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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in Media Studies

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Human-Machinic Assemblages: Technology, Bodies, and the Recuperation of Social
Reproduction in the Crisis Era

(Monograph)

by

Elise Danielle Thorburn

Graduate Program in Media Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that class composition, as defined and theorised by *Operaismo* and Autonomist thinkers, has had both a major and a minoritarian form. In fact class composition in its major form has always been subtended by a minor current. I examine both historical (the 1905 Russian Soviets, the 1919 Turin factory councils, the Italian social movements of the 1970s) and contemporary examples (the occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt, the Indignados movement in Spain, and Occupy Wall Street in 2011, as well as the 2012 Quebec student strike) of class composition. From these examples I then argue that the minor current of class composition is rooted in social reproduction – both its crisis and its recuperation. And further that this minor current expands throughout history, growing to command greater attention within social and labour movements. Further, this dissertation argues that contemporary social movements appear today as an assemblage, a human-machinic assemblage, which enact social reproduction in crisis and recuperation through both embodied and technologized forms. I demonstrate the ways in which technologies of communication are implicated in forms of securitised and commodified social reproduction, but also open up new and powerful possibilities for autonomous and liberatory social reproduction. This dissertation relies on a merger of conceptual, theoretical, and field research and benefits from the author's direct involvement in social and political struggles.

Keywords

Operaismo, Autonomism, assemblage, feminism, social reproduction, technology, communications, media, class, labour, capitalism, class composition, Marx, Federici, Hardt and Negri, Deleuze and Guattari, minor current, assembly movements, social movements.

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0.0 Introduction: Social Reproduction, Technologies, and Assemblies in the Return of Revolution.

In the mid-winter of 2012 a strike began amongst universities and CEGEP students across Quebec. In the years prior to this, I had devoted much time to thinking and writing on issues pertaining to higher education, including on the student as work and on the politics of the university in the current economic moment. I watched the 2009 California tuition fee protests, the 2010 UK tuition struggles, and the 2011 Chilean student movement from afar but with keen interest. From a distance it appeared that these movements were learning from previous organising strategies, eschewing traditional structures of leadership and hierarchy, and insisting on new definitions of old concepts, particularly the idea of class and class struggle. Upon the outbreak of combative student movement in Montreal, I felt compelled to witness the unfolding of the movement myself.

I travelled to Montreal several times between March and August of 2012 and invited Quebec student activists to participate in conferences I had co-organised in Toronto. While in Montreal I met and interviewed both experienced activists and newly politicised undergraduates. I toured the offices of the far left student association, *ASSE*, and sat in on *CLASSE* congresses and neighbourhood assemblies. I marched in *casseroles*, daytime solidarity rallies, and night demos. Eventually I began volunteering with Concordia University's television station, CUTV. This episode – the Quebec student strike and my participation in it – provides a case study that serves as the culmination of this dissertation project.

Today it appears that we are witnessing the return of revolution as a potential actuality. After dormancy for the better part of three decades, there has been renewed interest on the part of political theorists and philosophers, in new configurations of class struggle, in the possibility of revolution, and in the idea of communism (Zizek, 2009; Bosteels, 2011; Dean, 2012). Since the 2008 financial crisis, a series of social struggles have appeared which seem to prefigure new revolutionary possibilities – an idea of revolution which breaks its bonds with the party, the state, or the vanguard. New, distinct, and concrete political entities are emerging from within old models of struggle and without them. Understanding the new political entities which came into being during the Quebec student strike – as well as during the cycle of struggles that took place following the 2008 financial crisis – involves a reassessment of some of the current and influential theories about class, social struggle, and the role of media in social movements. To this end I have adopted and adapted a lexicon of concepts, whose development and explanation provides the main body of this dissertation. The development of these theoretical concepts aims to make a contribution to the understanding of contemporary capital, class, and social conflict.

Making use of theoretical concepts from French theorists Deleuze and Guattari and from the Italian *Operaismo* and later Autonomist¹ tradition, this work situates theory alongside actually existing practice. I analyse historical documents relating to three distinct yet overlapping eras of class composition – the 1905 Russian Revolution (associated with the professional worker), the 1919 Turin factory council movement (associated with the mass worker), and the Hot Autumn and social movements of the 1970s in Italy (associated with the socialized worker). I claim that while there was a

¹ In this dissertation I begin by using the term *Operaismo* and later, at certain junctures, begin to use the

major form of class composition active in that moment, there was a concurrent minor form whose technical and political basis was grounded in social reproduction. I carry on to analyse case studies from the cycle of struggles begun in 2011-- the Arab Spring, the Spanish Indignados, and the global Occupy movement-- through this same theoretical optic. In this I demonstrate that what was once the minor current is swelling, bringing it to the fore as an increasingly hegemonic political composition, known as the assembly. In the concluding chapters of this project I examine in depth on the Quebec Student Strike of 2012 and the use of live streaming video by the Concordia University television station during that 7 month uprising. In this way, I seek to understand how politics and technologies converge in a contemporary class composition, addressing crises in how we reproduce ourselves, collectively, as subjects, as human beings, but also as objects and agents of care. I hope to prove that the class composition of the present political and economic moment is centred on the assembly – an expansion of the minor current to historical manifestations of class struggle.

Understanding my experiences in the Quebec student strike in Montreal required locating these experiences within the broader history and theory of anti-capitalist movements. This historical and theoretical investigation involved working with and developing a handful of concepts that seemed particularly relevant to what happened in the movements of 2011 and 2012. These concepts come variously from *Operaismo* and Autonomist theory and from the work of Deleuze and Guattari. These two distinct bodies of thought are simultaneously related and intermingled, especially through the friendship and collaboration between Antonio Negri, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. Therefore, while defining the concepts separately, throughout this dissertation I hope to demonstrate that each becomes stronger when put into conversation with the other. These concepts are presented in the Key Concepts section below; this section is then followed by a brief account of the Methodology that informed the Montreal field study.

0.1 Key Concepts

a) The Organic Composition of Capital

Coming directly from Marx's analysis of capitalist production in Volume 1 of *Capital*, the organic composition of capital refers to the ratio of constant capital to variable capital in the capitalist mode of production. Constant capital is the value invested in, and thus embodying, the means of production (Marx, 1977): a physical asset whose value is transferred to a commodity in production constant capital includes machines, raw materials, buildings, and etc. Variable capital is the value invested in labour power through wages, and is embodied in the means of subsistence necessary for labour power's reproduction. This is sometimes referred to as the ratio between dead labour and living labour – dead being the inert parts such as tools, living being the active labourer and it is the specific form that the capitalist mode of production gives to the relationship between the means of production and labour. Marx's theory of value asserts that the exploitation of living labour is the source of surplus value; variable capital is the only part of capital that allows the capitalist to increase surplus value.

In Marx's original account of the organic composition of capital he focussed on the "power of capital to direct production through the accumulation of machines" (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 66). The tendency of capital, it was argued, is to increase the ratio of constant to variable capital through automation and other technological innovations, increasing productivity and lowering wages (see Mandel, 1975). Increases in the organic composition of capital have a tendency to decrease capitalist profits, though, as workers are pushed out of production by mechanisation thus decreasing surplus value (Marx, 1977). Marx and others also note that this tendency for declining profits has counter-

tendencies, such as intensified labour exploitation, cheaper machines and raw materials, and the creation of industries with low organic composition (Dyer-Witheford, 1999). In contemporary capitalism, profit can be created even with the expulsion of much living labour through technological innovations including surveillance and monitoring, self-replicating robots, tertiarization, and enhanced circulation via advertising and marketing (Dyer-Witheford, 1999).

Regardless of these tendencies and counter-tendencies, changes in constant capital do result in changes to the “composition of the collective labourer” (Marx, 1977: 461). Class composition, from *Operaismo* theory, inverts the terms of the organic composition of capital, assessing the capacity of living labour to wrest control away from capital.

b) Class composition

Class composition is perhaps the most distinctive theoretical contribution of the Italian *Operaismo* tendency. It comes out of the absence of a sociology of work and the study of factory *workers* in Italy prior to the 1960s. Turning their attention to the workers as a source of power to be wielded against capital, Romano Alquati and the militants associated with the journal *Quaderno Rossi* and later *Classe Operaia* in the 1960s focused their investigations squarely on the working class. Not satisfied with developing sociological knowledge Alquati sought to understand the political conflicts of factory workers and of students as political tools for the expansion and circulation of struggle. This form of research they called *conricerca* or co-research, and in this process of *conricerca* they discovered the composition of the class (Roggero, 2011)

Class composition as a theoretical proposition is associated most closely with the journal *Primo Maggio*, first published in 1972 and centered on the influence of Sergio Bologna, Bruno Cartosio, and Franco Moggi (Lucarelli, 2013). It is an attempt to create

“new ‘interpretive frameworks’ capable of surpassing existing left historiography” (Bologna, cited in Wright, 2002: 177). Class composition inverts Marx’s concept of the organic composition of capital, focusing not on capital but on the working class (Negri, 1991). Just as capital involves ratios of humans and machines, so too is the working class a mix of elements and relations between bodies and machinic technologies (Negri, 1991; Nunes, 2007; Trott 2007) and class composition seeks to describe the relation between labour and capital in particular moments in history.

Class composition is divided between the technical composition (the capitalist organization of labour power) and the political composition (the working class organization against capital). The technical composition constitutes particular openings for working class struggle, permitting a reading of the forms of action and organization possible at various historical conjunctures (Negri, 1991; Nunes, 2007; Cleaver, 1998) – the political composition. Forms of struggle are expressed in terms of a particular composition of the working class. Capital’s response to these struggles attempts to impose technical changes designed to restore discipline and authority. This new technical composition forces a “decomposition” of the class, which subsequently gives rise to new organizational possibilities and a new class composition. This is the way class struggle operates as a cycle – a cycle of struggle.

Both the organic composition of capital and class composition refer to the organisation of production processes but Marx’s original concept focuses on the “aggregate domination of variable by constant capital” (Cleaver, 1992: 113). Class composition, conversely, involves a “disaggregated picture of the structure of class power existing within the division of labour associated with a particular organisation of constant and variable capital” (Cleaver, 1992: 113).

c) Multitude

The concept of multitude, developed by Hardt and Negri over three texts (2000, 2004, 2009) is an attempt to define the composition of forces in a postmodern, post-Fordist, biopolitical workforce. Multitude is made up of worker for whom work time now extends and snakes throughout their entire lives (Virno, 2004). While contentious debates persist about whether or not multitude describes a class or undermines the concept of class altogether (see Negri, 2002, Brown and Szeman, 2005), the term describes an emergent collective subjectivity issuing from immaterial production (Trott, 2007). In traditional conceptions of economic class, Hardt and Negri (2004) argue, one is forced to choose between unity and plurality. Multitude, *as a class concept*, is unapologetically heterogeneous, resisting both the flattening tendencies of unity and the fragmenting tendencies of chaotic multiplicities (Hardt and Negri, 2004). Virno disputes the claim that multitude describes a class, arguing that it cannot “build a class consciousness of its own, let alone engage capital in class struggle” (Virno, 2004). Instead he claims it is an “open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can live and work in common” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: xiii-xiv)

I defer to Hardt and Negri’s proposition that multitude describes a class category far more expansive than traditional definitions of the term. Multitude holds the possibility of re-igniting claims from feminist *Operaismo* theorists such as Mariarosa Dallacosta and Selma James (1973) that workers are more than the industrial factory proletariat but include women, domestic caregivers, students, and the unemployed. In practice, though, multitude is centred on a very contemporary reading of capitalism as “immaterial” and “biopolitical”, focused on information technologies and communicative endeavours.

d) Global Proletariat

As a term, global proletariat derives from Karl Heinz Roth's work on labour history (2008; 2010). The working class, he argues, was formed within a global context from its earliest beginnings. Understanding the proletariat as global is important in uncovering how different forms of free and unfree, waged and unwaged labour became productive of surplus value within capitalism. Further, the notion of a global proletariat overcomes labour history's previous Eurocentric limits, which plagued, Roth argues, even the best scholars in the field. For Roth (2011), and earlier for Roth and Van der Linden (cited in Fuchs, 2014), the global proletariat is a multiverse of exploited workers constituted as a pentagon. Waged labour has played an important role in the history of working class formations, but does not guarantee the absorption of all segments of a global proletariat. Roth articulates five distinct segments – the pentagon – of the global proletariat. These include: subsistence farming, surplus populations, migrant labour, the new industrial working class in emerging economies, and the deindustrialised workers of formerly centre economies (including formally self-employed knowledge workers, artisans, and small traders) (Roth, 2010). Global proletariat describes a class engaged in processes of becoming, an emergent class which resists exploitation and valorisation as it composes and coheres itself as a collective entity.

In this dissertation I have chosen to adopt the term “global proletariat” as an alternative characterisation of contemporary class composition, over Hardt and Negri's original conception of multitude. In later chapters I argue that the concept of multitude defines a class in a process of decomposition, while the global proletariat signifies a recomposing of this class within the technical frameworks of contemporary capitalism. Furthermore, retaining the concept of proletariat in any description of class composition makes clear the relation, in capitalism, between human beings and capital, something which the concept of multitude does not, automatically, attune us to. Finally, while multitude emphasizes the liberatory potentials of high-tech digital- immaterial- and

cyber-labour, the concept of a “global proletariat” examines this 21st century composition from all angles – the dark underside of high tech labour in particular. Describing a multiverse of the working class with focus on the dependent, informal, bonded, and slave labours that make up a large proportion of the global economy – particularly the high tech economy – the concept of the “global proletariat” permits a reading of both class compositions and of resistance movements that can place at the centre the concerns of those furthest most heavily exploited, marginalised, and abused in a high tech global economy. It is my further assertion that the “global proletariat” allows the critical and resistant ideas of social reproduction to most effectively appear.

e) Social Reproduction

While the concept of social reproduction originates in Marx’s *Capital Volume II* (1978) his concerns to do not extend to a detailed analysis of the sort undertaken by existing feminist Marxist literature, in particular in the work of Silvia Federici (2004; 2006; 2012). In the Marxist feminist theoretical tradition social reproduction refers to the labour process that creates value through the production and reproduction of labour power, and is primarily associated with women². But because labour power is human labour social reproduction thus simultaneously produces human life; workers potentially antagonistic to capital. In this way, social reproduction as theorized in a feminist Marxism holds a dual character, marking it as an exciting site of potential struggle.

As it is understand in a feminist framework, social reproduction includes biological reproduction of the next generation of workers, ensuring the health and

² Although some recent theorists (ie., Loren Goldner) manage to talk about social reproduction without discussing the specificity of this labour to women at all.

productivity of the current work force, and the care for those too old, young, sick, disabled, or jobless to care for themselves (Abramovitz, 2010). While historically carried out in the home as unpaid labour by women, social reproduction also concerns the socially established- and state underwritten-activities that further procreation, socialization, nurturance, and family maintenance (Abramovitz, 2010). As the outgrowth of class struggle many European and North American countries came to provide socially reproductive services such as public education and health care, social security provisions such as welfare, disability, unemployment insurance, parental leave, unemployment insurance, and pension plans.

Throughout the 1970s women struggled against their largely unpaid positions as reproductive workers. Labour previously unpaid and confined to the domestic sphere moved increasingly onto the market, waged and in the public realm (Federici, 2006). While the home remained the centre for the reproduction of labour power, “its importance as the backbone of reproductive services is waning” (Federici, 2006: 82). With socially reproductive work moving on to the market the service sector exploded in the 1970s, and reproductive work became massified and organized on an industrial basis (Federici, 2006). This trend continues as increasingly previously unwaged reproductive labour is absorbed into the cash nexus. This can be seen through the aspect of social reproduction considered “managing consumption” (Abramovitz, 2010) and is visible in the fast food restaurants and low-cost consumer goods retailers that dominate the landscape in many suburban areas of North America. This suggests that socially reproductive services are being disaccumulated in the home and thrown ever faster onto the market.

As noted above, though, social reproduction has a dual character. It creates labour power and human beings simultaneously, accumulates capital and human life. It is all the work upon which life depends and thus includes those activities that “enable the basic

means with which to create and sustain cooperative relationships” (Brown et al, 2013: 90). As such, social reproduction provides a powerful terrain for emerging resistances to capitalist domination.

f) Assemblage

The concept of assemblage used in this dissertation derives from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, primarily in their two part series *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). The concept is later picked up by Manuel DeLanda and put to use especially in his text *An New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (2006). The term is meant to apply to a “wide variety of wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts” (DeLanda, 2006: 3), and to describe how multiplicities can exist within larger entities without succumbing to a logic of unity or sameness. Deleuze says that assemblages are a collection of co-functioning heterogeneous parts that form a provisional whole. This whole remains open; it is never a totality (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977).

Deleuze and Guattari use the metaphor of the Orchid and the Wasp to explain how assemblages are collections of temporary relations between entities. The Wasp enters the Orchid, becoming a piece of in the Orchid’s reproductive apparatus. The Orchid becomes a tracing of the Wasp. They conjoin and detach. When in contact they constitute a set of possibilities – the Orchid becomes a tracing of the Wasp in order to connect with the Wasp as carrier of its pollen. Reproduction becomes possible. As they detach new sets of possibilities arise. Their connection and detachment is not mimicry or imitation but rather “a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid, a becoming-orchid of the wasp” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10).

From this metaphoric visualization we can see that assemblages are the product of relations between autonomous parts; that an assemblage is a patchwork which can be neither reduced to its parts nor expanded to an infinite totality. Rather all assemblages are finite; they are “an emergent effect of processes of gathering and dispersion” (Anderson, et al. 2012: 177). The relations between these parts are external to the parts themselves, insisting upon the autonomy of both the parts and the relations. The concept of “relations of exteriority” means that the component parts of an assemblage are conditions – but not determined – by the relations they have (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977). In this way the liaisons and relations established by multiplicities in an assemblage only create unity through co-functioning, they are only ever symbiotic, or “a sympathy” (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977: 52). Since an assemblage lacks an inherent organization it can draw into its body disparate elements, it can contain other assemblages and create other assemblages by entering into relations with other entities.

As assemblages are created through the relations between parts they can have a constituent power. This constituent power emerges from the capacity of things within an assemblage to “exceed their relations” (Ruddick, 2012: 208) and to establish something new. These are “becomings” and they hold a political potential. The process of “becoming” accounts for the relationship between discrete elements – one constituent element disappears and is replaced by new properties of the assemblage. This is not mimicry or analogy, but rather is the generation of a new way of being, the instantiation of something new. All becomings, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, are minoritarian (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:106).

g) Majority, Minority, Minoritarian

For Deleuze and Guattari there are three political options: majority, minority, and minoritarian. Majority politics refers to the identification with the face of power or the

standard. It invokes only power and the struggle to maintain dominance. Also called “majoritarian” this politics grounds its distinction on a privileged term, for instance “man” (Colebrook, 2002). Minority politics refers to the identity politics of a subordinated group and the affirmation of power and life of that group. This invokes a struggle to establish said group’s position and affirm the group’s life, but in relation to the majority standard. Regarding the privileged term “man”, then, women can be seen as equal to men through arguments that they are also “rational, democratic, economically-motivated, and moral, ‘just like us’” (Colebrook, 2002: 117).

Minoritarian politics diverges from this binary, establishing a politics that is non-identarian and is always a process of becoming. In its becoming, minoritarian politics negates both the standard and its deviation, and constitutes something entirely new. A minoritarian politics does not require a pre-given norm for inclusion (Colebrook, 2002). Instead of an inclusive identity, the minoritarian is a process of becomings which are the “*treatments of life*” (Thoburn, 2003: 6). The minoritarian is not the minority then, but is rather a becoming over which no one fixed identity has ownership. Assemblages are minoritarian because they do not subsume all to the identity of the one. Similarly, a minoritarian politics is not about representation, but rather about constitution: it is the perpetual re-affirmation of something new.

In the political realm processes of becoming-minoritarian invoke what I call a minor current³. This minor current tracks alongside minority politics – struggles for

³ The idea of a minor current follows from Thoburn’s (2003) idea of a minor politics which he argues are a breach of majority and minority politics, and instead centre on an engagement with the social relations which traverse us, and “through which we experience life as ‘cramped’ and ‘impossible’” (Thoburn, 2012). Thoburn uses “minor politics” but “minor current” is not a term he deploys.

legitimacy and identity – but refuse subsumption into those fixed positions. In this dissertation I highlight contemporary movements such as Occupy, the Indignados, and the struggle in Tahrir Square as moments of a minoritarian politics. The organization of this politics I call “assembly movements”.

h) Assembly Movements.

I define assembly movements as those struggles with a directly democratic, participatory, and open core around which tactical and strategic organizing decisions are based. They are broad-based movements, often coalitional, and they eschew a politics of representation. Instead, assembly movements attempt to supplant ossified and oppressive structures of hierarchy and power by cementing power in the temporally located collection of bodies that are participating in the assembly process. In practice, assembly movements are constituent struggles – they aim to create and constitute something new. Often they become infrastructures for social reproduction without ossifying or becoming strictly identarian. They are prefigurative struggles, but they attempt to collectively develop what precise future they might be prefiguring.

Struggles falling on the rubric of “assembly movements” have a long history – they are not simply emergences of the present moment. These historical and current assembly movements express a minoritarian politics, and as historical struggles they existed as a minor current to the more minority and majority social and political movements of their time. In Chapter 2 I highlight three historical assembly movements: the Russian Soviets of 1905, the Turin Factory Councils of 1919, and the social movements of Italy in the 1970s. In Chapter 5 I draw out the expansion of assembly movements into the present, looking at the examples of the Occupy movement, the Spanish Indignados, and the struggles over Tahrir Square in Egypt. In Chapters 6 and 7 I identify the Quebec student strike as another example of an assembly movement.

Certainly today, as in the past, assembly movements are not the only – nor even most prevalent – dynamic existing on the terrain of political struggle. As the international communisation collective *Sic* has noted, several other dynamics of class struggle have also developed and their encounters with assembly movements may not be harmonious (Woland/Blaumachen & friends, 2014). Primarily they point to the “riots of the excluded” (2014) as a central and competing dynamic to the “assembly” struggles, as well as to the existence of more traditional labour movements around the globe. I will return to the varying dynamics of struggle that Woland/Blaumachen & friends (2014) outline in the conclusion to this dissertation, addressing how assembly movements relate to these other dynamics and considering the legacy of the public occupations wave of 2011 and the student strike of 2012. For now, though, what this all means is that an analysis of “assembly movements,” their underlying logics, their varying modes of social reproduction and communicative endeavours are important if we are to understand the ways in which they may intersect with simultaneously occurring struggles of differing demographics – the labour movements and the rioters being just two. The task of this project is to understand some of these potentials, logics, and obstacles through the lens of one particular case study, and using the central and unifying concept of the assemblage. Considering the resonances between the assembly movements as political form and the particular techno-scientific concept of the assemblage allows us to connect the threads between political movements and the prevailing technological conditions, and aids in the formulation of new ways of understanding political organisation in the class recomposition of the present movement. It is hoped that this analysis will contribute to orienting an approach to future movement organisation and structure that can contend with both the differing dynamics of contemporary class struggle and the issues of social reproduction inhering in both, as well as begin to develop more complex, nuanced, and

dialectical theories of the use of digital, social technologies in movements of the assembly, of the riot, and of labouring bodies.

0.2 Case Study Methods

While the development of the concepts described above is one part of my methodological apparatus, the other part is an empirically based case study of the events in Montreal during the Quebec student strike, which is discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. The case study is left to the final two chapters because my experience in this struggle led, for me, to a great deal of historical thinking and organisational reconsiderations. The experience of the Quebec student strike in particular and the 2011 struggles in general led me to a prolonged examination of contemporary theories of radical political organisation, digital technologies, and feminist theory. It forced me to consider the adequacy of specific concepts in relation to the concrete events in which I was involved. Therefore, I present the conceptual issues first and the case study second, reversing the process of my own investigations, in a sense. In so doing, I hope to clearly develop the key ideas and concepts and then demonstrate their operationalization and full elucidation in the examples provided.

The research for the two case study chapters is largely based on personal interviews, participant observation, and documentary evidence. To provide an empirical study of the strike remains difficult due to the minimal published work on the issue, whether theoretical or narrative-based. While occasionally relying on personal reflections based on my own experiences, I supplement these with the personal interviews and anecdotes published on blogs and in compilations of strike writings. These sources help to demonstrate my experiences as shared. I will explore in detail the methodologies of

participant observation and non-standardized informal interviews in Chapter Six. In addition to interviews and participant observation. In this section, I would like to highlight the overarching methodology that governs this entire project, the *Operaismo*-inspired methodologies *conricerca* (co-research) or militant research.

These similar research methodologies require an examination of social movements *from the perspective of struggle*. They operate based on the understanding of those being studied as co-producers of knowledge. This modify the position of research; no longer is it the key site for generating knowledge but rather it facilitates the capacity of those in struggle to generate knowledges for themselves. The Argentinian research collective *Colectivo Situaciones* note that militant research “tries to generate a capacity for struggles to read themselves and, consequently, to recapture and *disseminate* the advances and productions of other social practices” (Colectivo Situaciones, 2003).

Both militant research and *conricerca* grow out of the long history of “inquiries” as developed by both Marx and Engels in the 19th C⁴. Militant research and *conricerca* differ slightly, but both see themselves not simply as research but as *political action*. *Conricerca* (or co-research) was developed in Italy in the 1960s mostly by Romano Alquati and the young activists writing in the militant journals *Quaderno Rossi* and *Classe Operai*, and sought to understand the struggles of factory workers and students not as sociological knowledge, but as a political tool for the expansion and circulation of struggle (Roggero, 2010). *Conricerca* is itself a practice of intellectual production that does not accept a distinction between active researcher and passive research subject. The *con-* or “co” is meant to “question the borders between the production of knowledge and

⁴ See, for example, Marx’s (1880) “A Workers’ Inquiry” and Engels’ (2009) *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

political subjectivity” (Roggero, 2010: np) or, simply, to create a productive cooperation that transforms both parties into active participants in producing knowledge and in transforming themselves. More than anything, *conricerca* is a political methodology; it is the methodology of a constitutive breach (Roggero, 2010).

Militant research similarly, is, according to the Spanish women's group Precarias a la Deriva (Precarious Women Adrift) “a process of our own capacity of worlds-making which...questions, problematizes and pushes the real through a series of concrete procedures” (Van Meter, 2008: np). It is “research carried out with the aim of producing knowledge useful for militant or activist ends”. Both *conricerca* and militant research provide one with a set of tools – concepts, techniques, mechanisms – that “contribute to existing frameworks in radical movements by adding research components and by taking a direct role in producing knowledge and strategies that resonate with movement campaigns, organisations and initiatives” (Van Meter, 2008: np). Like Autonomist theory generally, it is a focus on struggle from the perspective of struggle and as such provides opportunities for communication within and between movements thus widening the field of struggle.

My case study, the Quebec student strike, is analysed in this spirit – in the spirit of *conricerca* or militant research. Using the snowball sampling method⁵ I interviewed 19 participants in the strike: students or non-students who were directly involved in the strike, organizing solidarity campaigns, volunteering with Concordia University TV (CUTV), or doing all three. I involved myself in the strike as well, attending regular

⁵ Also called “chain referral sampling” this is a research method in which existing interviewees recruit other subjects to the study for interviewing. Therefore, I initial interviewees introduced me to other subjects to be interviewed based on their personal relationships or knowledge of their participation in the movement.

rallies and marching in night demos, observed student and neighbourhood assemblies, and volunteered with CUTV. While being an active participant in some aspects of the strike, I saw myself as engaged primarily in research solidarity work, and so refrained from actively engaging in decision-making processes or activities that would determine the tactical and strategic directions of the strike. For this reason, the results of this dissertation are less prescriptive and more revelatory – an approach towards research which is more open-ended and based upon the revelations that movement participants and I collectively experienced through the process of struggle. This is to say, this dissertation insists that “collective struggles *reveal* things to us about our movements” (Dixon, 2014: 61) that we did not previously know. I attempted to get at these revelations through interviews, participant observation, and documentary evidence, and I present my findings here as part of a collective answer to a question collectively asked.

0.3 Chapter Breakdown: An Extended Abstract

My dissertation is rooted equally in Deleuze and Guattari’s techno-scientific concept of the assemblage and the Marxism of the Italian Autonomists. In Chapter One I trace the concept of the assemblage. I put the work of Deleuze and Guattari into its historical context and consider the relations between assemblages and both systems theory and actor-network theory. I analyze Manuel DeLanda’s “assemblage theory” and highlight its departure from the Marxism of Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, Chapter 1 constructs concrete connections between Autonomist concepts of class composition and Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblage through the notion of relations of exteriority. I claim that social reproduction forms the technical basis of a minor current in class composition, a notion only possible to consider through the relations of exteriority that are a key component of assemblages.

In Chapter Two I examine three moments of class composition as developed by Antonio Negri: the professional worker, the mass worker, and the socialized worker. I connect these three moments to three historical examples that align with them: the Russian soviets of 1905; the factory councils of Turin in 1919, and the social movements of the Italian Hot Autumn in the 1970s. I connect each moment to a particular means of communication in order to demonstrate that a human-machinic assemblage (the merging of human and technological bodies) has been a key factor in each of these historical moments and is not limited to contemporary social struggles. While each of the examples explored in Chapter Two elucidates the Autonomist theory of class composition, I argue that the major form of class composition has always been attended by a minoritarian, autonomous, assembly-based stream. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the importance of assemblage theory for understanding the persistence of a minor current within the logics of class composition.

In Chapter Three I move my research closer to the present, contextualizing contemporary class composition in the 2011 cycle of struggles. I engage with Hardt and Negri's theory of multitude, arguing against their contention that it describes of compositional form. Instead I claim that multitude describes a process of class *decomposition*. I work through related Autonomist concepts such as the general intellect and immaterial labour and begin to build a theory of a recomposing class in the form of an assemblage. I do so by providing a detailed elaboration of the current technical composition of capital. This supports broader arguments regarding the pervasiveness of embodied and machinic technologies in contemporary social movements and the role of these technologies in projects of recuperated and securitized social reproduction.

In Chapter Four I provide an in-depth description of social reproduction and define it as an integral element in contemporary class composition. I contend that the

1973-2006 economic cycle has expanded an ongoing crisis of social reproduction – one begun in the global south and now circulating through the global north. I focus on this crisis in the domains of care, education, and communication. In terms of care I examine the role of globalization in unraveling the fabric of community and family care in the global south, and in instituting what Hirschfeld (2000) and Parrenas (2000) call “global care chains”. I examine how care for each other has become increasingly commodified and how work in contemporary low-waged sectors such as retail and fast food become integral parts of the economy of social reproduction. I then look at the commodification of education as a component of a socially reproductive crisis, the vast accumulation of debt for students in the global north, and the role of debt in structuring collective and individual choices. As such I investigate to what degree a crisis in education transforms educational institutions into sites of securitized social reproduction.

Finally I examine a crisis in communications. I detail how contemporary technologies potentially accelerate our lives while folding communicative practices into the circulation of capital, following Dean’s (2009) notion of communicative capitalism. With Berardi (2009) I argue that the command to communicate inculcates our “souls” into work, and makes anxiety or panic the dominant affective condition. This command includes an exhortation to be visible which forces a confrontation with issues of surveillance and enclosure. In the conclusion I begin to push against this pessimistic grain, suggesting that through understanding the decompositional forces that crisis of social reproduction highlights we can begin to both understand the role of the human-machinic assemblage at the heart of capital and at the heart of resistance.

In Chapter Five I look at how social reproduction – particularly in the three abovementioned domains – has been central to and is recuperated in the 2011 cycle of struggles. I focus on the Egyptian Revolution, the Spanish Indignados, and Occupy Wall

Street as case studies to support these claims. I engage with critiques of these movements and of their machinic content. In so doing I demonstrate that social reproduction is an embodied technology – a human-machinic assemblage, reliant both on digital practices and bodies collecting in space. This assemblage is a component of class composition today, given autonomous shape in the assembly form in particular.

In Chapter Six I move on to the case study of the Quebec student strike, examining how the act of assembling and the actual assemblies of the strike constitute moments of affective and material social reproduction. These moments form two distinct yet connected assemblages – that of being together and that of deciding together – which contributed to the recuperation of social reproduction. Each of these assemblages exist in intersecting human and machinic forms, but the focus of this chapter is on the embodied elements. It develops the constituent politics found in both being and deciding together of the strike's assemblage.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, attempts a dialectical and critical analysis of the participatory media form prevalent in the Quebec Student Strike: the live streaming broadcasts of Concordia University Television. I define the live streaming as a human-machinic assemblage, and highlight how this assemblage contributes to the recuperation of social reproduction particularly in the realm of communication. Because digital sites of resistance have their origins in state and corporate machines and the power apparatuses they invoke, the discussion of resistance and recuperation must be had in the lived context of communications' crisis of social reproduction: discipline, control, and the surveillance apparatus. This chapter also, then, considers how we can mitigate these damaging affects without dismissing the importance of communication and digital media altogether. The structure of this chapter begins by examining the convergence of human and machine in the live streaming broadcasts of CUTV. Then I look at the ways in which

CUTV's live stream broadcasts contributed to transforming the subjects, subject formation, and the institutions of social reproduction in the realm of communication over the period of the strike. I then attempt to understand the "under-mediated" immediacy of the live stream as encouraging autonomous subject formation, and challenging highly the mediated representations of other mediums. Finally I focus on CUTV's live stream as what I call a "counter-hegemonic surveillance assemblage", dealing with conceptions of safety, security, and surveillance on the part of demonstrators and potentially the state. Through each of these runs the thread of affect – an emotional and care-oriented core of social reproduction. Affect and social media has been under-theorised by those examining the social struggles of the 2011 cycle, but is central to understanding the use of digital media as a component of a struggle for the recuperation of social reproduction in the Quebec Student Strike of 2012. This research grows out of participant observation, interviews, document analysis, and theoretical studies of CUTV's work during the strike.

In conclusion, this dissertation aims to make three original contributions to knowledge. Building upon a theoretical toolkit and historical documentation I seek to 1) develop a new understanding of *Operaismo*'s theory of class composition, rooting both the technical and political compositions in social reproduction; 2) revise some of the prevalent contemporary theories of media technologies in class struggle; and 3) provide a concrete case study to illustrate these points.

1.0 Chapter 1: Assemblages and Class Composition

Understanding class composition is enhanced by an engagement with the concept of assemblages. Thinking class through assemblage theory allows us to see the role of ignored components of class strata, and to develop non-fetishistic theories of the technological. The concept of “assemblage” was key to the overarching thought of

Deleuze and Guattari.⁶ This chapter traces some of the ways the concept has been defined and operationalized both in their work and in later contributions.

Explication of assemblages in the work of Deleuze and Guattari requires revisiting the historical context in which they were writing. Understanding this context – 1968 and the decade immediately after – clearly illuminates the creative Marxism of their project. This Marxism is eviscerated in the later “assemblage theory” of Manuel DeLanda, whose work is one of the main channels through which serious consideration of assemblages has reached North American audiences. Pointing to key claims in DeLanda’s work I will discuss why his theory of assemblages is a break with the politics of Deleuze and Guattari. I will then construct connections between the overtly Marxist *Operaismo* understandings of class composition and Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblages, a connection which resides at the heart of this dissertation project. I conclude by explaining how I use the theory of assemblages here, with special reference to Donna Haraway’s “cyborg” as a co-traveller in attempts at understanding productive convergences of humans and machines, social reproduction and technology.

1.1. The Legacies of '68

The concept of assemblage develops through Deleuze and Guattari’s two-part project called *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The first volume, *Anti-Oedipus* was published in 1972 but written in the midst of the tumult of 1968, considered a year of global revolution by world systems theorists Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein (1989). In

⁶ Although central to *A Thousand Plateaus* the concept is also evident in *Anti-Oedipus*.

1968 mass protests and revolt had erupted in cities across the globe, from Paris (most spectacularly) and Rome to Prague and Mexico City, Madrid to Chicago and London. *Anti-Oedipus* was an optimistic and wildly experimental piece of political philosophy. In 1980 the second volume, *A Thousand Plateaus*, was published, written in the dismal aftermath of the iconic 1968. It offered a much more sombre appraisal of political possibilities, reflecting on the attempted yet failed politics of '68, while still proffering experimentation in both theoretical endeavours and political compositions. Of '68's revolutionary events Deleuze and Guattari write, "those who evaluated things in macropolitical terms" at the time "understood nothing of the event because something unaccountable was happening" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 238). That unaccountable something was a micropolitics which left politicians, parties, unions, and many leftists "ultimately vexed" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 238).

Macro and micro are simultaneously present in any instance of politics, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contend. The macro and the micro of politics are not scalar concepts; they do not refer to the size of or perspective on struggle. Rather they are about levels. Micropolitics concerns transformations in sensibility and modes of relating; macropolitics concerns conscious positions, demands, open struggles (Nunes and Trott, 2008). As such, the events of 1968 are crucial to Deleuze and Guattari's thinking not on the basis of sets of demands met, goals attained, or victories achieved (macropolitics), but instead for the conceptual shifts, relational modes, and affective or psychic transformations inaugurated (micropolitics). These micropolitics can inform and infect a macropolitics. In 1968, Deleuze and Guattari write, a "molecular flow was escaping, minuscule at first, then swelling" (1987: 238). It was an unfolding of forces which marked changes in political relations, structures of thinking, and compositions of struggle that were both concrete and ephemeral, pragmatic and affective. It is these political legacies, permeating *A Thousand Plateaus*, which inform the concept of the assemblage.

In 1968 a less hierarchical, more cooperative, solidaristic society appeared within reach. By 1980 that possibility had all but vanished. Although the energies and experiments of 1968 rippled out longest in Italy,⁷ a firm neoliberalism began in earnest in 1973⁸ and had taken firm hold of Western Europe and North America by the 1980s (Harvey, 2007). On the political left a sense of despairing retrenchment permeated political and social movements. *A Thousand Plateaus* reflects some of the feelings of defeated despair of the later 1970s in France, with the growth of neoliberalism underway, the recomposition of a powerful capitalism, and the crushing of workers' and working-class movements. But while developing on this affective plane, *A Thousand Plateaus* is not a text of defeat. Rather it is one of caution: it is working to establish a revolutionary mind/body of thought and to minimise the reproduction of "microfascisms."⁹ In particular, concepts such as assemblage – though never fully defined in Deleuze and Guattari's work – are attempts to think through structure, organisation, and relationality in ways that do not reproduce the specific "microfascisms" attributed to earlier forms of political organising, such as parties, vanguards, and hierarchical unions.

⁷ See chapter 2 for more on this

⁸ Although as a theory neoliberalism dates back to the 18th century (Harvey, 2007), 1973 marked the first experiment with neoliberal state formation following the US-backed coup of Salvador Allende by Augusto Pinochet in Chile. After the coup US economists – Milton Friedman and others around the University of Chicago – put into practice the free-market ideologies of neoliberalism. They immediately began "privatizing public assets, opening up natural resources to private exploitation, and facilitating foreign direct investment and free trade" (Harvey, 2007: 26).

⁹ "Microfascism" is related the ways desire, the foundation of all politics, produces rules. Microfascisms differ from Fascism in that they are enacted through the imposition of individual desires upon another, the imposition of individual rules on another. Microfascism can be scaled up to macro levels. It produces a desire which desires only its own repression. Of microfascism Deleuze and Guattari write: "Leftist organisations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms. It is too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish, and cherish with molecules both personal and collective" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 214-15).

It is in this spirit, in the spirit of revolutionary concerns and cautions, that I take up the concept of assemblage. I use it in an effort to understand an emergent class composition centred on assembly movements, and the efforts of these movements to recuperate social reproduction through human-machinic convergences.

1.2 Deleuze and Guattari's Assemblages: Promise and Pitfall

In Deleuze and Guattari's work, "assemblage" is the English translation of the French *agencement*. The francophone word seems to better capture what an assemblage does, to convey its agency, its action. An assemblage, as the active linking of disparate things together in their heterogeneity, can be thought of as a "composition that acts" (Due, 2007: 132). Instead of composing totalities or placing primary importance on component parts, assemblages are constituted by the living connections between components; assemblages are convergences of components, but these components can de-converge, and then re-converge as something new. As new assemblages. Therefore, it is neither the components nor the whole that is central to an assemblage but rather the ongoing relationships, the composition of forces, between elements that compose a whole but not a totality.

Because they are about connections between things, assemblages rely on relations of interiority – between components within the assemblage – and relations of exteriority – with components external to the assemblage and also with other assemblages. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the idea of relations of exteriority comes to mean that component parts of an assemblage can detach and plug into another assemblage where the interactions of this part will be different (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari provide the example of the wasp and the orchid, both self-subsistent components

that come together but exist apart. As DeLanda (2006) puts it, they are “relations which may become obligatory in the course of coevolution” (11). In their active relations, the wasp and the orchid form *becomings* which decomposes one term (the singular orchid, say) and recomposes another (orchid-wasp, perhaps). As the two becomings interlink, they “form relays in a circulation of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10). The connections between external and internal components create temporary wholes and permit new assemblages to emerge, highlighting the importance of relationality. Neither an assemblage nor any component part can be considered in isolation: individuals, institutions, devices all must be considered in relation to each other and with regard to the immanent possibilities that their interminglings create. This emphasizes the living (though not necessarily organic), active nature of the assemblage. For example, the invention of the stirrup, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) note, “entails a new man-horse symbiosis that at the same time entails new weapons and new instruments” (90). One element, in relation to another, creates a new assemblage and expands the old. With this focus on relationality, assemblages continue to resist totalising impulses inherent in other theories of wholes.

Common frameworks for considering relations between things (people, organisations, or objects, for example) tend to position each thing as an atomistic entity (Anderson et al, 2012), which is then mediated through contact and exchange. These atomistic entities have a specific meaning that is determined through their relations to other atomistic entities. Challenging this principle, Deleuze argues that things are *conditioned* but not *determined* by their relations, and thus “relations therefore have autonomy from the terms related” (Anderson et al, 2012: 177). This means that, for Deleuze, an assemblage is a “co-functioning” of heterogeneous parts that creates a provisional whole. The relations internal and external to this whole are an agential, but not determining, force. Thus, the *only* unity in an assemblage comes about through its co-

functioning; the assemblage is a “symbiosis, a ‘sympathy’” (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977: 52). The imprecision of such a definition is, at least partially, the point: an assemblage is a cacophony irreducible to its constituent parts, resistant to the designation as “whole” or to strict definitions as such. That being said, there is a finitude to an assemblage – it is an “emergent process of gathering and dispersion” (Anderson et al, 2012: 177).

Thus an assemblage is not a site wherein homogeneity violently or smoothly subsumes different components. Nor does it operate like the model from systems theory (DeLanda, 2006), molecular biology, or information theory, all of which in some way reify concepts of organismic boundaries (Anderson et al, 2012). Instead, an assemblage’s provisional unity is found in its convergence and co-functioning with other assemblages and heterogeneous components; a relationality between entities and affects (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007).

In relating assemblage theory to assembly politics I seek to demonstrate that assembly movements develop out of a provisional active unity developed by heterogeneous forces – bodies, technologies, politics, and affects – across vast differences and through a “continuous process of movement and transformation as relations and terms change” (Anderson et al, 2012: 177). Suggesting that the power of assembly movements comes from their assemblage-like quality requires, however, a critical awareness of the potential pitfalls of both assemblage theory and assembly politics. Although often considered antithetical to domination, assemblages are not automatically liberatory. In Foucault’s (1980) related concept, *dispositif*, potentially repressive assemblages include the school, the army, the factory, the hospital, and the prison. These are assemblages of power, containing micropowers and microfascisms and they are destructive, constraining, and limiting.

Such destructive capacities are demonstrated in the use of Deleuze and Guattari's work by the Israeli Defence Forces. Weizman (2006) notes that the work of Deleuze and Guattari – including concepts of assemblages, territorialisation and deterritorialisation, war machines, and smooth and striated space – are regularly deployed by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in their military strategizing around the occupation of Palestine. Indeed “the reading lists of contemporary military institutions include works from around 1968 (with a special emphasis on Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Guy Debord)” (Weizman 2006). In a 2004 lecture by retired IDF Brigadier General Naveh a diagram was presented that plotted relationships in military and guerrilla operations. The diagram included headings gleaned from Deleuze and Guattari's work, such as *Difference and Repetition – The Dialectics of Structuring and Structure*; *'Formless' Rival Entities*; *Fractal Manoeuvres*; *Velocity vs. Rhythms*; *Wahhabi War Machine*; *Post-Modern Anarchists*; and *Nomadic Terrorists* (Weizman, 2007). Naveh further observed that the concepts operationalized in *A Thousand Plateaus* have been instrumental to military strategy for the IDF, “allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise explained. It problematized our own paradigm” (quoted in Weizman, 2007: 200-201).

Deleuze and Guattari were influenced by studies of war, but were primarily interested in non-statist forms of resistance in which the state and the military become the enemy. Their work, although important for revolutionary endeavours, also opens itself to counter-insurgency tactics, and counter-revolutionary study. Therefore it is important, when developing a notion of assemblages coming out of a Deleuzo-Guattarian framework, to always consider to what extent one's theorising can become a tool of the state rather than a weapon of revolution. Assemblages in and of themselves carry no set ethico-political criteria or tendency, aside from perhaps an injunction to recognise the heterogeneity of social agents and relations. It is thus important, in thinking through

assembly movements as assemblages, to maintain the spirit of liberation, the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari's politics, the spirit of 1968. The assemblage-theory of Manuel DeLanda serves as a powerful example theorising that evacuates a potential politics from Deleuze and Guattari's formulations.

1.3 An Absence of Politics: Manuel DeLanda's Assemblage Theory

In a 1997 text, *A Thousand Years of Non-Linear History*, DeLanda claimed to be developing a "new kind of historical materialism" (Holland, 2006:181), one which departs considerably from that of Marx. DeLanda's historical materialism would be explicitly anti-Marxist, derived instead from the work of Deleuze and Guattari and from the findings of nonlinear mathematics and complexity theory. In so doing, he completely rewrote the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia – Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Although the principle object of study of both texts was capitalism itself, DeLanda rejected Deleuze and Guattari's Marxism as a concept and even capitalism as a material system upon which one could base a nonlinear history. Instead, the solar system, biospheres, language, and atoms are seen as material systems; a Marxist theory of capitalism is presented as a "totalising, 'top-down' concept that the new, nonlinear sciences of emergence and self organisation have consigned to the trashbin of intellectual history" (Holland, 2006: 182).

DeLanda claims that definition of capitalism as an overarching system of markets based upon a logic of exchange is flawed. Neither "the market" nor a logic of exchange exists, and thus this definition of capitalism homogenises and does not differentiate market *types*. DeLanda follows Braudel in asserting that there is a distinction between markets (the many interacting small producers or trader) and anti-markets (the few large

entities structured by a rigid managerial hierarchy, called oligopolies) (DeLanda, 1996). Markets permit the flourishing of ideas and practices while anti-markets or oligopolies constrain them. To demonstrate this DeLanda (2000) cites a study comparing the production systems of Silicon Valley (wherein markets dominate) to those of Route 128, the area surrounding Boston (wherein anti-markets dominate). In these post-industrial corporations reside very different “ecologies” – Silicon Valley subscribing early to the flexible, decentralised, post-Fordist methods that would come to dominate production throughout the 1980s and 1990s, while Route 128 maintained centralisation, vertical hierarchies, and corporate loyalty. While Route 128 operates on older models of production and surplus value extraction, DeLanda ecstatically declares that the dense social networks and open labour markets of Silicon Valley “encourage experimentation and entrepreneurship” (DeLanda 1996: np) while creating porous boundaries between technology firms, local institutions, trade associations, and universities. Certainly this claim is undermined by the contemporary oligopolistic landscape of search engine and social media firms dominating the California coastline from Silicon Valley to the Bay Area.

Ignoring this distinction between markets and anti-markets, DeLanda (1996) argues, oppresses the dynamic potential applications of such a “new” way of interpreting processes of exchange and trade. This creates a “top-down” mode of analysing both the social and the economic that does not permit for heterogeneity. Needless to say, DeLanda’s work completely ignores any theorisation of workers or of class, and how these may inhere in a flexibilised, post-Fordist labour market (terms DeLanda, in a 2003 interview refers to as “ridiculous”). Instead he celebrates this porosity as “an alternative to economies of scale”, and focuses on the complexity of interactions between the heterogeneous elements involved in this market system (C-Theory, 2003). Anything less becomes a “top-down” analysis that eliminates the original interaction of heterogeneous

elements and prescribes a totality to what is actually a set of emergent properties. For DeLanda (1996), postulating capitalism as an overarching whole, as Marxist thinking does, ignores the heterogeneous processes that make up an economic landscape.

Contrary to DeLanda's totalising thesis on Marxist thinking, understanding the heterogeneous processes of an economic landscape has been core to the theories of uneven development that originated in Trotsky (Trotsky, 1931; Day and Gaido, 2011), were central to the work of Gramsci (1971), and have been key to the economic geographies of Neil Smith (1984) and David Harvey (2006). As well, critiques of an overriding top-down emphasis on the operations of capitalism to Marxist theorising are important – but many Marxists themselves make these critiques,¹⁰ and a libertarian reading of Marx and capitalism has long travelled with more “top-down” currents¹¹.

But it is Autonomist Marxism or *Operaismo* to which theories opposing the top-down perspectives on capitalism and Marxism have been central. The tradition of *Operaismo* centres its analysis squarely on the bottom, on workers and their self-activity.¹² This perspective, incidentally, comes directly *from* Marx's work, that of *Grundrisse* (1973) in particular. The top-down centralising impulses DeLanda highlights are not immanent to Marx's theorising, nor do they emerge from the work of Engels',

¹⁰ Including such figures as Anton Pannekoek, Raya Dunayevskaya, CLR James, Antonio Negri, Cornelius Castoriadis, MariaRosa Dalla Costa, Selma James, Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, Guy Debord, Daniel DeLeon, Daniel Guerin, and Raoul Vaneigem to name a few.

¹¹ As will be outlined in Chapter 2, the early soviets, the council communists, almost the entirety of the New Left but particularly the Italian contingent are confirmed as more “bottom-up” factions of Marxist history.

¹² A much more liberatory and generative focus than the “self-organisation” centred on “markets” that DeLanda espouses, which lacks a comprehensive accounting of relations of exteriority and how these relations might configure and constrain dynamics of power.

who himself conducted a thorough investigation of the material conditions of the English working class (Engels, 2009). Furthermore, a totalising, top-down, homogenising Marxism is neither the sort of Marxist analysis nor understanding of capitalism that Deleuze and Guattari adhere to. In *Negotiations* Deleuze (1990) writes:

Felix Guattari and I have remained Marxists, in our two different ways perhaps, but both of us. You see, we think any political philosophy must turn on the analysis of capitalism and the ways it has developed. What we find most interesting in Marx is his analysis of capitalism as an immanent system that's constantly overcoming its own limitations, and then coming up against them once more in broader form, because its fundamental limit is capital itself (Deleuze, 1990).

Clear in this is a refutation of DeLanda's top-down, static reading of Marxism and capitalism. Rather Deleuze and Guattari, and Marx for that matter, read the capitalist mode of production as a dynamic system that structures material conditions through relations of exteriority and internal tensions.

DeLanda expunges the Marxism from Deleuze and Guattari's work, accusing them of using Marxist concepts and philosophies as a "safe space" in which to theoretically reside, an unexamined stratum in their project of destratification (DeLanda, 1997). They retain, he writes, "the concept of 'mode of production' and of 'capitalist system' in a top-down way as an axiom of decoded flows" (DeLanda, 1997: 331 FN7). They, DeLanda claims, posit capitalism as a whole. Contrary to this, Deleuze and Guattari discuss capitalism as a system both contingent and emergent, not totalising or teleological. They state explicitly that for them Marxism is a stratum, a place from which to destratify.

Projects engaged in destratification must be handled cautiously, one must not destratify wildly. To be stratified is not a catastrophe, they argue. Rather they assert: “this is how it should be done: lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialisation, possible lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 160-61). This is to say, rather than as an unexamined stratum with top-down and teleological tendencies, Deleuze and Guattari find Marxist analyses of capitalism to be strata on which advantageous possibilities arise.

For Marx, as for Deleuze and Guattari, there is no immanent teleology to capitalism, even though it tends towards crisis and destruction. As a system, capital is a social relation *and* a process “in whose various moments it is always capital” (Marx, 1973: 258). At the centre of Marx’s project, Read (2003) argues that Marx considers capitalism an unfolding process and an historical contingency – in Deleuzian terms it is an assemblage conditioned by its relationality. Thus, contrary to DeLanda’s claims, there is a sense of development and self-perpetuation in Marx’s capitalist mode of production (Read, 2002) based on the relations of exteriority that give an assemblage both its coherence and its meaning. These relations of exteriority might include the labour of social reproduction that both maintains capital and holds the possibility of undermining it, as well as the internal tensions of the working class as an antagonistic force against capital. Class struggle, as the struggle of those external to capital but internal to its logic of value creation, can be seen as one of the relations of externality that move the assemblage of capital through its historical unfolding.

In his 2006 text *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, DeLanda takes up the concept of the assemblage to define a new ontology of the social. It is through this text, DeLanda’s many lectures, and his (more infrequent) writings that DeLanda fully develops his theory of assemblages. His work convenes a

concept dispersed throughout Deleuze and Guattari's work into a coherent (more or less) theory, a theory through which one can build a critical framework for understanding the social. Deleuze and Guattari's assemblages open new avenues for engaging processes such as information and digitisation, for understanding a global, neoliberal capitalism, for diagramming societies of control, but also for highlighting possible points of resistance to all of these. As reviewers Clough, Han, and Schiff (2007) note, though, DeLanda is not engaged in situating these assemblages – nor any Deleuzo-Guattarian thought – into Marxist, historical, or geopolitical frameworks. Deleuze and Guattari's work is not taken up by DeLanda to inform a “critical social analytics for *these* times” (Clough, et al. 2007: 388, emphasis mine). Instead, in *A New Philosophy of Society*, DeLanda writes for some time out of time, an imagined time without the frictions of class struggle, a time wherein markets are merely sites of productive exchange and not loci of exploitation and alienation. Along with refusals of Marxism and capitalism, he similarly rejects the market or the state as ontological infrastructures, as ways of developing a philosophy of society. He rather suggests that the market and the state are reified generalities, and therefore not empirical, concrete, or historical.

Following Deleuze and Guattari, DeLanda conceives of the world and its structuring institutions as an assemblage, “constructed through very specific historical processes” (DeLanda, 2006: 3) including cosmological and evolutionary, alongside human, history. As an assemblage, then, the structures of the world are “wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts” (DeLanda, 2006: 5) and can model other, intermediate, entities. Interpersonal networks and institutional organisations are assemblages of people, DeLanda (2006) writes, “social justice movements are assemblages of several networked communities; central governments are assemblages of several organisations, as well as of a variety of infrastructure components, from buildings and streets to conduits for matter and energy flows” (DeLanda, 2006: 5-6). Defined in

this way assemblages require no human presence, no subjects, or no intervention. They are of the same order as cosmological, geological, or evolutionary processes. This helps explain DeLanda's (2006) assertion that grain markets have no greater ontological reality than atoms; thus atoms and grain markets are relative terms rather than decisively different categories of existence in the world.

But what of capitalism then? It is left entirely absent as a structuring institution in the world although it can easily be conceived of as an assemblage of people, commodities, money, technologies, circulation and transportation systems – much as DeLanda imagines governments, for example, or social movements. If social movements can “emerge” as an assemblage of networked communities, how can capitalism not arise from similar convergences? Without asserting capitalism as an assemblage it can be considered outside of the realist social ontology DeLanda wants to pursue. But capitalism is clearly an assemblage, a system, a network of social relations and a process with an historical contingency based on relations of exteriority. If governments, social movements, institutional organisations and interpersonal networks are “natural” – cosmological and evolutionary – phenomenon, so too is capitalism (as Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Anti-Oedipus*, asserted). Further, so too is class struggle.

DeLanda's work offers potential important avenues for considering assemblages - organic and inorganic – in their capacities as possibly liberating or dominating. For example, his earlier project (1991) on war machines could prove useful for critiquing and proposing alternatives to centralised assemblages of machinic technology as diagrams of control. But, absent Deleuze and Guattari's experimental Marxism and diminishing their radicality, DeLanda's work operationalizes concepts of emergence, self-organising, and assemblage to justify the logics of neoliberalism, the free market, flexibilisation,

precarity, and militarization, amongst other things. His enthusiasm for markets, in particular, is a “natural” outgrowth of his theories of decentralization, emerging as they did in the neoliberal 1990s with its global project to sell an intensified and muscular capitalism. In an in 2003 interview published in *C-Theory* he states plainly that small scale enterprises with greater flexibility provide for more permeability between classes and maintain less inequitable power relations between worker and owner. The blanket concept of capitalism, he claims, obscures this relation (*C-Theory*, 2003). Therefore, DeLanda’s assemblages cannot be used to compose a project for thinking through capitalism as a system and its many resistances. A more generative possibility for assemblage theory lies in its connection to the theoretical and political project of *operaismo* and later Autonomism, which since the 1960s has tried to work through understanding revolutionary possibilities without positing a top-down, hierarchical, and centralising perspective on social processes.

1.4 Mobilising Assemblages: Autonomism, Assembly Movements, and Class Composition

An insistence upon transformation is key to the assemblages in Deleuze and Guattari and in DeLanda’s work. Transformation is also key to the theory of class composition coming out of the *Operaismo* tradition. Recalling from the Introduction, class composition theory refers to the division between the capitalist organisation of labour power (the technical composition) and the organisation of the working class against capital (the political composition). Changes in the technical composition open up new modes of struggle and organisation for the political composition, and in this way capitalism and anti-capitalism chase each other in a cycle of struggles. Composition, in terms of technical, political, and class composition, developed out of the *operaismo* movement in the 1960s and 70s in Italy. One of the movement’s central aims was to use

Marxist concepts and the Marxist tradition to identify movements, politics, and thinkers which emphasize “the autonomous power of workers – autonomous from capital, from their official organisations (e.g. the trade unions, the political parties) and, indeed, the power of particular groups of workers to act autonomously from other groups” (Cleaver, quoted in Wright, 2008: 116). *Class* composition was advanced by *Operaismo* thinkers as a new expression of class struggle; one that would permit individual autonomy within new revolutionary groupings, which were themselves autonomous. Such theorisations of the political permit consideration of how open-ended collectives can come to be, whilst maintaining their heterogeneity.

Both assemblages and class compositions are perpetually engaged in processes of assembling and disassembling enacted through relations of exteriority and the internal tensions these relations create. This concept of relationality is important to the project of understanding assembly movements, technology, and social reproduction in two main ways. First, thinking about relations between externalities and the becoming of something new helps resolve presumed contradictions between constituency and difference – the assumption that for composition to take place differences must be erased and totalities, or unities, must be created. Second, relationality connects assemblages to the thread of affect that runs through social reproduction, communication, and assembly movements in general. But importantly here, the connection between Deleuze and Guattari’s relationality and composition make clear the resonances of assemblage theory in *Operaismo* thinking.

Both assemblages and class composition appear from engagements between the organic and the inorganic, the machinic and the embodied. As such, class composition as a concept can be seen through the lens of assemblage theory: class is an assemblage. In any given moment class composition, as an assemblage, is only the visible manifestation

of external relations and internal tensions. It is here that Deleuze and Guattari's Marxism becomes fundamental for understanding class composition as a system, shaped by external relations to organic and inorganic entities, and possessing its own historical contingency. Classes compose and decompose as a process not as a teleological and predetermined fact. Of course, there is considerable tension between this conception of class and that of more "classic" Marxisms,¹³ which see class as a rather static entity made up of proletariat in an antagonistic relationship towards capitalists at the point of production. Seeing class as an assemblage allows us to understand the dynamic ways class struggles emerge at different points and sites in the productive and reproductive process in different historic moments.

Thinking of class composition through Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage theory allows us to understand how hegemonic and sub-altern fragments *within* proletarian organising can simultaneously exist. It allows us to think through what relations of exteriority bring people into what compositions, how minor currents can track alongside majoritarian politics. Assemblage theory opens up further considerations of structure that divests itself of the binary between ossified permanence and fluid transformation; as such it promotes understanding composition in terms of relationality. Finally, in both the notion of relationality and in its quest to move beyond strict categories of identity, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of assemblages encourages serious engagement with the affective dimensions of politics. That is, the focus on relationality in assemblage theory can help articulate the importance of affective labour such as allyship and solidarity, and

¹³ And there is debate internal to later Autonomism regarding what a class is, as seen in the various discussions and disagreements as to whether multitude is a class or whether class as a concept is dated and outmoded. See for example: Virno, nd; Negri, 2002.

ultimately of social reproduction, in class composition. These converging concepts are foundational to the theory of class struggle offered here.

Neither Deleuze and Guattari's nor DeLanda's assemblages are sufficient here for thinking through an enduring political project. For Deleuze the assemblage is in permanent flux, continually dissolving and morphing into something new, even on a moment-by-moment basis. Temporally and spatially, a Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage is transient. What political use, for the purposes of a recuperated social reproduction, is an entity that transforms itself "like a cloud that pulls together and loses molecules" (Tampio, 2009: 394) and are only ever "semi-coherent political entities" (Tampio, 2009: 394) even if articulated from a Marxist perspective? *Operaist* theories of class composition, then, become a fruitful way to engage assemblage theory, allowing considerations of *how* heterogeneous entities – organisations, formations, movements, struggles – can not only compose themselves, but also develop a clarified Marxist politics. Class composition theory provides a way of working through that connection between assemblages and the revolutionary Marxist project that Deleuze and Guattari were engaged in.

Because assemblage theory focuses on relationality, so too must theorisations of class composition and assembly movements be considered relationally *as* assemblages. This perspective highlights the constitutive power of assembly movements as compositions of the class, a central focus of this dissertation. Charting the relations that exist within movements aids in understanding how the practices, relations, technologies, and politics of the assembly *constitute* something, how they create a structure, even if this structure is, as noted earlier, in transformation, is fluid and mobile. Compositions such as assembly movements – wherein configurations of people, politics, practices, and technologies converge at one site, expand outwards, break off, decompose, recompose,

and converge elsewhere – create the autonomist “cycle of struggles”¹⁴ as an embodied and structural experience. Without an imposed teleology, the cycles of decomposition and recomposition mark the relations of exteriority in assembly movements – their responsiveness to changing material conditions, their full investment in relationality. It is as such that heterogeneous component parts permit an assemblage’s continuity, durability, and longevity even in the midst of transformation and flux.

A final point regarding my particular interpretation of the concept of assemblage in this project: while Deleuze and Guattari highlight relationality as key to assemblages, it is less the specifics of the relationship between things that is central and rather “the ways in which this relationship engages the ‘things’ themselves – what is brought into play in each multiplicity” (Ruddick, 2012: 208). This leads us to considerations of affect: how alliances, and solidarity – social reproduction – can become the loci around which assembly movements turn – and further to thinking about the relationship of affect *to* the composition and decomposition of non-totalising wholes. Ruddick (2012) notes that assemblages must “always be combining with exterior parts in a way that does not threaten its own existence” (209), and the same can be said for assembly movements. While making use of various technologies, and combining from previously un-politicised, diverse, and heterogeneous populations, assembly movements as assemblages have exterior and interior relations that can strengthen and cohere them as entities. The task is to think through ways that these relations will, in fact, not threaten the existence of an assembly movement. This can be done through considerations of relationality in terms of

¹⁴ Briefly, the concept of a cycle of struggles refers to the processes of compositions, decomposition, and recomposition of the working class, or capital. This allows us to understand the ways that, in one cycle, leading roles may be taken up by some sectors, and some organisational strategies may be practiced, while others may decline, become archaic or disappear. None of this means that class conflict has waned, just that the terms and models have changed.

affect, solidarity, and allyship – particularly with regard to the concrete manifestations of these relations. Such concrete manifestations include the practices of recuperating social reproduction that assembly movements are engaged in, such practices that are central to the feminist-Marxism of Federici and to the heterodox Marxism of George Caffentzis.

1.5 In Conclusion: Other Assemblages, Other Cyborgs, Other Feminisms

To maintain an engagement with the less ephemeral, more structural elements of the assemblage as a theory I want to think with Saskia Sassen (2008a and 2008b), as she takes up the concept of assemblages. While she has taken much from the theoretically dense work of Deleuze and Guattari the urban studies journal *Assemblages*, her use of the term is far more descriptive. For Sassen the term assemblage develops more from a dictionary definition,¹⁵ although she interprets from Deleuze and Guattari's work the mix of technical and administrative practices that convene in an assemblage. In Sassen's work assemblages are the incipient global formations that unsettle the "still prevalent institutional arrangements (nation-states and the supranational system)" (Sassen, 2008a: 62), which handle systems of order and justice. This refers to the coming together and suffusing of once distinct domains; the dissipation, for example, of the strictly national replaced by partial and "often highly specialised formations centred in particularly utilities and purposes" (Sassen, 2008a: 62). These assemblages look like inchoate geographies and through them she sees the development of globalisation as global convergences territory, authority, and rights. In a series of works (Sassen, 2007; 2008a;

¹⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines an assemblage variously as a "bringing together" a "meeting or gathering", a "joining or union", a "conjunction" and a "collection".

2008b), Sassen uses the concept of the assemblage to understand globalisation, the changing shape of the nation, and new, networked technologies. In these texts she demonstrates that foundational changes are underway within the state apparatus. These changes are not only a result of technologically powered globalisation, but also consist of denationalising impulses as state power transforms into multiple and highly specialised assemblages of bits of territory, authority, and rights (Sassen, 2007; 2008a; 2008b). These assemblages cut across binaries; the national is shot through with the global and vice versa.

While my own use of the term cleaves closer to the Deleuzo-Guattarian definition, Sassen's contributing analyses of emergent and expanded territoriality through digital technologies open up insights into the expanded potential of assembly movements in the current cycle of struggles. The tensions that Sassen (2008a and 2008b) highlights resulting from the localised micro-infrastructures and global networks exist within assembly movements as well – fighting local struggles while understanding the connection to and import of the global dimensions of crisis and resolutions/revolutions. As well, as theorists such as Mason (2012), have demonstrated, the expansive territoriality that is made possible through digital technologies – because assembly movements take place within a globally interconnected world the reverberations they can have and the lengths to which their component parts can reach are both broad and vast. This was made concrete in the anti-government demonstrations in Madison, WI in 2011, following on the heels of the Arab Spring. In that instance, supporters from around the world, most spectacularly some from Egypt, sent pizzas to those occupying the State capitol buildings for days on end. This solidifies the notion of a territoriality that is not solely spatially located, and aids an understanding of the assembly beyond the particular *site* of the assembly. The Quebec student strike, with its roving demonstrations, nightly marches, and dispersed sites of struggle also signifies a territoriality that is not only

global and local, but also subjective and internal. This is to say, while the structure of actually existing assemblies are important to assembly movements, this structure is something that can be both concrete and also can exist in and through the practices at work in assembly movements.

Further to this, in their attempt at a brief definition of assemblage Marcus and Saka (2006) state that the assemblage “invests easily in the image of structure, but is nonetheless elusive” (102). Structure is not something that can be clearly seen but is demonstrated through practices that can appear and disappear dependent upon the composition of the entity. This speaks again to the tension that Sassen highlighted as holding assemblages together: the structure of the assemblage is an invitation to think outside of strict structured/unstructured binaries much as assembly movements and assemblies as us to think outside of the opposition of horizontal/vertical, vanguardist/anarchist, or leaders/led. Of course this can lead to charges of ephemerality, a veiled uselessness, or even a counter-revolutionary impulse that follows much post-structuralist political thought. Certainly, there is much to be wary about in cheering a political theory that relies upon an opaque, perhaps non-existent, structure. At the same time, the structure that is created in assembly movements and in assemblages refuses the ossification that occurs with many “structured” movements that seek concrete form, such as the state, the party, or even the (business) union – examples of which I offer in Chapter Two.

The structure of the assemblage is one that is always in transformation, because the assemblage is beholden to the heterogeneous elements that compose it. Thinking of assembly movements as assemblages allows us to trace these heterogeneous elements and examine how they co-function: how human beings and digital technologies, for example, work together, or how specific constituent-based concerns – such as free education – co-

function with broader anti-austerity demonstrations, indigenous solidarity struggles, and climate justice actions. This is to examine how an assemblage or an assembly movement enters into relations with other assemblages, and permits a mapping of encounters and contacts with external forces that give assemblages their shape, consistency, and fluidity. Further, assemblage theory allows us to foreground processes of composition that take place across and through the human and the non-human, forcing a consideration of social wholes as made up of a complex array of parts “which do not necessarily cohere in seamless organic wholes” (Anderson et al, 2012: 172). The instability of relations in assemblage theory opens up novel possibilities. When thought of in relation to assembly movements this allows for consider new ways of organising as well as emergent modes of communicating, and recuperating social reproduction.

With particular reference to the relationship between technology and human beings, assemblage theory helps ripen sophisticated and complex understandings of how these elements relate and interact. Often the relation between humans and technologies is posed as one becoming more like the other – positioning human beings and technologies as discrete entities. Instead, assemblage theory allows us to understand the embodied and the machinic in assembly movements as integrated and flowing through each other. As MacGregor-Wise (2005) notes, assemblages work through flows of agency rather than specific practices of power and as such they are integrated human and machinic becomings. This allows us to understand, for example, both the surveillant and countersurveillant prospects of an assemblage, or of a technology within an assembly movement. Seeing human beings and technologies not as discrete entities but as components of a shared assemblage, marked by flows and intertwined together, I can begin to frame the digital-corporeal mergings in later chapters without a reliance on technological fetishism or tropes about machinic domination. Through my *Operaismo*-

informed assemblage theory I can trace a history of machinic-human mergers – human machinic assemblages – as not temporally specific or corporeally discrete.

This understanding of merged humans and machines takes on a specifically feminist framework in Donna Haraway's work on cyborgs and cyborg feminism. In her "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (1991) she contends with the ways new advances in digital and electronic technologies reshape social relations and make possible new economic structures. Both labour and poverty grow increasingly feminized and racialized in the emergent tech-based economy; privatisation and militarization expand beyond previous limits so that "more than our imagination is militarized" (Haraway, 1991: 168). Feminist theory must account for this integrated circuit, she argues, and proposes the figure of the cyborg as the future model for socialist-feminist resistant strategies. Much like the assemblage, the cyborg is a productive merging of human bodies and digital technologies – bodies and machines cease to be separate entities but reassemble as new beings based on affinities and relations. The cyborg comes out of various boundary leakages pertaining to late 20th century scientific culture, particularly the boundary separating human-animal and machine. As an assemblage of humans and machines the cyborg subverts organic wholes, undermines what counts as "nature", and destroys the ground of Western ontology whole opening space for new answers – much as DeLanda's assemblage theory attempts to do but this time with the revolutionary impetus of Marxism intact.

Haraway's cyborgs trace their lineages to patriarchal, militarized technologies, especially those developed during the Reagan era of "star wars" technologies. The cyborg, though, maintains a revolutionary directive: Haraway (1991) calls cyborgs illegitimate offspring, bastard children disloyal to their parents, turning against oppressive cultures and institutions, and overcoming obstacles. This disloyalty includes

refusal of the naturalized feminism Haraway claims was indicative of the Second Wave, a feminism which fetishizes the body, making of the body an organic totality around which a politics can pivot. Much progressive thought, including feminism, has taken the imagined organic body as a form of resistance against the domination of technics, Haraway argues, whereas the “transgressed boundaries of the cyborg open new political channels” (Haraway, 1991: 154). Cyborgs do not depend on organic wholes, make no claims about nature nor insinuations about unity under the category of “woman” – a category Haraway claims has always been troubled, complex, and oppressive for some.

Cyborgs then allow for affinities to be formed outside of a perceived naturalistic embodiment. Affinity is the cyborg unity – a relation of choice instead of blood. Being female does not bind women together, Haraway asserts. Female is not an ontological ground for the political mythologies of “we”. This is because there is “not even such a state as ‘being’ female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices,” (Haraway, 1991: 155), there are only affinities. Women of colour, Haraway offers by way of example, are a category of affinity (choice), emerging from the “power of oppositional consciousness” (Haraway, 1991: 156), and building a different affective unity. Instead of maintaining taxonomies of feminism that are always guilty of erasure, instead of making use of a “unity-through-domination” the cyborg builds affinities of difference, collectives based on hybrids, entanglements of bodies and technologies, humans and machines. These cyborgs emerge out of the very networks of technology that have given rise to new classed, gendered, and racialized oppression since beginning of the neoliberal era, but subvert and reterritorialize these networks and technologies in resistant configurations. Effectively blurring boundaries between organic bodies and inorganic machines, cyborgs can demolish oppressive unities while also freeing us from latent technophobias which impeded revolutionary progress in this hyper-networked, digitized, and machinic age.

Haraway's notion of the cyborg becomes a useful lens through which to understand the concept of assemblage made use of in this project. In eradicating similar "naturalized" conceptions of the proletariat – i.e., white, male, industrial – the class compositions can be seen as affinity-based assemblages. This opens the proletariat to new configurations and memberships from previously excluded subjects – domestic workers, racialized women, students, the poor, the unemployed. The assemblage, imagined in tandem with the cyborg, demands a feminist imperative to new compositions of the proletariat, and expands the minor current of social reproduction that has presented itself in previous, even hegemonic, compositions of the class. Further, this cyborg assemblage highlights the cross-hatching of body and machine that has made up – and continues to make up – iterations of class and revolutionary movements since at least the 1905 revolution of the soviets in Russia.

It is perhaps for this reason that Hardt and Negri (2000) also invoked Haraway's cyborg in their exploration of multitude and empire. Her insistence on the potential of cyborgs for the construction of "ontologically new determinations of the human, of living" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 217) becomes central to Hardt and Negri's thesis of multitude. Still, they remind readers that the cyborg is a fable and nothing more. To actualize the new terrains of autonomy that the cyborg promises Hardt and Negri return to a focus on the common experiences in the new productive practices, and "the concentration of productive labour" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 218). They return us once again to the assemblage at the heart of capital *and* labour. For Hardt and Negri the "plastic and fluid terrain of the new communicative biological and mechanical technologies" (218) is the terrain of production that motivates resistant practices. For my own work, the motivating force that can activate new autonomous existences and ground resistance resides in the human machinic assemblages of social reproduction.

In the intervening thirty years since the first publication of Haraway's *A Manifesto for Cyborgs*¹⁶ her essay has become something of an iconic work in feminist thought. The complex, interdisciplinary exploration of the effects of new technology on life in a globalized monetary and cultural economy, with a focus on the necessity of a third world feminism within American feminist theory, had enormous impacts and spawned thousands of articles. In her development of a "new human forged in the amalgam of technology and biology," (Sandoval, 2000: 166) Haraway sought to challenge binary oppositions, one of which was the strict distinction between waged and unwaged labour as the sole analytic of class structure.¹⁷ Traditional Marxism's focus on the wage relation makes waged labour a privileged category, humanizing it as an activity and making it the ontological basis for knowing a subject (Haraway, 1991). Haraway critiqued the alliance socialist feminists made with this basic analytic, and with the reliance of socialist feminist on a unified concept of woman. In so doing, Haraway's manifesto aimed to build a political myth faithful to feminism, to materialism, as well as to socialism, seeking to destabilize a socialist feminism which naturalizes woman as a concept to the detriment of myriad racialized and biological others. But while Haraway's contribution was to both feminism *and* socialism, much of the socialism of the *Manifesto* was left behind in subsequent uses of the cyborg concept.

The socialist element of the cyborg was a core of the concept, and a socialist reclamation of the cyborg is important. While I cannot take up that task entirely in this project, I want to gesture to the idea that perhaps this reclamation can take place in and

¹⁶ Haraway's *Manifesto* was first published in 1985 as "Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s" in *Socialist Review* then reprinted 1991 in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*.

¹⁷ She followed earlier socialist or Marxist feminists in this, such as Vogel, Federici, and Dallacosta.

through the Deleuzo-Guattarian theory of the assemblage. While I owe a debt to Haraway's cyborg and her insistence on a feminism at the heart of socialist thinking on technology and capitalism, I operationalize assemblage as my central theoretical concept, reclaiming its Marxism from DeLanda's evacuations and maintaining Haraway's heterodox feminism. I leave the reclamation of the socialist heritage of cyborgs to another project, one I intend to soon pursue.

With all of these above noted considerations, I finally must maintain an insistence on assemblage as a *verb* and not a *noun*. The French *agencement*, as noted above, maintains the action orientation of the concept, which is fundamental to understanding the use of the term when discussing assembly *movements*. This way of understanding assemblage begins from the perspective of action, a perspective I share. In this I claim that the assemblage *is kin to* assembling – it is processual, a way of forming together component parts, of creating associations between diverse and even divergent constituents, and merging the embodied and the machinic, corporeal and technological. As the rest of this dissertation unfolds it seeks to create affinities, relations of choice between humans, machines, movements, and technologies in order to enhance and expand class composition, to advance assembly movements as class-based struggles over social reproduction, and to ground contemporary theories of resistance in feminist practices and philosophies.

2.0 Chapter 2: Minor Currents: Tracing Movement Histories Through the Lens of the Minoritarian

Contemporary assembly movements have materialised amidst a particular convergence of capital accumulation regimes and labour organization. This is to say, assembly movements represent an emergent form of class composition which develops out of the relationship between capital's technical composition of labour and the working class's activity in the form of political organisation. These are the two components of class composition – the political and technical composition. While the *Operaismo* thesis of class composition asserts that the political structures the working class adopts correspond to the capitalist organization of labour power, this chapter demonstrates that throughout three historical moments of class composition a minor current of autonomy has flowed. A minor current, in this configuration, refers to a non-hegemonic form of class composition, and develops out of the Deleuzian notion of the minoritarian. The minoritarian, as noted in the Introduction, is an unfolding process that negates standard forms and their deviations and in this unfolding constitutes something new. The

minoritarian politics of the non-hegemonic class compositions marks them as assemblages. This political minor current, I argue, tracks alongside more hegemonic compositions of the class, and has swelled and expanded throughout the 20th Century. The assembly movements of 2011-12 are its contemporary descendents.

This is not to suggest that current assembly movements are merely the re-emergence of “older and even more defunct forms of social life, to which they bear a certain likeness” (Marx, 1933: 42), as has been claimed about many previous experiments in political form. Marx (1933) noted that the Paris Commune was dismissed as simply a reproduction of mediaeval communes, for example, and the Occupy movement was itself seen by some as the re-creation of the Paris Commune (Harvey, 2012; Chomsky 2012). Instead, this chapter aims to consider historical examples of assembly movements so as to demonstrate an always-existent autonomous strand of political organization that was itself reliant upon the capital’s organization of labour. I argue that a minor current of political composition was an assemblage reliant upon relations of exteriority with technical compositions that were historically un- or under-theorised, particularly compositions relating to social reproduction and reproductive labour.

In this chapter I build upon the definition of class composition provided in the Introduction. I explain the three moments of class composition as developed by Negri (1991) – the professional worker, the mass worker, and the socialized worker. I connect these three moments to three historical examples: the Russian soviets of 1905; the factory councils of Turin in 1919; and the social movements of the Italian Hot Autumn and beyond throughout the 1970s. I also connect each moment to a particular means of communication, in order to demonstrate that a “human-machinic” assemblage (the merging of human and technological bodies) has been a key factor in these three historical moments, and is not unique to contemporary social struggles. While each of the

examples explored here elucidates the autonomist thesis of class composition, I argue that the major form of class composition has always been attended by a minoritarian, assembly-based stream. In concluding this chapter, I highlight the importance of assemblage theory for understanding the enduring existence of a minor current within the logics of class composition.

The main lines of class composition are given their contours by capitalism's forms of organization, which are themselves always changing in relation to struggle. This is the technical basis on which political forms of working class activity are built. I argue that the relations of exteriority between workers engaged in reproductive labour or social reproduction as well as the organization of capitalism in the three periods examined provides a technical basis for the minoritarian line of class composition. This minoritarian line arose alongside and co-occurred with more dominant forms. Below I will sketch out what appears to be a different narrative from the dominant one offered by the *Operaismo* thesis of class composition. As a hypothesis, backed by historical evidence, I suggest that it is the un- or under-theorised role of reproductive labour and social reproduction (as well as early pre-figurations of the social factory) in each era of class composition that permits for more than one political composition of the class to exist. The full validation of this claim will require more prolonged research. I want to now suggest this narrative because it offers a different framing of contemporary class compositions but also highlights the important feminist lineages to any history or present of class organization and struggle.

Without citing a specific teleology to these historical movements, or suggesting that the current moment is an end point of history, this chapter seeks instead to show that assembly movements indeed have a traceable lineage and carry forth a thread of autonomy. This autonomous thread is a minor current to historical political compositions.

Tracing this history highlights the swelling of this minor current: an expanding flow of minoritarian assemblages whose basis is social reproduction. Deleuze and Guattari's theories of minoritarianism and assemblages are adopted here because they add to the *Operaismo* concept of class composition, by suggesting that class composition is, itself, an unfolding process inflected with a minoritarian politics. As well, employing the concept of minoritarianism and becomings helps clarify the ways in which each of these political struggles had internal to them their own lines of flight and, through relations of exteriority, these political struggles opened up different political possibilities. This will also allow us to see how the minoritarian current has been repeatedly dominated by more majoritarian influences.¹⁸

In this chapter three specific political events are explored in order to demonstrate the relations of exteriority – specifically with regard to reproductive labour, social reproduction, and the social factory¹⁹ – that both permit and expand this minoritarianism.

¹⁸ The structure of assemblies, councils, or early soviets has involved the de-centring of power. This differentiates them from more traditional forms of worker organizing, such as political parties and labour unions, which have not tended to promote workers' control (Ness and Azzellini, 2011). The contemporary and historical movements traced here have challenged the centrality of hierarchically organized leadership bodies (and thus representative politics), and have in some way engaged with the lived experiences of workers – waged and unwaged. As a result, almost all of these movements have clashed, at some point, with political parties, labour unions, and state bureaucracies (Ness and Azzellini, 2011), much as minoritarian flows clash, eventually, with both majority *and* minority politics. This class occurs in movements for workers' control, destabilizing the legitimacy and authority of a politics that seeks to impose dominance or obtain power. Because a majoritarian *and* a minority politics is concerned with maintaining/obtaining power or being recognized by that power, assemblies were seen by these forces as, at best, temporary structures. These impermanent structures would exist in the interim between oppression (the bourgeois state) and the attainment of "real" power (usually centred around a "revolutionary" party seizing control of state power and bringing into being a "revolutionary state"). But as noted, a minor current, even a minor politics ran alongside this major tendency.

¹⁹ The theory of the "social factory" explains how, through the advancement of capitalist development, more and more of life – outside the walls of the factory – becomes subsumed under the logic of production and surplus value extraction. Tronti puts it this way:

None of the historical moments examined – the 1905 Russian Soviets, the 1919 factory councils, and the 1970s Italian social movements – will be described in dense historical detail. Instead I advance a set of coordinated theoretical propositions regarding a minor current subtending each of these moments, and the relationship of these historical compositions to dominant communicative technologies. This will allow us to trace the historical contours of a contemporary cycle of struggles and to demonstrate the expanding minoritarian flow in emerging compositions of the class. Following on Marx’s writings on the commune which demonstrated alternative conceptions of the State and the meaning of seizing State power (Marx, 1933), or the heretical leftism of Pannekoek’s council communism, early Trotskyism, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, and *Operaismo* or autonomist Marxism, this chapter ultimately wants to map the ancestry of contemporary assembly movements and place them in the context of struggles which sought to build the base of a “self-determined socialist society” (Ness and Azzellini, 2011: 2)

“The more capitalist development advances, that is to say the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-exchange consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationship between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between the factory and society, between society and the state, become [sic] more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over all of society.” (Tronti, quoted in Cleaver, 1992: 137).

2.1 *The Professional Worker, Soviets, and the Newspaper*

2.1a *The Major Form of Class Composition in 1905 Russia*

Professional worker is the *Operaismo* term for the composition of the class in early 20th century capitalism. This composition was the “first great representative of wage-labour within the system of large scale industry” (Negri, 1991: 78). The professional worker materialised with the industrial revolution, but did not define the entirety of the industrial proletariat. Rather, the professional worker marked a subset of the working class, those engaged in machine production but whose skills were not yet entirely subordinated to the functioning of machinic technologies (Bowring, 2004: 106). In the newest industrial sectors, machinic saturation of the factory had not reached the levels of concentration and rationalization that was evident in other spheres. These sectors still required a highly skilled labour force that could customize and refashion the machines and tools they worked with, based on accumulated experience, skills, and knowledge (Bologna, 1972). Production, for these workers, depended upon “the professional ability of a skilled labour force working with the most advanced technology and special tools, and directly concerned with the modification of work systems” (Bologna, 1972: 5). It was this merger of skills along with the capacity to modify tools and work systems that made the professional worker a “worker-inventor”. As worker inventors, the professional worker laboured within a hierarchically structured factory setting, but maintained a level of control over his²⁰ work that other, less skilled, workers did not possess.

²⁰ The professional worker was, almost exclusive, male.

In 1905 Russia was certainly in the very early stages of industrialization. Much of its population of 132 million still lived in feudal, serf-like arrangements on the land, with only 3 million organized into factory labour in urban and suburban centres (Surh, 1989). It was a minority of the factory labour force that was made up of the skilled, artisanal machinists exemplary of the professional worker. For example, the greatest industry in St Petersburg was metalworking and machine production, which accounted for 80,000 jobs, or about 18% of all workers²¹, while about 23% of workers were women constrained to low-skill industries such as textiles, paper and hides, food and tobacco, clothing, and the bath and laundry sectors (Surh, 1989). Industrial factory workers lived in working class neighbourhoods close to factories in politically and economically important towns. This brought working people into close proximity with each other, opening up greater opportunities for assembly and for the cohering of a class. At the same time, the discipline, structure, and hierarchy of the factory were also often transposed from workplace to community (Surh, 1989), determining where and how people lived and to whom they were obliged to defer. As such, the order and authority of the factory tended to overcome the walls of the workplace itself and reconstructed the spatial and affective environments of the Russian industrial working class.

In theorizing class composition Negri (1991) notes that the determinate social formation is the political structure through which revolutionary subjects act. This social formation is comprised of a set of relations of production, which form the objective substratum underlying subjective production. The way labour is organized configures the organization of the working class (Nunes, 2007); hence the particular mode of production corresponds to the prevailing political form.

²¹ These workers, too, were paid at a far higher rate than those elsewhere in Russia, even in the same sector (Surh, 1989)

The skilled labourers that made up the composition of the professional worker were specialized technicians. The exclusive skills, abilities, and knowledge of professional workers in other European countries (Germany in particular) forced capitalists to concede to higher wages, 8 hour work days, and 6 day work weeks (Bologna, 1972). These specialized skills, and their status as worker-inventor, separated the professional worker from a general body of the industrial proletariat. Leadership capacities were concentrated in the professional worker due to their skill sets; their connections to artisanal machine production lent them a certain authority and capacity for self-management. It was this technical composition - the internal working-class division and hierarchization developed within the early industrial factory setting – that led to a particular political composition. The vanguard party became the paradigmatic political composition of the working class in the early 20th Century, although Bologna (1972) suggests council communism was also a characteristic of the professional worker composition. Led by the professional worker the vanguard party, for example, would be the political form through which the interests of all workers would be represented. This political composition based its structure on the discipline and hierarchy of the factory.

It was the divisions and the hierarchy of the factory that were to guide the structure of the workers' party, For Lenin; the successes of said party would only come from demanding the “strictest, truly iron, discipline” (Lenin, 1975: 5) from its membership. As in the factory setting with its clearly demarcated authority figures, the Party too demanded absolute centralization: it would be a particular subset of the working class – the skilled, professional workers – who would be “capable of leading or carrying with them the backward strata” (Lenin, 1975: 5). Further, discipline of the party

membership would develop and be maintained through “class consciousness,”²² resulting in the members’ “devotion to the revolution,” their “perseverance, self-sacrifice, and heroism” (Lenin, 1975: 6). Class-consciousness would develop through intellectual study and propaganda, which would promulgate particular ideological affiliations, and some of this study would take place in the pages of the newspaper. Thus the newspaper or journal held a place of importance for Lenin, Trotsky, and other Social Democratic and later Bolshevik parties – many ideas and debates were worked out in the pages of *Iskra* (*The Spark*), a political broadsheet started by Lenin.

2.1b) Means of Communication: The Newspaper

For Lenin, *Iskra* could concentrate “the elements of political discontent and protest” and thereby vitalize “the revolutionary movement of the proletariat” (Lenin, 1901: np). But the newspaper was more than a site for the development of class-consciousness. It too would serve as both the *model for* and the *organ of* class struggle. On the role of the newspaper Lenin notes:

A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of

²² Class-consciousness is importantly different from class composition. Class-consciousness seeks to understand historical causes for struggle, and the motives and beliefs of subjects about their own class and class interest. As such it seeks to explain what “set in motion great masses, whole peoples, and again whole classes of people” (Engels quoted in Lukacs 1971: 47.) Class-consciousness is the psychological understanding of struggle, and tends to be top down, derived from an intellectual grasp of struggle as viewed from above. Class composition, conversely, seeks to understand the sources and processes of transformation that are *internal* to the working class. Autonomous leadership and self-organisation are fundamental components in understanding the difference between a politics based around class-consciousness and class composition – or, between a politics of the minority and a minoritarian politics.

the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence these events. The mere technical task of supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the All-Russian work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions. (Lenin, 1901: np).

In this passage the structuring role of the newspaper for Lenin becomes apparent, displaying an almost compositionist idea of class as a human-machinic assemblage. The means of communication serve a role akin to the means of production in influencing political compositions for the working class. For Lenin in the newspaper we find the composition of humans and technologies necessary to advance class struggle. In fact the medium of communication shapes the contours of organization, like scaffolding, Lenin suggests – an idea echoed in contemporary thinkers like Castells (2012) who claim that the network form of organizing originates with the Internet. The newspaper mimics the

structure of the factory, and that structure echoes in the revolutionary organizational form that emerges.

Further, Lenin asserts that the technology of the newspaper and the process of bringing a publication to life unifies a class in its political composition, its organisational form. He writes:

This network of agents will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need – one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country; sufficiently broad and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently well tempered to be able to conduct steadily its own work under any circumstances at all 'sudden turns,' and in the face of all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able, on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it. (Lenin, 1901: np)

A sense of unity – of the sort that Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to distance themselves from – pervades Lenin's conception of the newspaper and the political composition associated with the professional worker: workers are brought together in the factory or under the rubric of the newspaper's ideology. As the professional worker had "an understanding of the complete production cycle" (Bowring, 2004: 106) so too would the agents of the newspaper remain closely connected to each other and have a general sense of the overall state of affairs, while being focused on the detail of their particular

labours. Reflecting back after the success of the 1917 revolution, Lenin asserted “*all* the issues on which the masses waged an armed struggle in 1905-1917 and 1917-1920 can (and should) be studied in their embryonic form in the press of that time” (Lenin, 1975: 9). This suggests that the newspaper was a key site of debate, a place for the development and highlighting of issues important to the class, and a key space for the organization of revolutionary struggle. It can even be said to have played a leadership role in the development of revolutionary forces within the factory settings. The newspaper and the factory were tied together in struggle as sites of both revolutionary training and discipline, and revolutionary education and propaganda.

2.1c) Minoritarian Currents in the soviets

Perhaps overawed by the power and productivity of industrial systems, Lenin perceived the factory model as inevitable and even enviable. The factory was the “perfectible form of the organization of the labour process” (Braverman, 1974: 11); a form which could be exported to communicative processes and political organizing. The political composition of the professional worker was to echo the structure, discipline, and organization of the factory in which this subset of the proletariat laboured. Such a political composition espouses a hegemonic mode of politics, but this composition was itself always subtended by a minoritarian current. This current points to a reality beyond the limitations imposed by Trotsky and Lenin’s vanguardism, and instead suggests that the class composition prevailing in the soviets was an assemblage, heterogeneous and varied. The contours of this assemblage can be seen through the structure, concerns, and demographics of the soviets. Tracing these contours will demonstrate that a minoritarian counterpart tracked the professional worker.

The soviets themselves were organised across workplaces and industries, incorporating male and female workers at various positions and levels in the production

process. The soviets were meant to “embrace the working masses irrespective of occupation” (Lenin 1975: 39). The best known of the soviets from 1905 was the St Petersburg Soviet of Workers’ Deputies;²³ Trotsky described it as:

An organization which was authoritative yet it had no traditions; which could immediately involve a scattered mass of hundreds of thousands of people while having virtually no organizational machinery; which united the revolutionary currents within the proletariat; which was capable of initiative and spontaneous self-control – and most important of all, which could be brought from the underground within twenty-four hours” (Trotsky, 1971: 104).

The soviet was to “bring unity and leadership to a chaotic movement” (Anweiler, 1974: 37) through empowering the workers themselves to take control of the production process. The soviet cohered and mobilised forces of defence through the newspaper, while also relying on the affective networks created their organising, and the solidarity such projects required. Soviets were a “hub of revolutionary politics” that served as the “medium for an uprising against the state” (Shandro, 2007: 319). The particular *kind* of unity pursued by the soviets hints at the minoritarian currents that skirt their edges: these were organisations that did not initially seek to subsume all struggles under one homogeneous banner, but rather allowed a proliferation of forces to attain strength

²³ There is some dispute over the name. Voline (1974), a Russian anarchist hostile to the Social Democrats take-over of the soviet struggle referred to the participants as Delegates; Trotsky and Lenin used the term Deputy. The difference, though minor, highlights some political tensions existing within the struggle for workers’ control in the early era of the Russian revolution.

precisely through their acts of coalescing. Of course, this stream of politics was itself eventually subsumed by the majoritarian and homogenizing impulses of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, but the initial preoccupations with more minoritarian concerns continued to swell and expand as struggles travelled through the 20th and 21st century.

The direct democracy that was at the core of the soviets also suggests the threads of a minoritarian current in early working class struggle. The soviets were considered organs of “extreme democracy” (Surh, 1989: 329); a “general political organ representing all workers” (Anweiler, 1974: 47). As organizational infrastructure, the soviets were created out of the objective conditions of struggle and were not the product of a vanguard’s imagination. They were expressions of “mass direct democracy” (Gluckstein, 2011: 33) that engaged all workers – not simply the skilled subset of the class – directly in struggle based upon the knowledge of their work, the workplace, and their community. They were made up of elected and recallable delegates, organised around particular issues, demographics, cities, or workplaces, and their size varied depending on their population. The elected delegates were accountable to the concerns of a broader working class, and were open to recall at any time, giving “the workers a feeling of genuine and effective participation in an organ elected by them” (Anweiler, 1974: 52). Ambivalent about party politics, the soviets were non-partisan and unaffiliated in their first instantiation: the soviet was an institution *of and for* the workers, wherein “all matters are decided by workers, and not by intellectuals” (Trotsky, quoted in Anweiler, 1974: 52).

The minoritarian current can be seen emerging most clearly, though, in the preliminary organisations that laid the groundwork for the more institutional soviets – the workers and learning circles. These organisations can be read as informal and autonomous structures of social reproduction. The idea of the soviet is one of “striving towards the most direct, far-reaching, and unrestricted participation of the individual in

public life” (Anweiler, 1974: 4), and the circles were the first step in this engaged public. Women had been limited in official labour organizing, excluded from the Moscow Workers Union, for example, due to a perceived intellectual and political naiveté (Surh, 1989). As Federici (2004) noted, claims such as this were little more than a dominant or majoritarian set of workers trying to increase the value accorded to their skills through limiting the supply of labour and marginalizing another, already marginalized, set of workers. As such, women engaged in self-organisation projects to support their acquisition of the necessities of life including, but also beyond, the wage. They built up many of the workers’ and learning circles according to their own concerns, experiences, and needs. Several of the circles, like some of the early soviets, were made up of both men and women, and concerned themselves with repairing gender-based divisions within the labour movement. One revolutionary pamphlet of the time read:

We must never separate male from female workers. In many factories in Russia women workers already constitute the majority of the workforce and they are even more cruelly exploited by the factory owners. Male and female workers must grasp each other by the hand and together struggle for their liberation (cited in Hillyar and McDermid, 2000: 75).

The early circles attempted to do this; they were often coordinated and organised by women both in factory and community settings. The issues raised by women in these circles helped to shape some of the foundational concerns and infrastructures of the soviets to come, and set the groundwork for an expanding minor current centring on issues of social reproduction.

Women engaged in recruitment and propaganda campaigns in the service sector and in textile factories. These were sites of “unskilled” labour in which women and children were regularly employed. Textile workers in particular were often orphaned girls, sent to work in the factories by their orphanages. Textile factory organizing, then, easily crossed over into orphanage and community organizing, as the young orphan women would take the lessons learned in the circles home with them (Hillyar and McDermid, 2000). Central to the work of the women’s circles, were concerns of social reproduction: organizing around the whole life of the worker from workplace to home place. In concrete terms this meant that women’s circles – and later some of the soviets women were especially involved in – coordinated and ran safe houses for women fleeing domestic violence; offered literacy programmes to women in community settings; coordinated and led political education campaigns; set up medical clinics in working class neighbourhoods, especially for maternity care; and within their workplace they centred demands for on-site maternal health care, maternal support, and for the establishment of crèches in and around factories and other workplaces (Clement, 1997; Hillyar and McDermid, 2000). As such these early circles and soviets can be seen as preliminary recognitions of something like a social factory: they demanded that attention be given to the worker beyond the factory floor. Through the circles’ concerns with domestic violence, maternity care, and child care their organizing put an early spotlight on the unpaid reproductive labour done almost exclusively by women. The relations of exteriority in these pre-Soviet assemblages connected women to an imposed and unpaid form of labour within the home, which was itself a part of the technical composition of labour (albeit one unwritten and often unthought).

The wage structure and technical composition of the class in early capitalism and beyond maintained unpaid reproductive labour as the foundation for capital accumulation, even when women also laboured outside the home (Federici, 2004). This

demonstrates that women's struggles within the soviets were not separate from or outside of class struggles, although the dominant forms of class organizing may have marginalized them. Rather these modes of struggle were class struggles in their own right. Even more importantly, these early examples of broad-based class organizing done largely by women and centred on social reproduction point directly to the routes out of capitalist exploitation that later movements would later take. It is for this reading that Federici (2004) argues that gender and the concerns aligned with it should be considered as a specification of class relations and not outside of them. In this way the internal, gendered, tensions held the circles and early soviet assemblages together, shaping some of the directions of the struggles. As well, we can see the relations of exteriority – between women and the technical composition of capital, capital's structuring of labour relations within and between classes – that cohere a minoritarian assemblage alongside the more hegemonic class composition of the professional worker.

It was this groundwork laid by women in the struggle – unskilled and outside the “professional worker” designation – that swelled the minor current in this era of organizing. When the soviets came into force in earnest in 1905, some included issues of social reproduction in their organizing as well. For example, relief measures were coordinated by soviets for workers and their families suffering the effects of labour strife and strikes. In St. Petersburg, home of the largest and most famous soviet, internal “committees of the unemployed” established four soup kitchens. They served food to fired and laid off workers, as well as the unemployed, women, and children (Anweiler, 1974). In this way social reproduction became part of a broadened proletarian struggle, overcoming a gendered factory focus to organizing and making struggle part of one's very existence, much as capital makes the factory part of the life of a society. This work was implemented and inspired by women's organizing in the lead up to and during the cataclysm of struggle in 1905, highlighting women's importance in creating and pushing

a minor current. As Deleuze and Guattari would write more than half a century later “it is necessary to conceive of a molecular women’s politics that slips into molar confrontations and passes under or through them” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 276).

The first soviets were the result of a desire for “unity and leadership” in a splintered struggle; they were not the product of a desire to seize state power (Anweiler, 1974). Understanding the connections between hegemonic modes of worker organizing and women’s struggles around social reproduction helps trace the early outlines of a minor current to political compositions. Through this understanding we can highlight the emergence, swelling, and sharpening of minoritarian assemblages in each phase of class composition. While the vanguard party, understood as the main political composition of the professional worker, did eventually attain prominence this form was over-determined by Leninist influences *after the fact* (Voline 1974). The vanguard party model did not necessarily represent all of the possibilities for working class organizational structure in the early era of industrialism, and it does not eradicate the more autonomous modes of struggle that existed simultaneously. In the next section we will continue examining the historical minor current as capital decomposed the professional worker through technological advances in manufacturing and production, the implementation of Taylorist theories of scientific management, and the Fordist assembly line. In *Operaismo* theory decomposition refers to “the destruction of the class as a political subject” (Wright, 2002: 5). This decomposition gives way to a recomposition as the working class resists capital’s advances and rebuilds itself based upon the technical conditions of the moment. This is the cycle of struggles. In the next rotation of this cycle the mass worker arose following the push towards automation and deskilling that marked the decomposition of the

professional worker. By 1919 the mass worker was emergent and the minoritarian line continued to expand.²⁴

2.2 The Mass Worker, The Journal, The Councils: 1919 Northern Italy

2.2a) Production and the Major Class Composition in 1919 Northern Italy

The mass worker was composed out of the “hell that was the Taylorised factory of organised subjugation” (Negri, 1989: 78). This working class formation was animated by the cooperative yet dissected nature of the production process emerging out of the Fordist assembly line and Taylorist scientific management. Workers in the Fordist-Taylorist factory saw their work radically and rapidly deskilled: divided into component parts a single productive task would be spread amongst several workers connected by a mechanical assembly line. The structure of labour within the factory – the technical composition – impacted the structure of working class organising – the political composition – and the mass worker became the second representative of wage labour within the system of large scale industry.

Although the mass worker thesis was not developed until the 1950s and early 1960s by *Operaist* theorists like Bologna (1972; 2007) and Tronti (2007; 2012), the factories of Northern Italy in 1919 had already begun decomposing professional workers’ power through the imposition of mass manufacturing, Taylorist scientific management

²⁴ This is not to argue that by 1919 the professional worker had disappeared. Rather, this is to demonstrate the overlapping of compositional forms in the changing technical composition of capital: as one form emerges as hegemonic another begins to wane but may never cease to exist entirely. In this we can also see the possibility of minor currents attending major forms.

strategies,²⁵ and the Fordist assembly line processes²⁶ (Adler, 1974). Production had changed in Northern Italy in efforts to meet the productivity demands of the war effort. Bologna (1972), Tronti (2012), and Baldi (1972) claimed that the mass worker only came into existence in the 1950s, with the era's focus on assembly line production. It was labour historians such as Hobsbawm and Kuczynski, the advent of Anglo-American sociology, and the expansion of modernisation theory all around the mid-century that finally legitimated the histories of working people and "prompted a reconsideration of economic history" (Wright, 2002) and prompted *Operaist* thinkers (Bologna, 1972; Tronti, 2012) to create new interpretive frameworks, which would work to overcome the limitations of existing left historiography. These early *Operaismo* theorists and activists positioned the work of Antonio Gramsci and the Turin council movement firmly within the era of the professional worker. Fiat and other Italian factory workers were still seen as skilled labour, as the implementation of Taylorism and Fordism was not understood as widespread (Bologna, 1972; Tronti, 2012).

The industrial history of Italy, along with the claims of Negri (1991) and Bowring (2004), however, suggest that the factory council movement took place in the earliest phases of the transition to the mass worker, as the implementation of widespread

²⁵ Taylorism is the active separation of labour power from specific activities, breaking the actual movement of work into its component parts, separating conception from execution, the head from the hand. Based on Frederick Taylor's "time and motion" studies, Taylor's scientific management is often referred to as "deskilling". It is actually the *capture* of knowledge *from* workers and the *transfer* of that knowledge *to* management. Taylorism detailed the division of labour within the body of one worker, and then divided that process into "manifold operations performed by different workers" (Braverman, 1974: 72). This destroyed the ability of any one worker to carry through the complete production process.

²⁶ Fordism objectifies intelligence (knowledge, science, technique) into the machine, thus "separating manual from mental labour and diminishing the application of intelligence on the part of the direct producer" (Harvey, 1980: 105). It is most powerfully and visually exemplified by the assembly line, especially in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*.

industrial production swept through Italy's north in efforts to meet and sustain productivity levels for the war. Italy was a relative latecomer to industrialisation, and Turin was later still, lacking widespread electricity until well into the 20th Century. It lagged behind Milan and Genoa until the turn of the century, and then underwent a rapid and total transformation, experiencing the highest rate of industrial growth in the country (Adler, 1974). The basis of this development was the merger of cheap electricity and new, sophisticated workplace technologies. This allowed new factories to arise “virtually *de novo* with the assembly line” (Adler, 1974:254). Rationalised, automated, scientifically-managed assembly line factories took hold early in Turin, in a vertiginous expansion of forces fed by the production needs of World War One (Adler, 1974). As such, Negri (1991) and Bowring (2004) claim that the mass worker had actually emerged by 1914, peaked by the time of its “discovery” in the 1950s and then began to wane, decomposing into the socialized worker by 1968. They argue that when *Operaists* were theorising the mass worker in the 1950s and 60s, “what we were *in effect* doing was paying tribute to the passing of his/her historical period” (Negri, 1991: 76).

Of course, the transformation to the mass worker did not happen all at once; the professional worker did not suddenly disappear. Rather, the transition was slow and complex²⁷. Hints of the professional worker are seen in the factory council movement, but so too are the burgeoning actions of the mass worker. Alongside the waning professional worker and the ascendant mass worker, however, we can also trace a minor current. While the councils played an important role and mark a minor current, eventually the political composition associated with the mass worker – the mass union – became hegemonic.

²⁷ For more on the multiple compositions of the class existing simultaneously in transition eras, see Bologna 1972.

The mass worker results from the assault on the professional worker by the ruling and industrial classes through the use of machinic and managerial technologies. But, as Turin's factory councils began to form, the working class recomposed itself as a collective subject "empowered by the organizational advantage of workers' concentration in huge factories" (Bowring, 2004: 107) and in the neighbourhoods that surrounded them. While many workplace struggles still centred on the price of labour and the length of the working day (considered primary concerns for the professional worker), the demands and dreams of workers amassed within and outside the factory increasingly chafed against the confines of the reformist trade unions and vanguardist parties who were their leading representatives. The mass workers grew to see themselves as producers, not simply wage earners, and much of the organizing in this era came into conflict with union officials. The factory councils, for instance, defied the authority and direction of union officials often on issues of social reproduction. In this the councils can be read a minoritarian politics adjacent to the official political composition of the class, a minor current subtending the major flow. As well, these councils were at least partially organised on the pages and through the ideas of working class publications, journals, and newspapers.

2.2b) Means of Communication: L'Ordine Nuovo as the Workers' Journal

In the Italian council-era journals or long-form newspapers were the primary medium for communicating workers' ideas and politics. *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order) was the main publication of the soon-to-be factory council movement, and had a decidedly less hierarchical structure than the Leninist *Iskra*.²⁸ Started by Antonio

²⁸ It is also important to note that *L'Ordine Nuovo* was not alone on the mediascape of the time as the only left newspaper. There was an established left and working class culture in Northern Italy, and the main leftist newspaper, *Avanti*, had a circulation of 300,000 (Martin, 2002; Joll, 1977).

Gramsci, Angelo Tasca, and Palmiro Togliatti, *L'Ordine Nuovo* was an intellectual space for workers and agitators to work through debates, develop strategies and tactics, and collaborate around the council movement. It was not a journal outside of workers' struggles, objectively commenting on them. Rather, it was *part* of the movement, a collaborative space for dialogue and debate. As the council movement intensified the journal's distribution greatly increased. The investment in struggle, previously limited to print, jumped from the pages and into the concrete lives of workers: *L'Ordine Nuovo* sponsored educationals, assemblies, and study circles affiliated with the council movement (Williams, 1975; Joll, 1977). Gramsci, Tasca, Togliatti, and other journal members were invited to council meetings and gatherings of the "internal commissions" – the precursors to the factory councils. Factory workers contributed to the journal, writing about "factory life, the internal commissions, the problems of white collar workers" (Williams, 1975: 98) and more. It became a space wherein the workers could find "the best part of themselves" Gramsci suggested, "because in it they sense their own inner striving" for freedom and autonomy (Gramsci, quoted in Williams, 1975: 95).

As the struggle over the councils progressed so too did the debates, conversations, and politics in the pages of *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Ideas put forward in the journal came from workers' experiences in struggle. These ideas circulated in the factories and neighbourhoods "through the medium of personal discussions in socialist circles" (Williams, 1975: 98). Such collective discussions, Gramsci claimed, sympathetically altered "the consciousness of men, unifying them and inspiring them to industrious enthusiasm" (Gramsci, quoted in Williams, 1975: 106). In their composition, and in their spirit of collectivity and participation, the councils reflected this enthusiasm, which worked in tandem with the educational role *L'Ordine Nuovo* played in recomposing the class. The journal supported workers' self-education and projects aimed at establishing autonomous organisational structures – new, non-authoritarian political compositions.

The politics developed through the councils was a departure from the strictures that formed the hegemonic political composition of the mass worker – top-down and officially recognised unions. While not expressed in precisely the Deleuzo-Guattarian terms of minoritarian assemblages used here, the councils – supported by *L'Ordine Nuovo* – were concerned with the creation of broad based revolutionary movements, heterogeneous organisational structures, and societal transformation. In the next few pages, I discuss some of the structures and policies of the council movement in 1919 Turin in order to demonstrate the existence of a minoritarian line at work in the council movement, which will lead political struggles into the next phase of class composition, that of the socialized worker.

2.2c) Minoritarian Currents: The Council Movement

The factory councils of Turin, in 1919, can be read through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarianism, as structures that at least partially attempted to subvert domination. They formed assemblages, building sites of workplace convergence reliant on unity *in* heterogeneity, and their struggles exceeded union-centred demands around wages and the length of the workday. Rather they merged the economic with the political, challenging the structures of domination that had come to permeate life within and beyond the factory's walls. Organizationally, the councils attempted to prefigure a new social, political, and economic order (Williams, 1975). This development occurred in response to crises of social reproduction that were emerging Northern Italy at the time, despite the ambitious transformations in the productive process enacted to meet the demands of the war effort. While machine production increased food production decreased and prices correspondingly rose; coal for home heating and cooking became

scarce to the point of being inaccessible; and a banking crisis unfolding in this period exacerbated the crisis in food and energy sectors, increased inflation, and further diminished workers' ability to reproduce themselves (Williams, 1975).

Official infrastructures of the working class were centred on mass unions and political parties, and were well populated throughout this period. The largest labour union, the *Confederazione General del Lavoro* (CGL) had a membership of over two million in the interwar period, while the metallurgical workers union *Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici* (FIOM) had 160,000 members. Even the Socialist Party, rather marginal by the standards of the day, had a membership of 200,000 (Martin, 2002; Joll, 1977). While the factory councils were qualitatively much smaller in scale, they represented most organised political form that the working class took throughout that same period. On 31 October 1919 the first "quasi-general assembly" of delegates from 32 plants representing 5000 workers was held. They set about determining a course of action for the councils and developing a revolutionary programme and General Regulations for the councils. The programme and Regulations were to be a production *of* and *for* the working class as a whole, manifesting, as it did, from the will of the factory proletariat. The revolutionary programme bestowed neither leadership nor authority on the delegates themselves, no positions of power were granted for those attending the meeting. Rather, the document stated that the "principle of democratic mandate must prevail in every authority" and that those elected must simply be "the executors of the will of the mass" (Williams, 1975: 125). Some of the mandates in the revolutionary programme included a) that factory delegates were the only true representatives of the working class because they were elected by *all* workers in a workplace; b) that unions were indispensable and workers should continue the struggle to unionise; but c) while unions would continue to exist and serve workers, councils were to be the embodied antithesis to ruling class domination and authority by a *working class*, not simply by workers. Councils would be

the “incarnate power of the proletariat in solidarity in the struggle for the conquest of public power and the suppression of private property” (Williams, 1975: 126).

Documents from this first quasi-general assembly demonstrate the more direct, more participatory democracy that the councils were attempting. The General Regulations were developed to govern decision-making within the councils. They included key points detailing the number of delegates from each council (decided after a survey of the work operations); determining who could become a delegate (only workers in the factory) and the frequency of elections (every 6 months); clarifying the regulations for recall (if delegates are disowned by a simple majority of electors they are subject to instant recall); and mandating how the vote would take place (by secret ballot during work hours). The General Regulations also made clear that although the delegates were only to be chosen from amongst unionized workers, they were to be the voice of and for *all* workers, regardless of unionization status²⁹. The General Regulations that governed the council movement fit imperfectly within the theory of minoritarianism – there was still a primary emphasis on *factory* councils diminishing somewhat their heterogeneity, and the insistence on unionized workers only serving as delegates or commissars maintains a commitment to the authority and structure of official unions. That being said, the swell of a minoritarian political line is visible through the persistent refusal to simply align with representative politics. This minoritarian line is more clearly traceable upon consideration of the simultaneously occurring ward councils, based in working class communities, which sought to organize workers outside of the factory setting. The ward councils engaged in educational projects that brought more people to struggle, and

²⁹ Although all workers – unionized and not – were members of the councils, it remains unclear why only unionized workers could become elected delegates. Perhaps this persists as a concession to the official union movement whose irritation with the councils grew as the councils’ power and numbers increased.

expanded the category of the working class beyond the strict definition assigned by the mass worker thesis.

Although the factory councils are most prominent in historical retellings of the “Red Years” in Italy, ward councils and neighbourhood assemblies existed simultaneously. Much of Gramsci’s energies went in to figuring out the complex relationship between the factory and the ward councils, keenly aware of the limits of a workplace-centred view of society and of struggle. He saw the ward councils as necessary to the broadening and expanding of revolutionary structures of the working class, and as important sites of education and organization. Their role as sites for the creation and maintenance of organic intellectuals from within the working class made them loci of autonomous social reproduction in the sphere of education. Ward councils engaged in research, examining the sociological and demographic make-up of their particular neighbourhoods, carrying out surveys of the working class forces in a community, and helping created the neighbourhood supports for factory-based struggles (Bates, in Martin 2002. Not based on one’s identity *as* worker but as a member of the *working class* the ward councils were made up of the “non-concentrated” workers: those who laboured as domestics, waiters and service workers, taxi drivers, rural workers, road sweepers, and clerks and who were frequently excluded from official working class organizing (Bates, in Martin 2002; Denning, 2009). Each of these jobs have in common a relation to labours of social reproduction, and their inclusion into a working class identity and organizational structure is an important act of expanding definitions of the class as a non-totalising and heterogeneous entity.

For Gramsci, the ward council was an expression of “the *whole of the working class living in a ward*,” (Gramsci 1977: 67) which made it an authentic, legitimate, and authoritative force. Its importance lay in the ability to expand a factory-based work

stoppage into a *de facto* general strike within a ward or several wards. The ward councils were designed to counter-act the “factory egotism” (Williams, 1977) that permeated the unions and also the council movement. They were an initial attempt at undermining a strict identarian focus, and worked to create a sense of solidarity amongst a more broadly defined working class. Ward councils began the process of envisioning a struggle focused on workers in general and in their lives outside the factory, rather than as they were defined purely within the industrial workplace. Together, Gramsci envisioned, the ward and factory councils would function as a training ground for the labouring masses, involving each and every person in the working class, expanding and broadening the definition. The relationship between the factory council and the ward council, though not entirely, and certainly imperfectly, worked out throughout 1919, engaged in organisational acts of social reproduction, remedying the detachment of the Socialist Party and of official unions from the grassroots of the working classes (Buttidgeig, 2011).

The struggles of the mass worker lasted throughout the middle of the 20th century, marking huge improvements in the quality of life and control over labour for the working classes. Mass worker demands, and victories, included greater control over production processes, higher wages, greater worker protections, and benefits. As the mid-century wore on, capital began the process of decomposing the powers of the mass worker and recomposing itself through the imposition of new production practices and techniques. This decompositionary/recompositionary process opened up political space for the development of the next class composition, the socialized worker.

2.3 The Socialised Worker and the Italian Social Movements of the 1970s

2.3a) Socialised Worker, Social Factory: Class Composition in the 1970s

As I discussed in Chapter One, May 1968 was a moment of global uprising; struggles of youth and students exploded from France to Mexico to the United States and beyond. The month of May holds iconic status as a new revolutionary moment, but in Italy what began that month lasted most of a decade. These were the struggles of the socialised worker, differing from the mass worker in terms of both political and technical composition and enlarging further the minor current. The socialised worker disengaged from a purely factory-centred struggle, expanded the demographic content of the working class, and intensified concerns with issues of social reproduction. As I have noted here, social reproduction hovered at the margins of the previous class compositions – forming the minor current to the major flow.³⁰ When the socialised worker emerged as a new composition, social reproduction moved increasingly closer to the centre of struggle.

The decomposition of the mass worker resulted from capital's transition to post-Fordist production processes, including increased automation and mechanization, the decentralization of production, and the centralization of economic power growing out of new managerial practices (Harvey, 1990; Dyer-Witheford, 1999).³¹ While earlier capitalist relations had been immanent to machines, increased technologisation contributed to the subordination of all social relations to regimes of production, making the social a plane of capitalized activity (Thoburn, 2003). This meant that value could be extracted from “the entire sociality of the relations of production and reproduction”

³⁰ Because social reproduction was not central to the main threads of the minor current structures (the factory councils and the workplace soviets), it can almost be considered the minor current to the minor current. For clarity's sake I will forgo this construction while still recalling that social reproduction was not yet central to the significant forms of minor current compositions in the eras of the professional worker and the mass worker.

³¹ For a more detailed explanation of the changes brought about through post-Fordist production models see Harvey, 1990)

(Negri 1988: 207). In this way the social itself became a factory – a “factory without walls” (Negri, 1989: 204) or a “social factory”. As Tronti, in 1962, noted:

The more capitalist development advances, that is to say, the more the production of relative surplus value penetrates everywhere, the more the circuit production-distribution-exchange-consumption inevitably develops; that is to say that the relationship between factory and society, between society and the state, become [sic] more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development social relations become moments of the relations of production, and the whole society becomes an articulation of production. In short, all of society lives as a function of the factory. (Tronti, in Cleaver, 1992: 37)

New technologies permitting the “social factory” meant that productive labour lost its pride of place in the process of surplus value creation and extraction. These technologies included computerization and automation of production, and advanced and high-speed modes of communication and transportation, which created a new sociality of production and formed new technical basis for the composition of capital. Changes in the technical composition of capital then altered the political composition of the working class. Out of this a new class composition engaged in new modes of struggle against capital could develop; what Negri began to call the socialised worker.

For the socialised worker, productive time moves beyond work time and becomes *life* time; thus class struggle ceases to centre on the direct point of production. Making the life of the working classes a site of antagonism brings to the fore whole new subjects of revolutionary class struggle, most powerfully women in their role as reproductive

labourers – as engaged in social reproduction – but also students, the unemployed, and children (see Dallacosta and James, 1972; Federici, 2012). This expanded understanding of the working class to include those engaged in social reproduction can be read as an important deepening of the minor current, as outlined in the previous sections. The inclusion of social reproduction and reproductive labour as sites of both value extraction and of struggle contributed to crisis in the political composition of the mass worker, bringing about changed strategies and structures in the social worker.

Several events converged to throw the centralised structures of the mass worker's political composition into crisis throughout the later 1960s and 70s. These included the influx of Southern Italian migrant workers into Italy's north who fought against discrimination as part of their class politics, and the exodus of feminist activists from both heterodox left parties and autonomous activist movements, permeated as they were with misogynist or sexist sentiments. These feminist activists formed their own separatist groups, organising struggles around the sexual division of labour, and domestic and reproductive work. It was through these explicitly feminist politics that the relationship between workplace and community, seen as so complex by Gramsci and the earlier councilists, was at least partially resolved. Feminist struggles of the socialised worker formulated campaigns for de-masculinised healthcare, abortion rights, daycare access, and housing rights (Beccalli, 1984; Barkan, 1984; Cuninghame, 2008). These issues were similar to those prioritized by women-lead soviets and circles in Russia in 1905, and considered by the ward councils in 1919, but by the 1970s they had taken on a life of their own, if not overshadowing at least challenging the primacy of factory-based struggles. The priorities of feminist activists disrupted easy notions of a single, homogenous voice for the working class, or of a unified working class identity. In this we see both the engorgement of a minor current to more hegemonic compositions, as well as the swelling of a minor current *to the minor current* in the form of feminist, social

reproduction-based organizing. The previously dominant modes of working class organisation – the parliamentary party and the mass union – were displaced by forms of struggle that were more aligned with the minor current – autonomous and extra-parliamentary movements. These movements were heterogeneous and contained a chorus of voices, as did the minoritarian media form of the era: the collective *Controradio* which formed ran the station *Radio Alice* that operated throughout some of the most heated days of struggle.

2.3b Radio Alice: Media of the Socialised Worker

In the 1970s Italian airwaves were dominated by the state; private citizens had no legal access to them. A collective, *Controradio* formed in Bologna to test this law by opening the station *Radio Alice*. It was the first free radio station in the city and it operated from 1976-1977,³² when it was shut down by the *carabinieri*, the Italian police (Downing, 2001). Unlike previous media forms associated with earlier class compositions – Lenin’s newspaper and Gramsci’s journal – the radio station started by autonomist activists adhered very closely to themes expressed by Deleuze and Guattari in their thinking through minoritarian politics. As such, investigating *Radio Alice* allows us see further evidence of the expansion of minoritarianism in the emergent class composition of the era, and the role of this radio station in the social reproduction of militant working classes. It is important to consider the role of media in the dispersion of struggles beyond the factory, the ways in which media proliferates struggles, and allows people to define themselves in relation to struggles: specifically, the role of media and

³² In 1974 the law regarding state-control of the airwaves was deemed unconstitutional.

communications in projects of social reproduction. For example, it was the continued relegation to “gestetner angels” – doing rote work such as mimeographing pamphlets and posters designed and written by men – that drove many women to forge their own movements and advance feminist struggles in Italy. This demonstrates one of the multiple roles media can play in growing movements and expanding minor currents.

The central means of communication in the 1970s in Italy were not obviously feminist, nor were the many self-organised multi-media projects emerging throughout the time period. These projects moved on from print media – newsletters, pamphlets, posters which all still held importance – into the realm of radio and even television. Media activists took communication from states of passivity to open participation (Berardi, et al. 2009), intending to allow media producers to create socially engaged work that would enter the public realm with transformative effect. Even print-based technologies like the mimeograph had far-reaching impacts, allowing for rapid mobilisations “through the reproduction of thousands of copies of messages at lightning speed and bargain prices” (Berardi, et al, 2009: 76), making broad-based consciousness-raising possible. The arrival of the off-set press allowed for colour printing, leading to an explosion in transversal newspapers and journals like *A/Traverso* and *ZUT*. As well, the Italian student movement took up independent video production, even creating a full-length feature *October*, and video cameras became a common sight at political demonstrations (Berardi, et al. 2009). *Radio Alice*, though, is possibly the most important medium of communication to manifest in this period in Italy. The station represents a decisive change in control over information distribution, and points clearly to the continued development and expansion of a minoritarian current in class composition. *Radio Alice* also allows us to clearly highlight communicative technologies as central to both minoritarianism (as an assemblage of minoritarian becoming) and social reproduction far before the Internet became a dominant means of communication.

The *Controradio* collective that formed *Radio Alice* was exclusively male – an “island of male-self consciousness operating in a context in which women were reasserting their specificity and autonomy” (Berardi, et al. 2009: 78). Despite this, the motives and politics of the station were impossible to understand without the critiques that feminist activists had launched against male leadership and movement relations. The station emerged in the midst of a political milieu influenced by feminist struggles. The primarily feminist influence on the station was the insistence that “the historical actor was not a unitary and homogenous social class, but a storm of singularities that expressed themselves on different levels” (Berardi, et al. 2009: 79). As such, the station discouraged “petty drives of identity” (Berardi, et al, 2009: 78) and sought to give voice to the movement in all its concatenations. Further, instead of a focus on content, the *Radio Alice* collective took seriously McLuhan’s dictum of the media as the message, seeing the technological structure and its organization as decisively influencing the “mode of communication and the conditions in which communicative exchange unfolds” (Berardi, et al. 2009: 79). A tangible political aim of the station, then, was to destabilize the dominant messages of work, order, and discipline through moving away from consumption models of media and “toward the critical production of the given and the said” (Berardi, 2009: 80).

In concrete terms, this philosophy appeared in several ways that are important for thinking through the role of communication as social reproduction, and further how communicative media can form and expand minoritarian assemblages. First of all, *Radio Alice* rejected a division between technicians and producers, and between producers and users. In order to undermine internal and external hierarchies. As a rule they did not professionalise, did not broadcast carefully produced and polished programming, and did not use prepared speeches or perfect mixes. They allowed people to represent themselves as they were and as they stood. As such the station followed a minoritarian current

resisting a representative politics and sought instead autonomous self-expression from movement participants, something we will later see reflected in the work of Concordia University Television in Chapter Seven.

As well, the station relied on a mix of technologies that enabled an increased range of information collection. They used the telephone in communicative routines, allowing for more immediacy and mobility of the station during the political demonstrations that were ample at the time. This meant, for example, that activists could call in from payphones in or near demonstrations, allowing for the live broadcasting of news from the sites of protest by the people involved calling in from the streets. The decentralized coordination and production of information meant that *Radio Alice* served as an open channel that anyone could pick up and make use of. The station became an assemblage of bodies and technologies through whose actions other assemblages were created. Because many youth carried around small transistor radios tuned in to *Radio Alice*, when they called in from demonstrations they could communicate with one another, coordinate actions, and develop a sense of coherency to their movement. This contributed to a reproduction of the social in that the students and workers who listened were also producers, and thus produced solidarities between them and their struggles. The station was an instrument through which to explore the varied and yet similar contradictions of capital within the society and to then “intervene creatively in everyday life” (Berardi, 2009: 82). Similarly, the use of the telephone permitted for the production and reproduction of new subjectivities. News was no longer produced exclusively by an editorial group and received passively by listeners. Instead, this dyad was eradicated and replaced by a proliferation of “producers” out of the myriad militants listening in the streets. While being an avant-garde artistic-communicative experiment *Radio Alice* was also more than that. It interacted with the city, the people, and the movements that

surrounded it, and in so doing “produced new networks of friendship and social aggregation” (Berardi, 2009: 82).

The interactions and relations that *Radio Alice* and its participants engaged in points to an expanded minor current, even a minoritarianism, in the assemblage of the socialised worker. But *Controradio* and *Radio Alice* were all-male collectives, and were both critiqued and critical of feminist counter-struggle within the left that helped forge the social worker as a minor current movement. Thus, while expressing a minoritarianism, in reference to communication media, and engaging in social reproduction through the production of new, often revolutionary, subjects, the more concretely socially reproductive concerns of women were largely absent from the station’s mandates and goals. A more decisively concrete standpoint from which to analyse the predominance of minoritarianism in the assemblage of the socialised worker can come the co-occurring feminist movement in Italy in the 1970s. The concerns of feminist theorists and activists emerged in earnest and moved towards the centre of working class struggles in the era of the socialised worker.

2.3c) Minor current to the Minor current: Expanding Feminist struggles, social reproduction, and the socialised worker.

In Italy of the 1970s feminist movements grew out of a frustration with and critique of both the traditional modes of struggle and the latent sexism in their autonomous alternatives. It was in the burgeoning feminist movement that the politics of autonomy, of minoritarianism, were most decisively expressed. As women increasingly entered the workforce, in factories and elsewhere, the aim of “equality” vocalized by the trade unions began to ring hollow. Although women in the factory setting made these aims more urgent, they were marginal to the process of renewal the union claimed was underway (Beccalli, 1984: 40). Politically, gender was consistently subordinated to class

as the central and primary contradiction under capitalism. Women were largely excluded from the organizing tasks and political direction of the union's struggles – decision-making was left to men (*Lotta Continua*, 1970) and the prevailing style of union militancy was overwhelmingly masculine – “a model with which women could identify only at great cost” (Beccalli, 1984: 43). Official trade unions operated on the basis of a minority³³ politics that sought simultaneously to subsume women into struggle while excluding them from leadership and decision-making roles, basing the politics of struggle on the long-held identity category of the male industrial worker. Because they were increasingly entering the workforce, women did continue to strive for greater democracy within official unions: they pushed for the creation of workplace committees and a return to the factory council model within the workplace.

Still, within the official union bureaucracy and to much of the working class, politics was considered a male activity. Women were seen primarily as caregivers, even when they engaged in waged work. Their position as unpaid domestic workers in their own homes gave men the freedom to meet, discuss, and organize working class struggle, marking the centrality of the internal division of labour within the family. The inability of union leaders or worker-comrades to take seriously the double exploitation of women, to destroy the divisions of labour within the family, to divest the male leadership of their centrality, and to share power with female workers and comrades was a central obstacle to any possible shared emancipation of the working class. This obstacle was not immediately or entirely overcome by the development of autonomous social and political movements, and the recomposition of the social worker in the late 1960s and 1970s.

³³ Recalling that a minority politics, for Deleuze and Guattari, does not refer to a numerical minority but rather to a position that defines itself against a standard – the majority – and seeks recognition from that standard as opposed to destroying the standard in the hopes of creating something new.

Even within autonomous and radical student groups women's specific needs and struggles were ignored as they were with the older, institutional left (Cunninghame, 2008). In these new left groupings women were often nicknamed "angels of the mimeograph" (Barkan, 1984) or "gestetner angels" (Wright, 2012), referring to the rote tasks they were often assigned. Women were the "mass worker" of even radical left movements – the minor current to the minor current. For many women this relegation to unskilled work was so frustrating that they abandoned even these heterodox left parties and autonomist groups and created their own organisations, including "loosely structured, local collectives, and consciousness-raising groups where they could couple radical ideology with new organizational forms" (Barkan, 1984: 32). This led to an emerging centrality of social reproduction in the theory and left practice of the 1970s in Italy. For example *Lotta Femminista*, a feminist group co-founded by Mariarosa DallaCosta, saw the source of women's exploitation within capitalism as rooted in their provision of reproductive labour. Reproductive labour, they argued, was of strategic importance to the functioning of capitalist economies and a site of surplus value extraction (Dallacosta and James, 1972). These emerging theories signified an evolving class struggle critique that did not subordinate sexual oppression to class oppression, but saw the two as deeply interconnected. As such, the body and its myriad labours became a site of anti-capitalist struggle, expanding Marxist theory beyond gender-blind limitations.

In their daily lives, because they were traditionally relegated to the home and to domestic labour, women bore the brunt of rising prices, increased costs of living, and inadequate wages. The recognition of reproductive labour as integral to capitalist surplus value extraction led Italian feminist theorists in the 1970s to deepen the notion of the social factory. The thesis of the social factory asserts that, at a certain stage of capitalist development, "every social relation is subsumed under capital and the distinction between society and factory collapses, so that society becomes the factory and social

relations directly become relations of production” (Federici, 2012: 7). Feminists such as Federici and DallaCosta argued that the social factory was not a new or emergent phenomenon, but rather the extraction of value from social relations was an ongoing part of the circulation of capitalist production. This subsumption can be seen in the earliest points of capitalist accumulation through a form of primitive accumulation that works specifically on the female body (Federici, 2004). By the mid-twentieth century with mass factory production, the capitalist circuit ran first through the home, the bedroom, the kitchen – the locations that served as “the centres of production of labour power – and from there it moved on to the factory, passing through the school, the office, the lab” (Federici, 2012: 8). When taken up by feminists who chose autonomous organizing paths, the concept of the social factory became a more weighty theoretical brick with which to build new political subjectivities and struggles, and to shatter tired strategies and infrastructures.

As such, feminist and some *Operaismo* or *autonomia* organizing took on the work of social reproduction as a central site for confronting and challenging capital (Beccalli, 1984), and tied this work to struggles in the community and in the workplace. In factory towns like Turin almost all aspects of social life were controlled by the factory, including public transit, housing, healthcare, and news media. As such feminist activists and mixed-gender groups like *Lotta Continua* argued for the necessity of converging workplace and community struggles, insisting on the need to understand the “apparently separate but in fact connected workplace and ‘private’ aspects of the workers’ life” (*Lotta Continua* 1971, np). Feminist groups responded to this demand concretely: they set up health centres (*consultoris*) in working class neighbourhoods, and learned to provide abortions before the procedure was legal (Barkan, 1984). They organized around inadequate childcare centres and grade schools, pushing for autonomous initiatives. Further they demanded and organized for autonomous community control over other reproductive

needs such as rent, food costs, and electricity prices (Barkan, 1984) and engaged in self-reduction and appropriation campaigns. This was part of a struggle over to re-appropriate the social wealth that the working class, broadly defined, collectively produced, but which remained unpaid by capital.

Lotta Femminista catalyzed an expanding minoritarian struggle for autonomy from official working class institutions, unions, and left parties, as well as from the market and the state. In their separation from male-dominated spheres, these assemblages of feminist struggle developed from within their own situated positions – they cohered and expanded through the relations of exteriority between them and their homes, their workplaces, and their social experiences of the world. While they engaged in practices and struggles which could be situated as “minor” in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms (seeking to achieve identity and power for a marginalized group) they fought for things like enhanced state services with an eye to autonomy and with an awareness of the class implications inhering in all services provided by the state. It was this militant feminist organizing in Italy that brought social reproduction to the fore of the minoritarian class composition of the socialised worker.

Thinking of minor currents to class composition through the framework of Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblages can facilitate our understanding of a swelling line in left politics, one that obtains its connections to the technical base of capital through relations of exteriority. In each of the three instances highlighted the minor current takes the assembly form, and in each historical iteration this assembly form has its own minor current grounded in social reproduction as well as production. The flow of the minor current has been uneven – as has capitalist development – but the history I trace demonstrates a strengthening emergence, a swelling, or an expansion of these politics. In the forthcoming chapters I will point to this current’s explosion in the struggles

converging out of the 2008 financial crisis. In the conclusion to this chapter, though, I will theorise the recurrence of the minoritarian assemblage in the logic of class composition through the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of relations of exteriority.

2.4 Conclusion: The Minor Current to Class Composition: Relations of Exteriority

As noted in Chapter 1, Manuel DeLanda (2006) claims that relations of exteriority are of utmost importance to assemblage theory. Thinking of assemblages in terms of relations of exteriority forces a refusal of lines of inquiry which perceive “wholes” or “unities” in organismic ways. As such, he resists bodily metaphors for thinking through systems or entities wherein component parts are dependent upon each other and work together. In perceiving wholes as organisms or bodies we promote internal harmonies that flatten difference and reduce wild heterogeneity to non-existent homogeneity. Instead assemblage theory allows entities or systems to be seen as collections of difference – assemblages of assemblages – which are held together in internal tension through varied and changing relations of exteriority. Thinking of class, and class composition, as an assemblage allows us to focus on the relations of exteriority that make a class cohere, and focusing on the relations of exteriority allows us to account for the recurrent minoritarian line within – and not against – the logic of class composition.

A class composition, as noted above, is created through the relation between the technical composition (organization of capital) and the political composition (antagonistic organisation of labour). The organization of working class activity gets its technical basis in capital’s dominant forms of organizing production. These in and of themselves are relations of exteriority – the component parts of the class relate to the

component parts of capital and are held together as a composition in internal tension. But there have always been advanced sectors and secondary sectors in capitalist production, operating simultaneously and often within the same geographic space. Reproductive labour or social reproduction has been historically ignored as any sort of factor in the technical composition of the class throughout most the history of working class organising. In the early 20th Century the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) in the United States organised around a “social factory” type thematic; they prioritized organizing the “unorganisable” and actively resisted racial and gender discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiments (Dixon, 2014). Aside from this, as Federici points out, reproductive labour was the great unnamed – and unpaid – source of surplus value extraction since the advent of capitalism (Federici, 2004). But just because social reproduction was ignored in dominant conceptions of class composition does not mean that such relations of exteriority – between assembly formations and capital’s organization of unpaid reproductive labour by women in the home – did not influence the major or hegemonic class compositions. In fact a minor current threaded itself through these major compositions of the class, and this minor current had – as one of its technical bases – the organization of gendered reproductive labour in the home and the community. In the era of the professional worker the soviets – mostly those led by women – concerned themselves at least partially with issues of social reproduction, whilst the dominant political composition – the Leninist party – was concerned exclusively with production as the site for revolutionary struggle. “Productive” and “unproductive” (read reproductive) labours were organised hierarchically in the dominant political understandings of the professional worker: productive labour was a site of struggle and hence the main source of both the technical and political basis of class composition. Although concerns of social reproduction were not dominant even within the soviets, reproductive labour did form the technical basis of a very gendered class composition and

this relation of exteriority between reproductive labour and the socially reproductive concerns of the women-led soviets permitted initial glimpses of a minor current in the class composition assemblage. This very gendered minor current can only be seen as attending to – and providing some internal tension within – a class when seen through the lens of assemblage theory.

The centrality of social reproduction within the assemblage of factory councils was less clear – much less historical documentation on women’s roles in the council movement is available. The factory councils’ politically-heterogeneous make-up, along with the ward councils which positioned themselves as expressions of the whole working class and meant to counter-act factory egotism, though, signify the maintenance of a minor current resisting the dominance of the “mass worker” as the exclusive composition of the class. Again based in the relations of exteriority between technical composition of workers engaged in socially reproductive work – such as service workers, waiters, taxi drivers, street sweepers, food workers, peasants, and women – and the political composition of the ward and factory councils, the continuation of a minor current alongside more a major class composition emerges. Those workers engaged in activities more associated with social reproduction (paid and unpaid), were ultimately necessary to the political efficacy of the larger class composition in that, with their involvement it became possible to order “the immediate and complete cessation of all workers throughout the ward” (Gramsci, 1977: 67). While councils themselves were something of a minor current to the unionism of the mass worker era, the immediacy of socially reproductive concerns within this minoritarian assemblage is minimal. That does not signify its absence.

It is in the final example, in the era of the social worker, that the minor current emerges in earnest as an assemblage growing in importance *within* the hegemonic

composition of the class. Based on relations of exteriority – women’s situatedness in the technical composition of the class – reproductive labour became recognized as an integral part of the circuit of capital *and* in the circulation of struggle, at least to a large number of feminist activists and theorists who left heterodox and orthodox Marxist organizing to form autonomous collaborations. In this sense the internal tensions holding together the assemblage of class composition obtains greater prominence, and points to the continuing co-existence of recurring minoritarian line *within* the logics of compositionalist theory.

In the forthcoming chapters I will highlight the continued swelling of a minoritarian line in autonomous organizing and class struggle in the contemporary, post-2008 era. I will connect this expanded minor current to the technical composition of the class throughout the neoliberal period and demonstrate the relation to the political composition of the class in the form of assemblages and assembly movements. The forthcoming chapters will argue that social movements in 2011-2012 centred issues of social reproduction because they were responding to a crisis affecting the capacity of people globally to reproduce themselves – a crisis wrought by the technical recompositions of capital, but also because this minoritarian concern proves the most liberatory way forward for class struggles.

Although carving out a clear and decisive timeline for transformations in class composition is impossible – there is always overlap and backsliding, and (at least) one composition always bleeds into another – I have tried to sketch when and how these transformations took place over the course of the 20th century. The professional worker’s reign was approximately 1848-1914 and the mass worker from 1914-1968. In the years immediately following the upheavals of 1968-69, struggles coalesced around the increasing decentralisation and automation of production as well as the recognition of the interconnectedness of productive and reproductive labour, expressed as a broadening of

the working class as a category, wherein the movements of feminists and students affirmed both of these activities collective as labour. It was at this moment that the cycle of struggles composed a new class, the socialized worker, forged in the earliest moments of modern neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). As globalization increased, communications accelerated, and movements diversified further the socialised worker morphed into what Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) called multitude (and I consider a class in decompositionary mode). In the next chapter I describe the transformations to the technical basis of capitalism in the neoliberal period, which envelopes both the socialised worker as it waned into the decompositionary descriptor of multitude.

3.0 Chapter 3: Financial Crisis, Class Composition, and a New Cycle of Struggles: 2008-2011.

This chapter seeks to contextualise contemporary class composition through an account of its technical basis. Over the course of the 1973-2006 cycle – the neoliberal period – capitalism worked to decompose the socialised worker. For Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009, 2012), Virno (2004), and Griziotti, Lovaglio, and Terranova (2012), among others this class – although the term class becomes highly contested – recomposed itself in the figure of multitude. Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) developed the term multitude to describe the formations emerging out neoliberal capitalism and the anti-globalisation of movements of the late 1990s. They continue to argue that this composition was evident in the 2011 cycle of struggles (Hardt and Negri, 2012).³⁴

Against this, I argue instead that the neoliberal period from the 1980s up to and including the 2008 financial crisis, constitutes an on-going process of class decomposition. If this decomposition has a figure, multitude may be it. Because I argue that multitude describes a class in a process of decomposition, I adopt the concept of the “global proletariat” to describe the processes of recomposition taking place in the post-

³⁴ For the purposes of forwarding a succinct argument, I will only briefly reference the struggles as they emerged in Egypt, Spain, and the United States, while recognizing that similar struggles were happening in Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Portugal, Greece, the UK, Canada, and Australia among myriad other places.

2008 cycle of struggles. I conclude this chapter with an elaboration of the contemporary global proletariat's technical composition, which avoids the gender-blind presumptions of other theories of class composition. This helps to support broader arguments presented in this dissertation regarding a) the expansion of a minoritarian current whose technical basis is social reproduction; b) the co-existence of embodied and machinic technologies in assembly movements; and c) the role of these technologies in liberating social reproduction from securitised and capitalised spheres.

The term “global proletariat” is the name I prefer to demarcate the collection of working class forces in this contemporary era. The term comes from Karl Heinz Roth and Marcel Van der Linden, who define the global proletariat as “the multiverse of the exploited” (cited in Fuchs, 2014) whose labour power is expropriated, disciplined, externalised, alienated, and valorised. The global proletariat can be seen as a class in the process of becoming, collectively “resisting the exploitation and valorization of their labour” (Fuchs, 2014: 305) and composing itself as such. Such a description permits a reading of the political processes that take place in social struggles, the relations of exteriority that form class as an assemblage. Furthermore, the concept of the proletariat specifies and makes clear capitalism as a social relationship. That is, proletariat as a term attunes us to the relations between humans and capital, something that multitude, conceptually and terminologically, doesn't appear to do. As a term, proletariat is also at least marginally freer from the “working class's” persistent association with exclusively industrial labour. As per the dictionary definition of “proletariat” as workers and working class people regarded collectively, I follow Heinz Roth's (2010) understanding of global as the deep interconnectedness of workers, but prefer the “global proletariat” to a global working class, for the proletariat's inclusive and broad demographic capturing. The global proletariat is distinguished from multitude in that it is a class in composition, rather than one in decomposition. It highlights an attempt to restore a *class*-based analysis

– indeed the *class composition* – to the complexity and diversity of contemporary labour conveyed by multitude.

3.1 Capitalism in the Neoliberal Period: the 1973-2006 Cycle

As briefly noted in Chapter Two, capital's response to classes composing themselves is to launch a counter-offensive aimed at class decomposition and the reassertion of capitalist dominance. This takes place through restructuring the technical basis of production, which in turn restructures and recomposes the economy in favour of the capitalist class. In the post-mass worker era this economic restructuring can be referred to as neoliberalism, a cycle of capitalism marked by hyper-exploitation of the working class and the contraction of the welfare state. This is a process that began approximately in 1970 although its roots can be traced back further (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberalism led to the proletarianisation of large swathes of the global population (the movement *into* the working class by many whose labour was previously untouched by capital or the downward mobility of those moving from middle class to working class positions) and the pauperisation of many in the industrialised and deindustrialised centres (the movement out of the working class entirely, forcing some to exist as surplus populations at the peripheries of production). While this cycle had ramifications for production and productive labour, it also seriously impacted social reproduction and reproductive labour. Thus, the financial crisis of 2008, when it finally exploded, had been preceded and was succeeded by an on-going crisis of social reproduction.

The unfolding of economic and socially productive crises over this period was uneven, occurring with greater or lesser impact and at different time in different country currents. In this chapter I focus on giving a picture of the tendencies at play largely in

advanced sectors of capitalism, particularly the overdeveloped world – Europe and North America – but I also reference some of the important impacts in industrialising or developing nations. I reserve further discussion of the economic tendencies in BRIC and developing countries – China in particular – for Chapter Four.

Social reproduction, which will be explained in more detail in Chapter Four, refers to the capacities of populations to reproduce themselves as both life and labour. Traumatic changes in the ability of a global proletariat to complete a reproductive cycle have significant effects on the sphere of commodity production, as “the latter depends upon the former to provide the vital ingredients for all production of value, labour” (Caffentzis, 2013: 6). The technologizing of capitalism’s productive practices, expanded proletarianisation and what Federici (2012) calls permanent primitive accumulation,³⁵ and state divestment from socially reproductive endeavours are the hallmarks of neoliberalism, or what we can call the 1973-2006 decompositionary cycle. Together these processes have created massive surplus populations, intensified global unevenness in production, created deep indebtedness, and dramatically altered the composition of the working class. This alteration – a decomposition – has had grave consequences for the possibilities of organised resistance to capitalism and working class struggle.

Levels of exploitation increased in the 1973-2006 cycle, pushed forward by the technological command of capital in production, transportation, and communication. New technologies transformed and standardised transportation chains by means of the container, accelerated communication through advanced information technologies, and

³⁵ Federici actually says that the impacts of a neoliberalised economy – specifically financialisation and the de-territorialisation of capital – have “created the conditions whereby primitive accumulation has become a permanent process” (Federici, 2012: 101)

intensified production through micro-miniaturisation and robotisation. Machinery was converted into “assemblages of individually enumerated and monitored components” (Roth, 2010: 210). In the overdeveloped economies of North America this led to increased productivity but also stagnating wages and the growth of surplus populations pushed out of work (Roth, 2010; McChesney and Foster, 2011). Expansion of credit and debt allowed for the continued subsistence and reproduction of working classes, but debt also served as a “mode of circumventing the wage relation” (Adamson, 2012) and meant the deployment of financial instruments as tools of control.

Contracted funding for state-based institutions of social reproduction also marked this decompositionary cycle. The shrinking of the welfare state forced greater reliance on credit cards, home mortgages, and bank loans for working class household maintenance, which more deeply integrated workers into financial markets (McNally, 2010). Over the course of these three neoliberal decades, debt-creation was a very lucrative form of profit generation for banks; heavily increased debt burdens were central to neoliberalism's actual existence. It was during this period that the financial services sector expanded, and began to unveil complex new financial instruments such as collateralised debt obligations, credit default swaps, and asset backed securities, many of which relied on complicated mathematical and computational algorithms, often poorly understood by anyone outside of a Harvard Computer Science classroom. These financial instruments were developed partially to hedge against the risks associated with “foreign exchange rates, constantly fluctuating commodity prices, and stock market volatility” (Roth, 2010: 213). During this period, banks also intensified borrowing as they sought to finance more business – banks needed to lend money out in order to create more money. This element of financialisation led to the expansion of predatory lending practices in the United

States onto those who had been most harmed during the previous decades of neoliberalism: African Americans and Latinos, primarily women (McNally, 2011).³⁶

Advances in communication technologies throughout this cycle also contributed to the increasing financialisation of the economy³⁷ and to an elongated process of class decomposition. The rapidity with which capital moved across the globe throughout the decompositionary cycle was made possible by ever-advancing computing technology which was able to continually break “the constraints placed on capital by workers’ resistance to exploitation” (Federici, 2012: 101). Advances in communication, production, and transportation technologies also allowed for the emergence of a global network of corporations that housed management in high wage economies central to global economic flows, while production and manufacturing moved to peripheral, low wage economies. This drove some workers in the global North into lower waged work or surplus status and “pauperisation,” while workers in the global South were rapidly proletarianised – enfolded into capitalist production from subsistence economies, for example (Roth, 2010).

³⁶ McNally, in *Global Slump* (2011), lays out carefully, in a way that is vastly beyond the scope of this dissertation, the interacting and interconnected changes that took place in the period in the global economy over the period of 1973-2008; changes that drove up profit rates for the capitalist class, and gave way to the small economic falterings after the breakdown of the Asian Tigers in 1997, all of which resulted in the wholesale reorganisation of capitalist finance leading to the massive increases in the fields of financial services and profits, and the creation of the aforementioned new credit instruments. Employment dropped by 2.4% in the black community in the United States and black incomes dropped by 3% in the years 2000-2007. During that same period subprime loans bled “between 71 and 93 billion in wealth from black households” (McNally, 2011: 125)

³⁷ Financialisation refers to a “pattern of accumulation in which profit making occurs increasingly through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production” (Krippner, (2005).

State divestment from social reproduction through privatisation, contracted funding, or simple abandonment of the social welfare responsibilities also marked this economic cycle. Much of the labour of care, for example, became marketised, meaning very literally that “every articulation of the reproduction of labour [was] also a immediate point of accumulation” (Federici, 2012: 102). Rural-to-urban migrations also resulted from this state divestment allowing, in some countries, for the privatisation of resources previously held in commons (such as water, energy, education, and health care). Increasing numbers of people were moving to cities just as cities were becoming less capable to serve them due to the shrinkage of state and local governments (Davis, 2006). Thus in the global South and some parts of the North formerly rural subsistence farmers, for example, were moving to urban slums to live in abject conditions and eek out existences in informal or highly exploitative economies – throughout the 1980s alone urban poverty in Latin America rose by 50% (Davis, 2006). As capital reorganised spatially throughout this 1973-2006 decompositionary cycle it enclosed, appropriated, and destroyed the natural basis of material production and social reproduction: the “forests, oceans, waters, fisheries, coral reefs, animal and vegetable species” were devoured at historically unprecedented levels (Federici, 2012: 102). The exploitation of ecosystems has important parallels to the remorseless exploitation of labour power over the same period (Roth, 2010).

The process of capitalist expansion, financialisation, and globalisation has been globally uneven both in its appearance and in its ramifications. Regardless of this unevenness, capital’s technologically-inspired expansion served the same objective: it forced large swathes of additional subjects into new human-machinic assemblages of profit generation. It enveloped more individuals and communities into the wage relation. This tendency simultaneously generated a huge new reserve army of labour – both in the global North and South – although some of those were never and will never be called up.

Instead they form what both Davis (2006) and Tayyub (2011) have called “surplus humanity” – those pushed to the margins of both legality and existence. Thus the neoliberal decompositionary period saw both the impoverishment of some proletarianised populations alongside the criminalisation and mass incarceration of allegedly “surplus” populations (Sassen, 2014, Federici, 2012, Alexander, 2010) as well as the “formation of an *ex-lege* proletariat made of undocumented immigrant workers, students defaulting on their loans, producers or sellers of illicit goods, sex workers” (Federici, 2012: 105). This *multitude* of proletarians reminds us that “the production of populations without rights...remains a structural necessity of capital accumulation” (Federici, 2012: 105). In this light it is difficult to hold the optimistic viewpoints of those who, like Hardt and Negri, espouse the revolutionary possibilities in this very restructured capitalism for more autonomous, more cooperative forms of work in the theory of multitude.³⁸ Although the many pushed into freelance or informal work by rapacious capitalism in this cycle may lack the bosses and assembly lines of the mass worker era, they also lack many of the productive supports and infrastructures that made organising in that earlier era so threatening to capital. It is my contention, then, that in fact Hardt and Negri's theorisation of the multitude serves more as a description of an on-going and globally devastating class decomposition, rather than an ecstatic moment of new class composition.

Class decomposition and recomposition are the corollaries of class composition. In the decompositionary mode, the working class fractures around multiple divisions across industries and national borders, but also importantly along lines of gender, race,

³⁸ In *Multitude* (2004) Hardt and Negri write “even when labour is subjugated by capital it always necessarily maintains its own autonomy, and this is ever more clearly true today with respect to the new immaterial, cooperative, and collaborative forms of labour” (54)

religion, language, ethnicity, and sexual orientation amongst others. In a recomposition of the class, working people and movements regroup and organise “across and around those same divisions, healing the schisms and growing larger and stronger” (Stanovsky, 2009: 224). Examining multitude as a descriptor of decomposition emerging in the neoliberal period can help delineate the fractures of the working class clearly, and demonstrate the opacity of the lines of affiliation, constitution, and composition that the concept holds. In the next section I will define multitude, based in Hardt and Negri’s formulation, as describing a class in decomposition throughout the latter part of the 1973-2006 neoliberal cycle. I will highlight the key terms in the theory of multitude – including immaterial labour, biopolitical production, and the general intellect – and hold all of these up against criticisms developed through feminist theorising, particularly in the work of Silvia Federici. I will then point to the crisis of 2008 as a bookend to this decompositional process, and as catalyzing a possible new class composition that begins to reveal itself in the 2011 cycle of struggles.

3.2 Multitude: A Class in Decomposition

To suggest multitude as a descriptor of class decomposition is not to suggest that the concept has been unimportant or that it can and should be ignored. In theoretical explorations multitude has served numerous purposes, primarily dragging all sorts of identities, subjects, and workers outside the mould of the industrial proletariat into the category of revolutionary subjects – extending even further the concept of the social

worker³⁹. Growing out the feminist influences of the 1970s struggles and beyond, multitude expanded the “radius of exploitation and points of conflict [...] beyond the immediate point of production, in the workplace, along an entire circuit of capital, and involve[d] agents other than the waged worker – housewives, students, ecological activists, new social movements” (Dyer-Witheford, 2001: 160). Multitude attempted to define the “experiment with coalitions, ‘co-ordinations,’ ‘rainbows,’ ‘rhizomes,’ ‘networks,’ ‘hammocks,’ and ‘webs’ that has been a salient feature of anticapitalist movements” (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 82), and signified a search for a polyvalent politics.

Developed over three of Hardt and Negri’s texts (2000, 2004, 2009), multitude is not, they claim, “fragmented, anarchical, or incoherent” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 99). Rather, it is a class composition⁴⁰ that merges Marxist understandings of “capital’s dependence on a now postindustrial proletariat, Foucauldian themes of resistance internal to power, and a Deleuzian account of rhizomatic conflict” (Dyer-Witheford, 2002: 5). Multitude, as a composition of the proletariat, obtains its technical basis from immaterial

³⁹ Although, as we will see below, much of this extensive work of expanding the concept of the working class originates in feminist criticism of Marxism, including Autonomist Marxism and the very notion of a social worker as a new or emergent figure of the working class.

⁴⁰ Although there is great debate internal to autonomist theory as to whether multitude describes a class, or whether class is even an appropriate terminology to continue using in the contemporary moment. That being said, Virno (2002) stated quite clearly that an “end of the working class” ideology is ridiculous: “I would like to dispel an optical illusion. It is said: the multitude signals the end of the working class. It is said: in the universe of the ‘many’ there is no longer a place for blue overalls, that are all the same and constitute a body that is insensitive to the kaleidoscope of ‘differences’. Whoever says this is wrong. And it is an unimaginative mistake: every twenty years there is someone who declares the end of the working class. Even though the latter is, neither in Marx nor in the opinion of any serious person, identified with a specific organisation of labour, a specific complex of habits or a specific mentality. Working class is a theoretical concept, not a souvenir photo: it indicates the subject that produces absolute and relative surplus value. The notion of ‘multitude’ is counterpoised to that of ‘people’ rather than to that of the ‘working class’. Being multitude does not impede the production of surplus value. On the other hand, producing surplus value does not at all entail the need to be politically a ‘people’.” (Virno, 2002: np)

labour – “labour that produces immaterial products such as information, knowledges, ideas, images, relationships, and affects” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 65) – and biopolitical production – the production of “actual social relationships and forms of life” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 99) The concept of immaterial labour is important in the work of Lazaratto (1996), Virno (2004), and earlier Hardt and Negri formulations (2000, 2004) and is intimately tied to the development of multitude as a constitutive figure. In fact, Wright (2005) suggests that it was the defeat of the figures around which earlier *Operaismo* theorists had centred their analysis – the very material labour of the mass worker – which led Negri and others to insist upon a different kind of work becoming hegemonic.

There are three primary aspects to immaterial labour, as Hart and Negri (2000) define it. It involves a) the communicative labour within an industrial production newly linked into informational networks; b) the interactive labour of symbolic analysis and problem solving; and c) the labour of producing and manipulating affects, emotions, and sensations. The first two aspects are centred around advanced communicative technologies suggesting that these technologies have been the central force altering production – and thus labouring – processes throughout the 1973-2006 cycle. Hardt and Negri claim that even in cases where computers were not used in production, all labouring practices have tended towards “the model of information and communication technologies” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 291); computation shapes all processes of production. At the same time, they also suggest that the new management schemes put in place in this immaterial production “require the labour force to work collaboratively” (Bratich, 2008: 30) and without a great deal of oversight.

Affective labour or care work is the other half of the immaterial dimension of production. This very embodied labour involves human contact and interaction, and takes place in fields such as health care and entertainment. Hardt and Negri insist that

this work is immaterial *even when* it is corporeal because what this labour produces is intangible – it produces feelings that cannot be grasped in any sort of concrete way but rather come to shape and structure the human experience *in that moment of labouring or being laboured on*. Immaterial labour produces ideas, knowledge, forms of communication and relating which are not material but are forms of life and social relationships. This kind of production they call “biopolitical” in order to “highlight how general its products are, and how directly it engages social life in its entirety” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 94). Somewhat in contrast to this, Berardi refers to this type of work as “cognitive labour,” the work left when information technology has replaced “human toil with intelligent machines” (Berardi, 2010). This cognitive activity – which is itself biopolitical – then becomes connected to value production. Hardt and Negri moved away from immaterial labour, a much-criticised concept, in their later works (2009, 2012). Whether cognitive, immaterial, or biopolitical, each of these theories of emergent labour forms grew out of the *Operaist* reading of what Marx, briefly in the *Grundrisse* (1973) referred to as the general intellect.

The general intellect is the condensation of the collected powers of the human brain, and is considered a crucial factor in production (Marx, 1973, Virno, 2001). Marx's original notion of the general intellect foresaw the ultimate erasure of the worker and the workers' body from production as machinic technologies replaced manual labour. Later thinkers in the *Operaismo* tradition did not stop at describing the general intellect as “an assemblage of humans and machines at the heart of post-industrial production” (Terranova, 2000: 45) but rather considered it the “generic attitudes of the mind” (Virno, 2001) that become productive resources – i.e. the faculty of language, the ability to learn, memory, the power of absorption, and the relation and tendency towards self-reflexivity (Virno, 2001). These are the cognitive activities of immaterial labour. As noted above, this labour began to include not just the work of machines in production but also

symbolic and affective work, contemporary labour requiring specialised knowledge and linguistic cooperation (Bratich, 2008).

The concept of multitude relies upon these interlocking theories of immaterial labour, biopolitical production, and the general intellect. Together they suggest that value is no longer solely created at the direct point of production, but rather the point of production has spread throughout the circulatory networks of capital, expanding into varied areas of life including into the production of life itself. This expands upon but is related to earlier notions of the social factory. In general, these theorists claim that capital today draws upon a “basin of immaterial labour” which “dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities” (Lazzarato, 1996: 136). These forms of labour and production can be considered geographically limited – centered in high-wage, deindustrialising economies of the global north – thus lending credence to charges of an implicit Eurocentrism in Hardt and Negri’s work (Ong, 2012).⁴¹ Against this they argue these immaterial forms of labour and production have structuring affects on all other forms of labour, including the deeply material; the immaterial has become hegemonic.⁴² The expansion of this

⁴¹ Hardt and Negri are attuned to such charges against their work and attempt to engage with the ways “many analyses neglect the forms of domination and control outside of Europe, conceiving them merely as echoes of European domination” (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 70).

⁴² Claiming that immaterial labour and biopolitical production are hegemonic – as Hardt and Negri do – is not to suggest it is globally dominant, nor that the traditional working class and material production have been completely or even largely replaced, nor does it even signify a decreased number of workers engaged in materially productive industries across the global. Instead asserting immaterial labour and biopolitical production as hegemonic signifies that “the qualities and characteristics of immaterial production are tending to transform the other forms of labour and indeed society as a whole” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 66). This plays itself out, for example, in the putting to work of affect leading to new and more intense forms of alienation, the increase in precarity as more and more work becomes contractual, and the blurred distinctions between work- and non-work life.

hegemonic mode and its attendant effects is made possible through the advances in technology brought about by capital across the neoliberal era.

Multitude, immaterial labour, and biopolitical production are all intimately connected. They are often critiqued together. One of the most powerful critiques of these interlocked concepts concerns their loss of connection to specifically gendered and often racialised components of struggle.⁴³ The abstractness of the labour described as immaterial and biopolitical divests it of any connection to specific bodies and all the meanings that these bodies contain. Re-inserting bodies back into a compositionalist analysis contends that a core component of the new work formations deemed “immaterial” – reproductive labour– is in fact highly material, and deeply gendered and racialised. Concepts such as multitude, immaterial labour, biopolitical production, and the general intellect evacuate work, especially reproductive work, of its gendered character, diminishing concrete connections between feminism and working class struggle.

Enfolding reproductive labour and social reproduction – highly feminised domains– into the realm of the immaterial implies a strict division between body and mind, between reason and emotion. This obscures serious differences in kind between work which is reproductive and work which is cognitive or immaterial. As Federici and Caffentzis (2007) ask, what is “common” in the labours of the domestic worker or even the sex worker to that of the computer programmer or digital artist? And if cognitive labour *includes* the work involved in the reproduction of human beings, they ask, then

⁴³ This may come as no surprise as much of Hardt and Negri’s thesis of multitude developed throughout the period of the anti-globalisation movement, a movement whose overwhelming whiteness did not go unnoticed by racialised activists. See, for example, Martinez, 2000.

what precisely is so new about it, as reproductive labour has existed as a fundamental component to capital accumulation since capitalism's earliest incarnations? Most importantly, though, Federici and Caffentzis state that certain kinds of work "and the political problematics they generate" disappear from view (Caffentzis and Federici, 2007: np) when all forms of work are assimilated – even as tendency – beneath one label, whether immaterial, cognitive, or biopolitical. By laying claim to "cognitive" or "immaterial" as the nomenclature of all contemporary labour, the risk of continuing to ignore specifically gendered aspects of (reproductive) labour and its perpetual devaluation in capitalist society obtains. Instead of proclaiming a composition – multitude – which engages in broadly defined "cognitive" or "immaterial" labour, should we not seek to develop generative modes of understanding class compositions that are at once multiple and deeply rooted in the embodied experience of those within the multiplicities?

In this spirit I follow Federici's argument (2012), which dispels Hardt and Negri's claim of multitude as an inclusionary category. Instead multitude witnesses the erasure of particular subjects, subjectivities, and their positions of struggle, almost homogenising subjects around a non-identity. This is not solidarity. Instead it obscures the specificity with which capital acts upon racialised and gendered bodies, and impedes possibilities for solidarity-centred movements that are heterogeneous, uneven, and based upon external relations and internal tensions. Multitude, I argue, minimises the possibility of seeing class composition as an assemblage. As discussed in Chapter 2 "gender-blind" and even "colour-blind" ideologies constrained historical understandings of class compositions, a problem which continues with multitude. This lends veracity to my claim that the category of multitude is a description of decomposition rather than defining an emergent class composition.

As well, Hardt and Negri's exuberant embrace of digital communication technologies as foundational to a "spontaneous elementary communism" (2000: 294) is another site of criticism. The convergence of the digital and the embodied is central to this project, as it is to multitude, but I take seriously Federici's (2012) claim that focussing on the elementary communism spontaneously arising from the communicative base of contemporary production erases the more powerful forms of commoning we develop confronting each other as, and in, our bodies. In favour of a techno-utopianism Hardt and Negri's communism of the multitude ignores the most peripheral sectors of a global proletariat, and along with them the "cooperation we can develop among ourselves, starting from those of us who must face the most vulnerable time in our lives without the resources and help they need" (Federici, 2012: 125). This is to claim that the near exclusive and hegemonic positioning of communication technologies at work in multitude erases gender, race, class, and age as central loci of concern. The ease with which these situated subject positions fade out, to be replaced by a process of computerised communication, makes the concept of multitude untenable as a description of actually existing class composition. Social reproduction can again be largely swept aside as a technical or political basis of class composition in the framework of multitude. Conversely, centering embodied and material socially reproductive labour, which simultaneously has its communicative and technologized components, as a technical basis of capital (and thus as a moment productive of value) commits us to shifting our very social relations so that valorisation "no longer commands social activity, and reproduction becomes a collective process" (Federici, 2012: 122).

Navigating complex terrain and treading a careful line, the subsequent chapters of this dissertation seek to understand a way we can imagine reproductive labour and resistant social reproduction as simultaneously occurring through in and through machinic communicative technologies, while never abandoning the body to the detritus

of “meat space”. My theory of human-machinic assemblages that form the developing class composition of the contemporary era walks a line between the works of Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004, 2009) and that of Federici (2005, 2012). I accept and engage with the formers’ emphasis on digital communications and technologies while taking on the latter’s critique of immateriality and focus on reproductive labour and social reproduction. While considering the labours conceived under the rubric of the immaterial, in my formulation these labours do not supersede in importance other, more embodied forms of working and being together.

Instead, I argue later, the relationship between humans and machines in both the technical and the political composition of the class must be considered much more dialectically, as an assemblage that converges in different configurations and with different proportions of components. In many ways this returns me to Haraway’s concept of the cyborg, discussed in Chapter One. As Haraway suggested, she would always “rather be a cyborg than a goddess” (Haraway, 1991: 181), but even with this technoscientific assemblage understanding of the human, cyborg feminism valorizes and radicalises social reproduction, acknowledging the resistant capacities of social reproduction without romanticising it, and instead creating a bricolage of technology and corporeality. The human-machinic assemblage I forward follows Federici and Haraway in their rigorous feminism while operationalizing Hardt and Negri’s – and Haraway’s – ideas and concepts of the increasingly digital age we labour and resist in.

While thinking multitude offers some initial resistant possibilities, the task of this project and of contemporary class politics is to comprehend resistant *and* constituent modes of organising. That is, its purpose is to push against obstacles but also to create viable alternatives. As such, it is inconceivable to advance the current labouring conditions as those that will permit a spontaneous and elementary communism to

develop, as those labouring conditions are so fractured and divided along race, class, and geographic lines. Multitude, Hardt and Negri claim, is a “form of political organisation that, on the one hand emphasises the multiplicity of the social singularities in struggle and, on the other, seeks to coordinate their common actions and maintain with equality in horizontal organizational structures” (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 110).

But we have already shown how the multiplications Hardt and Negri point to are also unintentional erasures of some specificities, especially those of race and gender. And despite the seemingly cooperative basis of the supposed immaterial forms of labour, it cannot be denied that capital continues to divide workers, both inter- and intra-nationally, through “an unequal division of labour, through the use of the wage, giving the waged power over the wageless, and through the institutionalisation of sexism and racism” (Federici, 2012: 92). While Hardt and Negri do insist that the immaterial labour of the multitude is internally divided between high- and low- skill (with corresponding valuations), they do not chart how this division is both racialized and gendered in ways that align with current racist and patriarchal conditions cohering in capitalism.

Because of the unclear picture of what multitude’s autonomous cooperation is intended to look like (and how it is to advance the struggles of women, racialised people, the unemployed and surplusd, and the hyper-exploited), developing a theory of class composition which centres minoritarian populations and minor currents becomes even more urgent. This is not to suggest that the notion of multitude has nothing to offer those who think about new modes of organising and struggle. As noted above, Hardt and Negri’s thesis opened up many important and novel insights regarding the composition of the anti-globalisation struggles and the conditions and structures of capitalism in the neoliberal era. Multitude as a concept attempted to bridge the divide between the so-called “Teamsters and turtles” of the anti-globalisation movement, demonstrating these

two groups not as separate class fractions, but components of the same struggling assemblage: the students, environmentalists, unemployed all considered workers alongside those who were officially recognised as such by organised labour and the state. The work of Hardt and Negri was important for expanding the notion of *who* was considered an agent of struggle, *who* was a part in the revolutionary class, *who* would be the agents of historical change.

Much like the feminist theorists whose writing and activism transformed the shape of movements in the 1970s, the concept of multitude helps illuminate reproductive labour as productive labour and life time as work time. Thus the active subject of history expands to include a much broader swath of the global population than the traditional notions of “the working class” had heretofore conceived of – and in this way we can see the swelling of that minoritarian current which tread alongside other moments of historical struggle. That being said, in the 21st century’s harsh light – with the failures of the past behind us and the ripening moment before us – it is most productive for political purposes to understand multitude as a description of a class in decomposition, being deteriorated by capitalism’s persistent and on-going attack. The moment of the 2008 economic crisis was a turning point in the decomposition of the multitude and concluded the 1973-2006 cycle of capitalist territorialisation. While devastating, it opened up potential terrain for a recompositionary resurgence of the proletariat, centred on social reproduction as well as digital and communicative tools; a renewed cycle of struggle.

The appearance of a new cycle began with the 2007-8 explosion of capital into a massive financial crisis. Over the course of this single year, five major investment banks disappeared completely, eight US banks collapsed, and twenty folded across Europe. Stock markets plummeted nearly 50%, wiping out \$35 trillion worth of assets (Grigor’ev and Salikhov, 2009). This banking crisis, begun in the mortgage sectors of financial

firms, soon spread to a manufacturing. Although its roots were in the United States, the crisis spread rapidly around the world, most of Western Europe, as well as many global South countries, although the effects there were shorter lived and many of the BRIC countries soon experienced temporary booms.⁴⁴ China's economic growth, for example, has been thirty years in the making but in 2009 – while most of the world experienced a painful recession – the Chinese economy grew by 9.1% (Wearden, 2010). The crisis, appearing to many to be a moment of capital devouring itself, troubled *Operaismo* theories regarding the centrality of working class struggles to crises of capitalism, known as the Copernican turn.⁴⁵ Maintaining such *Operaist* theories became difficult in light of

⁴⁴ A basic timeline of the initial two years of the crisis appears as such:

A) July 2007 – August 2008: mortgage crisis develops in the United states, banks write down bad mortgages, first bankruptcies of financial institutions occur. Up to \$800 billion in losses are incurred in the financial sector alone in this period.

B) September 2008 – mortgage crisis begins to stabilise but a liquidity crisis arises wherein seemingly reliable financial “brands” such as Lehman Brothers go bankrupt. This shatters the illusion of the stability of the banking sector and financial trades between central banks slows to a crawl.

C) September 2008 through 2009 – credit paralysis grows out of liquidity crisis

D) 2009 and onwards – current government invoke the undulating crises to smash through austerity measures, further privatising previously public goods, services, industries, and resources in North America and Western Europe⁴⁴. (Grigor'ev and Salikhov, 2009)

⁴⁵ The Copernican turn theory, especially attributed to Tronti (Moulier-Boutang, 1989) takes seriously capital as a social relation and not simply a parasitic power. It sees labour as the primary, rather than dependent, variable in capital's develop. Thus, struggles of the labouring classes bring about crises, collapses, and changes in the composition of capital and its modes and methods of production. In analysing the struggles of workers in the 1960s (and developing the “Copernican Turn” of *Operaismo*), Tronti wrote:

“We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to working class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital's own reproduction must be tuned.” (Tronti, 1964.)

“capital’s continued effort, as Tronti would put it, to emancipate itself from the working class” (Toscano, 2009). This suggests that the financial crisis was in fact an event internal to the workings of capital, and not catalyzed by working class struggles (Tronti, 2008). Others maintained that financial capitalism was a self-destructive mode of capitalism, a mode unable to “handle safely the new means of communication crystallised as high-speed trading and computerised risk management algorithms” (Dyer-Witheford, 2011: np).

It is possible, I argue, to understand the financial crisis within the framework of *Operaismo*’s Copernican turn, especially if we take seriously the claim that multitude is a decompositionary descriptor. Along these lines, the collective Midnight Notes (2009) contended that the explosion of debt in the neoliberal period was a form of “backhanded class resistance” (Dyer-Witheford, 2014). Throughout history all debtors’ struggles have been “basic to the analysis of class history” the Midnight Notes Collective writes, and thus “why should these be excluded in the class analysis of the 21st century” (2009:8). In fact the 1973-2006 cycle, rife as it was with on-going processes of primitive accumulation, proletarianisation, globalisation, precarisation, and flexibilisation brought about certain levels of global impoverishment and limited investment opportunities (even while it enriched and advanced some nations and individuals). Each of these economic degradations was at least partially addressed by finance capital through instruments of debt and speculation (Dyer-Witheford, 2014).

Expanded credit made continued consumption possible. The financial instruments invented throughout the neoliberal period permitted capital to continue to accumulate profit without actually producing or selling material commodities. Instead these instruments allowed bets on the risks associated with circulation, as if capital itself were autonomous from capital (Dyer-Witheford, 2014). This is called “financialisation,” and

its specific logic is the “autonomisation of the production of money via money” (Marazzi, 2011). Financialisation is an act of violence, Marazzi (2011) claims and its explosion in crisis should be considered as a moment “within a long-term process of ‘capitalist colonization’ of the sphere of circulation” (Marazzi, 2011: 64) taking place since the dissolution of Fordism in the 1970s.

It is possible to suggest, with Midnight Notes then, that the 2007-8 financial crisis was the result both of human-machinic assemblages gone out of control, but to argue further, that these assemblages were created as a result of the earlier struggles of the mass worker and the social worker and the long-term recompositionary attempts by capital. It was these previous compositions of the working class whose struggles pushed elements of capitalism to its most machinic, least embodied heights. The 2007-8 crisis should be read then as the culmination of a *counter*-revolutionary process through which capital was attempting to radically rearticulate itself in response to working class struggles; a project of class *decomposition* that persisted through the 1973-2006 cycle, reaching its apex in the 2007 financial crisis. This crisis inaugurated a new cycle, permitting a new class composition to emerge.

3.3 Contemporary Technical Composition of the Global Working Classes

Class composition, as discussed previously, is made up of two components: the technical composition and the political composition. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the technical composition of the global proletariat, which refers to the “political and material characteristics which make up, on the one hand, the historically given structure of labour-power as configured by the productive forces and relations occurring within capitalism” (Thorburn, 2012: 256). The technical composition is, simply put, the

capitalist organisation of labour power, and it corresponds to various patterns in working class behaviour. These behaviours make themselves known in and through particular organisational or strategic openings; the political composition of the class (Negri, 1991; Nunes, 2007; Cleaver, 1998), which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

On a global scale and within nations the technical composition of the working class is highly uneven.⁴⁶ This means that the working class is always a multiverse. Karl Heinz Roth (2010) has untangled the threads of this multiverse, delineating the “global class of workers” (his phrasing) as a pentagon. Roth’s pentagon of the global proletariat includes: 1) subsistence farming families in the Global South, 2) mass migration processes and migrant labour, 3) surplus populations engaged in shadow economies in slum cities, 4) the new industrial working class in emerging economies, and 5) the deindustrialised and casualised workers of formerly centre economies (Roth, 2010). The proportions of this pentagon vary wildly; between individual points of the pentagon there are moments of transition and convergence. This global proletariat (my preferred phrasing), then, simultaneously tends towards homogenisation *and* fragmentation. As discussed earlier, the previous cycle (1973-2006) utilised “strategic unemployment and intensified exploitation” to fragment and decompose the class formation (Roth, 2010: 221). At the same time homogenising processes of proletarianisation and pauperisation subsumed ever greater proportions of the global population under the command of capital.

While Roth takes a gender-blind (and thus implicitly masculine) perspective on this pentagon of working class composition, processes of proletarianisation have been

⁴⁶ In previous phases, while the industrial proletariat was dominant, other segments always existed and this contributed to the existence of a minor current of organising (as discussed in Chapter Two).

incredibly gendered. This gendering is part of the technical composition of the class, and has ramifications for its political composition. Impregnating the technical category with the necessarily gendered divisions that permeate it will aid in understanding the current political composition as an assemblage. This gendered lens will then permit a connection between contemporary struggles and historical assembly movements centred on the ever-expanding minoritarian concern of social reproduction, and a deepening crisis in this sphere.

Following Roth, I here provide a description of a multi-pronged global proletariat, but with a specifically gendered and racialized framing. This makes visible the previously ignored or under-theorised subjects – particularly women, migrants, and students – who appear here as central to the contemporary cycle of struggles. As well, it will highlight the on-going and expanding crisis of social reproduction, hence permitting a reframing of the contemporary cycle of struggles as primarily concerned with recuperating social reproduction in an autonomous mode. This has been played out especially around women's (especially migrant women's) labour but has also concerned education, both at the grade school and post-secondary levels.

3.4 A (gendered and racialized) Global Proletariat.

Subsistence farmers in the Global South still make up the majority of the world's working classes, with a population of 2.8 billion, 700 million in China alone (Waters, 2007; Prandi-Zika, 2008, Roth 2010). Because of on-going processes of enclosure via capitalist expansion these families are increasingly endangered. Their existence is undermined "by the transformation of the most fertile cultivated areas into mechanised large-scale farming enterprises, the consequences of climate change, and the

expropriation of land” (Roth, 2010: 221) for development. This has contributed to what was called, over the neoliberal period, the new international division of labour (Warf, 2010) wherein former subsistence lands and populations become enfolded into capitalist accumulation processes, forcing internal and international migrations.

National and international migrations involve millions of people, moving from the global South to the North, within China, from SE Asia to the Gulf, from Africa to Mediterranean Europe, from South and Central America to North America (Roth, 2010).⁴⁷ These are both processes of urbanisation constrained to periphery economies within the global South and international migrations to from South to North. What is ignored in Roth’s analyses of these movements is their specifically gendered nature. In what has been called the “feminisation of migration” (Piper, 2008; Labadie-Jackson, 2008) – or what Saskia Sassen calls the “feminisation of survival” (Sassen, 2001) – the work of increasing numbers of migrant women has been harnessed “for the reproduction of the ‘metropolitan’ workforce” (Federici, 2012: 66), often in the global North.⁴⁸ Today “half the current migrant population in the Western world is now constituted by women” (Farris, 2013) and those migrants make up 10-20% of advanced economies’ underclasses (Roth, 2010). This migration is structurally connected to the processes of globalisation discussed above. Due to the increasingly regulated systems of passes and the internal and external borders, those migrating without papers are twice devalued, “as immigrants and

⁴⁷ Persistently over the last two decades 0.6% of the global population has been engaged in documented migration (Abel and Sander, 2014), the proportion of those undocumented migrants undoubtedly larger, and this does not take into account internal migrations, within China for example.

⁴⁸ It can be argued that in the contemporary configuration of capitalism and capitalist state’s obsession with borders and border control, it is currently much easier for capital to migrant than it is for labour. That being said, taking into consideration not only transnational migration but also internal migration – particularly migrations from rural to urban environs – we can see unprecedented levels of human beings on the move across the globe, a mobility heretofore unheard of.

undocumented workers” (Federici, 2012: 70). In this way migration cuts labour costs for capitalists, and migrants documented and undocumented contribute to the vast surplus populations emerging in the slum cities of peripheral economies, as well as to urban mass poverty in the global North (Roth 2010). Amounting to about a billion people, surplus populations engaged in shadow economies eke out “a miserable living alongside the transport routes and river courses of the metropolises of the global South” (Roth, 2010: 222-3). These surplus populations also migrate or are trafficked to urban environments in the global North to toil in sex work, care work, or service work in precarious and often dangerous employment.

While some of the global proletariat migrate only to toil in slums encircling emerging cities, others have found membership in what Roth (2010) calls the new industrial working class in these same global South economies. The growth of this group of worker has contributed to some gains particular geographic locations, especially in the BRIC countries.⁴⁹ These workers “passed quickly through intensive processes of acquisition of technical skills, while fighting for and winning considerable increases in income” (Roth, 2010: 223). Such struggles, the recent wave of labour unrest in China for example, continue in the shadow of the still dominant centre economies. But gains, however marginal, obtained by the BRIC workers have contradicted processes in the global North where an initial boom in workers struggles in the mid-century became a substantial downturn throughout the 1973-2006 cycle (Roth, 2010).

⁴⁹ BRICs are Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Sometimes this category of countries is referred to as BRICSAM including South Africa and Mexico. Together they form a collection of emergent and rising states, with increasing importance in the global economy and in political affairs.

This emerging industrial working class has been uneven geographically, but also in relation to gender; the extended workbench of production has stretched spatially but the subjects who labour around it have altered as well. Throughout the previous economic cycle Free Trade Zones were developed and the South and several manufacturing sectors relocated to peripheral countries neighbouring the old industrial centres. Labour and production fractured along geographic lines: the new international division of labour, as mentioned above. In this, ever-greater numbers of women were subsumed into the waged workforce particularly in textile, consumer goods, and technology manufacturing. The discipline enacted on the bodies of women workers was, and is, incredibly restrictive. In emerging industrial workplaces women are subject to “daily body searches...forced to take birth control pills...and their movements are restricted” (Federici, 2012: 67). Working conditions have often been unsafe. The doors to factories have been locked to prevent escape until work quotas are complete, leading to the deaths of hundreds and thousands when “they could not flee from buildings shaken by an earthquake or burning up in flames” (Federici 2012: 68). In the case of the 2013 Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh, women locked in an unsafe structure were crushed to death as it crumbled to the ground. Women are also increasingly “integrated” into capitalist economies as nearly disposable reproducers of other workers “not only for local economies, but for the industrialised countries as well” in addition to their production of export commodities (Federici, 2012: 66). This creates the “global care chains” (Hochschild 2000), that extract both emotional and monetary surplus value from global South women, and reproduces inequalities in care and economies that are spatially structured.

Finally, in North America and the Eurozone a deindustrialised and casualised working class has risen to numeric dominance above a shrinking industrialised workforce (Roth, 2010). A component of this class is engaged what has been discussed as immaterial (Hardt and Negri 2000), cognitive (Berardi, 2009), or digital (Terranova,

2000) labour. As discussed above, this “cognitariat” are seen as the dominant strand of the working class (presumably in the global North); they are workers engaged in “enacting simulations later transferred to actual matter by computerised machines” (Berardi, 2009: 75) or even, for Terranova, those who labour for free through their cultural production and leisure time spent at internet-connected machines (Terranova, 2000). In this construction students, too, become workers, as their mere existence in classrooms becomes a productive moment for capital. The student becomes a worker producing value through the work they do, the work they are paid to train for, and (within the university) for the debt that they acquire to complete their education. Education is a key site of social reproduction, many of whose costs have been offloaded onto students. These costs grow out of the increasing university tuition fees the privatisation of certain sectors of the university, and the imposition of algorithms of measure on those working in education professions, all of which have been imposed in earnest in the previous cycle of capitalism (The Edu-Factory Collective, 2009). Struggles taking place in the field of education are thus an important part of global proletarian struggles. It is at least partially the vastness of education struggles since the economic crisis in 2008⁵⁰ that has contributed to issues of social reproduction becoming central to contemporary social movements.

Simultaneously occurring the global North has been the increase in low-wage, part-time, precarious work, often in the service and retail sector and one element in what

⁵⁰ Struggles in universities have taken place in the UK, California, Chile, and Canada, and battles waged on behalf of educators in high schools and elementary schools have been waged most famously in Chicago, but also in Ontario and British Columbia amongst other places, in recent years.

is called “affective labour” (Dowling, 2007).⁵¹ The growth in this type of work has resulted directly from the technological transformations in capitalism over the 1973-2006 cycle wherein well-paid manufacturing jobs moved south shrinking industrial workforces. The jobs that remained were highly automated or deeply embodied, both low skilled and poorly paid. In general, low-waged workers increase the total pool of surplus labour available to capitalism globally, and thus “help depress wages, cheapen the elements of constant capital, and tremendously expand the labour market and make possible the development of high tech industries that directly employ only a few knowledge workers or cyborgs” (Caffentzis, 2012: 79). Excluded or expelled members of the working class in North America, for example – those who had been replaced by machines or seen their jobs outsourced – are then converted into working in low-organically composed branches of industry.⁵²

This growth in service sector jobs, particularly low-waged fast food and retail-sectors,⁵³ can be considered an articulation of socially reproductive labour. Fast food and retail workers support the social reproduction of other, primarily low-waged, workers through the provision of inexpensive food and daily necessities. It is often the case that these service and retail workers barely earn enough to sustain themselves. The outcome of these changes in the North American proletariat is a large population of workers engaged in socially reproductive labour who are simultaneously experiencing a vast crisis of social reproduction. Their precarious work has become structurally necessary to capital

⁵¹ Dowling (2007) considers affective labour as it is specifically carried out in the restaurant industry, the labour of producing the dining experience.

⁵² Importantly this helps explain why, in a world so full with advanced digital technologies, increases in the low-tech workforce continues apace.

⁵³ But also in fine-dining, as Dowling (2007) points out.

accumulation, an “essential component of class composition in the metropolitan countries” (Roth, 2010: 224). More traditionally understood socially reproductive labour, such as childcare, elder care, and health care are also rapidly commodifying growth sectors, that are considered nonviable for relocation⁵⁴ and whose automating potentials are limited. Thus they also become sites for the re-absorption of internationally “surplused” populations.

The commodification of reproductive labour in particular is an important site for understanding the racialised and gendered dimensions of the current technical composition of capital.⁵⁵ Elements of this “care” work have always been commodified to some degree, but as its prevalence increases the racial composition of the workers has changed. Reproductive labour is an area of increased employment for migrant women to the global North (Farris, 2013).⁵⁶ Care workers or reproductive labourers are, to an enormous degree, migrant women (some undocumented) from the global South who are fleeing the “devastation of globalisation, free trade agreements, structural adjustment and the like” (Gonzalez, 2012: 361). Arriving in the North they find themselves living and working in highly exploitative conditions (Gonzalez, 2012: 361). The provision of direct

⁵⁴ Although the workers in these “care fields” frequently relocate, on temporary visas, to global North countries. In Canada the “Live-In Caregiver” immigration programme is just one example of this.

⁵⁵ In truth, though, gender and race have always been defining markers of reproductive work: domestic work in the United States has a direct lineage to slavery; it was work done almost exclusively by enslaved African women (Gonzalez, 2012).

⁵⁶ One might even call the reproductive labour industry an impetus to migrations. . Over the last decade the demand for care and domestic labourers has grown so much that it is currently “regarded as the main reason for the feminisation of migration” (Farris 2013).

care (for the ill, people with disabilities, the elderly, and children) is now one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy in terms of employment (Howes, et al. 2012).⁵⁷

Because of the degraded history of care work (its relegation to the domestic sphere and the unpaid work of women as well as its connection of slavery and to racialised minorities), and who does it at present (women, racialised minorities, immigrants some of whom are without documentation), we see reproductive work as a primary site for the casualization, flexibilisation, and precarisation of contemporary labour. These often migrant care workers are, as Saskia Sassen (2009) notes, of “strategic importance” for the functioning of professional urban households in the leading globalised sectors of the economy.⁵⁸ They are also the paradigmatic figures of the casual, temporary, hyper-exploited and precarious waged work that has expanded across the majority of the workforce in the global North.

While Roth (2010) helpfully points us to casualised and precarious work as a key sector in the composition of the North American working class, that he does not note this labour as specifically gendered and racialised is an important oversight. The minoritarian line in the political composition of the contemporary proletariat only becomes truly recognisable when the gendered and racial dimensions of the technical composition of the class are made clear. Fully noting the highly gendered divisions in international labour that are increasingly coming to the surface allows us to demarcate a technical basis for the emergent political compositions such as the assembly. For example, Roth claims that

⁵⁷ Paid care work accounts for 24% of all labour in the United States today (Howes, et al. 2012).

⁵⁸ Farris notes that it is their “strategic importance” in contemporary capitalism that configures the pool of female migrant workers involved in socially reproductive labour as a “regular,” rather than a “reserve” army of labour.”

with the loss of an industrial working class we are seeing the loss of a class with an historical connection to struggle, as industrial workers and workplaces have either disappeared or their numbers have been precipitously reduced (Roth, 2010).

But revolutionary subjects have not only materialised within the terrain of industry, as Roth (2010) ultimately suggests and as I demonstrate in Chapter Two. Both those inside and outside the assemblage of industrial labour work to remember and learn from archived knowledges of and historical connections to struggle. As we will discuss in Chapter 5, for example, the Occupy encampments almost universally had libraries and many had free schools or popular universities. Connection to struggle persists despite the decomposition of the institutions that were previously charged with maintaining these links and collective knowledges.

Further, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, women's involvement in working class movements has a long – and often minimally archived – history. Organising around concerns of social reproduction, around which women's involvement often centres, also has a long history (Federici, 2012). In the contemporary cycle of struggles feminist work and organising around social reproduction has come to the fore, alongside trajectories, lineages, and lessons from other marginalised, minor currents and populations. As the Zerowork collective noted, cycles of struggles are neither simple nor mysterious. Rather any class struggle, however broadly defined, “has many circuits, sectors, internal divisions and contradictions” and it neither “a mystical unity nor a chaotic mess” (Zerowork, cited in Shukaitis et al, 2011:111). Within a cycle of struggle we can see a number of bifurcations, divisions, and temporal lags, as well as moments of simultaneity, unification, and synchronicity. The divisions may develop out of the unevenness of capital's technical composition across the globe, but unity can develop from this as well in the form of solidarities and affects. While technological innovations drive

globalization, class struggle takes different routes, shapes, and trajectories but seems to emerge and mobilise in cascading series.

The technical composition of the proletariat outlined here demonstrates that the global supply chain of capitalism involves multiple types of fragmented, dispersed, and yet simultaneously interconnected work. That work fragments along lines of race and gender. Multitude, as noted above, describes the decomposing of this global working class over the 1973-2006 cycle. The assemblage – found in the merging of assembly movements and communicative technologies – points to an actually resistant *and* constituent political composition that is emerging from this technical composition of the global working class. Overall a similar pattern is appearing as a characteristic of the political composition of the contemporary working class in the 2011 cycle of struggles: all sectors are engaged in some form of revolt, but the shape of that revolt has some distinct similarities. In the paradigmatic examples from 2011 – the Egyptian uprising, the Indignados movement in Spain, and Occupy in the USA – three similarities stand out: the expanded and renewed political definition of the “worker” (taking off from the *Operaismo* notion of the social worker and the social factory); the recuperation of social reproduction through attempted, temporary, yet concrete communities of care (found in the embodied assemblies); and the recuperation of communication not as labour but as resistance (as found in the use of social media and digital networks to organize, facilitate, and expand the struggles locally and globally). In the next chapter I will further examine the effects of the transformed (and transforming) technical composition of capital. I will demonstrate the connection of the technical composition to expanded capital circulation through networks of social reproduction, in the realm of care, communication, and education. I will suggest that the current crisis is not solely an economic crisis, but also exacerbates and expands a crisis of social reproduction. In other words, the contemporary crisis is one of social reproduction as much as it is one of finance.

4.0 Chapter 4 – Social Reproduction and its Crisis: Technical and Political Bases of Contemporary Class Composition

In the previous chapter I gave a bird's-eye view of the technical composition of the global proletariat. In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth examination of another aspect of this technical composition, social reproduction, largely untheorised in relationship to class composition. I argue that the technical basis of capitalism lies not only in the constant capital of machines and the variable capital of productive workers, but also in the variable capital created and sustained through reproductive labour and by reproductive workers. This is to say that social reproduction forms one element of the technical composition of the class. In line with Marxist feminist scholars such as Federici and Dalla Costa I want to problematize the strict division between productive and reproductive labour, and highlight the waged and unwaged care work at what Federici (2012) calls the “point zero” of capitalism and resistance. Unwaged care work in particular has been called an “extra-market mechanism” (Jessop, 2002) that is used by capital to lower wages across the span of the labour market. Social reproduction, both waged and unwaged, plays a pivotal role in the technical composition of capital. In the contemporary moment its deep enfolding into surplus value production generalises and exacerbates an on-going crisis of social reproduction within the global North.

I begin this chapter by explaining the concept of social reproduction, as it has been defined by heterodox Marxist feminists; specifically those emerging from and inspired by the *Operaismo* tradition. From this theoretical basis I define a *crisis* of social reproduction. I then detail how this crisis circulates through three arenas of social reproduction – care, education, and communication. In so doing I will demonstrate that the notion of affect, or the affective dimension, is that which is degraded in crisis. The

affective is also the thread that mobilises bodies and machines for capital accumulation – affect, particularly acts of care, is integral to the capacity to continue labour, whether it is provided by women or the state, waged or unwaged. In the following chapters, then, I will show how contemporary social movements, in their aims and more importantly in their organisation and technologies, also use affect to mobilise bodies and machines in their capacity to resist, but also in their capacity to reconstitute another economy, another politics. Through the affective dimension contemporary social movements work to recuperate social reproduction as autonomous and liberatory. Social reproduction can be a powerful motivating force for developing a constituent politics, because it is simultaneously about the creation and maintenance of labour power alongside the production of the biological *fact* of life and the affective dimensions of social relationships and collective endeavours.

This chapter engages with three very large areas of research – the home/care work, education, and media/communications – and examines these within the theoretical framework of social reproduction. Each of these areas of investigation has its own, lengthy and important, history. In this chapter I cannot do justice to a detailed analysis of the work that has been devoted to each of these areas, individually or in conjunction, by other scholars. Instead, I seek to build on this body of work to conceptualise a broad and interconnected crisis of proletarian social reproduction within neoliberalised capitalism.

4.1 Social Reproduction: A Definition

While important to the history of class struggle in the 20th century, the industrialised waged proletariat has not been the sole revolutionary subject in a global history of struggle. Instead, what Roth and Behrens (1974) call the “other workers

movement,⁵⁹ the struggles of non-unionised workers and those in de-skilled sectors, have been quantitatively superior. Federici (2012) similarly notes that the anti-systemic struggles waged by rural, indigenous, anti-colonial, anti-apartheid, and feminist movements have been the planetary majority throughout history. These movements were often centred on the possibility or impossibility of reproducing oneself – on social reproduction.

At its most basic, social reproduction is about producing and reproducing capital's most valuable commodity – labour power – and with it, human life. This labour has been largely – though not exclusively – unwaged, frequently feminized, increasingly racialized, and often devalued and degraded *as* labour. In classical political economy a binary was constructed between productive and “unproductive” or reproductive labour.⁶⁰ From the point of view of capital, productive labour is that which adds to the mass of surplus value, primarily through producing goods and services for sale on the market (Marx, 1977).⁶¹ Unproductive labour is not productive of surplus values and often

⁵⁹ In their untranslated 1974 text *Die Andere Arbeiterbewegung*, a portion of which is available in English on libcom.org, and is referenced in Wright, 2002, Roth and Behrens sketch a history of de-skilled and unorganized workers in Germany. They call this the “other” workers movement, whose struggles are typically passed over in labour studies, in favour of a more orthodox reading of movement history centred on waged workers and the industrial proletariat.

⁶⁰ Although, Marx also notes that the definition of productive and unproductive labour is not static, but evolving. What is productive labour is historically specific, dependent upon what is “productive” within the conditions of a given mode of production (Marx, 1977; 1978; 1981).

⁶¹ Making explicit that domestic labour – social reproduction – is *not* considered productive labour, Marx writes: “That labour alone is productive, who produces surplus-value for the capitalist, and thus works for the self-expansion of capital. If we may take an example from outside the sphere of production of material objects, a schoolmaster is a productive labourer, when in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, does not alter the relation. Hence the notion of productive labourer

supported by surplus value production⁶². This surgical division obscures the interrelation between the two, and how that interrelation facilitates the creation of exploitable labouring subjects. If seen as interrelated to production, social reproduction can then be understood as fundamental to the existence of capitalism and to value production, as Dalla Costa and James (1973) and Federici (2005; 2012) argue. Certain activities of social reproduction have always been achieved within the circuits of capital – food purchases, for example, or the buying and selling of sex and comfort – but many have been excluded from the wage or the market, belonging in the realm of unwaged and highly gendered domestic labour. Over the 1973-2006 cycle activities of social reproduction taking place through circuits of commodity exchange have grown considerably and have becoming increasingly stratified geographically and racially, as noted in Chapter 3. Importantly for feminist theorists, there is always more that has to be done to reproduce human life than can be encompassed within commodity exchange, and this is most evident with child-bearing and much of child-rearing, for example (surrogacy and paid foster care notwithstanding). Social reproduction always exceeds what can be accomplished within the circuits of capital but, also significantly, it is always entangled

implies not merely a relation between work and a useful effect, between labourer and product of labour, but also a specific, social relation of production, a relation that has sprung up historically and stamps the labour as the direct means of creating surplus-value.” (Marx 1977: 509)

⁶² Referring to paid reproductive labour Marx notes that “the extraordinary productiveness of modern industry, accompanied as it is by both a more extensive and a more intensive exploitation of labour-power in all other spheres of production, allows of the unproductive employment of a larger and larger part of the working class, and the consequent reproduction, on a constantly extending scale, of the ancient domestic slaves under the name of a servant class, including men-servants, women servants, lackey’s etc.” (Marx, 1977: 446).

within those circuits. This makes social reproduction a key site for resistances to capital, and also a terrain upon which the worst of capital's excesses can be enacted.

Marx referenced social reproduction in his works, but as a concept it was ill-considered and continued to be the unconscious of Marxist analysis for much of the first half of the 20th Century.⁶³ It was expanded by feminist scholars and activists largely following the decline of the mass worker and in the emergence of the socialized worker and women's struggles that accompanied them (see Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Vogel, 1983; Brenner, 1989; Gimenez, 1990, 1991; Weeks, 2011; Federici, 2012; see also Chapter Two in this work). These scholars insisted upon the centrality of reproductive labour – social reproduction in the sphere of care, particularly in the home – to the production of surplus value. In fact, some (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Federici, 2012) argued that social reproduction is productive of surplus value itself. With them Caffentzis (2013) argues that “value is created not only by the work needed for the production of commodities, but also by the work needed to produce and reproduce labour power” (268). None of this is to suggest that social reproduction is reducible only to the literal reproduction of human beings through biological means, through birth and child-rearing, and so on. Rather, feminist theories of social reproduction insist that the production and reproduction of life is part of the same process as the production of goods and services;

⁶³ Marx noted, in Vol. 1 of *Capital* that labour is the commodity most necessary yet demeaned by capitalists – it is that which sets the capitalist system in motion and maintains its existence. Labour power is a source of value, because it is only through labour that both commodities and surplus value are created. Capitalists appropriate the surplus value of the workers' labour, and therein lies the source of the capital relation and the dominance of capitalists over the proletariat. But Marx does not contend with the question of where labour power itself comes from; instead the focus of classical Marxist theory has been only on the reproduction of the capitalist-worker relation, not on the worker herself. This has meant that the struggles of subsistence farmers, women and domestic workers, students – all of the minority populations who in numbers form a majority – are outside the purview of classical Marxism. Even in advanced money economies like Canada and the USA there is much that escapes the grip of the commodity form, but that has proven ripe for struggle.

and that the consumption of those goods and services is often also an act of social reproduction. In this way social reproduction emerges throughout the capitalist circuit.

We can think of the care we give to others, the regenerative activities of affect that we participate in – the work of love, friendship, sharing a home, a bed, a meal – as socially reproductive labours. Social reproduction also takes place in the work of eldercare, child-care, and care for the disabled – broadly, care for future and past workers. It can be considered the work of “maintaining a sustainable environment, or satisfying emotional needs” (Brown, et al. 2013: 90). While social reproduction is often the work provided (largely by women) in the domestic sphere, the state and its apparatuses also engage in socially reproductive activities such as education, health care, social security and unemployment benefits, pensions, disability benefits, and welfare. All of these state-subsidized forms of social reproduction have been established through long histories of working class struggle. In sum, social reproduction enables the basic means of existence through which we can create and sustain relationships both to each other and to capital.

A TD Bank Special Report (2010) suggests that there are substantive links between higher education and greater socially reproductive capacities, stating that university degrees play a key role in enhancing Canadians’ standard of living. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) echoes this sentiment, stating that post-secondary education is associated with improved earning and productivity differentials over the course of one’s work life (2008). Not only that, later OECD reports (2012) also state that higher education can lead to improved civic engagement, greater life satisfaction, and longer life expectancy (although this is less clear for women than for men).

As Bourdieu (1974) noted, education is an important site of social reproduction, and educational stratification helped to explain persistent inequalities between classes. Education can take place within the home and the family, but also in the institutional settings of early childhood education centres, day cares, and grade schools. Class position – economic but also cultural – colludes with structures of education to cement and maintain specific structures of what Bourdieu called “cultural capital.” Education, whether at home or within institutions, is a powerful socialising process, allowing human beings to access and share what Morris-Suzuki (1997) calls “social knowledge,” the sorts of information imparted from others and held within the human brain. Morris-Suzuki (1997) notes that workers are products of institutional training and education, yes, but also much of their knowledge, writ large, “is imparted by the unpaid labour of parents, and much skill is acquired without formal training, through the observation and imitation of others” (64). When education, skills, or training is institutionalised, the “long term or capital stock of knowledge” (64) acquired includes that which is derived from research and development, and from education at all levels. But institutionalised education also comes to us through the institutions of publishing and broadcasting – that is, from the media or the means of communication.

Similarly, as developed in Chapter Two, the means of communication prevailing in a society aid and support the reproduction of the social. Newspapers were integral to the reproduction of resistant subjectivities throughout the 1905 Russian revolution, and the journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* was a site for highly political socially reproductive practices in the Turin factory council movement. In the social movements of the 1970s in Italy mimeographs, video cameras, and especially radio were both sites of capital accumulation and also reconfigured as sites of resistant social reproduction, aiding in the formation of communities and subjects of revolution. The networks of communication through which contemporary capital circulates are also today the sites and nodes of a

certain high-tech, cyber-supported or digitally enabled social reproduction. Since the 1990s the Internet has served an important role in the communication of socially reproductive struggles. Messages sent by Zapatista rebels via digital networks formed what Harry Cleaver called the “electronic fabric of struggle” (Cleaver, 1998). The Internet was a medium that opened up ways to communicate without the mediating force of corporate mass media. Even within the highly corporatized environs of online social media expressions of care and affect become widely possible. Outside of explicitly political movements, communication technologies serve as repositories for social reproduction in that they provide alternative “affective forms of care for producers and consumers” and offer “the mobilisation of sharing and expression as instruments for ‘human relations’ in the workplace” (Dean, 2014: np). Social media in particular has become an important, even integral, ground for maintaining affective bonds and human relationships. 67% of social media users stated, in a Pew Research Centre study (2011) that they primarily used Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, or LinkedIn to stay in touch with current friends and family members, and almost 50% say they use these media to reconnect with old friends. The demographics of these social media users are diverse with regard to age, race, and class, but women are more likely than men to place maintaining family connections as their major reason for using these sites – 72% for women to 55% of men (Pew Research Centre, 2011).⁶⁴ The Pew Internet Project’s research found that social network users get much of their emotional support from social ties online, Facebook being the main source of support, but other studies show that Facebook is a key site for emotional contagion (Kramer, et al. 2014). For this reason, intensive use of social networking sites can contribute to greater levels of sadness (Bohannon, 2013).

⁶⁴ Women are also higher users of social networking sites – 74% of women use social media compared to 62% of men (Pew Research Centre, nd.)

Considered more politically, Dean (2014) further notes that “ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation” – all key to social reproduction when considered as a collective, collaborative endeavour – “come to be realised in and through expansions, intensifications, and interconnections of global telecommunications” (Dean, 2014: np). But at the same time, capital derives profits from the expropriation and exploitation of these communicative processes, be they personal and affective, or political and participatory. This means that that contemporary digital communications, considered as a form of social reproduction, no longer serve as a “critical outside” to the market. To be certain, there never was a truly critical outside with regards to the means of communication as a whole. Newspapers, mimeographs, video, and radio were always simultaneously sites for surplus value extraction and, in different contexts, resistant social reproduction. But contemporary communicative technologies, most especially social media, intensify the dualism of communication’s simultaneously resistant and yet productive roles: intimate, personal, and by all accounts private communications become sites of capital accumulation, but they also can accelerate the circulation of information pertaining to socially reproductive struggles.

Avoiding utopian visions of technology’s role in social reproduction, such as Nicholas Negroponte’s “One Laptop Per Child” scheme,⁶⁵ digital communications have opened up potential new sites of social reproduction. This is especially so when communication technologies are considered as nodes through which the circulation of other struggles of social reproduction circulate. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter on the 2011 cycle of struggles, which relied variously human relationships and on the Internet for elements of their coordination, organisation, and

⁶⁵ See the One Laptop Per Child webpage at: <http://one.laptop.org>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

decision-making. But as demonstrated in Chapter Two, whatever technologies were available for communicating in previous periods of struggle were taken up in order to expand and deepen movements. As concerns over social reproduction swelled in importance, so too did more decentralised and diffuse forms of communicating; in the 1970s the radio – and *Radio Alice* in particular – was paradigmatic of these efforts. Communication and communication technologies can allow for the attainment of potentially resistant subjectivities, subjectivities antithetical to domination. Further, they can create bonds of community through a shared sense of experience and a shared voice. Detailed exploration of the role of communication technologies in struggles over social reproduction will be explored in subsequent chapters. For the moment, we can see in basic terms how communication is an integral part of social reproduction.

Because social reproduction is vital to human life and consequently to the existence of labour power it is a shared concern for people and for capital. Social reproduction is where humans and capital compete for the reproduction of living bodies for love or labour. This dual character marks its potential as a site of resistance, and also as a potential site of serious crises. In this sense it is important to consider the disciplinary elements of social reproduction – securitization and commodification – and to consider the role that contemporary communicative technologies play in both of these disciplinary mechanisms. Social reproduction can be “securitised” (Cowen and Siciliano, 2011) through control regimes such as the prison, the military, or the police, and also through corporate and state control of communication and surveillance technologies. As well, social reproduction can be, and is being, commodified. A commodified social reproduction points to the rapid integration of all aspects of the reproduction of life, from the very biological (child bearing, child rearing, food provisions, sexual labour etc.) to the affective and emotional, into the circuit of value production. The commodification of affects takes place through the embodied sale of these emotional labours, what Hirschfeld

(2003) called the “commercialization of human feeling” (190). This commodification happens in concrete embodiments but also through the pervasive communication networks and digital technologies which demand of our attention and command us to connect but are at the same time sites through which information is extracted for surplus value creation. It is this securitization and commodification that contributes to a crisis of social reproduction and that impacts not just our capacities to reproduce ourselves as labour, but also as living and loving subjects.

4.2 Social Reproduction in Crisis

The surface manifestations of the neoliberal economic policies in the 1973-2006 cycle initially appear beneficial in terms of social reproduction. According to the World Bank there has been a steady global decline in the mortality rate of children under 5, for example, as measured over the years of 1980-2013. Life expectancy for women and men over the same period has, on average, increased as well.⁶⁶ BRIC countries and even some African countries have seen, and will continue to see, explosions in their middle classes, according to rosy Goldman Sachs and African Development Bank reports.⁶⁷ That being

⁶⁶ According to the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, available online at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT?page=4>. Last accessed 18 Sept 2014.

⁶⁷ The BRICs all will experience exponential growth throughout the next decade, Goldman Sachs argues, stating that the middle class “has already grown by hundreds of millions in the last decade alone, and is set to grow even more in the coming decade. Growth in the middle class will be led by China, where we expect the number of people entering the middle class to peak during this decade. Meanwhile, middle class growth in India will accelerate throughout this decade. As China and India are the world’s two most populous countries, rising incomes there will have much greater impact on global demand than any other countries could.” (Wilson, Dominic, Alex L. Kelston, and Swarnali Ahmed. 2010: np)
The African Development Bank (2011) has similarly rosy projections state: “By 2030, the GMR population in developing countries will have overtaken that in advanced countries, and in 2060 about 60 percent of the

said, over this same period inequalities have exacerbated globally. International and international divisions between wealth and poverty, the rich and the poor, have intensified to such an extreme degree that it “may well be irreversible under current conditions” (Sassen, 2014: 2). Arguments for the dramatic declines in rates of poverty – considered by the World Bank according to the number people living on less than \$1.25 a day,⁶⁸ – only become tenable when obscuring the fact that this data relies on the increasing number of people being pushed out of subsistence economies and forced onto the market. This is especially the case in China where forced migrations from the rural to the urban or the forced expropriation of rural lands for urban development moves many out of rural poverty and establishes them in urban centres, occasionally with jobs, but robs them of the capacity to provide themselves with the basic biological necessities of life, such as food, clean water, housing, and heat. Land seizures in China have resulted in poverty for many formerly rural residents and are one of the main causes of major protest across the country. It has been suggested that 2.5 to 3 million farmers lose land every year to urban development and are rarely sufficiently compensated (Branigan, 2011). According to these and other contexts, development theorists such as Selwyn (2014) demonstrate the weakness of claims that poverty and underdevelopment are solved

world’s GMR population will reside in developing countries.” Perhaps ironically this report was written and published by the bank in Tunis, Tunisia in September of 2011.

⁶⁸ In a 2013 press release the World Bank stated that in the previous 3 decades rates of poverty have declined in the “developing world” from around 50% of the citizens to 21%. This does not, though, take into account how many of those no longer unwaged are also no longer able to engage in subsistence agriculture or hunting, and does not account for the simultaneous increase in billionaires over the same period. An Oxfam report, cited in Forbes magazine, claims that the number of global billionaires has doubles *since* the economic crash of 2008, and in September 2014 CNBC reported that the number of global billionaires had hit a record high (Worstell, 2014).

through greater economic growth and market inclusion, and point to how both relative and absolute poverty are co-produced alongside capital accumulation and wealth.

The globalization of capitalism and its advanced technical capabilities has produced what Sassen (2014) calls scaling effects, wherein “the minor displacements and losses in the 1980s, such as deindustrialization in the West and in several African countries, had become devastations by the 1990s (think Somalia and Detroit)” (Sassen, 2014: 3). Sassen (2014) highlights a trend towards extremes of inequality in the global economy which directly contradicts the prospects for growth predicted by Goldman Sachs. In a 2008 Global Economics Paper the bank states that “global income distribution is getting narrower, not wider” (Goldman Sachs, 2008).⁶⁹

This is to say, then, that there is a deep complexity in the contemporary global economy (and perhaps some short-sightedness on the part of large investment banks). This complexity, though, is reflected in the complexity I want to draw out of the crisis of social reproduction. While such improvements as those listed above (infant mortality, life expectancy, and declines in extreme poverty in particular) were quantifiable throughout the neoliberal cycle, that period also saw the growth of inequality matched with increased precarity, attendant psychological distress, the loss of social cohesion, and large-scale environmental degradation (Sassen, 2014). Following Sassen (2014) these degradations also include an increase in “radical expulsions;” people, animals, things, and geographic locations expelled from the core of social and economic orders that mark our present.

⁶⁹ This report was published July 7th, 2008, just two months before a liquidity crisis caused major US investment banks to collapse entirely.

As noted in the previous chapter, the neoliberal period saw state divestments from and privatization of the infrastructure of social reproduction in key areas including education, health care, and welfare – elements of the circulation of care necessary for the reproduction of human beings and the working class. These radical expulsions, state divestments and privatisations, surface improvements notwithstanding, point to widespread outbreaks in a crisis of social reproduction – a crisis in the ability of human beings to reproduce themselves *qua* human beings and, consequently, *qua* labour power – throughout the 1973-2006 cycle. Much of this crisis is not quantifiable within the rubrics of UN, World Bank, and IMF data sets, as they involve things like familial breakdown, psychological distress, and the absence of social supports. Further, the current cycle, with the outbreak of a devastating economic crisis that continues to degrade reproductive capacities of proletarian classes, has impacted global North countries perhaps more immediately than those developing economies of the global South. But because much of the socially reproductive labour in the North is reliant on the bodies and labours of those from the global South, as this crisis continues to unfold throughout the decades increasing geographical ramifications will become clear.

To conclude this section with something of a definition: a crisis of social reproduction is anything that interrupts the quotidian circuit of reproducing human beings. This can include traumatic and devastating obstacles to existence such as war, famine, and genocide, or more mundane but equally destructive crises such as lack of social supports like education and health care, lack of adequate sustenance (food sovereignty), child-care and elder-care, and the absence of psychic supports or an affective dimension to life and politics. The decompositionary or neoliberal cycle exacerbated certain segments of this crisis, most particularly through the use of privatization, the removal of trade barriers, and the cutting of state budgets devoted to education, health care, and social security (Harvey, 2005; Farris 2012; Sassen, 2014).

This period also saw increased pressure on states to heavily invest in extractive industries, which led to cascading environmental degradation. Enclosed and destroyed subsistence farmland, forests, rivers, and oceans increased the difficulty of a social reproduction that is at any sort of remove from the market for many around the globe (Federici, 2012; Sassen, 2014).

Such neoliberal policies as those noted above were largely meted out in the global South through Structural Adjustment in the previous cycle. Following the 2007-8 economic collapse similar policies, already underway in the global North, accelerated. Greece, for example, underwent its own structural adjustment at the hands of the Troika⁷⁰ starting in May of 2010, and the UK instituted a government austerity programme that same year.⁷¹ These economic adjustments in both the North and the South have led to crises in the reproductive capacities of populations. Of particular interest here are the crises that unfolded through affective bonds of social cohesion and care, through education and educational institutions, and in the realm of communication. I will discuss the first two of these – care and education – below. Following that I will offer an argument regarding communication *as* social reproduction and indicate how it is being experienced as crisis today.

⁷⁰ See European Commission, 2014. The term “troika” comes from Russian meaning “group of three”. In the Eurozone crisis it refers to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission, and the European Central Bank. These three institutions formed an international lending body in the wake of the 2008 crisis. They provided bailouts to deeply indebted peripheral European states, most famously Greece but also Ireland and Portugal, but attached stringent austerity measures to the bailouts, following in the pattern of the structural adjustment programmes meted out by the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s and 90s.

⁷¹ In fact, “austerity” was chosen as the Word of the Year in 2010 by Merriam Webster dictionary. Online searches for the definition of that term peaked in 2010 as globally governments began to institute serious budgetary constraints.

4.2a A Crisis in Care

The global economic shifts throughout the decompositionary cycle saw the implementation of structural adjustment throughout the global South. Since the economic crisis of 2008 these adjustments have spread to the global North, often in the form of divestment from social reproduction on the part of the state. These divestments appear as austerity budgets which shrink state funding for social programs. Processes of migration and urbanization expanded through the decompositionary period and continued after the 2008 crisis, particularly in places such as China where urbanization continues to happen at “breakneck speed” (Branigan, 2011). While for some, primarily young women, the move from rural to urban environment brings with it a certain level of freedom from constraints of tradition (Schling, 2014) these economically-induced migrations have also resulted in the dispersal and destruction of community and social care bonds. Paired with divestment in state supports for social reproduction the ability to reproduce life, and hence labour power, is threatened. We can call this a crisis of care. Women—primarily women of colour—constitute those most profoundly affected by this crisis, as they comprise the majority of “care” or “reproductive” workers (waged or unwaged) (Farris, 2012; Nadasen, 2012) and are the main users of the socially reproductive services provided by the state (Lansley, nd.)⁷².

⁷² As Lansley (nd) notes in his report to Poverty and Social Exclusion UK “70 per cent of tax credits and 94 per cent of child benefit go to women. Between 2005 and 2008, 53 per cent of housing benefit claimants were women, 22 per cent were couples and 25 per cent were men”. Women are also heavier users of social care and are more likely to live in households with children of school/pre-school age using education. They are more likely than men to be in households with no one in employment because of caring responsibilities or with no male earner.

Ciudad Juarez, a city in northern Mexico, can serve as a key illustration of social reproduction in crisis, both in terms of state- and community-based care. As with many other newly urbanized manufacturing centres throughout the neoliberal period, Ciudad Juarez saw explosive population growth; it came to be what Rodriguez (2012) called a “city machine.” Such cities, he notes, are entirely unable to provide “satisfactory levels of housing, healthcare, safety, transportation, education, justice, culture, and environmental quality” (Rodriguez, 2012: 8) – all key elements of a collective social reproduction subsidized by the state. These broken bonds of social reproduction recomposed Ciudad Juarez’s “city machine” into a “femicide machine:” a literal destroyer of the powers of reproduction. The femicide machine annihilates women and their bodies, and is “inscribed within a particular structure of the neo-Fordist economy” (Rodriguez, 2012: 9). The machinic processes of destruction unleashed upon social reproduction are opened up by “an assembly line production that differentiates products via flexible, automated methods, information technology, and specially categorized labour” (Rodriguez, 2012: 9). In other words, the murder and torture of women – a very literal obstacle to the reproductive circuit – is a direct outcome of the technical composition of capital in the previous and current cycle. To call this a crisis in social reproduction is both accurate and a massive understatement.

Less spectacularly deadly, the technical composition of capital in the previous and current cycles decomposes social reproduction and composes a “global care chain” (Horschild, 2000; Yeats, 2011) centred on the circulation of capital. This global care chain begins in the North, wherein women in the workforce are unable to fulfil traditionally feminised domestic labour due to a variety of factors including inadequate maternity leave, lack of access to affordable/publicly subsidised child care, and a generalised “care deficit” resulting from government cuts to public services – the state sponsored side of social reproduction. While class-privileged women in the global North

purchase the caring labour of low-waged workers from the global South, these workers often purchase even lower-waged domestic workers in their home countries. Parrenas (2000), notes in relation to Filipina nannies, that the women who migrate North for work hire the women left behind in the Philippines to perform the reproductive labour these migrant workers are themselves performing for wealthier women in receiving nations (Parrenas, 2000). Low-waged reproductive or care workers in the global North give temporary cover to a shrinking public system of social reproduction but exacerbate the crisis in other parts of the globe (Quart, 2014a). This is to say nothing of low-waged workers in the global North for whom access to private childcare is inaccessible, and for whom just-in-time-style scheduling technologies wreck havoc on their capacity for engaging in social reproduction at home and production at work. This has led to the rise of what Quart (2014b) has called “extreme daycare,” daycares open 24-hours a day, with short-notice drop offs to accommodate the algorithmically-mandated work schedules of those employed in most retail and service sectors. With the migration of care labour from the South and the lack of accessible care for low waged workers in the North, the crisis of social reproduction is a global and globalised phenomenon. The hottest points of this crisis move along the circulatory flows of globalised capitalism.

4.2b A Crisis in Education

As noted above, educational institutions are primary sites of social reproduction. At the grade-school level, public education is operating on a deficit (Giroux, 2013), and the willingness to recognise knowledge acquisition as “a resource for informed modes of individual and social agency” (30) is buried beneath an accumulative imperative. In this capitalist model of knowledge acquisition and production, educational development, whether institutional or resulting from Morris-Suzuki’s (1997) “social knowledge,” “is appropriated and turned into a source of private profit” (64). At all levels – elementary,

secondary, and post-secondary – access to institutionalised social knowledge remains unequal due to the unequal distribution of material wealth. Morris-Suzuki notes, “schooling imparts knowledge to some but withholds it from others” (67). Colluding with technology, Giroux (2013) notes, educational institutions become “a powerful ideological tool for legitimating market-driven values and social relations” (31).

Throughout much of the world post-secondary education, too, is in crisis. This is evidenced by the implementation of the Bologna Process in Europe, massive tuition increases in Britain, on-going privatisation of the already market-oriented higher education system in Chile, out of control tuition in the United States, and growing levels of student debt in the US and Canada. The Bologna Process is a Europe-wide attempt to standardise higher education and to cut costs while increasing competitiveness. But the proposed educational reforms would contribute to the eroding of democratic control over individual universities. The Edufactory Collective (2009) consider the Process a part of the instrumentalisation of higher education; the focus on assessments and outcomes forces universities to operate in the interests of capitalism over the interests of learning.

In the Britain the government introduced the trebling of tuition fees in 2009, leading to widespread protests and a muscular student movement (now dissolved almost entirely). The outcomes of these tuition increases has meant higher student debt loads upon graduation, with student debt rising 6.4% over the 2010-2011 year, more than the rate of inflation. According to a BBC report the average debt for students entering British universities in 2012 was predicted to rise to £53,400 up from £26,100 for those starting in 2011 due to increased tuition (The Guardian, 2011). Fee increases has also resulted in declining enrolment of part-time and mature students (Fazackerly, 2013), limiting possibilities for career advancement and increased earning potentials for some.

In Chile, privatized education is the result of a systematic three-decade long experiment in neoliberal reforms. Approximately 80% of university students in Chile are enrolled in private institutions, and tuition fees are among the most expensive in the world when measured against per capita income (Rowling and Clark, 2013). These inordinately high fees and the resulting unequal access led, in 2011, to seven months of continuous protest across the country, as high school and university students demanded reforms from the state. The Chilean student movement has now been working for over three years to demand free and improved public education (Franklin, 2011) and some student leaders have had success running for political office on the basis of these demands. In 2014 an artist calling himself Papas Fritas engaged in a radical performance art piece wherein he stole student loan contracts from notorious for-profit university, Universidad del Mar. He then burnt these tuition contracts, decimating, he claims, almost \$500 million dollars worth of student debt (Franklin, 2014). While these international cases demonstrate the global terrain of a post-secondary education crisis, in this dissertation I am highlighting the outbreak of university-based struggles in Quebec. Therefore, the remainder of this section focuses on the crisis in Canadian education in particular, while making some references to the United States.

Canadian post-secondary education began to experience substantial budget cuts in the mid-1990s. Between the early 1980s and the early 1990s tuition fees at Canadian universities had already doubled and by 2002, total real per student state funding of higher education was 20% lower than it had been in 1990 (TD Bank, 2010). A Canadian Federation of Students (2013) report demonstrates predicted tuition fee increases across all provinces, rising in Ontario, for example, from \$2105 in 1992 to a predicted \$9231 by 2015. Such fee increases exacerbate and deepen crises of social reproduction in other realms. Statistics Canada (2001) has demonstrated that tuition increases limit access to higher education primarily for students from middle- and low-income backgrounds. In

fact, as tuition fees increase low-income families become half as likely to participate in post-secondary education than do those from high-income families. Further surveys also indicated that high school students most frequently cited tuition fees as a barrier to accessing higher education. Researchers at UCLA found that for every \$1000 in tuition increases there was a 15% decline in enrolment coming exclusively from minority and low-income students (Kane, 1999).

These figures neglect to contend with what happens when one does decide to take on increased tuition fees in order to obtain an education. Student debt levels in Canada and the United States have increased substantially over the neoliberal cycle (Canadian Federation of Students, no date A). In the United States student debt totalled \$1.6 trillion and in Canada it reached \$15 billion (Canadian Federation of Students, no date B). Student debt can no longer be considered simply as an individual choice; rather it has become an indispensable condition of future employment. Debt has its own pedagogy, disciplining students even before the time of repayment arrives. As a form of social reproduction all its own, debt produces and prepares young workers for the contemporary precarious workplace, acculturating them to a cycle of mortgaging their futures, and conditions the sorts of opportunities that can reasonably be pursued. As its own form of social reproduction debt invokes a crisis, in that it forecloses other possibilities of reproducing oneself and the collective conditions of existence one finds oneself in. It limits the capacities of the indebted to struggle for better conditions, to resist exploitation, and in *Operaismo*'s terms, to refuse to work.⁷³

⁷³ The refusal of work was a key component of *Operaismo* influenced organizing in Italy in the 1970s. Chemical workers in Porto Marghera influenced by the group *Potere Operaio* published a text in 1970 outlining their methods of struggle entitled *The Refusal of Work*. Their text was published in *Quaderni dell'or-ganizzazione operaia*, no. 1, 1970, and is available online at <http://libcom.org/library/refusal-work-workers-committee-porto-marghera-1970>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

The precarity of student life and the burden of debt also shape the kind of knowledge that students decide to pursue and that universities offer. Debt has a structuring relationship on what is seen to have vocational merit and what is considered an extravagance in educational pursuits. The generalization of such calculations shapes the types of knowledge that are valued and promoted within universities. The widespread assault on the humanities and critical social sciences (still in its relative infancy in Canada, although dark clouds are certainly forming on the horizon) is but one symptom of this larger affliction.⁷⁴ We need to recognize this instrumentalisation of the production of knowledge for what it is: another hallmark of a crisis of social reproduction manifesting itself in and through the circuits of the university and higher education.

Because student debt is also a productive moment for capital it should be seen as a collective wage-cut for workers, as graduates are forced to lower their expectations regarding their social reproduction, and hand over a portion of their earnings to repayment.⁷⁵ But whereas wage relations are collective, debt is an individualising, alienating relationship (Caffentzis, 2013). Student debt comes due upon one's exit from the shared environment of the university and operates upon the alone and the atomised; it can even distort one's self-perception, changing how one understands their value as a human being (Strike Debt, 2014). As Caffentzis (2013) and the Strike Debt (2014) movement have pointed out, debt can create a feeling of shame that compounds the

⁷⁴ Humanities programmes have been threatened with cuts – or closed completely – across the United States (SUNY Albany, University of Pittsburg, for example), and in the UK (Middlesex University closed the Philosophy department in 2010). In 2013 University of Alberta announced it would be eliminating 20 arts programmes, and suspending enrollment in a variety of academic arts majors, particularly language and music instruction (Bradshaw, 2013)

⁷⁵ Sometimes this lowered expectation regarding reproduction can be taken very literally, as some young people forgo marriages and children due to financial distress. (Slaughter, 2013)

isolation of its experience, thus limiting the possibilities for collective responses. Student debt has grown alongside general consumer debt. Consumer debt has exploded in the same period that has seen the dismantlement of state-supported social reproductive services and the stagnation of wages for many in the deindustrialising North. Credit, for students and for those who are no longer students, fills “the widening gap between the wages people earned and the personal expenses they accumulated in the new economy” (Gates, 2010: 427).

Together these factors reinforce the commodity approach to higher education, and throw the university as a site of potential autonomous social reproduction into crisis. Instead, universities remain socially reproductive for some, but that reproduction is commodified, operationalized in the service of capital accumulation. Capital has been enormously successful in shifting the burden of job training from the employer onto the worker. Today, workers must take on more of the costs of their own reproduction as workers, and the university must respond by creating Taylor-made (pun intended) programmes and courses to suit the needs of post-Fordist capitalism. This functionalization of learning – the commodity approach to education – has largely become the dominant form of our relationship to knowledge acquisition. In this sense, social reproduction within the institution of the university is readily thrown into crisis.⁷⁶

4.2c A Crisis in Communication

As noted earlier in this chapter communication is an integral component of an expanded definition of social reproduction. This is especially with regard to social

⁷⁶ And this is to say nothing of the struggles of those waged workers within institutions of learning. Grammar and post-secondary education have all seen major labour battles in recent years, most spectacularly the Chicago Teachers’ Strike in 2012.

reproduction as a site of potential resistance. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, various media of communication have been important to the development of revolutionary subjectivities and to the expansion of struggle. Communicative technologies are paths through which the autonomous potentials of social reproduction can be discussed, debated, and transmitted. These media contribute to the affective domain of social reproduction: as noted above communication involves the creation and maintenance of social bonds, sensory experiences, and often the body, and digital communication technologies are a central way in which social bonds are maintained for many people today.

On the other hand, the social reproduction the contemporary communicative technologies engage in is largely a product of the accumulative ideologies of contemporary capitalism. Giroux (2013) notes that today it is the “centralised commercial institutions,” be they old media such as broadcast television and radio, or the new interactive screen media, that “tell most of the stories that shape the lives of the American public” (31). The stories these media impart are important as they tell a society, Giroux argues, “about its history, civic life, social relations, education, children, freedom, and human imagination” (31) and thus determine the measure of value for individuals and societies as a whole. As communication technologies have accelerated both the pace and space of capital accumulation the social reproduction enacted is one of deep commodification and securitisation.

The circulatory speed of capital, in both the previous and current cycles, pushes bodies further apart, increases work time, and atomises individuals. The “command to communicate” (Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C, 2014) disassembles and decomposes the corporeal through the networks and circuits of machinic technologies. As the Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C notes, voluntary self-exposure through

digital communicative technologies and social media opens us up to the “perpetual gaze of virtual others” and opting out of machinic communications makes one incommunicable. In a digitised and securitised capitalism the incommunicable, they suggest, is then excluded, erased. Berardi (2009) notes that life in the “info sphere” requires a constant and pervasive connectivity, forcing those interested in survival to receive and process an immense amount of data. This leads to an informational saturation, a moment of chaos when the world of information moves too fast for the human brain, and the subsequent attentive stress that reduces our time and capacity for affectivity. The command to communicate via digital means and the attendant stresses and chaos that ensues is a contributing component to a crisis of social reproduction. In the remainder of this chapter I will focus on these communicative aspects of the crisis of social reproduction.

There is a voluminous body of literature on the political economy of communication and its relationship to issues of economic structuring, employment and unemployment, working conditions, and more. This includes early political economy work by Herman and Chomsky (1988), Mosco (1996), and Dyer-Witheford (1999) and has accelerated in recent years with considerations of digital labour (Fuchs, 2014; Scholz, 2013; Dyer-Witheford, 2010), social media, and online playbour (Fuchs and Trottier, eds. 2014; Goggin, 2011; Terranova, 2000; 2004). These recent works and others (for example Harvey, 1990 and Roth, 2010) argue that in the contemporary cycle of capitalism, economic flows have been marked by communication technologies, digital networks, and information. It has been called alternatively an era of: regimes of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1998), informational capitalism (Castells, 2000), biopolitical production (Hardt and Negri, 2000), transnational network capitalism or transnational information capitalism (Fuchs, 2008; 2007), cognitive capitalism (Moulier-Boutang, 2007), semiocapitalism (Berardi, 2009), or communicative capitalism (Dean, 2009). Such

theorisations of capital and technology express concern with the increasing automation of contemporary production and consumption (Dyer-Witheford, 2013; Palm 2011), the commodification of knowledge, communication, affect, and play (Dean, 2009; Hardt and Negri, 2000; Scholz, 2013), and the acceleration of capital flows on bodies and economies (Berardi, 2009).

Marx (1973) himself discussed the incremental mechanisation of production in individual factories, fearing it would lead to the expulsion of workers from the shop floor. Those not expelled, Marx thought, would have their labour become little more than a “conscious organ” that is “subsumed under the total process of machinery itself” thus becoming “only a link in the system” (Marx, 1973: 393). Machines, in fact, were “organs of the human brain” and, through the distillation of social knowledge into machinic technologies, this “general intellect” would become a “direct force of production” making social life itself or “the real life process” both mechanised and capitalised (Marx 1973: 393). Vercellone (2007) suggested that this indicated a third stage in the division of labour and from this notion of the general intellect Berardi (2009) and others⁷⁷ developed a theory of “cognitive capitalism”.

Dean (2009) echoed these concerns when she said that communicative processes between human beings become sites and sources of capital accumulation within “communicative capitalism”. More recently Lazzarato (cited in Thrift and Amin, 2013) argued that digital technologies endow capitalism with “a sort of omnipotence” that can permeate the “roles, functions, and meanings by which individuals both recognise each other and are alienated from each other” (48). And Sassen (2014) suggested that Marx’s

⁷⁷ Others such as Moulier Boutang (2007), Vercellone (2007), Fumagalli and Lucarelli (2007), and Pasquinelli (2014).

fear was, in many cases, being realised – advanced and technologized capitalism uses all at its disposal to expel not just people but things and sites from its circulatory routes once they become impediments to accumulation.

For those who are not expelled completely from capitalist labour markets the promise of digitisation and automation creating vast expanses of leisure time has often not materialised. The gains won from productivity increases in the 1950s have not translated into increased leisure time. In fact, contemporary capitalism in advanced sectors of the economy has instead translated leisure time into labour time, capitalising on interpersonal interactions, turning language and social relationships into labour. In this we can see a commodified social reproduction which operates through the quotidian circuits of communication. All of life becomes a part of capital's accumulative circuit; the energies of thought and communication – what Berardi calls “neuropsychic activities” – are put to work at the “rhythm of networked productivity” (Berardi, 2010). The general intellect of human communication – taking place through machines – becomes integral to surplus value production. This is social reproduction in crisis *through* circuits of communication: it involves disembodiment and the destruction of certain social bonds, alongside the creation of new and destabilising affects such as “anxiety”, “panic”, and “insanity”.

In order to fully understand the crisis of communication as it unfolds through communicative networks we can divide communication into its components of production and reception. While these distinctions are not arbitrary, production and reception of information are deeply interwoven and blurred – both from the perspective of people and from the perspective of profit. In fact, Terranova (2000) questioned the legitimacy of the distinction between production and consumption/reception with the advent of a communicative, internet-enabled capitalism. Maintaining a tension between

production and reception while seeing them as intimately interconnected and dependent upon each other will aid in a thorough description of the crisis of social reproduction through communication, though, and for this reason I maintain the distinction while recognising its murky borders and certain overlapping.

With regard to the production of communication, I am referring here to the use of technologies by workers in the workplace – be that an official or unofficial workplace. Through this lens we can see the ways workers are, through their use of digital communications, made into constantly labouring subjects wherein even leisure times becomes a productive moment for capital (Scholz, 2013; Terranova, 2013). The reception of communication refers to the capture of communications by capital that takes place through direct surveillance of labour using digital technologies, but also the capture of information from workers at rest and play. In reception we see communication – from deepest intimacies to quotidian interactions – become mobilised as a site for the extraction of capital.

The extraction of value from the production and reception of communications is at odds with the project of autonomous social reproduction. It limits rebellious possibilities, exacerbates alienation, contributes to the formation of disciplined or “securitised” subjects, and thwarts possibilities for empathy and solidarity. Instead of autonomous social reproduction taking place through enhanced circuits of communication, with the capture of value from the production and reception of communicative interactions we see social reproduction become further securitised and commodified.

i) Producing Communications

As noted above and in the previous chapter the reliance on digital communicative technologies grew throughout the 1973-2006 cycle of capitalism. While the technological inputs in capitalism have been generalised across the global circuit, digitally supported social reproduction has been mostly particular to the communicative labour *and* leisure of many in the specific subsectors of advanced capitalist economies. As more and more people work and play in and through machines, more and more of our communications become digitised, mediatised, and virtualised. This trajectory has been associated with middle class and/or educated populations and largely – but not exclusively – been limited to the global North. Lazzarato (2008) calls this increasing virtualisation of communication a “machinic enslavement” wherein human beings are connected to the technologies they use to communicate while simultaneously becoming a part of the devices themselves. Machinic enslavement occurs in the cynical capitalism that dehumanizes subjects by “including us in an assemblage that no longer distinguishes between humans and non-humans, subject or object, or words and things” (Lazzarato, 2014: 13). At this point in capitalist history, Lazzarato laments, human beings “literally form one single body with the machine” (Lazzarato, 2008). This single body lives in and through the Internet, which connects to and expands the social factory (Terranova, 2000). This is an objective process, Lazzarato (2014) contends, and not simply an ideological distortion. It is the internet that has given both ideological and material support to a trending crisis of social reproduction viewed through communication: the internet permits – perhaps demands – an increasingly flexibilised workforce, the demand for continuous reskilling, the prevalence of precarious freelance work, and the tethering of workers to their labour through the act of “supplementing” – “bringing supplementary work home from the office” (Terranova, 2000: 34).⁷⁸ Perhaps even more simply, the current

⁷⁸ See also Castells, 1996.

configurations of capital in advanced economies rely upon the constant and rapid dispersion and exchange of information. Thus increasing quantities of our communications are channelled through digital networks and devices both at work and at home. We produce communication constantly, for work and for play.

Digitising the vast majority of communications leads to a loss in the “pleasure of being together” (Berardi and Lovink, 2011), a disembodiment wherein human beings enter into their machines, becoming machinic and not corporeal. As our communications are increasingly shuttled through digital channels, “too much time is devoted to work in virtual exchange” (Berardi and Lovink, 2011). This “media virtualisation” destroys the “empathy among bodies, the pleasure of touching each other, and the pleasure of living in urban spaces” (Berardi and Lovink, 2011). The simplicity of the human is lost, according to Berardi and Lovink; replaced by accelerated yet empty messages persistently pinging back and forth across informational superhighways and digital divides. The possibility of an autonomous social reproduction through affective networks of care, solidarity, and love are diminished in this highly digitised landscape, replaced with only the possibility of commodification, value extraction, and the commands of capital.

Berardi (2009) argues that the commodification of language and information exchange that marks advanced capitalist economies inculcates our “souls”,⁷⁹ into work and the ubiquity of value production. He states that labouring with and through technologies makes labour as *labour power* an essential component of one’s life and one’s self-definition, personalising labour in and through machines. While he

⁷⁹ In his 2009 text *The Soul At Work* Berardi makes clear that the “soul” is not a theological concept for him, but instead refers to the social capacity and creativity of human beings, which is incorporated into production in contemporary capitalism.

problematically generalises very specific conditions across the entire fabric of global capitalism, there is something compelling to the notion of one's subjectivity unfolding in and through work. The commandment to "do what you love" in the world of work stems from the inculcation of "worker" subjectivity into "human" subjectivity as it broadly occurs in contemporary capitalism. This is particularly the case in the high-tech realm: work is translated into one's very self-definition. Tokumitsu (2014) points to former Apple CEO Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford University commencement speech as exemplary of the blurred boundary between the human and the worker in the privileged sphere of Ivy grads and start-up founders. He tells graduates:

You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to do what you love (cited in Tokumitsu, 2014).

But there is an erasure of the political nature of work in this assertion, and an abundance of alienation in the comparison of waged work to a human lover. The notion of loving your work as you would love a lover individualises and atomises love, undoing what Hardt says is the political potential of the affective dimension: love as a transformative, collective power of politics that endures over time (Davis and Sarlin, 2011). Love outside of labour abides duration.

The mutation of person into worker, of labour into love, need not happen only in the advanced, highly digitised "communicative" or "cognitive" work. It can also be seen

in the leisure time activities of people with access to advanced technologies. Leisure time, Berardi (2009) suggests, is transformed into “cybertime” – a “time of mental processing absorbed into the infinite processes of cyber-space” (Berardi, 2009: 79). Terranova (2000) referred the productive potential of leisure time as the “free labour” that is a “trait of the cultural economy” (33) in advanced capitalist societies. Leisure time lived through cyber-sociality becomes a series of moments mobilised for capital accumulation. As noted earlier, the Pew Research Centre (2011) confirmed that cyber-sociality guides our relationships – affective bonds, love – through the same digital networks used for and at work. The absorption of work and leisure time into the productivity sphere aligns with the broader neoliberal mantra of permanent productivity and constant connectivity that the Internet permits.

Thus even our social relationships – our friendships, loveships, familial relations – become moments of surplus value production and extraction, especially when taking place through digital networks and social media. The command to communicate at work follows us into our homes, with the technology of labour becoming the technology of life. This communicative commandment along with the ubiquity of labouring devices in our lives contributes to turning every moment into a productive moment for capital. This connects the production of communication to its reception, and further marks a point of crisis in social reproduction through communication.

ii) Receiving Communication

With the emergence and popularity of social media for communications both inside and outside of work, the command to communicate becomes the command to connect. Mason (2012) demonstrates the near ubiquity of internet connectivity, showing increases in connectivity from 1.5 billion in 2008 to 2.4 billion four years later. Regarding social media specifically, Facebook users numbered one billion by 2012, up

from 100 million in 2008. Similarly Twitter accounts grew from four million in 2008 to 100 million by 2012. Estimates suggest that 34% of the world's population is currently connected through digital networks (Mason, 2012). Castells (2012) and Mason (2012) suggest that such a vast communicative landscape has largely positive outcomes, enabling people to “think what they want, act more autonomously, and to get the knowledge they need” (Mason, 2012: np). But the ubiquity of connectivity and the command to connect has a dark obverse. Refusing to connect leads to feelings of exclusion, isolation, and desocialisation (Gehl, 2013; Langlois, 2013). Disengaging from large corporate social media networks like Facebook impels in many a fear of losing connection with friends and family especially, as noted earlier, as many social media users do so primarily to maintain personal relationships (Pew Research Centre, 2011). And further, the constant connectivity that social media permits has psychic impacts – aside from potential increases in sadness (Bohannon, 2013) we become addicted to “constantly changing flows of updates” (Langlois, 2013: 52), to the constant renewal of information. It is in this way that social media can be liberating (as Mason, 2012 notes above) but also incredibly dangerous: because social media's main investment is in lives being lived (Langlois, 2013).

The building and maintenance of digital infrastructures for the expression of lived experience generates “increasingly detailed information about all of these activities – and more” (Andrejevic, 2011: 279). Networked activities of life lived via corporate social media platforms is increasingly monitored, collected, aggregated, parsed, and archived for later use, potentially for purposes of manipulation and control (Andrejevic, 2011: 278). Though affective connections developed through social media may counter the decline of community associated with neoliberal manifestations of the social (Miller, 2011), this embryonic online “community” exists almost entirely in the service of data extraction for smoother and frictionless capital accumulation. The technologies of

communication so central to contemporary sociality in the global North and beyond reveal themselves to be, below the surface, technologies of accumulation and surveillance. Living moments become suddenly perceptible to capital; they become visible, surveillable, archiveable. Because the infrastructure of the internet is largely in the hands of the private sector, a life lived online can be tracked and followed, so that social media users' activities can be "recorded, stored, and eventually used to manipulate them without their consent or knowledge" (Andrejevic, 2011: 278).

As technologies of surveillance appear as more benign instruments of communication – as the infrastructure of affective relations and social bonds – they colonise an ever-larger proportion of our life-space. The Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C refer to this landscape of surveillance technologies in the guise of communicative devices as a "multi-faceted omnipresent web of *surveillance*" (2014). The outer carapace of this web includes edifices material and ephemeral: social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, the US National Security Agency, and the prevalence of CCTV cameras in urban streetscapes, for example, as well as workplace performance management reviews and prevalent systems of measure (especially in the education sector), the privileges systems in prisons, and the classification of schoolchildren into vocational or academic streams. External systems of surveillance and measure become internalised into our very subjectivities and life stories through our engagement in such communicative trajectories, transforming human beings into nodes of information capitalised upon by private interests, mobilised for the potential productive capacities they contain. Both Andrejevic and The Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C suggest that our investment in an online life connects us to other networks of surveillance and commodification, our lives becoming perpetually present, our activities and communications catalogued and archived, stored in databases for later

searchability. The psychic and affective fallout of this contributes further to the crisis of social reproduction in the domain of communication.

Beyond only the surveillant potential, the velocity, frequency, and ubiquity of our communications contributes of moments of psychic breakdown – what Berardi (2009) calls “panic” and The Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C (2014) call “anxiety.” The reception of our communicative moments into the circuit of capital produces an alienation from our very existence *as* human beings, as communicative creatures outside of our capacity to generate value – a novel experience under contemporary capitalism, Andrejevic (2011) suggests. With no outside to value production, we are no longer simply alienated from our labour in the workplace, but alienated from our ourselves as we labour in all aspects of our communicating lives. The investment in highly mediated lives and the anxiety or panic that this brings thwarts resistant possibilities.

The collective Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C note that the command to communicate via the perpetual gaze of social media platforms, technologies, and regimes limits our capacities for solidarity, warmth, and care (2014). Similarly Dean (2008) argues that the constant process of producing the self in online space leads to an abnegation of politics. It is the intensity of circulating content over the terrain of a communication-driven capitalism that “forecloses the antagonism necessary for politics” (Dean, 2008: 103), and a lack of human connection eviscerates the solidarity and trust necessary for the risk of political antagonisms. The fixation on connectivity, productivity, and speed in communicative interactions creates a “tele-present” world: a world pre-occupied with the ever-changing perpetual present moment which Virilio (2006) argues thwarts long term visions of change, and grassroots strategizing and organising. Berardi (2009) argues that capital’s fixation on extracting value via communications produces

subjects incapable of solidarity, foreclosing on the possibility of collective politics. Unlike in previous cycles of struggle, wherein communication aided the autonomous, liberatory social reproduction of rebellious subjects, communication today securitises and commodifies social reproduction. The outlook, it would appear from these arguments, is bleak.

It is through understanding crises of social reproduction, including those enacted through communicative circuits, as central that we can begin to mobilise and adapt struggles for autonomy and liberate our communications from the channels of capital and control. Hardt and Negri, in their *Declaration* (2012), conclude that in communicative endeavours “nothing can replace the being together of bodies and the corporeal communication that is the basis of collective political intelligence and action” (18). But if we are to consider communication as an integral component to the crisis of social reproduction, and this crisis as central to the decomposition of both capital and the proletariat in the current cycle, we can begin to develop an understanding of the human-machinic assemblage at the heart of resistance. We can begin to devise ways of communicating with bodies *and* technologies that enhance the pleasures in being together; that expand solidarity and erode atomisation. We can recuperate communication as a site of autonomous and liberatory social reproduction.

4.3 Conclusion

Much of the social conflict emerging in the current cycle is, as Brown et al (2013) note, experienced as a crisis of social reproduction. Together the contemporary technical composition of capital and the decomposition of the proletariat as a constituent force have severely impacted people’s self-reproductive abilities. Even in the world’s high-

wage zones austerity and financial crises have seen people thrown from their homes, from work, from their communities, forced to give up on ways of life and networks of support that they had previously relied upon (Sassen, 2014). Due to the transformed technical composition of the class human beings have been made even more transient and precarious, they have been transformed into disposable nodes of information, mere economic inputs stripped of humanity. In short, as demonstrated in this chapter, much of the world has been experiencing a crisis centred in the realm of social reproduction, which by definition extends throughout networks of care, education, and communication.

It is therefore not coincidental that a renewed concern with the concept of social reproduction is prevalent today.⁸⁰ But while the technical composition of the class has exacerbated and expanded crises of social reproduction, this composition also has opened up possibilities for new political compositions, as is the nature of the class composition thesis. These political compositions can be seen as assemblages that demonstrate the expansion and strengthening of a minor current which tread alongside more central compositions of the class throughout 20th century history. In the final three chapters, then, I will demonstrate the expansion of this minor current through the attempted “self-reproducing movements” constructed in the 2011 cycle of struggles, and the further efforts at creating a sustaining and constituent politics in the 2012 Quebec student strike. This has meant the production of movements that do not “separate political work from

⁸⁰ Some examples of this include the recent reprinting of Lise Vogel’s 1983 book *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*; the collection of writings on social reproduction, reproductive labour, and care work by Silvia Federici (2012); the prominence given to feminist theorists of social reproduction at recent Historical Materialism conferences (particularly HM Toronto 2012, HM New York 2013, and HM Toronto 2014); the emergence of radical childcare collectives like Kidz City in Baltimore, ChiChiCo in Chicago and the Bay Area Childcare Collective in California; and the creation of the Florence Johnston Collective in New York City which seeks to advance struggle and analysis around social reproduction.

the activities necessary to the reproduction of our life” as it has become more evident that “no struggle is sustainable that ignores the needs, experiences, and practices that reproducing ourselves entails” (Barbagello and Federici, 2012: 2). We can see these attempts at reconstituting social reproduction as central to struggle both in the embodied – human – endeavours at the heart of these differing struggles, and also in the technological and communicative – machinic – components. As such, the struggles of the 2011 cycle and the 2012 Quebec student strike emerge as human-machinic assemblages charting a minoritarian course through social movement history. They are becomings immanent to the class composition of the contemporary moment.

5.0 Chapter 5: Political Composition in the Seasons of Struggle: Social Reproduction and the Assembly in 2011

The seasonal struggles of 2011 – the Arab Spring, European Summer, and American Autumn – exemplify a trend in the contemporary political composition of class: they are all assembly movements centred on social reproduction. As noted in the Introduction, assembly movements were not the only configuration of politics to emerge in the fallout of the economic crisis, nor were they the only response to accelerating and expanding crises of social reproduction. Riots, labour struggles, and workplace strikes and occupations were co-concurrent with assembly movement initiatives. In some cases, more traditional struggles (strikes in Egypt, for example) formed the preceding basis or foundation that permitted assembly movements to occur as popular struggles. While acknowledging these other struggles and their importance, this chapter will focus on the assembly movements of 2011 and investigate how these movements prefigured struggles for a liberatory and autonomous social reproduction.

I will not provide a detailed chronology of these struggles nor provide details of the national or regional contexts of the movements. These have been amply charted elsewhere.⁸¹ Instead, this chapter demonstrates how the assembly movements of 2011 attempted to recuperate social reproduction in two areas. First, in the realm of care – reproducing individuals and movements via embodied affective networks and second, in the realm of communication – through autonomous subject formation and expansive solidarity via digital, machinic networks. This necessarily involves engaging with the

⁸¹ Particularly by Mason (2013) and Gerbraudo (2012)

criticisms these movements have encountered, particularly around the movements' composition in terms of both class and race. Further I contend with the varied criticisms of the machinic content of assembly movements, and examine the capacity of digital communications to provide a foundation of resistance in an era of what Dean (2009) calls "communicative capitalism." In sum, this chapter seeks to further the argument, central to this project, that a human-machinic assemblage is at the heart of contemporary struggles over social reproduction, and this human-machinic assemblage finds its concrete expression in the assembly or assembly movements.

As human-machinic assemblages, assembly movements can operate as attempts to recuperate social reproduction for resistant means. They demonstrate the possibilities of antagonism and organisation; the possibilities of being resistant *and* constituent in a moment of "machinic enslavement" (Lazzarato, 2014). These are possibilities that travel through both digital and embodied networks and flows and they allow us to take seriously the interdependence between bodies and technologies in contemporary struggles. This interdependence is antagonistic to the interdependence of bodies and technology in contemporary capitalism (see Hardt and Negri, 2012; Dean, 2009; Berardi, 2009; Harvey, 2005). In contemporary capitalism and its resistances, this body-technology interdependence is arguably unprecedented in both scale and intensity. The political configuration of assembly movements as human-machinic assemblages, and the central role of social reproduction demonstrate what is, I argue, an expansion of Deleuzian minor currents in contemporary class composition.

5.1 Assembly Movements and the Recuperation of Social Reproduction

That social reproduction should be a central concern to movements seeking to overturn the dominant regime of accumulation has not always been obvious. While more strictly production-based struggles have been hegemonic throughout history, Chapter 2 demonstrated that concerns with reproduction have been a minor current to histories of class struggle. That chapter also traced the swelling of this minor current throughout the 20th Century. With the assembly movements of the 21st Century this minoritarian tendency of concern with social reproduction came to the fore.

To recall, social reproduction in Marxist theory tends to refer to the reproduction of human beings as both life and labour power (Batticharya, 2013, Federici, 2012, Caffentzis, 2012; Ferguson, 2008). The labour of reproduction – historically feminised – includes both the physical necessities of existence – biological procreation, food, shelter, etc., – but also the social relations that contribute to fully-formed human beings, connecting individuals to communities and helping to frame subject formation. This includes the implicit and explicit labour of care, of communication, of solidarity, friendship, trust, and care. It is the concrete and affective infrastructure of existence. As such, social reproduction can become a site for revolutionary self-activity and collective co-constitution. As noted in the previous chapter, social reproduction is simultaneously a key site for capital accumulation (by commodifying socially reproductive labour) and securitization (through the technologies and infrastructures that shape docile or obedient subjects). This commodified and securitized social reproduction has been increasing over the course of previous capitalist cycles. It is for this reason that I contend that social reproduction is now, globally and in all its myriad forms, in crisis. In this situation of crisis, I look to attempts to reproduce life and the bonds of social solidarity outside of either capital or security apparatuses as autonomous social reproduction as key to the

political composition of the working class. This is social reproduction as recuperated or reclaimed from the limits of capital and the security state.

While imperfectly executed, assembly movements of 2011 created concrete, affective, and digital sites for endeavours in autonomous social reproduction. They created a politics that was not simply antagonistic but also constituent, and tried to avoid separating the personal from the political. Legacies of feminist struggle are evident in the ways assembly movements of 2011 attempted to operationalize the realm of care as a contested site, and as a prefigurative political horizon. The feminist movement of the mid-20th century recognised that “the revolution begins at home” and thus worked to restructure “reproductive activities and the social relations that sustain them” (Haiven, 2011). The 2011 cycle of struggles can be seen as a broad-based attempt to recuperate social reproduction through this restructuring and prefiguring of different social relationships and infrastructures.

Of course, each of the three main 2011 assembly movements involved women, both in their build-up (online and in person) and in their spatial occupations. In Egypt in particular, “multi-layered patriarchal power” was being rapidly challenged and was, for many women, “at the heart of the uprising” (Hafez, 2012: 38). Women played an extraordinary role in the occupation itself (Cornish, 2011), but it was also the struggles of women in their workplaces and the bread riots on Egyptian streets in the years preceding the Tahrir occupation that helped create a climate of possible revolution. For example, women were the first to walk off the job in December 2006 at the MISR Spinning and Weaving Co, sparking a 20,000 person strong strike. As they walked out they shouted “Here are the women! Where are the Men?” (Cornish, 2011: np). The strike’s successes grew largely out of the outreach and solidarity work that was considered the “hallmark organising tactic” of women workers (Cornish, 2011: np). The April 2008 general strike

in Egypt – giving the April 6th Youth Movement its name – saw women in important leadership roles; the build up to that strike holds, as its untold story, the “crucial role of women workers in organising the biggest wave of industrial action for a generation” (Alexander and Koubaissy, 2008: np). These actions, along with the 2007 factory occupation at Mahalla al-Kubra gave women workers the confidence to resist and to lead the resistance, but also “changed the views of many of their male colleagues” (np) with regards to women in struggle.

Throughout the 2000s, as well, digital mobile communication technologies were profoundly impacting many women’s lives in Egypt. With the ability to communicate on social media young (mostly middle-class) women were able to mix, socialise, and connect with people of both genders in ways that were impossible in the physical world. Herrera (2014) asserts that this gave young women greater levels of autonomy than they may ever have previously experienced, profoundly influencing the role they played in the eventual occupation of Tahrir. Much of the online organising immediately preceding the occupation took place through the We Are Khaled Said Facebook page. Despite women making up about 40% of the page’s membership, the language of struggle and exhortations to protest on were written in very gendered language – calls to “be a man” and questions of manliness, for example (Herrera, 2014) – and male Muslim identities “dominated the voice and culture” (Herrera, 2014: 53). Even the young women, Asmaa Mahfouz, whose video blog was an accelerant for the January 25th demonstrations, commanded participation in the proposed demonstrations by saying “if you have honour and dignity as a man, come. Come and protect me and other girls in protest” (quoted in Herrera, 2014: 108). Regardless of this gendered language, women did play important roles in organising the demonstrations in Egypt, and “Asmaa Mahfouz, Nawara Negm, Isra Abdel Fattah, Gigi Ibrahim and countless other women activists rallied people to Tahrir” (Winegar, 2012: 69).

In Spain the Indignados occupations grew out of the *Real Democracia Ya!* Network and the 15M movement. While these networks and movements involved women they did not initially create sets of demands or slogans that reflected the gendered nature of the economic crisis. Prior to the occupations of the Indignados women and feminist groups had worked hard to outline how the crisis and government austerity measures impacted women in general, immigrant women in particular, but these concerns were not reflected by the movement in its early days (Ezquerro, 2012). The feminist group *Precarias a la Deriva* was formed in Madrid in 2002, calling themselves a laboratory of female workers. Not only did they refuse a division between bodies and politics, insisting that “bodies could not be at the margins” but instead should be “part of the field of operations of power and of multiple struggles” (*Precarias a la Deriva*, 2009: np), but they also centred their work on precarity, particularly feminised precarity, long before the crash of 2008. The austerity policies across Europe even prior to the emergence of the Indignados took a toll on social reproduction in Spain, and such issues were definitely on the broader movement agenda even if it was not considered central in the original sets of concerns that the Indignados initially adopted (Ruiz Garcia, 2014).

In the first weeks of the occupation, Sandra Ezquerro (2012) writes, “concepts such as ‘feminism,’ ‘oppression,’ and ‘gender inequality’ struggled to gain any consensus in many meetings” (Ezquerro, 2012: np). Feminist discourse was met with a certain aversion by many, who felt it was too radical, unreasonable, and divisive. Similarly, the Occupy movement grew out of a loose collection of individuals gathered together to plan for the Adbusters-inspired occupation of Wall Street, many of whom had participated in Bloombergville, an occupation in front of New York City’s city hall. The organising of OWS did not explicitly involve feminist politics and practices, but organisers of the occupation reported that actively saying “no” to misogynist behaviour or sexism was a key element to early Occupy process. In the lead-up to the encampments and throughout,

both women and men were engaged in organising against sexual assault and creating the occupation as a safe space in which women and transpeople could participate (Seltzer, 2011).

When the occupations eventually took root, women were present, although their concerns may initially not have been. At Tahrir Square, where gender divisions appeared most pronounced, women demanded their insertion in the struggle (Philiptchenko, 2013, Herrera, 2014). The insecurity in Egyptian streets, the economic and social violence inflicted upon the population, and the state manipulation of people's ability to access food, gas, or electricity was read as an act of direct violence against women by some Tahrir activists (Philiptchenko, 2013), and thus as an imposition of a crisis on women's bodies and abilities to reproduce themselves and their families. This violence also manifested in concrete forms during the occupation of Tahrir Square both on the part of the military (especially with the "virginity tests" arrested women were subjected to by the "interim" military government⁸²) and on the part of other demonstrators who frequently sexually harassed and sexually assaulted female occupiers (Amar, 2011). These acts, however, strengthened bonds of solidarity and contributed to the recuperation of social reproduction via networks of care. Anti-harassment and anti-assault squads sprang up around the square, bands of men and women targeting harassers and aiding survivors. Some groups of vigilantes spray-painted assaulters' bodies so they were easily identifiable (Fahim, 2011). The most famous OpAntiSH (Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment or *Quwwa did al-taharosh*) intervened physically in assaults taking place in Tahrir Square.

⁸² See Homa Khaleeli <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-womens-blog-with-jane-martinson/2011/oct/28/virginity-test-tahrir-square>

In these and many other ways way women's struggles in Egypt's Tahrir Square attempted to create more "cooperative and egalitarian forms of reproducing the human, social, and economic relations at the heart of political work" (Brown, et al, 2013: 84). Similar concerns intimately tied the Occupy movement and the Indignados movement to legacies of feminist struggle, according to Federici (Haiven, 2011). The desire for a politics that is not simply antagonistic, that emphasizes the "creation of more cooperative and egalitarian forms of reproducing human, social, and economic relationships" (Haiven, 2011: np) are some of the feminist-inspired roots to both Occupy and the Indignados' existence. The eventual structuring of the encampments grew, at least partially, out of the discussions taking place in social movements to create "communities of care" and "collective forms of reproduction" in order to "address the issues that 'flow from our everyday life'" (Haiven, 2011:np). The notion of prefiguring "the world you want to create through your actions and organisation" (Haiven, 2011) was developed by previous feminist movements and has been attempted in the politics of the present. Certain working groups at Occupy encampments and in the plaza occupations in Spain eventually took seriously feminist issues, even if they were initially resistant, and women maintained a persistent and often vocal presence at Occupy encampments (Seltzer, 2011).

There is a danger in attempting to solidify the terrain of prefigurative politics, though. Sexual violence was absent from neither the Occupy nor the Indignado encampments, alongside the acts in Tahrir Square. Occupy Wall Street and its many incarnations across North America saw numerous acts of rape and sexual assault (Lomax, 2011; McKeown, 2011; Jender, 2013). Feminists in Puerta del Sol denounced both the sexual assaults that took place at the Indignados encampment and the refusal of the General Assembly to recognise these assaults as acts of patriarchal violence outside of the confines of bourgeois legality (Publico, 2013). Such events and their treatment by the general assemblies in general did cause breakdowns in projects of social reproduction and

forced some people out of some encampments (Jender, 2013) and demonstrate that assembly movements have not been feminist utopias. This is certainly part of the treacherous terrain that is encountered in prefigurative experiments amidst patriarchal social relations, and point to the difficulty in engaging in collective and ultimately inclusive projects of social reproduction, a critique that will be considered below.

On the whole, however, the attention paid to issues of social reproduction did grow out of the broader influences of feminist politics, both those of the past and the reinvigoration of these politics in some online and movement circles. This politics contributed to the affective and concrete *infrastructure* of the encampments of the 2011 cycle of struggles. Such assembly movements were not only protests, then, but also attempts at a pre-figurative politics; that is to say, in their corporeality they worked to enact more caring and attentive social relations, demonstrating how relations between human beings might constitute themselves going forward (Brown, et al. 2013).

The concrete infrastructure of social reproduction was the backbone of the occupations in the 2011 cycle of struggles, and permitted the material existence of the encampments. These were pre-figurative practices – creating an alternative future in the present by “cementing equality and democracy at both the personal and institutional levels” (Sitrin, 2013: np). The assembly movements of 2011 eschewed conventional representative politics and capitalist relations and worked to create relationships of care and support to concretise their future visions. In Tahrir, Puerto del Sol, and Zuccotti Park occupiers set up the infrastructure necessary to provide food, health care, legal support, libraries, childcare, and mediation services. The encampments relied upon communication with other people, and collaborative decision-making (Sitrin, 2013). Specifically, the Indignados encampment in Madrid’s Puerto del Sol and the Occupy encampments for example featured working kitchens, day cares, libraries, free

universities and popular education sites, women's and indigenous spaces, process groups, safe spaces and committees (Postill, 2014; Brown, et al. 2013). In Tahrir Square volunteers immediately coordinated food, water, and tent provisions for campers. Mosques opened their doors as makeshift field hospitals and doctors and nurses volunteered their time (Al-Ghazawy, 2011; Hessler, 2011). The concrete infrastructure of social reproduction in the encampments was largely a project of volunteer labour, but in the North American context this volunteerism also points to the uneasy alliance many encampments had with official organs of the working class. For instance, in Occupy Toronto the portable toilets that permitted the occupation to sustain itself and its waste products were provided with funds from seven traditional labour unions. This money also funded three Mongolian-style yurts that served as the library and safe spaces for the occupation.⁸³

The affective infrastructure of assembly movements was an appendage to the concrete infrastructure. The occupations almost immediately began to self-organise for their daily subsistence needs – food, shelter, hygiene. But the organising was beyond simply biological necessities: at a certain point in the Egyptian revolution demonstrators from all walks of life formed a 3000-person strong human chain surrounding the Museum of Antiquities to prevent its looting by thugs or *baltageya* (McGreal, 2011; Roos, 2011b). Similarly, an affective infrastructure could be seen when Coptic Christians encircled and

⁸³ The funding for the toilets and the yurts, as well as for some food and other necessities, came from Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Service Employees International Union, Ontario Nurses Association, Steelworkers District 6, Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, Communication, Energy, and Paperworkers Union, and the Society of Energy Professionals. The contributions totaled \$91,000 in total. See: <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2011/12/01/19049176.html>

protected Muslims from police violence as they knelt in the streets to pray.⁸⁴ This was emblematic of a kind of affective communalism that was an additional infrastructural element emerging in the Tahrir encampment. Visible manifestations of solidarity and care could also be seen in the circle dances that broke out in Tahrir when Hosni Mubarek finally stepped down (Stavrides, 2011).

In Occupy, affective infrastructure could at least partially be seen in the attempts at creating bonds of solidarity through the use of progressive stacks and speakers lists during assemblies and working group meetings. This was an occasionally successful attempt to allow marginalised participants to have their voices consistently heard. Acts of solidarity such as this were similarly reflected in the focus on eviction defence amongst both the Indignados and the Occupy movements, mostly emerging after the encampments had come down. In Spain for example, a group emerged from within the occupation – *Afectados por la Hipoteca* or Those Affected by Mortgages – that supported those receiving foreclosure notices, oftentimes by blockading court officials from delivering eviction notices (Sanchez, 2012).⁸⁵ The infrastructural links of solidarity developed in the Indignado encampments expanded outwards, and were maintained in the aftermath of the occupation with groups like *the Afectados*. By the autumn of 2012 a Spanish locksmiths union – representing 40% of the trade – voted to not replace locks on foreclosed homes, and a police union offered legal support to officers refusing to participate in evictions (Moffet and Bjork, 2012; Kalwaic, 2013 2014). Several Occupy sites similarly, upon the dissolution of its encampments, began to focus their energies on housing,

⁸⁴ Photos were sent out via Twitter by Nevin Zaki and the story was covered by The Daily Mail in the UK <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1353330/Egypt-protests-Christians-join-hands-protect-Muslims-pray-Cairo-protests.html>

⁸⁵ See also O’Leary, 2011.

particularly Chicago and Minneapolis. Anti-eviction squads occupied foreclosed homes, glued locks shut, blockaded marshals attempting to carry out evictions, and disrupted court proceedings auctioning off foreclosed homes by singing loudly and drowning out all else (Sitrin, 2014). In this way the practices of assembly movements, after the physical occupations have disappeared, develop and maintain relationships and a sense of community rooted in solidarity, collectivity, and social reproduction. This is more than bricks and mortar infrastructure, but rather the infrastructure of affect.

The affective and communicational dimension of social reproductive was also evident was in the use of the “human microphone” as an alternative to the PA system throughout many of the Occupy encampments. The use of the human microphone stemmed from the Occupy Wall Street protests: in response to bylaws restricting the use of amplification in public space without a permit Occupiers there organised amplification through repetition (Radovac, 2014). A speaker seeking to address an audience shouts “mic check!” and then speaks in short bursts, their phrases repeated by the gathered crowd so as to alert others to a speaker, to amplify a single persons voice, and to spread one’s voice throughout the park.

Although heavily debated in terms of its actual practicality (Radovac, 2014) the human microphone was instituted in many other Occupy sites at least partially – and perhaps unconsciously – because of the role it played in collective and individual social reproduction. The communal repetition of a speaker’s words, it is claimed, “played a central role in the formation of an auditory space that was animated by the principles of direct democracy that guided the movement” (Radovac, 2014: 34). Further, it served as a medium of communication more deeply associated with the public and the common (Deseriis, 2014). With the human microphone attempting to ensure that “the maximum number of voices are heard,” Occupy encampments symbolically situated themselves as

“anti-oppressive environment(s);” places that seek to be “welcoming, engaging, and supportive” (Brown, et al. 2013: 84). That being said, as with many of the prefigurative experiments in the encampments, the human microphone was not uniformly regarded as an inclusive and welcoming exercise in communing communication. People with auditory processing challenges or on the autism spectrum often found the cascade of voices coming from the human microphone extremely distressing; the practice served as a barrier to participation for some (Sheppard, 2011). Further, as much as the practice of the “mic check” produces an affective solidarity, it does so by creating a strange sort of unity: speaking anecdotally, one finds oneself repeating statements that one might not agree with. This in itself can produce an experience both of empathy but also of cognitive dissonance, which again points to some of the difficulties in pre-figuring social reproduction amongst and within large, inclusive, and ill-defined collective bodies.

In terms of the political pre-figurations at play in the 2011 assembly movements, the encampments initially centred on self-organisation. Building an at least semi-coherent structure allowed demonstrators, from Egypt to Spain to New York, to establish re-emergent forms of egalitarian decision-making and self-defence. As such the use of general assemblies, direct democracy, and participatory decision-making can be seen as another pillar of the infrastructure of an autonomous social reproduction. Simply being together in the assemblies at Puerto del Sol (for the Indignados) was a moment of affective social reproduction, in that it created a palpable sense of joy amongst participants (Fernandez, 2012). Professionalising politics, enclosing the political into representative domains, empties common spaces, Fernandez argues, but being *and deciding* together “automatically generates joy” (2012: np) in political engagement. In this way, directly democratic decision-making collectively co-constructed autonomous and politicised subjects (from the apathetic and hardened activist alike). This was a simultaneously concrete and affective manifestation of social reproduction: it created

what Fernandez (2012) called a new emotional climate. Participants in the general assemblies of the Indignados, for instance realised they could, through shared discussion, debate, and decision-making, “collectively construct another point of view on current affairs” (Fernandez, 2012: np) giving them a sense of agency and investment in the future not widely experienced before. In such a way, assemblies address a lack of involvement in representative politics. They play an important role in reinvigorating the affective components of the political; a dimension almost entirely evacuated from representative politics.⁸⁶

Hardt and Negri (2012), in their chapbook *Declaration*, defined four subjective figures that emerged in the neoliberal era and were the key constituents of the assembly movements. These figures are the indebted, the mediated, the securitised, and the represented. The indebted resists the control of financial institutions, the mediated revolts against the corporate control of information, and the securitised rejects the violence of the state. Referencing the figure of the represented, Hardt and Negri note that this subject resists her contemporary framing within politics. Although popular ideologies reiterate the teleological unfolding of history from tyranny to democracy exclusively through a representative politics, the 2011 cycle of struggles breaks this ideological chain of meaning. While representative governments and universal suffrage are globally widespread, it has become apparent that representation is “not a vehicle of democracy but instead an obstacle to its realisation” (Hardt and Negri, 2012: 25). The withering of civil society throughout the previous cycle, they suggest, has today made structures of participation all but invisible, those which do exist have been commodified and

⁸⁶ This has its dangers, of course, with the possibility of an affective right-wing nationalism emerging as well. The key, as Fernandez (2012) noted, is to motivate this sense of joy beyond the confines of an occupation and into a joyful, collaborative, everyday confrontation with capital.

securitised. The social presence of the working class and its organisations has been diminished by the near-eradication of civil society and the rending of the broad fabric that supported it. The represented thus have no access to effective political action within the confines of a representative system, Hardt and Negri (2012) argue. Seizing upon this moment of collapsing structures of representation, the represented then helped foster the emergence of assemblies and assembly movements.

A generalised crisis of social reproduction and an increasing sense that the state does not “care” (Brown, et al. 2013) has inaugurated a broad-based suspicion of political institutions. These suspicions are manifested in the creation of assemblies for collective self-representation that was a tendency of the 2011 cycle of struggles. Assemblies offer a commons of social reproduction wherein participants can forge their own politics, orientations, and subjectivities at least somewhat autonomously and in a caring, collective environment. Representative politics is actually, as Caffentzis (2012) notes, a politics of absence, one that relies upon hierarchies, inequalities, and striations of power. In representative politics one’s power in decision-making is abdicated to another, a representative. While the representative becomes present, the individual is absented from the official circulation of politics (Caffentzis, 2012). In assembly politics, however, one must “bodily be at the centre of the circulation of cities” (Caffentzis 2012); assemblies require presence.⁸⁷ In 2011 this insistence on *presence* was made visible in the mass of bodies merging at street corners, in city squares, parks, and plazas from Tahrir, to Puerta del Sol, to Zuccotti Plaza and elsewhere. With their presence these bodies stated that a

⁸⁷ Caffentzis (2012) and others (see Thorburn, 2013) almost fetishize the importance of embodied co-presence in the assembly, a rejection of the prevailing digital forms of communicating and assembling. The necessity of pure embodiment – the valorisation of the biological over the machinic – will be troubled later in this discussion, when we discuss the recuperation of communications in the human-machinic assemblages at the heart of assembly movements.

purely representative politics would no longer suffice. Collective self-representation, as happened through the horizontal, directly democratic assemblies, served as an embodied act of autonomous social reproduction, introducing to people the idea that they no longer needed to rely on the state but could learn from each other and make decisions together. In Puerta del Sol, the plaza in Madrid occupied by the M15 or Indignados movement, the General Assemblies were non-hierarchical, open, and were the first political assemblies held in a public space in Spain for several decades (Gutierrez, 2013). They were demographically diverse, and not limited to an already constructed collection of politicized subjects. Rather, the assemblies of the Indignados were groupings of people for whom politics were not the centre of their existence.⁸⁸ This was echoed in the Tahrir Square and in the Occupy occupations, wherein encampments had ample quantities of politically inexperienced participants, those who had never before protested or participated in a movement (Gerbraudo 2012; Occupy Research, nd).⁸⁹ For many of the young media-savvy contributors to assembly movements, participation and not representation is a key facet of their online lives, and so participation in their offline lives appeared a natural outgrowth of their networked existence (Castells, 2012)

Anti-representationalist threads within the 2011 cycle of struggles, though, does not signify that this politics was ultimately predominant, nor that no representative institution is viable in a struggle for autonomous social reproduction. While there was a “rejection of representation” (Hardt and Negri, 2012: 7) in many of the assembly

⁸⁸ The lack of professionalization either as activists or political figures was important, for Fernandez (2013), because “the professionalization of politics (and of activism) empties common spaces” (np)

⁸⁹ While the encampments and assemblies were diverse – not exclusive to a specific social stratum or demographic sector – this is not to suggest that there weren’t certain dominant class fractions, an issue explored further below.

movements of 2011, there were also strong tendencies towards traditional politics. The dynamic of struggle even *within* assembly movements was varied and complex. As noted above, unions played a fundamental role in maintaining the socially reproductive possibilities of Occupy. Further, in the early 2000s labour struggles lead by traditional union formations were the foundational to what became the Egyptian revolution (Abdelrahman, 2012). Some of the most exciting initial outcomes of the Egyptian movement were not confined to Tahrir Square but involved, for example, the seizure of workplaces and the self-management of Port Said.⁹⁰ While the encampment and assemblies of Tahrir Square were an important catalyst to change in Egypt, the history of varied actions by different institutions of the working class were inextricably connected to the eventual occupations of public space (Abdelrahman, 2012). At the square itself the ultimate demand of demonstrators was not to dissolve the state and create autonomous commons of social reproduction but rather to rid Egypt of Mubarak and to bring about democratic elections within a representative system (a demand ultimately proving deeply problematic) (Gerbraudo, 2012; Abdelrahman, 2012).

Occupy, similarly, prioritised a participatory politics within the encampments, but the ultimate political goals of the occupation were muddled and unclear, varied depending upon whose voice was being amplified. Adbusters original call for the occupations was a demand to “get the money out of politics”, insisting that “Barack Obama ordain a Presidential Commission tasked with ending the influence money has over our representatives in Washington” (Adbusters, 2011: np). While framed in the language of “democracy” versus “corporatocracy,” this demand did little to undermine a hegemonic politics of representation but rather for a less corrupted set of representatives.

⁹⁰ For more on history of Egyptian labour struggles see Said, 2009. For labour during and just after the revolution see: Tahrir-ICN, 2013.

Other high-profile participants like Jodi Dean (2013) pushed for occupiers to develop a political infrastructure through reinvigorating a party of the Left. The capacity to say “we” again, Dean argued, was reinvigorated in the collective expression that was Occupy, and this endeavour introduced new opportunities to demand accountability and coordination and a left party that could eschew bourgeois politics (2013). Finally, self-described “leader” of Occupy Wall Street, Justine Tunney, wanted Occupy to become a “Tea Party of the Left” and eventually sought to crowd source the funds to pay former occupiers to become non-violent militia for Occupy (Klee, 2013; Chu, 2014).

Nonetheless, as a concretised pre-figurative politics anti-representationalism was an important component of the 2011 cycle of struggles for many, and served as a form of social reproduction. The attempts at re-appropriating urban space, holding ground, and occupying demonstrate that the ethos and practices of participation as an act of social reproduction must be “built into the locus of the action itself” (Brown, et al. 2013: 85). In assembly movements there were concrete and ephemeral ways of prefiguring autonomous social reproduction through networks of solidarity and care. The need to be confrontational, determined, and defiantly political did not, in the opinion of some participants, supersede the need for the Occupy movement, for example, to be “nonetheless ethical and caring” (Brown et al, 2013: 78). In this, assembly movements are able to potentially place care in a more effective political context: demonstrating that caring for one another physically and psychologically is an element of social reproduction, and that caring and being cared for also concerns analysis of the quotidian and its particular political economy.

The socially reproductive elements of the 2011 cycle of struggles have been fundamental to changing the shape of contemporary political and social movements. That being said, a nuanced lens must be adopted with regards to the movements as a whole.

Critiques of these struggles have been well catalogued and discussed elsewhere (Campbell 2011; Kilibarda, 2012; Grande, 2013; van de Sande, 2013, for example), and thus in this section I want to briefly highlight only two: one, the problem of an inward focus in socially reproductive struggles, and two, the composition of these movements along both class and race lines. These two components are important, along with several of the other criticisms attended to in this chapter thus far, because some of them are contended with in the Quebec Student Strike of 2012 while others – namely issues of race – remain troubled.

Notwithstanding the importance of care and social reproduction to the longevity of any political struggle, these alone are insufficient to creating viable alternative futures. While the assembly movements created infrastructures of care, none were able to establish these infrastructures as strong or durable enough to provide long-term support in processes of social reproduction. The encampments themselves, and the autonomous social reproduction that they temporarily created, is not the end of a long road that lays ahead, and serious consideration must be given to the social organisation that can and will replace capitalism going forward. Outside of the confines of their occupations, minimal institutions of the assembly movements remain – Occupy has seen the creation of some eviction defence movements and did provide important support during Hurricane Sandy in New York City in 2012 (Jaleel, 2013; Sitrin, 2013). Members of the Indignados have also created the anti-eviction squads and have made popular the “primacy of the political over the economic” (Prentouliss and Thomassen, 2013) but it remains to be seen if this will be enough to even overcome austerity budgets let alone create alternative pathways of the future.

As Naomi Klein (2011) said, movements can be like beautiful flowers that burst forth in spring but quickly die off. Lacking roots, she suggests, lacking long term plans

for how to sustain themselves, ephemeral movements, like flowers, get washed away when the storms come.⁹¹ In a 2011 speech Zizek also warned the Occupy encampment not to fall in love with itself. Spectacles or carnivals, he admonished, “come cheap” and the basic message of the 2011 cycle of struggles is that “we are allowed to think about alternatives.”⁹² While the assembly movements in Egypt, Spain, or North America may not have yet created institutions capable of offsetting capitalist abuses or replacing the state and its infrastructures, their importance lies in the fact that they, in 2011, broke a taboo and made clear that “we do not live in the best possible world” (Zizek, 2011). This opened up potentials for thinking of different futures and different worlds, and for taking seriously this project on a large, social scale.

The demographic composition of the 2011 assembly movements, though, poses another obstacle to the possible constitution of a “different world”. The class backgrounds of those leading and participating in Egypt’s Tahrir Square movement contributed to its inability to produce coherent political organisations or socially radical policies. At best, the occupation of Tahrir expanded individual rights for the middle classes, while deeply problematic military and security apparatuses remained intact (Fosshagen, 2014). It was perhaps because of trajectories of downward mobility post-2008 and the middle class discontent out of which the 2011 assembly movements grew that such projects were ultimately subsumed into bourgeois imperatives (Fosshagen, 2014). In Egypt specifically the demands of poor and working class people for social

⁹¹ Of course, it is interesting to note that when an *actual* storm came (Hurricane Sandy) Occupy, as a meme if not a movement, did in fact reinvigorate itself however momentarily.

⁹² The transcript for Zizek’s speech at Occupy Wall Street is available at: <http://roarmag.org/2011/10/zizek-at-wall-street-protest-dont-fall-in-love-with-yourself/>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

improvements were translated into calls for “increased political participation and universal human rights” (Fosshagen, 2014: 14) that would do little to improve conditions of poverty. While convergences in Tahrir Square did convey some sentiments of a community, albeit a disparate one, the demands asserted have been more likely to “increase the neoliberal processes of privatisation, internationalisation, and state minimalisation that has dismantled protections for the poor and [put] the cost of enormous private profits on the workforce” (Fosshagen, 2014: 14).

Speaking generally, as Woland/Blaumachen & friends writing in *Sic: The International Journal for Communization* note, the movements of 2011 were composed of a collapsing middle strata, and while being lauded for their inclusiveness they maintained an exclusion of the already excluded.⁹³ The collapsing middle stratum is a fluid category, no longer confined to small property owners and individual professions. In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, the “masses of impoverished unemployed, the de facto poor youth, and the precarious workers push down the ‘status’ of what can be called the middle strata” (Woland/Blaumachen & friends, 2014: 9) thus reducing their political influence at the level of the state. Demographic data obtained by Occupy Research and DataCentre found that almost half of surveyed Occupiers self-identified as working or lower-middle class, without about 30% engaged in full-time work and 18% being students. Only 8% were unemployed (Occupy Research and DataCenter, 2012). This aligns with Woland/Blaumachen & friends assertion of a collapsing middle strata, as those employed, or post-employed in the occupations of 2011 were working in sectors experiencing a vast collapse. Employed, even full-time, yes, but rapidly being

⁹³ These excluded, Woland/Blaumachen & friends claim, manifested their own discontent in this cycle through the spectacular outbreak of riots. These riots occurred near simultaneous to the assembly movements.

“proletarianised” as Roth (2010) noted, due to declining wages and increasing precarity. The image of Mason’s (2013) “graduate with no future” figure central to all of the main spatial occupations and resistance movements of 2011 points to the stunted upward mobility or rapid downward descent experienced by the young and educated due to lack of professional opportunities. The cycle of struggles that emerged in 2011 happened in the midst of a vast and international middle class collapse and the active proletarianisation of formerly middle strata members.

Because of the recent and rapid collapsing of this middle strata, the composition of assembly movements Woland/Blaumachen & friends (2014) argue – along with Fosshagen (2014) – maintained some political allegiances to a “middle class,” that the demands align with the politics of that strata: in the case of many assembly movements, this primarily meant the removal of one government or party and its replacement by another. In the absence of a party of the working class, Woland/Blaumachen & friends (2014) argue, the fall of a government essentially entails the fall of the movement as a cohesive force – in places like Egypt, then, “what initially appeared as a victory proved to be a defeat” (12). Due to the class composition of 2011’s assembly movements *Sic* claims that the necessary horizon of these struggles was little more than “better management of the bourgeois state” (12). The autonomous social reproduction that took place in the squares was little more than a temporary commoning unable to expand beyond the geographic confines of the urban environments in which they emerged.

With regards to Occupy, the imagining of possible worlds through autonomous social reproduction in the squares was limited by virtue of its overwhelming racial

homogeneity.⁹⁴ Joel Olson (2012) noted that one of the most significant tensions in the Occupy movement was over issues of race, a frustration echoed by Campbell (2011) who argued that the whiteness of Occupy was reflected in the whiteness of its concerns. For example, Campbell argues, the centrality of student debt as a concern was a result of the high number of mostly white university graduates populating Occupy encampments. Debt, he argues, is a difficult issue around which to rally black communities: more black men will see the inside of a prison than the inside of a university classroom, and thus concerns around student debt appear far less pressing than do concerns around mass incarceration (Campbell, 2011). Frustrations with the inability of Occupy participants to contend with issues of racism, white supremacy, and white privilege both inside and outside of the encampments lead to an exclusion of people of colour. Some offshoot groups, such as Occupy the Hood Boston cut ties with the main Occupy encampment due to the overwhelming white privilege and inability or refusal to confront it (Campbell, 2011). Certainly, as Olson suggest, there is no capacity to create a force capable of uniting the “99%” without confronting these tensions around race. The key obstacle to the eventual success of assembly movements, Olson argues, “is left colour-blindness, and the key to overcoming it is to put struggles of communities of colour at the centre of this movement” (Olson, 2012: 46).

The composition (both class and racial) of the 2011 assembly movements signifies a subsumption of concerns and demands to bourgeois and ultimately white

⁹⁴ Demographic data obtained by Occupy Research and Data Centre reflects this claim. Their research found that 81% of Occupy participants were white (see Occupy Research and Data Centre, 2012). That being said, some occupations, Occupy Oakland in particular, had a broader participation, and the concerns put forward reflected this. Oakland and Vancouver, BC, were two of the sites where the demand to “decolonize Occupy” came from, in Oakland’s case because the occupation sat on unceded Ohlone land, in Vancouver’s case on unceded Coast Salish territory.

politics. These are all problems that undermine the advances of assembly struggles and mitigate the possibilities of recuperating social reproduction from the purview of capital and the state. That being said, these critiques do not undermine the potentials of assembly movement politics in general. Rather, they are presented here in order to advance struggles beyond this point, to understand the limitations the 2011 cycle of struggles came up against, to demonstrate the development of these issues in the Quebec Student Strike, and to maintain critical components at the forefront so that these issues may be contended with as struggles move forward.

5.2 Communication and Social Reproduction in Assembly Movements

As demonstrated in Chapter Three, communication is also a component of social reproduction. In the 2011 cycle of struggles, communicative technologies played important roles. Unfortunately, some enthused journalists and theorists often overstated these roles in the immediate aftermath of struggle. Occupy, the Indignados, and especially the Egyptian revolution were characterised as operating in large part in and through digital networks (see primarily Mason, 2013 and Castells, 2012). Calling the Egyptian revolution of 2011 a “Facebook revolution” or a “Twitter revolt” has been criticised as racist and as promoting further Western hegemony (Aouragh and Alexander, 2011) through the implicit assertion that the Arab Spring would not exist without the social media platforms of the Internet. Claims that centre the roles of Western- and capitalist-created technology in social struggles ignore the material conditions and organising that took place in the years leading up to the occupation of Tahrir Square, Puerto del Sol, and Zuccotti Park. Then, when looking at the machinic components of assembly movements, it is necessary to see the Internet as simultaneously a “product of imperialist and capitalist logics” and something “used by millions in the struggle to resist

these logics” (Aouragh and Alexander, 2011: 1344). From this perspective it is impossible to claim that these technologies have a wholesale determining effect on revolutionary dynamics; yet the Internet and other communicative technologies cannot be said to have *no* effect on radical political projects whether in Egypt, Spain, or North America. In the remained of this chapter I focus on the technologies of the 2011 cycle of struggles. I seek to use a nuanced lens to understand how embodied and digital components of struggle form human-machinic assemblages, and how these assemblages were critical to the 2011 cycle of struggles, without fetishizing the digital or the role it played in any “revolutionary” force.

Communicative technologies did play an important and fundamental role *alongside* the histories of organising and the bodily assemblies in 2011, much as the newspaper played its role in 1905, the poster and journal in 1919, the radio in the 1970s. In the long history of social movements the prevailing media forms (machinic technologies) have been key to socially reproductive elements of assemblies, forging the move from dispersed, private grievances into material bodily assemblies. The Occupy-affiliated Tumblr We Are the 99% was a powerful example of this in the 2011 cycle, serving as a visual manifestation of the inequalities exacerbated by the neoliberal cycle of capitalism.⁹⁵ Further, media and communication technologies allow for acceleration in the circulation of struggle, connecting movements together and expanding affective and solidarity networks. In 2011, at times a direct video link connected activists in Tahrir Square with those in Puerta del Sol, so that Egyptian occupiers could communicate with and air their support for the Spanish struggle and vice versa (Roos, 2011c). Similarly, long distance communication allowed for more concrete examples of solidarity, such as

⁹⁵ See the We Are the 99% Tumblr at <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

when Egyptian activists ordered pizza for Wisconsin State Capitol occupiers (Silverman, 2011), a tactic repeated at the Occupy Wall Street's Zuccotti Park and other encampments around North America.⁹⁶ In this we can see some examples of the human-machinic assemblages at play in the socially reproductive capacities of the 2011 assembly movements.

At the same time, the figure formed in and through contemporary digitised milieu is what Hardt and Negri (2012) call the "mediatized subject." This subject, they claim is stifled by the overabundance of information, communication, and expression, forced to communicate yet unable to truly connect. Communications flow through corporate and capitalist channels, through corporate and capitalist platforms, giving shape and second-order meaning to their utterances. Mediatised subjects, Hardt and Negri paraphrase Spinoza, "strive for servitude as if it were their salvation" (Hardt and Negri, 2012: 15). When communicating through online platforms, Hardt and Negri ask, are people are contributing to instead of contesting repressive forces? In answer, Dean (2009) argues that networked communications cannot but serve capital. The commodification of communication in contemporary capitalism "reformats ever more domains of life in terms of the market" (Dean, 2009: 24). At the same time Dean does not claim that no political resistance can be facilitated in and through digital or networked communications. Instead, she argues that the "political efficacy of networked media depends on the setting" (Dean, 2009: 24).

Because subjectivity is so influenced by our entanglements with the machines of communication (Berardi, 2009; Lazzarato, 2014), the disconnection of communications

⁹⁶ Some reports suggest that Twitter was used by Zuccotti Park activists to make requests for food, and donations poured in in spontaneous waves. See Gordinier, 2011.

from capital was also a part of recuperating subjectivities and social reproduction in the 2011 assembly movements. As Gerbraudo (2012) notes, popular social media sites were not solely the playground of disaffected youth who mindlessly plugged their information into a communicative surplus value net. Rather, when invested in struggle, corporate-owned social media became sites for the emergence of newly formed radical subjects; the platforms supported the creation of radical movements. Not simply a tool for conveying abstract opinions nor for re-affirming already held beliefs, social media can aid in the formation of embodied assemblies, and also help people understand why such concrete assemblies become necessary.

Unlike some commentators on assembly movements, Gerbraudo (2012) makes clear that digital technologies were not enough to initiate a revolution. They served in some situations as a catalyst to organising, as in the Arab Spring or in Occupy, and often as tools for analysis and engagement once the occupations were already underway.⁹⁷ Communication technologies often served as a “means of representation, a tool of ‘citizen journalism’ employed to elicit ‘external attention’” (Gerbraudo, 2012: 3). While social media were used as “a *means of organisation* of collective action, and more specifically as *means of mobilisation* in the crucial task of ‘getting people on the streets’” (Gerbraudo, 2012: 3), embodied communicative modes have always been needed alongside digital ones in order to establish foundations for autonomous social reproduction. Similarly, in response to a crisis of social reproduction enacted through communicative channels, Hardt and Negri (2012) claim assembly movements have

⁹⁷ Although the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* made the first call for an occupation of Wall Street via digital networks, that command did not make very big waves outside of a small circle of on-the-ground activists. Instead, information exchange via social media began in earnest following the police pepper-spraying of OWS protestors and the mass-arrest of activists on Brooklyn Bridge. For more see Gerbraudo, 2012.

rediscovered the “truth” of communication: that communication comes through the circulation of information and the construction of political affects that happen when people are in *close physical proximity*. Digital technologies and social media are useful tools but ultimately cannot replace physical being together.

For example, Gerbraudo (2012) notes that Facebook was used to call, coordinate, or organise marches in Egypt just prior to the occupation of Tahrir Square, but it was activists going into mostly working-class neighbourhoods in advance and on the day of the actions and talking to people in-person that invoked participation in the streets (Gerbraudo, 2012). In the assemblies of the 2011 cycle of struggles, Hardt and Negri (2012) claim, “participants experienced the power of creating new political affects through being together” (Hardt and Negri, 2012: 18). Being together in embodied assembly revolves around “the construction of a situation of bodily density dominated by face-to-face communication” (Gerbraudo, 2012: 39), but in highly mediatised societies with dispersed populations and fragmented, flexibilised workplaces, this physical coming together could not take place “without a complex process of technical and symbolic mediation involved in summoning from a distance dispersed individuals” (Gerbraudo, 2012: 39). To be together in embodied assemblies digital communications were often necessary.

The digital and embodied practices of communication and organisation operating in the 2011 assembly movements allowed spatially dispersed people to unite in shared struggle. These practices opened up the possibility of then acting together. In this way, assembly movements recovered an autonomous social reproduction via corporate-owned communication platforms and technologies. Assembly movements, at least temporarily, broke digital communications from their explicit connection to capital. This reflects the ways that Leninist and Gramscian newspapers and *Radio Alice* cut the link between the

dominant media forms of their time and the flows and networks of capital that ran through them. In contemporary assembly movements, an autonomous social reproduction emerges through precisely the human-machinic assemblages that also mark capitalism and capitalist flows.

When considered together the struggles of assembly movements in 2011 provide a shared understanding of the centrality of social reproduction, both through networks and infrastructures of care, but also the networks and infrastructures of communication. In the forthcoming chapters I will investigate in depth one assembly movement in which I took an active role. The 2012 Quebec Student Strike, its assemblies, and its dominant media form provide a more comprehensive example of how contemporary assembly movements recuperate social reproduction. Further, the 2012 strike demonstrates an expanding and deepening of the minor current in left practice, and the increasing emergence of minoritarian assemblages rooted in both the human and the machinic.

6.0 Chapter 6: Assemblies, Machines, and Social Reproduction: The Quebec Student Strike

Although a movement with a different structure than the occupations marking the 2011 assembly movements, the Quebec student strike of 2012 maintains and even deepens some of the key claims of this dissertation. The strike can even be seen as paradigmatic of the assembly movements in many ways, repeating the patterns associated with a social reproduction crisis and recuperation, even though the specifics may be different. Because the Strike was not an occupation, the recuperation of social reproduction in the form of community kitchens, day care centres, care for the homeless was largely absent. But the crisis of social reproduction is a pattern that plays itself out differently, and yet similarly, dependent upon which wage zone it takes shape in and what the specificities of the struggle are. In Quebec, the strike was a roving, mobile movement, spread across a province, running through several universities and colleges. It initially targeted tuition increases but broadened into a general anti-austerity and even anti-capitalist movement as the strike dragged on. With its centre not in the occupation of specific space, but instead in the occupation of social reproduction as a generalised aspect of existence, the Quebec student strike still exists as a paradigmatic example of assembly movements, their human-machinic mergers, and the attempts they make at recuperating a crisis of social reproduction that is global, embodied, and deeply digital. Based upon directly democratic assemblies and using live, mobile media communications the Quebec student strike maintained and deepened on-going aspects of a recuperative struggle over social reproduction. The strike yields significant practical lessons for the precise political composition of the proletariat in the contemporary moment of capitalism. Examining the

student strike can guide us to a deeper understanding of the assemblage – the assemblage of minoritarian becoming – as a mode of class composition in the present.

Because the strike was not a spatial occupation⁹⁸ the prefigurative attempts at social reproduction were less visible than the community kitchens, day-care centres, and community libraries of the 2011 movements.⁹⁹ That being said, the student strikers were perhaps even more explicitly focussed on socially reproductive concerns than the activists encamped in public squares. With the core of the movement not the occupation of a space but of the idea of autonomous social reproduction, the Quebec student strike highlighted how processes of social reproduction are increasingly channelled through a state infrastructure that is beholden to the demands of the market, and thus fails those it claims to serve. This aporia of state-based social reproduction makes an opening for experimentation in autonomous alternatives, pushing them to become visible and even viable. Though assuredly flawed and with unclear outcomes, the practices and structures of the Quebec student strike did yield significant practical lessons for understanding contemporary class composition, social reproduction, and resistant human-machinic assemblages.

In this chapter I will begin with an explanation of my methodology in examining this case study. I will then provide a brief chronology of key moments in the 2012 Quebec student strike. As assemblages exist in intersecting human and machinic forms, in this chapter I will focus on the embodied form. I will therefore focus on the act of assembling and the actual assemblies of the strike, and highlight the ways both the acts

⁹⁸ Except in a few instances wherein university entrances were blockaded or when streets were seized for brief periods.

⁹⁹ Particularly Occupy, the Indignados, and the Arab Spring in Tahrir Square.

and the sites of assembly opened up spaces for the recuperation of social reproduction, in material and affective dimensions. In this I rely largely on blog postings and anecdotal writings from strike participants, published online and in various compilations. I also make use of personal interviews with strike participants and organisers, as well as my own participant observations.

The material and affective dimension of the student strike's assemblies form two distinct yet related assemblages – that of *being together* and of *deciding together*. In tandem – in their relations of exteriority – these assemblages contributed to projects of recuperative social reproduction and developed a constituent politics. Finally, this chapter affords me the opportunity to speak of the affective components of assembly movements from a place of personal experience and participant observation. This intimate and embodied connection I have to the strike itself is essential, perhaps, to the legitimacy of the forthcoming analysis. It has allowed me to develop an analysis of the affective relations constructed in and through this particular assembly movement, relations which, I claim, are not limited to the Quebec experience alone.

6.1 A Note on Methods

As noted in the Introduction, much of the anecdotal evidence presented in this chapter and in the forthcoming Chapter Seven is the result of personal participant observations, interviews, and documentary evidence. Chapter Six makes use of interviews and participant observation but relies more heavily on documentary evidence: reflections on the strike (both during and afterward) published on blogs, websites, and in academic journals, and available on YouTube or on podcasts. Chapter Seven depends on the interviews and participant observation I obtained over the course of my time in

Montreal in 2012. In the forthcoming section I will provide more detail regarding the qualitative research methodologies I employed, why I chose them and what benefits they bring to this dissertation project.

I conducted interviews with 16 participants in the student strike. The first set of interviews took place over several separate visits to Montreal, in late May of 2012, in June of 2012, and again in August of 2012. These interviews were conducted in person, recorded and then transcribed later. I further conducted several more follow-up interviews and sought out more CUTV interviewees in late August of 2013. As many of the participants had, by that point, dispersed to cities across Canada, I conducted these interviews via Skype. My interviewees covered the demographic range representative of the strike participants – long-time activists, newly-politicised students, CUTV volunteers, non-striking community members, women, and people of colour. I interviewed Anglophone students of Quebec's English universities and Francophone students of Quebec's French universities. I interviewed Allophone International students and community members working in the largely immigrant communities in Montreal's north end. Interviewees were all offered the option of anonymity; most did not choose to remain anonymous, but a small proportion did. Those who chose to be anonymous cited security concerns as their central reason. At the time of several of the interviews, the Quebec government still had in place Special Law 78, which imposed fines of \$1000-\$5000 on individuals for infractions including attending an illegal demonstration, failing to stop others from impeding instructional services or participating in illegal actions, or inducing others to participate in illegal actions. Further, in any way helping or

encouraging anyone else to break the law was liable to fines of \$1000-\$35,000, circumstances depending.¹⁰⁰

I used an in-person, informal, conversational interview technique. I developed a brief set of predetermined questions, but these questions were adaptable based on the interviewee's position, experiences, opinions, or other determining factors (Berg, 2008). In-person interviews, as a method of research, are far more personal than emailed interviews or questionnaires. They allow a relationship of trust to develop between interviewer and interviewee, which is important for the full development of thought, opinion, and reflection on the part of the interviewee (Kvale, 1996). Sitting together to engage in an informal guided conversation allowed interviewees to speak freely, to reflect upon their experiences, and to share their impressions of what they were experiencing (McNamara, 1999). It also allowed me the potential to probe further and ask immediate follow up questions. I contacted potential interviewees through the "inverse snowball sampling" method – I asked interviewees to put other potential interview subjects in contact with me. This meant that the participants I interviewed had definite, often shared, biases. It also meant that the people I interviewed were active participants in some aspect of the strike and therefore had the most intimate knowledge of it, its flaws, and its victories. In general snowball sampling – also known as chain sampling or chain referral sampling – offers the potential of generating unique social knowledge – emergent, political, and interactional knowledge (Noy, 2008). It has been suggested that this method allows for an understanding of interactional units within social organisation. With specific reference to my case study, using the snowball sampling method allowed

¹⁰⁰ The full text of Law 78, "An Act to enable students to receive instruction from the postsecondary institutions they attend" is available through the Provincial Government website at: <http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2012C12A.PDF> (Accessed Feb 23 2015).

me to see how social networks were built and formed around the strike. Tracing the connections between diverse and varied participants allowed me to visualise the ways in which the Quebec student strike created or intensified bonds of solidarity and social reproduction between varied constituencies.

In the course of my interviews I sought to obtain four key understandings. First, I sought knowledge from the participants. Interviews filled in the gaps in my knowledge regarding both the history of the movement and the day-to-day organisational operations. As I was interviewing participants while the strike was underway, there was very little in the way of documentary source material available. Second, I sought to understand the behaviours of the strike participants – what they did and how they organised, in intricate detail. Third, I interviewed participants to understand their individual opinions, values, and politics regarding the strike. I wanted to understand how those things had changed over the course of their politicisation or throughout the strike, and how the strike did or did not serve as a site of learning for them – a site of autonomous social reproduction. Finally, I sought to uncover how the participants felt during their time in the strike or working with CUTV. I asked how the strike impacted them personally, what trajectories their emotions took over the course of the strike, and tried to relate this to what they learned and how the movement altered their politics.

Aside from interview material I also made use of documentary evidence – blogs, newspapers, journal articles, video – and of my own participant observation research. As a method of research, participant observation requires that the research becomes directly involved in the daily life of the subjects of study (Jorgensen, 1989) – in this case the Quebec student strike and the strike participants. During my time in Montreal I lived with friends involved in the strike, and spent my time participating in assemblies, demonstrations, CUTV meetings and live stream videography, as well as conducting interviews and sharing meals and celebrations with my new community. The largest

component of my participation involved my time volunteering with CUTV on their live stream teams. I was an active member of the live stream team throughout June and July of 2012, participating in live streaming both night marches and daytime actions such as demonstrations, blockades, and street fairs. In assemblies and meetings, I offered my opinions and contributed to discussions when requested to, but in general I minimised my role in directing the outcomes of the decision-making processes. This is because even though I shared many of the aims and visions of the strikers, I was not a student of a university on strike and thus the strike itself was not my struggle.

As a methodology, participant observation has been called a special method “uniquely adapted to the distinctive character of human existence” (Jorgensen, 1989: 7). It merges a social scientific approach with a humanistic one – in itself an assemblage of varied components. My ability to adapt to situations, and to interact and develop relationships with people enhanced my capacities as a participant observer and improved my research. Further, my ability to create connections with people allowed me to tap into their networks of sociality in order to generate further connections and obtain a broader perspective on the struggle. Participant observation was an important methodology because it allows for the development of qualitative descriptions of the strike and of the behaviours, feelings, practices, and actions of the strike participants. I could occasionally observe things that the participants themselves would not even notice. This method of research allowed me to develop my central hypotheses, which I was then able to formulate further using documentary evidence, interviews, and theoretical frameworks.

While participant observation theory alerts one to the non-rational influences that may impact the researcher (Jorgensen, 1989), I sought to access the affective dimensions of the strike as well as the more concretely political or practical dimensions. Thus I attuned myself to these non-rational experiences as well, not discounting them but instead offering them up for careful consideration. Because of this methodology’s central

concern with human meanings and interactions as viewed from an insider perspective (Jorgensen, 1989), participant observation was helpful to one of the key aims of this research: developing the affective dimension of struggle. I was located in the midst of those interactions and life situations during my time in Montreal, and experienced the strike as concretely political and as an affective reality. Further, my research benefitted from this methodology because it allowed for a logic and process of inquiry that was “open-ended, flexible, [and] opportunistic” (Jorgensen, 1989: 14). Being an engaged observer of both the strike and of CUTV’s work allowed me to constantly redefine the scope of my inquiry, the problems I was trying to understand, and the hypotheses I was working with, based on the “facts gathered in concrete settings of human existence” (Jorgensen, 1989: 14) – in the case, in the setting of struggle.

Each of the qualitative research methodologies I used – primary and secondary document analysis, interviewing, and participant observation – fit well with the overarching methodological imperatives of *conricerca* or militant research, as discussed in the Introduction. *Conricerca* or co-research is research done *with* struggle, and understand the subjects of study as also being co-producers of knowledge. My participant observation in the Quebec student strike and with CUTV allowed me to develop my own insights and hypotheses, while my interviews and document analysis allowed me to learn from and produce knowledge collectively with those centrally occupied in the 2012 Quebec student movement.

6.2 A Brief Chronology of the Quebec Student Strike¹⁰¹

In March of 2011 the then-governing Liberal Party of Quebec announced a 75% increase to tuition fees, to be implemented over five years. The government claimed that this was necessary to save an ailing university system and would bring tuition fees in line with the rest of Canada. Organising against the proposed increase began immediately. Over the spring and into the autumn several actions took place across various Quebec campuses, including one-day class walkouts, and 30,000 students signed a petition against the increase. In November of 2011, 20,000 students marched on the Montreal offices of then-Premier Jean Charest.

Throughout the autumn of 2011, the Liberal government consistently refused to meet with any representative from Quebec's three main student associations, FECQ, FEUQ, or ASSE.¹⁰² In advance of the strike, the most radical student association, ASSE, formed a coalition with non-affiliated and FECQ- and FEUQ- affiliated student groups, calling itself CLASSE, or the *Coalition large de l'ASSE*. The CLASSE was seen as the

¹⁰¹ The content in this forthcoming section is derived both from the author's own experience, as well as a journal article, several webpages, and CBC news sites. These include the interactive timeline by Alexandra Epp posted to McMaster University's Public Intellectuals Project <http://publicintellectualsproject.mcmaster.ca/education/quebec-student-strike-2012/> as well as the "Timeline of Events in Quebec Student Strike" from CBC.ca <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/timeline-of-events-in-quebec-student-strike-1.1244671> and the interactive CBC page featuring key moments of the strike, "Montreal Students Protest Tuition Hikes" <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/montreal-protest/>. Material was also sourced from Sorochan, Cayley (2012).

¹⁰² The FECQ (Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec) and FEUQ (Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec) were two politically liberal student federations. ASSE (l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale) is Quebec's most militant student association, built on the principles of combative unionism and direct democracy. It declares a mandate of free education as a core demand. ASSE later formed a coalition with non-affiliated and FECQ and FEUQ affiliated student groups called CLASSE. (Coalition Large de l'ASSE).

most radical of the three student associations collaborating in the strike, and as a core principle it demanded that all members engage in directly democratic assemblies for any and all decision-making purposes. CLASSE (as part of ASSE) was alone amongst the student associations in their persistent argument that higher education should not be seen as an individual consumer investment, but rather is a social good that ought to be paid for through progressive taxation.

By February 2012 strike votes began at several Quebec universities, and on February 13th the first students walked out of classes, officially on strike. Some campuses engaged in hard pickets, blockading university entrances and disrupting on-going classes. In March protests grew larger and more intense. At a March 7th protest CEGEP student Francois Grenier lost an eye from a police projectile. In Montreal, on March 21st a demonstration engaged in a blockade of the Champlain Bridge and on March 22nd a massive demo took to the streets with upwards of 200,000 participants. In April street demonstrations and economic disruptions continued, as did an expansion of the strike's targets. An Earth Day rally on April 22nd vocally opposed the Liberal government's plans for development in Northern Quebec, *Plan Nord*. This demonstration brought indigenous land rights and environmental concerns into conversation with the tuition struggle. In a speech CLASSE spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois argued that the student strike is only one front in a broader anti-austerity class struggle. Night marches began on April 24th; they met each evening at 8pm in Parc Emile Gamelin and continued unabated into the summer.

In May levels of police violence against protestors again intensified. At a Liberal Party convention held in Victoriaville another student lost an eye from police projectiles. On the 17th of May the government introduced Law 78 (later called Law 12), the "special law" which criminalised the strike and its participants. Particulars of the law included a

demand that protestors give police 8 hours notice and provide them with a march route in advance of any gathering of 50 people or more. Police also reserved the right to move planned protest activities to a new location. Severe penalties were proposed for any participant in an illegal march, or for persons or groups that encouraged others to participate in these activities. The law would also cancel classes at striking campuses, putting students on “break” until mid-August when the spring semester would resume. The city of Montreal passed a similar by-law, P6, which criminalised wearing a mask at a public demonstration. On May 18th Law 78 officially became legislation, sparking further demonstrations and violence. The law’s passage further expanded the struggle into broader domains: lawyers and law clerks rejected the government’s attempts to crush dissent and held their own protests against Law 78, and popular sentiment increasingly turned against the Liberal party. May 22nd marked 100 days of the strike and a massive demonstration was held in Montreal, while solidarity demonstrations were organised across Canada.

Mobilisations and public demonstrations slowed throughout the summer, although key tourist events such as the Grand Prix in Montreal brought many people to the streets, and another anniversary march on June 22 drew massive crowds. On August 1st the Liberal government called an election for September 4th, significantly dissolving the motivations and power of the strike. Some student leaders, including FECQ spokesperson Leo Bureau Blouin, ran for political office. Just before the mid-August return to classes, new strike votes were held by autonomous assemblies to determine if the strike would continue. Every vote failed, and the strike ended. On September 4th the *Parti Quebecois* was elected with a minority government.

6.3 Being Together: Assembling as Social Reproduction

Interpreting the recuperation of social reproduction through the assembly, broadly defined, requires contemplating the very act of assembling. Participation in the Quebec assemblies required a coming together, an embodied engagement with others. Such minimally-mediated interactions in collectively created sites constituted an affective space wherein encounters of the body could involve discussions, positions, analysis, ideas, and traditions. These all merged to create collaborative networks of solidarity. These personal and collective networks are necessary for organising large, powerful, and resistant events such as strikes. As Gerbraudo (2012) noted with regard to the Egyptian struggle, the size of the occupation of Tahrir square was due in no small part to the face-to-face interactions of people in their neighbourhoods and communities, in spaces of communal interaction. The militancy, determination, and longevity of the Quebec student strike is owed, almost entirely, to the insistence upon shared spaces of discussion and dissent. The strike offers us important lessons in the necessity of embodied and affective encounters in assembly movements – for the human component of the human-machinic assemblage.

These encounters with others are fundamental in creating the foundations of an autonomous social reproduction: empathy, community, and care. Being together creates potential moments for the demonstration of collective care as well as collective resistance. Intimacies are developed in illegally taking up space in the streets, and these foster sense of shared resistance and risk-taking. These intimacies forge a sense of care and community that was reflected in one demonstrator loudly announcing, at a night march, “this movement is about love! It’s always been about love!” (Milstein, 2012c: np). Care and empathy are developed in the mere act of standing next to a stranger as you face down riot police, or as Milstein (2012c) asserts, pulling a stranger out of harm’s way and

then running into them again later at a random place and having the sense that you are old friends because of the experience you had shared. The creation of communities of care and empathy enacted in the streets was also reflected in the actual assemblies. For example, at UQAM people with children were encouraged to bring them to meetings, but further, the striking students collaborated with the UQAM daycare to provide a place for children to play while parents participated in assemblies. A forum was organised at UQAM on the idea of a social strike and a daycare was organised for this event also.¹⁰³ Having a variety of spaces for embodied encounter was key to constituting socially reproductive spaces in the strike. Creating such varied sites – street demonstrations alongside assemblies, or day cares alongside forums and night marches, for example – for collective expression can serve to combat the alienation, exclusion, cynicism, and apathy often experienced in highly digitised, individualistic societies (Berardi, 2009; Berardi and Lovink, 2011; Hardt and Negri, 2012, Lazzarato, 2014). These shared moments of expression can deepen already existing networks of support and solidarity, and expand the possible agents of struggle.

Such networks are deepened not only in joyful moments, but also in the moments of resistance to state violence. For many strike participants the violence experienced in facing police armed with tear gas, rubber bullets, flash bang grenades, and sound cannons catalyzed both emotional and political responses. In an interview Francois Grenier, a student who lost vision in one eye from a rubber bullet, stated that his experience of police brutality during the strike had changed his views of police and state authority. Of police, he said, “I see them as an armed person. A person who can be potentially dangerous” (Lakoff, 2013: np). Standing against these assaults strengthened a sense of

¹⁰³ Interview with N. Jun 4, 2012. Montreal, QC.

solidarity amongst strike participants as well as those on the sidelines. In his diary entries charting his experience of the strike, Vincent Roy writes of his CEGEP's struggle to maintain a hard picket and subsequent confrontations with police. The visceral togetherness of the struggle makes him feel a part of a collective, a "we" who owe each other their allegiances. "From now on I belong to this movement" he writes, frustrated after a day of angry confrontations. Of his striking friends he says, "I can't let them down because I know they wouldn't let me down. And that's our strength."¹⁰⁴

In together resisting the violences of the state, Milstein says, people begin to remember what they are capable of "from solidarity to courage, from mutual aid to direct action, from collective illegality in the face of repression to sharing this moment – the many exquisite moments – with each other in so many intimate ways" (Milstein, 2012c). This solidarity, mutual aid, and courage draws attention to an affective condition of the politics of assembling, and gestures towards expanding minoritarian politics. Such affective conditions can be encapsulated in Hardt and Negri's (2000) invocation of communist joy. In *Empire* they note that there is an "irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 413), staking claim to constitutive being-together as an affirmation of life and love against the misery of power (Thoburn, 2003). Such constitutive being together is concretised in assembly movements: *being-together* creates a collective assemblage which circulates through the flows, channels, and networks of an urban landscape without being subsumed into a singular hegemonic unity. This assembly, broadly construed as an assembly movement, is an entity both *for* and *against*, open to chance encounters and possibilities, and it is constitutive of new potential infrastructures. In the mere act of being together, of assembling, a foundation is

¹⁰⁴ Roy's diaries are published in the online e-book *This is Fucking Class War*. Available online at: <http://thisisclasswar.info/roy.html> (Accessed 26 Feb 2015).

laid for the reconstitution of an autonomous political sphere and the recuperation of care and social reproduction.

Vincent Roy's journal entries, published in the online post-strike collection *This is Fucking Class War* and entitled "The Joy of Striking," demonstrate this exuberant *for* and *against* that is the product of resistant *being-together*. At the outset of the strike he writes in his journal (dated Feb 28, 2012) that he is simply a student who wants to "finish his CEGEP as quickly as possible" but will attend a General Assembly at the behest of a friend. Under a month later he has attended the large demonstration in Montreal and writes: "What a memorable day! I had never lived anything that gratifying, heartwarming, and stressful in my life." His feelings of joy emerge from the assemblage that the strike has created – not just students in the march, he notes, he sees "workers, union members, 'construction guys,' young people and old people, English and French" all constituting a new class shared in their struggle against the state and for a different possible future. "It's a day I am happy to have lived" Roy writes on March 22nd.¹⁰⁵

As the strike carried on, new assemblages of constituent resistance emerged, in the form of "*casseroles*" and neighbourhood assemblies, the *Asemblées Populaires Autonomes de Quartiers* (APAQs). These assemblages contributed to a sense of spatial democracy: the *casseroles* were audio assemblies, the APAQs literal ones. Both asserted a democratic control over community space and contributed to processes of collective subject formation. The APAQs in particular, Lakoff (2013a) notes, kept alive the spirit of the student strike "in the hearts of many communities across the island of Montreal" (np).

¹⁰⁵ The online text, *This is Fucking Class War* is neither copyrighted and dated, nor paginated. All quotations come from Roy, Vincent "The Joy of Striking" and is available at <http://thisisclasswar.info/roy.html> (accessed 26 Feb 2012)

Such embodied assemblages can also be read through Hardt and Negri's visceral communist joy, as they reinstate the notions of community autonomy and power against the miserable authority of the state (Thoburn, 2003).

The autonomously-organised *casseroles* followed the implementation of Bill 78 in May of 2012, when resistance to state authority became a community concern. In several Montreal neighbourhoods people took to the streets at 8pm and began to beat on pots and pans. In open defiance of government statutes, people paraded through the city reclaiming both urban and aural space. These "orchestrolls" were a sonic embodiment of the assembly, and helped celebrate resistance to power. They formed low-tech human-machinic assemblages: simple tools of pots and pans carried into collected crowds to make noisy dissent, these *casseroles* formed temporary bubbles of affect. In this way they constituted some of the threads necessary for a broader autonomous social reproduction.

The *casseroles* were opportunities for an "outpouring of emotion and relief," and a "weighty sentimentality" (Sterne, 2012: np) that could be enacted publicly, as an assertion both of the commonality of feeling and the commonality of the space they claimed. They asserted the city as common, and made embodied "care" central to maintaining a collective ownership of the social and public space of the urban environment. As momentary adventures in creative protest, the *casseroles* created a foundation for a social reproduction. Such sentiments were even conveyed in one letter to the editor of *Le Devoir*:

Now people greet and talk. Now neighbourhood meetings, discussions, vigils start up casually among neighbours on the steps and balconies of Montreal. The neighbourhood will be less and less alien. This is a true political victory!

We should repeat this friendly beating [the evocation of *tapage* doesn't quite work as well in English] possibly in other forms, until the land is occupied by neighbours who recognize one another, encounter one another each day by chance, and have known one another over the years. That is how we live in a place that is how we become citizens.

My heart swells with joy.¹⁰⁶

As both assemblages of social reproduction, the *casseroles* expanded the struggle of students outwards throughout the city and the social, reclaiming public space, public education, and a sense of being together. They helped anchor recuperative social reproduction in process of class struggle. While incorporating myriad individuals into a collective space, they confirmed “the existence of something like a democratic public sphere” (Barney, 2012: np), a site of autonomous social reproduction wherein people act in embodied forms and do not just “talk (or link, or like, or tweet)” (Barney, 2012: np). Finally, the collective nature of the *casseroles*, which brought families and neighbours and strangers into contact, contributed to the alleviation of negative affects. Barney (2012) noted that “to walk in the *manifs casseroles* with your neighbours and their children was to feel the accumulated weight of decades of demoralization and cynicism lift off your shoulders, carried skyward by the great and righteous clamour of a spoon struck wildly against a common kitchen pot” (Barney 2012: np). The *casseroles*

¹⁰⁶ The full text of the letter can be read on *Le Devoir*'s website, available online here: <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/350721/victoire-collaterale> Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

encouraged a sense of the social, despite the rampant privatization and depoliticisation pushed by the State; Milstein (2012b) called this a time of sociality “without commodification or contrivance” (np); I argue it is an autonomous social reproduction. This encouragement towards an sociality uncommodified and uncontrived, a politicized sociality, was deepened with the emergence of entities with a more directly political character – the neighbourhood assemblies or APAQs (*Assemblées populaires autonomes de quartier*).

The APAQs “brought together upwards of hundreds of people at a time in leaderless meetings to organize in bringing the student strike into different sectors of society” (Lakoff, 2013a). Established autonomously by radicalized community members in several of Montreal’s working class neighbourhoods, soon APAQs began to appear in Hochelaga, Centre-Sud, Villeray, Mile End, Rosemont, and the Plateau. They were politically autonomous, aligned with neither parliamentary parties, particular ideologies, nor trade unions. In their opposition to the dominant order and its political forces they leaned towards the minoritarian. The APAQs sought to create community strength and autonomy by bringing together people who held in common only the geographical locations of their residence. In so doing, they attempted to create neighbourhood-based commons of support, solidarity. APAQs can be read as embryonic institutions of social reproduction that emerged autonomously from within the assemblage of the strike, and can be aligned with the notion of class composition forwarded here. It was hoped that out of these assemblies a broader-based resistance to the austerity crisis, and to capitalism in total, could be fomented. Such attempts harken back to the forms of struggle characteristic of earlier incarnations of class composition – the community councils or neighbourhood soviets of 1919 and 1905, for example, or the socialized worker movements of Italy in the 1970s.

The strike ended in late summer of 2012 but by 2013 several of the APAQs were still operating, holding regular meetings and planning events around community issues such as gentrification, police repression, and migrant justice. These issues mark a clear expansion of struggles beyond the confines of higher education, while remaining similarly concerned with issues related to social reproduction. In several cases, in highly politicized or policed neighbourhoods for example, the APAQs concerns were explicitly connected to a critique of a securitized social reproduction through state institutions such as the police, the prison, and border controls (Lakoff, 2013a).

On 4 September 2013 a coalition of several APAQs held a loud *casserole* through Montreal streets to mark the one-year anniversary of the election of the *Parti Québécois* (PQ) to provincial parliament and to express a discontent with the party's policies and the leader, Pauline Marois.¹⁰⁷ Later in the month the same coalition of APAQs held a public assembly in the hopes of reigniting the most energetic elements of the student strike. By that time the PQ had repealed the original tuition increase proposal as well as the punitive components of Law 78, but the municipal bylaw P-6 remained. Over that first year of Marois' leadership large, militant protests – in particular, the annual march against police brutality and the May Day rally and march – had resulted in almost immediate dispersal

¹⁰⁷ Pauline Marois and the *Parti Québécois* were elected in September after the student strike and political discontent brought down the governing Liberals. Her election was seen by some as a victory, but by many of the more politicized strikers it was simply the mantle of power changing hands to a slightly softer neoliberalism, a slightly less ugly austerity. Marois quickly revoked Law 78 (but Bylaw P6 remained in Montreal maintaining the same rules around protest as Law 78: P-6 imposes ridiculous \$637 fines for people who participate in demonstrations which do not give their route to the police in advance. Montreal police used P-6 to arrest over 1500 people between March and May, 2013, often times kettling hundreds at a time) and in that sense the battle that CLASSE and ASSE fought for free tuition was lost. That being said, more struggles are likely in the future, and by 2014 Marois and the PQ were out of power, the Liberals back in, after a disastrously racist campaign to invoke a "Charter of Values" in Quebec that would prohibit the wearing of religious insignia for public employees.

by police; participants were met with arrest and significant fines.¹⁰⁸ Further, while the 75% tuition increase was revoked, the Marois government convened a winter conference on tuition fees with various stakeholders, and the conference settled on a 3% annual increase. Regardless of these setbacks, the continued attempts at building a constituent politics in and through varied assemblies worked to maintain the networks of solidarity that had been crafted over the months of the strike itself.

Even with these strengthened networks, though, victory was not immediate. Neither the assemblies of striking students nor those of community members and neighbourhoods have been able to create alternative structures or institutions that, at this point, can serve as a serious challenge to the hegemony of the state and capital. In fact, it was only too easy for the state to dissipate the energies of the strike – to deterritorialize the assemblage – by calling an election. The August election call by then-Premier Jean Charest almost instantly decontextualized the set of relations carefully co-constructed between students, faculty, and community throughout the assembly processes. The socially reproductive energies that had flowed through the assemblages of the strike were immediately reterritorialized into the body of the state. Some student leaders even ran for political office.¹⁰⁹ While the networks of solidarity and support were important to the existence and longevity of the strike, on their own they were ultimately not enough to sustain the movement or to create substantive alternatives.

¹⁰⁸ See American Civil Liberties Union, 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Most spectacularly, Leo Bureau-Blouin of the FECQ became the youngest ever elected politician in Quebec when he successfully redirected his energies into running for the *Parti Québécois* after the August election call.

Further, as one activist notes (Lakoff, 2013b), all told the strike saw 3500 arrests and hundreds injured from police violence, including two students who lost eyes due to police grenades. This led to post-struggle trauma, burnout, and intense feelings of sadness and loss for some movement participants, alongside the invigoration, joy, and celebration at having been part of such a dynamic struggle (Lakoff, 2013b). The less joyful affective outcomes of the strike help explain the inability of the movement to re-engage and gather the same levels of strength they had previously displayed once the most active aspects of the strike faded. The movement had not created, nor did it have the capacity to create, permanent institutions to support people going through these feelings of loss and trauma. While the strike assemblages contested the legitimacy of the state, of capital, and particularly of the police, they could not, at that point, construct alternative structures strong enough to challenge the hegemony of the state and capital in the long term. In sum, while assembling together helps create the space for the affective dimensions of social reproduction, it is true that negative affects (post-traumatic stress, burnout, and sense of isolation, sadness, and loss) permeated much of the movement after the strike ended, and the state was able to recompose its legitimacy through the electoral process. These negative affects and their attendant material effects could have been mitigated if the networks of social reproduction (affective, emotional) had been stronger and more infrastructural. The election may not have destabilized the movement if infrastructural alternatives had been created as sustainable projects. As such, affective bonds must, to a certain extent, be concretized so that movements can offer self-created or autonomous institutions of social reproduction that exhibit solidarity and care. In this way movements can build a greater sense of collective security in struggle. Autonomous institutions of social reproduction would offer something substantive or constituent to people seeking respite from the oppressions and exploitations of contemporary capitalist structures.

Conversely, the *being-together* or “being in common” experienced in these *casseroles* and APAQs reasserted the idea that demanding the impossible was, in fact, possible. In so doing it highlighted, even momentarily, the limits of reform-based activism. Roy, again in his journal, writes of his disaffection from traditional, representative politics. “I was an idiot to have faith in this government,” he mourns. Being part of the strike has made him capable of “read[ing] between the lines of what the media says,” a skill he “acquired through the multiple discussions I had with strikers and picketers, but also with family members who asked me what I thought.”¹¹⁰ The assemblies, *casseroles* and APAQs created space for learning, for shared conversations, for discussions, and for political development. As collaborative sites they became foundations for recuperated social reproduction, in the sphere of affect, emotion, and care, because they created shared spaces for autonomous learning and the joy in being together. These assemblies generated a basis for human contact, for intimate discussion, for knowing one’s neighbours, for familial and intergenerational engagement with protest and dissent, and the creation of neighbourhood associations for solidarity, support, and care. Unfortunately, the limit of the assembly movement was, in the case of the 2012 Quebec student strike, met before the limit of reformist measures such as parliamentary politics and elections. In this sense, the battle of the student strike was lost. In the aftermath of the election, though, it has again become clear that representative politics offers obstacles to autonomous social reproduction rather than being a location for continued struggle. In this way, the strike reiterates the importance of new modes of organizing and contending with movements.

¹¹⁰ Roy, Vincent available at <http://thisisclasswar.info/roy.html> (Accessed 26 Feb 2015)

In the end, while the Quebec Student Strike did not institute these structures of social reproduction as permanent, impermeable institutions, socially reproductive elements of the strike are (and were) fundamental to the movement and to assembly movements in general, even if imperfectly enacted. In the assembly movements sure to come such socially reproductive gestures must, of necessity, be expanded. The lessons of solidarity and the networks of care persist, and can form the foundation for future endeavours. It remains to be seen how rapidly these networks can be re-constituted and how structurally sound they will be once reconvened, but as noted above several strike participants have suggested that their experiences over the course of 2012 changed them fundamentally. The promise of the assembly form remains.¹¹¹

In the years since the strike ended, several events have taken place which demonstrate the impact of assembly movements as an compositional force. These events suggest the reconstitution of assemblies and class as an assemblage, as emergent struggles move beyond the specificity of education-based struggles. According to a press release circulated in November of 2014, a new coalition of student associations launched focused on climate justice and opposing “any and all pipelines at the provincial border.” The coalition, *Étudiant-e-s Contre les Oléoducs* (ECO) immediately represented 70,000 students and planned to operate in solidarity with First Nations anti-pipeline struggles, demonstrating the heterogeneity of assemblage classes and assembly movements (newswire.ca, 2014). The coalition is also endorsed by *ASSE* and *FEUQ*. Anti-austerity struggles continue in Quebec as well, with plans for major protests in the Spring of 2015.

¹¹¹ By 2014 Marois and the PQ were out of power, the Liberals back in, after a disastrously racist campaign to invoke a “Charter of Values” in Quebec that would prohibit the wearing of religious insignia for public employees

On the 29th of November, 2012, following the election of the Marois government and the dismantlement of the strike more than 125,000 people in Montreal and Quebec City rallied against the new provincial government's austerity budget and the dismantling of the Quebec state, in a protest organised by civil society groups, health and teachers' unions, and student activists and associations, known as the Red Hand Coalition. It serves as one of the key coordinating sites of Quebec Social movements (Neigh, 2014).¹¹² A formation organizing autonomously from formal organisations and offering a more militant politics are the Spring 2015 Committees (Neigh, 2014). The Committees, whose slogan is "show us your fangs," aims to organize "effective struggles for collective and environmental rights."¹¹³ These movements, centred on climate justice and anti-austerity are connected to, grow out of, and expand the student strike. They are assemblages constructed in the spirit of the assembly – there are numerous centres of activity, autonomous yet connected, and the resistances are heterogeneous and yet able to form momentary coalitions or create projects in tandem. The breadth of organizing and the connections made between organisations and individuals – the relations of exteriority – that are on display in the lead up to the Spring struggles against austerity in Quebec can be seen as at least partially a result of the assemblage of the student strike. The coalitions, committees, and heterogeneous yet allied organizing against austerity in Quebec is a continuing expansion of those politics.

¹¹² This is discussed by former student strike coordinator Joel Pednault on Scott Neigh's *Talking Radical Radio*, available here: <http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/talking-radical-radio/2014/12/red-hand-coalition-and-fight-against-austerity-quebec>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015. The Red Hand Coalition is also discussed by CLASSE spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau Dubois in an interview with People's Voice found here: <http://www.peoplesvoice.ca/Pv01jn12compact/PV%20TEMPLATE03.html>. Last accessed 23 Feb 2015.

¹¹³ See the Printemps2015 or Spring2015 website here: <http://printemps2015.org/en/introduction/>

In the period of the strike itself, affective bonds were forged through *being together* which grounded social reproduction. This allowed for the creation of renewed political subjects, and the necessity of “care” and empathy in the concrete manifestations of democracy in the strike’s actual decision-making assemblies. The processes of *deciding together* helped to constitute another foundation of recuperated social reproduction as well as made clear the decimation of social reproduction – especially care – in representational politics as it operates today.

6.4 Deciding Together: Direct Democracy as Social Reproduction

The inability for people to adequately care for or reproduce themselves their families, or their societies indicates a crisis of social reproduction. A less visible yet still fundamental manifestation of this crisis of social reproduction is seen in the political sphere. Contours of this crisis are articulated in the growing sense amongst the population that “the state-capital nexus does not care about them in the sense that it does not promote, protect, or even consider their needs or interests” (Brown, et al. 2013: 79). As noted in Chapter Five, this realization destabilizes much popular faith in representative politics; at its worst it results in an overwhelming sense of cynicism and despair. Such cynicism can find its expression in the explosion of what the Sic Collective (2014) called the “riots of the excluded” – for example those in the UK in 2010 emerging in response to the police shooting of Mark Duggan. Less cynically, the dawning realisation of the state’s incapacity to “care” can result in the occupations, strikes, and solidarity actions that have mostly been associated with what Sic calls the middle strata or the collapsing middle strata. There are important distinctions of class composition between these various activities, as has been discussed earlier.

The Quebec student strike was certainly limited to a more privileged class stratum – for the most part students on strike were not part of an excluded class, even if they were not racially or economically entirely homogeneous. However, as Woland/Blaumachen & friends (2014) suggested, the strike merged two dynamics of struggle at play in the post-2008 cycle – both riots and “occupations” broadly defined¹¹⁴ – and was “inscribed within the range of practices varying between these two dynamics” (Woland/Blaumachen & friends, 2014: np). The class composition of the strike remained relatively static, though, holding more in common with the “middle strata” of the dynamic of occupations than with the “excluded” of the dynamic of riots, to use Sic’s (2014) formulation. Thus, while the riotous elements of the strike were important, this section will focus on the attempts to create sites and moments of agency in the political sphere, in particular through the form of the assembly.

The longstanding use of directly democratic assemblies by student unions in Quebec signifies an established engagement with participation; assemblies are a key pivot around which Quebec student movements have turned (Thorburn, 2013). They open up new sites of social reproduction within the sphere of the political. Care, and “caring about,” was rediscovered as a political project in the assemblies of the student strike. From this moment of care, assemblies as organizational formulations can begin to constitute the concrete structures that permit agency and solidarity to exist. As such, assemblies are integral to a nascent class composition considered as an assemblage.

In the remainder of this chapter I will provide an analysis of the assembly process used in the Quebec student strike. I will demonstrate how the practices of directly

¹¹⁴ The strike did not engage in long-term spatial occupations, as noted, but did “occupy” the ephemeral “space” of the university by refusing classes and thus causing campus shut-downs and closures.

democratic decision-making composed, of the students, a class wherein newly politicized subjects could attain levels of agency unattainable in other political domains. Although imperfect in both composition and outcome, the assemblies of the Quebec student strike created a foundation for considering class composition as an assemblage containing embodied and machinic elements. These assemblies also demonstrate a continuing expansion of the minoritarian current in left politics. As such, this chapter will highlight the anti-representational practices of the strike assemblies and share evidence demonstrating how they contributed to a recuperated social reproduction. I will also consider the ways the assemblies of the strike resolved some of the criticisms raised regarding the structures of the 2011 movements. At the same time, this chapter will also maintain a critical perspective, and elaborate on the limits of the assembly as it manifested in Quebec in 2012. This section is based largely on interviews I conducted with strike participants, as well as some observations from my own experiences attending assemblies and congresses of the striking students, and the neighbourhood assemblies.

The use of directly democratic and participatory methods for movement decision-making has a long history in the Quebec student movement. Francophone students in Quebec, influenced by student organizing in France, have experimented with more participatory, horizontal models since the late 1960s. The struggles of this era were often mergers between student groups, labour unions, working class organizations, and nationalist groups. Student unionism in Quebec, since the 1960s, has theoretically, ideologically, and practically, constituted students as intellectual workers. Therefore, as workers students, students are afforded the same rights to associate, organize, negotiate, and fight for collective rights. Further, participatory decision-making structures and coalitional politics informed a long-standing anti-capitalist narrative within the Quebec student movement (Thorburn, 2013).

In 2011, when the student association *ASSE* formed the coalition *CLASSE* to fight the proposed tuition increase, the only pre-requisite for joining was a commitment to open, general assemblies. The joining student associations had to use directly democratic assembly processes to make all decisions; the sovereignty and leadership of the assembly had to be respected by any elected delegates. Documents of member association, *Association Facultaire des Étudiant(e)s en Sciences Humaines* (Social Sciences Student's Association) at *L'Université du Québec à Montréal* (UQAM) note:

As opposed to representative democracy direct democracy consists in giving power to popular assemblies which decide to what extent (and to whom) they wish to delegate part of their responsibilities. These delegates must then put in practice the democratically voted mandates and must constantly return before the assembly to develop and put into effect these mandates.”¹¹⁵

This document demonstrates a philosophical commitment to a minoritarian politics as codified in aspects of the Quebec student movement. Such an absolute commitment to practices of collective agency in decision-making contributes to expansions of “care” in politics – an element of social reproduction. This commitment to participation also meant that the pace of assemblies was at times intolerably slow. As I witnessed in attended student assemblies, and as reiterated by interviewee N, decisions were discussed and

¹¹⁵ “Les raisons d’être de la démocratie directe”, AFESH.
<http://www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/afesh/spip.php?article63>

debated at length at general assembly meetings, and on not infrequent occasions no conclusions could be arrived at.

This pace – the pace necessary for deliberative democratic decision-making, is at odds with the rapid pace of contemporary, digitized life. The leaden pace of some assemblies had its benefits: it permitted necessary space for full consideration of issues and decisions and allowed for a full accounting of perspectives. As interviewee Rushdia Mehreen noted, a participatory decision-making body encouraged a strong mobilization, as people felt that they had “an informed position based on healthy debate, not based on what you read on Facebook or heard in the mainstream media.”¹¹⁶ Giving space for a variety of voices made the participants “feel empowered,” feel that they had some agency and ownership over the process, and also developed a space outside of the classroom that became “part of the learning process” of life. An insistence on direct and participatory democracy did, however, also make the student assemblies large and unwieldy instruments ill-suited to rapid changes or fast responses to arising issues. Further, assemblies as rather inflexible bodies required heroic levels of commitment from membership, an issue to be explored further below.

The *CLASSE* assemblies were structured so as to demand a high level of engagement and commitment. Student associations joined the coalition at the departmental or faculty level – for instance the Geography graduate student’s association at Concordia University became members of *CLASSE* while the undergraduates did not.¹¹⁷ These local associations were then required to hold their own, regular assemblies

¹¹⁶ Interview with Rushdia Mehreen, 6 Jun 2012. Montreal, QC.

¹¹⁷ This information acquired through an interview with Rushdia Mehreen, graduate student in Geography at Concordia. 6 Jun 2012, Montreal, QC

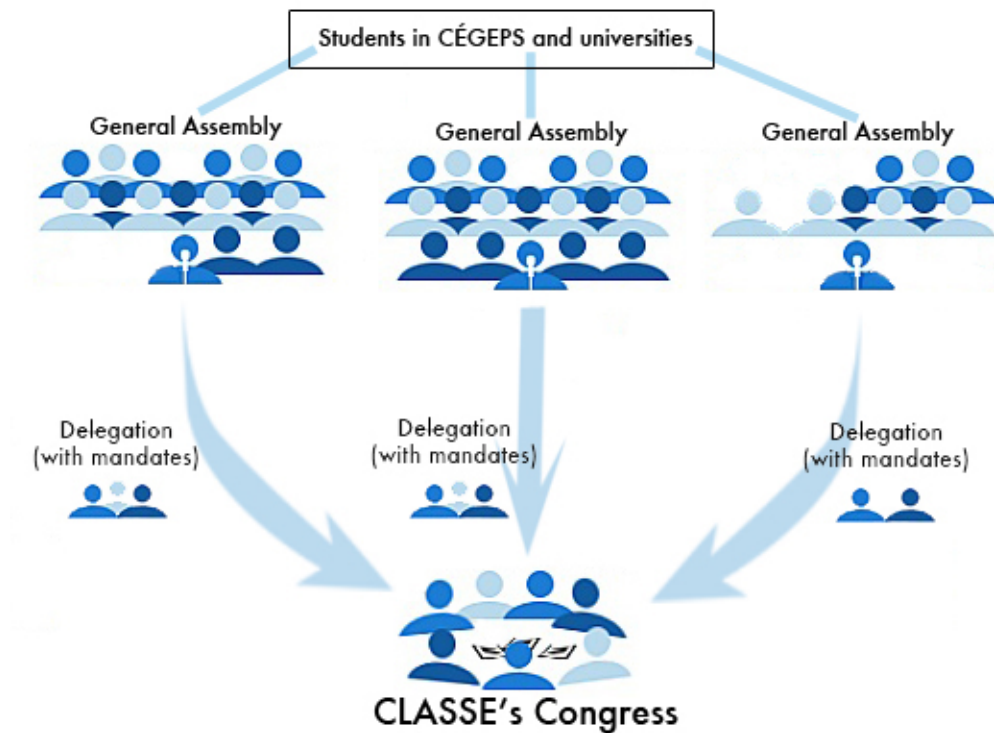
wherein all decisions would be made. To vote on an issue *in* an assembly, one had to be present and participating *at* the assembly. One could not miss an assembly and still vote on the issues discussed, nor could one send a proxy to vote, nor attend the assembly remotely (following over a live video or radio stream, for example). Stressing a necessary embodiment, *CLASSE*'s "Becoming Members" document states this clearly:

To participate in the collective decision, one must have taken part in the deliberations. Therefore, any voting procedure that would split decision from deliberation and would enable someone not involved in the deliberation to participate in the voting is considered unacceptable.¹¹⁸

This highlights the importance of embodiment in Quebec strike assemblies' processes of engagement, returning to an older narrative of class composition – an assemblage based on corporeal participation. This hinges on the human component of the human-machinic assemblage as an embodied co-presence, and perhaps demonstrates a suspicion of the digital technologies that were somewhat erroneously considered so integral to the assembly movements of 2011.

Local assemblies at the faculty or departmental level then elected recallable delegates who would participate in larger *CLASSE* congresses. A visual representation of how local assemblies are subdivided into delegates who then attend *CLASSE* congresses can be seen below, in Image 1.

¹¹⁸ "Devenir membre" on the CLASSE website. Available online at: <http://www.bloquonslahausse.com/la-classe/devenir-membre/>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.



*Image 1. Example of CLASSE assembly and congress structure.*¹¹⁹

General Assemblies at the faculty or departmental level voted on decisions to strategic and ideological questions. The delegates carried with them the decisions and votes of their membership to the *CLASSE* congress; they were asked to not vote their personal positions but to respect the terms set out by their members. The “Becoming Members” document also states this clearly, marking the existence of a collective presence embodied in the delegate:

¹¹⁹ Image 1 obtained from Bonin and Mehreen, nd.

The associations and CLASSE itself have ‘spokespersons’, certainly not ‘leaders’. These spokespersons are delegates rather than ‘trustees’ (to use the classic opposition). They can only act on the basis – and within the limits – of mandates which have been voted for in assembly and in congress. Their flexibility, their capacity to take the initiative with regards these mandates is strictly limited – and jealously monitored by the member associations and activists.¹²⁰

Once decisions were reached at the congress they were communicated to the public through official spokespersons, most notably Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois and Jeanne Reynolds. Of course, this demonstrates an ideal structure for the assemblies and congresses. As N noted in an interview, the adherence to direct democracy was not always followed to the letter. At *CLASSE* congresses, delegates coming from assemblies with less of a commitment to direct democracy (perhaps spawned by a lesser history of combative student unionism and engagement) did not always adhere to the decisions made by their memberships. She states: “Some associations that do not have the same direct democracy culture – because some associations that joined CLASSE were members of FECQ and FEUQ and they don't have this culture. They sometimes represented themselves and not their membership...A lot of associations don't have positions on this, on direct democracy.”¹²¹ Further, if a majority of member associations at the *CLASSE* congresses decide to abstain from voting, due to a lack of direction from

¹²⁰ “Devenir membre”, la CLASSE. <http://www.bloquonslahausse.com/la-classe/devenir-membre/>

¹²¹ Interview with N, 4 Jun 2012. Montreal, QC.

their membership, the vote is put aside until the next congress, and delegates bring the issue back to their assembly. That being said, structurally this organisational model emphasises a distinction between a representative and a delegate, and between a representative democracy and a participatory democracy. In representative democratic practices, a representative makes decisions *on behalf of* a membership. Delegates, as defined by *CLASSE*, take votes in local assemblies and adopt the mandates determined by membership, respecting principles of direct democracy.

In this way, the assemblies of the Quebec student strike invoked, at least ideally, two elements of social reproduction: one, the necessity of collective, active, autonomous participation in political processes; and two, the embodied assembling in space that this participation necessitates. The human-machinic assemblage was, in this case, reliant upon co-presence. And aside from being sites of care and solidarity, the assemblies also constituted a cultural site wherein participants could be meaningfully, physically, and personally implicated in politics – wherein agency in political processes could involve their whole beings. As Rushdia Mehreen noted, in representative democratic processes and in the hierarchical institution of the university students “don’t get to voice their concerns or interests or priorities; what they want and where they want to go as a whole”. General assemblies, she argues, “where you sit with your peers, where you debate and challenge each other – I think this is how we get the best out of ourselves, how we come to understand issues and develop informed positions that gives us skills and a sense of control over our lives”. Bonin and Mehreen (nd) further argue that empowering students at the grassroots in turn strengthens the movement.

This is social reproduction enacted through deciding together. The assemblage of the *CLASSE* rejected the alienating structures of the state assemblage and its representative politics. As Caffentzis (2012) noted, this representative politics is a politics

of absence; it consistently fails to demonstrate care or take into account, let alone develop, autonomous, social reproduction. The *CLASSE* mandated presence in its politics, and it was this presence in the assemblies that consistently drew students to the strike and to *CLASSE* - some 60,000 students, members of more conservative and less democratic organisations *FECQ* and *FEUQ* joined *CLASSE* to obtain more control over their own destinies (Duchaine, 2012 and Teiscera-Lessard, 2012).

Although limited to assemblies of striking students, *CLASSE* did have loftier goals. The coalition wanted to expand a conversation about participation and autonomy beyond the boundaries of the university, and their goal was to create sites of agency and autonomous social reproduction in schools, but also in neighbourhoods, workplaces, and beyond. The *CLASSE* Manifesto states:

The way we see it, direct democracy should be experienced every moment of every day. Our own voices ought to be heard in assemblies in schools, at work, in our neighbourhoods. Our concept of democracy places the people in permanent charge of politics, and by ‘the people’ we mean those at the base of the pyramid – the foundation of political legitimacy. This becomes an opportunity for those who are never heard. It is a time for women to speak as equals and raise issues that are too often ignored or simply forgotten about. The democracy we see does not make promises: it goes into action. Our democracy banishes cynicism, instead of fuelling it. As we have shown many times over, our democracy brings people together. Each time we take to the streets and set up picket lines, it is this

kind of democracy that at last breathes free. We are talking about shared, participatory democracy.¹²²

Within the confines of the university, the democratic practices – deciding together – of the *CLASSE* assemblies gave voice to students otherwise excluded from the governance structures of at least one of the institutions that affect their lives. These practices manifested a constituent politics and contributed to autonomous social reproduction. Rushdia Mehreen noted that several student participants in the Concordia Geography general assembly spoke to her of the way assemblies encouraged in them a sense of agency, brought about the formation of opinions and engagement in political processes, and developed a sense of empowerment amongst many who had previously been uninterested or disengaged. In this way the *CLASSE* assemblies composed an assemblage of a greatly expanded working class, which pivoted on questions related to social reproduction such as the cost of education, the importance of embodied engagements, and the processes of democracy.

The strike assemblies were much more successful experiments in autonomous social reproduction than those of the Occupy Wall Street movement. The student assemblies had a clear constituency; they were not open to whomever, but rather were populated by students – a group with at least some identifiable shared characteristics. *CLASSE* encouraged participating associations to organise at the departmental or faculty level, so as to keep membership numbers low and relationships intimate. Small numbers also minimised lengthy meetings and allowed all voices to be heard, encouraging active participation. While always seeking to connect with other struggles – to create relations

¹²² CLASSE manifesto is available online at: <http://www.stopthehike.ca/manifesto/> Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

of exteriority between varying assemblages – the assemblage of striking students were clear on the founding parameters of their struggle. They were engaged in a strike opposing a tuition fee increase. These parameters were permeable and connections were sought, but having this shared immediate goal gave coherency to the strike over so many months. Coherency also came from the actual procedures used during assemblies – some assemblies used Robert’s Rules of Order, while *CLASSE* adopted and adapted the meeting rules and processes outlined by the national trade union the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux* (CSN) (Thorburn, 2013) called the Code Morin.¹²³ This decision making codes allowed the assemblies an internal tension (necessary in an assemblage) but did not see that tension fall into a destructive mode, so often visible in the adherence to a loosely defined consensus experienced in Occupy¹²⁴, and critiqued in the 1973 article “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” by Jo Freeman. Those in *CLASSE* had a baseline of shared politics, as it was a coalition of choice – unaffiliated and affiliated student organisations chose of their own accord to join.

The *CLASSE* assemblage also forged relations of exteriority by using a tuition struggle as a catalyst for a class struggle. In a speech in April of 2012, *CLASSE* spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois said that when we fight the tuition increase, “let us

¹²³ The Code Morin is a Québec code of rules inspired by Robert's Rules. An adapted version of Code Morin can be found here: WWW.AECPUL.COM.ULAAVAL.CA/PDF/CODEMORIN.PDF

The adapted version that *CLASSE*'s congresses used can be viewed at WWW.ASSE-SOLIDARITE.QC.CA/SPIP.PHP?ARTICLE74. Accessed Feb 26 2015..

¹²⁴ See the debate about consensus in the Occupy Wall Street online series “To Consense or Not Consense” available at: <http://www.occupywallst.org/article/consense-or-not-consense/> Last accessed 26 Feb 2015.

not forget that this ruling class is also what we are fighting,”¹²⁵ the student strike is only the surface manifestation of this class struggle. Here the assemblies of the Quebec student strike are positioned as emergent workers organisations, where students operate as workers, and are exploited in an inequitable system over which they otherwise have little control. Because of this clear politicisation of their struggle, the student strike assemblies can be read as a minoritarian assemblage attempting to carve out space for autonomous socially reproductive possibilities. The university may be one of the sites for composing this assemblage of the global proletariat in the contemporary moment.

Despite the grand visions for democratic assemblies – beginning in educational institution and spiralling outwards to create systemic social change – real barriers in participation, composition, and capacity remained. While some of the problems plaguing the assembly movements of 2011 were resolved by the clarified structure, shared politics, and connection to movement histories in Quebec, concerns about the rather homogenous class and racial position of the strike assemblies continued, and the uneasy relationship between assembly movements and representative politics deepened over the course of the struggle. It is perhaps these limitations that thwarted the strike, in the end, and these limits must be examined in order to further develop such institutions as site for autonomous social reproduction, to continue the expansion minoritarian politics and avoid a contraction of struggles.

¹²⁵ Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois’ talk is available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74JQQf4zfg4>. Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

6.5 *The Limits of the Assembly*

As noted above, the Quebec student strike assemblages insisted on embodied presence for participation, and refused to take decisions or votes until all questions, concerns, and voices were aired. While some assemblies involved only a few dozen participants, others were large, involving two hundred students or more. The *CLASSE* congresses, too, were also large in participants' number. As Rushdia Mehreen noted, such spaces could be intimidating for newcomers to politics, or for those uncomfortable with public address, and "that that are against a popular idea can feel marginalised". Certain rules were adopted in assemblies to deal with these feelings of discomfort such as banning both applause and booing so as to dissuade intimidation. *CLASSE* congresses featured "*gardiens de sentir*" or "mood watchers" who observed the crowd and tried to intervene when people were feeling intimidated or disrespected. Further these *gardiens* tried to ensure that everyone who wanted to speak was able to, by checking in with those appearing frustrated or bored to see if they had anything to contribute. The idea for the *gardiens* grew out a feminist tradition, which sought to overturn the language and practice of dominance; they practiced an autonomous social reproduction by demonstrating care and solidarity for those who often lacked a voice.

Another concern is that the assemblies during the strike demanded a considerable time commitment from those involved. *CLASSE* congresses or local assemblies were held almost every week and could go on for 8 hours or more. The insistence on presence in order to participate was important to constituting, for the assembled students, a sense of agency and ownership over the movement and decisions made. But such an insistence on presence also leads to certain categories of students being excluded: older and lower-income students, some immigrant and racialized students, students with caregiving

responsibilities, and female students. Even just having a job limited one's capacity for the near full-time commitment the strike and its assemblies required.

While post-secondary attendance has increased in Canada since the 1970s, so too has the number of students combining paid work with education. About half of current post-secondary students work for pay, and female students participate in the paid workforce at a slightly higher rate than male students (52% of full-time female students hold a paid job during the school year compared to 41% of male students) (Marshall, 2010). Older students, particularly older female students, are also more likely to work for pay during the school year, as are students from immigrant backgrounds (Marshall, 2010). Almost 96% of student workers are employed in the service sector, often making minimum wage (Marshall, 2010). Thus, although the assemblies formed one site of autonomous social reproduction in the realm of political control, their demanding schedule excluded those engaged in other forms of unpaid reproductive labour, such as caring for children or other family members, and even those engaged in paid socially reproductive work. Despite the impressive feminist rhetoric of much of the assemblies and congresses, the vast majority of paid and unpaid reproductive labour is performed by women (Federici, 2012), and thus women are the ones most likely to be affected by these exclusions.

The assemblies were also openly admonished by some (Thorburn, 2013) for their overwhelming whiteness and for a perceived nationalism that alienated some members of racialized and immigrant communities in Quebec. The strike, even when it moved into neighbourhood assemblies and the *casseroles*, was considered too insular and limited to particular – mostly white Francophone – communities. There was limited outreach to and engagement with Haitian communities, for example, although education has always been

a site of struggle for both black and indigenous learners in Quebec and Canada (Thorburn, 2013).

As Will Prosper pointed out (Thorburn, 2013), recent studies have shown that black university graduates in Canada will find it more difficult to obtain full-time employment than whites with only a high school diploma. For this reason higher education is an important terrain of struggle for black students but the overwhelming whiteness of the student movement assemblies created a sense of alienation for several participating racialized students, which served as a barrier to further participation. The lack of diverse constituencies playing a “leadership” or spokesperson role also inhibited broader participation from racialized groups, Prosper suggested, stating that the only time he saw a student spokesperson of colour was when a delegation from the Canadian Federation of Students arrived in Montreal from Ontario (Thorburn, 2013). The working class and immigrant community of Montreal North, where Prosper works and organises, was largely disconnected from the strike and its assemblies, although the outcomes – increases in tuition fees – would perhaps affect them most deeply. The absence of racialized voices and participants is something assembly movements must address in order to form mass struggles going into the future, a critique made clearly regarding the Occupy movement by Campbell (2011).

That being said, it is important to note a counter-claim. Suggestions that the Quebec student movement and their assemblies were only “white” and “privileged” erases the considerable contributions of students of colour despite the aforementioned issues with accessibility (Hampton, 2012). Certainly critiques of the racial homogeneity of the movement are necessary; attention must be called to the neo-colonial and racist language and practices occasionally engaged in, as well as the minimal outreach and exclusions that the assemblies, often unwittingly, fomented. Confronting the criticisms

while recognising the contributions from racialized students is an important part of building and strengthening assemblies as assemblages of an emergent class composition.

For CLASSE, for the students, and for the assemblies especially, the essence of the strike was a collective action “whose scope lies well beyond student interests” and instead voices a call for a different world, “one far removed from the blind submission our present commodity-system requires.”¹²⁶ In a capitalist representative democracy human beings and the services necessary for social reproduction are subordinated to the market. CLASSE and the strike demanded a decisive break from this logic, exemplified through the assembly process. But as the Manifesto notes, this cannot be mere talk, cannot be ideas and ideals. It must be material, must be concrete, must manifest itself.

While the assemblies of the Quebec student strike demonstrated a concrete fight for the recuperation of social reproduction, they were unable to constitute longstanding infrastructures of social reproduction capable of challenging state hegemony –

¹²⁶ Text from the CLASSE manifesto, “Share our Future” available online at:

<http://www.stopthehike.ca/2012/07/share-our-future-the-classe-manifesto/>

One must contend with the issues of race and racism here as well. While CLASSE was excellent on feminist politics, its engagement with issues of race and immigration was limited, and occasionally unintentional acts of racism occurred (See Thorburn 2013 for more on this.) As well, Quebec nationalism was high amidst the striking students, with Quebecois flags waving proudly at all the demos. In this sense it is crucial to bring an anti-colonial lens to some analyses of the strike, something beyond the breadth of what this dissertation can do aside from alerting the inconsistencies between the statements of the assembled and the actions. Montreal is on occupied Mohawk territory and at some points during the strike it felt as though the movement had begun to thoughtfully engage in genuine indigenous solidarity – in opposition to *Plan Nord* for example, and demonstrators successful disruption of the *Plan Nord* job fair at the *Palais de Congres* on 20 April 2012, which linked the issues of rising tuition, ecocide, and the continued colonisation of Innu, Cree, Naskapi, and Inuit lands in Northern Quebec. Certainly more work needs to be done in connecting these struggles and expanding lines of solidarity and support, but initial steps were made in the strike and in this we can see, too, attempts at recuperating social reproduction in line with the solidarity and struggles of indigenous peoples.

infrastructures fluid, open, and transformative enough to be assemblages and not ossify into states themselves. At least partially because of their minoritarian politics, and perhaps because of their popularity, the assemblage of striking students, neighbourhood assemblies, and *casseroles* had a contentious relationship with more major or hegemonic forms of class composition, such as the official trade unions and leftist political parties. In this the strike assemblies continued the trajectory of minor current class compositions traced in Chapter Two. While obtaining the support of some members of faculty and student unions across the rest of Canada (tens of thousands of dollars were donated to the *CLASSE*'s strike fund¹²⁷) the strike assemblies were unable to join forces with the broader Quebec working class and with the official working class organisations, in fact were thwarted from doing so. In a June 2012 speech *CLASSE* spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois suggested that the strike had hit its limit in term of protest and disruption as effective mechanisms. This limit could only be transcended by obtaining the active involvement of organised labour, but other workers could not be expected to fight for educational demands alone. Nadeau-Dubois ended his speech by appealing to the broader working class movement to broaden the student strike by infusing it with their own, class- and labour-based demands (Annis, 2012).¹²⁸ In this way, *CLASSE* and the student movement attempted to initiate what they called a “social strike,” one which held a great possibility building relations of exteriority with other assemblages of the global proletariat, and for laying the groundwork for recuperative social reproduction.

¹²⁷ See The Canadian Press, 2012. and Blatchford, 2012.

¹²⁸ See also the transcription of Nadeau Dubois' speech, “Pour un front commune de lute” available at: http://www.pressegauche.org/IMG/article_PDF/Pour-un-front-commun-de-lutte_a10710.pdf (last accessed 28 Feb 2015)

Unfortunately, this task failed. This was not necessarily the fault of the assemblies or organising bodies of the strike, who reached out to labour unions and other working class organisations. Opposition to the concept of a social strike came from union leadership and was fierce. A May 28th letter from FTQ president Michel Arsenault to union leaders in the rest of Canada demanded that these leaders reign in their members and cease support for the strike.¹²⁹ The leader of the CSN, Louis Roy, argued that his membership was not ready to engage in a social strike. Both leaders urged students to take a well-trod route of bourgeois politics and continue negotiations with the government, even though it was already, at that point, clear that negotiations were doomed to failure. This points to the ossification of traditional working class structures, the refusal of union leadership to see the changed composition of the working class, and the incomprehensible faith that these leaders still hold in bourgeois politicians and their practices. Nadeau-Dubois suggests assembly movements must seize these structures from their leaders and obtain the infrastructures for minoritarian aims as opposed to for corrupted half measures (Annis, 2012). How, precisely, this is to be done still remains to be seen. At the very least the assemblies of the student strike, despite their flaws and imperfections, expanded a minoritarian current amongst their constituency and shone a light on the inability of traditional, minor lines of politics to address the political issues and concerns of the contemporary moment. The assemblies demonstrated that traditional organising methods could not defend social reproduction, let alone create dynamic, autonomous, and liberated spaces for its flourishing. As the *CLASSE* Manifesto commands: “now, at a time when new democratic spaces are springing up all around us, we must make use of these to create a new world.” It is clear that leadership heavy

¹²⁹ This information was revealed via the Recomposition.info blog and is available online at: <http://recomposition.info/2012/06/20/c-l-c-sells-out-students/> Last accessed 5 Mar 2015.

structures of previous eras are not the institutions capable of seizing these democratic spaces for liberatory means.

However, aside from the concrete “new democratic spaces”—the assemblies—what of the more ephemeral, digital concrete spaces that were devised, created, and sustained throughout the Quebec Student Strike? While online voting and digital engagement via Facebook or Twitter was deemed unacceptable by strikers, according to interviewee Jaime Barnett, the digital played an important, decisive, and constituent role in the recuperation of social reproduction at play in the student strike, in the realm of autonomous, participatory communication. There was a machinic component to this assemblage and it proved, in many ways, decisive in the recuperation of social reproduction. This was the of live streaming video technology by the Concordia University Television station. In the concluding chapter I examine the machinic component of the human-machinic assemblage of the strike by looking at the role played by CUTV’s live stream project. I analyse how it contributed to the recuperation of social reproduction in the realm of communication via the constitution of radicalised, autonomous subjectivities and a forged sense of safety and counter-surveillance to contend with state violence and spying, while also attending to the very real possibilities for surveillance and oppression that technologies like live video can unveil.

7.0 Chapter 7: Live Streaming: Communicative Assemblages of Social Reproduction in the Quebec Student Strike

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, communication is an integral element of social reproduction because it transmits information that contributes to the expansion of affect, to autonomous subject formation. In the assembly movements of 2011 and 2012 digital technologies and social media were amply used for just these purposes. The use of participatory platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were charted in both mainstream media accounts of the 2011 struggles as well as in academic research (Castells, 2012; Mason, 2012; Gerbraudo, 2012). These social media platforms played a role in supporting movement organisation and facilitated communication both between demonstrators and to the broader population. But, as also noted in Chapter Four, the most accessible communication technologies and social media sites are corporate controlled, and serve as sources value production and capital accumulation; their users are exploited as new avenues of profit. And as Lazarrato (2014) notes, capitalism utilises technological flows – machines, communicational technologies – to articulate the production of new, pliant, obedient subjects, a form of what I, following Cowen and Siciliano (2011) call “securitized social reproduction.” They also create avenues for the commodification of socially reproductive activities, or the intensification of already existing commodifying tendencies.

These same corporate technologies have also been used in an antagonistic way from the time of their creation: both the Zapatista struggle and the anti-globalisation movement of the 1990s (Cleaver, 1998) famously used the internet to supplement resistant struggles, and this counter-hegemonic use continues into the present. As Gerbraudo (2012) notes, the use of these digital technologies always necessitated an

embodied counterpart; they cannot be seen as agents of revolution on their own.¹³⁰ In both academic writing and media accounts of digital and social media use in recent struggles, the focus has been primarily on the well-known platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and to a less extent, YouTube. In this chapter I will closely examine a different form of participatory media – live-streaming – in the context of the Concordia University Television’s (CUTV’s) live broadcasts of the Quebec Student Strike of 2012. Live streaming, in this context, will be explored as a form of resistance but also as an infrastructure, that which constitutes politics, subjects, and autonomous social reproduction. I will also demonstrate some of the ways live streaming can operate as a form of surveillance that produces securitised subjects, and offer insights into how this may be resisted.

This chapter attempts a dialectical and critical analysis of CUTV’s live streaming technology as human-machinic assemblage and how this human-machinic assemblage contributes to the recuperation of social reproduction that the assembly movements, in general, address. The focus within these topics is on the ways in which the specific convergence of a media form (live streaming) and an assembly movement (the strike) circumvented state power and created sites of resistance, constructing autonomous,

¹³⁰ Contemporary assembly movements have been directly connected to the impacts of the Internet and its modes of communication and organisation – especially Web 2.0. Often, though, social media is given far too much autonomy in the development of these movements. For example, Spanish academics Jose Manuel Sánchez and Victor Sampredo Blanco have “interpreted the actions of the Indignados movement [in Spain] as a sort of *transfer* to the streets of practices of cooperation first developed on the web” and claim that “the Net was the square” (Gerbraudo 2012, 96). The logic of the Internet that has been transferred to public life, according to these theorists, includes the practices of “self-summoning, forum deliberation, consumption of counter-information, the weaving of affective and effective networks” (ibid.). As well, traits of communication such as – “cooperation, instantaneity, self-nurturing, horizontality, decentralisation, flexibility, dynamism, and interconnection” (ibid.) – are present in communication in the digital sphere, but not exclusive to it. These directly democratic and horizontal forms of communicating, organising, and understanding politics have their own vaunted history in radical movements as discussed at length in Chapter Two.

recuperated social reproduction in the realm of communication. Because digital sites of resistance have their origins in state and corporate machines and the power apparatuses they invoke, the discussion of resistance and recuperation must be had in the lived context of communications' crisis of social reproduction: discipline, control, and the surveillance apparatus. This chapter also, then, considers how we can mitigate these damaging affects without dismissing the importance of communication and digital media altogether. Given that capitalism flows through and profits from human-machinic assemblages as well, the question of recuperation is: what does CUTV *as* a radical human-machinic assemblage of communication look like? And how can we expand its revolutionary potential while mitigating its dominating affects? With these considerations in mind, the structure of this chapter begins by examining the convergence of human and machine in the live streaming broadcasts of CUTV. Then I look at the ways in which CUTV's live stream broadcasts contributed to transforming subjects and opening autonomous sites of social reproduction, particularly in the realm of communication. I demonstrate this through first understanding CUTV as a form of "participatory journalism" (Lievrouw, 2011) that serves as a counter-weight to corporate or mainstream journalism. I further argue that CUTV moved beyond the boundaries of participatory journalism towards autonomous social reproduction. I then attempt to understand the "minimally-mediated" immediacy of the live stream as encouraging autonomous subject formation, and challenging highly the mediated representations of other mediums. Finally I focus on CUTV's live stream as what I call a "counter-hegemonic surveillance assemblage," dealing with conceptions of safety, security, and surveillance on the part of demonstrators. At the same time, I will complicate this notion by examining how the live stream also potentially serves the surveillance facilities of the state. Through each of these resistant possibilities, though, runs the thread of affect – an emotional and care-oriented core of social reproduction. Affect and social media has been under theorised by

those examining the social struggles of the 2011 cycle, but is central to understanding the use of digital media as a component of a recuperative struggle for social reproduction in the Quebec Student Strike of 2012. As in the preceding chapter, this research grows out of participant observation, interviews, document analysis, and theoretical studies of CUTV's work during the strike.

Before beginning and as an aside, it is important to avoid resigning analysis to either a technological fetishism—which holds that the internet and social media are the key to successful activism in the current conditions – or a technological fatalism – which holds that technology has a only negative repercussions on social movements offering us only weak links and surface level engagements with struggle.¹³¹ Christian Fuchs has called such a resignation the “normative dimensions of technological determinism” (Fuchs 2012, 387). These determinisms proffer a one-dimensional view of technology and provide a causal relationship between media, technology, and society, assuming that “a certain media or technology has exactly one specific effect on society and social systems” (Fuchs 2012, 387). Instead, I offer an analysis of social media and social movements that is complex, complicated, and dialectical, developing critical theories of technology and recuperated social reproduction. This analysis turns on the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the assemblage.

¹³¹ The idea of social media as an organisational force leading only to weak links and thus weak activism was forwarded, for example, by Malcolm Gladwell in a 2012 *New Yorker* article. For a rebuttal based in social movements, see Nunes, 2012.

7.1 The Human-Machinic Assemblage of Social Reproduction: CUTV's Material Composition

During the Quebec student strike, the use of digital technologies and social media differed from earlier assembly movements. While Facebook and Twitter's importance was less prevalent, CUTV's live streaming was pivotal to expanding the struggle beyond the confines of the students and even beyond the boundaries of the province; the station's images found their way onto newscasts around the world.¹³² CUTV is a student- and community-run television station based out of Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, typically broadcasting via a closed-circuit TV network, DVD releases, Internet distribution networks, and public access TV channels. It is the oldest university television station in Canada, founded in 1969. Undergoing a series of changes from 2009-2010,¹³³ the station emerged into a wider public spotlight with the decision, in the winter of 2012, to obtain high definition live streaming equipment. Shortly afterwards, the station began streaming video footage of the demonstrations underway in Montreal and across the province as part of the Quebec student strike.

As a journalistic and social media form, CUTV's live stream project was imbued with affect, in its ideological aims as well as in its most material composition. This affective dimension contributed towards a developing autonomous processes of social reproduction in and through machinic technology. The composition of the live stream teams allowed affect to be created and communicated in human and machinic forms; the

¹³² CUTV workers often referred to the footage as "stolen". See Perreux, 2012

¹³³ In 2009 a referendum at the University saw an increase in the student levy directed towards CUTV (up to 34 cents per student), which effectively doubled the station's budget. This permitted the station to hire staff. Laura Kneale was hired as Station Manager in 2010 and Laith Marouf as Programme Director.

live stream created a digital location for autonomous social reproduction. In this sense, the CUTV's live stream project offers us a concrete example of the human-machinic assemblage at the heart of contemporary assembly movements.

As a human-machinic assemblage the CUTV team was octopus-like with disconnecting-reconnecting tentacles, or like a cybernetic organism with human bodies and machinic addendum. The machinic component of this assemblage was the technical equipment leased from LiveU – the apparatus provider – and the platform space purchased from Livestream at livestream.com. LiveU provided CUTV with an LU60 backpack, containing the technology necessary to stream live video to a web platform. This included encoding hardware, a Firewall cable, and a built-in wireless connection with six load-balanced 3G modems that deliver data over 3G and 4G cellular networks. The LU60 backpack contained a transmission system that was connected via a lengthy wire to any shoulder-mounted camera. The transmission system took video images, disassembled them, bonded them, and sent them over cellular networks to the Livestream platform where they were reassembled and uploaded. The backpack also contained its own modem and router, making it a mobile wi-fi hotspot, allowing again for constant connectivity but also permitting other mobile devices to connect to the Internet. The transmission system simultaneously analysed conditions in the field, and recommended the most suitable video settings for the prevailing conditions.¹³⁴

The CUTV crew and the perspective they provided were the human components of the assemblage. Although a single operator can wear the LiveU backpack and shoulder-mounted camera, CUTV chose to engage with the demonstrations as a unit, a

¹³⁴ All information about the LiveU LU60 backpack can be found through the LiveU website at www.liveu.tv

small digitally-enabled affinity group.¹³⁵ Live stream teams were assembled with a rotating cast of volunteers, each playing a different role. On the ground there were two technical positions – a camera operator and a technical operator carrying the backpack. There was also a reporter, a researcher, and a director. On occasion there was also a spotter.¹³⁶ The camera operator and the technical operator were physically connected via a firewire cable running from the backpack to the camera. The technical operator, then, was also engaged in supporting the camera operator through tight crowds or around obstacles, alerting her to changes in the street's topography or to the dangers out of the camera operator's line of sight.¹³⁷ The reporters roamed free with wireless microphones, interviewing participants and providing commentary in both official languages. The researcher investigated background information, checking the name of blockaded institutions and possible reasons for their targeting, for example. The researcher also communicated via social media with live stream viewers and sought out and shared information on Twitter.¹³⁸ Finally the director of the shoot attempted to maintain nominal

¹³⁵ Affinity groups are small groups of individuals formed around shared interests or goals. Often affinity groups operate in a non-hierarchical manner making decisions by consensus. They provide a small, flexible, and decentralised mode of organisation within larger activities, demonstrations, or events.

¹³⁶ The spotter kept apprised of the movements of police and other demonstrators, and ran errands when necessary.

¹³⁷ For example, while working as a technical operator our team was in a crowd that was attacked by police with flash-bang grenades and tear gas canisters. Along with other demonstrators, and due to the panic that flash-bang grenades induce, our team began to run, over sidewalks, through parks, and across uneven ground. While running, I had to maintain visual and physical contact with the camera operator, ensuring that he did not trip on sidewalks or tree roots as his vision was significantly impaired due to the obstruction of the camera and lens. This demonstrates the role of solidarity as integral to the operations of the CUTV live stream “assemblage” as an example of the possibility of minoritarian-becomings.

¹³⁸ Because demonstrations are frequently divided and dispersed by police, this function of social media becomes incredibly important in re-assembling after dispersal. Although not always effective (because, as will be discussed, the police also make use of these social media sites), using text and social media in this way can help isolated individuals regroup after being charged and divided by police and increase safety.

structure, coherency, and agreement between the varied parts of the live stream assemblage.

The director held a position of authority when the team was filming in the streets, making decisions on when to retreat, when to move forward, where to focus the camera, and when to return to the station. This was a rotating position, held by a different CUTV volunteer on any given night; her authority was temporary and contingent. The legitimacy of the director's temporary authority came entirely through the consent obtained in collective processes of discussion and decision-making held before hand, and she was recallable if her decision strayed too far from the collectives demands and desires, much like the delegates of the *CLASSE* assemblies. Teams discussed and agreed upon comfort levels, personal limitations, arrest-aversion, and the like prior to heading out to a demonstration so that the director could make informed decisions in the moment. Attempting consensus-based decision making in the midst of hectic demonstrations could be both dangerous and unhelpful; such a possibility was negated by the necessarily immediate response times of a live, streaming broadcast. Thus, it became imperative that one team member adopted a temporary, flexible, and rotating position of authority, which could provide coherency and political directionality to the project; but such an authority position was based on the solidarity shared amongst the broader collective – on the creation of an even momentary community of care. In this way the live stream team made as a core element of its structure the embodiment of social reproduction through affective concern and care for each other. This reminds of us of its important, embedded role in class composition.

7.2 Participatory Journalism: The Assembly of CUTV and the Recuperation of Social Reproduction

CUTV's live stream broadcasts greatly differed from most mainstream media footage (and from the live streaming footage of earlier demonstrations and riots)¹³⁹ in that the station broadcast live from the centre of demonstrations, marching alongside the demonstrators, many of whom were their peers. These broadcasts provided activists, strike participants, and the broader community with opportunities for bold, unedited reflections on the struggle by strike participants themselves; self-representation and direct communication with audiences, mediated only through the participatory technologies at hand. Images and stories of strike participants were not channelled through the political yet purportedly "objective" lens of the mainstream media.¹⁴⁰ For those unable to attend the actions, for those at far remove from Montreal, or for those impeded by mobility issues or familial responsibilities, the live stream gave insight into the motivations, ideas, analysis, and politics of the strikers and demonstrators *from their own perspectives*. These went far beyond the mainstream media's reliance on government platitudes and shocking images of rioters smashing windows or running from tear-gas happy police.¹⁴¹ This was a particular *kind* of journalism.

¹³⁹ For example, the live streaming of the Tahrir Square occupation was shot from a high angle, from a camera several hundred feet away and in the air. The same is true of the Greek riots, and the anniversary of the occupation in Egypt in 2012. CUTV, by contrast, placed itself in the very centre of the demonstrations.

¹⁴⁰ For critical analysis of mainstream media's objectivity refer to Herman and Chomsky, 1988. and Herman, 1996.

¹⁴¹ This image of demonstrators as spoiled children engaged in wanton property destruction was especially prevalent in mainstream English-language media in the rest of Canada. But, while the coverage and analysis was better in French, students were rarely able to see complex, well-rounded descriptions and debates about their struggle.

The notion of “participatory journalism” is similar to embedded journalism used by more mainstream news organisations in wartime scenarios,¹⁴² but unlike embedded reporters participatory journalists themselves have a stake in the struggles. These are invested media makers, creating new journalistic practices and alternative channels of communication using the power of emergent technologies and social media (Lievrout, 2011). The human component of the CUTV live stream team was largely made up of activists and students on strike or those sympathetic to the strike. Many volunteers were grounded within the student movement or in the broader Montreal anti-authoritarian social justice community (Jeppesen, 2012). As CUTV volunteer Jadis Dumas argues, “part of why CUTV was so successful and why it had such a strong presence and longevity was because of the confidence it had already built within the radical community.”¹⁴³ The demographic makeup of the station and the affective bonds of the CUTV assemblage allowed for the creation of bonds of trust and solidarity between strike participants and CUTV media makers. But the demographics also meant that CUTV journalists shared many of the class positions and concerns of striking students, and had inside knowledge of their aims and goals, and the actions of the movement. This departs from the usual separation that occurs between the mediated and the media makers, and as such confirms CUTV as a mode of participatory journalism. But it is the affective dimensions of the relationship between journalism and participation that ties CUTV to

¹⁴² Embedded journalism refers to news reporters being “embedded within” or attached to and given the protection of military units during armed conflicts. While it has some historical precedents with regards to interactions between journalists and military personnel, it became prevalent with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Embedded journalism has been critiqued by media professionals themselves for the inherent bias that comes with covering an institution charged with protecting one’s life. Critical articles include Cockburn, 2010 and Myers 2010. As well documentaries such as *The War You Don’t See* and *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning us to Death* also take a critical approach to embedded reporting and journalistic bias in mainstream media organisations.

¹⁴³ Interview with Jadis Dumas, 7 Aug 2012. Skype.

processes of recuperating social reproduction from securitising or commodifying impulses. Dumas elaborated upon this relationship of movements to media:

“We worked within a radical framework, and the consistency of our coverage meant that even those who weren’t yet radicalised still trusted CUTV because of the support we showed *as* individuals and *as* a group, and *to* other individuals and groups. I can think of countless examples of CUTV folks going in to support others as activists and not simply observing as reporters. It is important for me that that line becomes blurred. It is not possible – not even desirable – to separate oneself from activism as a journalist if that is your politics. I cannot imagine surviving the strike if we at CUTV hadn’t been sharing and supporting each other and other strikers as human beings first and foremost.”

Certainly, the support CUTV enjoyed from the student strikers developed out of the station’s participatory role in the struggle and the consistency of their reporting, which created a sphere of autonomous communication. But such an infrastructure of social reproduction was impossible without the specific live streaming technology that created the possibility of the live stream *as* “participatory journalism.” The necessity of both the human and machinic components of this assemblage were apparent, Laith Marouf notes, because:

We are not just trying to document things with high quality imaging, like some film collectives do, nor just be there when action happens, like some media activists do. We are

trying to create television quality production with an open bias towards people's movements, so that we offer a real, high quality, produced alternative to both the public and the private sectors. It is very clear that the private and the public arms of the fourth estate are not going to give any sort of support or even equitable voice to the students and their objectives. But our mandate is different from the public or the private. We are not beholden to shareholders, profits, or the state. We are there to represent communities that otherwise lack representation or are misrepresented in the mainstream media ... We exist to give a platform to those voices – a high quality, well produced platform that can offer a challenge to the 24 hour production cycle of huge TV stations and the quality of footage they produce. Carrying a laptop or filming with a cellphone isn't going to cut it for the quality of production we want. Citizen produced media is very important and worthwhile, but we want to produce something different – a sustainable, high quality alternative – and for that we needed to invest in the technology. (Thorburn, 2013)

The technology and volunteers of CUTV gave legitimacy to the project of the live stream broadcasts: the mobility afforded by the LiveU backpack and camera meant that the station could broadcast live from the midst of demos each night; the activist credentials and clear bias towards students opened the demonstrators up to the station. Thus the convergence of technology with human bodies created an assemblage capable of developing modes of communicative social reproduction in line with the goals and aims

of participatory journalism. Participatory journalism aims to provide insider perspectives on the struggle, thus helping marginalised communities “resist cultural domination and homogenisation,” creating and supporting “local, ‘homegrown’ media and content that better represents their interests” (Lievrouw, 2011: 146). Such was the aim of CUTV, according to Marouf, who stated that the station existed to represent communities left out of mainstream or corporate media discourses, or not permitted to represent themselves (Thorburn 2013). CUTV’s journalistic model developed the affective dimension of journalism, critiquing and opposing “the market-driven cynicism and detachment of the mainstream press” (Lievrouw, 2011: 148).

Because CUTV developed bonds of trust with strikers and because journalists were movement participants themselves, they often possessed insider knowledge and were able to access spaces, places, and voices that mainstream and corporate media could not. This element of participatory journalism contributes to freer flows of information – as Lievrouw (2011) notes, breaking through the informational blockade often constructed by private media firms. Such far-reaching breakage of information blockades is only made possible through the advances in social media technologies in recent decades¹⁴⁴ – as noted social media emerged as an important source for the latest news and aided in keeping movement participants abreast of the latest developments throughout the 2011 cycle of struggles. As with other social media platforms CUTV’s live stream used the same tools and sent information along the same globalised cybernetic flows that “transnational network capitalism” (Fuchs, 2008) travels, while attempting to communicate in an oppositional and antagonistic mode. CUTV re-appropriated the digital

¹⁴⁴ As noted in Chapter Two, *Radio Alice* was able to break through informational blockades by opening up phone lines to callers from the sites of struggle, but the reach of such free flowing information was limited by the broadcast range of the station.

tools of social reproduction (social media) to create sites for autonomous self-representation and subject formation. They created a media infrastructure in and through the assembly, and operated as an assemblage. In fact, this form of information flow – participatory journalism in general, and CUTV in particular – can be seen as an assembly itself. Emergent, bottom-up, and democratic, CUTV is representative of the human-machinic assemblages no longer simply minor, but rather increasingly fundamental to the infrastructure of assembly movements since the 2011 cycle.

Against the standard definition of “participatory journalism,” though, CUTV did not adhere to the “practices and values of professional journalism” (Lievrouw, 2011: 148), such as objectivity, balanced reporting, and professionalism (Jeppesen, 2012). Taking on the perspective of the students meant that CUTV was often unabashedly biased in their coverage. Laith Marouf, former Station Director and frequent camera operator stated explicitly that the “station favours the striking students and their supporters” and that if people want “the voice of the premier and the police and the university president amplified a thousand times”¹⁴⁵ they can tune into mainstream media. In a workshop on “Autonomous Media” at the Montreal Anarchist Bookfair, Station Manager Laura Kneale discussed the importance of bias in CUTV’s reporting, suggesting that CUTV’s bias removes the veil of objectivity from mainstream media, and reveals the biases inherent in media forms owned by corporate or state entities (Jeppesen, 2012). When CUTV presents the viewpoints and voices of students in their entirety the absence of these same voices from mainstream media becomes glaringly apparent.¹⁴⁶ Kneale notes:

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Laith Marouf, 22 Jun 2012. Montreal, QC.

¹⁴⁶ In fact, any coverage of the strike – especially in English media – was for a long time absent in its entirety. It was with the live streaming of the movement and with the heating up of tensions between strikers, the state, and police that mainstream coverage began to appear.

The live streaming is important for me because I see people having access to information about what is going on in the demonstration and why, I see people being represented as they are, not as caricatures. And when people see this, they begin to feel empowered by the media; it isn't focussed on criticisms, doesn't emphasize only the vandalism of *les casseurs*. Instead, I feel that CUTV's live streaming coverage really popularised the movement and it also forced the mainstream media to reciprocate, to improve their coverage. The mainstream media had to begin covering the strike, or else our bias would be the only one people had access to. (Thorburn, 2013)

This purposeful bias is an important, socially reproductive element of CUTV's live stream, and it is at least partially possible because of the immediacy of the technology. In the following section we will discuss what role the *immediate* – and thus marginally mediated – plays in the construction of autonomous social reproduction. The immediate is the intimate; minimally mediated at least insofar as that is possible when visual information flows through the networks and nodes of the Internet.

7.3 Immediacy of the Live Stream Socially Reproductive Moments

In a capitalist framework, immediacy contributes to the affective modes of panic or anxiety, that which Berardi (2009) and the Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C (2014) refer to as the dominant affective mode of our time. Immediacy is now “laced

with anxiety” (Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C, 2014), a perpetual present in which all are commanded to communicate and be communicable. But from the perspective of the human-machinic assemblage offered here – in the context of resistant assembly movements – immediacy proffered through CUTV’s live stream builds the affective bonds that *respond* to anxiety or panic, promoting the assertion of an autonomous social reproduction. The exhortation to communicate and be communicable becomes, through the lens of CUTV, instead an invitation to self-representation and participation similar to the participatory democracy embodied in the physical assemblies.

Invoking an autonomous social reproduction through the immediacy of CUTV’s live stream will be demonstrated in three main ways. First, that the immediacy allowed for the direct and *minimally-mediated* transmission of the *feeling* of protest. Second, the expressions of these feelings on the part of strikers, through the live stream and to viewers, allowed for self-representation from striking students. And finally, both the transmission of feeling and the self-representation of strikers both contribute to an urgency that encourages participation from viewers at home.

As Sandra Jeppesen (2012) pointed out, what was unusual about CUTV’s broadcasts, in comparison to mainstream video reporting, was the powerful conveyance of the emotions of protest that the live stream was capable of. Because they were live, and because they were close to the movement themselves – and also because they were frequently the targets of police violence – CUTV volunteers often responded emotionally to the situations they found themselves in. The intentional bias of the station and the movement-basis of the volunteer demographic also contributed to the high levels of affect that flowed through CUTV’s live stream. Because the volunteers placed themselves at the centre of protest, in the midst of striking students and in the face of police in riot gear, the video images transmitted were uniquely capable of creating and demonstrating the

affective conditions of a demonstration – often the confusion, the fear, the anger. As CUTV volunteer Mikelai Cervera notes “it is hard not to be emotional in the spur of the moment, if you are being charged by the police, if you are being kettled, if you witness something upsetting, or if you are a victim yourself.”¹⁴⁷

The rawness of CUTV’s footage – because perpetually live and unedited – transmitted the urgency of the demonstration as reporters cried for help and stumbled around confused after being pepper-sprayed by police, ran in fear from fired sound cannons and stun grenades, or gasped audibly and yelled in rage at police violence inflicted upon their friends and comrades. While controversial for some,¹⁴⁸ the expression of open and honest emotions – the impacts of being in the midst of, and part of, demonstrations created a level of honesty and transparency in the live stream. This honesty was communicated to viewers and contributed to the creation of bonds of trust. As well, the live stream transmitted the urgency of the demonstrations, giving voice to the affective dimensions of protest in ways that other social media forms cannot quite articulate. Live video conveys so much more, and much more viscerally, than other mainstream news coverage or even a Facebook post, Tweet, or YouTube uploads possibly can because it is ongoing, live, and raw. CUTV’s live video stream incorporated viewers into the demonstrations, making them *feel* what participants felt, and in that

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Mikelai Cervera, 18 Jun 2012. Skype.

¹⁴⁸ Certainly there was dissent within the live stream teams about expressing certain levels of emotion, particularly anger. On one occasion, after being attacked by police from behind and pepper sprayed, several CUTV volunteers reacted angrily, screaming at a passing collection of riot police with epithets of “pigs!” and raising their middle fingers in the police’s direction. Other members of the CUTV team were quick to admonish these actions saying that it made the station too overtly political and put the live stream team in danger of further police retaliation and attack. While emotions were demonstrated on camera regularly – and sometimes unintentionally, as is the nature of live video – it was not clear that all volunteers were entirely in favour of this.

making them participants themselves – slowly interpellating viewers into sympathisers and then actors.

But anger, fright, and rage were not the only emotions displayed through CUTV's live stream. As with the roving casseroles, live streaming the nightly marches also opened a window onto both the mundane moments of protest as well as the joyful ones. Marching for long evenings throughout Montreal could be devoid of the riotous cat-and-mouse game with the police, but the live video feed could then convey the conversations and friendships built through long collective night walks through the city's streets. The live stream could capture conversations amongst friends and was a space for demonstrators to come and share their own feelings and opinions. As well, the excitement of being engaged in acts of defiance and protest could be communicated through the live stream – both in the quiet moments and in the moments of action. The immediacy of the live stream conveyed to wide audiences the joy that Sterne (2012) and others cited in Chapter Six found in voicing dissent collectively and building movements together. Key to the recuperation of social reproduction here, from commodifying and securitising impulses, is the *diversity* of affect CUTV was capable of displaying. Alongside rage, CUTV could clearly demonstrate “the camaraderie of intergenerational communities banging on pots and pans” and give voice to “the emotional impetus behind why people feel it is important to be in the streets, how people feel about austerity, and why they believe tuition should be free” (Jeppesen, 2012: np). Beyond simple binaries of joy and rage, CUTV's live stream could demonstrate the complexity of people's emotional engagement with protest, with movements, and with media. Action-driven emotions such as the tension and panic people feel when unintentionally trapped in a police kettle, or how temporarily disorienting tear gas or pepper spray attacks can be demonstrate “how traumatising certain interactions can be, particularly when police violence is experienced or witnessed” (Jeppesen, 2012: np). These affects are not as consistently and powerfully

reproducible in mainstream media footage, nor in print or other social media venues. Live stream footage can, though, most accurately portray them.

The immediacy of the live stream also extended the ability of movement participants to engage in self-representation in the same honest, transparent, and affectively complex way to viewers. Both CUTV viewers and strike participants “felt really close to their media,” as CUTV volunteer Jadis Dumas states, because of its unedited content. Viewers at home could “follow exactly what was going on in the streets” and people in the streets “knew that if they spoke to CUTV their words would be reproduced exactly.” Much like the desire for self-representation and the refusal to accept distant leadership at play in the politics of the assembly movements, the desire for a media form that permitted self-representation and hence some autonomous subject formation was met with the CUTV live stream. Because of the commitment of the CUTV volunteers to deliver transparent demonstrations of anger, frustration, and confusion in protests, as well as joy, excitement and love, movement participants developed an overall sense of kinship and solidarity with the station, and viewers could find common ground with the demonstrators. At demonstrations people who “felt the urgency to speak their mind would come right up to us and say what they had to say” says Dumas, and people watching at home would receive this information without editing or mediation.

The immediacy of the CUTV video form also developed intimate relations *through digital technologies* between movement participants and viewers at home. This allowed overlapping between viewers and participants to develop. Viewers could begin to feel connected to both the individuals they were seeing on their screens and the struggle they were a part of, because they were privy to the unedited reflections from participants and their often harrowing experiences of the street. This connection between the assembly, assemblages, and immediacy contributes to the minor current of

assemblage politics; increasing participation and interpellating new subjects into strugglers in class-based movements. CUTV volunteer Jesse Freeston argued that the live stream actually encouraged active participation amongst those viewing the feed.¹⁴⁹ Instead of defeat or paralysis – feelings he claims are common when watching distanced, biased corporate reporting, or in other forms of media produced at a remove from the action – the live stream encourages engagement and connection. Live streaming video shows “that not only does this movement exist, but it exists *right now*, it is happening *right now*” – its action is immediate, and therefore so too can be one’s participation. This allows viewers to see that “not only are people not alone in thinking [that things aren’t right and that education should be cheaper or free] but that there is a whole movement of people stepping up to the plate,” and thus viewers can feel that their participation in the struggle is possible. The particular digital tools used in the Quebec Student Strike were a part of growing the minor current of the assembly, turning the immediacy of digital and social media from a force to rend apart social relations to a force for the bonding of and intimacy between people. The live stream itself became a site of recuperated social reproduction.

In its role as participatory journalism and through its immediacy, CUTV’s live streaming formed a human-machinic assemblage integral to contemporary assembly movements. Through the modems, wireless signals, information packets, and the live stream, CUTV’s digital body created an electronic fabric onto which viewers could stitch themselves. In this, they became implicated in the demonstrations – the live stream provided a framework for viewers’ own autonomous formation of ideas, identities, and subjectivities. This itself served as social reproduction mediated through a very

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Jesse Freeston, 17 Jun 2012. Montreal, QC.

technologically sophisticated medium. Viewers and participants alike – sometimes found in the same body – could develop more radical subjectivities, more radical politics, through seeing oneself and one’s comrades honestly, transparently, and complexly displayed. This contrasts with the anxiety and panic that Berardi (2009) and the Institute for Precarious Consciousness/Plan C (2014) claim is the primary, or even exclusive, outgrowth of pervasive digital media’s immediacy. With CUTV’s live stream, comes the solidarity, kinship, desire to communicate, and bonds of trust necessary for constituting a recuperated social reproduction in the realm of communication but also, importantly, in the realm of the concrete, the political, the lived. Connected to these affective components, the CUTV live stream also contributed to the feeling of security and safety for some activists – capacities both affective and concrete that will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

7.4 Countering Securitised Social Reproduction: Safety and Solidarity in the Counter-Hegemonic Surveillance Assemblage.

With the advance of austerity, and the increase in political struggles against it, come increases in the repressive power of the state (Bellamy-Foster and McChesney, 2009). Since the mid-1960s militarised policing has proliferated as a structural response to growing socio-economic inequalities (Wacquant, 2014), and increased surveillance and policing of social movements and activists has grown (Wood, 2014; Bellamy-Foster, and McChesney, 2009). As security is a means of governing the social, of stabilising the “general economy of power” (Foucault, 2007: 10), security apparatuses like the police are engaged in a form of *securitised* social reproduction (Cowen and Siciliano, 2011). They are engaged in disciplining the body of the population into social modes of order and obedience, provoking a crisis in autonomous forms of social reproduction. We can read

CUTV and CUTV's live stream as responding to this securitised social reproduction. The live stream project was at least partially a response to the state of *insecurity* that securitised social reproduction created for some communities, and served as an attempt to create sites and spaces for recuperated, autonomous social reproduction through solidarity and collective security. At the same time, live streaming technology opens prospects of expanding that securitised social reproduction through expanding the capacities of state surveillance, a concern we will explore further throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Policing during the Quebec student strike was a major source of contention and concern, as the repressive power of the State came down in full bore on students. Anti-protest laws – earlier enacted in Egypt and Spain in response to the uprisings there (Seymour, 2013) – gave police free reign to arrest any gathering of students, resulting in the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.¹⁵⁰ Students' ire was frequently turned on the police,¹⁵¹ and police ire was directed at students, including at CUTV cameras and volunteers capturing the violence over the live stream. CUTV staffer Laith Marouf had ribs broken in unprovoked police attacks while filming. He recalls:

“For myself, like three or four days in a row, they would attack, and pepper spray my camera and me. Directly into my eyes. At many of those moments there would be no demonstrators around or anything like that. These were

¹⁵⁰ See Wyatt and Panetta, 2012. Over 2500 people were arrested over the course of the student strike, with 1000 people arrested in one day alone, resulting in what some called the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.

¹⁵¹ Students frequently and controversially associated the SPVM (*Service de Police de la Ville de Montreal*) with Nazis, a popular chant going “SSPVM: Police politique!”

unwarranted, unprovoked acts of violence and I caught them live on the broadcast.”

It is important to consider why CUTV’s live streaming was deemed a threat to the State and its repressive apparatus, the police, during the strike. Certainly, journalists are occasionally assaulted in the operation of police actions,¹⁵² but rarely are they directly attacked in Canada.¹⁵³ It appeared, to CUTV volunteers at least, that CUTV members were specifically targeted, that their arrests and immediate release served as warnings and their unprovoked attacks appeared as threats. Why did CUTV pose such a threat to State order? Why were concerns of the live footage being streamed through CUTV’s website so great? What sort of assemblage did CUTV and the student strike create that caused such reactions from the powerful forces of state control?

In discussing policing theory Newnham and Bell (2012) note that live or near real-time footage “has significant consequences for governments, riot police, and other agencies whose every move can be uploaded for the world to see” (38). Thus, the response from the state to live video can be often violent, leading to cascading effects amongst the broader population. In order to contend with why and how live streaming can be a destabilising force to governing bodies or authorities, the remainder of this chapter will explore issues of surveillance and counter-surveillance through the particular example of CUTV and the strike. I look particularly at the ways the live stream broadcast formulated sites and spaces for the creation of what I have elsewhere called “counter-

¹⁵² The infamous case, from the 1997 APEC conference in Vancouver of a CBC cameraman getting a face – and camera – full of pepper spray is a good example of how journalists can be caught in the crossfire with police and demonstrators clash, but are infrequently directly targeted. See Peu (2000) for more.

¹⁵³ Of course, this is slowly changing. Several journalists were arrested and injured during the G20 protests in Toronto, although again this appears inadvertent as opposed to specific targeting.

hegemonic surveillance assemblages”. Further I examine how these assemblages contributed to social reproduction through a sense of security for participants and a sense of engagement for viewers. I will also examine the potential dangers in creating surveillance assemblages, whether counter-hegemonic or otherwise. To begin, though, I will define surveillance and the notion of a “surveillance assemblage” (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000) in order to move towards understanding how CUTV took up surveillance in anti-authoritarian and counter-hegemonic ways, and the potential promise that this holds.

Surveillance is the disciplining of another body through observation, real or presumed. (Foucault, 1995). Theories of media and technology are fundamental to understanding surveillance in the modern world. The human-machinic assemblages at play in contemporary surveillance has lead some theorists (Allmer, 2011; Bogan, 2006; Haggerty and Ericson, 2000) to conceive of surveillance in Deleuzian terms: as deterritorialised and rhizomatic, “resisting exclusionary control strategies” (Lyon, 2006: 13), and as itself an assemblage. In this, the “surveillant assemblage” (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000) is defined as a machine operating through the abstraction of “human bodies from their territorial settings” and then “separating them into a series of discrete flows” (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000: 605). One enters a surveillant assemblage or is entered by it, resulting in the transformation of the human body into a node of information that is then made available for scrutiny or targeted for intervention. These assemblages are reliant upon digital media, and interface between technology and corporeality. They are made up of the “surfaces of contact...between life forms and webs of information, or between organs/body parts and entry/projection systems” (Bogan, 1996: 33). The prevalence of assemblages of mediatised surveillance closes off externalities, broadening the bureaucratisation and privatisation of public space and widening the range of human activity deemed criminal, risky, or anti-social (Institute for

Precarious Consciousness/Plan C, 2014). That being said, the surveillance assemblage – like all assemblages – is a potentiality – one that resides at the intersection of varied media forms and corporeal actions. It cannot, then, be dealt with in a singular way nor can it be seen as a singular infrastructure. To combat or resist the surveillance assemblage cannot take place through targeting a specific technology or institution alone. Attempting to struggle *against* particular manifestations of surveillance is akin to “efforts to keep the ocean’s tide back with a broom – a frantic focus on a particular unpalatable technology or practice while the general tide of surveillance washes over us all” (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000: 609). Instead, resistance can come from lines of flight within a surveillance assemblage itself: oppositional uses of surveillance technologies, and a focus on the practices and activities within an assemblage formation.

Technologies do not determine their own use, but rather it is “the social or collective machine, the machinic assemblage, that determines what is a technical element at a given moment, what is its usage, extension, comprehension, etc.” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The same can be said for surveillance assemblages. While video – live and not – can be an enclosing force when taken up by the State (either through CCTV, police filming of protests, or the incorporation of social media in spying on and arresting activists, as happened after the G20), it can also operate as a line of flight. In certain contexts, live video streams can form an assemblage of surveillance that resists domination and enhances liberation – contributing to the social reproduction of movements and activists through increased feelings of safety, security, and solidarity.

But live streaming has also been heavily criticised for its provision of internal surveillance footage to the state, under the guise of being for the benefit of movements. The anti-police brutality collective WeCopWatch considers live streamers as informants, too entitled to admit that “police find their work more valuable than demonstrators”

(2014, np). The complaints that WeCopWatch have regarding live streaming of demonstrations includes the tendency to film people (and show people's identities) without their consent, call people by name, narrate an interpretation of the action, film direct actions, and narrate the logistics, tactics, and route of the group protesting. They cite a police memo referring to an "FTP"¹⁵⁴ demo in Oakland during which no Facebook, Twitter, or live streaming was permitted. This forced the police to rely exclusively on undercover agents in the crowd for any and all information. The collective suggests that if live streamers insist on participating they ought to remain a good distance away from crowds, not film people's identities, not narrate the events, and wear brightly coloured t-shirts reading "live streamer" or "informant".

These suggestions are important to consider, particularly when considered in terms of the varied dynamics of struggle that the *Sic* collective pointed to. Certainly, greater care must be taken, greater consideration given, if planning to live stream the "riots of the excluded" for example. But to suggest that all demonstrations should be tech-free, or that all live streamers are inherently informants is to imply that all protest activity holds the potential for illegality, thus imbuing leftist politics and class struggle as inherently dangerous. This often has the effect of building exclusive and shrinking movements, instead of inclusive, growing ones. It also seems to suggest that protest is something that can be, should be, or is done in secret, with only those already invested in radical politics should have knowledge of. This position seems to offer no understanding of social reproduction as fundamental to struggle – both contemporary and historical – nor how digital technologies can play a role in this social reproduction. While WeCopWatch suggests that filming one's own interactions with police is beneficial to

¹⁵⁴ FTP, in this case, stands for Fuck the Police.

movements, overall their argument does not consider how movement-led surveillance can operate as a counter-hegemonic assemblage, seeking to – as demonstrated by CUTV – provide transparent self-representation for the striking students, but also to expose and disseminate the images of police violence in order to delegitimise the repressive apparatus of the state and encourage further resistance. The concerns of WeCopWatch are important, but their critiques apply to only a fraction of contemporary assembly movements today. Consideration of their position should not destroy or undermine the potentially positive contributions of live streaming. Rather, the criticisms provided by WeCopWatch should impel live streamers to consider both the beneficial and detrimental applications of their actions, and to weigh these actions carefully so as to build best practices and expand recuperative social reproduction in assembly movements, strengthening the potential of live streams to form counter-hegemonic surveillance assemblages.

The specific digital technology of CUTV's live stream was important in contributing to its existence as a counter-hegemonic surveillance assemblage. Counter-surveillant possibilities emerged from the hardware and software of the LiveU system. As noted earlier, the LiveU backpack that CUTV used operated as tiny, mobile satellite truck, the technology bonding up to fourteen 3G and 4G cellphone networks. This meant that the signal and data transmissions could overcome attempted disruptions by State or corporate entities attempting to choke off data flows or block signals by limiting the bytes sent over one network, for example. In demonstration settings police and the state have been known to disrupt cellphone signals in order to limit communication and information

transmission or even to prevent protests altogether.¹⁵⁵ LiveU's technology bonded networks linked to or owned by several companies simultaneously, allowing more bandwidth and higher quality images, but this also mitigated the potential for orchestrated disruption by the state, by one corporate entity, or even by several. The LiveU hardware, though, also contains its own modem and router, making it a mobile wifi hotspot. This allows constant connectivity even in cellular dead-zones, or where transmissions have been purposefully disrupted. The internal antennas in the LiveU hardware – second generation and proprietary technology – also support communication, and can access a larger number of frequencies. This ensures connectivity, signal performance, long-range reception, and uplink capability. LiveU's website notes that the “new external antenna array provides additional resiliency for extreme scenarios.” The multiplicity of antennas allows the equipment to connect to a wide variety of wireless networks as well, including mobile and WLAN networks, again targeting the possible choking off of information uploads by corporate, police, or security entities.

These technical components are important; they contribute to the creation of a counterhegemonic surveillance assemblage in the specific context of the station, its aims, and its politics. It is, though, through the specificity of *live broadcasts* that the socially reproductive elements of CUTV's live stream as counter-hegemonic surveillance assemblage become clear. This is also where the problems of live streaming as surveillance assemblages arise. During the strike the live stream created the potential of safety for participants, as live video could capture acts of violence committed by the police – and in some instances it halted that violence. But, as suggested by the

¹⁵⁵ As happened in San Francisco in 2011 wherein a planned demonstration on the BART rapid transit system fell apart after the agency shut off cellphone services on the station platforms. See Chen, 2011 and Collins, 2011.

WeCopWatch collective above, live streaming also contributed to an overall atmosphere of surveillance in that everyone – including the police – had access to the live stream. It could then be used by authorities to identify regular demonstration participants, translating attendance levels into leadership roles and thus setting up individuals as targets of police harassment or arrest. This became especially problematic with the passage of Law 78 that placed enormous fines on individuals, student leaders, and student associations for planning, participating in, or even encouraging participation in illegal demonstrations.

Aware of the surveillant capacities of the stream, however, CUTV sought to undermine its disciplinary uses by taking great care in the subjects and objects of their footage. For example, directors and camera operators would attempt to avoid filming sensationalist acts like militants throwing bricks through windows or setting garbage cans on fire – while still giving a sense of the demonstration, its intensity, and urgency. This did not mean hiding the truth of demonstrations or demonstrators' acts – if windows were broken the CUTV team would not purposefully hide that this was taking place. Rather, the focus always maintained a broader sense of the demonstration in order to counteract the mainstream and corporate media's overreliance on television-friendly footage of a few masked demonstrators taking out a bank window. Further, and importantly, when demonstration participants were invited to speak on camera they were not required to provide identifying information such as a first or last name, nor did they even need to appear on camera. If individuals preferred to not have their faces shown, this was communicated clearly to the camera operator and the reporter would interview the demonstrator while the camera looked elsewhere. This is important in terms of creating the sense of safety and solidarity key to the social reproduction inhering in the live stream: strike participants know that their wishes will be respected and that they can

communicate their feelings, beliefs, and politics without having to necessarily remove the veil of anonymity that allows them to feel safe in doing so.

The decision to move away from filming the faces of demonstrators – in general but also during particular interviews – was a difficult one for CUTV. It was taken out of recognition that the live stream served a dual purpose as both a service for activists and a surveillance assemblage for police. Marouf observed that:

“In the beginning we took an editorial decision to actually film faces, as many of them as possible, to fight back against the stereotyping and vilifying of the students. We showed all ages, all races, all sexes; it humanised the students and worked really well. Once things began to get more heated, when people started losing eyes and laws were passed that could target individuals very harshly we started to give people more privacy, to protect them and ourselves.”

The sophisticated recognition of the limits of live streaming technology are important in considering CUTV as itself an assembly engaged in social reproduction. Abiding by requests to remain off-camera – and later to avoid filming faces or identifying people at demonstrations general – exemplifies the democratic and representative politics at the heart of the assemblies, as well as the care and consideration that make up the affective components of social reproduction in the assemblage. This was similar to the simple yet important ways in which assemblies address and exhibit social reproduction through their organisation and practices.

Connected to this is the consideration of the modes of resistance that are immanent to CUTV as surveillance: the ways CUTV's live stream assemblage resists dominant and hegemonic forms of surveillance and becomes, itself, a counter-hegemonic surveillant assemblage. Surveillance is a network of power and knowledge and therefore always guarantees its own resistances (Foucault, 1980); resistance is built into the assemblage. It can turn surveillance from a means of identification, normalisation, deterrence, and exclusion, into a force of multiplication, deviation, and inclusion. For instance, CUTV's unceasing, uncensored, and explicit coverage of state violence inflicted on demonstrators challenged and undermined the State's claim to legitimate use of force. Viewers watching the CUTV live feed of the demonstration in Victoriaville, for example, were exposed to the naked violence of the State, while CUTV's camera and reporters stood watch over injured demonstrators. One student lost an eye in the ensuing police violence and another was taken to hospital for life-threatening injuries – fractures to his face and skull and cerebral contusions (Shingler, 2012; Christoff, 2012). This exposure of the fundamental violence at the basis of state power reveals the state to be defined by “the perpetuation or conservation of organs of power” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 375), thus dispelling liberal notions of possible liberation through State institutions. For many this realisation was revelatory; as Marouf notes, the acts of police violence captured on camera often emboldened people at home, sending more and more into the streets.

As well, the mere act of holding a camera – particularly a camera connected to a live stream – allowed CUTV to impact police actions and intervene in police violence, thus creating a shroud of safety for demonstrators. In an interview Jadis Dumas suggested that CUTV was a “wild card” in the demos; the police knew the station was there, and wanted to avoid having acts of violence captured on film. As noted, this meant that the team was sometimes targeted and were seen as an irritating presence by the police. But Dumas reinforced the importance of this presence stating “it is crucial that we build up

this presence more, that we build up knowledge and trust networks regarding what we can film and who we can talk to so that we become even more of a resource for people.” The live stream team was often seen as a source of information by demonstrators, but also as a source of safety and support – believing that there was a chance of safety by travelling with or near the live stream team, some demonstrators wary of police violence would stay close to the camera in the hopes that this would protect them from arrest or violence. Finally, the live footage of police violence could later be beneficial for activists. In interviews both Freeston and Dumas note the importance of video footage in protecting activists in the aftermath of an arrest – claiming that friends and acquaintances have been protected from conviction by having their actions, and the actions of police, captured for posterity on film. CUTV’s live stream served as a witness to the quotidian, the mundane, but also the violent and oppressive reality of the strike, creating or attempting to create zones of safety and solidarity amongst demonstrators. The live stream contributed to security through surveillance – in this case a surveillance that was counter-hegemonic, with an aim towards liberation instead of control.

As with the assembly movements, CUTV as a station was not attempting to mimic, recreate, or obtain state power. Rather, the attempts of the live stream were to displace or decompose the power of the state while composing constituent power and creating sites of social reproduction. Of course, the responsibility for destabilising, disassembling, and challenging the despotic face of majoritarian power and constituting autonomous social reproduction cannot be held by CUTV alone. The station was but one part of a larger assemblage – the student movement, for example, and the broader assembly movements in general – which comes together and dissipates, acts and reacts situationally. CUTV’s live streaming broadcasts were, in their criticality, operations *against* the state and in effect destabilised the state and its apparatuses. This destabilising opened up possibilities for resistance and constituency in the realm of social reproduction

– the decomposition of capitalist and statist forces – while also opening up dangerous possibilities for the recomposition of majoritarian power. Benjamin (1986), in his *Critique of Violence*, recounted the ways in which strike actions, as acts, called into question the State’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force, thus destabilising or even decomposing the State. But it was through this very process of decomposing that the State was able to recompose, reconstitute its legitimacy, and incorporate the “right” to strike into the legal paradigm. Possibilities for autonomous social reproduction open up, but they can be simultaneously foreclosed upon. Similarly, the State has not found the power of the student movement nor the streaming video of CUTV an insurmountable impediment to reconstituting itself as an authority. Instead the student movement was thwarted by an election call, the removal from power of the offending political party, and the election of a party that trumpeted its support for the students *until* the election, at which time politics (and state power) as normal was restored.

As well, troubling possibilities persist regarding state surveillance with new technology, social media (especially video footage), and political demonstrations, as the WeCopWatch collective noted. Machines and technologies, as Hardt and Negri (2000) rightly observe, are not neutral entities, not blank pages upon which we can write whatever script we choose. They are rather “biopolitical tools deployed in specific regimes of production, which facilitate certain practices and prohibit others” (406). The exploitation of social media sites used by political activists is not a tactic that should be underestimated, as policing theorists Newnham and Bell (2012) assert. Thus, the risks as well as the possibilities of any human-machinic mergers in the processes of social reproduction and the expansion of the assembly form must be taken into account and carefully considered. In the examples provided above we can see the ways in which surveillance assemblages both enhance autonomous social reproduction and reinforce repressive forms of social reproduction, with specific reference to the practices and

products of CUTV's live stream. From the station's perspective (on the ground and allied with marginalised communities), its creation of transparent sites for autonomous self-representation, and the veil of safety it created through filming and broadcasting the violent acts of the police, the live stream was able to operate, even temporarily, as an infrastructural zone of social reproduction. It expanded our understanding of assembly movements (and of liberation) as always already contending with and being made up of human-machinic assemblages. The project CUTV began in 2012 has paused, perhaps ended, but it opened up new avenues for resistance and new machines for liberation that activists can pick up, carefully, going forward.

8.0 Conclusion

This dissertation begins with a hypothesis. Supported by historical evidence it suggests that the *Operaismo* theory of class composition has always been subtended by a minor current – a mode of organising that was autonomous, unaffiliated, and leaned towards the horizontal. This minor current composes its own class formations, finding its technical basis in reproductive labour; the political compositions strove to address concerns of social reproduction. I call this minor current composition an assemblage – a human-machinic assemblage, even, recognising the role of various technologies in cohering the class – that forms through relations of exteriority and internal tensions. Assembly movements are what I have called the political composition of this minor current assemblage – in whatever specific form they take in particular historical moments. I traced these assembly movements through three distinct yet overlapping instances in 20th century history – the 1905 Russian revolution, the 1919 Turin factory councils, and the Hot Autumn and long years of struggle in Italy in the 1970s. Each chosen historical instance aligns more or less closely to the three phases of class composition as outlined by Negri (1991) – the professional worker, the mass worker, and the socialised worker.

In these three historical instances traced I have defined the major class composition and attempted to highlight the co-occurring minor current. I also sought to demonstrate how, in each instance, the minor current swelled a little, growing ever more powerful, with movements focussing ever more closely on issues of social reproduction. In the contemporary era of assembly movements, I argue, this minor current has expanded further, subsuming more and more of the political space. Across the many revolutionary moments of the 20th Century, the minor current has slowly plotted a trajectory from the background closer to the foreground; but it has still not attained

hegemony of social struggles. Yet while by no means the sole mode of organising political, social, and labour movements the assembly has had structuring effects on the ways that politics is done. An ideology of participation, direct democracy, and engagement influences – whether cynically or not – all sorts of other political processes. These can be seen in examples as diverse as the increases in shop-floor organising meetings and wildcat strikes in officially unionised workplaces, such as at Canada Post (Gage, 2015), the cross-sectoral and cross-workplace organising and strikes in non-unionised workplaces (Guh, 2014 and Rushe, 2014), and the discussion about or use of processes like participatory budgeting at the municipal levels of governance.¹⁵⁶

Although this dissertation traces assembly movements mostly throughout Western Europe and North America, they are not limited to these regions, nor do they develop solely from the politics pertaining to these geographies. Socially reproductive concerns have come to the fore in a number of important actions across China, for example. One of the largest strikes in the country in several decades took place in 2014, and was carried out largely by migrant workers over the issue of pensions – a socially reproductive service of the state.¹⁵⁷ In December of 2014 massive teachers' strikes began to roll out across northeast China. These strikes were over wages but also over pensions and pension payments.¹⁵⁸ Their labour – education – was rooted in the reproduction of the social, of life and of labour power, and one of their key issues was the defence of subsidized socially reproductive services by the state. More explicitly assembly politics can be seen as structuring the recent histories of *horizontalidad* in Argentina (Sitrin, 2006), of Bolivian social movements operating as anti-state forces even while supported by and

¹⁵⁶ See the PBW2 website at <http://www.pbward2.ca/> last accessed 1 Mar 2015.

¹⁵⁷ See *The Economist* 2014

¹⁵⁸ See *China Labour Bulletin* 2014

through the state (Zibechi, 2010), and of the struggle for autonomy in the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela (Reyes, 2012).

The contemporary movements I focussed on in this dissertation – Occupy Wall Street, the Indignados, the Egyptian Revolution in Tahrir Square, and primarily the Quebec student strike – can also be seen as assemblages expanding a minor current, and each was centrally concerned with recuperative responses to crises of social reproduction. These contemporary movements also formed sophisticated human-machinic assemblages; they deepened the convergence that has always existed between people and technologies, between movements and media of communication. I sought to connect two important realms – the technological and the corporeal – in this project, dissolving neither into simply a technological fetishism or a utopian return to pure embodiment, pure corporeality. Following Gerbraudo (2012) and Mason (2013) I stressed the importance of communicative technologies to the recent recomposition of assembly movements but, following Silvia Federici (2012) (and later Hardt and Negri, 2012) I maintained a simultaneous focus on the embodied, on the sharing of space in common that was a key component of each of the 2011-12 struggles.

Despite the optimistic tenor of this dissertation, it must be admitted that assembly movements have, thus far, been ultimately unsuccessful and have in many ways appeared ephemeral. Occupy has fallen mostly silent in the face of increasing inequalities, Spain continues to implement austerity measures in the face of popular protest, Tahrir has been an unmitigated disaster with democratic elections followed shortly by a military coup, and Quebec's tuition is not yet free (in fact it will likely be indexed to inflation.)¹⁵⁹ That being said, while the spectacular elements of these movements have burned out, sparks of

¹⁵⁹ see The Canadian Press, 2013.

assembly struggles remain and the thread of social reproduction is tugged along at various circulating points across the globe.

For example: In Spain an Andalusian mayor (and member of the Andalusian Workers Syndicate, coordinated raids on supermarkets to provide those most impacted by the recession with free rice, pasta, sugar, oil, and other necessities (Sangra, 2012; Govan, 2012). Furthermore in October 2014, after a series of student and worker strikes in response to the ongoing economic crisis and the continuing implementation of austerity policies by the Spanish state, the feminist collective *Vaga De Totes* (Everything Strike) organised a “caretakers strike”. This strike brought together over 600 feminist and community groups for a massive demonstration in Barcelona. While labour-related general strikes have been common in recent years, the collective notes, women’s issues are rarely acknowledged. Left of out of the conversation are issues pertaining to social reproduction and reproductive labour, including (roughly translated from their website) “compulsory maternity,” violence against women, labour regulations which deepen gender inequalities, and the shrinking of state budgets around socially reproductive services which result in increased hours of unpaid care work for women.¹⁶⁰ On their website, *Vaga de Totes* claims they are organising an even bigger care strike and feminist protest for the spring of 2015. The socially reproductive recuperations of the Indignados assembly movements continue in Spain, expanding the assemblage of class composition further, engaging in expropriations and work stoppages at the point of reproduction.

In the United States, socially reproductive movements have also continued, and many of the critiques around racial composition of the Occupy movements have been met in these. Primarily centred on the claim that “Black Lives Matter” after the highly

¹⁶⁰ See the Vaga de Totes website available at: <https://vagadetotes.wordpress.com/>

publicised police executions of black men in public places in the summer and autumn of 2014, emerging anti-police violence movements also expand a minor current seeking to engage in and understand class struggle outside of the confines of point-of-production labour markets. Instead such movements challenge racist narratives that hold together a white supremacist capitalism and work to decompose the institutions and structures – including but not exclusive to capitalism – that denigrate and destroy black life. Although less explicitly class-based than other recent struggles, these demonstrations add to important racialized understandings to the class composition assemblages. They are socially reproductive in that they encourage participation from previously unpoliticised and highly marginalised subjects, in fact are led by these populations, and the movements have circulated organically from one end of the country to the other. In many ways the protests and organising emerging out of #blacklivesmatter seem the anti-Occupy, led as they are by disenfranchised black communities, but operating with the same non-partisan, unaffiliated, and autonomous logics – at least in some circles. Finally, as noted in Chapter Six, student organising in Quebec has expanded beyond tuition and into anti-austerity and ecological struggles. Opposition to pipelines connect the ecological movements in Quebec to anti-pipeline struggles across Canada, in Indigenous communities, and into the United States. The diversity and capacity of these protests grows out of the successful models of struggle that the 2012 student strike laid out.

Coalitional possibilities also exist in the present moment between the varying dynamics of struggle that Woland/Blaumchen & friends (2014) laid out, and other movements exist that reproduce and maintain the minor current of autonomy discussed in this dissertation. This is especially the case with the non-traditional labour struggles that exist concurrently with assembly movements, including the Domestic Workers United (DWU) campaign and the waged labour struggles taking place in socially reproductive sectors. These include the Fight for \$15 movement to raise the minimum wage for fast

food workers and the OUR WalMart organizing for increased protections and decreased precarity for low-waged retail workers.

In New York City Domestic Workers United, for example, may operate through what appear to be more “minority politics” – affirming recognition from the state for domestic workers *as* workers and fighting to obtain fair labour standards *for* those workers.¹⁶¹ But DWU refuses a purely identarian and representative politics. Instead they recognise the assemblage of parts that make up domestic workers and see their struggles as tied to the struggles of “all workers, poor people, migrants, immigrants, people of the global South and all oppressed communities” (Domestic Workers United, 2012: 355). They tie contemporary domestic work to historical legacies of slavery, and recognise that workers are often undocumented, fleeing the devastation of globalisation in their home countries, and responding to varied crises of social reproduction that neoliberal policies, free trade agreements, and structural adjustment programs have wrought. DWU and the movement to obtain legal labour rights have been “led by immigrant women of colour, many of whom were undocumented” (Federici, 2012: 361).

As such, what appears as solely a struggle around labour rights enters into compositions with similar struggles of oppressed people around immigration and racism. These struggles form assemblages; their focus beyond workplace politics or party-based organising and their situatedness in the expansive lives of workers marks them as assembly movements. They are movements of convergence, pivoting on social reproduction, unaffiliated with majoritarian aims or processes. As organiser and domestic worker Priscilla Gonzalez notes, the strategic heart and soul of the Domestic Workers’

¹⁶¹ See “Domestic Workers United” in *The Commoner* 2012 Issue 15.

United campaign was to build “a cross sector coalition of multiple voices” and a “broad enough frame that [other workers] could meaningfully participate” (Federici, 2012b: 364) while still having the movement anchored in the voices and struggles of domestic workers themselves. The coalitional aspects – invoking the support and participation of other workers and other actors in democratically-based grassroots movement – helps us to understand what a political theory of assemblages might look like, and how we can understand class composition as assemblages with varying component parts.

The more specifically “labour” struggles of low-waged workers, on the other hand, do not limit themselves to a singular identity grouping, work site, or issue, but rather tie together low wage workers across the retail sector. They do not insist on unionisation as a requirement for involvement – in fact, individuals can and do make up the majority of OUR Wal-Mart, and can remain mostly anonymous.¹⁶² They invoke participation from actual workers and encourage agency and ownership over the movement’s direction and strategy. These struggles encourage the creation of bonds of solidarity across lines of race and within the class – forging the bonds of an autonomous social reproduction. Although not assembly movements, they similarly take on oft-ignored subsets of the working class to organize in creative and participatory ways. As well, they too are centred on social reproduction – both as the technical basis of their labour (they are engaged in socially reproductive activities) and as the object of their struggle (they struggle against their incapacity to reproduce themselves and their families on the wages they earn and the hours they work).

¹⁶² See the OURWalmart campaign website at <http://forrespect.org/>

As service workers (retail and food) form the largest growth sector of the contemporary economy, ranking first among all sectors in total share of employment in Canada, for example – making up 1,907,605 workers¹⁶³ and as the majority of retail workers are women it is important to see these struggles as assemblages on the political terrain to which assembly movements must learn to relate. Analysing these distinct movements within the logic of class composition, and their relation to assembly movements, will be important because of the potential magnitude of these struggles. Collectively they are changing the shape and face of contemporary politics – shifting the political composition of emerging components of the North American working class and highlighting the vast inequalities that develop from the current technical composition of capital. This is the minor current expanding; these are the political compositions that emerge.

Another dynamic that authors in the journal *Sic* point to is that of the “riots of the ‘excluded:’” confrontations made up of “those who are radically excluded from the official circuit of surplus value production” (Woland/Blaumachen & friends, 2014) and whose political desires cannot be captured within the rubric of demands. As Woland/Blaumachen note, demands are meaningless because their inclusion is impossible in contemporary capital’s logic of expulsion¹⁶⁴ and exclusion. They focus on

¹⁶³ Statistics Canada “Portrait of Canada’s Labour Force” 2011 <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011002-eng.cfm>

¹⁶⁴ Two key communisation theory journals, *Sic* and *EndNotes*, have contemplated the logic of expulsion at work in the contemporary capitalist economy. *Sic* notes that expulsion is a process of radical exclusion from value creation (the possibility of being labour-power). *EndNotes* suggests that those expelled from economic productivity remain in a “mutually-constitutive relation with that which abjects them” (PAGE) and that such expulsions are an “integral aspect of the general regime of labour insecurity”. Saskia Sassen, outside the sphere of communisation, also discusses a logic of expulsion which underwrites contemporary capitalist circuits. In this she is referring to the experiences of income inequality, unemployment,

the division between what I call assembly movements and what they call the dynamic of riots. They argue that a collapsing “middle strata” populates assembly movements, and this strata has the potential to turn against the excluded classes. It is the case that the populations involved in assembly movements are likely to engage in such a politics, leading to an expansion of the fascist creep we are seeing with the growth of working class parties like UKIP in England and groupings like the English Defence League and the Jewish Defence League to name just three examples. Certainly, fascism and the potential for a genocidal conflict abetted by the re proletarianisation of the “middle strata” against the excluded classes (a largely racialised category) is a terrifyingly real possibility in the contemporary conjuncture, with perhaps groups like ISIS and their capacity to recruit disenfranchised youth from the West a chilling foreshadowing of politics to come.

That being said, I find the clean division of “riots” from assembly movements or labour struggles to be problematic, as well as the class distinctions between the “excluded” vs. the “middle strata”. In my mind this does not reflect adequately the class compositions at play in the streets and squares. While the organising of domestic workers, retail workers, and fast food workers (composed of many of those otherwise operating within the “excluded” category) was not central to the projects of “assembly movements,” there were crossovers and convergences between these demographics.

displacement, mass incarceration, and environmental destruction which must be understood as more than simply poverty and injustice but rather as expulsions which derive from the financial instruments that drive a contemporary capitalist economy. For Sassen expulsion refers to the destruction of the very things that make life possible.

Furthermore, the “assembly movements” that found their outlet in the occupation of public space were often joined, in Canada, by indigenous people holding down “sacred fires” and homeless people with few other locations for supported social reproduction – certainly two subjects for whom exclusion from circuits of official capital flows are a reality with a long and painful history. There certainly are differences in demographics between the political moments, but it would be inaccurate to say that these lines are firm. Certainly a large proportion of the “assembly movement” participants are not “structurally excluded” but that demographic does exist within them, and people from those demographics persistently try to draw linkages between the “excluded classes” and the “middle strata” struggles. See, for example, the way Will Prosper articulates attempts to build coalitions and alliances between the student struggle in Quebec and the Haitian community in North Montreal (Thorburn, 2013) and how Rosalind Hampton (Thorburn, 2013) suggests a racism in the way people of colour were erased from the work of organising the strike in the many repeated critiques of the extraordinary whiteness of the Quebec student movement. The excluded, or what Sassen (2014) considers the expelled, are but one part of a predatory system of contemporary capital that has devastating consequences even for those who think they are invulnerable. Further, as Brown et al (2013) noted, lines of affect, care, and social reproduction cut across these seemingly disparate dynamics – the riots, labour struggles, and the assemblies – infusing each with logics of care. Each of these dynamics of struggle are responding to a crisis of social reproduction most demonstrably impacting those disregarded by states, nations, and corporation, those not part of the economic and social elite.

The recomposition of the class and class struggles continues its circulation elsewhere in the world. In the spring of 2014 protests began at five factories in the northern Bosnia-Herzegovina city of Tuzla. The five formerly state enterprises had been privatised and stripped of assets so that workers were left without jobs and benefits,

therefore unable to access health care and other socially reproductive services provided through the state. As protests raged four regional governments resigned and communities across the country began to institute popular assemblies called plenums, which would provide infrastructural bodies for the protests to move into the next phase. While these plenums have since petered out, replaced by election processes, their implementation suggests a political zeitgeist is in the air.¹⁶⁵

Even amidst the terror of battling crypto-fascist Islamic State (ISIS) militants a hopeful story appeared about the northern Syrian town of Kobane. A Kurdish community, they still stand despite months of attack by ISIS forces, offering what is arguably the best chance for left politics in the region. In a piece in *The Guardian* in October of 2014, David Graeber asserted that the northern Syrian Kurdish autonomous region of Rojave and the canton of Kobane in particular offers the best hope for a revolutionary left politics in the region. Kurdish communities in Rojave drove out Assad's forces in 2011, in the midst of the Syrian civil war, and then set about rebuilding their community as an experiment in participatory democracy. Should it survive and be successful the example of Kobane could perhaps stand as the full swelling, the coming to hegemony of the assembly movement, the assemblage as the emergent class composition.

Kobane uses popular assemblies as decision-making bodies, and chooses councils for the different municipality in the region. Councils are selected with ethnic and gender balance. Even the military features a People's Defence Force and a parallel Women's

¹⁶⁵ See Bosnia-Herzegovina Protest Files website at <http://bhprotestfiles.wordpress.com> and the short Global Uprisings documentary "Bosnia and Herzegovina in Spring" available at <http://www.globaluprisings.org/bosnia-and-herzegovina-in-spring/>

Defence Force – what Graeber (2014) calls a “feminist army.” The experiment in Kobane seeks to build self-governing communities based in principles of direct democracy and to develop a democratic co-operative economy. Their future struggle is to dissolve the bureaucratic nation state and create a model for a worldwide movement towards democracy. Although the future of this experiment remains to be seen – Kobane is under direct attack from ISIS forces and has limited support from outside the region – the implications of its emergence are clear: experiments in new forms of organising are growing, in line with the shifting dynamics of the contemporary assemblage of class composition. While previous attempts have ultimately failed, and this one might too, each new attempt pushes the limits of assembly movements and assemblage politics further.

Therefore, a key lesson from this dissertation is this: while we can sketch the outlines of a new class composition centred on a global proletariat whose technical – and political – basis resides in social reproduction, what we see emerging today is just a preliminary sketch. The assemblage of class composition with the assembly as its political form offers to us a means for devising something perpetually new. Social reproduction is important to this experimentation, and is increasingly recognised as such by scholars and activists. Its deeper incorporation into theories of class struggle and class composition might help inform future models of engagement and resistance in workplaces, communities, and beyond.

More research is required both with regards to the history of class struggles and their connection to social reproduction as well as to the ways that contemporary technology shapes social reproduction to create states of security and surveillance. In particular I am interested in exploring the intensification of a securitised social reproduction through technological devices at work in specific institutions and sociotechnical systems, and how these securitized forms can be resisted. As well,

considerably more investigation could be done to understand in greater detail some of the flaws that reside within the assembly model, and what aspects of assemblage theory may be impediments to resistant theorising. In a post-strike interview Quebec activist Eric Martin (Fidler, 2013) decried the assembling-disassembling-reassembling process of the Quebec student movement, a process central to the theory of assemblages. The history of Quebec student struggles, he said, is that movement infrastructures like *CLASSE* are created for the strike and dissolve immediately after. The temporary coalitions – assemblages – created by movements come with explicit provisions for their dissolution at the end of the strike. Permanent structures are needed, Martin argued, so that people are not left in a vacuum when the strike is over, or when they age out of the student movement. The students, he said, have to re-form coalitions each time an adversary appears, wasting precious time and energies (Fidler, 2013). Struggles become disconnected from building long-lasting projects or institutions for the left. Further research examining the after-effects of the movements charted, what their outcomes were, and what has been left in their wake *in their specific geographical locations* would prove interesting to a process of developing a better understanding of future prospects for assemblage politics and assembly movements.

Continuing in a theoretical vein, alongside Deleuzian theories of assemblages my work gestures to Donna Haraway's cyborgs to understand the convergences of humans and machines in this wave of struggles. Future research could revisit Haraway's cyborg manifesto, using it as a framework for investigating the specifically socialist-feminist politics at play in this cycle of struggles. Using Haraway's cyborgs to analyse emerging theories such as left accelerationism (Williams and Srnicek, 2013) could bring new postulations to both the understanding of assemblages and assembly movements, and to a feminist reading of accelerationist politics. Furthermore, Haraway's cyborgs bring entirely new, non-essentialised understandings to the concepts of social reproduction.

Finally, when this dissertation was initially developed live streaming, as a practice in movements, was rather new. The technology was still large and often clumsy, although the first cell phone apps were becoming available. Now, live streaming is far more commonplace, with a variety of cell phone applications available for individual live streamers. Coherent structures such as CUTV backed by large and wealthy institutions such as the university are less necessary for the proliferation of live video streams to the Internet. This opens up a host of possibilities but also a raft of problems. Some of the concerns outlined in Chapter Seven by the WeCopWatch collective could be considered in future research into the machinic components of contemporary class composition assemblages. What are the benefits and what are the barriers that emergent technologies pose? At which precise moment and with what precise usage does a technology of autonomous, recuperated social reproduction transition into a tool of surveillance, a technology of securitised social reproduction?

The present moment holds us at an impasse. We assume that assemblages will save us or that technology will fix us. Varied paths lay before us, leading us to either autonomous and liberated or authoritarian and oppressive futures, or even some convergence of these oppositions. Old models of struggle, organisation, and resistance are not dead – as some may suggest – but they must be revisited and reconsidered in light of the present. If seeking to find pathways to the future in our collective past, we must engage in archeological investigations that remain attuned to the minor current threading its way alongside the more hegemonic forms of anti-capitalist resistance. Furthermore, we must carefully and critically assess the terrain of the contemporary moment. We must pull out the strands of organisation and struggle that reside on the minor current and aid in the expansion of these struggles. Within these movements we must work to develop our politics so that they enhance autonomy and inhibit oppressions. We must centre our analysis on the most marginalised actors, on an anti-capitalism inflected with anti-

colonialism, anti-imperialism, feminism, and on the processes of social reproduction that permit us to return, each day, renewed and reinvigorated to the struggle.

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=[SECTION 1 PROJECT REGISTRATION

1.1	Project Title
	Virtual and Physical Assemblages: Multitude, Immateriality, and Class Composition in New Workers' Movements.

1.2a	Anticipated Project dates	Start Date	June 1 1 st , 2012
		Completion Date	August 31 st , 2012
1.2b	While all protocols are dealt with as quickly as possible it is helpful to know in advance about pending agency deadlines. Indicate if there is a specific funding agency deadline by which REB approval is required.	Pending deadline date	July 1 st , 2012

1.3	Principal or Lead Investigator, or Sponsor of Student's/Visiting Scholar's project at this site. (PI must be a faculty or staff member at UWO or affiliated institutions. Sponsor for student or resident projects must be the faculty advisor. Sponsors of Visiting Scholars should be the Chair, Director or Dean of the unit where the visitor is primarily located)		
	Name	Nick Dyer-Witthford	
	Title & Position	Associate Dean	
	Degrees	PhD	
	Departmental Affiliation	Faculty of Information and Media Studies	
	Mailing Address	xxxxxx	
	Telephone	xxxxxx	Fax xxxxxxxx
	Email	xxxxxxx	

1.4	Signature of Local Principal Investigator or Sponsor of Student/Visiting Scholar attesting that:
	<p>a) all co-investigators have reviewed the protocol contents and are in agreement with the protocol as submitted;</p> <p>b) all investigators have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (1998) and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein;</p> <p>c) the investigator(s) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and</p> <p>d) the Principal Investigator will notify the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner;</p> <p>e) the study, if funded by an external sponsor, will not start until the contract/ agreement has been approved by the appropriate university, hospital or research institute official.</p>
	<p>Signature _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>

1.5	List all local co-investigators and collaborators. Include research personnel only if they have a significant role in the conduct of the study. Expand chart as required.		
	Name	Title/Position	Role
	Elise Thorburn	PhD Candidate	co-investigator

1.6a	Is this a multi-centred study?	YES	
		NO	X
1.6b	If YES, who is the Principal Investigator or Project Leader for the entire study? Provide name and contact information.		
⇒			

1.7a	Is this a student project? i.e. Is completion of this project an academic requirement for a course or degree?	YES	X
		NO	
1.7b	If YES, please describe the course or degree. (e.g. name of course, Honours BA paper, Masters or Ph.D theses etc) and the student's role in the research (e.g. questionnaire design, data collection, interviews, data analyses etc).		
⇒ PhD dissertation. Student will design questionnaires, conduct interviews, collect data, and carry out data analysis.			

1.7c	If YES, Signature of Student attesting that they:
a) have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein;	
b) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and	
c) will notify their supervisor and the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner;	
<div><div>Signature</div><div>Date</div></div>	

1.7d	Is this a Visiting Scholar's project?	YES	
		NO	X
1.7e	If YES, Signature of Visiting Scholar attesting that they:		
	a) have read the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the UWO Guidelines on Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and agree to abide by the guidelines therein; b) will adhere to the Protocol and Consent Form as approved by the REB; and c) will notify their Sponsor and the REB of any changes or adverse events/experiences in a timely manner;		
	Signature	Date	

SECTION 2 FUNDING

2.1a	What is the status of the funding or support for this project? <i>The NMREB strongly recommends waiting to apply for ethics approval until after a project submitted for funding has received notification that the funding has been approved. It is very wasteful of the researcher's and the REB's time to prepare/review a protocol that may not proceed or may require significant revision and re-review as a result of receiving less funding than anticipated.</i>	Funding not required	X
		Application Pending	
		Funded	
		In-Kind contribution only	
	If Application Pending; Funded; or In-Kind Contribution fill in chart below.		
2.1b	Name of funding agency(s) or sponsor(s)		
2.1c	Name of investigator receiving/applying for funding		
2.1d	Date submitted for funding.		
2.1e	Agency/sponsor reference number if known		
2.1f	Title as submitted to funding agency(s) if different than title of this ethics submission		

SECTION 3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Complete each section under the appropriate heading. Be succinct and adhere to the page limitations. DO NOT DIRECT THE COMMITTEE TO 'SEE ATTACHED'. DO NOT USE TEXT COPIED FROM FUNDING APPLICATIONS OR STUDY PROTOCOLS UNLESS IT PROVIDES A SUCCINCT SUMMARY OF THE METHODOLOGY APPROPRIATE FOR ETHICAL REVIEW AND DEALS WITH ETHICAL ISSUES. Copies of detailed proposals submitted to a funding agency or sponsoring agency protocols will not be reviewed as the ethical issues are not often adequately addressed in such documents and they frequently do not provide a succinct summary as noted above. Your protocol will be RETURNED UNREVIEWED if the project description information is incomplete, illegible or improperly filled out.

3.1a	Is this a sequel to previously approved research?	YES	
		NO	X
3.1b	If YES, indicate the previous ethics review number(s):		
⇒			
3.1c	If YES, describe differences from the previously approved protocol(s):		
⇒			

3.2	Provide a <u>brief</u> one or two sentence overview of the proposed research describing the population, intervention and outcome. <i>E.g. Children 5 to 8 years of age will view a video about animal mothers and their babies then be asked if they think there are any similarities between an animal mother's behaviour and a human mother's behaviour. The research will take place in the children's classroom.</i>
⇒ Activists and participants in community projects and assemblies, over 18 years of age will be asked to detail their experience participating in these movements. They will be asked to give detailed information about their role in the projects, and how they understand the make-up for their projects as well as their organisation's overall relationship to the broader society. The research will take place in the participant's desired location, on the phone, or via Skype.	
Some participant observation will be utilised so as to develop a deeper familiarity with the structure and processes of the assembly as a political but also practical formation. This will contribute to the ethnographic portion of the research, and will help draw out some of the uses of technology that are so habitual to be, perhaps, invisible or unmemorable to interview subjects. As well, observation of and participation in assemblies in process will help the researcher to deepen her understanding of the practical applications and methodologies of these projects. Due to the researcher's extant participation in some of the assembly projects under investigation, participant observation would broaden her understanding of the role the organisation plays and that subjects play in the organisation, outside of her own direct experience, and will help balance her experience with the experiences of others.	

3.4	Background & Justification – Summarize the scholarly and scientific contribution of the study. (1 page maximum)
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⇒

In the era of austerity measures by municipal, provincial, nation, and regional states, the landscape and terrain of the political is rapidly changing. Along with this change in politics come rapid advances in digital technologies (Fuchs, 2009). This research seeks to understand new political formations that are arising in the space left vacant by a widening sense of disillusionment with electoral politics, traditional unions, and parliamentary parties. In the place of representative politics we see the emergence of a politics of co-presence, with people seeking a more active role in the political formations they choose to participate in. The “assembly” is the model of many of these directly-democratic political and community organisations.

Through participant interviews and some observation this research will seek to understand both the political

make-up, structure, and organisation of a sampling of “assembly”-style projects. This research will also examine, in depth, the uses of various digital technologies in these projects. Interviews with participants in contemporary projects is necessary as it will provide the necessary optic from which to assess past assembly models and to test the validity for assembly-style political organising to come. Interviews will also provide an understanding of the role of subject formation in engaging with various political projects – as people assemble together they experience themselves differently. Observing the behaviour and actions of the interview subjects in the assemblies will help to understand the sometimes complex functioning of the assembly, and perhaps will draw out ideas or concepts that the interview subjects were unable to articulate. The only way of attaining data on the different ways in which participants experience themselves through assembly projects is through direct participant interviews and some limited participant observation.

This research will also seek to understand how digital technologies shape the participants' engagement with the assembly projects, and their own understanding of their role in these projects. Through interviews and examinations of actually existing assembly projects this research will contribute to a renewed understanding of “mediation” both outside of and within technological environments.

This research will make ample scholarly contributions to the rapidly emerging work on digital technologies in politics, and provide a much deeper, broader, and more nuanced assessment of digital technologies and political formations than has heretofore been completed, highlighting the intersection of media theory and contemporary politics. This research will use the descriptions and understandings of political projects and their interactions with digital technologies in order to forward and contribute to a discussion of political formations in a highly mediated age. It will seek to demonstrate the ways in which the internet, social media, user-friendly digital technologies, and highly advanced military-developed technologies can be used to advance community sustainability, community media, and alternative political formation projects. In this way, this research will provide a substantial contribution to both political theory, organisational theory, and studies of digital technology.

3.5	Objectives and Hypotheses: Provide a clear statement of the purpose and objectives of the project. (1 page maximum)
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⇒ The purpose of this research is to advance our understanding of assemblies as political formations, and the interaction of digital technologies with new political forms. The objective of this project is to get beyond the binary of technological determinism, wherein digital technologies are seen as inherently advancing political movements or inherently weakening them. Rather, through participant interviews, this research holds as its primary objective a far more nuanced understanding of the contemporary relations between political actors, community organisers, and the technological/media environment.

As such, the research has 4 general areas of inquiry in order to meet with its objectives. These areas of inquiry will be structured around a series of research and interview questions.

The first set of research questions will center around the idea, and actuality, of assemblies themselves as the main objective is to understand the make-up and structure of assemblies and how they are understood by participants. Interviewees will be asked how they understand the *assembly* as a political form, and *how it differs from other political forms* – not only the party or the state, but also from its ancestral formations the council and the soviet. They will also be asked to comment on its specific mechanics and structure.

Another objective is to understand the relationship of contemporary political theory to practice, and thus interviewees will be asked to speculate on the projects they are involved in from a theoretical perspective.

A third objective is to understand utilisation of digital technologies within emergent assembly projects. Therefore,

interviewees will be asked to detail how their assembly uses digital technologies and what some of the main debates or questions around use of technology and social media is.

A final objective will seek to understand how contemporary extra-parliamentary political projects have much expanded participant bases than previous movements. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the make-up of participants in assembly projects, and how they identify themselves.

Some general questions that will shape this research include: If assemblies as political formations have been around and have been brought to bear on political formations since, at least, the Paris Commune, what, then, is the value of new research into this old form for contemporary theorists and actors? Why does looking at workers' assemblies in terms of late 20th / 21st Century thought reveal to us something new about this long lineage of organising? What is different and what different possibilities are held in contemporary workers' assemblies and what can contemporary workers' assemblies tell us about current conditions of labour and organising?

3.6	Methodology – Describe the study design and what participants will be asked to do at each stage of the research. Investigators are encouraged to use flow charts or diagrams in their descriptions. (2 page maximum)
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⇒ This study will rely on interviews with participants . Interviews will be one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured, and face-to-face whenever possible, but via telephone, email, or Skype when pragmatic or necessary, or when that is the preferred medium of communication for interviewees. Due to the transnational nature of this research, email or Skype interviews may be necessary due to geographical distances. As well, it is important to use the medium through which and the means by people experience their activism. For some assembly activists, the technological component is dominant (especially for the livestreamers) and thus it may be occasionally preferred by interview subjects to have our conversations mediated by a screen.

Interviews will emphasize dialogue with participants, and will be designed so as to enable interviewees to respond most deeply to questions targeted at their areas of expertise. Set questions will guide the interview. Interviews will take place at interviewees' place of employment or at alternate locations at the interviewees' request, or online, or on the telephone, and at a time and place of their choosing. I will use an audio-recorder to record the discussion for my later consultation—a fact interviewees will be made aware of in advance of the interviews – or a transcript will be made of email or IM interviews. Interviewees will also be asked if the conversation can be audio-taped. The duration of each interview will be approximately one hour, and one interview will be conducted except in cases where a follow-up interview is deemed necessary.

3.7	Indicate why a particular design was selected. Address the strengths and weaknesses of the selected design. (1 page maximum)
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⇒ Interviews and some participant observation are necessary for three reasons: 1) there is a significant lack of academic research on the contemporary assemblies that takes into account participants experiences and understandings of this emergent political form and 2) because interviews with active participants in assembly projects can provide broader insights heretofore undetected in the scant academic and journalistic writing on these subjects that does exist, and 3) observation will allow the researcher to draw out actions, events, and objectives that were perhaps unarticulated by the interviewee, were invisible to the interviewee, and also to aid the researcher in understanding the sometimes complex structuring of assemblies as political formations.

Observation is also deemed an important methodology to use as this will allow the researcher to draw out discrepancies between what the interviewees and participants say and believe should happen in assembly

projects and assembly meetings, and what actually does happen. Observation as a methodology will allow the researcher to get closer to some sort of truth about the project and the promise it holds as a political formation.

By adopting a free format within the interviews, I will foster opportunities for interviewees to take the conversation in directions most pertinent to their specific experiences and areas of expertise. Moreover, this format will allow for the exploration of unexpected insights and reflections, which may not be foreseen in the drafting of interview guides—a process that may subsequently lead to the amendment/alteration of interview guides to make for even more fruitful future interviews.

It must be stressed that the data I seek are not readily available in other forms. Contemporary assembly movements are rather new, and while there is ample historical research on assembly movements from the 19th and 20th centuries, very little information has been compiled on these practices in the present. Due to the lag time involved with the process of publishing new insights on a rapidly changing political terrain, interviews with actors within key projects and assemblies will allow me to garner up-to-date, on-the-ground observations and interpretations of political challenges and changes.

My questions will address the practices and strategies that have been implemented in the contemporary climate, the use and practicality of digital technologies in various projects and movements, and the actors' perceptions of continuities and changes therein. I am also interested in participants' affective relationships to the projects and assemblies they work within – how they feel about the work they do, how they feel about the decision making processes and group structures. Quantitative, structured interviews would not offer better access to my area of enquiry; rather, such an approach would freight the interview process with restrictions that may close off, rather than open, points of entry with interviewees.

By weighing the interview and observation data against in-depth analysis of relevant theory and criticism, print and archival research (including historical case studies), and political economy analysis, I will be able to interpret the responses derived from my fieldwork data in a way that taps into real reactions to and perceptions of the opportunities and challenges assembly projects offer the political terrain.

3.8	References – If possible please restrict the list to ten of the most relevant references. References must be properly cited and contain the author, title of article, journal and page number(s).
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Terranova, Tiziana. (2004). *Networked Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London, UK: Pluto Press.

Wolfson, Todd. (2011) "Constitutive Communications and the Shimmering Project of the Multitude" in *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. 35:370.

3.9	Analysis – Discuss how the data will be analyzed. (1 page maximum)
-----	--

⇒ Discourse and standard qualitative analysis will be employed to process interview data. That is, transcriptions are treated as social texts in which patterns of language and meaning emerge. These patterns are at once contextualized by a specific institutional setting—workers' assemblies and community assembly projects—but also by the myths that permeate culture generally during a given historical moment.

3.10	CONTINUING REVIEW - At a minimum all Principal Investigators will be required to complete the NMREB's Surveillance Report Form annually.		
3.10a	Are the risks associated with this project sufficiently low that the project requires only an annual review?	YES	X
		NO	
3.10b	If NO, Please indicate why you feel a more frequent review is required?		
	⇒		
3.10c	If NO, Please indicate your recommendation as to the appropriate frequency of the REB's continuing review.	EVERY 6 MONTHS	
		EVERY 3 MONTHS	
		EVERY MONTH	

SECTION 4 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

4.1a	Number of subjects in entire study	50
4.1b	Number of subjects at this centre (if a multi-centred study)	
4.1c	Number of centres participating	

4.2	What is the rationale for using the intended number of subjects.
-----	--

⇒ A broad enough sample size is necessary to obtain enough information to adequately draw conclusions about the overall experience and understanding of the various projects.

4.3a	Was a formal sample size calculation used?	YES	
		NO	X

4.3b	If YES – give the actual calculation and a reference for the formula used. If, instead of a calculation, a table in a published source was used, provide the reference(s) and table reference numbers. If a sample size calculator was used, provide a description of the software package used and/or the URL for internet-based calculators.
------	--

⇒

4.4	The study will involve: (check all that apply)	✓
	Incompetent or unconscious participants	
	Minors (under 18)	
	Institutionalized persons (e.g. prison, extended care facility)	
	UWO Psychology Pool	
	Participants with possible language barriers (e.g. illiterate, non-English speaking, dysphasic)	
	Employees or students of UWO or the institution where the study is being carried out	X
	Patients	
	Pregnant women	
	Participants recruited in emergency or life-threatening situations	
	Others whose participation may be problematic for some reason (describe)	

4.5a	Will the study involve males AND females?	YES	X
		NO	
4.5b	If NO, explain why only one gender is being selected. (e.g. condition under study is gender specific)		

⇒

4.6	What is the age range of the participants?	LOWER AGE LIMIT	18
		UPPER AGE LIMIT	N/A

4.7	Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: List all inclusion/exclusion criteria and indicate with an asterisk (*) those criteria which will be included in the Letter of Information.
4.7a	Inclusion Criteria
⇒ membership in a particular group working on the assembly project or active participant in the assembly project.	
4.7b	Exclusion Criteria and rationale for exclusion

4.8a	Are there any risks for these participants if they are also taking part in other research?	YES	
		NO	X
4.8b	If YES explain any risks associated with participation in multiple studies		

⇒

SECTION 5 PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

5.1	Describe the method of selecting, sampling and recruiting participants.
⇒ I will contact people known to be active organisers or participants in each of the projects to be researched., all of whom are publicly identified in various media sources (journal articles, blogs, and other web-based media, primarily). From these intial recruits, I will ask them to pass along my inquiry to others they may think could offer other important insights to my research. I will allow this second layer of recruits to contact me, rather than reaching out to	

them. Once contact has been made I will send official invitation letters to participants.

All participants are permitted to remain as confidential as possible (appropriate steps will be taken to ensure the highest possible privacy, including encryption of all interview files and safe storage of files on IDrive, an encrypted server) if they so choose, and reminded at the beginning and end of the interview that they can choose to keep all or some of their interviews as confidential as possible given the state of contemporary security technologies available.

5.2 Identify who will be contacting them .

⇒ I will contact initial participants. I will allow subsequent recruits to contact me, through invitations passed on from their acquaintances or allies.

5.3 Indicate where the research will be conducted.

⇒ The research will be conducted where the interviewees feel most comfortable. Preference will be given to in-person, face-to-face interviews, for security reasons, but should the interviewees prefer interviews can take place over the telephone (landline) or over Instant Messaging or email, using appropriate cloaking technology. In person interviews will take place at the location of the interviewees choosing.

5.4	Will announcements or advertisements be used?	YES	
		NO	X
	If YES (Provide 10 copies of all advertisements /announcements that will be used)		

SECTION 6 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

6.1	Indicate which of the following interventions, testing or procedures are to be performed on the human participants as part of this research study. (Check as many as needed)		
	Interview/survey/questionnaire	X	Evaluation of program or services
	Experiment		Non-invasive physical measurements (e.g. BP, temperature)
	Observation of public behaviour	X	Collection of biological materials
	Observation of laboratory behaviour		Retrospective chart or file review
	Analysis of existing data		
	Audio or video taping	X	Other (specify)

SECTION 7 INSTRUMENTS TO BE USED IN STUDY

Instruments (forms) = questionnaires, assessment forms, scales, interviews, surveys and diaries etc.

7.1	<p>In the chart below list all instruments that will be used in the study. If you will be using standard, previously validated, previously approved by the NMREB, or widely accepted instruments provide FOUR copies. If the instruments have been developed or adapted for this project, provide 10 copies Expand chart as required.</p> <p>If you are conducting open-ended or unstructured interviews or focus groups provide an outline of the topics to be discussed.</p> <p>To assist the REB indicate clearly on this chart, who will be completing the form (E.g. subject – self administered, subject-interviewed, caregiver, teacher etc)</p>		
INSTRUMENT		Who will be completing the form?	STATUS Standard New Adapted
Recruitment and Reminder Email (Appendix A)		N/A	N
Consent Form (Appendix B)		Researcher and interview subject	N
Information Letter (Appendix C)		N/A	N

SECTION 8 DECEPTION OR PARTIAL DISCLOSURE TO BE USED IN THE STUDY

8.1a	This section refers to instances of deliberate deception or the withholding of key information that may influence a participant's performance or responses. Do any of the procedures in this study include the use of this type of deception or partial disclosure of information to participants?	YES	
		NO	X
8.1b	If YES, provide a rationale for the planned deception or partial disclosure.		
⇒			
8.1c	If YES, describe the procedures for a) debriefing the participants and b) giving them a second opportunity to consent to participate after debriefing. If debriefing and reconsent are not viable options please explain.		
⇒			

SECTION 9 RISKS AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

9.1	RISKS & DISCOMFORTS: Discuss the overall risks of the proposed research, and specify the particular risks and discomforts associated with each aspect of the protocol. Consider physical, psychological, emotional, social, economic etc. risks and stressors.
⇒ Due to the political nature of this research, risks that are presently unknown may arise in the future, should participants choose to be identifiable.	

9.2	BENEFITS: Discuss benefits to the research participants, to groups or to society at large or the population being studied. Please note that monetary compensation is not considered a benefit. .
⇒ The results of this research may enable research participants to better understand their experience. It may help social movements, unions, workers' organisations, political and social activists, and general members of society to experiment with new ways of organising political engagements. As well, it may help theorists better grasp and utilise theoretical instruments to understand contemporary politics and technological innovations.	

SECTION 10 COMPENSATION AND COSTS

10.1a	Will the participants be compensated or reimbursed for their time and expenses?	YES	
		NO	X
10.1b	If YES, provide details. Specify the amount, what the compensation or reimbursement is for, and how payment will be determined for participants who do not complete the study.		
⇒			

10.2a	Are the participants likely to incur any additional expenses or inconveniences as a result of their participation in this study?	YES	
		NO	X
10.2b	If YES, describe		
⇒			

SECTION 11 PROTECTION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PARTICIPANTS

11.1	Describe facilities and procedures to protect the physical and mental health, comfort and safety of the participants.		
⇒ As noted in 5.3, interviews will be conducted in participants' own offices or at alternate, possibly virtual, locations at their request. The research design will accommodate participant comfort and convenience and they will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point during the study.			
11.2a	Will the study be likely to induce high levels of stress, fear, anxiety in some or all participants or require them to discuss painful memories of past events?	YES	
		NO	X
11.2b	If YES, explain what resources you will make available to subjects to cope with such stress.		
⇒			

SECTION 12 CONFIDENTIALITY & PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

12.1	Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and for preserving the confidentiality of data both during the research and in the release of the findings. This would include procedures such as removing identifiable information, collecting anonymous data and ensuring that highly visible subjects in small communities or groups will be protected from inadvertent identification. Describe any condition in which confidentiality or anonymity cannot be guaranteed or must be breached.
------	--

⇒ Email and mail correspondence with interview participants will make clear that any the highest possible levels of security will be utilised in order to protect identifiable information should interviewees choose to remain anonymous. A letter of information and a consent form(see Appendix A and B) will be sent to participants in advance, or at the beginning, of the interview. This letter will indicate that all available steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality, using the most up-to-date available cloaking software for electronically mediated interviews, unless participants indicate otherwise. Participants requesting confidentiality will be interviewed in person, and if preferable for the interviewee, and be referred to with generic names that disguise any distinguishing features like gender, age, ethnicity. In order to retain the highest possible level of confidentiality for interview subjects – should they choose to remain anonymous – only in-person interviews, landline telephone interviews, or electronically mediated interviews using the best available cloaking devices, OTR (Off the Record) messaging, and run through Tor, an application that helps anonymise web browsing will be used.

All email interviews will be sent and recieved via Enigmail Open PGP encryption systems with appropriate public and private keys used for encryption, de-encryption, and re-encryption.

Participants will be afforded the ability to withdraw their permission of consent in writing in advance of an agreed upon date. As well, participants will be reminded at the beginning and end of the interview that they have the right to choose confidentiality at any point in the interview process and thereafter, and all possible steps will be taken to ensure that confidentiality, although only in in-person interviews can this reasonably be guaranteed.

To recap: Any instant messages (IMs) will be encrypted using OTR encryption system for IM. I will use https, the most common web encryption standard, for all webs browsing when available, and I will use Tor which anonymises web browsing so as to protect against traffic analysis, pen-trap taps, and other forms of internet based wiretapping.

12..2a	Is identifiable participant data being sent off-site to a sponsor, co-investigator or central data collection site or registry?	YES	
		NO	X
12..2b	If YES, indicate which, if any, of these participant identifiers will be included with the data?	Surname Name &/or Initials	
		Contact info: address, phone etc	
		Date of Birth or Death	
		Personal Numbers: e.g. SIN, employee or student number,	
		Institutional / Hospital Chart or Record #	
12..2c	If any of the above identifiers will be included, provide a rationale why it is necessary to include this information and why a unique, de-identified code cannot be used instead.		

⇒

12.3	Describe the procedures for securing and storing written records, videotapes, computer discs, recordings and questionnaires etc. Indicate if the material will be retained indefinitely or the length of time the material will be retained and describe the method of disposal if it is to be destroyed.
<p>⇒ Audio-taped interview conversations and hard copies of written transcriptions will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet during analysis and writing. Electronic copies of these data will be password-protected on my personal computer and uploaded to IDrive, a secure cloud storage site that encrypts all data using industry standard 256-bit AES encryption for transfer and storage, and is accessible only with a private encryption key. Tapes and electronic files with de-identified information will be kept indefinitely for the purposes of future research. All data will be destroyed after passing the PhD defense and upon completion of the dissertation.</p>	

12.4	Identify all agencies or individuals other than the research team you know will have access to confidential data collected for this study.
<p>⇒</p>	

SECTION 13 INFORMED CONSENT

Disclaimer: The REB does not assess the legal validity of the consent form nor does it provide any other legal advice.

13.1	Briefly describe any plans for provision of feedback to participants.
<p>⇒ Participants will have access to the full study after publication upon request. Access will occur primarily by email unless participants request hard copies be sent by mail. The researcher will retain and update the contact information of all participants until the research has been completed and published.</p>	

13.2	If written consent cannot be obtained from potential participants prior to intervention or written consent is not appropriate, provide a justification. (E.g. completion of a questionnaire in a survey study is evidence of consent.)
<p>⇒</p>	

13.3a	Will minors or persons not able to consent for themselves be included in the study?	YES	
		NO	X

13.3b	<p>If YES, describe the consent process and indicate who will be asked to consent on their behalf and discuss what safeguards will be employed to ensure the rights of the research participant are protected.</p> <p><i>Whether or not a separate assent form is used, investigators and parents or guardians should discuss the study with the person (when appropriate) and explain exactly what will happen and what the person's rights are. In certain circumstances, the REB may find it acceptable for mature or emancipated minors to give consent without also requiring consent from parents or guardians.</i></p>
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⇒

13.4	<p>Attach a copy of the documentation that will be used to inform and obtain consent from the potential participants about the research. Separate Information/consent documents or a combined Information/Consent document may be used. Wording regarding the participant's consent <u>must</u> comply with the UWO policies and procedures and participants <u>must</u> be given a copy of the Letter of Information or combined Information/consent document to keep for reference if they wish.</p> <p><i>Some requests for interviews with competent persons who hold or have held positions of responsibility and who are primarily relating their experiences in public or private office (e.g. politicians, government officials, senior executives) need not follow such a structured outline. (see Section 10.0 in the NMREB Guidelines.)</i></p>
<p>YOU MAY FIND IT HELPFUL TO COMPLETE THE OPTIONAL CHECKLIST ON NEXT PAGE</p>	

13.5	CHECKLIST – INFORMATION & CONSENT DOCUMENTATION		
HAVE YOU INCLUDED OR ADDRESSED THE FOLLOWING ISSUES?			
YES	Not Appl	(see Informed Consent documentation guidelines Appendix 1 NMREB Guidelines for detailed description/requirements of each category)	
X		Title of the research	
X		Identity of researchers & sponsors	
X		Invitation to participate in research	
X		Information/consent documents addressed to research participant	
X		Summary explanation of research	
X		Number of participants – total & local	
X		Participant inclusion & exclusion criteria	
X		Description of the research and any experimental procedures	
X		Explained specific research techniques	
X		Estimate of participant's time commitment	
X		Location of the research	
X		Described Risks / Harms / Benefits	
X		Explained voluntary participation and freedom to refuse to participate/withdraw at any time.	
		Participation in concurrent or future studies	
X		Anonymity	
X		Confidentiality	
		Alternative options to participating in the research if appropriate	
x		Told they may keep the Letter of Information	
x		Contact person(s) for participants a) regarding the study & b) subject rights	
		Compensation & Costs to Subjects	
x		No waiver of rights	
x		No indication of institutional or REB approval	
x		Publication of results	
x		Conflict of Interest declared	
x		Measures taken to deal with stress, anxiety, or fear induced by study, if any	
x		Language Level - lay language, grade 8 level	
x		Formatting – pages numbered, type size, page layout, header/footer, headings	
x		Consent Statement as per UWO standard or written consent not required	
x		Signatures – participant, person obtaining consent	
		Assent form for children 7+ (Optional)	what the study is about
			why the child is eligible to participate for the study
			procedures, what will happen
			voluntary participation, withdrawal
			risks, discomforts
			benefits
			contacts
			an invitation to ask questions
			signature

Appendix A

Email Script for Recruitment

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Body:

Dear _____

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, Dr. Nick Dyer-Witthford (Associate Dean, Associate Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies) and Elise Danielle Thorburn (PhD Candidate, Faculty of Information and Media Studies) are conducting. Briefly, the study involves an examination of activists participating in assembly projects, broadly defined. This research seeks to better understand both the internal dynamics of the particular assembly project you are involved in, and in a broader sense, your overall understanding of your work as it relates to the political left and other workers' movements such as political parties and trade unions.

We would like you to participate in an interview of approximately 60 minutes. This interview can take place at your convenience, either in person or over the telephone. It will be unobtrusive and will not result in any known harm to you. Due to the political nature of this work, though, there may be risks to participating. Should you care to discuss these, please contact the researcher. Due to the political nature of this work and the unknown risks that could arise, the default option is for interviewees to remain anonymous. You will have the right to choose confidentiality before the interview by ticking "No" on the consent form, and in this case all available steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality. To know more about the security measures being taken, please contact the researchers at this return address. As well, you may withdraw from the research or choose to make certain statements confidential or "off the record" as you choose, at any time. You will be asked at the end of the interview if there is anything you want to be removed from the record.

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of information about this study please contact the researcher at the contact information given below.

Thank you,
Elise Danielle Thorburn
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX

and

Nick Dyer-Witthford
University of Western Ontario
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Reminder Email Script for Recruitment

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Body:

An email was sent to you _____ (weeks / days) ago and we wanted to send you a quick reminder about our study. You are being invited to participate in a study that we, Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford (Associate Dean, Associate Professor, Faculty of Information and Media Studies) and Elise Danielle Thorburn (PhD Candidate, Faculty of Information and Media Studies) are conducting. Briefly, the study involves activists participating in assembly projects, broadly defined. This research seeks to better understand both the internal dynamics of the particular assembly project you are involved in, and in a broader sense, your overall understanding of your work as it relates to the political left and other workers' movements such as political parties and trades unions.

We would like you to participate in an interview of approximately 60 minutes. This interview can take place at your convenience, either in person or over the telephone. It will be unintrusive and will not result in any harm to you. You can choose to remain anonymous, but for the purposes of legitimacy in research it is preferable that you be identifiable.

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of information about this study please contact the researcher at the contact information given below.

Thank you,
Elise Danielle Thorburn
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

and

Nick Dyer-Witheford
University of Western Ontario
XXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Appendix B **Consent Form**

I have read the Information Letter, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Please check: ☐

I choose to remain anonymous in this research.

Yes: ☐

No:

Name (please print)

Participant's signature

Date

Name of person obtaining informed consent

Signature of person obtaining informed consent

Date

Appendix C:
Information Letter

Virtual and Physical Assemblages: Multitude, Immateriality, and Class Composition in the New Workers'
Movements

Nick Dyer-Witheford, PhD
Elise Danielle Thorburn, PhD Candidate
Faculty of Information and Media Studies, UWO

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Purpose of this Study

You are being invited to participate in a research study looking at new workers' movements, assemblies, and the use of digital technologies at the University of Western Ontario. It is the intention of this study to better

understand the dynamics of contemporary assemblies as they are used in workers' movements in North America, through historical and theoretical research, as well as first-person interviews with activists involved with various assembly projects across North America .

Who is eligible to Participate?

You are eligible if you are older than 18 years of age.

Research Procedures for this Study

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. This interview can be completed in person, via email, Instant Messaging, Skype, or over the telephone. A total of 45-50 people will participate in these interviews. If anonymity is chosen, that decision will be respected.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Inquiries and Risks

Due to the political nature of this research, unknown risks may arise in the future due to your participation in this research. Every available step will be taken to protect your confidentiality, should you choose to remain anonymous. Please contact the researchers, contact info below, to obtain a detailed description of the security measures and software being used to protect your privacy in this research. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form.

You are free to ask questions about the study or the questionnaire at any time. Contact Prof. Nick Dyer-Witheford at xxxxxxxx or Phone xxxxxxxx, or contact Elise Thorburn at xxxxxxxx for more information and any with any inquiries.

Benefits from the Study

There are no known benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your participation will help to gain insight on assemblies as part of current workers' movements .

Confidentiality of Information

Audio-taped interview conversations and hard copies of written transcriptions will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet during analysis and writing, and stored data will be held on IDrive, a secure cloud computing site that encrypts all data using industry standard 256-bit AES encryption for transfer and storage, and is accessible only with a private encryption key. Electronic copies of all data will also be encrypted and password-protected on my personal computer. Tapes and electronic files will be destroyed upon completion of this dissertation. If anonymity is chosen it will be respected. We will take every available step to ensure confidentiality for participants and interviewees who choose this option, but it should be known that confidentiality can only be reasonably guaranteed when interviews are conducted in-person.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Consent to Participate

You consent to participating in the present study by completing the interview.

Contact

If you have questions about this study, please contact Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford by phone at xxxxxxxxxx or by email at xxxxxxxx, or Elise Thorburn at xxxxxxxx.

If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact:

Office of Research Ethics
The University of Western Ontario
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX



Office of the Dean

Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

All non-medical research involving human subjects at the University of Western Ontario is carried out in compliance with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Guidelines (2010). The Faculty of Information Media Studies (FIMS) Research Committee has the mandate to review minimal-risk FIMS research proposals for adherence to these guidelines.

2011 – 2012 FIMS Research Committee Membership

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|-----|----------------|
| 1. | R. Babe | 7. | A. Pyati* |
| 2. | A. Benoit | 8. | A. Quan-Haase |
| 3. | J. Burkell (alt) | 9. | D. Robinson |
| 4. | E. Comor* | 10. | K. Sedig (alt) |
| 5. | C. Hoffman | 11. | L. Xiao |
| 6. | P. McKenzie (Chair) | | |

Research Committee member(s) marked with * have examined the research project FIMS-2011-12-028 entitled:

Virtual and Physical Assemblages: Multitude, Immateriality, and Class Composition in New Workers' Movements

as submitted by: Nick Dyer-Witheford (Principal Investigator)
 Elise Thorburn

and consider it to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects under the conditions of the University's Policy on Research Involving Human Subjects. Approval is given for the period to 15 December 2012.

Approval Date: 30 July 2012

Pamela McKenzie, Assistant Dean (Research)
FIMS Research Committee Chair

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Elise Thorburn

Post-secondary Education and Degrees: Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
2003-2005 B.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2005-2007 M.A.

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2009-2015 Ph.D.

Honours and Awards: Fulbright Canada Fellowship
2012-2013
Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Doctoral Fellowship
2010-2013

Related Work Experience Per Course Instructor
Memorial University of Newfoundland
2014-2015

Publications:

Thorburn, Elise. 2015. "Assemblies and the New Shape of Organising." In Azzelini, Dario (ed). *An Alternative Labour History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*. London: Zed Books.

Thorburn, Elise. 2014. "Social Media, Subjectivity, and Surveillance: Moving on From Occupy, the Rise of Live Streaming Video" *Communications and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 11(1).

Thorburn, Elise. 2014. "Assemblages: Live Streaming Critique in the Quebec Spring." In Fuchs, Christian and Daniel Trotter (eds). *Social Media, Politics, and the State: Protests, revolutions riot, crime, and policing in the age of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube*. London: Routledge.

Thorburn, Elise. 2012. "A Common Assembly." *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*. 4(2)