Insurrection, communization, and autonomy: decolonial theory in the development of organizational praxis.

# Decoloniality theory, tactics & praxis.

How does decolonial theory inform how we think of struggles? What might be the effect of the tactics used by organized and/or unorganized forms of resistance on the character and escalation of conflict? The goal of decolonial theory is to envision solidaristic alternative to settler-colonial institutions as well as an intentional undermining of much of the epistemic assumptions of social science accounts of how social movements develop. I will argue that decoloniality must take seriously the various types of “knowing” developed by individuals and the ways these types of knowing are shared through interpersonal relations, conflict, and dialogue among those participating in transforming theory into practice. I will argue tactics are not discrete militaristic categories of action, but rather the tact developed among groups as they learn and experiment and come to trust or distrust one another. As situations and events change, tactics evolve through strategic discussion as well as unexpected opportunities or unique combinations of people, feelings(?), and resources that may signal major shifts in the narrative of struggle. The story of how tactics develop give us insight into the organization of resistance and the ways the kinds of tactics we engage in shape us in and through the process of struggling with one another. By being with one another in struggle, as accomplices or as support, new combinations of ideas and initiative may develop from those experiences and feelings.

The content of these experiences, actions and their unfolding is often studied as the effect of predominant structural variables in social movement literature. In this view tactics are part of structural development of movements, their resources, elite frames, and procedures for aggregating decision-making. Political science literature focuses on the structural antecedents of configurations of the state and the regime, or are structured through rational-choice models of human behavior-- which may be articulated as a static variable or as a progressive development of norms and expectations. These limitations, particularly for social movements resisting occupation in settler-states, are important and some of my analysis will be informed from insights of deliberative theorists and arguments taking seriously the structure of the state (all the better for attack). Yet seeing tactics as creative and collaborative projects requires an analysis of social movements as they develop through moments and often major events shaping the consciousness of those who resist. I will argue that approaches in social movement which subordinate the question of tactics to structure fails to not only take into account how interpersonal relationships drive much of the potential of socially solidaristic action. Such accounts of social movements also fail to take into account the very ways oppressive structures reproduce themselves and shape organization and the feel of the shared space. Moments where people gather to participate are important because they are spaces where discourses around tactics and interpersonal relationships among groups and social milieus develop.

Decoloanity will be used as a normative set of principles and assumptions against which action will be measured. As an approach for analysis, decoloniality emerges from Latin American social struggle for self-determination. Decoloniality is an orientation toward practical and programmatic action taken against the institutional technologies of settler-colonial occupation. Glen Coulthard (2009) argues that such a project of decoloniality would not treat colonialism as an event that has passed, nor the Marxian stage of primitive accumulation as a rearrangement of property relationships once and for all, but instead insist on making visible the “unconcealed, violent dispossession [that] continues to play in the reproduction of colonial and capitalist social relations in both the domestic and global contexts.” In this context, tactics cannot be theoretically isolated from decolonial critiques of the realities of a settler-colonial world, for to resist life under occupation we must know how we are constantly disempowered, isolated, and repeatedly dispossessed and shut down those institutions directly. The point of this paper will be to explore the theoretical implications of decoloniality and how they could be used to advance a diversity of tactics based on shared affinity and direct struggle. In the relationships developed it is important that the focus be on the ways in which we nurture revolutionary developments, that is how we have “tact” when dealing with one another (Comité invisible 2014). He relation between tact and tactic is to specify how small conversations can build and nurture our creative energy and invite future collaboration, which is the building blocks of tactics being a sense of trust and shared affinity and not dogmatic adherence to this or that platform.

Debates over tactics emerge amid critical opportunities for movements, which in turn have influence over the development of organizational *praxis*, wherein theoretical propositions are enacted or materially realized within movements. Decolonial theory will form the backgrounding assumptions about how new practices of resistance emerge as a result of subaltern resistance.Specifically this study will be grounded in participatory forms of collaborative action and will attempt to create a framework for thinking about the potential interplay of decolonial tactical repertoires in social movements. Walter Mignolo proposes that the decolonial thesis here would require a radical shift in production of intellectual thought through subaltern ways of thinking. These subaltern ways of thinking are an “emergent discursive formation” resulting from “oppositional practice in the public sphere and a theoretical and epistemological transformation of the academy.” (Mignolo 2000, [88-9](https://books.google.com/books?id=ZSG_LWhncnEC&pg=PA86&lpg=PA86&dq=(Post)Occidentalism,+(Post)Coloniality,+and+(Post)Subaltern+Rationality.+In+The+Pre-Occupation+of+Postcolonial+Studies.&source=bl&ots=iClfLp4X07&sig=QyTuN0DvhX2i2DGHeFWxcROe-gY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjAmfv9t77LAhWMcD4KHQDlCu0Q6AEINDAD#v=onepage&q=(Post)Occidentalism%2C%20(Post)Coloniality%2C%20and%20(Post)Subaltern%20Rationality.%20In%20The%20Pre-Occupation%20of%20Postcolonial%20Studies.&f=false)). Importantly, for Mignolo, these theoretical practices emerge *from* the practice of resisting colonial legacies in order to think of ways beyond toward a longing for post subaltern ways of thinking, meaning that we are shaped in and through a grounded practice of direct struggle against occupation. Through an analysis of the tendencies present in contemporary resistance to settler-colonialism as they relate to social movements and spaces of organization. Tendencies can be imagined as a positional map in terms of discourse. Thus the language used to described tactics and the ways they are replicated and escalated in a protracted war against the occupation of life by capital.

## Tendencies: autonomy, negation, and navigation

Mapping the tendencies in social movements gives us insight about the development of discourse and observed through the articulation of social movement strategy. I will divide these into three main tendencies, which describe a constellation of specific tactics and forms of struggle and are not determinate of action but generalize out the shared set of principals and importantly immediate goals for specific projects. These tendencies are *autonomy*, *negation*, and *navigation*

The tendency for autonomy focuses on evading the projection of settler-colonial power relationships in a given territory or public sphere. While I choose the word autonomy we can also think of ways in which this tendency as described is also present in survival tactics seeking to evade or leverage what resources one has to avoid the violence of capital. These tactics can also take the form of refusals to do what has been habituated in a relationship of a class interest, land expropriation and the refusal to pay the imposed rents is a declaration of autonomy. This autonomy can be individual, small acts of illegality and theft. When generalized out in a moment of insurrection, the suspension of order and the potentiality of moments of what Enrique Dussel calls *hyperpotentia*-- the power of the people “that emerges in creative moments of history to inaugurate great transformations or radical revolutions” (Dussel 2008, 81-82). Dussel uses the Bourdieuian concept of field to “situate the various possible levels or spheres of political actions and institutions, in which the subject operates as the actor with respect to a given function or as the participant in multiple practical horizons within which numerous systems and subsystems are structured” (Dussell 2008, 5). Individual subjects transverse various fields daily and *know* how to behave in these fields of daily life activity and through systems, but not simply determined because of the varying permanence of structures of power and institutions.

Related to defending or elevating one’s oppressions, the tendency is to attack the institutions or to undermine their function directly. This tendency is referred to here as *negation*. In a recent interview James C. Scott added perspective on a specific story told in *The Art of Not Being Governed*, in which he describes a scene of peasants jubilant at the sight of a combine harvester stuck in the mud and Scott observes the connection between the situation for the peasants was one where the cards of history were knowingly stacked against them and this was one instance where that history was, however symbolically, stopped. Scott goes on to generalize from this to a comment about the dialectic of justice and injustice:

In a world of injustice there’s going to be dreams of justice; whether there are peasants around, whether it’s justice for peasants or not, is another thing. We may be seeing the end of the smallholder in many places, Via Campesina notwithstanding, it may be that the days are numbered for small property of that kind. But it seems to me that rumors and dreams of justice are part of a dialectic of injustice and dreams of justice will be with us for as long as there’s injustice, and that doesn’t seem to be in short supply.

Images of the state represent these major symbolic trappings of the ideology of settler-colonialism. This work build off of Scott’s earlier work on everyday forms of resistance. Robin Kelley build off this concept, also called infrapolitics by both authors as, “daily confrontations, evasive actions, and stifled thoughts that often inform organized political movements" and goes on to say "while the meaning and effectiveness of various acts differ according to the particular circumstances, they do make a difference, whether intended or not.” (Kelley 1994, 8). These everyday forms of resistance are not respectable and for Kelley has created a false division between these forms of infrapolitics and organized resistance since the most oppressed sectors of the black working community always resisted, by upsetting the social order, through clandestine forms of attack, and not paying; these practices for Kelley created a cycle of opposition and containment and shaped struggle and developed new tactics (Kelley 1993, 110). It is important that Kelley notes that failures of organizing working class black communities were in part related to the notion that they did not experience “liberal democracy” and instead would from their perspective resemble a facist or colonial situation. In social movement scholarship the accounts of social movements are more apt to exclude or marginalize these forms of resistance or to disparage them as counterproductive, *to whose production?* I will argue negation an elective affinity to the decolonial practice of de-linking statist epistemology and toward decoloniality. By including negation as a tactical repertoire we can see how the tactics we use shape the political horizons of struggle toward more solidaristic forms of action and a respect for different ways of engaging in self-organized liberation.

Finally *navigation* as a tendency seeks to leverage state power towards the movement itself. In Marxist theory André Gorz calls this form of organizing as based on non-reformist reforms, which are reformist in the strictest sense of the word in that they are managed and enforced by the state but the point of these reforms is to provide more favorable conditions for organization. This incrementalist Marxist argument is focused on direct means of empowering individuals and communities with direct transfers of wealth, and perhaps a radical recognition of all forms of labor. A policy favored by Gorz is guaranteed basic income based on his commitment to liberate human beings from wage-slavery and from social alienation, individuals would receive this income on a constant basis regardless of work status. Such a system Goez argues would allow for experimentation in lifestyle and the freedom to complete personal, family, or community projects. Since this is a state policy it is a reform, but it is a reform that allows for an increased level of freedom of movement and the possibility of the self-organization of labor and sociality to develop. In the Marxist vein there are a literature describing various tendencies, often with an inflection on (or perhaps fetisization of) tactics.

Dual power is one such term that has arisen to describe this path towards revolutionary change. Originally articulated by Lenin to be associated with the ideals and practices of the Paris Commune-- he describes an autonomous force “from below” which would take on the role of the state, particularly the police would be replaced by an armed populace and state functionary positions may be elected but also can be instantly recalled by their first demand. As defined by the Love & Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation New York Local Member Handbook dated June 1997, dual power is “a state of affairs in which people have created institutions that fulfill all the useful functions formerly provided by the state. The creation of a general state of dual power is a necessary requirement for a successful revolution.” In an article published in the North American magazine, *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, Lawrence Jarach gives a post-left anarchist critique of dual power:

“Dual power in its original sense, then, is not a program or even a strategy, but a *description* of a transitional political tension and conflict that must be resolved. The Bolsheviks knew that their periodicals didn’t constitute organs of dual power; they knew that their meeting-places didn’t; they knew that their legal aid committees didn’t; they knew that all of their self-help groups didn’t. They were clear that the organs of dual power were the soviets of workers, peasants, and soldiers, which were making and executing decisions on production and distribution of goods and services, ownership and control of factories and land, and how to deal with an imperialist war. As authoritarians and statists, they were equally clear that these organs needed to be guided and ultimately controlled by them in order to create the necessary infrastructure for a new “workers’ government.”

This tension in the use of dual power by bolsheviks to ultimately steer the course of revolution is predicated on some direct leverage against state institutions and the idea that workers’ government would provide a skeletal structure of the state. But as a descriptor of a revolutionary situation it is not bound to the Leninist aspirations to create a proletarian Communist Party since this is an attempt to recuperate the social forces of direct seizure toward a Bolshevik platform for organization.

Communization has in some ways has become the contemporary framing of Lenin’s dual power thesis, where the focus of communization takes as the goal the immediate abolition of capitalist class relationships and importantly the complex of oppressive social relationships-- value, gender, state violence, legal apparati. Communization is loosely connected through a set of literature, and the *Endnotes* collective identifies communication as an emergent discourse stemming from French insurrectionary texts, most notably the journal *Tiqqun* and *The Coming Insurrection--* made famous for its use as evidence in the sensational Tarnac Nine case where a rural left commune became the center of a state anti-terrorism case for a plot to sabotage public railways. Communization comes at a time in the historical development of capitalism where positive relationships to working class identity, there is no victory for the working class but to abolish itself; communization displaces the working class as the revolutionary subject and seeks to find not one revolutionary subject in its place. What replaces the revolutionary subject is not something that is answered by communization theory.

This has led to disparate uses of the term communication, specifically for *Endnotes* the Anglophone reception of these texts in west coast Anarchist milieus. The content of this critique is that the focus on tactics in the Anglophonic developments of communization focus on the abstract creations of division, primarily between those who are organized and those social forces being organized against. This manufacturing of an “we” is a misplaced attempt to recover agency against the totality of capitalism and valorize the “authentic” individual voluntarism self-affirmation of Anglo-American sensibilities. This critique mirrors another a recent anarchist critique emerging out of the participatory anti-austerity and nominally anti-capitalist movements in Spain in recent years; *A Wager on the Future* criticizes populist tendencies to seek an authentic connection with “the people” and seek to recruit often time focusing on the creation of better propaganda and the seeking to direct the creation of a new radical subjectivity through their organizations. However, *Wager* makes a counter proposal for the development of struggle rooted in “projectuality,” the idea that struggles develop struggle through the development of social ties and develop affinities through a particular project. This is distinct from the type of organization seeking to create struggles rather than coordinating and amplifying an activity that already exists. To this the authors of *Wager* contend that the weakness of the anarchist proposals for Barcelona was the reluctance of anarchists to articulate concrete tactics and develop real and not imagined relationships of community resistance. They argue that while the movement spaces were heterogeneous but that the anarchist were “among the most active organizers around campaigns in the metro and bus campaigns in reaction to fare hikes and widespread cutbacks in services. The sense is that there was the potential to propose the idea of free transport through populist propaganda but that the discussion in the assemblies became dominated by a reformist discourse; instead the realization of free transport through action, a putting the theory into practice instead of agonizing over the ideal world and asking what transportation existed in utopia. By trying to avoid being seen as impractical dreamers anarchist in the assemblies stuck to reformist and populist discourses centering the state as the primary was to navigate struggle while alternatives, such as a refusal to pay-- not during occasional protest but everyday (26). If everyone refuses to pay then won’t the system collapse? That would be the point, but the transportation infrastructure does not disappear and gives way to the self-organization of local communities through the development of deeper practices of solidarity.

These three tendencies create a frame of reference for understanding how to think of decolonial struggle as a logistical question of how we come to struggle and how we develop those relationships, not mediated by a dominant ideology seeking a reconfiguration of the same settler-colonialist systems. The affinity I hope to draw between decolonial thought these tendencies is that action of resistance needs to be seen as an emergent relationship based on the transformative experience of struggling with and creating new forms of daily life activity. Jasper Bernes suggests that the forms of struggle against the logistics of capitalism as they exist today to exclude the possibility of seizing the means of production as the restructuring to the mode of production toward modular logistical components that can be easily moved and replaced and where one’s place in the totality is illegible. The position of the worker holds no source of dignity or positive feelings toward work, if it ever did. Instead of seeing the path toward communization Bernes highlights an affinity between this articulation of struggle and decoloniality. On the subject of the totality of the alienated condition under capitalism:

The supply chains which fasten these proletarians to the planetary factory are radical chains in the sense that they go to the root, and must be torn out from the root as well. The absence of opportunities for “reconfiguration” will mean that in their attempts to break from capitalism proletarians will need to find other ways of meeting their needs. The logistical problems they encounter will have to do with replacing that which is fundamentally unavailable except through linkage to these planetary networks and the baleful consequences they bring. In other words, the creation of communism will require a massive process of delinking from the planetary factory as a matter of survival (Bernes 2013).

This de-linking from the planetary factory is the experience of occupation under settler-colonial logics that are challenged in and through resistance of peoples to domination and exploitation. The question of logistics become important as we consider these tactical tendencies together with the use of negation, autonomy, and negotiation with existing social forms of power and diverting the material resources of the state toward particular projects. How then do groups, organizations, or individuals choose one tactic over another in a given situation? To answer this we have to look at the debates within social movement venues over the deployment of tactics. Tactics may be imbued with particular meaning, as is the case for practitioners of nonviolence in various sects and incarnations throughout history. Contrasting to this tactical purism, a discourse of a “diversity of tactics” has become a mainstay of North American social movement language since the 1960’s. This language is contemporary written about by such figures as Francis Fox Piven and Aderanti Roy, who caution against a nonviolent washing of the civil rights struggle and the inability of contemporary activists to get out of that mindset. The contemporary surge of struggle, most notably the potential turning point represented by Ferguson, MO as the spiritual successor of the Watts rebellions of the 1960s, has once again brought to the foreground of debate. However, such debate is nothing new and hardly limited to Western social movements and activist milieus. The “revolutionary” situation is where the practice of social transformation can gain space, literal physical territory as well as space to move and advance struggle. Tactics may evolve over time depending on a situation, they may be rediscovered or adapted from iconic or historically relevant movements, they can be inventive out of necessity, function, or new assemblages of peoples and ideas. Rather than finding the right tactic in the abstract, we must take into account the transformative process of doing experienced by those participating as well as those mediating groups or maintaining and forming new affinities.

# Being *in* struggle

The world is covered with concrete walls, gun turrets, checkpoints, new “developments,” and software integrated into technology to impersonalize the violence. These are the means by which the entire globe is occupied by and through state power. Sometimes the walls themselves and their bankrollers and steamrollers get attacked, joyful and contemptuous messages are scrawled and capital looted or made useless to those who “have the right” to use it. Decolonial strategy requires that we view most of the world strategically and as occupied territory. Particular to this orientation is how settler-colonial logics have linked it’s epistemology to the material reproduction of settler colonial domination over the world. The incisive point in Glen Coulthard’s critique is that the land itself is stripped of intrinsic value as are the practices sustaining indigenous modes of thought; to this end Coulthard call for a “place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought” and an “authentic decolonization,” which include the constellation of power relationships around not only economic but patriarchy, white supremacy, and the use of state power to coordinate and sustain settler colonialism. These insights not only point to the ways in which capitalism re-establishes accumulation and dispossession, but how these relationships are constantly *mediated* (to use Coulthard’d from of reference to describe the asymmetrical exchange of recognition and accommodation by the Canadian state) against actually existing and persisting communal *praxis*, with a concrete frame of reference in the history of such struggles against the hegemonic settler-colonial relationship. If any general observation or applicability can be made is that a decolonial frame of reference draws our attention specifically to communal practices and institutions that have the potential to constitute daily-life engagement with communal practices. It also turns our attention to the role of mediated coercion in re-establishing settler-colonial relationships. A confrontational as well as communal orientation toward struggle is deeply embedded in decolonial thought and place based definitions.

Such a place specific orientation of tactics would challenge colonial epistemologies and leverage social power towards collaborative resistance. These forms of resistance would need to overcome the social relationships of domination reproduced and altered under occupation. The particular contours of history requires understanding the mechanisms of control exerted by the state onto indigenous victims of occupation and how such an understanding must be incorporated into understanding the tactical leverage available. J. ​Kehaulani ​Kauanui argues that the blood quantum definition of native Hawaiian put in place by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act undercut collective land claims by those who would consider themselves Kanaka Maoli through a sense of belonging based on inclusive lineage and kinship relationships not through a relation to a distant ancestor (Kauanui 2008). This has far reaching implications for what the strategic implications there are for decoloniality in occupied Hawaii, one option would be to adopt a decolonization framework and seek legal recognition to self-determination as a people to negotiate their form of government within the framework of existing nation states. Deoccupation would seek the full reinstatement of the Hawaiian Kingdom, this could be sought through leveraging article 46 of the Declaration​ on​ the​ Rights​ of​ Indigenous​ Peoples adopted by The ​Human ​Rights ​Council ​of ​the ​United ​Nations ​in June of 2006, which would seek redress for the infringement on sovereignty by the occupation and would result in the largest land transfer to indigenous populations but would not deal with the internal colonization of Kanaka Maoli and would not redress the assimilationist policies imposed on native Hawaiians prior to long before the formal takeover (35).

Recognizing the need for decolonial relationships cuts deep to the radical shift in subject formation required by a decolonial project that cannot be simply a recovery of something lost, especially when we don’t know the extent of what was lost and how with self-determination Kanaka Maoli identity were there no occupation. Settler colonial projects reify the project of civilization upon native bodies and have stilted the ability for a critical redeployment of sovereignty and kinship, as Mark Rifkin argues in his study of how settler colonialists projects imposed heterosexual projects and turned the native “straight” (Rifkin 2012). Rifkin uses queer critical theory but also critiques the use that native culture, such as two-spirit, have been appropriated and do not recognize the ways that non-Native queers are reliant on settler logics and in their critiques simply propose a new kind of “settler sociality” without recognizing the material claims of native peoples. Instead Rifkin’s project is not to find the queer in indigenous peoples, but to apply the insights of queer theory on indigenous sovereignty to consciously redeploy it to stretch this discourse to include geopolitical alliances outside of the state but still informed by the underlying project of decoloniality as a strategic practice navigating the constraints of state-identity formation.

Decoloniality is here a frame of reference for how we develop concrete practices of liberation with one another, through sharing political space and developing these alliances by resisting the persistent logics of settler colonial occupation and requires that movements make creative connections and establish an understanding of the terrain of social movements through the identification of constituent affinities, institutions, organizations, and the history of animosities and antagonism between actors who may potentially find common ground (and common targets) of attack and spaces to decolonize as a basis of radical praxis. My object of study to address my original question of the debates over tactics during periods of mass mobilizations and sustained via social movements and their counterpart organizations. I’m interested in periods where tactics are more diverse as opposed to periods tactics are more homogenous, specifically focusing on the discourse and dialogue over material effectiveness, subjective resonance, and legitimate use of force or disruption. Instead of analyzing movements as static given what they are responding to, approaching the study of complex socially transformative events as unfolding situations will better shed light on the internal dynamics of social transformation through concrete opportunity and instead of homogenizing movements will be able to address particular split over analysis and tactics as they develop through practice.

Here the moment of insurrection is important as it opens up future possibilities and brings into focus the antagonisms underneath the ‘movement.’ By understanding such situations as politically generative of new subjectivities and material commitments to social transformation, later debates and struggles over institutionalization of organization toward some specific project. In Susan Buck-Morss' search to recover universal potentiality in particular events, like the Haitian revolution, dissidence of image and thought plays a central role. This kind of dissidence of image and spirit of thought, which Buck-Morss calls “moments of clarity,” is what arose when Polish soldiers fighting under the banner of France confronted when black slaves singing *La Marseillaise*. Buck-Morss search for universal history, which attempts to recover an ideal of universal history without the violence of erasure and homogenization that come hand in hand with the primitive accumulation of modern society through colonial endeavors, speaks to a very queer embrace of the agonal non-identity:

And it is in our empathetic identification with this raw, free, and vulnerable state, that we have a chance of understanding what they say. Common humanity exists in spite of culture and its difference . A person's non-identity with the collective allows for subterranean solidarities that have a chance of appearing universal, moral sentiment, the source today of enthusiasm and hope. It is not through culture, but through the threat of culture's betrayal that consciousness of a common human identity comes to be. (Buck-Morss 2009, 133).

Decoloniality is such an experience of *praxis* is a process of becoming with and through the solidarity developed through necessarily free and plural action. The development of a universal human identity was developed through the retributive violence of the Haitian revolution to the threat posed to the ideas rooted in a common experience. The transformative change of implied in creative action is often unnameable in contemporary Language dominated by the colonization of our identity by neoliberal regimes. Drucilla Cornell explains that while the symbolic world around us can be drained it can not be fully emptied of its symbolic richness (Cornell 2010, 93). This leaves us at a symbolic impasse of sorts when speaking of transformative change and revolution. If our sense of being is a site of contestation and domination how can we be sure that our envisioning of a revolutionary consciousness of human experience will not simply reproduce a sense of symbolic violence? In searching for some kind of way out of a specular doubling while still, Cornell turns to Frantz Fanon and the addition of a poeticist dimension to this kind of internal struggle for the self-assertion of the self; a process “never come[ing] to an end in any simple seizure by a party of the apparatus of the state.” (Cornell, 155). Cornell finds this in the practice of uBuntu in the context of a new constitutionality to revive the symbolic world of new becoming. Against the critics of uBuntu as another form of social cohesion premised on the denial of *participatory difference* (emphasis in the original) and she cites scholar of African legal philosophy, John Murungi “what is essential to law is what secures human being in their being.” The non-totalizing, always incomplete project of political action is linked to the concept of *decoloniality* through the study of participatory assemblies, which I will argue may provide a narrow possibility to situate marginality, as bell hooks argues, as a site of sustained resistance through the production of “counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in the habits of being and the way one lives” (hooks) and that this comes from a lived experience. Yet, participatory assemblies, far from being an exemplar of democracy can very much reproduce the same *disempowering* marginality as suggested by Cornell in her outline of the fears by critics that uBuntu would reconfigure cohesion under a new dominant concept.

Roxanne Euben’s work is aesthetically useful in sense that physical travel is not an end in itself. The ability to understand cultural concepts is derived not from a mere autopsy of the world around us, a seeing with our eyes in a way that dissects and categorizes and generates facts, but from a process of imagination and reflection on lives that are not one's own (Euben 2006, 196). A sense of feeling is lost if we do not take seriously how the aesthetics of the world imparts a sensation that can in fact, in the real, affect our politics. Affect becomes effect and manifest though political imaginaries. Farah Godrej build off of Euben’s project and emphasises in the narrative of travel the importance of self dislocating (and self re-locating) and places this as the central objective of any project engaged in Comparative Political Theory. In order for such a project to be viable in the academy it must be brought to bear on the discipline and practice itself. In this way Godrej's is arguing that in act of self-relocation, which is oriented toward “articulating alternatives ways of understanding the the political world,” the existential experiences by the traveling scholar must be “implicated in the task of making the text or idea 'speak' though the voices and experiences of its adherents.” (Godrej 2011, 66). The transformative experiences of being in struggle with one another, through the kinds of dislocations encouraged by comparative political theory to open up potential affinities between universal projects for human liberation and forms of direct struggle against settler colonialism through a seizure of power and the belief in the collective power of experience.

# Finding each other

The major questions I am trying to answer are what are the practices of revolt where possibility opens up, things are expropriated, capital destroyed, and where society as we know it ceases to reproduce and from that something truly new. I am interested in how subjects navigate open spaces of confrontation through mutual support, cooperation, and the development of everyday political praxis -- that is the the moment where theory is no longer potential but made into action. On the level of mass mobilization of such everyday action, creating potential spaces of action is developed through interrelationships and the development of actual and reliable social solidarity networks; a milieu is a term sometimes used to refer to someone’s immediate material relationships with those around them and can be considered sociable. This fusion of anarchist and decolonial thought is particularly important in understanding the contemporary struggle for social transformation. This emphasis shifts away from social movement literature focused on organizational diffusion and the diffusion of ‘activist’ cadres (Andrews 2006), toward a renewed challenge to sovereignty and the refuting the logic of settler colonialism. In particular, my project seeks to understand the split between, what I will call a decoloniality current on the left (or among post-left anarchist/insurrectionists), and on the other hand the institutional liberal-left pursuing a platform of liberation through the construction of new nation states or negotiations of power sharing with existing nation states (nations within a state or federal control). In particular the centrality of women-centered and indigenous groups will be analyzed in *Autogestion* in Buenos Aires (2001- 2005), to contextualize the cycle of movement activity from an analysis of the development of certain tactical tendencies.[[1]](#footnote-0)

The goal of an ‘anarchist’ decoloniality is to proliferate and articulate our own struggles with an open invitation for others to join and to invite ourselves to join with others as we develop a practice of struggle and a iterative development of our theories of what is effective action towards the ends of delinking our lives from settler-colonial logics. To achieve social transformation can be identified through the tendencies discussed as general tactical orientations toward direct struggle. The point of specifying decolonial; struggle as necessarily *direct* struggle is to develop forms of resistance to occupation, where the ability for regimes to contain or disperse conflict is frustrated and autonomous social relationships are experienced through alternative institutions, communal social relations, or through the empowerment of systematically disempowered groups through mutual aid and social and economic solidarity. Academic debates within social movement theory have have built on *resource mobilization* theory have centered on the dominance of psychological and structural variables and the interplay of the two on the terrain of political opportunities and existing organizations. This is the case Aldon Morris argues for in the civil rights movement where black churches activated dormant revolutionary aspects of black religion thereby refocusing the cultural content of mobilization at a particular point in time (Morris 1984). More recent attempts to arrive at a synthesis have focused on the dynamics of contention and aim to track various episodes and identify causal mechanisms, which have patterns (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly). Generally this focus is referred to as political opportunity models or political process models and emphasize: the development of insurgent consciousness, organizational strength, and political opportunities.

In social movement literature this moves in two directions, the classic elite model of political action wherein social movement entrepreneurs position themselves strategically as voices and shift the flow of resources (McCarthy 1973/1977) or the structural variant of this model of social movements emphasising the “political process” addressing opportunity structures (McAdam 2001). The other tendency is toward the valorization of democratic ideals, wherein the practice of democracy where “stronger forms of democracy are sought after each other through participation itself. As Benjamin J. Barber argues “the taste for participation is whetted by participation: democracy breeds democracy.” (Barber 2003, 265). After this line Barber goes into an analysis of neighborhood assemblies and the institutionalization of democratic talk and civic revival in small rural communities. Drawing directly from Hannah Arendt’s use of *vita activa* in his analysis of strong democracy, Benjamin Barber (cited above as an example of the valorization tendency among democratic theorists) remarks at the bluster from liberal pluralist democratic theorists Arendt received following *The Human Condition* but attempts to recover a meaning compatible with “strong democracy” by critiquing specifically liberal democrats as “hav[ing] too often permitted their concern with accountability, representation, possibly maintained individual rights, and abstract autonomy to suffuse their conception of the political with torpor.” (Barber, 123). Recent literature in social movements have interestingly developed an analysis of how social movements are politically mediated as it relates to how movements demonstrate that they have an autonomous capacity to act and successfully resist particular policies. The rise of the political mediation model discards the dyad between disruptive and assimilatory to a dialectical relationship focusing on how “assertive” movements beyond only the punctuated moments of protest (Amenta 2013). The turn toward how movements assert themselves should be read in the context of the overt *defeats* around the world of social movements attempting to assert themselves in public space while trying to create open participatory spaces for more generalized involvement and building of capacity. Yet, perhaps while we did not get the final overthrow of all that has existed, but the experiences in those spaces were importantly transformative for many people. Because the aim of this paper is to explore the internal dynamics of social movements as a situation unfolds through a series of opportunities and moments in the development of specific tactics of revolt in response to the terrain of the overall situation.

The interpersonal dynamics within movements as they relate to those spaces of participatory deliberation, debate, and decision making, especially how structures of domination replicate themselves in non-hierarchical attempts to expand and develop struggle. In Barber’s analysis is how deliberation can be directed towards a project intended to “transform,” “accommodate,” or “minimize” conflict through deliberative means. is that social movement elites and organizations blunted or curbed disruptive action by the lower-class; “popular insurgency does not proceed by someone else’s rules or hopes; it has its own logic and direction.” (Fox-Piven 1977, xi). Francis Fox-Piven decries the cleavages and backlash that led to white working class reactionary oppression of Black proletarian struggle. Today we see this with the racialized leftist recuperation of rioting against the police and mass incarceration where rioting is framed as an unfortunate side effect of the failure to implement this or that reform, is decried as the sneaky work of outside agitators, or moralized through a white gaze as begging the question of “why would ‘they’ destroy ‘their’ own community like that” as if to naturalize the sense of entitlement of white middle class observers have toward public space or to discount the joyous ecstasy experienced though disruptive agency. The deliberative democratic theorists like Barber attempt to organize struggle around a set of deliberative institutions around reasoned debate and the ability of compromise to present itself in every given situation, or at least that should be the goal. However, the flaw I find in Barber’s arguments is similar to most democratic theorists coming out of the Western canon in that they carry with them liberal assumptions about the ability to distribute violence throughout a society to allow for stable exploitation through the property relation. Barber himself has a useful insight when he attempts to describe what coming to consensus looks like in a fair deliberative arena, that there would have to be some degree of autonomy in order for a claim that consensus has been reached. In short, to make an agreement that meets the standards of deliberative equality sought by democratic theories, those making the decisions must be made with semi-autonomy. What deliberative theorists miss is that democracy as a concept cannot be separated from the conditions and modes of survival available to those in struggle. The goal of approaching struggle as a set of tactical tendencies I hope illuminates the necessity for the escalation of conflict as a means to develop praxis.

The demobilization of disruption is part of a recuperative strategy on the institutional liberal left as well as through state forces of repression acting on our movements. The upholding in particular of non-violence as the only legitimate form of direct struggle is dangerously revisionist. This revisionist lie of non-violence is often espoused by Western liberal left thinkers through a cherry picked history of Gandhi and King. Yet these revisionist histories exclude shifting reality of subaltern practices of rupture and instead revises the relationship of power. In a non-violence washing of the history of struggle the state can be seen as *granting* concessions instead of reacting toward a forceful challenge to their institutions. For example in the spring of 1963 in Birmingham Alabama, where after mounting police violence and frustration by protesters lost their preference for nonviolence and on May 7th “black people began fighting back, pelting the police with rocks and bottles. Just two days later, Birmingham - up until then a bastion of segregation- agreed to desegregate downtown stores, and President Kennedy backed the agreement… The next day, after local white supremacists bombed a black home and a black business, thousands of people rioted again, seizing a nine block area, destroying police cars, injuring several several cops (including the chief inspector), and burning white businesses.” (Gelderloos 2005). Shortly after the Civil Rights Act was passed by Congress. As Gord Hill points out in a critical analysis of Gandhi and King (Hill a.k.a. Zig Zag 2012) activist-scholars have repeated this moment as a victory attributed to nonviolence (Cortright 2009) but Hill finds inconsistencies in this revisionist history. This amount to a doing violence by history, scrubbing disruptive action of its agency and attributing success to the ability to be recuperated into a teleological and directed form of struggle- this kind of blurred history would itself be troubling but is made more so by Fox-Piven’s above critique of *organizers* stifling *praxis* (the doing of excess, revenge, attack) in favor of the *poiesis* of recovery and domination by elites. Did civil rights organizers that night or over the next few days on the ground actively step in to manage the conflict and escalation through moral appeals or perhaps even though collusion with police in honest fear of an even bigger backlash had there been escalation, did the moment pass and the taste for revenge satisfied, or did some other features of the terrain and mode of policing make further revolt less viable than on the first two nights? And if so, *how many more police cars could have been burned, products directly expropriated or burned?* These are important questions for the study of revolt itself as moments pass into one another and agency unfolds, uncontrolled.

The recent uprisings against police in U.S. cities exemplify the scope of tactical discourses, especially with print culture allowing for report-backs of such events soon after they happen-- such as Oscar Grant (Oakland) Chuy Huerta (Durham), Mike Brown (Ferguson) to name a few. These accounts, as well as other communiques, are detailed and convey the feeling of the moment and trace the discursive effects of themes of respectability and coalition building; often describing moments of chaos and confusion as they affected an activist base and the broader context of struggle from below, ofting fusing or multiplying existing expressions of everyday acts of resistance, which is often criminalized as part of a broken windows policing routine. In Oakland sideshows, a long tradition of spontaneous street gatherings rooted in *hyphy*, meaning hyperactive, rap culture of the Bay Area in the 1990’s. On January 7th 2009 the clashes in the streets merged with this daily accustomed form of subversive life activity: “people moved in groups, hollered out when they saw cops, and used cell phones to spread the word about where to meet up next and where to avoid.”[[2]](#footnote-1) These nights may, as I will argue, have a profound impact on the discourse and possible horizons of struggle as they develop as a *praxis* of revolt, of holding space and allowing for disruptive action. In its place I propose a defense of non-democratic collaborative forms of solidarity and attack that do not suppose the rules, hopes, and logic of action. What happens when communication fails and conflict as the liberals say in, intractable? Unlike the liberal solution of adjudication or tolerance, I will propose the deliberative and communicative power of the form of solidarity through attack or *decoloniality.*

Whereas liberals would seek legalisms and the “strong democrats” seeks transformative accommodation, solidarity as attack emphasises when words are no longer an effective means of communication and where power imbalances are such that no real autonomy exists and thus no possibility for consensus on a scale envisioned by the partisans of democratic inclusion. Solidarity as attack is distinct from the idea of solidarity as allyship. Writing from an indigenous perspective (and they include “provocation” to the readers), *Accomplices Not Allies: abolishing the ally industrial complex* suggests a particularly decolonial practice. This is based on a critique of ally as a category which commodifies struggle and where extensive networks of nonprofits brand issues. This is opposed to the tendency advocated for in the text, which is toward the “criminalization of support and solidarity.” The remainder of the text is serves as a point of intervention into the recuperative effect of allyship industry and identifies traits: Missionary & self-therapy, exploitation & co-optation, confessional allyship, parachuters (or missionary types with more money), academics & intellectuals, Gate keepers who institutionalize and control resources, navigators & floaters who bail and are never accountable for their actions, and finally acts of resignation of agency in order to be a “good ally” but end up with “anti-civ/primitivist appropriators or anarcho-hipsters, when saboteurs would be prefered.”[[3]](#footnote-2) This last point has a common connection to the critique of academics and intellectuals, where the prescription is to leverage resources and betray institutions. The problem with acts of resignation is that it removes the creative aspect of agency in action and re-establishes a hierarchy of action based on a messianic style of activism instead of an orientation to being an accomplice with the recognition that one’s liberation is bound with another. On the back fold of my copy back fold reads on one side: “direct action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We’re in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence” On the other side is a jaggedly scanned image of a burning Canadian police cruiser. To some this may seem like a naive romanticization of violence and conflict, but I would caution to consider a shift in context to one where conflict is recognized as a pervasive and persistent condition of maintaining occupation and settler-colonialism and the contemporary resistances to images of power.

Tactics requires some *tact*, or sensitive mental touch when dealing with others in a collaborative space. In moments of heightened struggle the coordination of action is explicable when we understand the existing social relationships between participants-- in what contexts and through what institutions are tactics and strategy explicitly deliberated on or what are the informal ways of communication between and among separate groups acting. Returning to the original question participation in events should be analyzed alongside and as a subtype of deliberative communication. The goals of deliberation may not conform to a Habbermasian ideal, they may be local or translocal in that they correspond across distances similarities. The discourse surrounding that deliberation can take on many forms: revolt, revolution, insurrection, rebellion, rioting[[4]](#footnote-3) where each of these words has a mix of normative connotations, claims to rationality, historical place, as well as an emotive coding of events as triumphant, desperate, or fearful. It is why I will choose to use the phrase heightened tensions as identifying moments of contextualization for action as they are found as artifacts in society in the stories told during and after moments of action as well as through the process of participation and deliberation.

The focus of this study is to better understand the effects of participation on the participants social world as it is co-created in the process of acting with- through being accomplices together in a struggle against power. These relationships sustain and bring forth new tactics and combinations through the unique combination of persons in the assembally as well as how those connections spiral out and intersect with larger social milieus. These creative combinations of participants are particularly interesting in moments of uncertainty where situations unfold rapidly and choices are made by people acting based off their past experiences and what they have learned in the process of struggle. As struggles assert themselves there is an element of unpredictability and uncontrollability. Individuals may meet in the streets and engage in the same tactics or even work directly as accomplices, yet such affinity may not survive that night. In fact, such action could bring to the surface existing social antagonisms, which instead of being seen as negative for “the movement” can be helpful in clarifying the composition of the various social worlds active in a moment of struggle. Participatory assemblies can be spaces where these conflicts can be articulated. They can also become spaces hostile to certain forms of struggle. Overall they are, for the purposes of this study at least, important in identifying what voices have been excluded in tactical discourse and where social concentration of energy is tended and due to what intersubjective forces of participatory transformation. Those who don’t participate in the assemblies, but all the same act and participate in an overall tactical discourse written all around us.

## Application: Buenos Aires

On December 19th and 20th 2001 in Argentina an insurrectionary moment happened where a broad cross section of society revolted, the significance of the level and type of participation is notable because it involved many groups who do not often share the same ideas of struggle. The generalized character of the revolt was directed at the corrupt leadership: “Que se vayan todos, que no quede ni uno solo!” The policy sparking the insurrection had to do with placing limitations on bank transactions for banks to stave off the drain in capital that had happened throughout 2001. This caused disruptions affecting the middle class and businesses and groups already dissatisfied with De la Rúa mobilized various forms of resistance. The generalized insurrection was immediately preceded by the organized actions of unemployed people in demanding that supermarkets hand out food and incidents escalated the days before the 19th when looting and rioting became generalized throughout Buenos Aires and in other urban and rural areas of Argentina.

The dramatic insurrectionary moment of December 2001 defines many people’s recounted experiences becoming active in struggle, but the major tactical innovations were made possible through the resistance of the *piqueteros*, used either to refer to the pictures themselves or the tactic. The *piqueteros* would create blockades with the intention of shutting down and disrupting. These tactics developed throughout the 1990s by low-wage workers pushed to the margins, pushed to precarious situations of employment, and the eventual loss of a job and the indignity suffered as a *desocupado* (unemployed person). These forms of protest originally developed in the rural interior regions of Argentina but quickly spread to the urban areas of marginalization. As these modes of resistance developed into organized structures they “engendered diverse approaches to the movement, and separate lines, or *coordinadoras*, developed with distinctive regional bases, organizational styles and political alliances” (Birss 2005). The tactics developed rapidly between August and December of 2001. In August following deaths of five *piqueteros* and the arrest of hundreds more, a nationwide attack on the economy shut down over three hundred highways and by September organized such roadway disruptions in Buenos Aires as well as a general strike ([Petras, 2002](http://monthlyreview.org/2002/01/01/the-unemployed-workers-movement-in-argentina/)). The particular contours of the December insurrection mobilized these tactics and accelerated the model of the *piqueteros* as a tactic of resistance and directly out of those struggles and experimentations organizations developed to coordinate the already existing activity. The *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* (MTD) was formed and developed a set of participatory assemblies to coordinate action through horizontal decision-making.

The Buenos Aires case provides an example of the kinds of dynamics and interplay of tactics. I will give a brief overview of the case and how I think it fits into a framework build on the articulation of tendencies as they develop through participatory modes of action. What emerged from the situation was a sustained practice of general assemblies and participatory meeting spaces as a major form of organization and mutual aid. These forms persisted in a significant capacity until 2005 when many of the assemblies lost momentum and the movement activity subsided amidst a populist government on the one hand and the use of state force to evict most insurgent assembly spaces. This case is interesting for this because the movement was organized primarily around sets of tactical questions, which defined much of the deliberation and projects developed through assemblies. Prior to the moment of insurrection there was a direct building of tactics on the street. The cause of the insurrections can be explained in terms of structure, but the development of tactics through moments of direct struggle is important for understanding the types of affinities that developed and how the various tendencies in the movement developed. Eventually the movement was demobilized through the assemblies as they were recuperated by state forces and the limitations of solidarity that were developed in the assemblies. In some ways the movement was killed by its own success by the gaining of some concession on the margins but was also beleaguered by exhaustion resulting from state repression. Assemblies were by in large demobilized after 2005, during this period a stabilizing regime emerged from the remnants of the corrupt old guard statists.

The tactical innovations developed through struggle in the assemblies led to the developemnt of specific projects to critically push forward a projects of self-determination, where one’s sense of recovering agency or, to use the terminology of the participants, becoming protagonists in the unfolding of history. While the assembly structures innovated the kinds of collaborative styles available they were just one instatiation of this transformation. Paula, a member of a feminist and GLTTB (Gay, Lesbian, Transvestite, Transsexual, Bisexual) said of the scope of the transformation felth through organizing: “If the assemblies disappeared, it wouldn't be so terrible. I say this because there's something happening in people right now” which she describes as a subjective transformation expanding one’s sense of what is possible, in particular what is possible through the overcoming of the limitations imposed by a harsh alienating individualism and toward collective action (Sitrin 2007, 216). This possibility was gained through the assemblies but the change developed is not only observable in the concrete actions taken up by the assemblies but in the new approaches people developed toward solving their problems collectively. This perspective makes it possible to think of lateral shifts between organizations with different goals and scopes as containing some of the same shared and underlying set of principals and subjective understanding about how change happens. The participatory model of engagement became the norm not just among the MTD but as the moment spread beyond those spaces and into neighborhood assemblies and among workers who were facing their own struggles with their bosses over not being paid for extended periods of time or facing unemployment as a company threatened to close locations. Neighborhood assemblies formed and were used as a means for people to transform their lives through the organization of direct mutual aid.

Assemblies occupied political and public space through this period; short lived were the Interbarrial Assemblies being the aggregate of these assemblies and oriented toward the articulation of demands and strategic debate. These assemblies became dominated by political parties and conflicts over goals and strategies and are seen as demobilizing the assembly movement (Thompson 2010). Assemblies were open to infiltration by political parties attempting to, as Walter Benjamin said. think for the revolution. There were also open to infiltration by the state. One *compañera* recounts the assassination of her comrades in the MTD and the subtler forms of control that prevaded: “now, what they're doing is subtler, they come around and try to buy off companeros, and try to infiltrate the movement.” (Sitrin 2006, 195). Overall the assembly movement has seen a major decline in their assertiveness. While Mariah Thompson finds support for two of Sidney Tarrow’s thesis in *Power and Movement*, namely that state repression and internal divisions clearly caused a decline in the movement. However, Thompson does not find support for his characterization of violence and institutionalization being polar opposite tendencies remarking that “confrontational actions took place in the form of building occupations and, contrary to Tarrow’s predictions; these tactics were employed by institutionalized sectors of the movement as well as autonomous ones.” (Thompson 2010, 9). This is important because the possibility remains open that confrontational and violent tactics can become institutionalized in some circumstances and importantly *not* only existing as autonomous actions but very much employed by the institutionalized sectors of the movement.

In terms of discourse the range of tactics employed by the movement and how that tactics were first concretely developed and how they were sustained is a central question to address in this case. The strict division between nonviolence and violence as well as political and anti-political is a discursive ad hoc generalization since it is clear that the movement was characterized by rapid experimentation of tactics. It brought to the surface tensions of identity between participants and their tactics. Clearly taking a cue from the Movement of Unemployed, workers organized occupations of their own factories to resist wage withholding or to prevent the factory from closing. Kicking off from the December insurrections as many as 200 businesses were taken over by workers. The formal organization coming out of these occupations dealt with the problem of successfully resisting the state and the coordinating the activities of the workers to self-manage the business and run them cooperatively. The Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas (MNER) developed as an umbrella organization for self-managing workers and their associated businesses and to coordinate mutual aid as well as provide political and legal support, often through existing relationships to left parties. Over time a split developed with a minoritarian platform developed as the Movimiento Nacional de Fabricas Recuperadas (MNFR). This split was characterized by a disagreement over the tactics for self-organization of labor power. While the MNER prefered tactics of leveraging state power through the recognition, the MNFR maintained a position of perpetual seizure of means and spaces, represented in propaganda as *ocupar, resistir, producir* (Faulk 2012, 192). MNER represents an emphasis on the navigation tendency, through their development they promoted the creation of intermediary governmental burrcracies to legitimize and streamline the process for becoming legally recognized as worker run enterprises. The official state recognition was a means by which MNER envisioned a transition to a cooperative economy through state support and investment in the cooperative model. By contrast MNFR drew for the tendency for autonomy instead seeking to generalize the practice of blockades toward a logistical general strike and the direct expropriation and workers self-management of all capital.

Sometimes the tendencies chosen are related to the daily contradictions we experience in the search for self-determination while at the same time navigating our own relationships to ways to survive under capitalism. In one of the plaza assemblies a 30 year old Bank Boston employee remarks “by day I must work as a capitalist, but at night I’m a socialist. I’ve been a socialist for a long time, since my father was disappeared when I was six years old” (Solnit et al. 2002). The broad participation in contentious actions, institutionalized and autonomous is notable because of these temporary cross class alliances and appeals toward the universal history. In a documented instance of institutionalized proliferations of attacks, on February 18th 2002 a crowd of over 200 people smashed up seventeen banks, lotting ATMs and tagging the facades with graffiti such as “churros.” This in ways in reminiscent of the summit hopping anti-globalization movement of the 1990’s with the use of black bloc as a tactic. However the aesthetics on Florida Avenue that day were quite different. There it was impossible to pick out demonstrators from passerbyers, “Men in suits and ties with briefcases in one hand and hammers in the other, women with gold bracelets, hand bags, and high heels sharing cans of spray paint, anonymous suits on their lunch break joining the fracas and then melting back into the crowd.” (Ibid). The observers in this case half-jokingly referred to this as the “bourgeois bloc,” for its theatrical display of spontaneous coordinated revolt. On the topic of “violence,” as these acts of sabotage and expropriation are often categorized as, I will return to Thompson’s study above and the track of research I intend on picking up on. She articulates a consequential path of future study based on her analysis of the decline of the assembly movement with implications for other movements as well:

Whether the lack of violence is representative of a healthily functioning democracy or is because members lacked audacity must be determined on a case by case basis. Overall, these two theories will be helpful for future researchers and analysts interested in identifying the underlying factors that contribute to the presence of violence (or lack thereof) and institutionalization. It will be particularly useful in the study of how homogenous and/or primarily middle-class social movements interact with the state during their decline (Thompson 54).

This is the type of question that is driving my own research into participatory assemblies more generally as they relate to the sustaining of contentious action.

Some have characterized this demobilization in terms of a swing from the market-based policies of neoliberalism in Argentina post the fiscal collapse and insurgency of 2001 toward whom Jean Grugel and Maria Pia Riggirozzi call *neodesarrollismo*-- the re-emergence of economically progressive nationalism through state interventionism and the investment of foreign capital in shaping development models as the predominant strategy of “social conflict management” (Grugel 2007). The distribution game played by the state is open to many latent contradictions according to the authors, in particular fluctuations in global markets but also the limitations of the populist welfare policies to “relegitimize and reinstitutionalize government after crisis” and where demands for redistribution exceed the fixed boundaries of what the state can deliver (107). These policies have taken the form on consensus building initiatives where input from the various actors in the struggle as it developed institutions and negotiated development toward neo-Peronist policy regime, right leaning.

The Buenos Aires case highlights the particular discursive divisions in the assemblies between political and anti-political tendencies, as well as the debates over goals and strategies as they developed and/or demobilized. Through an archival research of the case material (notes and communiques from the movement, oral histories, history of state engagement and survey research I hope to identify particular moments or turning points to explain the impact of participation in detail and importantly the interpersonal tensions propelling people through potential exhaustion. What were the relationships within movements that sustained action through the myriad difficulties? This focus will draw from what has been called generally the *affective turn* in theory, namely the influence of queer and feminist theory in centering the politics of emotions which include “impulses, desires, and feeling that get historically constructed in a range of ways” this being distinct from the study of emotions as a category contrasted with reason (Cvetkovich 2012, 4). Cvetkovich talks specifically of political depression and how it can spur antisocial reactions as well as new forms of sociality, attachment, or affiliation. The emotional attachment to the tactics of resistance, occupation, and sustaining the energy of all involved is the hidden emotional labor present in the movement that may be best captured through in depth reflective interviews on the major events and what kinds affects they had upon the feelings of participants.

The affective turn has has led to the proliferation of emotion interested research in recent years, in particular how emotions can be analyzed as integral to social movements. Much of this work focuses on how emotions can be mobilized (Gould, 2002, 2009) as well as how emotions can be transformative of the self through their articulation. Sarah Ahmed writes on the topic of emotions as a challenge to the status quo by explaining how emotions function as markers of experience and how those experiences can be brought to the surface not only to display injustice but toward restoration, repair, healing and recovery; “emotions work by working through signs and on bodies to materialise the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds.” (Ahmed 2004, 191). This has also taken the form of scholarly attempts to understand what are “the emotions most relevant to politics, as the editors of *Passionate Politics* (2001)argues for the return of emotions to help explain how emotions shape space, can spur on recruitment and action, or lead to the demise of social movement organizations through negative emotions. However, such sociological approaches have been critiqued for exactly on the division between what emotions are and are not relevant to to politics. Through in-depth interviews with queer-identified activists, Eleanor Wilkinson (2009) challenges the neat division made between our intimate lives and the public sphere. Wilkinson focuses on what she terms autonomous organizing based on lines of affinity and unity through diversity as a remedy for the hierarchical strategies of the left, but also find this mode of organizing wanting due to hidden hierarchies and how dominant forms of sexual and interpersonal violence are often reproduced in these spaces.

Taking these limitations and points of exclusion seriously will require that the study of participatory assemblies actively seek out hidden emotions of participants and understand the ways in which emotions transformation happens on a personal level and how through sharing the experiences of autonomous organizing can spread throughout a social movement through assemblies. As Marta, from an MTD group in Almirante Brown: “In my case, this transformation took place on a personal level. This is true for a lot of people in the assembly. There aren't statistics, but many people survived the crisis and began to think about how to rebuild their lives in a different way. It's really incredible.”(Sitrin 2006, 218).These experiences construct a world of dislocating possibility, which becomes clear in such retellings of experience and propels creative action forward in the search for our individual and collective self-determination.

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1. For space and time constraints this paper is limited to looking only at one of the cases mentioned in the abstract as the bulk of this paper has been to establish the typological framework and get feedback on further research into the questions of how tactics develop on the ground informed by decolonial understanding of self-determination struggles. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. *Unfinished Acts: January Rebellions.* Revised 2012 edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Indigenous Action Media, *Accomplices not Allies* (version 2 dated 5/02/2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Each of these words have particularly normative connotations and there is no technical agreements. One need look no further than Ferguson to see what is described as a riot or rebellion and by whom. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)