those of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, this study will be able to identify some of the problems with Zapatista democracy and prefiguration. The chapter will thus return to these problems after a short introduction as to the institutions of autonomy.

Autonomous organizations
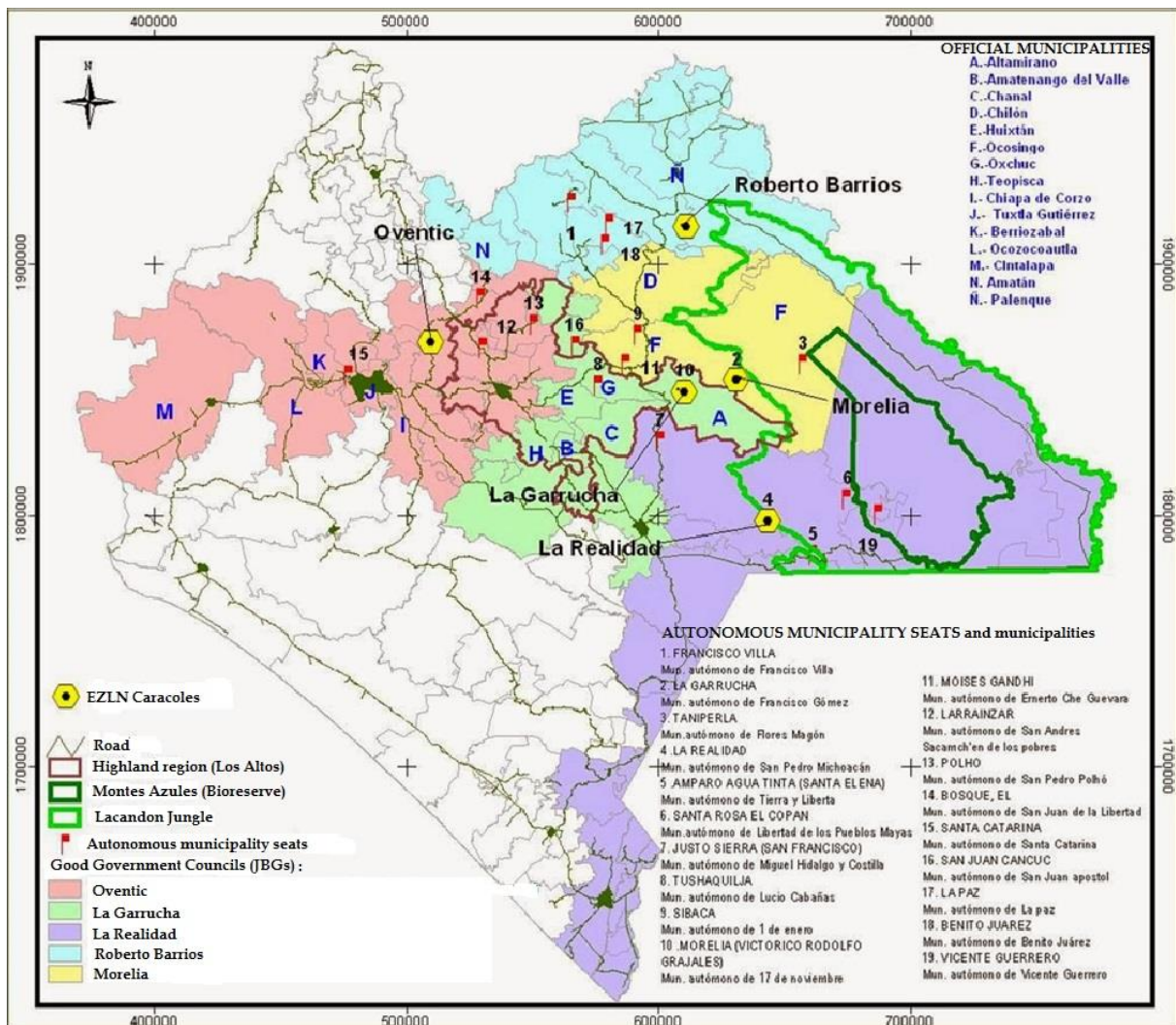
In order to govern themselves according to the principles and to construct their own autonomy, the movement has organized into autonomous communities or base communities (BAEZLN for their Spanish acronym), autonomous municipalities (MAREZ) in five Zapatista regions, each with its own

Caracol where the JBGs are. The move to establish this structure of autonomy was a response to several problems identified by the organization, most important of which had to do with the unbalanced development between municipalities whereby the most-known and the most accessible centres and communities would receive most support (Marcos 2003b). More significantly, however, the shift to the *Juntas* as the authority marks a transformation to civilian rule. Marcos illustrates:

> The EZLN does not intervene at all in the designation or removal of autonomous authorities, and it has limited itself to only pointing out that, given that the EZLN, by principle, is not fighting for the taking of power, none of the military command or members of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee can occupy a position of authority in the community or in the Autonomous Municipalities. Those who decide to participate in the autonomous governments must definitively resign from their organizational position within the EZLN (Marcos 2003c).

The decision-making currently is, in a way, ascending and descending at the same time. While the *Junta* members are chosen in assemblies at the municipal level they are, as Subcomandante Moises explains 'the instance of maximum authority.' As he explains, the *Junta* meets to discuss plans for work. Later, they propose these to the authorities of the MAREZ who then meet with the *comisariados* (those responsible for land related issues) and *agentes* (those responsible for keeping an eye out for interpersonal issues and problems) of the autonomous communities.[90] The latter then take the proposal of the *Junta* to their community. The community makes decisions that are then taken back to the municipal level where a general assembly is carried out and a decision reached which will characterize the mandate of the people that is then returned to the *Junta* (Moises 2008, 15). When urgent things emerge, and special assembly is called to be able to make a decision that JBG has not been previously mandated to do. The communities have municipal assemblies every three months whereby the *Junta* gives an account of their activities and the process is monitored (ZM 2013a, 15). The decision-making is organized so that the JBG have two representatives from each of the autonomous municipalities in the region (Ross 2005). Recently the objective has been to have gender equity in this regard, but as the 'Little school' documents indicate, and as will be discussed shortly, there are still significant problems with achieving the goal.

The community assemblies decide on all local matters such as appointments to Zapatista government. Assemblies are held on many levels: community, municipal and regional (Starr et al. 2011, 105). However, sometimes regional assemblies are difficult to arrange given the distance between communities and transportation arrangements. For example, according to *Junta* members of Oventic in the highland region they are yet to hold a general assembly at the regional level (ZM

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[90] Marcos explains the roles of the *comisariado* and *agente*:
"The *agentas*, for example, in my community, are the ones who watch over the community, who keep vigil over certain kinds of problems, things like small interpersonal issues, or problems with animals that cause harm or damages. It is the *agente* who is responsible for solving these types of problems. They also hold meetings to provide guidance on how to avoid problems with alcohol and drug addiction. These *compañeras* always participate, in every meeting, providing this guidance to avoid arriving at more serious problems. The *comisariadas* also hold meetings to discuss land issues—the care of the surrounding lands and the use of agro-chemicals. We planned all of this out as regulations that the *comisariadas* and *agentes* administer within the communities to maintain this control" (Marcos 2013).

2013a, 38). When the assemblies are held at municipal or regional level, the idea is that the whole community goes to decide. Attendance in community assemblies is compulsory for all those over sixteen which is also the age for starting to contribute to the community in serving in different *cargo*s (Baronnet 2008, 113). The discussion in the assemblies is not clearly structured but carries on until a decision is reached. There is a facilitator who summarizes the arguments made (Starr et al. 2011, 105). In case of disagreements, the practice is to go with majority will but with the idea of keeping an eye on the practice to see whether it goes well. If not, the majority will have to then do something about it to address the issues or concerns those in disagreement had (Moises 2008).

Mandar obedeciendo implies that anyone can raise concerns about the performance of anyone in a role of responsibility and the delegates can be called back. The organization stresses the idea of 'learning to be government' – the principle that *cargo*s and responsibility should rotate and everyone should at some point be in positions of trust and responsibility to learn to overcome their fear of responsibility (Starr et al. 2011). Indeed, all positions of responsibility are rotated. The *Junta* members, for example, are chosen to serve for three years during which two to four different teams rotate so that effectively a *Junta* member will be in duty for up to two weeks per month and with a couple of days overlap between different teams so as to ensure continuity.[91] Moreover, to ensure that whenever the 'term' is over there is continuity and the new incoming *Junta* is up to the task, there is an overlap of one year, during which time the outgoing members of the *Junta* accompany the newcomers and train them in whatever they need to learn for their job. The members of the *Junta* are allocated different spheres of responsibility from the following: education, production, health, agroecology and justice. Again, the idea is to have at least one male and female *compañero* for each area of responsibility (ZM 2013a).

At every level of Zapatista democracy, tasks are allocated not according to whether somebody wants to take the role or not, rather the assembly seeks to identify who would be the best person for the job (ZM 2013a, 59). One can officially refuse the *cargo*, but given that this is seen as a responsibility and one's duty, this is likely not encouraged nor looked upon well.

Looking at the Zapatista autonomous government in the light of Freeman's suggestions, it seems that on first look the movement has indeed learned the lessons of the past and thus should be able to avoid the emergence of informal elites. The autonomous government is based on (1) delegation as opposed to representation (given that the delegates cannot decide on behalf of the rest); (2) the accountability of delegates exists, and ultimate power rests with the group as a whole; (3) authority is distributed and rotated (4). Moreover, responsibilities are (5) allocated according to rational criteria (as opposed to likes/dislikes) as indicated earlier. Movement members, at least theoretically should

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[91] The exact number of *Junta* members varies according to region as does the time during which they are in the *Caracol*. The JBG at La Realidad, for example, consists of two *Juntas* of 24 people that serve 15 days per month. In each area of the authority there are two men and two women.(ZM 2013a, 15) In Morelia they started out doing 6 shifts changing every 8 days.

have equal access to information (6), given that the important decisions are taken publicly and collectively. In terms of equal access to resources of the group (and skills and information) the movement is engaged in educational efforts and decision-making is in practice based on the notion of 'educating in being government' whereby people are encouraged to participate and those who are to take up a role are trained by their predecessors (Freeman 1972, 4–5).

Beyond what they say (and what is said about them)

Generally, thus the Zapatistas operate a communal, assembly based form of direct democracy that for the moment seems to correspond with all of the indicators of a healthy democratic process as per the previous chapters. The *compas* meet at least once a week. All communal matters are discussed and decided in the assembly. Agreement is generally reached by consensus. The different *cargo*s and the performance of those in these roles is up to scrutiny in these meetings. People from the village are chosen as delegates to municipal authorities and from there people are chosen to the regional authorities of the *Juntas*.

This, at least, is the dominant narrative in the literature and how the movement presents itself. Yet, as will be discussed afterwards, even on the formally democratic level there are some significant problems. The literature (including Holloway) often illustrates the directly democratic nature of the movement by stating that the communities were consulted before going to war and when negotiating with the government following the war is (E.g.Harvey 1998a, 197; Holloway 1998, 165). Or they explain how the institutions established by the movement work and the principles on which they are based. This is essentially what we have done until now. Yet, without knowing how the power dynamics and the decision-making actually pans out in the local context, we can only make arguments at a very superficial level, and not about the true content of the processes that take place in the communities.

The Zapatista discourse and the literature itself highlights the hypocritical nature and the disconnect between the idea of democracy and the practice in neoliberal capitalist societies. In an interview for Spanish television Marcos himself argued that the Zapatistas do not evaluate the success of the New Leftist governments in Latin America by looking at the governments but rather the people of these countries (El Loco De La Colina 2012). Similarly then the Zapatistas should be judged by what happens in the base, and not by their official discourse or the institutional arrangements. Indeed, many studies into the Zapatista movement have focused exclusively on the EZLN at the expense of the civilian elements that form the base of the movement (Martínez Espinoza 2008, 160). There appears to be a general reluctance to explore the communities and evaluate the workings and processes of autonomy therein (Mentinis 2006, 62). Consequently, the literature is forced to accept that the movement discourse represents the reality and that the principles of 'lead by obeying' are in fact reflected in practice.

Yet, due to problems of access, as discussed in the previous chapter, I too was unable to carry out an extended observation of the communal processes. Consequently, this part of the case study will contrast my personal experiences in Chiapas (as outlined in chapter 3) with the evidence provided by some of the more critical scholars that have engaged with these questions (Barmeyer 2009; Barmeyer 2008; Barmeyer 2003; Mentinis 2006; Ryan 2011; Ryan 2009). Moreover, I had multiple conversations with human rights observers, and NGO personnel and conducted interviews with key academics and intellectuals who are well-acquainted with Zapatismo. In addition, the summer of 2013 provided a unique opportunity for reflecting on the Zapatista project. The movement organized the *Escuelita* or 'Little School' for activists, academics and other sympathizers of the movement nationally and internationally. The *Escuelita* coincided with the 10 year anniversary of the JBGs, and the movement intended to show the maturity of the autonomous project by collectively producing the materials for the school. People from different regions, different levels of responsibility and different genders took part in the producing the materials. Subcomandante Moises stated before the school: "it is the people themselves, that is, the bases of support, who are sharing these ideas, not just their representatives. These people, not their representatives, are the ones who will say if they are doing well or if the way that they are organized is working well. That way others can see if things are really like the people's representatives say they are" (Moises 2014).

Thus, the *Escuelita* materials as process of collective reflection provide an invaluable basis for assessing the discussions inside the movement. As discussed in chapter 1 and 3, self-reflection is fundamental to a continuing prefigurative project. It is not assumed that a group can instantly shake off past hierarchies. Yet, they should be actively reflecting on the processes of constructing autonomy and in that regard seek to identify remaining or potential inequalities and concentrations of power so as to be able to tackle them. The *Escuelita* materials offer a way to observe the relations between different elements within the movement as well as contrast my findings with the potential of the movement addressing the hierarchies. Naturally, given that the materials were produced by those more actively involved in the movement, one has to approach them with some caution. But we will return to this point later.

Indeed, while formally the Zapatista democracy seems to be taking into account different sources of hierarchy, there are some significant problems that will be considered in the following discussion. Namely, the military elements of the movement continue to influence the movement and the *Juntas* and the movement as a whole exercise quite a lot of control over the communities and individuals. In this regard, one also has to problematize the assumptions of the movement as homogeneous. Indeed, there are conflicting interests within the movement, most importantly between the 'hard-core' and the 'pragmatics' and a tension that broadly corresponds with these divisions regarding deepening women's participation. The possibility of class differences will also be discussed before ending with a lengthier consideration of the continued gender inequality. The gender issue is related to questions of power in education which will end the discussion in the chapter.

Phase two - Hierarchy and inequality in the Zapatista movement

The role of the military

The stated purpose of the *Juntas* was to "break with separation of politicians and the 'people': so that the task of governing is not exclusive to one group, so that there are no 'professional' leaders, so that learning is for the greatest number of people, and so that the idea that government can only be carried out by 'special people' is rejected" (Hesketh 2013, 229). Yet, despite the fact that the members of the command of the EZLN cannot take up any roles in the communities, municipalities or the *Juntas*, the reform of 2003 has left the role of the military organization itself somewhat vague (Holloway 2013b; Stahler-Sholk 2007, 58). Some of the literature indicates a problematic continued influence of the EZLN. Starr et al, for example, argue that the CCRI functions as "the ultimate authority in Zapatista territories"(2011, 104). Mentinis goes as far as to argue that tradition, customs in the communities and the military structures sometimes "transform the communities into autonomous, oppressive and authoritarian structures, reducing collective decision-making and the principle of 'command obeying' to mere myths for academic consumption"(2006, 144). Similarly, in one of the most realistic accounts, dealing with a community far away from the Zapatista centres, Ramor Ryan, a long term solidarity activist in Zapatista communities, describes Marcos's discourse as 'rose-tinted prose.' His experience led him to argue that the *Junta* may be the public face of the movement, but in the region where he was working, decisions seem to return to the same man who was the military commander during the uprising and is now some kind of a civilian commander (2011, 200). According to Ryan, he too does not have the evidence to support this claim's validity throughout the Zapatista territories, due to the secretive nature of the movement, but through his talks with other people that have worked in the communities he concludes that many important decisions were taken by this important comandante rather than the corresponding assembly or delegates. Ryan argues, based on his experiences working and living with the movement that despite the formal authority of the assembly, people often turned to the 'local EZLN head-honcho' for certain decisions. He concludes (2011, 200-201):

> Old habits – like letting someone else make your decisions for you – die hard, and unfortunately, the practice flies in the face of the much-lauded notion of Zapatista participatory democracy. It is like a system of old-school caudillismo (strong man rule) still lingers, like a useless tradition that people cannot quite shake off, despite the democratic aspirations of the movement.

Barmeyer, similarly a long-term activist and Zapatista observer, argued in 2009 that even fifteen years after the uprising a significant gap exists between the impression the movement has created and the realities on the ground (2009). He describes how decision-making structures are in reality, "less a model of grassroots participatory democracy than a process often dominated by men, older community members and those who can dispense patronage"(Ryan 2009, See: picture 5).

At the same time, it would not be fair to deem the movement failed in this regard without considering the current situation, given that for example Mentinis' nine months in Chiapas took place in 2001, which is before the reorganization of the movement. Barmeyer's research, similarly, goes until 2009. Yet, while there are no references to direct forms of *caudillismo* (perhaps unsurprisingly) the *Escuelita* materials indicate multiple instances where the military elements influence the movement. For example, Fanny, a member of the *Junta* in La Realidad explains: "…the CCRI…also gives us their idea, they guide us, they say: this is lacking, this should be done" (ZM 2013a, 15). Elsewhere, the Subcomandantes Marcos and Moises have sought to explain the role of the comandancia as supporting communities in their work, visiting divided or co-opted communities to warn about government support as counter-insurgency (Moises and Marcos 2011a; Moises and Marcos 2011b). The work in their view is to look outside the base communities of the EZLN and to explain to the communities what is happening outside and in the rest of the country. And conversely, the comandantes explain to outsiders what happens inside the EZLN, sometimes through communiqués and sometimes through talks where things like women's work and the work of municipalities is explained to outsiders (Moises and Marcos 2011b, 16). "Because of this, we say that comandantes and comandantas are the organizational bosses [jefes], those who organize the people, those who are responsible for the organization, with our [Subcomandantes] support"(Ibid). It is noteworthy, that despite the fact that the CCRI takes decisions collectively, it is an institution that consists of permanent members who do not rotate. They officially have come to their positions democratically (Petrich and Henriquez 1994) but in practice being a comandante seems to be a life-long honour.

Indeed, the CCRI and the Subcomandantes have influence over the civilian elements of the movement through many ways. Firstly, the CCRI in each region "will monitor the operations of the Good Government *Juntas* in order to prevent acts of corruption, intolerance, injustice and deviation from the Zapatista principle of 'Governing Obeying'" as Marcos explained introducing the *Junta*s back in 2003 (Marcos 2003c). Indeed, the *Escuelita* material shows that to begin with, the work of the *Junta*s, their tasks and responsibilities – in short, what they should and should not do – were defined by the military elements. Moreover, many of the propositions that have been taken upon by all the *Junta*s have come from the CCRI. For example, the General Command recommended to the *Junta*s to set up vigilance commissions in 2012 to safeguard against corruption and financial mismanagement and to keep an eye on the *Junta*s on behalf of the base communities (ZM 2013a, 39). In addition, the CCRI still seems to be involved in holding the *Junta* accountable in terms of the use of funds.[92]

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[92] For example, in the *Caracol* of Oventic, the receipts of donations received are always sent to the CCRI (ZM 2013a, 33). The role of the CCRI becomes ever more visible when we discuss the challenging of gender roles in the base communities.

One of the areas where the EZLN seems to be very active is in the promotion for further participation of women at all levels (Moises 2008, 14). In the words of an ex-member of a municipal authority: "The authorities of each council, the same as CCRI, are looking for a way to make the gender equity so that the decision taken is fulfilled in every municipality"(ZM 2013a, 45). Elsewhere in the *Escuelita* documents, a female education promoter in the region of La Garrucha explained that the CCRI is the most active in promoting female participation in the movement, getting the women together and giving them the necessary information to get involved (ZM 2013c, 44). This sentiment is widely shared by the female Zapatistas, as it appears in other parts of the documents (ZM 2013b, 8, 11, 22, 33, 46). We will return to the discussion on gender and the role of the military and the *Juntas* when discussing gender equality.

EZLN and discourse

The Military also influences the movement through discourse. Almost all of the movement's communiqués and literature has been produced by Subcomandante Marcos. They have not only influenced how outsiders see the movement but undoubtedly also the way in which the Zapatista 'bases' see it. Especially, given that for many of the indigenous Marcos is almost a god-like figure (Mentinis 2006). It is not unimportant, either, that the movement first came to the communities from the 'mountains' and that Marcos continues to sign all of his communiqués with the words 'From the mountains of Southeast Mexico.' Mountain, for the indigenous, is more a concept than a geographical fact. Mountain is where people do not live (De Vos 2002, 363). Mountain is "the magical world inhabited by the whole of Mayan history, by the spirits of ancestors, and by Zapata himself"(Neil Harvey 1998a, 166).

Yet, this discourse seems to encourage people in the movement to challenge hierarchic practices. This has been pointed out by the critical research discussed earlier. Ryan writes: "there is a constant struggle between the old forms of exercising power and new, emancipatory ones. The inclusion of more women and youth in the decision-making process is, as Barmeyer points out, evidence of a shifting paradigm" (Ryan 2009). Mentinis, too, while being very harsh in his critique of hierarchic practices in the Zapatista secondary education showed how the students were challenging those practices as incompatible with the notions of democracy and *mandar obedeciendo*. He argues that the discourse of autonomy in itself has provided the counter-power to these hierarchic and militaristic practices in the school (2006, 149–150):

> justice, freedom and democracy is appropriated by some indigenous people and used tactically to challenge oppressive and authoritarian community practices…This is something that characterises not only the Zapatista school, in which some students formulate their dissatisfaction in terms of lack of democracy and freedom, but also in other areas of the Zapatista praxis and especially the struggle of women.

This appropriation of the principles and the democratic discourse as per the writings of the EZLN (and Marcos in particular) will become clearer later when the chapter proceeds to discuss gender roles and education.

Gerontocracy

In terms of gerontocracy, its decomposition had begun in the communities of the Lacandon region, and the changing social composition therein, as discussed before. In the literature and the *Escuelita* materials there is only indication to traditional authorities in the municipality where they are merely in charge of religious festivities (ZM 2013a, 27–29). In addition, the discussion indicated that the movement is actively seeking to transform the way in which traditional authorities are chosen (ZM 2013a, 29). Similarly, both in San Marcos and among the shift workers of 21 de Abril, I saw that elderly men were in charge of leading the religious ceremonies. However, in terms of managing other affairs, the same people were not in other roles of responsibility.

In fact, it could be argued that due to its young composition and active youth involvement on all levels of Zapatista autonomy, they could have in fact displaced or excluded the old. Baronnet has studied youth's role in education and the communities. He argues that while the youth are more active and more represented at all levels, they have not displaced the old or excluded them completely from communal decision-making. Indeed, they are vigorously supervised by intergenerational bodies such as the assembly and the educational committee appointed by it (Baronnet 2008).

According to Baronnet, the old indeed tend to have roles in religious activities, and discussing the curricula of the autonomous schools so as to safeguard and revitalize the indigenous culture and traditions (2008). "Having renounced their agrarian rights in favour of their children, they [the elderly] do not participate in all of the communal assemblies, but continue to influence local political life. Their ceding of secular power to their children and grandchildren does not mean that they lack moral authority" (Baronnet 2008, 115). Indeed, this is one of the careful balances the movement has had to seek through its practice. However, it is important to stress that despite many being religious, the movement does not rely on religion for its operation as argued before.[93] Consequently, there is less risk of power concentrating. This difference is important as will be illustrated at the end of the chapter with the comparison to the more religiously oriented *Abejas*.

While the Zapatistas seem to have avoided reproducing the traditional gerontocracy or creating a neontocracy (young people's rule) in its stead, the continued influence of the CCRI raises questions of a potential new form of traditional rule, this time not due to age but one's involvement in the EZLN. The time spent working with the Zapatistas in the terrain of 21 de Abril indicates these tendencies.

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[93] Or as Rosalinda, an ex *Junta-* member of Oventic explained, the Zapatista could not have organized according to religion since there are Catholics, Jehova's witnesses, Presbyterians, and she does not know how many different religious faiths (ZM 2013a, 29).

Indeed, as explained in the beginning of the chapter, the 'coordinator' of the working group was ex-EZLN, and enjoyed much authority and respect from the others due to this. Even though participation in the civilian authorities is not allowed for members of the EZ, they can do so by resigning from the military. Consequently, it is not impossible to imagine that these former militants enjoy influence in their communities. It is similarly perceivable that they continue to be influenced by the desires and discourse of the EZLN. Yet, due to the secretive nature of the movement, it is hard to estimate how many of the former militants are involved in autonomous government.

Role of the JBGs

If the CCRI has influence over the *Juntas*, so do the latter over the communities and individuals. Marcos' communiqué in 2003 announcing these new authorities justifies them as necessary: "in order to serve and guide national and international civil society so that they can visit communities, carry out productive projects, set up peace camps, carry out research (note: those which provide benefits for the communities) and any other activity permitted in the rebel communities"(Marcos 2003c). In effect then, the *Juntas* control the access of any outsiders to the autonomous communities, regardless of whether this in effect would mean an unfair advantage of the community in question, material or otherwise.

My personal experiences are indicative of this. Following the two weeks (July 18 - 31 2013) working in collaboration with the Zapatista turnantes in the region of Morelia we approached the coordinator of the group to ask if it would be possible for us (myself and a Portuguese peace observer) to come to their community for a while to teach English and in that way get to know the project autonomy at the local level. The coordinator told us that the community does not have the authority to take a decision of this kind. If they were to give us permission, the *Junta* would 'pull them by the ear' as one might do with naughty children.

While the *Juntas* seek to rotate between municipalities (ZM 2013a) so as to avoid centralizing power, the autonomy of the individuals and villages is limited by collective decisions. The *Juntas* are trying to impose gender quotas so as to ensure female participation. This in effect means that the more conservative elements in the communities are forced to go with the will of the majority and to be in accordance with the movement's principles widely speaking. As an example, Ceferino, an ex-member of the *Junta* in La Garrucha explains: "There are also villages that want to do something without the majority, then to this village it has to be explained that they cannot; cases like this have happened to us, there are villages that come to the office and even raise their voices against the authorities, but we cannot accept what they want because it depends on the majority. In that we have to be clear, but it is to explain to the village/people [pueblo] and try and convince them, make them understand the reasoning for why these things are done" (ZM 2013a, 51). At the moment, each community has to name their *agente* and *comisariado,* and they have to include women (ZM 2013a, 45).

In effect, thus, the *Juntas* are charged with observing the fulfilment of laws at the municipality level (Marcos 2003c). In practice this means mainly urging the municipalities to fulfil gender ratios as per the revolutionary law of women. This however means that the communities have autonomy only so far as they comply with the general principles and agreements of the movement, many of which were drafted by the EZLN in the early 90s. Furthermore, in order for the Zapatista *compañeros* to migrate to another region to provide for their families, they require permission from the authorities. This is a significant restriction on one's freedom. Indeed, according to Pablo Iribarrén, a Dominican priest and a historian of Chiapas, the movement in this way controls excessively the lives of its membership (Interview 2012).

Relating this back to the work of Holloway, this most certainly implies a form of 'power-over' and demonstrates the practical limits to building 'power-to.' Given that a decision to choose two men to represent the communities, for example, is taken democratically but then frowned upon by the *Junta* and the CCRI, the practice is not purely prefigurative. But given the conservative reality in some of the communities, the emergence of purely (liberatory) prefigurative practice from therein is also impossible. This, in effect, demonstrates some of the practical paradoxes of prefiguration. Relating back to Holloway's ideas, and the fact that he seems not to think that critical consciousness is necessary for advancing social change,(Holloway 2013b) this activity by both the *Junta* and the CCRI indicate that there are certain fundamental principles of the movement that effectively should be agreed to and practised by the membership. Their efforts to promote or enforce these principles, then serve as a form of indoctrination and leave the military and *Juntas* in a powerful position. If relating back to della Porta's work, this perhaps corresponds with the notion of orientating towards the public good but is hardly consensual. It is as if the limits to what kinds of decisions are acceptable are defined before the deliberation itself. This is a tension that we will return to repeatedly.

In addition to posing these questions, it is necessary to problematize the assumed homogeneity of the movement which is surprising given the movement's own discourse of diversity and the 'world in which many worlds fit.' Based on many years of ethnography as a teacher and a researcher in the Cañadas region, the heartland of the rebellion, Barmeyer argues that in fact there are two distinct groups within the movement: the 'hard-core' membership (mainly former and current militants of the EZLN and their families); and those with slightly looser, more pragmatic ties to the organization in the Zapatista support bases (2003; 2008; 2009).

Moreover, people do not necessarily protest an abstract concept such as 'neoliberalism' or 'capitalism' but more concrete instances, such as the landlord or the municipal authorities (Stahler-Sholk 2007). While the hard-core is likely more informed about and dedicated to the fundamental principles and desires of the movement, many others seem to have joined for pragmatic and material needs. Indeed, the experiences of Barmeyer and Ryan indicate that some *campesinos* are not very politically aware or committed, and their relationship with the 'organization' can perhaps be characterized as pragmatic as in many cases their preoccupation with survival overrides ideological

considerations (Ryan 2011). For example, the community where Ryan was helping to build a water pumping system in the end jumped ship and left the movement to join a paramilitary organization. Ryan himself indicates that this is not at atypical, and in many cases communities join the movement and leave it based on their estimations as to which – the state or the organization – will be more beneficial to the community (Ryan 2011, 207). Similarly, as explained before, my observations in the communities indicated that indeed many had not only left the movement but become party to paramilitary organizations to improve their material conditions. Such is the case with the village neighbouring 21 de Abril where the whole community was part of the uprising but now only one family remains while the rest belong to ORCAO, the paramilitary organization who harassed the inhabitants of 21 de Abril until they decided to leave their community. The supporters of ORCAO now intend to extend their cattle ranching and logging activities to this village.

Class

Given the youth of the Zapatista communities, and they largely living off 'recuperated' land, there should not be much class difference. Due to the colonies predating the movement having been relatively loosely integrated to the economy, they arguably avoided some of the growing class differences that took place inside the indigenous communities due to neoliberal reforms elsewhere in Chiapas. Nonetheless, we can assume that families with a large number of children (sons especially) might have more difficulty making ends meet given that land is the source of income for most people in the movement. In the community of San Marcos, there seemed to be little difference in the material conditions of people (see: Picture 6); everybody seemed to have more or less the same construction materials for their houses and the same utilities. Yet, when visiting one family in San Marcos in September 2012, it was visible that they had notably more animals than the rest, and importantly a horse to help out with the farm work. They had been fortunate in the sense that during the uprising they had already been living there and working in the large estate that was subsequently occupied by the movement, and thus did not have to build their own house. This left them in a more advantageous position.

Moreover, unlike what one might assume reading the Zapatista literature, private enterprise also exists in the communities. It is not impossible to assume that those *compañeros* that run the village shop that for example we as peace observers frequented would be materially better off than the rest.

Many argue that the movement avoids many of these problems through the collective ownership of land (Hesketh 2013, 226; Olivera Bustamante interview 2013). Yet, at least all the Zapatistas that I have spoken with indicate that they have personal corn plots, or *milpas*. Moreover, given that many of the Zapatistas live in communities divided between official and autonomous institutions, this means much of the land is not worked collectively but owned through titles to the *ejido* and parcelled up to families. Some parts of the land are owned collectively and worked as such, but based on my discussions and observations with people in the communities, the basic subsistence of a family derives

from the family *milpa*. Indeed, further research would be necessary to see exactly how and according to what criteria these plots are allocated. Naturally a poor plot gives less harvest and thus less income and a poor basis for survival. Similarly, further research should explore the explore how the pressure for more land is handled given that a family with many sons eventually needs to find more land to be able to subsist. In various discussions with the Zapatistas, the pressure for land was identified as an important factor driving migration to the US and generally away from Chiapas. Similarly, the shift workers in 21 de Abril explained that in the region of Oventic the movement already does not have more land. Thus they had been assigned to the work in the village which is in the region of Morelia. Many expressed secret hopes for being able to come and live in the community once the area would be secure enough. They did not seem too hopeful, though, and it seemed as if overall they do not have much say in the process.

The *Juntas* are generally charged with identifying and minimizing potential differences regarding the benefits of collective projects and NGO funding, in fact this was, as explained before, one of the main reasons for their establishment (G. Collier 2005, 204–5). They collect a 'brother tax' of ten percent of any NGO project. This tax is then used to equalize by distributing it to less advantageous communities. The projects themselves are also directed to places with most need. In addition, the collective decision-making is supposed to ensure that people cannot reap personal rewards from collective projects (Fernandez 2010). Indeed, an article by Fernandez, written in cooperation with the authorities of the Oventic region explains how the autonomous government aims to tackle potential corruption. It is viewed that continuing rotation sterilizes against corruption, in that one might be able to make a 'deal' with one authority, but then he would have to make it with all of them and in all of the different shifts, otherwise there would be no continuation. Once you achieve that, you already have to start again since now there is a new *Junta*. Moreover, the fact that none of the roles are paid for, and that community oversight is exercised through the vigilance commissions and the assemblies and by CCRI itself, should complicate the use of political power for economic gains. This is particularly difficult since it is not allowed to occupy the same role of responsibility for two consecutive terms (Fernandez 2010).

Vice versa, being able to take part in roles of responsibility should not be dependent upon economic status. People are chosen according to their suitability for addressing the problem at hand. The work of the person that leaves is then the responsibility of the community as a whole until they return or whenever they are not in the community due to responsibilities. Similarly, travel is reimbursed and the community as a whole is responsible for providing the necessary food and utilities for those in roles of responsibility (Fernandez 2010). Consequently, if there are class differences in the Zapatista communities, they are minimal and do not seem to coincide with politics. Indeed, my observations never indicated the coincidence of material prosperity and roles of political responsibility. Consequently, potential differences in economic status should not reflect on the ability

to take part in a meaningful way in the Zapatista democracy. Similarly, the movement seems to be actively trying to tackle any material inequality.

Gender roles

As explained before, the traditionally very subordinated role of women in the communities is by far the most challenging factor for Zapatista prefiguration. It manifests itself in many ways that shall be discussed now. Yet, compared with past revolutionary movements, the Zapatistas are remarkably conscious of the need for a more 'integral revolution' whereby the problem of gender is addressed in the organization itself.[94] The Women's Revolutionary Law of 1993[95] has paved way for many improvements. Domestic violence it is strictly forbidden and the autonomous justice system sees to punishing it, as indicated by discussions in the *Escuelita* materials (ZM 2013c). Similarly, the banning of alcohol, coinciding with the establishment of the *Juntas* in 2003, is seen as an indication of the power of the women in the movement.[96] This has been justified in part to protect women and children from violence (Barmeyer 2003, 135). The *Juntas* and the CCRI actively promote the amplification of female participation, but some significant obstacles remain, some of which are not actively acknowledged by the movement. This section of the chapter will first outline my observations in this regard, contrasted with those of other researchers. This will be followed by an analysis of the *Escuelita* documents and the discussion therein. Given that gender inequality is a significant issue for the movement – and the starting point is a difficult one – it is fundamental that the movement demonstrate the kind of self-reflection that shows the problem is acknowledged in all its nuances and that they are likely to do something to address it.

My experiences and the observations by Ryan and Barmeyer speak to the continuing inequality between men and women, especially in remote regions where the influence of the EZLN is weaker. Indeed, Ramor Ryan's book about a water project in a remote Zapatista community shows that the reality in the village was very different from what one might imagine reading the official Zapatista communiqués or the writings of Marcos (Ryan 2011). He explains that in the community where he worked women were normally completely excluded from decision-making and the village generally was under the leadership of one man. However, there was an important moment in his stay in the village. The men were trying to stop the women from participating in a meeting where the plans for the places of the water hoses were to be decided. The women wanted water to be brought into a central location in the village so as to be able to wash clothes closer to home and not having to go

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[94] For example, in an example from nearby, the Sandinistas have been accused of marginalizing the debates of reproductive rights and consequently portraying feminism as antagonistic to the revolution (Heumann 2014.)
Similarly, the FMLN in El Salvador did not see fostering feminism as one of its objectives. Moreover, in the cases of Cuba, El Salvador and Chile, the work carried out by women was consistently invisible or deemed secondary in importance. For this discussion and a good general discussion on the role of feminism and women in revolution, refer to: (Shayne 2004)

[95] Refer to Appendix 3.

[96] This was announced by Comandante David on 9 august 2003.("Autonomía Zapatista, Otro Mundo Es Posible. (parte 1/2)" 2014)

down to the river for it. The men did not see this as important. The women chose to come to the meeting anyway and managed to persuade the rest of the utility of their plan. This highlights both the problems and the progress. It shows that the full participation and equal position of women is not a reality as of yet, especially in these more far away villages, but the women have appropriated the language of democracy and participation and are claiming a space in public affairs (Ryan 2011).

Compared to the community of Ryan's work, in the village of San Marcos the position of women seems slightly better. However, this might be due to the continued influence of western activists or the cooperation that the community has with the FRAYBA that has many women in their organization. The women were present in the meeting with FRAYBA and the weekly assemblies were attended by men and women both. However, as I was not invited to take part in the assembly, I cannot say much about the actual influence women have over the decision-making process. The assemblies are not the only meetings in which things are discussed and decided (however informally) though. A meeting to welcome the volunteers to the village as well as the meeting to send us away were only attended by the male *compañeros*. They also routinely sat down by the volunteer's house discuss matters. Moreover, when attending church where the people broke down into groups to discuss the day's gospel, the men formed two groups outside and collectively discussed what is to be learned from the text. We were told by them that the women are doing the same thing inside the church. However, my female observer friends indicated that the women were not discussing the text. Moreover, in the village all the *cargo*s were taken up by men – the coordinator of the volunteers, the educational promoters, the health promoters and the responsible. In addition, during the whole time I did not come across any women who would speak Spanish. Meanwhile, in the *Caracoles* of Oventic and Morelia where I came across four different *Junta* teams, there were indeed women involved, but not a single time did I see a woman as the coordinator, they were always men. This indicates that there is still a long way to go from women playing merely in supporting roles.

Escuelita documents

The acknowledgment of gender inequality by the movement is encouraging. Marcos himself has said: "Although they have also seen to it that women are no longer sold and may freely choose their mate, what feminists call 'gender discrimination' still exists in Zapatista lands. The 'women's revolutionary law' still has a long way to go in being fulfilled"(Marcos 2003b). In terms of the self-reflection necessary for carrying on with prefiguring more egalitarian social roles, it is encouraging that one out of the four books for the *Escuelita* is dedicated entirely on the role of women in the movement and produced entirely by female Zapatistas. Similarly, it is encouraging that the women talk openly about the problems and argue that there is a long way ahead of the movement in this regard (ZM 2013c, 23–25).

In terms of women's participation in political and other communal affairs, there are problems already in quantitative terms. Yet, this varies much between regions. In La Garrucha, for example, the

percentage of women taking part is merely two to three percent (Ibid, 44). Conversely, in Morelia the women argue participation is equal to that of men from the municipal level up and from all villages there has to be at least one female representative (Ibid, 51). The same discrepancy exists in thematic terms. While women are roughly equally represented in health (Ibid, 22) and communication, (Ibid, 23) there is a complete absence of women in roles of responsibility regarding agrarian questions (Ibid, 21; 22; 34). Women also do not take part in the Vigilance Committee which provides oversight of the *Juntas*. Moreover, when women do occupy a *cargo*, they often indicate how they need to 'battle much' to be listened to (Ibid, 33). Consequently, it is hard to speak of equality in quantitative nor qualitative terms. Similarly, referring back to Freeman and della Porta, the incomplete participation of women is an indication of problems of inclusiveness. Moreover, it shows that while there is rotation, this rotation cannot be considered adequate because for the following reasons the female element is missing.

Obstacles to female participation

Why, then, despite all the encouragement, are women still so few in the Zapatista institutions? Ultimately there are many elements to the answer, but many of them come down to the fact that in the Zapatista communities it is the men who make the decisions inside the family.

Lack of moral support

On multiple occasions in the *Escuelita* documents, women explained how females in the movement do not feel that they have the moral support of the communities to take on roles of responsibility (E.g. ZM 2013a, 9; 32). Many more expressed feeling incompetent (Ibid, 9) or fearing responsibility due to lack of experience in being in charge (Ibid, 19; 21; 24). This is an interesting phenomenon. Officially the Zapatista idea is one of 'learning to be government' whereby it is stressed that whatever one needs to learn for the *cargo*, they can learn in and through the work itself – this includes learning to read and write or to speak Spanish (E.g. Fernandez 2010). Indeed, even though this is the official line, the most commonly used explanation by women in their hesitation to take part indicate that they think they should learn first to be able to do it; be that to read and write or to study land issues to be able to participate in agrarian issues. It seems thus, that for women the lack of adequate training is more of a problem that it is for men. This is very important, given that in the *Escuelita* documents the female *compañeras* often cite lack of confidence as the main threshold. And the consequent unwillingness to get involved in public affairs is the most oft-cited reason for low levels of women in authorities.[97]

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[97] In the región of La Garrucha, for example, an ex-member of the *Junta* explains that in some municipalities they still don't get to even 20 percent. And that they are trying to find ways to actively convince the women to take part (ZM 2013a, 45–5).

Education and language

Given that women seem less confident in taking responsibility due to the lack of moral support, education is very important. Education is also important for another reason. Spanish is the working language for the *Juntas*, at least when they deal with people of the other ethnicities. Being able to write is also necessary for administration. In the community of San Marcos I did not come across any women who could speak Spanish. This significantly hinders the possibility of female participation at the regional level. For this reason alone education would be very important. Autonomous education with its focus on practising community democracy and decision-making is potentially helpful.

In this regard, as Shenker argues: "Whilst sexual 'equality' is far from reached with most women still maintaining their traditional role in the home and a lower quantity of women than men currently occupying *cargo*s, the equality of opportunity in education and in political participation that is now open to women represents a significant step from the pre-1994 years" (Shenker 2012, 440). Her research showed that at least in the region of Morelia, the number of girls attending school (primary) is almost on a par with boys (Shenker 2012). This means more women are, at least in the future, potentially capable and confident in taking up roles of responsibility. My experiences reflect this – in San Marcos on all of the days I attended the autonomous school, the numbers were more or less equal. (Picture 7-9).

Yet, at the secondary level, the story gets complicated. There are fewer girls in secondary school which means fewer female education promoters. In the communities that Shenker studied, similarly to San Marcos, all the education promoters were men (Shenker 2012). The *Escuelita* material speaks about this problem. Fathers are reluctant to let their daughters enter the secondary school. This is because the school is far from the communities and thus the daughter would have to stay away for long periods of time which would make it impossible for the fathers to control what they do (ZM 2013c, 26). Indeed, families often fear that young single women serving as instructors might engage in unsanctioned relationships during the periodic training workshops. Consequently, according to Baronnet, biographical accounts of female promoters show that in order to become one, women inevitably violate familial and communal behavioural norms (Baronnet 2008, 120). Consequently, there is a lack of female education promoters which maintains the cycle due to the lack of positive examples. This thus remains a significant problem. It is also related to the next obstacle to female participation generally.

Travel

Women's participation in regional government is also complicated due to the necessary long journeys (Stahler-Sholk 2007, 58). The problem here is threefold. Firstly, there is the question of security. Indeed, female members of the JBG in La Realidad explained in an interview that for women to travel all the way to the Caracol or any meeting is difficult as they should be accompanied (indioezln 2008). The *Escuelita* discussion similarly makes many references to the fear of rape and

harassment (ZM 2013a, 27; 42; 55; 65). Regarding harassment, while the women discussing in the documents generally seem to be in agreement that domestic violence has generally declined drastically in Zapatista communities (E.g. Ibid, 15), and those that harass are the *partidistas*, it is quite worrying that for example in the region of Roberto Barrios there is no enforcement for breaking domestic violence and harassment laws (Ibid, 73). The second and third problem in this regard have to do with childcare and the husbands' reluctance to let the women be away from home for considerable times, given the distance to the Caracol. Ultimately, thus, these are questions of domestic roles and domestic work that will be discussed now, as they pose the most significant obstacles to female participation in the Zapatista movement.

Domestic work and roles within the family

It has been argued that the movement is challenging the roles inside the family. The testimonies of those taking part in the *Escuelita* indicate that families have started to share household chores and do the farm work more collectively. Raúl Zibechi, the influential Uruguayan autonomist scholar and activist writes: "Upon finishing, they all wash their own plates and spoons, even the father, who at times helps prepare the food. I ask if this is normal in these parts, and they tell me that it is customary in Zapatista communities" (Zibechi 2013). This, I fear is the kind of romanticism characteristic of the literature on the ZM.

Shenker, for one, points out that women have maintained their traditional role of taking care of all the household duties (Shenker 2012). *Escuelita* documents talk about this continuing *machismo*. The *Junta*s seek to address this by talking to the husbands and fathers. For example, as a *Junta* member explains. If the father tries to stop his daughter from participating, they visit him and explain that freeing the women is one of the things they are fighting for. But sometimes they would say: 'no, I rule here. And I say no'(ZM 2013a, 47). Indeed, the documents give so many clear examples of how the men in the family make the decisions, and how using this power they make it more difficult for women to meaningfully participate in the movement's 'public' life, that it is necessary to walk through them separately.

Women cannot participate if their fathers do not trust them to go away independently or for some other reason are not given permission by their fathers (ZM 2013a, 11; 43; 44; 56). Women also often drop out when they get married, so as to be able to take care of the family (Ibid, 12). Also, those married to men outside of the movement are often prohibited from taking on roles of responsibility (Ibid, 8; 15).

Moreover, the early feminist critique of EZLN arguing that there might be equality between men and women inside the military organization, but only unmarried women could become insurgents with married women were relegated to supportive roles seems to persist. On multiple occasions the women in the documents talk of how there are more young women involved because married women are not allowed to by their husbands, (Ibid, 20; 24; 57) or because they have many children and are thus

unable (Ibid, 35; 65). Indeed, it is often very clear in the discussion carried out in the *Escuelita* documents that the men decide in the family (Ibid, 68). As an indicator, it is perhaps quite sad that following a review of the Revolutionary Women's Law, the document went on to propose 33 points. One of these points included a law that proposes that women should have the right to have fun, and to go to other places in the country and the state (ZM 2013c, 30).

Marriage

Related to domestic roles, the way in which marriage and is settled is fundamental for questions of gender equality. In this regard, the customs that the movement is struggling against are arranged marriages and dowries. The *Escuelita* documents explain that by now, the majority of fathers already ask their daughters if they want to marry and with whom (ZM 2013c, 27). Yet, if it is so that the fathers ask it seems as if they do still decide. Elsewhere in the documents it is argued that women now decide who they marry, but there is conflict with the elderly who say the custom should be adhered to. The argument from them is that they should be able to make sure the daughter gets a good husband (Ibid, 72). Similarly, dowry still exists and varies between regions, but is apparently challenged increasingly (Ibid, 34).

In terms of challenging the institution of marriage, the movement seems to be going the opposite way. On many occasions, extra or pre-marital affairs are judged. On one occasion, being in a relationship before marriage is framed as a 'city habit' and very badly perceived (Ibid, 27). Elsewhere it is said to set a bad example and destroy the institutions of family and society more generally (Ibid, 29). In case of elopement, the couple goes in front of judges who are all men (Ibid, 34).

For married couples, the movement is trying to promote family planning. Yet, there is much resistance to this, not least due to its association with government's forced family planning (ZM 2013c, 16).[98] Thus, they [the *Juntas*] are trying to frame it in terms of the couples' not having to give up having children altogether but rather that they should decide together when and how many children to have (Ibid, 12). There are men who do not like women deciding on the number of kids. One man, for example, voiced his resistance in this way: "What God decides is what I will have" (Ibid, 70). Moreover, the question of family planning is not necessarily perceived as a tool to allow women to decide better over their affairs. One female, for example, viewed it as a question of overpopulation and the scarcity of land (Ibid, 26). Furthermore, there are problems delivering the message. In the region of Roberto Barrios there was a discussion on family planning but not all women were present (Ibid, 69).

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[98] I have no way to verify whether this actually happened, but it appears repeatedly in the documents.

Land ownership

Another problematic factor for gender equality is the issue of land ownership which is not part of the Women's Revolutionary Law. As the interviewers of Major Ana Maria and Comandanta Ramona identified in 1994: "A point missing from the women's demands is the right to own land. In spite of the fact that Ramona and Ana Maria recognized that this is vital for survival and that in the struggle to obtain it both men and women are participating, they did not conceive that widows and single women should be included in the redistribution"(Richards 1994). As explained earlier in this chapter, women are thus virtually excluded from land ownership in Chiapas. Olivera Bustamante identifies this as the most significant human rights issues in Chiapas. She argues that the Zapatistas, however, avoid much of the issue through collective land ownership (Interview 2013).

Yet, as discussed previously, at least my observations indicate that most land is in fact farmed and owned by the families. In effect then, without making sure that both men and women can inherit the land titles or their part of the *ejido*, women's position will ultimately remain subordinated and mediated through men. Indeed, an analysis of the current state of the Law by Zapatista women and the proposed revisions to it included the proposal that women should have the right to own and inherit land, and that in case of divorce, the land should be split (ZM 2013c, 29).

One of the ways to improve the material independence of women is through women's work cooperatives as the Zapatista women themselves deliberated in a women's *Encuentro* (H. Klein 2008). Shenker too talks about the women's cooperatives as new opportunities (2012, 438). Through cooperative work women can increasingly gain material independence and security and gain confidence. Women's spaces like cooperatives can also help women share their experiences and identify common problems and solutions to them. Yet, without addressing the land issue women will ultimately be subordinate. Similarly, the incorporation of women into the sphere of formal work does not equal liberation. Oftentimes this will just mean that they just have to take on more duties, on top of the ones at home. Indeed, many have pointed out this problem. Mora shows that despite the advances made by the movement, the traditional role of women in society still poses significant challenges to the achievement genuine equality (Mora 2007, 74).

Despite the talk of democratizing the family (Olivera Bustamante interview 2013) I never saw men take part in the household activities when in the community. In fact, our companions working in 21 de Abril were very impressed by our [three western men] ability to cook. They also made jokes about me 'carrying the baby' given that I used a scarf as a bag to carry things, the very same way the indigenous women do. During my time in Chiapas I saw only one man carrying a baby on his back. This is an unfortunate reflection of the attitudes towards what is considered responsibilities of women and men.

Of course, as the preceding discussion has shown, there is increasing resistance to patriarchal practices, and the military elements actively promote it. As a Tzeltal woman in her fifties explained in an interview with Mora (2007, 74):

Oh, but of course men don't want to change their traditions! They say that we [as women] have to respect because that is how the elders did things. But these are excuses because they don't want to lose their power. That is why in women's meetings we discuss what are the traditions that have to change, like not letting women participate in the assembly, not encouraging the girls to go to school, or when husbands beat their wives.

Indeed there are many women in the movement who are consciously fighting to improve the position of women. In the document they mentioned the proposed amplification of the laws as a result of collective discussion between women in 1996 (ZM 2013c, 31). The proposal included being able to use natural and artificial methods of family planning which I take to mean abortion too (Ibid, 28). Yet, for the moment, ZM remains a movement largely run by men. Regarding the proposal to update and expand the Women's Law, the women recount that "It simply stayed up in the air, there is no concrete response, it was not approved…" (Ibid, 31). This speaks to the limits of prefigurative politics in many ways, some of which we will return to in the conclusion.

Most fundamentally, however, the movement's general approach is one of persuasion. For example, regarding harassment, a woman explains how in Roberto Barrios the movement needs to get the message to those who have not been as much outside of their communities, to those in the base communities where the *machismo* still exists strongly (Ibid, 73). In Oventic the active women have demanded answers and furthering participation, to no avail, receiving no support from the municipal or JBG level (Ibid, 36). Of course, merely being able to do what men do is not necessarily female liberation. Yet, in the current moment Zapatista women do not decide in the home. For one to be able to decide what she wants to do is a necessary step for furthering equality. Ultimately gender equality will remain at the level of discourse unless practices inside the family and community are challenged. However, the movement's approach to this question is one which refrains from forcing changes. As much as there are recommendations and requirements for gender balance, the preceding discussion has shown that in reality there is a long way to go. Ultimately it is difficult to say whether these fundamental changes can be brought about without resorting to some form of coercion.

Unfortunately, it seems, thus, that family matters are still considered private which poses serious problems in terms of gender equality. Of course, this is a way to avoid direct confrontation between more liberal and more traditional elements and thus perhaps necessary. But ultimately the change is then on the shoulders of the women who need to actively defy tradition to be able to improve their own position.

Ultimately, there are some potential solutions to these problems. One potentially beneficial solution would be collective child care arrangement to free the women from household duties, or collective food arrangements in their absence, as they have done in Morelia (ZM 2013c, 59). As regards capacity-building and confidence, the lack of gender specific training has been identified as a problem (Ibid, 13) Due to the widespread lack of confidence and fear of taking on board responsibility, it would be very useful to have experienced *compañeras* train newcomers and

generally have more women-only spaces. Yet, ultimately being able to push through these changes could be quite difficult given the patriarchal power and the reluctance of the movement to impose.

Education, hierarchy and the individual

Another problematic aspect for prefiguration comes from education. The fact that the ZM is engaged in education introduces another dimension to potential hierarchies. The Zapatista autonomous education project was started in 1996. The movement now boasts of having an autonomous primary school in each community. The autonomous education aims to protect indigenous culture, values, languages and rights, improving gender equality and promoting knowledge of the local context and the skills needed in that context with the emphasis of enhancing autonomy (Shenker 2012, 433; Starr et al. 2011, 114). The movement argues that the Mexican state education produces individualistic citizens for the neoliberal political system (Pañuelos en Rebeldía - Equipo de Educación Popular 2012).

Yet, gearing the education towards the indigenous and Zapatista 'way of life' might result in the creation of homogenous subjects who do not see beyond the local context, consequently perhaps not having the possibility of actually questioning whether they want to live in this way or not. Moreover, this education give them tools to survive outside of the movement, greatly reducing their choices. McCowan argued similarly in his research on prefiguration in education that "students experiencing a highly democratic environment do not acquire the knowledge and skills needed to engage in the oppositional, conflictual politics needed to bring change in a semi-democratic or undemocratic society"(McCowan 2010, 23). Here the problem has as much to do with democracy as it does with the curriculum. As the schools are autonomous, they do not give the Zapatista children the opportunity to continue studying, because the autonomous schools are not recognized by the state. Shenker identifies this problem and asked the *Junta* whether they saw the inability to continue to university as a problem. Shenker recounts: "'No,' they almost unanimously responded, indicating that the lives of the Zapatistas were agricultural lives, and that no university could be of any use in the training for such a vocation" (2012, 440). Moreover, given the conservative attitudes indicated in the discussion on gender, the autonomous education might not be as liberatory as is often assumed.

This is a fundamental problem. The curriculum may be designed by the community and the promoters chosen democratically by the community, but the institutionalization of the autonomous project indicates an inter-generational problem of 'power-over' in the sense that the way in which the young think and the options they have available for them are largely defined and limited by their parents. Moreover, this poses a problematization of the Zapatista slogan of the 'world in which many worlds fit' - it seems rather like a world in which many homogenous worlds can coexist as long as other people decide for you which one you have to belong to.

In addition, the processes within the schools might not be as prefigurative as one might assume. Not having visited the secondary schools in the *Caracoles* where the educational promoters are

trained, I cannot personally say much as to the validity of some of the very harsh criticisms raised by Mentinis based on his participant observations and interviews in the secondary school of Oventic in 2001. At the time Mentinis identified hierarchy in all the practices of the school.

> The school is governed from the top down without a single democratic mediation….Three people decide for about 100 students who are reduced to mere puppets and whose opinion counts for very little, or more accurately, does not count at all. This, of course, is at odds not just with the whole Zapatista discourse about freedom and democracy but with the whole principle of 'command obeying' so much celebrated by the academics (Mentinis 2006, 148).

Indeed, Mentinis's argument is that the school serves to indoctrinate the promoters-to-be in Zapatista ideology, and Marcos as the main producer of it. Further with the lack of democratic practice, Mentinis shows: "Failing to comply with the school's rigid rules, like not doing homework for the next day's classes, talking back or challenging the promotores [sic] (who often are the same age as the students), incurs military-style punishment such as a two-hour night-shift watch, washing everybody's plate after lunch and dinner, and so on" (2006, 149)

In the region of Oventic they currently (2013) have an education committee consisting of 14 members of the BAEZLN, with 496 promoters, 157 primary schools hosting in total 4886 students in the whole zone. All of the nearly 500 promoters have been trained in the secondary school in the Caracol (ZM 2013a, 26). Given that Mentinis' research took place in 2001, it is hard to say how much of the practice in the school have changed since then, especially given the reform of 2003. Given the lack of access thereto, it is impossible for me to evaluate how much of this currently holds. However, my personal experiences in the village of San Marcos give some indication as to similar tendencies.

Education in San Marcos

During my stay in the village of San Marcos I was able to go to the school on three occasions to observe the working of the autonomous education. The day in school begins by the singing of the Mexican national anthem, the Zapatista hymn and the Chiapas state anthem, reflecting the way the movement sees its struggle. During this time the children are outside in two lines – one for boys and another one for girls. The promoter, with a ruler in his hand, drills the children in military style turns and manoeuvres. After the morning ceremonies the children go into the little wooden building where they have some elementary desks constructed for the purpose of studying. Walls are decorated with very arbitrary posters; there is a world map and a picture of human anatomy with English text, the building itself is covered with murals typical of all Zapatista administrative buildings.

One of the two promoters was a 17-year-old boy who has himself received only a secondary school education in a state school of the nearby village (Picture 9). Like the educational materials – a few books for the promoters and notepads and pens for the children – he has received his teacher training at the *Junta* in one of the five *Caracoles*, in his case Oventic, as this is the Tzeltal speaking

region. He always proudly wore a t-shirt of Marcos. He was the only one who indicated that he is not very interested in religious matters during the Sunday service in the community. The material of the school is likely donated to the movement by civil society actors or NGOs and distributed on by the *Junta*. The training of the education promoter is perhaps a bit wanting, he often misspells the Spanish words that he writes on the blackboard. The education, however, is in Tzeltal which is one of the reasons why the movement has decided to self-administer education. The promoter did not beat the children with the ruler either, at least not in the presence of us western human rights observers.

According to Shenker and Baronnet, researchers of the educational programs, the movement is breaking down the barrier between teachers and students in accordance with the critical pedagogy of the influential Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire (Shenker 2012; Baronnet 2008). Yet, despite the fact that the atmosphere in the school was quite relaxed, I did not see any indications of 'breaking down the barrier between the teacher and the student.' In fact, this promoter was very traditional – marching back and forth at the front of the classroom with the ruler in his hand while spelling out words from the blackboard for the children to write down in their notebooks.

Let us consider some of the problems education poses for prefiguration. Firstly, despite the community officially being in charge of designing the curriculum for the school, choosing the promoters and keeping an eye on them,[99] the fact that the promoters are all centrally trained in the *Caracoles* implies a form of indoctrination and consequently indirect control over the way in which the younger Zapatistas think. However, even if the curriculum was indeed completely designed and education implemented according to community desires, the question of influence over the choices and thinking of the young generation would still be problematic. Once a movement is engaged in such institutionalized experience that involves a justice system, health, education and production all organized by the movement, it seems impossible to avoid resorting to some forms of 'power-over.' In the case of the Zapatistas, this is perhaps most visible in the banning of alcohol in the communities and the consequent severe limitation this poses to individual choice. Secondly, the way in which children are taught seems not to be as democratic as one would imagine. Yet, in this regard, as Mentinis has argued, the young people are adopting the discourse of democracy and *mandar obedeciendo* in their challenge of bad practices.

Comparison with the *Abejas*

Yet, compared with the *Abejas*, the Zapatista communities function in a visibly more democratic way. Due to the lack of direct access to the movement – and the fact that one can only influence so much where you get sent by FRAYBA – led to me being sent to the *Abeja* village of Acteal. This, however, provided me with the opportunity to contrast what I had seen in the Zapatista communities

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[99] The curriculum and teaching approaches are supervised by an education committee that has been chosen by the local assembly (Baronnet 2008)**.**

to the reality in communities that do not share the Zapatista commitment to *mandar obedeciendo* and other prefigurative and democratic principles. Still, the *Abejas* also aim to improve indigenous rights and construct autonomy and democracy (Picture 10).

The *Abejas* base their movement on Catholic values and pacifism (pictures 11 & 12). And indeed, the role of religion is very visible in the movement. They work closely with the Diocese of San Cristobal and Pueblo Creyente, a faith-based social movement. The religious and the civilian authorities coincide. Our work in the village of Acteal was to accompany a group of 98 *Abejas* that had to escape their village due to a religious conflict. The group's leaders were the catechists who are in charge of religious ceremonies. These two men gave all the interviews and managed all the meetings and negotiations. The *Abejas* also have traditional authorities. Moreover, the roles in the *mesa directive* – their decision-making authority based in Acteal – does not seem particularly rotational. Its five members were all men. In addition, the ex-members of the *mesa* stay on as 'authorities.' All in all, the decision-making inside the movement seems quite complicated but not very democratic. When discussing with Nicolas, the religious authority of the displaced people, he talked to us about the negotiations with state and municipal authorities regarding their return to the village. He never indicated a need to approve any decision with the community that he represents.

Not only does power seem to be concentrated in few hands, but these hands are exclusively male. Politics is clearly the business of men (Picture 14). During the two weeks in Acteal, the displaced men generally spent the whole day outside the building of the *mesa* (Picture 12) while the women were in the kitchen preparing food and taking care of the children. In the whole time I saw one of the men do work in the kitchen. Yet, the group of displaced people due to not being in their home village had nothing to do most of the time. During our stay the *Abejas* were running a training session for health promoters. Only one of them was a female, likely for feminine health issues.

While there were many meetings with different NGOs and representatives of different church groups that were helping the *Abejas*, it was only in the meeting about women's rights that the women actually spoke (Picture 13). The same also happened when outside organizations specifically sought representative views for their testimonies of the conditions of the displaced. Otherwise, the women would either be absent, or clearly in a secondary role whereby men run the whole affair and always had the last word.

Indeed, the difference between the Zapatistas and the *Abejas* is that the latter seem to embrace tradition without question. As Mercedes Olivera Bustamante explained in an interview with me (2013), they do not fundamentally challenge the structural conditions like the Zapatistas. And truly, after this experience in Acteal, one can appreciate the difficult work of prefiguring different political forms and alternative gender roles that the Zapatistas are attempting. While the process might be slow, and there remain many obstacles, the experience in Acteal points to a clearly visible qualitative difference. Moreover, while there are paradoxes in the practice, the movement's clear commitment to

mandar obedeciendo provides a tool for struggles in the movement to improve the position of the young and the women.

Conclusion

Given the context of the Zapatista movement and its attempt to both draw from and reconstruct tradition as well as its origin in the material issues of land and the discrimination of the indigenous people, the often paradoxical nature of its practice is not too surprising. The Zapatista's original strength of building the organization through kinship ties and community dynamics now poses difficulties for genuinely democratic practices. Mentinis has summarized this aptly: "The way of Zapatista autonomy towards democracy, freedom and justice seems to be a long one and the enemy the Zapatistas have to fight is not just the 'bad government' but also certain indigenous traditions and customs as well as the military logic introduced to the communities through the EZLN"(2006, 149).

In practice, thus, this means that the movement is not purely prefigurative. The EZLN has a vanguard function, but this is a paradoxical one, one that seeks its own undoing. At the moment, it does not seem as if the 'people' or the bases are trusted with true democracy. The hand of the CCRI and the Subcomandantes can be seen in many aspects of the autonomous projects. It seems, however, that this influence is mainly positive in terms of contributing to further democracy by driving more oversight of the *Junta*s, encouraging and invigilating that the principles of *mandar obedeciendo* are aspired to and promoting further participation of women in all levels of government. Similarly, the discourse produced by the CCRI and Marcos in particular has given those traditionally undermined and excluded from decision-making a tool to use for conquering more space and rights for themselves, as is indicative of the way in which the Zapatista women frame their struggle.

So in essence, the Zapatista struggle is not purely prefigurative, given the role of the military. Yet, with the apparent lack of ideological commitment in some of the base communities, it can be suspected that the movement would be much less democratic if it was not for this influence. Still, some concerns have to be raised. Particularly feminists have voiced some hard questions that remain unaddressed, namely women's access to land, and the availability of not only the discourse but the means of family planning (e.g. cheap and safe abortions). These issues should be identified and addressed for furthering equality. In addition, despite many women campaigning to challenge their subordination, it remains to be seen whether this can be achieved without resorting to stronger forms of coercion and not just persuasion and discourse.

The experiences in Chiapas thus point to the problematic nature of transforming social relations merely through inter-personal relations. As far as women are not able to possess land and inherit land their position will be weaker than that of men. Nevertheless, there are many indications of the those in weaker positions in the communities, such as women and students, adopting and utilizing the movement's discourse for improving their situation. There might be a gap between the rhetoric and practice, but the rhetoric opens up a space of action and change in itself.

In addition, the role of autonomous education – while undoubtedly good for the project as a whole – significantly limits the options available for the Zapatista youths, given that they are less able then to make the decision as to whether they actually want to live and work where they are from, due to the inability to continue to higher levels of formal education. Education and the project of autonomy most definitely imply a form of authority whereby the movement is banking on its future and seeking to solidify autonomy through new generations that have lived and practiced autonomy and learned the values of the movement through participation and education. This, to me, shows that not resorting to some form of 'power-over' is difficult.

Nor is the Zapatista democracy purely ascending given the role of the *Junta*s. The large scale has meant that pure delegation is difficult, the *Junta*s definitely also make decisions independently, and they have a project that has in itself been set from 'above' as they were established by the EZ and their tasks were defined by them. This is thus not pure 'power-to,' especially given that in some regions they are yet to hold their first regional assembly. Regarding the difference then between democracy and 'power-to,' Holloway himself had the following to say: "democracy is always power-over in so far as it addresses people as beings" (Holloway 2003). 'Power-over' seems to turn into power-to when "there is a common project, a common doing and the issue is how to form a mutually-recognitive We-Doer. This is not the problematic of (bourgeois) democracy" (Holloway 2003). The Zapatista case being Holloway's favourite point of reference, this is quite a complicated statement. The divisions and differences in aspirations identified by many observers points to the absence of this collective 'We-doer' and rather to a project whereby the 'power-to' of one group guides the process of the movement more generally by defining the underlying principles of the practice and thus defining what it is to be a member of the movement.

Ultimately, the Zapatista experience shows that emancipatory social practice seems to always be based on some form of ideology. No matter how much we emphasise that the ideology is the correct practice, the fact remains that this correct practice is defined in some way and the principles underpinning it – in this case equality of all and the seven principles of *mandar obedeciendo* – seem to set the limits to the functioning of democracy. In the end, the communities are free to decide what they want, democratically, as long as it is not in violation of these principles. In 2013, in a series of communiqués titled 'Us and Them', Marcos emphasized the differences between the culture of the political system as opposed to the Zapatista-proposed 'culture from below,' and claimed not "to build a large organization with a governing center [sic], a centralized command, or a boss, whether individual or group" (Zibechi 2013). The EZLN may not be a vanguardist group in the sense of seeking to organize and lead the all the Mexican 'people' but at the same time their role within the movement indicates a paradoxical vanguard position. To see Zapatistas as a completely anti-vanguard movement is incorrect. The continued consciousness-raising efforts of the CCRI and the Subcomandantes indicate the opposite. They might not seek to lead others in society, but they are definitely guiding the *Junta*s and the movement generally to the 'right direction' in terms of

improving democracy and female participation. There is an ideology and that is in the principles – as soon as the principles are shared, then maybe the EZLN can truly retire, but at the moment it does not seem to be willing to truly trust the people with democracy.

Indeed, both the work of Barmeyer and the interview I conducted with Father Pablo Iribarrén helped me to understand the fundamental difference between the 'hard-core' of the movement and some elements of the base communities (Barmeyer 2003; 2008; 2009; Iribarren interview 2012). Barmeyer interviewed some of those who changed allegiance, finding that they had become disillusioned with the EZLN that did not deliver any material prosperity for them (2008, 517). Both of the authors have indicated that the autonomous project has often meant difficult sacrifices and a heavy workload without much material pay-out. This explains the de-mobilization of many of the communities and families. In essence this points to a kind of critical consciousness that the more 'hard-core' elements of the movement are trying to create and how it clashes with the more pragmatic and conservative groups in the communities. The new generation of Zapatistas is undoubtedly more committed to the idea and the principles due to the educational efforts and the demobilization of more demoralized or pragmatic elements. This is highlighted especially through the comparison between the *Abejas* and Zapatistas where the latter clearly have a more democratic character to their practice. As Barmeyer states: "particularly among the inhabitants of the new Zapatista settlements where revolutionary practice is part of everyday life, bears witness to the fact that these people are indeed committed to a cause that transcends their own immediate benefit" (Barmeyer 2009).

Ultimately, however, the prefigurative project of a social movement should not depend entirely on the membership's willingness to sacrifice in terms of time and resources. In this regard, the inability for certain members to participate due to one of the two factors will lead to patterns of heightened participation among certain groups and consequent inevitable hierarchies. In this regard, it might be so that ultimately a more general transformation of the society around the movement will be necessary so as to take off some of the harshest economic pressures that underpin the problem, given the difficulty of maintaining a pocket of resistance exhausting the membership.

Regarding more direct forms of hierarchy, a very sceptical account would emphasise the continued influence of the EZLN and the dependence of the movement on sympathetic NGOs and solidarity organizations. It could be argued that the reality in the communities itself is not changing and the control of the information both in the way of communiqués being the main channel of movements publication and the restrictions on access by outsiders to base communities serves to maintain an image necessary for continued support. Indeed, a very critical reading of the *Escuelita* documents would highlight that they are produced by those more actively involved in the movement, and even the very problematic evidence therein could be a somewhat 'cleaned up' version of reality. Similarly, one could argue that the movement was likely able to cherry-pick the families with whom the *Escuelita* visitors stayed, so as to be able to portray a positive image. Indeed, it is likely that the

materials of the school avoid some of the hard questions, but even as it is the critical self-reflection is remarkable and unheard of for revolutionary movements.

Yet, if critical self-awareness and reflexivity is key – as identified in the previous chapter – the question is whose reflexivity? To frame this more concretely - the men who are opposed to the idea of women's rights within the movement eventually have to be forced into line with the rest so as to stay within the movement. The Zapatista case illustrates that it is difficult not to resort to 'power-over.' This is indicated in an analysis of the educational programs, as well as the role of the *Junta*s vis-à-vis the communities, the continued influence of the CCRI and other elements of the military organization and the banning of alcohol in the communities. Of course, it has to be noted that the interference of the Comandancia and the Subcomandantes mainly seems to serve a function that improves the democracy at the base level, but at the same time it is not prefigurative in itself given their superior position.

Pictures above: On the left Dario Santillán, the martyr of the movement. On the right, FPDS gathered to the annual memorial protest.

Chapter 5. MTD Lanús, Frente Popular Darío Santillán (FPDS)

To investigate the potential of prefigurative struggles in the urban context, I arrived in Buenos Aires 29 June 2012 with the intention of finding an active movement corresponding with the idea of autonomism. Upon arriving in Argentina I had to do quite a lot of legwork to find out which parts of the movement still aspire to autonomy.[100] After some time in Buenos Aires and getting familiar with the more up-to-date literature that I now had at my disposal,[101] it seemed that one of the movements that encompasses many of the autonomous elements of the *Piquetero* movement would be the Popular Front Darío Santillán (Frente Popular Darío Santillán – henceforth, FPDS). I thus visited the Roca Negra centre of the Unemployed Workers' Movement of Lanús (MTD Lanús for its Spanish acronym), one of the southern suburbs of Greater Buenos Aires. There I conducted interviews, talked to people and observed an assembly meeting of one of the five neighbourhood groups that make up MTD Lanús, one of the roughly fifty organizations belonging to the nation-wide movement. Based on these initial observations it became apparent that the movement is indeed one of prefigurative and autonomous orientation. Thus, upon the end of my stay in Argentina we agreed that I would return to work in the movement and in that way get to better understand the movement's project.

I thus returned to Buenos Aires and Lanús 23 April 2013 – 1 July 2013. The analysis in this case study combines participation observation with semi-structured interviews with 27 members of the movement as well as an analysis of relevant documents issued by or belonging to the organizations

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[100] Based on the background reading it had become apparent that many of the original *Piquetero* movements had either largely demobilized or formed a working relationship with the Kirschnerist party FPV.

[101] Most of academia outside of Argentina seemed to have lost its interest in the still active social movements in Argentina, following the end of mass mobilizations in 2001 and 2002.

examined. I also took more than 500 photographs and about an hour of video material of movement activity. During the field research, I worked with the movement in different areas of their activity during the weekdays. I attended neighbourhood assemblies and the weekly coordination table (*mesa de coordinación*) which brings together delegates from the five neighbourhoods that form MTD Lanús. I also accompanied the movement to multiple marches and protests as well as celebrations. I attended the popular education program in the Roca Negra centre as well as the programs for children, such as the *murga* (roughly corresponding with the idea of the marching band). I also returned to Buenos Aires over the Christmas period 2013-2014 (25 December – 8 February) which allowed me to observe some important changes over time as well as conduct interviews with relevant academics well acquainted with the movement.

With this approach I aimed to contribute to de-romanticizing autonomism. Outside of Argentina, the experiences of the *Piqueteros* are often seen in an unrealistically positive light. For example, the political theorist and long-time militant, Hernan Ouviña, told me of a Mexican activist friend who had asked him how the MTDs are doing that 'have entire self-administered liberated neighbourhoods under their control'(Ouviña interview 2014)? Needless to say no such experiences ever existed in Argentina. But even those with closer experiences with autonomist movements in Argentina have had a tendency to avoid talking about the problems, contradictions and paradoxes therein. The work of Marina Sitrin (2006; 2012) is for many Anglophones the only mirror into Argentinian autonomism. Her work is disproportionately based on the experience of one of the MTDs, that of Solano and represents an idealised account of the movement that according to local autonomist scholars and activists not only disappeared but some of its referentes ended up doing private business (Mazzeo 2014). The view of autonomism in Solano was one of more purist and retreatist tendency following the idea of 'small is beautiful' (Mazzeo interview 2014). The fact that the movement there has effectively disappeared points to the problems and further justifies looking into the experiences where the contradictions of autonomism are more explicitly identified and embraced. The FPDS being one of the few autonomist movements having survived and maintained their project and their autonomism from the uprisings of 2001 and 2002 until today (Ouviña interview 2014), offers a good point of focus for the challenges of sustaining and advancing prefigurative political action.

In terms of the objective of observing the power relations of the movement in Lanús, the chapter will require a brief historical account of the movement and contextual factors. In the second part of the chapter, the general challenges the movement faces are identified before looking into the challenges of interest for this project. Namely, the chapter will make references to interviews and movement documents in explaining the 'ideology' and practice of the movement. The FPDS is explicitly prefigurative and autonomist. The 'official' arrangements for the organization of decision-making and work are in accordance with the principles put forward by Freeman and della Porta. In practice, however, an informal elite group can be observed in the movement. In the third part, the chapter will thus turn to look at obstacles to equality and participation in the movement before

concluding the fieldwork findings. The experience of the MTD both points to limits with prefigurative political action in terms of avoiding hierarchy, and challenges to some of the tenets of the theory of Holloway, especially regarding the role of consciousness.

Part 1. Brief history of MTD Lanús

Piqueteros – a new actor in Argentine politics

The Piqueteros, as a political actor emerged through the resistance to the neoliberal reforms of President Carlos Menem from 1996 onwards. Two moments are formative of the method and identity of the *Piqueteros*. It was the roadblocks by former state petroleum YPF employees in Cutral Có and Plaza Huincul, in the Southern region of Neuquén 1996 and in the towns of General Mosconi and Tartagal in the northern region of Salta in 1997 that became the 'model experiences.' In both places the towns had suffered heavily due to the privatization of the oil company and the massive unemployment that followed. The protestors, dubbed '*Piqueteros*' (picketers) by the media, forced state representatives to negotiate with the unemployed and to concede to their demands (Wolff 2007, 6). In the first *piquete* the unemployed, and those sympathetic to their demand for the opening of a factory that had been promised by the provincial authorities, blocked access to these two towns for seven days in 1996 (Farinetti 2012, 113). As a compromise, the government started providing unemployment benefits or *planes de trabajo* ('work plans') or *planes sociales* ('social plans'). According to Svampa and Pereyra, perhaps the most oft-cited account of the origins of the *piquetero* movements, these plans started out as a compromise but quickly came to be viewed as a right and entitlement rather than as government assistance. The experiences of Neuquén and Salta quickly spread to the poor suburbs of Buenos Aires. According to the authors, two factors allowed for the emergence of a strong *piquetero* movement – "the adoption of roadblocks as the generalised technique of struggle, on the one hand; the rapid institutionalisation of a response by the state via the planes sociales, on the other" (2003, 55). Indeed, as Ponce (2007) has argued, high unemployment was not exclusive to Argentina, yet it was the only place where the unemployed emerged as an important actor. Consequently, he argues, the introduction of the planes provided the need and the opportunity for the unemployed to organize themselves. Similarly, Garay (2007) argues that unemployment, dissatisfaction with clientelism and all the factors typically used to explain the protest are useful. However, the policy of *Plan Trabajar I* helped create the opportunity. The unemployed started forming associations and movements to demand work, unemployment subsidies and food assistance and in this process a collective subjectivity, identity and solidarity was forged (Gordillo 2010).

To understand the spreading of the wider *piquetero* mobilizations, we have to understand the importance not only of the events in the interior of the country that then sparked the action in Greater Buenos Aires (GBA) but the fact that upon spreading to the capital, they added to the political traditions already existing in certain areas, especially in La Matanza where the biggest *Piquetero*

group FTV would be formed in 1997 (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). Where the experiences of the southern and northern regions created the *piquetero* identity and narrative, the new way of organizing (assembly) and the format of protest (roadblock) coupled with a new demand for the subsidies (*planes de trabajo*). This then amalgamated with the forms of collective action in GBA based on territorial work in the neighbourhoods creating a new national model of mobilization (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). Consequently, beneficiaries of national workfare programs increased from less than 100,000 in 1996 to a record 2.2 million in 2003 (Garay 2007). And by the end, the unemployed have become accepted as a new corporatist group (Wolff 2007).

A Map of the Organizations of Unemployed Workers

Organizations that evolved from community-based groups towards an alliance with new union organizations

- ➢ Federación de Tierra y Vivienda (FTV), *Housing and Land Federation*, integrated into the Central de Trabajadores Argentinos (CTA), *Argentine Workers' Union*

- ➢ Corriente Clasista y Combativa (CCC), *Combative Class Movement*

Organizations that were initially mobilized by social or political activists and turned into political movements

Neopopulists

- ➢ Coordinadoras de Trabajadores Desocupados Anibal Verón* (CTD Anibal Verón)/ Movimiento Patriótico Quebracho, *Anibal Verón Unemployed Workers Coordinating Comittees / Patriotic Movement Quebracho.*

- ➢ Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados Resistir y Vencer (MTD Resistir y Vencer)/ Movimiento Patriótico Malón, *Resist and Overcome Movement of Unemployed Workers/Malón Patriotic Movement.* (New movement: Movimiento Patriótico 20 de Diciembre (MP20), *Patriotic Movement December 20.*)

- ➢ Barrios de Pie**/Movimiento Patria Libre, *Neighborhoods Standing Up**/Free Country Movement.*

Radical autonomous post-Marxist organizations

- ➢ Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados Anibal Verón (MTD Anibal Verón), *Anibal Verón Movement of Unemployed Workers.*

- ➢ Movimiento Teresa Rodríguez* (MTR), *Teresa Rodríguez Movement.*

Organizations linked to the small, traditional leftist parties (Trotskyite and Marxist-Leninist organizations)

- ➢ Polo Obrero/Partido Obrero, *Workers' Pole/Workers' Party.*

- ➢ Movimiento Sin Trabajo Teresa Vive/Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST), *Teresa Lives Movement Without Work, Workers' Socialist Movement.*

- ➢ Movimiento Territorial de Liberación* (MTL)/ Partido Comunista, *Territorial Liberation Movement*/Communist Party.*

*Anibal Verón and Teresa Rodríguez were protestors who had been killed in riots.

**These organizations actually "evolved" from another cluster to the one they occupy in present time.

Map adopted from Delamata 2004: 13-14

However, from the very beginning this new movement was very heterogeneous and represented many ideological and political currents (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). As the above map illustrates, the movements could be roughly divided into those formed by or in alliance with the trade union CTA, those in cooperation with political parties and those that were independent. Despite all of the *piquetero* organizations having a strong territorial orientation (i.e. addressing issues in the neighbourhood), the autonomous movements largely belonging to the MTD Anibal Verón were more independent with no links to political parties or unions but rather grew out of territorial neighbourhood based activities (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

Despite the diversity of the movements, they had in common the roadblock as a method, orientation to assembly processes, references to the *puebladas* (uprisings) of Cutral Co and General Mosconi, and community-based work. Indeed, the *piqueteros* tended to pool their resources for collective projects in their neighbourhoods, ranging from food and medicine to education (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). However, the bigger movements FTV and CCC that were a unified block between 1998 and 2003 had a markedly more reformist orientation with a tendency towards negotiation and institutionalization (Ibid). MTD Lanús, on the other hand, formed part of the CTD Anibal Verón.[102]

Establishment of MTD Lanús

MTD Lanús was established in 1998 when the neighbours of the *barrio* started getting together to talk about the problems and trying to look for solutions to them (Lucia, MTD Lanús 2012).[103] The problems were multiple at the time given the high unemployment, poverty, lack of union support for the unemployed, and the dissatisfaction of clientelism which dictated access to social benefits (Garay 2007, 302–303). The development of Lanús is inseparable from that of the other MTDs in the region. Members of MTD Lanús, Solano and Almirante Brown explained in an interview in April 2002 that they had been inspired by the example of Cutral Co and Plaza Huincul and the roadblock as a tool of resistance that had been developed therein. They explain that the government clearly tried to contain the new groups by dividing and co-opting while reinforcing the clientelist network of the national government and the provincial governments. However, many unemployed workers organizations saw the possibility of consolidating the organization through these subsidies (AULE 2002). They continue to explain that in this context, the neighbourhood of Florencio Varela the first to have a corte (roadblock) in Buenos Aires at the end of 1997. This had resulted in victory for the *Piqueteros* and hence became an important reference for those in MTD Solano, Lanús and Brown. According to the interviewees, the most captivating element was the organizational form whereby everything was managed in the assembly, where nobody had a 'bought position' and everyone was removable.

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[102] The attached map by Delamata (2004) incorrectly places the autonomist groups in a separate organization MTD Anibal Verón, whereas in reality they coexisted in the CTD Anibal Verón with the Quebracho which is a more hierarchic vanguard-like militant organization.

[103] Out of concern for the safety of the research subjects, all names of the membership have been anonymised.

Consequently, MTD Solano started early, having assemblies and the first *corte* (roadblock) in November 1997. They started building relations with other organizations. The *compañeros* from Lanús went there in solidarity, consequently forging links between the people in both neighbourhoods. In a couple of months (early 1998) MTD Lanús started to organize, with Almirante Brown soon following suit. These organizations would then go onto form the core of the CTD Anibal Verón (AULE 2002). In the early days of the movement, the people organized for a land occupation in the poor neighbourhood of La Fe in the larger neighbourhood of Monte Chingólo in Lanus, one of the municipalities in the southern side of Greater Buenos Aires (Mirra 2012). They also saw the need to organize to demand unemployment benefits (AULE 2002).

The principles and practice of the movements integrating the CTDAV will be discussed in more detail in due course.[104] For the moment, it suffices to say that these movements were different from other *Piquetero* organizations due to their lack of leaders, their stronger orientation towards the neighbourhood, direct democracy and horizontal organization. As Dinerstein argued in 2003, the CTDAV "rejects traditional forms of political and labour representation, presenting a more radical proposal that attempts to change the logic of power and capitalist work" (2003a, 2). The members explain how they would use the resources acquired from the state to develop the organization and the neighbourhood while their ultimate aim was social change. In the practice of advancing social change they placed importance on the concepts of horizontality, autonomy and 'grassroots work'. In the early days of the CTD, the prefigurative element was already clearly present, as they explain that social change is constructed daily and the *formación*[105] of *compañeros* acquires a central place in this work (AULE 2002). As Bukstein explains: "CTD is composed of *compañeros* or 'companions' [sic] representing each of the participating groups and meeting weekly to discuss the situation in each district and in CTD itself. The proposals of the CTD then become discussed in the neighbourhood assemblies, in which all the *compañeros* from each neighbourhood involved gather to solve and elaborate new proposals"(2008, 318).

The question of territoriality as the organizational axis of the movement, and this territoriality is, as Analia Otero explains in her thesis on MTD Lanús, "inextricably linked to the project to create a different kind of society today not through the seizure of state power but starting from the generation of social relations characterized by solidarity that begin to develop in everyday experiences"(Otero 2006, 57–58 [my translation]). In this regard, the autonomist movements posed a challenge to the

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[104] The Coordinadora De Trabajadores desocupados 'Anibal Veron' was formed mostly by MTDs in the *conurbano* (neighbourhoods surrounding the city of Buenos Aires) - MTD Solano, MTD Lanús, MTD Almirante Brown, MTD Florencio Varela, MTD Guernica, MTD Quilmes, MTD Esteban Echeverría, MTD José C. Paz, MTD Lugano (Federal Capital), MTD Berisso (La Plata), MTD 22 de Junio (In Allén, Río Negro), MTD Darío Santillán (Cipolleti, Río Negro), CTD La Plata, CTD Lanús and CTD Quilmes.

[105] *Formación* is one of those words that translate poorly to the English language. Perhaps the most adequate word would be education, but the word also means training as well as capacity-building. In the context of the movements they tend to use this word when referring to the development of political consciousness, through '*formación* workshops' (*talleres de formación*) but also through participation and through street protests. I will thus use the word in Spanish not to lose its full meaning.

clientelist network of Peronism. Moreover, the experience of the movements in the capital was qualitatively different to that of the earliest *Piqueteros* in the oil towns. "Unlike the very first *Piquetero* experiences of 1997/98 in the oil provinces of Salta and Neuquén, where many protesters had been members of the strong YPF workers' unions, those in the province of Buenos Aires achieved what for many was impossible: to organise groups of unemployed workers without recent unionist experience" (Andreassi 2012).

National scene 1999 - 2001

According to Svampa and Pereyra (2003), the *Piqueteros* entered a second stage in their development between 1999 and 2001, becoming a central actor. In this time, though, the movement focused more and more on traditional political spaces, such as Buenos Aires and larger cities. Some attempts to unify the *Piqueteros* through national assemblies took place. Despite some coordinated national protests, these instances served to make more visible the differences between the organizations. There was conflict between CCC and FTV but also between autonomists and everyone else. Following the assembly of September 2001, the National Piquetero Block encompassing the more radical party-aligned movements that would confront the national governments was established and the autonomists or independents went on to form the CTD Anibal Verón (Gordillo 2010, 132).

At this time, the opposition to Peronist neoliberal reforms resulted in an election victory for de La Rúa. His policies, however, were seen as a continuation of Menem's. Protest ensued (Prevost et al 2012, 13). Importantly, however, the new ALIANZA government allowed The *Piquetero* organisations to present their own local development projects and administer the social subsidies and the corresponding projects themselves. This, combined with the increasing economic hardship, explains the rapid growth in this period of the *Piquetero* organizations (Wolff 2007, 7).

'Que se vayan todos' – 2001-2002

With the economy getting worse, the middle class was losing its faith in the Argentine economy. By December 2001, withdrawals from banks reached \$1bn/day (Nelson 2003, 60). As a measure against this, the government of De La Rúa introduced the *corrallito* ('little fence') which effectively froze people's savings in their bank accounts. On the 19th of December the government declared a state of emergency due to widespread unrest. Argentina entered what many have dubbed a 'pre-revolutionary situation' (Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). "The events of December 2001 – which included the wave of food riots that occurred alongside thousands of people blockading roads and bridges throughout the country, and the banging pots and pans in the main plaza of Buenos Aires in a collective mobilisation that, together with heightened elite factionalism, provoked the ousting of two presidents in less than a month" (Auyero 2006). In the *Argentinazo* of 2001 coincided the development of the unemployed workers and the ever-increasing occurrence of popular uprisings (hence the post-fix 'azo') with the characteristics of spontaneity, general involvement across the class

spectrum and the rejection of politics (Gordillo 2010, 118). These *estallidos sociales* (social uprisings) were events where people emerged spontaneously from their houses to bang on pots and pans.[106] The *piqueteros* that soon joined them in the protests had already established organizations and a history of protest. Indeed, in the months leading to December 2001, MTD movements of more 100,000 people blocked a total of 300 highways (Nelson 2003, 61).

The government of de la Rúa had in 2000 announced massive cuts to the unemployment benefits which had fuelled the protests (Garay 2007, 309). Meanwhile, the unemployment rate had continued to grow. In December 2002, at its height, the rate was at 29 percent, with seven million people falling into poverty between October 2001 and October 2002 (Dinerstein 2003b, 168). Argentina defaulted on the debt of $95 billion, making it the largest default in the history of capitalism and in the twelve intensive days of protest the administration changing ownership three times (Garay 2007). The years of democratization and the representative system were perceived to have failed, with the slogan of the protestors being 'Que se vayan todos' which loosely translates to 'Out with them all'(Bukstein 2008, 135). The *Piquetero* movements would now enjoy a period of about a year of having a central place in Argentine politics and increased cooperation with the organized middle class (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

After the *Cacerolazo* the government stabilized momentarily in the hands of the Peronist interim president Eduardo Duhalde who began a process of re-establishing the traditional Peronist control over social movements that had been broken by Menem's move to the neoliberal right (Prevost et al. 2012, 15). To SMs, the government generally responded through a combination of assistentialist social programs and repression. Repression was more direct in the interior of the country, whereas in the cities the government contained movements by manipulating the delivery of social programs not according to technical criteria but the contentiousness of the recipient. Thus, the independent organizations bore the brunt of government repression (Svampa and Pereyra 2003). In terms of the numbers of the movements, in 2002, the more reconciliatory CTA-aligned FTV and CCC had 130,000 members, the Bloque Piquetero 35,000 members and the independent Anibal Verón 15,000 (Young et al. 2002). The repression culminated in the June of 2002, where elements of the CTD and Bloque Piquetero (CCC and FTV were in dialogue with the government) tried to block the Pueyrredón bridge, joining the Southern *Conurbano* with the federal capital. In the disproportionate police response, two young *piqueteros* were killed.[107] One of the two activists was Darío Santillán, a 21 year old militant who for the last two years of his life had been actively building the organization of MTD Lanús in the *barrio* of La Fe (Andreassi 2012). FPDS would upon its establishment take their name from him.

This so called 'Massacre of Avellaneda' marks a turning point in the government's handling of protest. Cross-class solidarity was at its height, and for a moment the slogan was 'We are all

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[106] The word *cacerolazo* refers to this event. It derives from the word 'cacerola' meaning saucepan.

[107] For an account of the events: FPDS 2010b; MTD Aníbal Verón 2003.

Piqueteros.' Duhalde was forced to call for early elections (Dinerstein 2008, 18). Moreover, the events of 2002 marked both an end and a beginning. "On one hand, they marked the limits of the increasing political radicalisation within the popular classes, and of the use of political violence. On the other, they produced a long-lasting political change, by making it clear that repression is not a sustainable way to hold on to power." As the author and close friend of Darío Santillán, Mariano Pachego points out, De la Rúa left his presidency escaping in a helicopter from the presidential palace, Duhalde brought the election forward and the next president, Nestor Kirchner took office saying 'I won't suppress social protest' (Andreassi 2012). Indeed, with the election of Nestor Kirchner in 2003 the government re-orients its approach to protest into a more legalistic one (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

'The Kirchner effect'

The somewhat unexpected election[108] of Kirchner in 2003 posed a new challenge to social movements. Kirchner adopted a 'dual strategy' of co-optation and judicial clampdown of protest to deal with the social movements (Epstein 2009). He sought to incorporate some of the larger unemployed federations (Garay 2007, 318). With the more radical organizations: "Kirchner took the tack of protecting them while waiting for their natural disintegration; he was steadfast in opposing any heavy-handed responses to piquetero direct actions" (Gaudin 2006, 79). The president set out to re-legitimize the state and politics. Indeed, FTV, Barrios de Pie and other large *Piquetero* movements embraced 'Kirschnerism' and formed the Officialist Piquetero Front (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

Apart from these organizations, the *Piquetero* responses to the new politics varied. Some of the leftist-party linked *Piquetero* organizations deemed Kirchner 'more of the same' and continued street mobilizations and aimed at building political consciousness, a strategy that had negative consequences given the wearing out of the social bases (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).[109]

The third tendency in this era is the one represented by the organizations of CTDAV and then FPDS which according to Svampa and Pereyra are "less visible in the media, more innovative in terms of political practices, and associated with spaces occupied by the new left." Despite the differences in ideology, ranging from Guevarism to autonomism, "...they gave priority to more manageable neighbourhood issues, without renouncing mobilization or the production of new strategies for action. Rather than dedicating resources to an unequal political struggle against a government backed by public opinion, these organizations chose to concern themselves with developing political awareness and training and producing new social relationships ('new power,'

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[108] Kirchner got chosen due to the fierce conflict between the two strong men of the Justicialist party, Menem and Duhalde. When Duhalde lost out, he threw his support behind Kirchner (Gaudin 2006).
[109] For a comparison of two different strategies and relationships with the government, refer to: Epstein 2009.

'popular power' or 'counter-power,' depending on the various formulations)" (Svampa and Pereyra 2003).

Indeed, in a situation of declining middle class solidarity, people started calling for repression of protests, and indication of the breaking down of the middle class and *Piquetero* alliance (Svampa 2008, 85). The middle class neighbourhood assemblies had largely demobilized, often frustrated by co-optation attempts by political parties (Galafassi 2003). In the meantime, Kirchner produced some economic recovery, mainly due to export-oriented economic policies. According to Maristella Svampa, however not much changed in reality – "For if Kirchner can point to some genuine economic achievements and certain policy initiatives that qualitatively separate him from earlier administrations, his government otherwise presided over widening income inequalities and an increasing trend towards precarious forms of labour. His political praxis, meanwhile, was marked by repeated recourse to tactics of co-optation and clientelism, suggesting that the old order supposedly swept aside by the crisis of 2001–02 has clung to life, in altered guise; and that it may yet make a full recovery" (Svampa 2008, 80). The veracity of this statement is of course subject to debate, but what is important here is that it largely corresponds with the autonomist movements' reading of the political situation.

Given the re-composition of confidence of important sectors of the population in the political system, some elements of the CTD Aníbal Verón saw that the potential of the *piquetero* movement was not the same, and that it would be necessary to advance through the building of a wider, 'multi-sectorial' organization (Di Piero et al. 2012, 45). Thus, in 2003-2004, FPDS was established.

2003 – Establishment of FPDS

The FPDS emerges out of the rupture of the then 'mythical' CTDAV and in a context of regression of the struggles by the most dynamic sectors of the society – the unemployed, the occupied factories and the students – sectors that had been the most combative throughout the 90s and early 2000s (Molina 2012). In 2004, the existing fractures in the CTD intensified, when one sector of the *Coordinadora* aspired to a multi-sectorial political project with an identity linked not only to the unemployed sector but that would incorporate students, employed workers and with the aim of constructing a regional and national movement (Di Piero et al. 2012, 4). They viewed that the Kirchner government had managed to re-legitimize the state which called for a need to revise their own mistakes, the principal of which being the exclusive identity of the unemployed (MTD Anibal Verón 2003). MTD Solano, on the other hand, withdrew from CTDAV starting that it was restricting their autonomy (Chatterton 2005, 553), "arguing for the need to prioritize activities in the five neighbourhoods in which members lived and to be immersed in local struggles" (Khorasanee 2007, 766). So in a sense one of the tendencies was towards expanding and diversifying the movement

while another tended towards focusing on the solidification of the experience in the neighbourhood.[110] FPDS, representing the first tendency is thus consolidated by the end of 2004 (Di Piero et al. 2012). In 2012, upon my first arrival in Buenos Aires, it had around five thousand active militants around the country. Despite the multi-sectorial character of the movement, the majority of them are still of the 'territorial' or unemployed sectors of the movement in the *Conurbano* of Buenos Aires (Di Pieroet al. 2012).

As Maneiro has argued, since 2004, the *piquetero* movement lost much of its visibility and edge (2012, 85). In the case of MTD Lanus, for example, between 2005 and today, the number of members has dropped from 400 families to 180.[111] However, in 2009, the government of Kirchner's widow, president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner introduced a national program titled 'Argentina Works' (*Argentina Trabaja* - AT) which seemed to have attributed considerable strength to the *piqueteros* (Maneiro 2012, 85). The ministry of social development responsible for the implementation of AT, states: "This program creates opportunities for inclusion that improve the quality of life of families in neighbourhoods through the creation of jobs, training and promotion of cooperative organization for the implementation of infrastructure projects" (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación 2014 [my translation]). Through AT thus, the people (for the most part the unemployed) are organized into cooperatives of around 60 people. These cooperatives then work in public projects such as cleaning the streets, plazas and taking care of infrastructure (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación 2014). Through AT the government aims to create links of solidarity and work in the poor areas, organizing the lower classes in cooperatives. Moreover, the idea has been to replace all the other social 'plans' with AT and make it nation-wide (Lucia, MTD Lanús 2013).

Importantly, the social benefit that participants in the AT program claim is paid personally to a bank card which is supposed to guarantee transparency and eliminate the possibility of intermediaries (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación 2014). In reality, though, the implementation of AT was largely managed by the resuscitated Peronist *puntero* network, as the government in reality only gave it out to aligned groups. Consequently, in July 2009 the territorial organizations of FPDS held a big roadblock through which they managed to secure AT in cooperation with other organizations (Di Piero et al. 2012, 49) In the case of Lanús, the movement has 180 claimants of the program, which gives each of the members 2,000 pesos/month[112] (~£150).[113]

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[110] The FPDS that was established by those identifying with the first idea did not, however, stop entrenching their experience in the neighbourhood, but viewed rather that ultimately it will be necessary to build a coalition of forces to oppose the government.

[111] Figures of 2005 (Otero 2006).

[112] For comparison, in July 2013 the government announced its plans to raise the minimum wage incrementally to 3,600/month by January 2014 (Gray 2013).

[113] Officially the amount is 1,285/month, lower than minimum wage. In February 2012 the government announced two incentives for the cooperatives – 300 pesos a show in the increase of productivity and 250 for show of presence at the workplace. (Di Santi 2012a)

The government had an aim of involving 100,000 workers to the AT, an aim that was reached in 2010 (Vales 2010). Apparently in October 2011 the number reached 200,000 (Di Santi 2012a). Officially the aims of the government reflect an attempt to tack into the *Piquetero* ideas: "By forming cooperative work, ministry fosters solidarity among workers and promotes a form of social participation that favours teamwork over individual effort. Facilitating these spaces for community organizing is also a way to generate autonomy and popular organization"(Ministerio de Desarrollo Social de la Nación 2014). However, some observers have dubbed the program 'cooperatives without cooperativism' since the majority of the cooperatives were created for the purpose of the program by putting together people that did not know each other, in practice avoiding the principle of solidary work. Moreover, the state seems to use these cooperatives composed of under-paid workers for the hardest public work (Di Santi 2012b). In the case of MTD Lanús the never-ending battle against rubbish in one of the squares in the neighbourhood is an example of this. The people there collect the rubbish in very unhealthy working conditions, lacking in basic equipment, such as work gloves, to do the work hygienically and safely.

In the case of MTD Lanús, AT seems to have intensified some of the already existing tensions in the movement and also subjected those in administrative capacities to increasing critique due to the handling of public projects. These tensions shall be discussed in due course.

To the current moment

In this context, the FPDS continues to think that the Kirchnerist project is not dealing with the wider socio-economic questions. "We think the economy continues to be in the hands of a few large business groups that control key areas such as oil, agribusiness, mega-mining etc" (Molina 2012). In their view, the neoliberal traits of the state combine industrial development with social inclusion but with very little redistribution of wealth (Ibid). In this regard, the FPDS forms part of a wider umbrella movement COMPA with the intention of synthetizing the different expressions of what they called the 'independent Left'(Di Piero et al. 2012). The movement has existed in constant tension with the authorities. The activists of the movement state, in Di Piero et al.'s study, that the FPDS would never accept a plan or program in exchange for not protesting (2012, 15). Generally speaking, however, the political and economic situation in Argentina is now much better than in the difficult years. As an indicator, the unemployment rate in early 2013 was at 7.9 percent, when at the time of the economic crisis it had been as high as 21.5 percent (El Mercurio 2013).

Rupture

In between my two rounds of field research in Argentina an important development occurred. The tensions within the FPDS as to how to best advance its project of wider social change intensified and in January 2013 the movement broke into two. According to the interviews and discussions with activists of the FPDS and with academics with a good knowledge of the movement the more student-

based movements mainly located in the area of La Plata, that had joined the CTD Anibal Verón in 2003(Di Piero et al. 2012, 3–4) wanted to move more towards the political arena and form an alliance with another largely student-based organization, La MAREA, to start building a political party (Mazzeo 2014). These organizations broke away from the FPDS to form FPDS Corriente Nacional ('National Current' – FPDS-CN). The activists in Lanús explained the difference in that, due to their youth and the fact that they had not been part of the years of intense repression of popular protests, the students in La Plata did not share the same subjectivity forged in those struggles and consequently did not attribute the same weight to the territorial and prefigurative forging of the collective. Consequently, during the longer period of field research with MTD Lanús, in April – July 2013, an overall feeling of the loss of direction could be sensed and people often talked about the movement the search for 'rediscovering the movement.' It is in this context that I carried out my participant observations and interviews with those of MTD Lanús. Because of the significance of territoriality and to understand the challenges specific to the group there, it is necessary to give an overview of the kind of neighbourhood the movement operates in and the FPDS's idea of social change and how it is advanced.

The neighbourhood
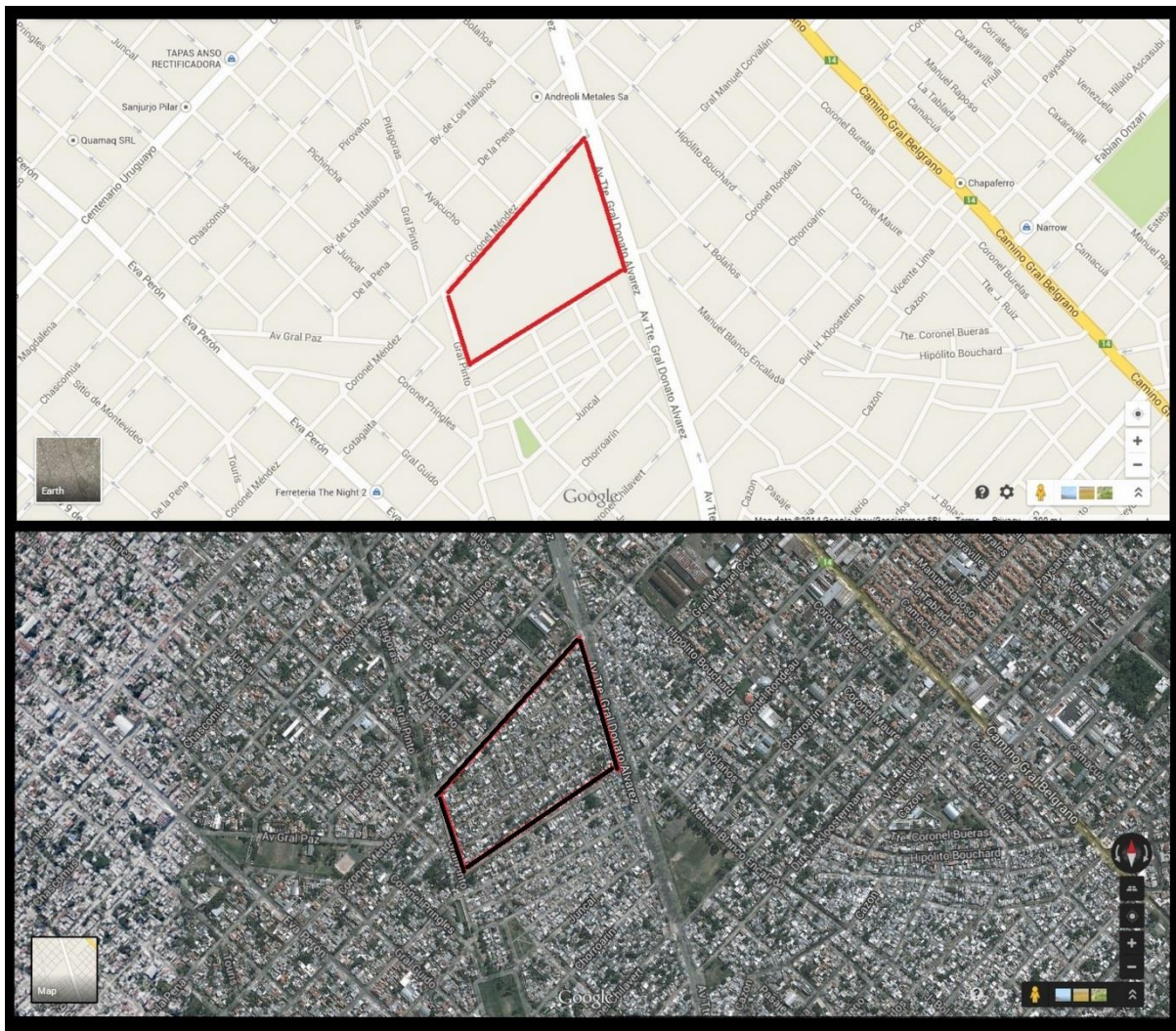
The neighbourhood of La Fe in Lanús does not officially exist, as indicated by the comparison of Google map and the aerial view. Above photo illustrates how the area full of streets and houses is officially a field.

MTD Lanús is divided into five neighbourhoods, all of which in the area of Monte Chingólo in Lanús. With its roughly 500,000 inhabitants, Lanus is one of the most densely populated areas of Greater Buenos Aires, hosting more than 9,300 inhabitants/ km² (Buenos Aires Provincia 2014). In the research carried out between 2003 and 2005, Analia Otero described the neighbourhoods where MTD Lanús is located as 'zones of emergency prioritized in state intervention' (see Picture 15). Consequently during the crisis these neighbourhoods turned into 'neighbourhood on benefits' given the dependency on social programs. Otero cites interviewee testimonies of rising levels of unemployment, internal violence, drug abuse and the degrading of the health and educational systems (2006, 56). More specifically, most of the *compañeros* live in the neighbourhood of La Fe, which is on occupied land, meaning they do not have building permits for the houses due to the fact that in the zoning the area is not supposed to be residential. Nobody thus has official ownership of the land or

their house and their situation is precarious due to this. The most important facility for the movement is undoubtedly the Roca Negra centre in the neighbourhood of Urquiza (See appendix 4 for the map). The centre acts as a meeting place for larger reunions of the FPDS. The centre used to be a factory producing kitchen appliances. Later it was converted into a scrap metal workshop. In the end, the centre was occupied by the Mothers of La Plaza de Mayo[114] and handed over to the movement. They had to set up an NGO to get the judge's ruling for the appropriation. Now they have the official title for it, provided that they make use of it.

Based on the interviews and discussions with the membership, times are now much easier than they were in 2001-2002. However, the neighbourhood is still a place with a concentration of socio-economic problems. Outside the centre itself, there are homeless people living in makeshift tents, burning electric cables to extract the copper for sale (Picture 16). In the night the zone is a red light district. According to rumours, poor women exchange sexual favours for fruit and vegetables in the cooperative market at the end of the premises. Drug use is widespread and the neighbourhoods have been witnessing an increasing 'securitization' in the form of the government's deployment of *gendarmeria* in the area. For example, early on in my second stay in Buenos Aires I was working with the *compañeros* of the metal workshop when one of their friends came in at the back of his motorcycle that a friend of his was driving. He had been shot in the foot by a local drug dealer for reasons unknown to me. Apparently he was unable to get rid of the bullet due to the involvement of corrupt police that would catch him if he were to use the hospital's services. Almost a year later when I returned to Lanús, he still had the bullet in his foot.[115]

As discussed before, MTD Lanús was constituted in 1998, and through a decline in membership it now hosts 180 members and their families. The people work in five different neighbourhoods, La Fe, La Torre, Villa Urquiza, Gonnet, and Semillita. Most of the 180 *compañeros* work in five cooperatives that belong to the *Argentina Trabaja* program. Only a few odd receive an older social benefits. Historically, MTD Lanús emerged in a difficult time, and was one of those organizations that emerged in confrontation with and relative autonomy from the state and in competition with the Justicialist Party and its *punteros* on the ground. As Otero explains, much of the state intervention in these 'emergency zones' came through the municipality, and more often than not, through the

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[114] The *Madres* are perhaps the best-known Argentinian social movement. They were instrumental in challenging the Dictatorship of 1976-1983 through their silent marches demanding to know the fate of their 'disappeared' sons. Yet, their struggle extended beyond the dictatorship and the theme of repression to fight against gross inequalities, poverty and exploitation. Their example and the material support for other movement has been very influential. For an overview, refer to: Bouvard 2002; Navarro 1989.

[115] The corruption of the *Bonaerense* (the Buenos Aires police) is notorious, and perhaps best depicted in Trapero's film (2002). Argentina generally does not do too well in corruption indicators. Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer survey for Argentinians demonstrate that 77 percent feel that the government's efforts to tackle corruption are ineffective. The police is among the institutions perceived by Argentines as the most corrupt, receiving a value of 3.8 when the scale ranges from 1 – not at all corrupt to 5 – extremely corrupt (Transparency International 2014). In terms of the linkages between crime, violence and police corruption, the case of Luciano Arruga is particularly illustrative. The 16-year old from a poor neighbourhood in BA disappeared following his refusal to get involved in thieving for the corrupt police in his neighbourhood. See: Amaya 2014.

Peronist 'Basic Units' (*Unidades Básicas*) that are the local units of the Peronist party assistentialist network (Otero 2006, 57). MTD Lanús, along with other organizations, challenged this network. This does not mean that the network ceased to exist or disappeared, but merely a break away from its monopoly and increased competition (Ibid, 59). But what is the idea underpinning this challenge? Let us now turn to how FPDS views their project.

FPDS and the idea of social change

As the Newspaper Clarín article from 2002 highlighted, whether the leaders of different *Piquetero* organizations like it or not, there is one thing in common with all the organizations – the membership is largely comprised by the urban poor that cannot even remember anymore the last time they had a job (Young et al. 2002). In terms of the conditions in Lanús, it is hard to imagine a sudden change in collective consciousness in La Fe – the movement's first neighbourhood – which would explain a political organization of the prefigurative type. The best explanation is the fact that those key organizers who started to mobilize the people in the movement were dedicated to a particular vision of social change. As one of the members puts it, "some compañeros…when they built the movement…had this ideology, of grassroots, of horizontality. This was the base of our organization that was to be repeated, and made work in many neighbourhoods" (Luciano, MTD Lanús 2013).

Indeed, due to the intense internal discussions and political differences, the Frente has quite a clear articulation of how it views its project. Already from the times of the Anibal Verón, the movement has been explicitly autonomous and prefigurative as the following discussion will illustrate. The autonomist elements of the social movements in Argentina are viewed as very similar to the Zapatistas. Dinerstein for example sees them as part of what she calls the 'new internationalism' initiated by the Zapatistas (2003b, 170). Indeed, the activists themselves have made references to the influence of Zapatismo (Léo, MTD Lanús 2013). A spokesperson of FPDS put it this way: "[Zapatismo] is a way of thinking politics and power from a different starting point." In this regard, the FPDS has drawn influence from the Zapatistas, but also from MST in Brazil, and the discussion of the state is undoubtedly influenced by the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela. In fact some of the activists from Lanus have travelled to both Brazil and Venezuela, and many activists from FPDS have been in Chiapas working in solidarity with the Zapatistas. The Frente belongs to the South American network of social movements, ALBA, which is in itself an attempt to internationalize the struggle (Molina 2012).

The clearest articulation of the political line of MTD Lanús that has carried through the changes in coordination with other movements can be found in the 2003 document by CTD Anibal Verón titled 'Our politics for constructing a present and a future with work, dignity and social change.' The document states that a fundamental transformation of the society is necessary. As long as capitalism exists, the upper classes will control the rest of society either legally or outside of the law. The movement views that it is necessary to start practising the kind of society they want. For them this

means to organize the work, attitudes, and relations with dignity, justice and equality. In their practice thus they value 1) autonomy; 2) democracy of the base; 3) construction of people's power; 4) putting in practice the values of equality and solidarity (MTD Anibal Verón 2003). The collectively produced document titled 'What is the Frente Popular Darío Santillán' in the FPDS webpage demonstrates a continued importance of these notions, making explicit references made to each of these concepts (FPDS 2010a). It is necessary to outline how they view each of these very inter-related notions. After this the idea of the movement shall be contrasted with Freeman's findings regarding the avoidance of informal elites.

Autonomy as a concept

"What we understand by autonomy is the capacity that, as a people, we have to organise and lead ourselves... Autonomy is, above all, action, realised in daily life and struggle. For this reason, the pillars that support it, more than grand definitions, are found in future reflections, when we discover our work in the MTD "(MTD Anibal Verón 2003). Similarly, the Frente in its website states that the movement is not only autonomous of the state and the political parties along with the church, but they refuse the domination of popular organizations by 'any superstructural instance.' Autonomy is thus perceived necessary "to guarantee that the interests of the people are not tampered with by the opportunism of those who aim to divert the popular leadership towards the integration into a system that only aims to perpetuate domination"(MTD Anibal Verón 2002). The people determine rather, from the base and democratically the decisions and the politics to follow. Moreover, "autonomy is, above all, action, everyday realization"(MTD Anibal Verón 2003).

Autonomy is also a notion that guides the relationship between different constituent parts of the CTD and later FPDS. "Upon the emergence of our movements, we were presented the challenge of being able to take steps of coordination without that implying that the base organizations be subordinated to a centralized body that leads them"(MTD Anibal Verón 2002). This practice of coordination between different organizations has been dubbed by some observers a form of 'Confederal democracy'(Galafassi 2003).

However, it is important to note that autonomy is viewed as both an aim and a practice and it is not assumed to be pure or complete. As one of the key activists of MTD Lanús explained to me, they aim for autonomy but in many ways they are dependent on the state (Ricardo and Aleman, MTD Lanús 2012). The movement seeks state resources to be able to generate other things with them.

Democracy of the base

Alongside autonomy, democracy is an important concept to the movements. Yet, the notion they use is 'democracy of the base' (or grass-roots democracy) understood as horizontality, the rejection of hierarchic forms: "We recognize ourselves as peers, as *compañeros*, where none is above the other (MTD Anibal Verón 2003). The functioning of pure horizontality is viewed as impossible given the

diversity of movements involved and their geographical distance. Delegated responsibility is thus the solution while maintaining the assembly as the 'highest form' of authority.

> For the functioning to be democratic, the *compañeros* that meet these tasks should be selected and have the mandate of the assembly. It is also important that these roles are rotating and revocable. If we had to graph the idea of organization that we practice, rather than a horizontal line, we would draw an inverted pyramid, where at the top, above all, are the base assemblies, and in a subordinate form the areas of work and the tasks that are delegated(Ibid).

The idea is thus, that the assemblies have the 'last word,' and that they can refuse or remove the delegate if they commit a serious error. The movements recognize, however, that there are assemblies and "assemblies" – the document talks about experiences where the assembly is simply a formality, whereby those with more information or better discourse end up deciding or leading the decision of others. In this regard the movements place much importance on education. "To talk about horizontality presupposes equality in access to information, political understanding and *formación* of everyone, something that is rarely given in our people today"(Ibid).

As discussed briefly before, *formación* is viewed as an important part of social change. "We are trying to decide things ourselves, for that we need to be informed and formed, always collectively…Develop and multiply the values of solidarity, new forms of relating that destroy a little bit every day the values of the dominator, his ideas"(Ibid). *Formación* is achieved in struggle, through free and shared work, and through active participation. In addition, the movement uses popular education in the form of workshops, since it is viewed as allowing for all to participate as equals. The thinking is captured in the following phrase: "Nobody knows everything, and there is nobody that knows nothing. Who struggles, already knows, but who reflects upon his struggle, struggles better"(Ibid).

Construction of 'People's power' and prefiguration

In terms of the wider project of the FPDS, it is viewed as a continuing construction of what they call 'People's power.' This notion is based upon an understanding of power as not a thing, but a social relation. The 2003 document articulates the construction of people's power as changing human, social and political relations, conquering better life conditions. Bridging the eternal problem of revolution vs. reform, the movement views that every struggle for reclaiming resources or rights contributes to constructing this power as the people's capacity to organize and struggle grows. Similarly, the distinction between the 'political' and 'the social' is rejected, and rather political struggle is inseparable from the struggle for rights, As the FPDS document explains: "We say, in turn, [that we are] a social and political movement, because for us social and political struggles are not separate compartments. We believe that all social struggle is political and that there is no political struggle without social flesh"(FPDS 2010a).

The traditional moment of revolution that transforms the fundamental unjust structures of society is seen as another step in the construction of People's Power – not the only moment but an important one regardless. Importantly People's power is an explicitly prefigurative construction. "We are only constructing an alternative of liberation if the values we proclaim are put to practice, and that change of consciousness adopts organizational forms that overcome the fragmentation and isolation...people's power is constructed from and in the ground, with democracy and conscious participation, with relations that prefigure the society that we long for"(MTD Anibal Verón 2003). In an interview for an SM program, a spokesperson for FPDS and the early organizer of MTD Lanús, Henrique relates the movement's project to Zapatismo and the works of Holloway and Negri by articulating the idea underpinning FPDS's political project as different from past movements in the opposition to the idea of taking power. He explains, however, that understanding power as a social relation does not negate the fact that a particular social relation of power has been legitimized, one that allows for the majority to be poor and a rich minority to govern. Indeed, he indicates that although power is a social relation, some of these social relations are more difficult to break and overcome than others ("Los Origenes Del Frente Popular Darío Santillán" 2012).

For FPDS the answer is to construct people's power. As noted above, Solana explains that "at some moment it is necessary to reformulate the whole conjunction of the state, making a radical change of the rules of the game so that this [people's self-expression] would be the norm and not the exception. Now there are isolated experiences where the construction of people's power manages to impose logics and even manages to reformulate mediums of power..."("Poder Popular, Hegemonia, Zapatismo Y Revolucion Bolivariana" 2012). In a sense, thus, the question of the state is left open, but changing of it is viewed as coming through the construction of People's Power.

Challenge to clientelism

Given the movements' competition with the Peronist network in the poor neighbourhoods, it is important to understand how it works as their project is about posing an alternative to it. Moreover, given the experiences people in the poorer areas have had with clientelist practices, it is not entirely inconceivable that the movements themselves would reproduce elements of it.

Clientelism is essentially personalized welfare whereby the access to resources and information is monopolized by the *puntero* or the party broker who mobilizes people for a *referente* – a politician running for or holding a position. They are the go-betweens or gatekeepers controlling the flow of resources and services coming from the municipality and the flow of votes coming from the clients (Auyero 2000, 67). The most influential scholar of Argentinian clientelism, Javier Auyero uses the following definition of political clientelism: "the distribution of resources (or promise of) by political office holders or political candidates in exchange for political support, primarily – although not exclusively - in the form of the vote" (2000, 57).

In Argentina clientelism is traditionally viewed in relation to Peronism. The working class as a collective actor was constituted in Peron's regime (1945-55). It had a special relationship and a central role in politics mediated through labour unions that acted as transmission belts between the workers and the state. The Peronist Justicialist Party thus became the traditional representative of working class interests (Farinetti 2012, 109–110). While the military regimes had paused the political function between the peronist political parties and the working class, it quickly resurfaced with the reintroduction of democracy in 1983. Yet, through the neoliberal reforms and the undermining of labour unions, the Peronist President Menem had contributed to a collapse of corporatist political identities whereby the traditional link between PJ and the working class was lost (Farinetti 2012, 119). The party sought to replace its links with the organized working-class with links with the urban poor. This is what Delamata dubs the 'Peronist shift' from labour-based party with unions as dominant partners into an increasingly clientelist party, "in which its uni006Fn-based linkages had been replaced by patronage-based territorial organizations located in poor areas" (Delamata 2004, 6). It is in this environment, and very much in opposition to clientelist practices, that the autonomous *piquetero* organizations emerged in the political arena.

In the 2003 document CTD calls the corrupt management of work benefits "another demonstration of the perversion of a political system that leads millions of people to misery and despair and uses that misery and that despair to perpetuate itself." Instead, they articulate their use of these resources as a transformation into "an incentive and a challenge to advance the construction of people's power towards social change" (MTD Anibal Verón 2003). Similarly the FPDS cites their origin in dispute with the "political clientelist Mafioso apparatus of the governing parties" (FPDS 2010a).

It is important to note, however, that the *punteros* are not necessarily perceived as bad - for good or worse, people have often depended on the *punteros* to deal with their everyday needs. As Auyero explains they create "problem-solving networks work as webs of resource-distribution and of protection against the risks of everyday life. *Punteros* provide food in state funded soup-kitchens, broker access to state subsidies for the unemployed or to public hospitals, and distribute food and/or food vouchers to mothers, children and the elderly" (Auyero 2006, 261). According to a survey he cites, more than one third of the full sample and almost half of low-income respondents would turn to a *puntero* for help if the head of his or her household lost their job. More than one 20 percent had sought help from a *puntero* in the previous year and almost the same amount acknowledged having received a hand-out in the 2001 election campaign (Ibid, 262). The activists of MTD Lanús also cited previous experiences with *punteros* yet often indicating disappointment. Some had even been involved in mobilizing votes and people for a specific *referente*. All of them indicated their distrust of the party brokers. As one of the women in the movement articulated it: "once high-up, forget about it" (Aylén and Marina, MTD Lanús 2013). Yet, the people in the movements being the

most vulnerable in society, it is possible that their past experiences of dealing with resources would penetrate an organization like MTD Lanús, despite their anti-clientelist stance.

The principles

Similarly to the Zapatistas, certain principles and values underpin the movement's practice. In 2003 they were clearly defined as solidarity, honesty and joy with the aim of creating free, dignified and generous individuals. Solidarity is to "see the necessity of the other as if it was your own, feel good helping others, and harvesting the help of the *compañeros* when we need it." Honesty is to understand that any personal benefit taken of common good hurts those around you, and to act accordingly. Collective work and the assembly create an environment of *compañerismo*, friendship and joy which are posed as the alternative to competition and speculation characteristic of capitalism (MTD Anibal Verón 2003).

The principle of solidarity or *compañerismo* is especially important. In this regard, references are often made to Darío Santillán and others as example *compañeros*. "In the act of giving his life for a compañero [Darío] summarizes the human values and the political consciousness of the younger generation that, from a concrete commitment to the most urgent demands of our people, struggle with vocation to promote revolutionary changes" (Molina 2012). The importance of Darío and others 'fallen in the struggle' is highlighted by the adoption of their names for the organizations, FPDS being just one example, the same way the CTD was named after Anibal Verón, one of the early victims of police repression of *piquetero* mobilizations (Fornillo, et al. 2009, 48). However, relating to the figure of Darío, Fornillo et al. argue that: "In the story, the death appears not meant as a sacrificial moment in the struggle for a transcendent cause, but as the greatest thinkable testament to the solidary bond: one in which the risking of a life can only be justified by the protection of other. The figure shows the two young men as an expression of 'prefigurative' practices of the society to come" (2009, 49).

Indeed, the movement's discourse is explicitly one of prefiguration, horizontality and autonomy. Let us see how these principles and values are being converted into institutional arrangements as the chapter proceeds to outline the formal instance of prefiguration in the MTD and FPDS.

Part 2. Decision-making and work in FPDS and MTD Lanus – the 'rose-tinted picture'

Organization of work and decision-making

As explained by Fornillo and others in their 2009 study of FPDS, "social change is associated with the transformation of values and everyday relationships, creating bonds of solidarity and cooperation, the creation of mechanisms for making decisions in assemblies which promotes participation and mutual recognition, and the recreation of work based on forms of self-management forms and 'without a boss'" (2009, 49). The following is an overview of the organizational arrangements of the movement.

The work of FPDS is divided into different sectors, by area and into different spaces.[116] In terms of sectors, FPDS is divided into territorial, student, gender, rural, and employed sectors. MTD Lanús belongs to the territorial sector along with the other unemployed movements. The work of the FPDS is also subdivided according to regions. The different sectors have regional meetings. MTD Lanús's delegates have fortnightly meetings with other territorial movements of the Southern Zone of GBA (Lucia, MTD Lanús 2012). In addition, there are national and regional coordination meetings in terms of finances, coordination and organization whereby delegates from the movements get together to discuss the grand lines and activities of the movement. In addition there are meetings regionally and nationally for the area of political relations where contacts, dialogue and coordination with other movements, organizations and parties is realized. The area of management, conversely, takes care of petition towards ministries, among other things. In addition, the movement has viewed it necessary to construct different 'spaces' for gender, youth, children, health, and culture (Di Piero et al. 2012, 7).[117] For example, in the women's space the female members of the movements come together to discuss potential issues common to many of them and many other women in the neighbourhoods (Partenio 2009, 1).

In addition the movement has what they call 'spaces of synthesis' where all the different activities are coordinated. In the regional 'table,' there is at least one representative of each sector, each area, organization and space. These meetings thus bring together 30-40 people and are open to all the militants (Di Piero et al. 2012, 7). In addition there are similar 'tables' for the Metropolitan area and a national one taking place bimonthly. On top of this there are national and regional assemblies where all the membership can participate. These meetings take place at least once per year (Di Piero et al. 2012, 8).

Concerning, MTD Lanús, the movement is divided into five neighbourhoods, as previously explained. The work of the 180 workers is divided into *productivos* like the screen printing workshop, bakery and brick factory whereby those working in these micro-enterprises produce something to sell and in that way make some additional income on top of the AT monthly allowance. Everything produced is sold at cost to movement members and more expensively to those outside so as to improve the subsistence of the workers. The surplus after the necessary funds to continue the work is shared equally between those working in the projects and a tax of 10 percent is paid to the movement so as to be used for collective projects.

On top of this, people in the movement work in *comunitarios* which is work for the common good, be that the community kitchen or the *copa de leche* where food won as concessions from the provincial or municipal authorities is used to have free meals for those in the neighbourhood.

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[116] For an overview: Di Piero, Enríquez, and Lama 2012, 6–9.

[117] For an overview of the women's spaces, see: (Partenio 2009)

Moreover, there are those doing organizational work such as administration which includes dealing with the official instances of the cooperative paperwork and the absences and presences of those working in the cooperatives.[118] There are also those responsible for financial matters such as handling the money owed by the municipality as well as the support payments of the membership to the movement.[119]

Many of the people in the movement do the kind of work as characteristic of the government's plan with *Argentina Trabaja*. This work, or *obra* as it is referred to, includes the cleaning and improvement of public infrastructure such as parks and roads.

The organization adheres to assembly based decision-making, whereby the neighbourhoods make decisions in an assembly regarding questions and issues that have to do with the neighbourhood itself. Movement-wide decisions are made in the *mesa* by the *responsables* ('responsibles,' those delegated by the assemblies) or in case of more difficult questions, in a general assembly of all the movement membership. The work is supposed to propose an alternative to capitalism in being 'work without bosses.' A CTD document of 2003 explains that the production in the MTD is popular and has the aim of solidarity; "the aim is to satisfy our necessities and improve everyone's quality of life. It is the opposite to capitalism that seeks the accumulation of riches, and those riches always stay in the hands of the few"(MTD Anibal Verón 2003). In this regard, the idea is that the work is organized collectively and problems are discussed together. Moreover, the different areas of work have their weekly meetings where delegates of different projects and/or neighbourhoods come together.

Similar to FPDS as a whole, there is a weekly meeting of 'synthesis.' These meetings, or *mesas de coordinacion* ('coordination tables'), bring together the responsibles of all of the neighbourhoods as well as areas of work (*productivo*, collective, *obra*, finance and administration). The idea is, as explained before, that all these roles rotate (Lucia, MTD Lanús 2012). Moreover, the direction of decision-making should be ascending, so that the delegates are mandated by and accountable to the assemblies. In addition, the place of the *mesa* meetings rotates monthly between the five neighbourhoods so as to avoid centralization.

In terms of *formación*, the movement acknowledges the obstacles to participation and officially is trying to improve the capacities and knowledge of the membership by running workshops and actively encouraging participation of newer members or those who have not been in roles of responsibility.

As explained in chapter 1, one of the challenges for prefigurative movements is how to spread the struggle. In this regard, FPDS has an interesting way of viewing its exterior relations. FPDS has two

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[118] There are officially five cooperatives that the people in the movement belong to, but these do not correspond with the neighbourhoods but are rather entities that exist on paper and do not have much to do with the practical day-to-day work.
[119] The question of the support (*aporte*) is a continuing problem in the movement as many lag behind their payments. Officially everyone should now be paying 3 percent (60 pesos) of their monthly benefit to the movement so as to have funds for collective events and the travel costs of delegates to meetings elsewhere.

types of links with other organizations. Firstly there is 'coordination' whereby momentary common interests allow cooperation with movements that might not share similar organizational principles or views of social change but nevertheless can campaign on the same issues. For example, 'coordination' takes place with Polo Obrero which is the movement wing of the Worker's Party in salary struggles or anti-repression protests. The second type of relation, 'articulation,' is much more demanding as it has to do with construction of shared 'spaces' and more close cooperation. Articulation is the way to relate to movements that who share the views regarding organization and social change. In this regard, articulation is carried out mainly with movements of the COMPA, an umbrella organization of the 'independent left' movements (Di Piero et al. 2012, 54). The view is that unity is necessary but not so that the people rally behind a program that has little to do with their interests. Unity is constructed through concrete processes of articulation and coordination for concrete struggles after common interests (MTD Anibal Verón 2003).

For MTD Lanús, much of the articulation has to do with the organizations belonging to a group called AGTCAP which is an organization for movements with cooperative work. AGTCAP unites the organizations to reclaim recognition of the *aguinaldo* (yearly holiday pay paid to public workers at Christmas time), tools of the work, and work-related public health insurance policies (Léo and Aleman, MTD Lanús 2012).

MTD Lanús in the light of Freeman's warnings of informal elite

Looking at the MTD Lanús in the light of Freeman's suggestions, the organization of decision-making and work seems like a response to her cautionary notes (Picture 17). The movement uses (1) delegation as opposed to representation; (2) the accountability of delegates exists, and ultimate power rests with the assemblies; (3) authority is distributed and rotated (4). Responsibilities are (5) allocated according to rational criteria. Based on my observations, when responsibles are needed, people often propose somebody they think would be adequate for the job given their capacities as well as their adherence to the principles of the movement and their work morale. Moreover, there should be equal access to information (6), given that the important decisions are taken publicly and collectively. Regarding equal access to resources of the group (and skills and information), the movement acknowledges the paradox of equal information, and thus places much importance on the notion of *formación*, as explained earlier.

To identify the difference between how decision-making should work and how it actually does, the chapter will now proceed to the second phase of the analysis whereby the fieldwork and interviews are used to assess the potential of hierarchy and informal forms of power. The problems encountered therein can be viewed through three of the indicators used by della Porta in her work on deliberative democracy, namely equality, inclusiveness and transparency.

Part 3 – the assessment

The most important single event of my field research in Argentina was the general assembly of MTD Lanús. Because the experience highlights most of the problems with prefiguration in the movement, it is useful to recount the events therein.

General assembly

At 9:30 in the morning of June 7 in 2013 about 100 of the 180 members of the movement had gathered at Roca Negra and the assembly begun by one of the more experienced activists introducing the themes for the day. The idea was to get into three groups (Pictures 18 & 19), to discuss the things in wider society that influence life in the *barrios*, and then discuss the positives and negatives of the movement's past year. The three groups would then get back together to feed into to the general group the things that were discussed. This, to me, seemed to correspond with Freirean methods that I had familiarized myself with using the movement's manual for trainers of *formación de base* workshops. Accordinly, in the beginning the discussion was very free-flowing with the coordinator taking down everyone's point. Later these points get grouped according to theme and thus narrowed down (FPDS 2009). While we were starting, I was stood next to the young man from La Torre. He said to me: "I hate this – I'm in it for the work, and nothing more." He said something along the lines of the movement being managed by a couple of people forcing the others to bear the things of assemblies and the political. They have their way of running the movement, he said. I asked who he meant by this; and he said: "the people that run the movement" – as ever it was left quite vague for me who he was talking about. For him, of course, it was obvious to whom he was referring. He told me that if he were to get another job, he'd leave right away.

The three groups were all coordinated by one or two of the more active and experienced activists. I joined one of the three groups. Another group was for a moment left without a coordinator and people were calling for the usual names of the group of more hard-core activists that I had from the very beginning identified as the potential informal elite.

In the groups, however, the discussion was healthy and everyone was encouraged to participate. The coordinators noted down the opinions and points raised by everyone. In accordance with the Freirean method, the discussion was carried out thematically. The first discussed theme was education and the on-going teachers' strikes. The second theme was health, where problems with hospitals, the lack of resources and poor facilities were discussed, and people seemed to be in agreement that the problem is very similar to that of education, and deriving from the same source, that being the government's neoliberal policies and the marriage between capital and the politicians.

In the beginning many of the female *compas* were quite tense, and seemed somewhat indifferent when it came to the wider issues and the key word of capitalism. However, when the discussion was linked more forcefully to the conditions of the children, they warmed up to the conversation, and

more people joined in. Before then, it had been mainly the more experienced and politically sophisticated that had done the talking.

While the discussion was going on in the working groups, a group of *compañeros* that I had identified as the group around a particularly influential member of the movement were roaming around, and at one point some of them left to handle some orders at their workplace. At the time, I wrote in my field notes that "This, for me, seemed to reflect an attitude that the meeting has to do with training the *compas* [read: 'people'], and as such does not touch X and the others as they already consider themselves formed." Indeed, the agenda and the objective for the assembly and the day as a whole were set by the more active and hence influential group and clearly had the training purpose in mind, the objective being raising the consciousness of the movement rank-and-file in terms of raising militancy and stopping some of the *compañeros* being content with bare survival. This in turn has the purpose of mobilizing more of the *compañeros* for participation at work, in demonstrations and training as well as providing the financial support the movement and the Frente as a whole needs for its function.

In my group more or less everyone participated in conversation at some point. Some of course more than others, and these people tended to be the more experienced and more active ones, the ones I always saw in the *mesa* meetings, or who no longer attend frequently because of age.

The second part of the discussion had the objective of evaluating the movement's activity this year up until this point (June 2013). People were given the task of explaining what they see as the positives of the movement's activity in the past year or so. One of the female *compañeras* started by saying that she thought the year has been quite good for the movement, considering the rupture of the Frente in January and the difficulties generally. They had managed to receive some things through roadblocks, and maintained their unity. Some others agreed with her at which point one of the hard-core members jumped in asking why they think the movement did manage to get some concessions out of the authorities. She continued: "Because we did go out to the streets, we blocked roads and because we were united." At this point the *compas* wanted to agree with her statement and there was a general consensus among the group that this was a good evaluation of the situation.

In terms of negatives, the discussion touched upon the difficulty of getting more work (and consequently more cooperative benefits). The discussion soon turned to the internal problems – the government is not the only culprit, a woman said. The movement before had 300 *compañeros*, and now they are 250, although for mobilizations sometimes only around sixty show up. In this way, the discussion led to the theme of participation and the *aporte*, themes which I had seen in the *mesas* and assemblies to be identified as a long-term problem. In my view the whole purpose for calling the general assembly was to deal with this touchy issue. Many of the membership fail to attend marches and skip work while not paying their share of the movement's costs.

At this point the experienced clearly took charge. They highlighted the fact that the benefits had risen and the *aporte* no longer corresponded with the level of income. One of the two core female

activists explained how the support is divided in three parts: one for the neighbourhood, one for the movement (finance) and one for the Frente. The money in the first case is to be used for the kitchens in the *barrios*, and in the second and third case for allowing the coordination of events mainly in terms of having the possibility of travelling to different places for doing the work needed for coordinating the Frente as a whole and building relations with others. Generally the people agreed that the *aporte* is necessary and a matter of principle. At the time I wrote in my notes: "However, at this point it is worthwhile to note that not all *compas* were present in the assemblies. The ones that were absent are also likely to be the ones that are the problem in this regard." The *compañeros* noted that everyone knows who are in the movement for the plan and the work and nothing else, and who are in for the movement and the cooperatives.

Afterwards the three groups joined into a general discussion. At this point the dynamic changed somewhat. The coordinator began by asking the groups to report back. The first two groups had reported back, followed by applause. At this point, and against the rules of discussion, the influential individual that had been free flowing with his entourage jumped into the discussion. Again the theme was about participation and not being comfortable with the situation of having a social benefit and work. He talked about the example of an older *compañera* that works in the community kitchen. He said she is admirable in that she always paid the *aporte*, works full hours and more every day, and comes to work from a great distance daily. On top of this she participates in the marches. He said there are undoubtedly many like her in the movement, "but how do we make it so that all *compañeros* are like her?" he asked. "We need the people to be 'contaminated' by her example, not by the example of the negative people."

The conversation moved on to deal with the practicalities of how to actually deal with the people that lack in work, do not pay the *aporte* and do not participate in the movement activities. Nobody seemed to have a solution in mind. An old man from La Semillita that everyone refers to respectfully using the prefix 'Don' meaning 'Sir' talked about how he "will not accept a single person in his *barrio* that does not pay".

It was pointed out that even at the present moment only about a half of the *compas* were present in the meeting (Picture 20). And the ones absent still find it very easy to complain about whatever the active *compañeros* do or decide, even when they cannot be bothered to participate themselves. As a measure to deal with the problem, a point was made about the project in all the neighbourhoods to make a list of those who pay, and to make a spread sheet about the participation in protests. The meeting ended with all the topics being discussed, and the familiar applause. At this point there were markedly fewer people present already; I estimated 50 people out of the 180 members.

Before leaving, I made a stop at the other side of the centre in the metal workshop where a couple of *compañeros* that I had gotten to know very closely worked. They had chosen not to come to the assembly, which I saw as another indication of the rupture between them and the rest of the people. The old militant started by asking me how the 'congress' had gone. I told him nothing was really

decided. He told me what he thinks of it: "it's a parody. There are five people that run the whole thing and the rest follow." I asked him about an idea that he had been thinking about regarding demanding the authorities for the securing deeds for the houses in La Fe. He told me he could not have presented the idea there, because of envy. He believed he would have been shut down had he presented it in that meeting.

Lessons of the general assembly

The general assembly highlights many of the problems with the movement. Firstly, there exists a core group of individuals that are more influential than others and in whose hands many of the responsibilities tend to concentrate. On the other hand, many in the membership are not in the movement for its political project. Out of the twenty-seven members I interviewed, seventeen indicated getting work or a benefit as one of the principal reasons for joining the movement, whereas only eight cited political reasons.[120] Indeed, already with CTD – FPDS's predecessor – in Fernanda Torres's interviews 18 percent indicated that they were involved to participate in political discussions and activities, whereas 75.9 percent had joined to acquire a benefit, or 71.6 percent that wanted to establish a soup kitchen in their neighbourhood (Torres 2009, 292). At the same time, not everyone is as explicit about their non-commitment to the movement's political project as the young male cited above. For example, one of my interviewees told me he would never leave the movement even if he found another job. On my return to Lanús early 2014 it turned out he had been kicked out for stealing the electric cables of one of the classrooms in Roca Negra and is now working in a private company. I never saw him attend any of the events again, nor did he respond to my attempts to contact him.

In reality, thus, there seems to be a continuing difference in terms of the desires of the hard-core and the rank-and-file, and while it is true that the hard-core do most of the work, and often get criticized unfairly, they do also employ power in a way that goes against the principles of the movement. Despite their discourse of encouraging participation and rotation, the requirements for facilitating the entry of new people into roles of responsibility are not provided by the hard-core. In addition, the movement seems to have largely reversed the direction of decision-making, whereby the assemblies have become more and more formalities and instances of 'informing the people' of decisions already taken elsewhere. For example, two rank-and-file members explain how the movement takes decisions in their view (note, they are not *mesa*-goers themselves). If an important decision has to be made, "first they go to the *mesa*, where they talk and afterwards the inform the assembly…before it was the other way around, before it was first the assembly and afterwards the *mesa*." When I asked them about the change in the direction of decision-making, they could not quite explain why this had taken place, but one of the women said that it seemed that the assembly always

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[120] It has to be noted, at this point, that despite my desire to guarantee a 'representative sample' I was constantly pushed to interview those with more experience, who also tend to be more politically conscious and motivated. Consequently, I have reason to believe that those silent from my sample are less likely to be politically motivated.

discussed a lot but never reached any kind of decisions (Luisa and Caterina, MTD Lanús 2013). Moreover, even in the *mesa* meetings, some of the newer members clearly take a back seat and do not feel that they are in the position to take decisions. Especially the role of one particularly influential individual was notable both in terms of his visibility in the roles of responsibility that he had but also the way in which he interacted with others in meetings and the work. But let us look at this conclusion more systematically.

As explained in chapter three, I adopted a category-based approach to the field research whereby I focused on the relations between the different groups of people (e.g. age, gender, education, past experience of political activity). In this regard, some categorical differences turned out to be more salient, such as experience and education.

Gender

It is always reasonable to assume that gender-based discrimination exists. However, those asked always argued that in the movement men and women are equal. In fact, when asking two of the older women that had joined the movement with the launch of AT in 2009, they seemed a bit annoyed at the question and assured me that there was equality.

The p*iquetero* organizations have been known to have a majority of women (Picture 21). Through unemployment the roles inside the family also changed, often the woman was the one who maintained the family (Samanes 2009, 3). However, as Svampa and Pereyra have pointed out - while women are a majority, they seldom occupy positions of leadership (2003). However, in their analysis they looked at all *piquetero* organizations and specifically argued that much of this has to do with the history of party or union activity of some of the activists. MTD Lanús developing more autonomously of these structures seems to have avoided much of this dynamic. Of course, the movement does not officially have positions of leadership, but in terms of the roles of responsibility, in the *mesa* meetings it was often more women than men. In addition, while it still tends to be women working in the kitchen and men in construction and metal work etc., there are men and women equally working in the obra, maintaining the public park in the neighbourhood. Women have also occupied important positions in the security work of the roadblocks. An ex-member explained to me how she had worked in the security and been put in charge of the whole team as well. She explained how she had to work hard to show her worth to the men who at first would not take her seriously. Slowly the perception of her changed.[121] These days it is common to see women working in security just as men do.

In effect, thus, I did not see any gender-based inequality in the operation of the movement. This is to say in the movement's 'public' life there seems to be no inequality and there factors like education and experience seem to be stronger sources of disparity. However, the private side of the membership is one that I got to discover much less. In this regard, an FPDS member from La Plata explains in an

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[121] Discussion at Roca Negra, 27 April 2013.

interview that a strong *machismo* exists in the neighbourhoods and women are in charge of the household chores and of the children and that it is difficult to break this logic (Di Piero et al. 2012, 43).

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that much of this problem is still present in the houses of the *compañeros*, in which case the fact that they do not actively identify it as a problem is in itself concerning. It may be that in the unofficial leadership there are men and women equally so the problem is not so much in the movement practice itself. However, to relate this to della Porta's notion of inclusiveness, it seems necessary to include these seemingly private questions in the public discussion of the movement. Ultimately, an unequal distribution of responsibilities in the house restricts women's ability to take part in movement activity and hence restricts more active participation to those without children or otherwise easier 'private' situation. Moreover, if the idea is to prefigure alternative, equal social relations, this cannot be restricted to just some elements of life, or to the public sphere of work. Instead, this *compañerismo* should reach the totality of life.

Political conflicts within the movement

With the working hypothesis that there will always be some form of authority and hierarchy, even in prefigurative experiments, I came in to the movement set to find out the different groups within the movement and their relative positions vis-à-vis power. Early on it became apparent that there are some fundamental divisions within the movement. Just how powerful some of the individuals were I only learned to appreciate quite late in my stay as people started to trust me and consequently share quite delicate information knowing that I would soon leave and hence would not compromise their position.

Out of pure happenstance, I suppose, I became closely affiliated with a group of *compañeros* working in the outer part of the Roca Negra centre in a metal workshop. It soon became apparent that this group of *compañeros*, consisting fundamentally of Carlos, a long-time activist and revolutionary who had in his past been part of a *Montonero* urban guerrilla group that fought against the military dictatorship, who is now 57 years old, and his son Luciano, 28. There are also some others who could be characterized as loosely affiliated with the movement but mainly friends with the two. These people come and go given that they have their work or studies elsewhere. When they come it is just to spend time sitting down and talking or making food together or to help Francisco and Pablo with their precarious projects at the workshop.

It turned out that in terms of their political views, the couple diverge from what they view as the movement's leadership. The couple and their friends could be characterised as anarchists. They refuse to sign into work, a government requirement for the cooperative workers. They also oppose wearing municipal work clothes. The two have also given up participation in the assemblies of Roca Negra where they work, and do not pay the *aporte*. In addition, it is easy to see that the area of the metal workshop and its surroundings is clearly their territory that only few of the others feel comfortable

coming into. For example, on my birthday in June, I had invited people from 'the other side' that I had gotten to know but none of them showed up as we had the traditional Argentinian barbeque at the metal workshop. I was often asked to deliver messages or ask the people in the metal workshop for things when those who work on the other side did not feel comfortable doing it themselves. In addition, very early on in the second round of field research I had returned to Roca on a Saturday to meet with Pablo for a social event in an occupied building in another neighbourhood, Lomas De Zamora. As I was waiting for him I had an interesting discussion with the gatekeeper, Gabriela, of about 45 years of age. The mother of six had been a *cartonera*[122] in the difficult years of economic collapse and joined the movement early on. She is now on a pension from the government and says she has given up participation in the movement due to their loss of ideology. Elena says that the movement is no longer what it used to be. When I ask her why that is, she argues that the *dirigentes* do not care about the people in the neighbourhood anymore, and that now everybody is just trying to make as much money as possible. Her thinking is more in line with that of Pablo and Francisco, she says. In this regard, it was not exactly clear what she thinks this ideological difference is more concretely, but from very early on I came to understand this division in the movement. And this division proved quite problematic for me, as I started to get associated with the group of Pablo and Francisco and consequently had to work to gain the trust of others and to be able to expand beyond the metal workshop. Later on in the chapter I will return to discuss this conflict.

The informal elite and obstacles to participation

On one of my first days back in Lanús, I joined the movement at the monthly demonstration in Avellaneda at the renamed railway station of Darío and Maxi where the two had been killed in the 2002 demonstrations. An excerpt from my field notes outline my initial sentiments: "Inside the gates I instantly met Lucia who was happy to see me and seemed to remember me well. We reaffirmed the commitment for me to start working with them regularly, which is what my objective for the day was. Lucia is a short woman, perhaps something like 35 years old. She is what seems to me one of the older and more experienced *compas*, along with Mariano (tall man with an earring and a ponytail) and Ricardo (brother of one of the 'marthyrs'). These are the core group of activists who seem to be doing most of the organization and who I assume to enjoy most influence within the movement. These are also the people whose word counts when it comes to me being involved with the movement to research them." Indeed, this initial intuition turned out to be quite correct. It was, however, only at the very end of my 2013 stay in Lanús that more than those who I had gotten closest to started opening up

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[122] *Cartoneros* make a living collecting cardboard on the streets, going through rubbish bins. They sell it to recycling in bulk and thus make a living. This is one of the heaviest jobs imaginable as one has to collect very much carton to be able to make ends meet.

to me and showed me the real picture instead of maintaining the image and the official line. Particularly revealing were the interviews conducted on the last few days.[123]

While it may be true that the territorial *piquetero* organizations "did not inherit certain habits from traditional unionism, and leaned towards more horizontal organisational structures" (Andreassi 2012) this does not guarantee that the decision-making is actually democratic. In fact, from the very beginning of my field research it was evident that a more active and more influential core group of organizers exists in the movement. It was to these more experienced members that I was taken for the initial interviews in 2012. Consequently, I was granted access to the movement and the ability to carry out my research by these key individuals. This decision was never brought to an assembly.

Moreover, as the recounted experience of the general assembly highlights, there seems to be a difference between the more politically dedicated activists and those who are involved for the work and/or the benefit. Delamata's research similarly of CTD shows the "difficult relationship between, on the one hand, the broader political goals of their founders and, on the other, the struggle for jobs and food, which is the principal activity that the movement carries out. Whereas the political leaders found their identities on the ideological field, rank and file members tend to identify the organization's action either through the absent state responsibilities or self-help" (Delamata 2004). This seems to be true even after ten years. To justify this assertion, it is necessary to demonstrate the observations that led me to it. After which, I will consider different obstacles to breaking down this informal hierarchy.

The informal elite

Multiple interviews and conversations with movement membership pointed towards an influential core group. The last few days of intensive interviewing especially surfaced much of these tensions. In an interview with two women working in the *obra*, I asked where the idea of not having *dirigentes* comes from, they responded: "the movement has *dirigentes*. It [not having *dirigentes*] is something they say but it is not fact" (Anna and Jennifer, MTD Lanús 2013). They explained that I had been given the 'rose-tinted picture.' In the same way, those of the metal workshop often referred to the 'heads' and 'those running the show.' The gatekeeper, Elena, had also talked about the *dirigentes* or 'those above.' In addition, many of the interviewees indicated traditional understanding of power. For example, in an interview with two older seamstresses that had joined the movement with the introduction of the AT cooperatives explained that: "Those who understand better might be higher, in a place higher than others. To bring information and to do things that one cannot do." They talked about those 'higher up' 'informing' others (Aylén and Marina, MTD Lanús 2013).

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[123] Some would still seek to maintain the image. For example, I had heard from many of one of the members that had left/been kicked out due to him stealing from the movement. In a discussion with one of the key organizers, he never mentioned this episode but let it seem as if he had left due to finding work elsewhere.

The nature of informal elite is such that it is never explicitly laid out who belongs to the group and its membership might be flexible depending on the context and the issue. However, most people put the figure of those in charge between five and ten. In the first place, there are clearly those more influential in their neighbourhoods and those influential in the movement as a whole. These groups often coincide but not always – some people are more oriented towards their neighbourhoods whereas a core group is responsible for the direction of the movement as a whole and its relationship with the Frente, other movements and authorities. In addition, there are implications of the influence of those outside the movement itself, namely influential past organizers that no longer work in Lanus. These indications only came to my attention in the very end of my stay in Lanus, so I have not been able to investigate them much further. We shall return to this point, however, when discussing the apparent changing course of FPDS as a whole.

But who are those members of the informal elite?[124] And how did they become this elite? The above quote by the 56 year old member seems to suggest another form of gerontocracy, whereby influence is due to length of participation in the movement. Indeed, those who are more influential in the movement tend to either have a long history with the movement or have a higher level of education, or both. Significantly, gender does not seem to play a role in this, and men and women are equally part of this influential group. However, only one of the women in this group has a child in the age that needs much attention, and she seems to have an arrangement with her partner whereby they share the duties.[125] The others either have no children or their children are older. The median age for those in the core group that I had interviewed (eight individuals) is 31, compared with 32 for the whole sample (twenty-six). Regarding education, however, there seems to be a difference. When eight out of the total of 25 respondents had completed secondary school, half of the frequent *mesa*-goers had studied either up to secondary school level or beyond.[126] Of the 27 interviewees, eleven were men, and sixteen women. The distribution of those involved in the *mesas* corresponds, with three men and five women.

However, by far the most visible correlation is indeed that of the length of participation in the movement. Indeed, only very few of those that regularly go to the *mesa* meetings have a short history with the movement. Of the twenty-seven interviewees, I have identified eight as regular *mesa*-goers. Seven out of these eight are pre-2002 members who have lived through the hard years and repression, while only one had joined the movement more recently. This 21-year old female *compañera* that I interviewed attends the meetings as a delegate from the neighbourhood of La Semillita. She has only been involved in the movement, officially speaking, for a year, although her mother has been involved for a long time and thus she had always known about the movement. She, however, has finished

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[124] See picture 22.

[125] This member is one of those who I did not get to interview due to issues of arranging a suitable time.

[126] I have reason to assume that this figure would be even higher, had the remaining influential members been interviewed as well, given that they seemed to be well-educated people.

secondary school and is studying to become a biology teacher.[127] Her participation in the *mesa*, however, seems qualitatively different. She does not see herself as clearly a 'responsible' of the neighbourhood as those from the other neighbourhoods do. In this regard she identified herself as the one who "is responsible for bringing the information to the *barrio*." She refers to the *mesa* in third person, explaining that "in the *mesa* they discuss everything of all the *barrios*, and there they take the final decision." I posed to her a question regarding participation and paying the financial *aporte*, she responded that she does not know what will be done about it, but that "they will say that in the *mesa*" (Cristina, MTD Lanús 2013). Indeed, in the *mesa* she takes an observational role and does not participate much. She seems to view her role as taking notes to then inform on the decisions in the neighbourhood. Her passive role perhaps has to do with the fact that previously the delegate from her neighbourhood had been the older 'Don' who talks strongly about 'his' neighbourhood, but cannot attend the meetings as much due to his age. In addition, her two cousins, both involved from the beginning are also present in the meetings due to their roles in administration. All in all, though, the case of this newcomer indicates a mentality of following rather than co-leading, despite the fact that she takes part in the meetings. Certain key individuals largely direct the conversation and are in charge of the key tasks such as the negotiations with the authorities.

Most of the time, those that I had identified as members of this core group of activists, talk about the democratic nature of the movement. However, when pushed upon on the question of democracy, they do identify its limitations. Perhaps the most influential member of the movement (his role will be discussed shortly) himself explains: "we are in a time where it's necessary to coordinate somewhat, but the idea is to be able to get past that, and that the *compañeros* take charge themselves" (Léo, MTD Lanús 2013). For him the idea is to engage the members by talking to them, by creating (critical) consciousness. In this way the objective is to get the people to work more than the required four hours per day and to avoid the "need for an experienced *compa* to always be there" (Léo, MTD Lanús 2013).

Very similarly, a female member of this core group identified democracy as the key challenge for the movement: "Despite the years that the Frente has, the main problem is to be able to have a consolidated democracy of the base." She sees the challenges involved – "The democracy is difficult, is a slow process. That's why we try to maintain the assemblies weekly, not only to inform, but so that it's possible to debate and so that other *compañeros* keep on getting involved." In the same interview, I asked her if she thinks there is equality between the members. She responds: "comparing with other movements, and with the society, I think that in the MTD and in the FPDS there is equality. But it isn't completely consolidated, that equality, because it is difficult, because we come from a highly

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[127] I do not have the statistics for education for the whole movement, but I have reason to assume that those who I did not interview have lower levels of education, given that those who are more educated have been identified as tending to find it easier to participate. For example, a male interviewee, 56, identified that those with better 'chat' (*charla*) tend to become delegates.

egoist, aggressive, adverse society…it's very difficult; we are part of the society, it's not as if the FPDS wasn't part of the society…We are part of the society, then to leave this place is very difficult. If you compare it with the rest, in the Frente you can find – not sure if it's a complete equality – but an equality, a contention that cannot be found elsewhere." Yet, she explains that there is a group of more active, and more influential, *compañeros*. "There is a group of *compañeros* that have more influence, but they use it for a collective end. In the Frente, I don't know of a group of *compañeros* that would use this influence for their personal aims"(Lucia, MTD Lanús 2013). At the same time, others have accused this core group from using people for their own ends. For example, a 56-year old male who had previously been involved in other groups such as Barrios de Pie and the Communist Party, argued in an interview: "How long they've [the core croup] been in the movement doesn't give them the right to manage the people according to their own criteria"(Ignacio, MTD Lanús 2013). Whether they do use their influence for the common good or for personal gain as they have been accused of doing (again, this will be discussed shortly), the fact remains that this poses significant limitations to democratic prefiguration.

Indeed, it seems that there are problems with rotation and participation and generally the direction of decision-making seems to have been reversed so that the decisions are taken in the weekly coordination meetings instead of the neighbourhood assemblies where they officially should be taken. The core group of activists that go to these meetings form the informal elite that pushes the movement forward. The assemblies largely fulfil a rubber-stamping function and a moment of 'informing' regarding decisions taken elsewhere. For example, Pablo from the metal workshop argued that this is why they no longer attend the assemblies. For him, and many others that I talked to, assemblies are not the place for debate anymore, but merely for communication.[128] He explains how he used to be actively involved in the training workshops and how he used to try to "show people how to organize and to make it so that the assemblies wouldn't just go through how the *dirigentes* want it, who more or less have a mentality [of their own], but that it would go through the people, the *compañeros* that don't have as much training that live the ideology in their place. Their support is very important" (Luciano, MTD Lanús 2013). Through multiple discussions with him, it became evident that he became frustrated with the leadership of the movement. We talked about the official idea of rotation, and the fact that there isn't any. His reason for withdrawing from participation is that "they say one thing and do another." Consequently, despite the talk of those more active about encouraging participation and creating critical consciousness conducive to it and the movement's project more generally, certain important obstacles prevent this from happening. The chapter will now turn to account for these factors.

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[128] Conversation with Luciano, 3 May 2013.

Obstacles to further participation and breaking down the hierarchy

Consciousness and training

In sum, those in key roles tend to be either more educated or more experienced or both. In addition, those who are 'in charge' also tend to have a more political understanding of the movement's project and tend to see the democracy as prefigurative.[129] The most influential organizer himself sees social change in the following way. "Social change is not to take power. It's not a moment. Social change is something one constructs, getting together with the others"(Léo, MTD Lanús 2013). The challenge for this, in his opinion is "to break with the vices. Our strength is in training (*formación*) – it's necessary to think and reflect on our struggle" (Léo, MTD Lanús 2013). In reality, however, despite the talk by these key individuals regarding the need for further participation, rotation and training, the movement seems to have given up on many of these things.[130] During the whole time of my stay in Lanús, there was only one event during a weekend that could be characterized as a *formación* workshop, but this itself seemed to be targeted more towards the largely student composed youth wing of the FPDS as a whole and merely happened to take place in Roca Negra for its spacious facilities. Many of the interviewees identified *formación* as necessary for meeting the challenges of the movement they had identified (lack of participation in work and protests, supporting the movement financially, rotating the roles).[131] The movement also has the official requirements for membership as the need to participate in the work, the marches, paying the support and seeking political *formación*. The following discussion with one of the core activists regarding the rotation of tasks highlights the problematique.

-   Interviewer: "Is it easy to find 'volunteers'?"
-   Lucia: "No, it's not easy."
-   I: "And that's a problem sometimes?"
-   L: "It's difficult, because…it's not all about volunteerism, it's also a responsibility, right….Sometimes it's confused…well: 'I want to, so I go' but I forget about the responsibility."
-   I: "Is there a fear of responsibility?"

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[129] When asked about what the movement is trying to achieve, ten of the interviewees talked about what could be characterized as social democratic ends – either improving the conditions of the neighbourhood or with the country as a whole – better education, health and other services. One talked of creating a 'culture of work' whereas a group of four in a joint interview talked about a 'new mentality.' Another two discussed personal transformation. Only five explicitly talked about wider aims of social change – these interviewees include two of the members of the core group that many refer to as the leaders as well as the two from the metal workshop. The key individuals thus tended to have a more radical posture and understanding of the movement's task. This is apparently typical of *Piquetero* organizations as Hernan Ouviña discussed in an interview (Ouviña interview 2014).

[130] The interview below indicates this. Similarly, in a discussion with two female members of the movement, they indicated that before the movement used to run much more workshops of all kinds (Luisa and Caterina, MTD Lanús 2013). In another interview, two of the members working in the *Obra* which could be seen as the lowest level work in the movement, argued that rotation has never really taken place but that the movement is only recently trying to improve this (Marisa and Andrea, MTD Lanús 2013).

[131] Nine of the interviewees made direct references to the necessity of having more training workshops.

- L: "I think there are *compañeros* that are afraid of taking responsibility because of the accusing finger. Because we know that he who does is the one who's there. And he who's doing can do things badly and then they can judge you…Some are afraid of that. There are very brave *compañeros* that put on the jersey and get out to the field."
- I: "Do you have education for this, or training?"
- L: "Yes, we call them *formación* workshops. Yes, the idea is a little halted [*enfrenado*] at the moment, but yes – every now and again the *compañeros* give us hand with some teachings...So that the *compas* don't feel frustrated…well, they can't take responsibility if they don't know how to do it."(Lucia, MTD Lanús 2012)

Indeed, in an interview with Miguel Mazzeo, the Argentinian political theorist and an activist in FPDS until the rupture last year highlights the importance of *formación* for FPDS, explaining it as the only way to equalise and eliminate the distinction: rulers-ruled (Mazzeo interview 2014). Yet, as the above interview and my personal observations indicate, the training is largely discontinued. In addition, there are individuals in the movement that have been members for a long time but still do not participate nor have a political *formación*. For example, one of the close associates of the powerful individual of the movement is a 27-year old man who has worked in the brick factory for the past 10 years. He does not know how to read or write and never participates in the discussion in the meetings that he sometimes attends. In response to the question of whether he would still be a militant in the movement If he found work elsewhere he says: "I'll stay here. I'm not going anywhere; nobody can throw me out of here. Even if it would be good money, I wouldn't take it. I'd stay with Leo here… I prefer to stay with Leo"(Juan C., MTD Lanús 2013). Indeed, this is an interesting statement as it indicates a kind of clientelist personal loyalty to the powerful figure in the movement that he had identified as the person who recruited him to the movement and got him a job.[132] Moreover, this powerful individual often treats him like an errand boy with him running around getting a drink, delivering messages and the like.

But the problem is not just the lack of provision for training. As the general assembly indicates, there is a reluctance to get involved, both in training workshops and assemblies and protests. As the 28 year-old *compañero* of the metal workshop explains: "It's difficult, because they lack political *formación*. But they don't want to be trained, because of the culture of not throwing oneself in the political"(Luciano, MTD Lanús 2013). Indeed, given the context of clientelism whereby politics has become a dirty word,[133] a general reluctance of getting to know or getting involved in anything that can be seen as political.[134] Many do not necessarily want to become 'formed,' as the discussion with the young man before the general assembly indicated. Moreover, many 'talk the talk' about being

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[132] For comparison see Auyero (2000).

[133] Auyero explains how politics is generally viewed as dirty, temporary and an opportunity to get ahead in a deceitful and manipulative manner (2000, 72).

[134] An observation of the *Bachillerato Popular,* the Popular Education program in the Roca Negra centre highlighted this. I observed a class on politics, where the typical response to any question was, 'I don't know' or 'I'm not interested in politics, It's boring.' In a discussion with the coordinators following this third year session, they shared their frustration with trying to break these attitudes and get people to think for themselves (Lanús, 27 June 2013).

committed to the political ideals, but as the example of the ex-member that had to leave due to stealing from the movement indicates, they might not be very strongly committed to these ideas.

The often visible frustration of those more active in the movement highlights this problem. People often speak about 'those in just for the benefit.' Participation in work, the *cortes*, and paying the financial support was the topic of almost all assemblies and *mesa* meetings that I attended. There seems to be a continued distinction between the desires of those who joined for material needs and those that beyond those needs have a political vocation. For example, while those of the metal workshop refuse to use the municipal work clothes altogether, the core group of activists tend to use them but cover the municipal text with the movement's logo. Conversely, those people that tend to work in the *obra*, the most visible aspect of the movement and least paid work, tend to just wear the clothes as they are, sparking debates in the *mesas* and assemblies about how the movement should not be seen as working for the municipality.

Regarding the tension between material desires and political ones, Analia Otero's thesis (2006) on MTD Lanús and my personal discussions with ex-members seem to suggest that most people in fact demobilized due to finding work elsewhere. Consequently, the observation by Delamata regarding the predecessors of the movement still seems to hold: "Beyond their general ideological differences, the UTD and the CTD shared a significant gap between leaders and followers. This may well have been a characteristic of all *Piquetero* organizations, which tended to have clearly demarcated leaderships with previous social or political militant experience and a broad base of followers who lacked such experience" (Delamata 2004). Concerning MTD Lanús, however, those key individuals who can be seen as the leaders – those who are always called for in confusing situations or when a decision needs to be taken, an interview given or a problem solved – do not have previous union or party experience but do have a markedly clearer understanding of political questions and a stronger commitment to the movement's project. The lack of rotation and the consequent centralization of responsibilities and capacities in few hands seem to suggest that the 'people' are not trusted to start taking over. However, they will not be able to take over due to lack of political commitment which derives both from the poor availability of training as well as seemingly from a lack of self-confidence in being in charge as well as unwillingness to get involved in anything 'political.'

In addition, in the absence of active doers, those already burdened with many responsibilities would be charged with the running of the workshops too. Moreover, they already spend much of their time in meetings, and probably just want to get the assembly meetings out of the way and get frustrated with debate. This highlights another problematic aspect, namely that of time.

Time

In discussions and interviews with members, many indicated that it is difficult to participate in the meetings due to the time it takes. One of the core members explained how he finds it more difficult to participate now that he has a family (Rodrigo, MTD Lanús 2013). Another member of the 'hard-core'

explained that on top of those who do not want to participate, there are also those who would like to be more involved but cannot because of children, or other time constraints (Lucia, MTD Lanús 2013). It is reasonable to assume that these pressures are especially high for women, given the lingering traditional roles, as per the discussion before. In this regard, the movement would benefit from bringing these 'private' matters into 'public' discussion and perhaps considering joint child-care arrangements as well as actively challenging traditional roles within the families. Given that there seems to be an absence of 'Women's Space' type activities in Lanús, and that these used to be more common in the past, (Luisa and Caterina, MTD Lanús 2013) it does not seem very likely that these discussions will take place – especially given that the none of the interviewees identified problems with gender equality. In some cases, the interviewees even saw the problem of gender as something of the past and a problem largely solved by Peron through the modernization of the economy![135]

In the case of those who I got to know best in the movement, namely the workers in the metal workshop, they expressed on multiple occasions their disillusionment with the amount of time people spend in meetings, arguing that it does not leave you time to do the work. However, at the same time, their absence leaves it up to the more active to decide whatever they want. At the same time, they argue that it would not make any difference if they attend or not since their ideas would not go through anyway. As an example, Francisco planned multiple times to propose his idea of demanding deeds for the houses in La Fe but he never ended up doing it since he was sure the powerful ones would rule it out.

Obstacles for participation in the movement as a whole – and not just in the meetings and other activities when already a member – also exist. Given the (however limited) material security that the cooperative benefit offers and the time needed for participation, Fornillo et al. have talked about those youths in other sections of FPDS that have had to 'unemploy' themselves to become members of the movement. For these youths, official unemployment and the consequent participation in movement cooperatives offers an option for life in the form of full time militancy (2009, 52). Indeed, in Lanús, all of those interviewed were recipients of a *plan*, and I met only very few people who consider themselves as part of the movement but do not receive a benefit. In interviews, people often expressed doubts as to being able to further participate in the movement if they were to work elsewhere. In this regard, increasing rotation could be the solution to many of the problems with time and centralization. But the rotation itself is problematic due to the factors identified before.

Again, as in Chiapas, there is an elite which tries to do away with itself, at least officially. Indeed, some people seem to have more power, but again those people seem to be better informed and work hard for the movement. However, by assuming the lack of political commitment (however founded this assumption) they will alienate them and maintain the view that it is impossible to change

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[135] Interview with Ofelia, Flavia, Martina and Aleman, MTD Lanús 2013.

ourselves. Those active complain about the work and try to encourage participation and rotation but they do not make it easier for others to get involved since *formación* workshops are largely discontinued (maybe precisely because there is no time). It is possible to become more involved, but this is largely dependent on one's own initiative and capacities, and the conditions of the movement are not necessarily conducive to it.

However, there is also a difference between quantitative and qualitative participation. Not only are the positions largely taken by those with more experience and/or education, but they also tend to dominate in the assembly-setting. In this regard, it is necessary to recount briefly the role of this influential individual that I have already referred to on multiple occasions.

Ricardo's role

This particular individual works in the Brick factory of the movement. He is the responsible for the productive projects and hence attends the *mesa* meetings. On top of this, he is involved in organizing the youth events of FPDS and dedicates much of his time to the protests on police corruption and reclaiming justice for those killed and disappeared through police repression. He usually assumes a very dominant role in meetings. Particularly in the neighbourhood of Roca Negra where he works, the assemblies are often dominated by him and the meetings become a dialogue between him and everyone else. He does not abide by the rule of putting one's hand up to have the word, and often stands up when others are sitting. In addition, his discourse often resembles a father scolding his children, particularly when the topic has to do with participation in work and protests.

In addition, his role seems to exceed far beyond his formal responsibilities. He is the one people called for when Francisco was about to have a fight with a municipal worker that had driven fast into the premises almost hitting his grandson playing in front of the metal workshop. Another incident is particularly telling of his role. From the very beginning he took it upon him to facilitate my research and make sure that I get to know all the different projects of the movement and that I can interview whoever I deem necessary. He either introduced me personally, or made sure somebody else would take me to wherever I would need to go. On this particular occasion, I was invited by him to get to know the work of those in *obra*. At the time the work in the brick factory was halted for lack of materials, so he and a couple of others that normally work there joined in with the working group to clean up the nearby plaza that the movement attends to, fighting what seems like an unwinnable battle against rubbish dumped by those living in La Fe right next to the place.[136] We worked for a good while, after which he decided to call for an assembly. He led the conversation and set the topics. The conversation was, as so often, a dialogue between him either standing up or sitting in the swing, with

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[136] Being a 'villa' – an unofficial neighbourhood – there is no official rubbish collection service in the neighbourhood, so the people pay small money to men and boys working with carriages to take care of their rubbish. These people consequently dump the rubbish wherever it is most convenient for them – oftentimes in this very plaza that the movement is trying to turn into a playground and a safe park.

others in a kind of a semi-circle formation in front of him. He was trying to communicate the point of working hard, and made an example of myself, having worked the whole time we were there. This event was quite revealing in that he does not work in this group, nor does he have any official representative role regarding them, but he held an assembly meeting with a tone of telling them how they should do the work.

His brother being a 'martyr' of the movement, necessarily has focused much attention on him, and in private discussions he indicated that he felt he had no choice but to continue and maintain his brother's legacy. And rightly or not, people often assume he has power. On one occasion, I was with Pablo when an old woman who is an outsider to the movement started to complain about how Ricardo would not let new people into the cooperatives. And indeed, he seems to enjoy quite a lot of influence within the movement. He was present in most of the meetings, and along with roughly five other people, tends to direct the conversation, sum up the arguments and set the agenda. He works with a group of men in the brick factory, all of whom are markedly more silent in meetings. The work itself, as in all the other places that I observed, is carried out without bosses. However, he seems to have a kind of an apprentice in the 27 year old man who he sends out to fetch drinks or deliver messages or anything else necessary. For example, one morning I arrived late to the centre and the others had already left for a *mesa* meeting. Ricardo knew that I wanted to attend, so he had told Juan to stay in the centre and wait for me. He then escorted me there and stayed in the meeting but not participating, as was customary.

The other influential members of the movement belong to the same core group and seem to have a similar understanding of the political line and necessities of the movement. In their hands concentrate the negotiations with the authorities, relations with the Frente and with other movements as well as the financial questions. This group often meets outside of the official decision-making moments too, making an imbalance in resources and information in the movement likely. This, moreover, points to a problem with transparency that will be discussed now.

Accusations of corruption and mismanagement – the role of economic factors

Only on my very last days in Lanús, accusations of corruption started to surface. In particular, these were voiced by a pair of women that work in the *obra*. They are clearly unhappy with the direction of the movement, yet they do not want to leave the movement and seem to think that the problems of corruption and hierarchy they had identified are inevitable. The following exchange highlights this.

- Woman 1: "There is no equality."
- Woman 2: "If they can crush you, they do it. Camaraderie [*compañerismo*] does not exist."
- Interviewer: "And how do you change that, or can you?"
- Both: "No you can't change it."

The women argued that it had been years that the same people go to the *mesa* but that it changes sometimes. More recently it has started to rotate more. The women accused the leadership of stealing and said that "They no longer care what's happening here, that's why there no longer are workshops of political *formación*" (Anna and Jennifer, MTD Lanús 2013). This echoes what Elena, the gatekeeper, had already argued but was also supported by the interview the day before with Ignacio, the long-term militant that had joined the movement a couple of years back. Ignacio was perhaps the most vociferous critique of the leadership of the movement. "These people that round us up around right now…they use the badge [of Darío] for personal benefit. Nothing changed." He accused – as the two women had done – the leadership of not permitting anybody to do things alone. "We've talked a lot about the equality here. There is no equality. You can see the difference, when people are cut off…maybe it's because I lack years of militancy, but there are people that get left out. 'Take a bag of goods and you know nothing.' But it's not like that" (Ignacio, MTD Lanús 2013). Pointing to a stripped bus by the entrance of the centre, Ignacio explains that it was given by the government and should have been used by the movement but instead all the parts were stolen by people in the movement. The bare skeleton for Ignacio is the indication of the biggest problem in the movement for him, the lack of political consciousness and the egoism. He accused 'them' [the not-very-clearly-defined elite] of stealing. He says some go to meetings with municipal authorities as delegates because they have better *charla* [chat] and these same people sometimes let down the principles and advance themselves economically, and that money is then lost from the base. "Nobody wants to talk, but I've seen it and I know" (Ignacio, MTD Lanús 2013).

Similar accusations were regularly put forward by Francisco and Pablo. However, I only discovered this in the very end so did not have time to pursue this much further. At the end of the second round of field research I remember thinking I know these people are more influential, mainly due to their more active participation, but that the only way to ultimately find out whether they exercise more direct forms of power would be to witness a conflict. And just this happened. It is necessary to quickly recount the issue.

Importantly, however, many of the accusations on the last few days were directed not only at those involved in MTD Lanús, but some key individuals of FPDS outside of Lanús. In particular references were made to Henrique and Candela; both of whom had been original organizers of MTD Lanús, but recently have moved to other parts of FPDS. Candela being a teacher is involved more in the union side of FPDS whereas with Henrique it was never very clear where exactly he is working, but at least seems to regularly serve as a spokesman for the movement. In a television discussion program he was described as a 'high leader' of FPDS, a statement which he did not contest ("Los Origenes Del Frente Popular Darío Santillán" 2012). It was actually his interview in a local paper that got me to the movement in Lanús in the first place.

The role of the two seems to be quite vague yet very influential. Unfortunately their influence was never clear to me until the end of the research and thus could not pursue this further. However, in a

discussion with an activist of FPDS in the city of Buenos Aires, and she hinted at the existence of a political coordination *mesa* where the long-time activists are involved. In the daily work of the movement, however, they are not visibly present. I only saw Henrique once when he was visiting the movement. The two women of *obra* told me how they had wanted to develop a community garden in the movement's premises and Henrique and Candela had promised to deliver them the material necessary to get started. Their promise never materialized. According to the two women this indicates that they no longer care about the 'base' (Anna and Jennifer, MTD Lanús 2013).

Indeed, interestingly in the case of all those very critical of the leadership you can find a bitter experience of a failed attempt to either advance or develop a project of some kind. In the case of Ignacio, he is visibly unhappy at belonging to what he calls the 'package' by which he implies the rank-and-file workers in the *obra* that for him seem dispensable. He seems to want to get 'higher-up.' Similarly, the story of the two women clearly serves to embitter them. As to Francisco and Pablo, they too have had their ideas of developing individual projects that have failed. Consequently, I approach their accusations of outright corruption and personal economic benefits somewhat cautiously. In this regard, perhaps the most appropriate interpretation of the situation was given by Pablo, who is in many ways much more restrained than his father who is known to have a temper:

> Before we didn't have this problem [of corruption], because we didn't manage that much money. In the *barrio* it was known how much money there was and everyone knew what was happening. Now, with the [AT] cooperatives and with the projects much money has entered this place, and then that has been left aside. It's not known where the money is…To me this seems bad.

He does not believe that the leadership would have outright robbed money, but that they mismanaged some of it, and that it is possible that in that way some of it has disappeared (Luciano, MTD Lanús 2013). It is worthwhile to highlight that the two unhappy women of *obra* do not themselves think that the leadership has benefited from their influence economically but rather they enjoy having power (Anna and Jennifer, MTD Lanús 2013). Regardless of how much of the accusations are true, the problem is clearly the lack of transparency in terms of the funds and the decision as to which projects go forth or do not and in this regard the possibility of throwing out these accusations is in itself an indication of a serious lack of transparency.

Similarly, there is inequality of income between those working in the different projects. Those working in the bakery, for example, make twice as much as those working in *obra* since they get the surplus of the production. However, it was never indicated to be a source of grievance on the multiple occasions that I asked people about this. Even those unhappy with the movement do not complain about those working in better paid jobs, but rather tend to justify it in terms of the hard work it implies. What remains somewhat unclear to me is the relationship between who gets chosen to work in the productive micro-projects and under what conditions. The leadership of the movement tend to be working in the productive side of the movement which means they make additional money. Moreover, the criteria for membership (participation in work, in protests, paying the support and

attending political *formación* workshops) seem to be the criteria employed there. In this regard, political roles and economic well-being seem to coincide, despite the lack of apparent criticism regarding this. Let us now visit the moment of conflict to highlight some of the dynamics of power in the movement.

An example of conflict

On my last visit to Buenos Aires, early 2014, a conflict had broken out between Francisco and the elite. I was back in Lanús to observe the first assembly after Christmas holidays. Uncharacteristically, Francisco attended and made loud accusations of corruption, demanding to know what happened to a sum of 400,000 pesos. None of the influential people were present, but those in the meeting seem to support Francisco' statement that there is a need for more transparency and more camaraderie. After the assembly I went to the metal workshop to ask him about the accusations he had made. He explained that he had an idea for a project to do with organic farming, greenhouses and sustainable development at the centre. The idea was to receive more than 400,000 pesos from the government and it was about to be sealed. He had to refer the negotiations to a person responsible for the Frente's external relations, someone called Nahuel. Apparently this person had rejected the project. Francisco says this is because of Agustina, Lucia and Ezequiel (all those I had identified as influential) who apparently had not wanted the project to go forward. According to Francisco this is because they were afraid of him 'getting a little power'. He repeatedly accused them of being envious and corrupt.

We proceeded to talk about the decision of some of the parts of FPDS to join a coalition of the 'Independent Left' to support candidates in the local elections of 2015. Francisco said that the movement is no longer the same as it used to be. He said that the Frente now has an office in Lanús, like a political party, and that they are distancing themselves from the neighbourhoods. For him, the people in charge only know how to talk and talk and talk, complain when they need something and protest, but that they do not work. Not one of them works. I asked him to specify who he might be talking about. He mentioned Candela (who most people mention when talking about influential individuals). She is more from the union side of things, and had lost her electoral campaign for union leadership the last time I was here.[137]

Indeed, this last discussion is quite significant, as it had become apparent to me that it is not entirely clear where decisions of this magnitude have been taken. Talking to Mazzeo who used to be involved in FPDS, he says the national plenary would be the place for deciding on questions such as electoral participation. Given that the activists in Lanús did not even know that FPDS Capital was about to put forward candidates, the decision does not seem to have come from there. Similarly, when I pushed Ricardo on the question of the rejection of Francisco' project, I wrote the following way in my field notes: "Ricardo got visibly distressed with this question, and in the course of his response he

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[137] Discussion in Lanús, 4 February 2014.

got very heated up." He explained vaguely about quotas for projects that the Frente as a whole can put forward, and that it had nothing to do with Francisco. I then mentioned that should not this kind of things come through assemblies etc. rather than from individuals, to which Ricardo did not really say anything. Francisco himself repeatedly argued that the influential people were trying to disown him from the movement. He even wanted me to provide him with photos from the marches in the previous year to show that he had been with the *cabezas* ['heads'], and thus is clearly part of the movement. To interpret this conflict; Francisco himself clearly seems quite jealous and exclusive about his project and does not seem to have proposed this in the assemblies. Moreover, he framed the opposition in terms of people not wanting to give him more power. Conversely, neither was there any indication of collective decision-making in the response of the powerful, indicating rather obscure rules and power games behind the scenes. Clearly something should be done to improve transparency of decision-making.

Conclusions and discussion

On my last day in Lanus we are sat outside the metal workshop as so often during the five months I had spent in Buenos Aires. A friend of the workers in the metal workshop, asked me about the conclusions of my research. I had gotten to know him through his frequent visits to the Roca Negra. We had talked about his experiences in the popular education program. He is from the neighbourhood and knows the movement very well without necessarily being part of it. He says: "it's all a lie, right?" referring to the horizontality of the movement which in his opinion is in reality far from true. I would not go as far as him and argue that it is a lie, but certainly there are complications with the democracy and equality of the movement in Lanús. In terms of continuing the hierarchies and practices of power characteristic both of previous political movements and the society generally, the movement is of course not officially hierarchic, neither are there assigned leaders.

However, many problems linger. It feels somewhat unfair to criticize the group that I have identified through my discussions, interviews and observations as the leadership of the movement, given that they work very hard, and they are committed to the cause. These people are often very frustrated with those who they see as caring much less about the political project of the movement. And they do work and sit in meetings much of their time. This new hierarchy largely seems to correspond with experience in the movement as well as political vocation and motivation. However, unfortunately in the practice of the movement the research showed many indications of the centralization of power-over. Moreover, not only is there a quantitative centralization of this power, but also qualitatively the same people tend to dominate in discussions and decision-making moments. In a way, thus, the movement has not been able to transcend the distinction between leaders and the led. It might be quite natural for those more active to get frustrated with the rest, but at the same time the movement should try to find ways to more actively practice rotation and improve transparency of decision-making. It seems as if the movement is stuck in a limbo whereby rotation takes place when

somebody is politically formed and motivated enough to step up. However, as one of the older activists explains, the point of rotation is that people learn to take responsibility and that people get motivated – that is why it is necessary to open up places for others too (Rodrigo, MTD Lanús 2013). Some members could be motivated and thus activated if they were to have a role of responsibility.

At the same time, a movement of prefigurative kind cannot force its members to become politically conscious and adhere to the principals. Especially now since the government is explicitly trying to make *Argentina Trabaja* apolitical – so that the program should not be used for any political aims, clientelist or otherwise. They have set up a hotline for informing the government if the cooperative programs are used for political aims, (Di Santi 2012a) which is most certainly true for the movement in Lanús. However, simultaneously, the experience of MTD Solano seems to suggest that a purist experience which would likely mean excluding everyone with a lack of clear political commitment does not fare too well either. Consequently, what we are left with is this messy experience by which a form of hierarchy is inevitable and competing desires within the movement co-exist, however uneasily.

Ultimately, however, as in the case of Chiapas too, the movement's project cannot depend on the level of political commitment that demands huge material sacrifices and the dedication of all your time to the movement. This leads to just another form of vanguardism whereby those in the position to do so can take a more active role in the movement. However, to increase the viability of the project both in way of increasing material sustainability means building material independence further beyond the state. This however, is complicated in a poor neighbourhood like Lanús, where the resources are scarce (Otero 2006, 64).

To return to other literature, in terms of the work of John Holloway and Marina Sitrin, the work of the latter clearly avoided dealing with the more difficult questions. If we are looking for the viability of autonomous movements, the example of Solano is not necessarily very useful, given that the movement demobilized and disappeared. As Hernan Ouviña suggests, it is much more useful to look at movements like FPDS that are still active after more than ten years (Ouviña interview 2014). From the case in Lanús we can learn that as long as the society around us is capitalist, prefiguration is going to be a process ridden with contradictions and tensions. To maintain the prefigurative nature of the movement seems difficult especially in the case of a movement that largely consists of people that have joined for motivations other than political ones. This introduces a constant tension between purely prefigurative practice and maintaining the principles and political aims of the movement. In Lanús it seems this dedicated core group views their project still as a transitional phase whereby eventually the others in the movement will be able to take over, but in the meantime they are trying to create in them the kind of values they adhere to and a sense of critical consciousness.

In relation to the work of Holloway, this is an important point. In an interview with him, I specifically asked about the role and importance of critical consciousness, given that I had identified what you could perhaps call social democraticc tendencies in the movement. I saw that many were

perhaps instinctively rejecting old political practices, but not necessarily connecting the democratic practices, equality and all the other values of the movement into an idea of social change or prefiguration. For Holloway consciousness is not necessary for advancing social change (Holloway interview 2013). In this regard, those activists in the movement fundamentally disagree. For them, critical consciousness is necessary in order to avoid reproducing clientelist practices of the *punteros*.[138]

Most importantly, the experience of Lanús highlights that verticalism does not originate solely in the state. In this way, the FPDS is much less purist, and their understanding of the state more sophisticated than that of Holloway. The recent move to participate in elections did not for the activists themselves mean the acceptance of the logic of the political system and a complete move to party organization and electoral politics, but merely one more tool in the construction of 'People's power.' In a way, this can be viewed as taking Holloway's argument about capitalism and the state as being merely forms of social relations to their logical conclusions. The state does not have a predestined form outside of our social relations. It should thus be possible to prefigure alternative social arrangements from within the state too – or, as Holloway himself says, 'in, within and beyond the state.' It remains to be seen whether they can avoid the centralisation of power and the adoption of an electoral short-term strategic mentality after this move. But as the experience in Lanús seems to suggest, whether a movement is electoral or not, hierarchy and leadership seem to be difficult to avoid.

The following quote from Pablo summarizes the problem: "What we don't have is making oneself worth what he/she really is worth. I know what I'm worth. This is something that comes from us – to not let the other dominate you. If you allow yourself to be dominated, it's like you lose the freedom. The inequality we have, you yourself create it." He himself identifies that it is hard to get out of this loop due to a lack of political *formación*. And the lack of *formación* itself largely derives from a rejection of everything political (Pablo , MTD Lanús 2013). Ultimately, the question of prefiguration is a very difficult one. To truly prefigure an alternative society in itself presupposes the motivation to do so, but how do you create this consciousness without resorting to some forms of hierarchy?

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[138] Discussion with three members of the 'core', Roca Negra, Lanus, 7 February 2014.

Chapter 6. Conclusion - Limits of prefigurative political action

This thesis has sought to assess prefigurative movements according to their own standards. In this vein, it seems appropriate to return to Subcomandante Marcos, who asserts: "The *Juntas* intend to break with separation of politicians and the 'people:' "so that the task of governing is not exclusive to one group, so that there are no 'professional' leaders, so that learning is for the greatest number of people, and so that the idea that government can only be carried out by 'special people' is rejected" (Hesketh 2013, 229). Both cases point to significant problems with a project of this kind. In light of Freeman's ideas about preventing the emergence of elitism, safeguarding against hierarchy requires wide participation. Without active participation of many in the membership, the active rotation and decentralization of power necessary for prefiguring a more democratic society becomes difficult. While the movements themselves seem to view this as a problem of consciousness and of will, there are obstacles that derive from the practice itself. This chapter will thus briefly revisit the main findings of the case studies before considering their significance in light of both the movements themselves and what it implies to movements elsewhere and the theories of prefigurative political action.

With the Zapatistas, a difference between the military 'hard-core' and the base communities more generally was identified. Participation in the movement has implied a high level of sacrifice and hard work. Despite the official stepping back of the military leadership of the EZLN, their hand can be viewed in efforts to increase consciousness and to safeguard the principles of *mandar obedeciendo*. This is particularly visible in their efforts to improve the role of women, often going against the conservative elements in the base communities. Essentially, thus, while the EZLN leadership promotes things that are ultimately in accordance with the movement's aims, the practice itself is not purely prefigurative, amounting to an internal vanguard function of the more experienced and more active membership.

Similarly, in the case of MTD Lanús, the movement is officially democratic and its organizational principles read like a direct response to Freeman's suggestions. The movement is not officially hierarchic, nor are there assigned leaders. However, as in Chiapas, there is a core group of more experienced and/or politically conscious members that have – unwillingly, perhaps – concentrated much of the movement's decision-making in their hands. While in Chiapas the prefigurative project seems to be taking steady steps forward, in Buenos Aires progress in this regard seems somewhat halted. For example, the decision-making has been reversed to an extent that many refer to assemblies as having a mere informative function. The core activists talk about increasing participation, but have only recently introduced useful measures to make it more possible – such as training new members so as to ensure a steady transition. The movement as a whole (FPDS) seems to be taking steps towards a more traditional political orientation. For the moment, their view of participation in the upcoming

elections is that it is merely one among many tools, time will tell if this will introduce a more instrumental and temporal logic.

The problem of participation in MTD Lanús is a complicated one. The core group undoubtedly work hard, and genuinely seem to desire wider participation. However, this problem is often viewed in terms of political consciousness and commitment (or more appropriately, lack thereof). As will be discussed shortly, this is only one way to view the problem. Essentially, it would be useful to reconsider the conventional arguments for representative democracy. Namely not everyone has the time to participate in decision-making. More efforts should be made to avoid a situation whereby to participate actively demands a desire to sacrifice to the extent it seems to require at the moment. In particular this will become an important question when thinking about what movements and people elsewhere can draw from the Zapatistas and the *Piqueteros*.

At the moment, both movements seem to be in a kind of a perpetual 'transitional phase' whereby the 'people' or the bases are not trusted with democracy. Moreover, in Buenos Aires especially, it seems as if the movement is stuck in a limbo whereby rotation takes place when somebody is politically formed and motivated enough to step up. Yet, rotation and the participation deriving from there is simultaneously is seen as a way to learn and to become motivated. In this regard, some members could be motivated and thus activated if they were to have a role of responsibility. For the moment, the obstacles to participation – whether they derive from lack of motivation or from organizational deficiencies – allow patterns of heightened participation among some of the members, leading to hierarchy.

In addition, both movements limit the freedom of their membership in many ways. In Mexico this is more acute in the Zapatistas' control over the base communities and the membership's freedom of movement. Moreover, the educational curriculum limits the options of young people to a *campesino* life. In Buenos Aires, too, the movement has requirements for participation in work, protests, political training workshops and the paying of the *aporte* as requisites for the memberships. In general, there seems to be a constant tension between prefiguration and the principles of the movements in that an elite within the movement seeks to make sure that the principles are complied with. Essentially, thus, it seems that it is difficult to balance the aims of the movement with the freedom of the membership. Consequently, it is inevitable that membership will be treated to an extent as means to an end, which of course is contrary to the idea of prefigurative politics.

Of course, when dealing with prefigurative movements, it is not fair to deem them a failure in the short term, given their focus on a process of slow and fundamental transformation instead of short term gains such as legal reforms. But when can one say that the movement has failed? In case of the Zapatistas, the second generation arguably shows more prefigurative tendencies, but ultimately the movement's real test will come in the post-Marcos era. In Buenos Aires, the development is not very promising, given that the movement, according to many accounts by the membership is already 'not what it used to be' in that decision-making has become much more descending as opposed to

ascending. The 'transitional phase' is still evident in the accounts of the core group, even after more than fifteen years.

If we take the experiences of these movements as indicative of prefigurative politics, at the moment this practice seems to demand much ideological commitment and sacrifice. To consequently identify the problem with advancing the movements' project as one of political commitment or consciousness implies that social change should always require a high level of sacrifice either of time or of financial resources. This is a difficult notion and certainly does not suggest easy times for those seeking to change the world through prefigurative practice.

Especially given the anti-dogmatic stance of prefigurative movements, the movements should not rely purely on ideological commitment. Viewing the problem in this light pushes the movements towards efforts of creating critical consciousness, running the risk of these efforts becoming much like those of previous movements. Instead, the movements should direct their efforts more towards thinking about how to make participation in decision-making and roles of responsibility easier, less frightening and less time consuming. More attention should be paid to the challenges of integrating decision-making more into the normal flow of things.

Prefigurative theory and the case studies

In many ways, the works of John Holloway and Marina Sitrin have been much influenced by the experience of MTD Solano in Buenos Aires, as discussed in the previous chapter. The somewhat purist understanding of autonomy as per MTD Solano explains much of its eventual demobilization. More problematically, even if the movement would have been able to sustain itself longer, the challenge of advancing the project beyond the immediate confines and context of one neighbourhood would have lingered on. While Holloway has indicated on many occasions that a more general transformation will eventually be necessary to even sustain these experiences, his work does not deal with the practical challenges of prefiguration in a diverse group of people with different motivations and desires. It is arguably much easier to prefigure alternative social organization if the group is already homogenous and share the desire to do so and have come together because of their political views (like many western activist groups). In this regard, many of the problems with the *Piqueteros* and the Zapatistas derive precisely from the fact that the membership is not homogenous in these questions. This is at the same time their strength in that they are discovering ways in which we can advance social change without resorting to ghettoes of full-time activists, but rather they are engaged in the day-to-day challenges of how to overcome the problems implied by seeking to harmonize the desires and viewpoints of a diverse group.

In this vein, there are some problems with Holloway's theory as the case studies have shown. His theory largely ignores the fact that the movements have not emerged out of a pre-existing collective, but that the historical process has started by a core group of activists that until today maintain an influential role in the organization.

In particular this points to the fact that 'power-over' derives equally from the social as it does from the political. While he has acknowledged, as discussed earlier, that all experiments of constructing 'power-to' are likely tainted by 'power-over' he seems to view that the 'state route' is a guaranteed way to corrupt these experiences. To illustrate this, a quote from Holloway himself:

> The struggle to liberate power-to is not the struggle to construct a counter-power, but rather an anti-power, something that is radically different from power-over. Concepts of revolution that focus on the taking of power are typically centred on the notion of counter-power. The strategy is to construct a counter-power, a power that can stand against the ruling power. Often the revolutionary movement has been constructed as a mirror image of power, army against army, party against party, with the result that power reproduces itself within the revolution itself. Anti-power, then, is not counter-power, but something much more radical: it is the dissolution of power-over, the emancipation of power-to. This is the great, absurd, inevitable challenge of the communist dream: to create a society free of power relations through the dissolution of power-over. This project is far more radical than any notion of revolution based on the conquest of power and at the same time far more realistic (Holloway 2002a, 24).

In this light, we could problematize Holloway's theory by arguing that there have never been successful experiences of constructing and maintaining this anti-power either. Avoiding the state in no way solves the problem of 'power-over.' While undoubtedly in both of the case studies there are pressures that derive from the state, this pressure is not the only source of 'power-over' in these experiences. In this way, one could ask, that if we are faced with what seems an inevitable re-emergence of power in the traditional sense, regardless of which way we go, why should the state route then be rejected by default? Holloway sees, similarly to Piven and Cloward's famous argument (1979) that movements of people seek to form organizations as a last resort:

> I think institutionalization is not necessarily damaging. It may or may not be, but we should not focus on that, we should think much more in terms of movements. The danger is that we start thinking in terms of institutionalization at the point at which movements are beginning to fail. Institutionalization can be a way of prolonging their life, but then they turn into something that's not very exciting and not very interesting (Roos 2013).

Here too, there is a counter-argument. It may be that institutionalization is a last resort, but it may also derive from a long period of activism and lessons learned therein. While Holloway accepts the need for general transformation, the question of how we get there without eventually engaging with the existing political institutions is left open. Autonomism, as shown by the case studies, is costly and often implies much sacrifice. We cannot expect everybody to want to choose a life of full-time 'activism' and personal asceticism to advance social change. State institutions, as it stands, are capable of promoting the kinds of changes that push for the desired world without everybody having to carve out their freedoms in their respective spaces. In a way, too, the movements themselves do this on a smaller scale. For example, the Zapatistas have their principles and the Revolutionary Women's law that carry out the same function as a state legal reform would. In addition, the focus on inter-personal social relations does not give answers to some of the difficult questions of how to change social relations that are not necessarily merely interpersonal but wider, such as land ownership or abortion laws.

Similarly, FPDS indicates a much less purist understanding of autonomy and the state. The recent move to participate in elections did not for the activists themselves mean the acceptance of the logic of the political system and a complete move to party organization and electoral politics, but merely one more tool in the construction of 'People's power.' Even following Holloway's theory, this is not an unsustainable position. If the state and capitalism are mere social constructions reproduced in daily human interactions, it is not entirely inconceivable that there would be a way in which we could interact differently within the state so as to change it, without accepting the hierarchic package that has usually come with it. If the state really is just a fetishized form of social relations, it should have no power of its own.

Simultaneously, in an interview for ROAR Holloway argued that it is not necessarily important that alternative ways of living and social movements are sustained in any given place where they might have opened up through a crisis but that the search for alternatives moves on and keeps on going somewhere else (Roos 2013). This thought, curiously, indicates a certain hint of vanguardism in Holloway's thought. If the change is to be power-to, it should be built in many places at the same time, and we should seek to maintain and expand these spaces rather than look for a global guiding light.

Ultimately, too, given the challenges of autonomism, the experiences seem to need to be accompanied by other forms of political activity. In this I agree with Adamovsky who argues that:

> It's critical to understand that true autonomy is fought over in all society (including the state). I clarify again here, so as to not be misunderstood: I think that building autonomy, what some call 'counter-power,' must be the fundamental horizon of our political tactic. But to change the world we need to find a way to disempower the state and replace it with another form of social relationship. The neighbourhood assemblies, self-managed factories, micro-enterprises are fundamental. But a new society is not maintained just with that (Thwaites Rey 2004, 46–7).

For me it seems that given the problems of avoiding the reproduction of forms of 'power-over,' it would be useful to consider alternatives in the building of 'power-to.' This includes thinking about 'liberating' power-to by taking over instances of 'power-over' such as state institutions so as to not allow it to be 'power-over' but 'power-to.' But in this the key is to do it differently, to engage with the state not as its mirror image but rather through a process that seeks to be prefigurative while acknowledging the difficulties and contradictions therein. This would involve acknowledging the elitism deriving from the costs of non-representational political organization in that not all have the possibility or motivation to take part as much as others. The search for a pure prefigurative experience and horizontality in itself can easily turn into groups where those without a clear political commitment are excluded. These groups then ultimately are not much different from past vanguardist groups. Consequently, the challenge of prefigurative politics lies in these messy experiences, like the two case studies here, where forms of hierarchy seem persistent given the competing desires within the movement.

Autonomism as an alternative strategy of social change

In many ways, autonomist movements seem to have inherited some of the problems of past movements. Even though autonomism implies a certain anti-dogmatic stance, the attention given to adhering to the 'principles' of the movement, evident in both cases, indicates something akin to a doctrine of social change. Moreover, there seems to be a core group in the movements that could be characterized as the 'keepers' of these principles. The case studies here point to the need for shared principles for prefigurative politics. This does not necessarily mean that the group needs to be homogenous, but if the people do not agree on a set of values and desires, such as equality between everyone, an elite group is likely to emerge to uphold the values that they promote. Consequently, it is unlikely that they would be able to avoid resorting to forms of coercion or indoctrination to be able to make the movement more the way they think it should be. The fact that they do indeed exert influence makes the movement non-prefigurative. Yet, the alternative seems like yet another form of life-stylist isolationism whereby the ideas are not likely to spread.

The movements themselves, especially the Zapatistas, are largely aware of many of these problems and paradoxes. However, this is not how they are perceived by those looking for inspiration from them. In this regard, there are some things we should keep in mind when thinking about their 'exportability.' It would be useful to view autonomy as a paradox and an '(im)possibility' rather than something pure and achievable. The same goes for horizontality. The prefigurative process stops when the group assumes that they have actually achieved equality. This amounts to a situation not unlike the one described in Freeman's work where the group officially has no structure but inevitably will have developed one.

Of course the alternative is not so much to admit that since hierarchy is inevitable, it should be cherished and accepted as something beneficial. In this regard the problem is similar to that of balancing between the tyranny of the majority through majoritarian voting procedures and the domination of a minority through consensual ones. The movements seek to overcome this by having a process that aims at consensus and thus facilitates deliberation and discussion and does not assume predefined interests, while ultimately allowing for the vote so as to avoid 'blocks'. Similarly, it would be useful to always aim at equality and horizontality while acknowledging that in practice this does not seem possible. Key is to maintain the possibility of keeping the hierarchies in check by admitting their existence and thus openly finding ways to tackle them. In case of these movements this would, in the first place, mean that the problem of participation is not solely a problem of consciousness but derives equally from the ability of some to participate more actively than others due to lesser time and other constraints.

What does this mean for others? – Prefiguration and its generalizability

When thinking of the generalizability of the experiences in Argentina and Mexico, some things need to be kept in mind. As explained in the previous chapter, both movements emerged in a society

where the traditional corporatist system that had largely structured the lives of those who became members of the movement was in crisis. In a way, these movements can be seen as replacements for the traditional order, and the argument could also be made about them replacing declining state services. In both places the disintegration of traditional political organization left a vacuum to be filled with something equally pervasive. In Mexico especially, the movement structures to a large extent the life of its membership. The membership of the movement defines much of the 'public' and 'private' life of those belonging to it. The fact that the people work and produce together seems to be the glue that holds the movement together. Regarding this, future research would benefit greatly from studies exploring further the external element of autonomous movements; how and when do they spread? Is it possible for prefigurative movements to conquer greater spaces without drastic structural changes in the economy?

In this regard, those seeking for lessons from the movements to be taken to the Western context, for example, should be cautious as to how much we can adopt due to their specificity deriving from their respective contexts. Both movements developed in difficult times and places. In fact, the movements were preceded by more moderate attempts through legal and institutional means to address the conditions giving rise to them. They also have gone through demobilization when things generally get better. These two factors point to a kind of economic determinism that can be quite disheartening for those interested in social change, and one that I would like to avoid. Therefore, in the western context especially it might be appropriate to think slightly differently. It would perhaps be more useful to think in terms of advancing on all fronts the project of self-determination and 'power-to' while acknowledging the paradoxes therein. It would be more appropriate to promote the building of collective efforts in all workplaces and communities for more collective decision-making and ownership, to generally rebel in the contexts that we are in. This is an alternative to the efforts to try and develop all-encompassing movements that incorporate 'full-time activists.' The latter in itself can lead to an elitism whereby those who can afford to partake fully will ultimately become an elite and the group as a whole a vanguard showing the way to the rest of society that they expect at some point to give up what they are doing and either join them or build another movement. As far as autonomism implies a great sacrifice, monetary or time-wise, it will lead to these kinds of elitisms.

Similarly, the tendency in Occupy-style movements to fetishize horizontality can in itself be exclusionary and lead to elitism. This is because a pure assembly format leads to patterns of participation where some are better able to participate than others and consequently decision-making concentrates in their hands. It would be of great use, therefore, for us to acknowledge the '(im)possibility' of both autonomy and horizontality, and work with the assumption that both do exist. Only this way we can continue carving out spaces of freedom in our relative contexts. And this means within the state too.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Fieldwork photography[139]

Picture 1. Shift workers in 21 de Abril, on the right, the fence.

Picture 2. 'The mutiny' – the younger Zapatistas refused to work unless guaranteed a shorter day.
This was discussed until the coordinator gave in.

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[139] All photos are author's own

Picture 3. (Left) Work in 21 de Abril

Picture 4. (above) On a surveillance tour around the terrain. In front, a molested fence pole.

Picture 5. Elements of the EZLN in the 10-year anniversary of the JBG in Oventic. August 2013.

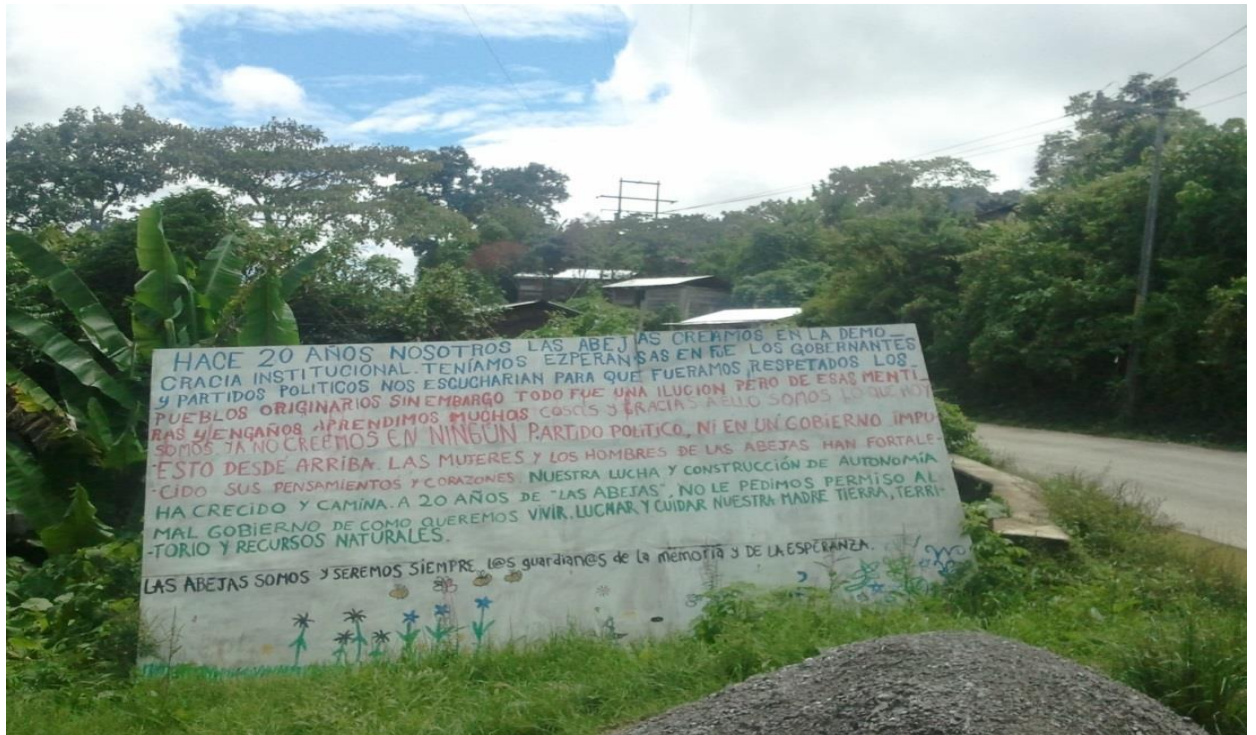Picture 6. Living standards in San Marcos Aviles were not very good. This is the 'shower.'

Picture 7. The class of the autonomous school of San Marcos Aviles.

Picture 8 & 9 Girls in the autonomous school along with the promoter.

Picture 10. The mural of the *Abejas* declares their desire to build autonomy and democracy.

Picture 11. Bishop Samuel Ruiz (left) in a mural in the most important building of Acteal, the church. Alongside him, martyrs of the massacre in 1997.

Picture 12. (Above) Men in the typical position at the *mesa* building. Picture 13. Meeting with Women's rights group

Picture 14. A typical meeting in Acteal, all men.

Picture 15. The *barrio* of La Fe. The photo illustrates the challenging living conditions of the movement membership.

Picture 16.   People burning electric cables for copper outside Roca Negra. The economic conditions in the neighbourhood require many to make ends meet in any ways possible, including less legal ones.

Picture 17.   Assembly taking place at a roadblock in central Buenos Aires. The movement officially operates horizontally, taking decisions in assemblies.

Picture 18. Working groups of the General Assembly

Picture 19. Same, behind the group you can see the metal workshop. The people there did not attend.

Picture 20. The poorly attended general assembly in general discussion, at this point the absence of majority was visible. Discussion concentrated on the long-term problem of what to do with those who skip work and do not commit to the movement.

Picture 21. FPDS women at a demonstration. Women make a large part of the *Piquetero* organizations and have challenged in many ways their traditional roles.

Picture 22. A *mesa* meeting taking place in the neighbourhood of La Fe. This is one of the weekly coordination meetings that I regularly attended. Those present here tend to be more active and more influential members of the movement.

Appendix 2. Questions for the First phase of case studies

Political tradition

1) Are autonomy and prefiguration seen as important for the movement?
2) What are the historical events that have influenced the emergence of the movement?
3) What are the past organizations driving for similar aims in the country?
4) Did they have similar organization (i.e. democratic; prefigurative, autonomous)?
5) If the past organizations have been hierarchic, why has this movement chosen to adopt the prefigurative approach?
6) Are there members in the movement that were involved in past movements?
7) How might their experience influence the current movement in terms of its decision to be prefigurative and its ability to do so?

Social and economic tradition

1) What is the role of women vis-à-vis men in the movements' contexts?
2) What is the role of elderly people vis-à-vis the youth in the movements' contexts?
3) Which things are seen as explicitly 'private'?
4) Might private activity hinder the possibility of certain individuals or groups within the movement to participate in decision-making?
5) What is decided as a family and what are individual choices?
6) What are the significant sources of inequality for members of the movement in terms of material possessions?
7) What are the significant sources of inequality for members of the movement in terms of personal capacity to influence others? (education)

Questions for the Field work

1) What are the decision-making arrangements of the movement; how do they work in practice?
    a. Are they as they have been described to outsiders?
2) What kinds of decisions are taken in the public setting (i.e. assembly)?
    a. Are some decisions that concern the membership as a whole taken outside of this setting?
    Assembly-based decision-making is seen as necessary for avoiding the reproduction of hierarchy. If decisions are actually taken elsewhere, e.g. in the meeting of representatives or delegates or in informal chats, this is not in accordance the principles of both movements.
3) Are there groups or individuals who consistently do not attend these decision-making moments?
    a. Do they tend to be people of the same category within the movement? (e.g. women; workers in a particular projects)
    b. Have some people been pushed away by a potential informal elite or marginalized so that they are disillusioned by the formal decision-making procedures?
4) Are there groups or individuals who do not speak much in the meetings?
    a. Who?
5) How do people react to different speakers within the debate-setting?
    a. Are men and women equally listened to?
    b. Are the opinions of new members and experienced ones equally valued/listened to/encouraged?

6) Are there some whose word seems to be final and necessary for decisions?
   a. Following Freeman's work, there might still be some people whose word counts for more than others – the ones whose approval is needed for any decision "Once one knows with whom it is important to check before a decision is made, and whose approval is the stamp of acceptance, one knows who is running things."[140]
7) Is there genuine rotation of tasks?
   a. If roles of responsibility concentrate, we can assume to see an informal elite emerging with more information of movement activities/resources
8) Do people have equal access to the information needed for the decisions?
9) Do people have equal access to other movement resources?
10) Who are the people that no longer participate in the movement? What were their reasons for leaving the movement?
    a. Was there a competing informal elite that was pushed out by the victorious group?

Following these questions, if problems have been identified with one or more of these aspects, the following questions will focus on the awareness of it and what is being done to address the challenges.

1) If there are problems with rotation of tasks:
   a. Why is it?
   b. Who are the ones who cannot participate as much?
   c. What are the reasons they cite for it?
   d. Who are those who have relatively more responsibility?
   e. Does this coincide with membership of one of the other categories (e.g. gender)?
   f. Is the problem actively acknowledged?
   g. Is something being done to address it?
2) If people do not attend assemblies:
   a. Who are the ones who cannot participate as much?
   b. What are the reasons they cite for it?
   c. Who are those who have relatively more responsibility?
   d. Does this coincide with membership of one of the other categories (e.g. gender)?
   e. Is the problem actively acknowledged?
   f. Is something being done to address it?
3) In case of inequalities in terms of resources and information:
   a. Does this coincide with another category of people?
   b. Is the problem acknowledged?
   c. Is something being done to address the inequality? (training, encouragement)
4) If there is a visible informal elite
   a. Are they aware of this?
   b. If so, are they trying to uphold or abolish their influence?
   c. Are they trying to discourage others from participating further?

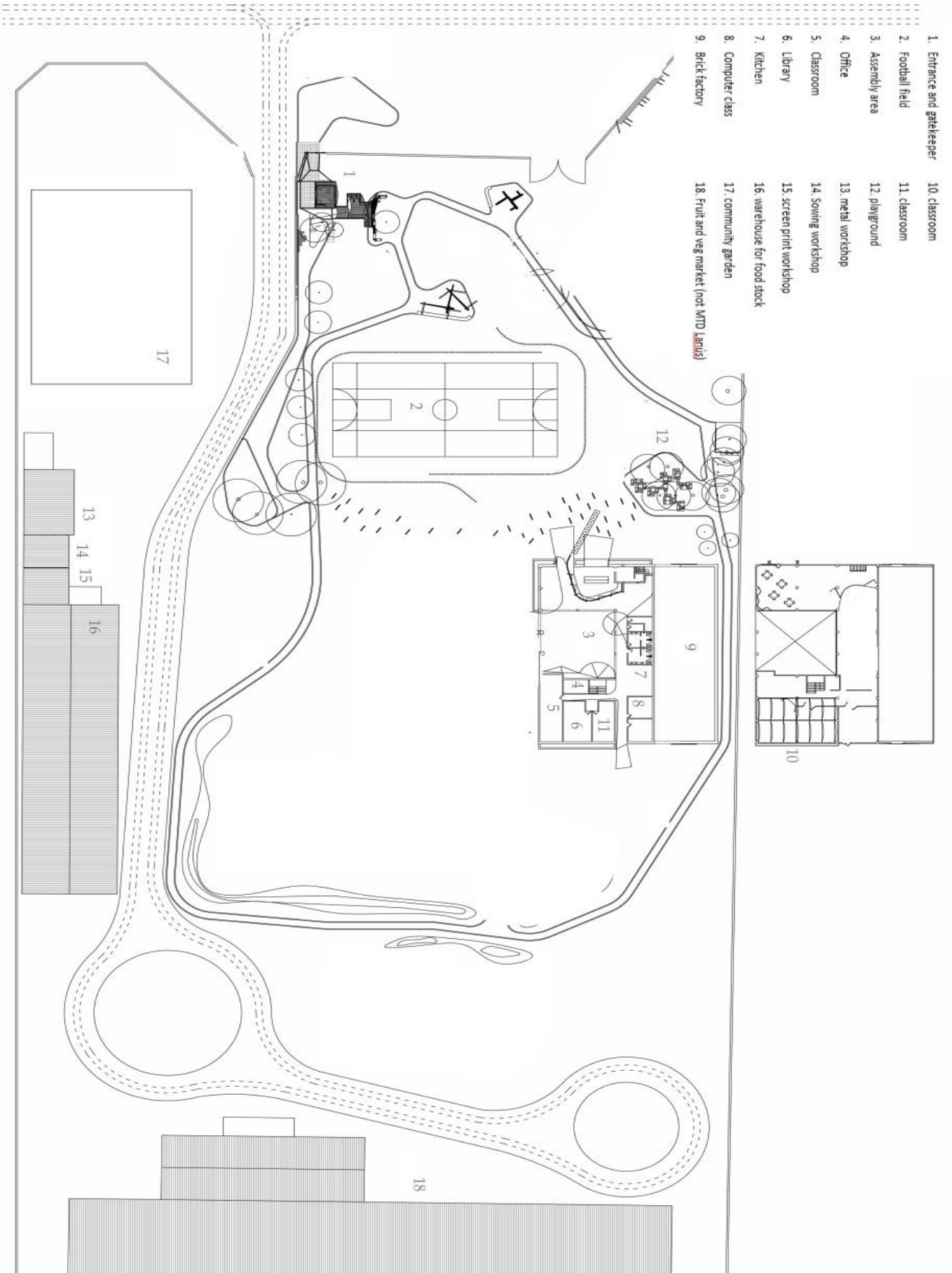---

[140] Freeman and Anarchist Workers Association (Hull, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*.

Appendix 3. EZLN – Women's Revolutionary Law 1993

In their just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women in the revolutionary struggle regardless of their race, creed, colour or political affiliation, requiring only that they meet the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. As well as, taking account of the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution incorporates their just demands of equality and justice in the following Women's Revolutionary Law.

- First--Women, regardless of their race, creed, colour or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.

- Second--Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

- Third--Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.

- Fourth--Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are free and democratically elected.

- Fifth--Women and their children have the right to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition.

- Sixth--Women have the right to education.

- Seventh--Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.

- Eighth--Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

- Ninth--Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

- Tenth--Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations give.

Appendix 4. Roca Negra, MTD Lanús

1. Entrance and gatekeeper
2. Football field
3. Assembly area
4. Office
5. Classroom
6. Library
7. Kitchen
8. Computer class
9. Brick factory
10. classroom
11. classroom
12. playground
13. metal workshop
14. Sowing workshop
15. screen print workshop
16. warehouse for food stock
17. community garden
18. Fruit and veg market (not MTD Lanús)

Appendix 5. List of Interviewees, MTD Lanús

	Gender	Place of birth	Age	Family	Education	Role	Old school – new school
1	Male	Sarandi, Avellaneda, Buenos Aires	57	Married (2nd time) – 4 kids	Secondary	External – work at the metal workshop	Old
2	Male	Gleypole, Don Orione – Alt.Brown, Buenos Aires	29	In relation, two kids	primary	Key organizer – brick factory, youth movement, responsible	Old
3	Male	La Torre, Lanus	37	Single, no kids	Secondary school, Military history. Now studying to become biology teacher	Responsible, screen printing, president of coop, responsible of the groceries of FPDS	Old
4	Female	Guiimes (now La Fe), Buenos Aires	21	Single, no kids	College -> biology teacher	Responsible for Semillita. School support	New
5	Male	In the capital	49	Separated, 3 kids (who do not participate)	Primary school – worked always as a baker	Works in the Panificadora.	Old
6	Female	Lanus	25	Single, two children	Primary, secondary incomplete		New
7	Female		47		Primary completed. Operating room nurse		Old
8	Female		48		none		New
9	Male	Lanus	28	Single, no children			New
10	Female	Lanus	60	Separated – 3	Primary..plus training	Works in the sowing workshop, since February 2013	New (3 years)
11	Female	Santiago Del Estero, Northern Region	42	Separated – 4	Primary and training courses (hairdressing etc)	Works in the sowing workshop, since Februrary 2013	New (3 years)
12	Male	La Fe., Lanus	51		primary	Responsable of La Torre, and of Finance	Old – 12 years
13	Female		22		Secondary incomplete	Administration (planillas, asistencias)	New
14	Female		48		Secondary plus	administration	Old
15	Female		17		secondary	cook	New

	Gender	Place of birth	Age	Family	Education	Role	Old school – new school
16.	Female	Santiago Del Estero, North	31	Married with one child	Secondary	Apoyo escolar	Old
17.	Female	Santiago del Estero	28	Divorced with one child	secondary	Administration	Old
18.	Female			Divorced, 6 kids	Primary	Security – no longer a militant	Old
19.	Male	Lanus	27	Single, no children	None	Bloquera	Oldish (10 years)
20.	Male	Lanus	23	Single, two kids	Primary, going to study more	Different works, nothing settled	New (7 years)
21.	Male	Lanus	32	Married, 3 kids	Primary	Bloquera	Old wave (2000)
22.	Male	Misiones, North	56	Single, 2 old children	Primary	Public Works	New (six years)
23.	Female	Salta, North	58	Married, 2 kids	Primary	Cook, before different jobs	Old (2000)
24.	Female	Lanus	27	in co-living, 1 child	Primary	Public works	Old (10 years)
25.	Female	Lanus	33	Same as above, 3 kids	Primary	Public works	New (3 years)
26.	Female	Southern Buenos Aires	31	single	Secondary completed in the Bachi	Serigraphy, responsible of many things, including external relations with FPDS	Old (2001)
27.	Male	Lanus	28	Single, 1 child	Primary, secondary	Metal workshop	Old (10 years)

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Rodrigo, June 27, 2013.
Francisco, May 9, 2013.
Aylén and Marina, June 4, 2013.
Ofelia, Flavia, Martina and Aleman, May 31, 2013.
José, June 27, 2013.
Cristina, May 24, 2013.
Ricardo and Aleman, July 16, 2012.
Ricardo, May 14, 2013.
Pablo, June 28, 2013.
Anna and Jennifer, June 28, 2013.
Lucia, July 16, 2012.
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