We Work, We Eat Together: Anti-authoritarian Mutual Aid Politics in New York City, 2004-2013

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WE WORK, WE EAT TOGETHER:

Anti-authoritarian Mutual Aid Politics in New York City, 2004-2013

by

David Spataro

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
We work, we eat together,
We need no swords.
We will not bow to masters,
Or pay rent to the lords.
Though we are free,
Though we are poor.
You Diggers all stand up for glory
Stand up now.

-Lyrics from 'The World Turned Upside Down'
by Leon Rosselson
Abstract

We Work, We Eat Together: Anti-authoritarian Mutual Aid Politics in New York City, 2004-2013

by

David Spataro

Advisor: Professor Cindi Katz

New York City's neoliberal restructuring has fundamentally transformed the city's labor market and privatized many important aspects of a once robust municipal welfare system. In this research I examine one radical response to these changes: anti-authoritarian mutual aid groups that blend Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture with direct action politics. These are projects where activists attempt to build strong communities of resistance by organizing collective forms of social reproduction. I find that these projects are a threat to neoliberal urbanization because they reorganize reproduction beyond the household scale while simultaneously criticizing the social relations of capitalism as the root of household insecurity. At the same time, this research reveals that mutual aid projects coming out of the white North American anarchist social movement culture are filled with conflicts and contradictions. Activists who create “geographies of autonomy” often struggle to reconcile their imperative against hierarchy with needs for a horizontal management of the commons. Additionally, I find that although these projects take social reproduction as an object of struggle, they are prone to undervalue gendered and racialized work in a way that mirrors the same neoliberal social relations which mutual aid groups seek to escape. The conflicts that ensue from these contradictions can and often lead to women and people of color (and others) withdrawing energy or support in order to create stronger forms of
mutual aid. These cleavages between activists can be best understood through black feminist and Marxist feminist theories of care in social struggle. Conflicts reveal the need for mutual aid groups to develop a social practice that revalues reproduction work in social movements and celebrates those who have done it in the past and continue to do it today.
Acknowledgements

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My deepest gratitude goes out to all the individuals who participated in this research, who sat down to talk with me about their desires for a different political economy, about their reservations about different tactics, and about the joys of mutual aid despite it all.

Thank you also to Jesse, Manissa, Kareem, Amanda H. and Steve for friendship and for offering your bright minds openly. Thank you to my committee members Marianna Pavlovskaya and Mike Menser, two people who supported me throughout this dissertation and whose work on solidarity economies and participatory democracy I admire.

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1

Introduction
Introduction

During the carnival the world is temporarily turned upside down, the fool crowned king and the king made a fool. People glimpse what a different world might look like: a world without priests or kings, or cops and corporations. (Duncombe 2002, 221-222)

During the period of neoliberal urbanization activists developed a new model to express their dissent, a model that eschews older forms of mass demonstration and prioritizes participatory action. Duncombe explains this transition by contrasting the social and spatial strategies of nineteenth century labor parades with the medieval carnival (2002, 221). For Duncombe, the older model turns desire and dissent into a form of passive spectatorship. The large protest rallies of the 1980s and 1990s tended to follow the same pattern. Participants gather, march, and chant in a manner predetermined by the boundaries of official protest permits. The demonstrations end with earnest, but ineffectual, speakers at a podium in front of a disempowered audience (Duncombe 2002, 221).

In contrast, the new model stresses participatory democracy in in all elements of the actions from planning to execution. This model values actions that are designed to be playful, actions that are open to pluralistic interpretation and improvisation from participants. What do these actions look like? For a protest group like Reclaim The Streets (RTS), their actions are one part road blockade and one part dance party. Organizers cleverly stop traffic on a centrally located street. Then, participants and any willing passersby commence dancing, political theater, or street performances. Some people simply just socialize together, taking the opportunity to turn the street into an alternative public space. “An RTS [Reclaim the Streets] action is like a potluck dinner,” writes Duncombe. “RTS secures the space and provides the music (and post-protest legal support), but what happens at the action depends upon what people bring with them and what
they do once they are there” (2002, 220; cf., Starr 2005, 25). The potluck metaphor is an apt
description for the Really Really Free Market (RRFM), an action in this same spirit. The Really
Really Free Market is a temporary space secured for the free exchange of goods, food, skill-
shares, entertainment and just about anything people bring to the space. 'Free exchange,'
however, does not mean 'freedom to exchange,' as it does in neoclassical economics. During the
time of the carnivalesque Really Really Free Market, everything is free—their slogan is 'no
barter, no trade, no money'—and participants get a taste of a world beyond the economy based
upon competitive markets and prices. In addition to Reclaim The Streets and the Really Really
Free Market, there are Critical Mass bike rides (Carlsson 2008; Carlsson 2002; Carlsson and
Manning 2010), IndyMedia Centers (IMCs) of independent news (Pickerill 2007; Nogueira
2002), Food Not Bombs community meals (Heynen 2010; Mitchell and Heynen 2009;
Gelderloos 2006), Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Armies (Routledge 2005; Routledge
2010), infoshops or squatted social centers (Mudu 2004; Maggio 1998; Montagna 2007), and
many other novel, participatory, affirmational protest actions (see Day 2005).

This new protest model is born of “a philosophy that had been percolating in the cultural
underground for the past two decades: Do-It-Yourself,” writes Duncombe. (2002, 219; Hotlzman
et al. 2007; McKay 1998). Also know as DIY, Do-It-Yourself “has been effective in empowering
marginalized sectors of society, while simultaneously providing a means to subvert and transcend
capitalism,” write Holtzman et al. (2007, 41). “As a way of reapproaching power,” they argue,
“DIY became a different way of withdrawing support from capitalism and the state while
constructing and experimenting with other forms of social organizing” (2007, 41). DIY is an

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1 In using the term 'affirmational,' I invoke Cornell's (2011) writing on social movements that “oppose and
propose.” I also wish to retain connotations with 'affinity,' which is a central concept in the social movement
culture of these novel strategies (see Day 2004; 2005).
ethic of cultural production that criticizes commodified culture and the profit motive in artistic expression. It is quite simply the imperative to “make your own culture and stop consuming that which is made for you” (Duncombe 1997, 2). However, while DIY was once largely confined to the field of cultural production—from hosting (and playing) punk music to publishing zines—during the 1990s the DIY ethic began to become more prominent in the field of political protest. This culture of DIY became one dominant culture of resistance amongst young white people frustrated by neoliberal globalization and critical of hierarchical forms of older left organizing. The DIY cultural critique of corporate products and passive consumers became a good fit for the material and symbolic practices of a budding social movement culture because DIY ethics mirrored the anti-authoritarian critique of hierarchy.

Many of these new protest groups combine the theatrical and performative elements of the carnival with collectively organized basic services. They are simultaneously carnivalesque and nourishing. At Really Really Free Markets people experience an oasis of sharing amidst the competitive marketplace, and that oasis typically includes spirited conviviality and free food and clothing. At Food Not Bombs community meals we see a similar dynamic. Activists carve out a 'new world' of abundance and cooperation by temporarily taking over public space for a hot meal. However temporary that new world may be, the food that people prepare, share, and eat together is no less real. The project literally satisfies hungry bellies even if it has to prefigure egalitarian social relations and an economy of abundance, quite obviously because scarcity, inequality, and competition are the norm in the capitalist spaces that surround any given Food Not Bombs meal. The participatory ethic that suffuses this new breed of protest is not just a tactical combination of direct action confrontation and convivial cultural production. Helping one another to find de-
commodified forms of nourishment is equally legion. Projects such as Food Not Bombs and Really Really Free Markets have a tendency to oscillate between spaces (and moments) of intense confrontation and spaces (and moments) of quotidian social reproduction. And in this way Duncombe's metaphor of the potluck becomes something more literal than a true metaphor. Protest actions during this DIY era are like a potluck in that people participate in ways that they bring to the table, so to speak. But they are also like a potluck in that people bring together basic goods such as food and clothing in order to care for each other. Some of these 'potlucks' happen regularly, in the same places over time, and take on the element of providing nourishment and community care. The protest groups that tend towards community nourishment provide a ritualized structure for community 'resilience' (see Katz 2004) in the whirlwind of neoliberal urbanization.

In this way, this new mode of protest is a form of 'total protest.' Each group, from Reclaim The Streets to IndyMedia Centers to Food Not Bombs, engages in an action that is limited in time and place. But the limited action simultaneously seeks to be a form of total immersion where all layers of social relations are meant to enact an alternative to capitalism. This entails everything from relations between participants to the food that is shared and eaten. From this perspective, older modes of protest are not only problematic because the spectatorship is boring and lacks participatory elements. The hierarchical relations and disempowering tactics do not meet the high standards of this new genre of protest, where all elements of the form and process are meant to create (even if momentarily) a literal ideal alternative in real space.

But creating a space where relationships are completely alternative (even if temporary) in a sea of capitalist uneven development is no small feat. The ascendancy of this mode of
organizing in the last twenty years invites a whole series of questions for social researchers and
social movements alike. What are the main challenges activist face when they attempt to create
totalizing spaces of resistance? Are activists successfully able to overcome hierarchies of gender,
race, and class in these participatory, alternative spaces? Or do capitalist social relationships
manage to leak back into these prefigurative spaces? Are there specific contradictions that
emerge from these organizing tendencies? How do individuals confront specific challenges or
limitations to their own organizing tendencies? Are activists successful when they attempt to
overcome the limitations to these methods? And, if so, how?

However, these are broad questions bereft of any particular social theories. They are
important questions in their own regard, but too broad for a research program. In this research I
ask more specific questions using a particular theoretical framework: neoliberal urbanization
from the standpoint of feminist political economy. This framework forces us to examine closely
the way neoliberal urbanization creates crises in the realm of social reproduction, and how
households attempt to manage those crises in ways that reveal gender and race inequality in
cities. By looking closely at the dominant trends in urban political economy, and the social
cleavages it creates, we can begin to analyze social protest movements as producers (of culture,
of space, of critiques of capitalism, of new organizational forms) and as products (of neoliberal
urbanization, of limitations of power, of the social relations from which they arise). Scholars
have analyzed this form of protest by focusing on concepts of affect and affinity as potentially
powerful new discourses (see Day 2001; 2004; 2005; cf., Routledge 2010). But the uneven
structure of social reproduction in neoliberal cities has not been used as a lens when looking at
these social and spatial processes. By taking up social reproduction as a collective and
collaborative communal project, how do activists negotiate the way neoliberal urbanization intensifies the process of de-valuing social reproduction work? How does the imperative to create spaces of total alternatives to capitalist social relations manifest itself in real places where uneven relations of hierarchy and privilege invariably find their way into alternative spaces? What strategies do activists use to overcome the contradictions between their ideals of ‘total protest’ and the realities of neoliberal political economy where gender, race, and class inequality increasingly define people's everyday lives? These are the questions this research seeks to answer.

**Methodological Design: Ethnographic Extended Case Study**

The danger here...is objectification—that global forces will appear inevitable and natural. We have adopted three strategies to counter objectification. The first is to consider global forces as constituted as a distance. *The focus of the ethnography then is on the way global domination is resisted, avoided, and negotiated.* The second strategy is to see global forces as themselves the product of contingent social processes...The third strategy, the most radical, sees global forces and global connections as constituted imaginatively, inspiring social movements to seize control over their immediate but also their more distant worlds, challenging the mythology of an inexorable, runaway world. (Burawoy 2000, 29; emphasis added)

The process of transformation is uneven, slippery, and shot through with as many derailments as possibilities. (Katz 2004, 239)

Developed from the methodological innovations of the Manchester school of Cultural Anthropology, sociologist Burawoy promotes the use of an extended case study method to ethnographic research (see Burawoy et al. 1991, Burawoy et al. 2000; Tavory and Timmermans 2009). For Burawoy the concept of 'extension' has multiple meanings, which he calls dimensions. Firstly, extension refers to the observer extending out “into the world of the participant” (2000, 26). This is simply restating some basic ideas about what ethnographic research entails, but
Burawoy's emphasis reminds us how foundational that extension outward is to the project of ethnographic social research. Secondly, extension refers to making observations over an extended period of time. Thirdly, extension refers to the process of “extending out from micro processes to macro forces, from the space-time rhythms of the site to the geographical and historical context of the field” (2000, 27). And lastly, in contrast to grounded-theory, extension refers to the extension of theory. Such extension of theory involves beginning with strong theories of explanation. The final purpose of the study is to refine and improve upon the theory using the empirical observations of the case to bear upon the original ideas of explanation.

As the first quote above emphasizes, Burawoy developed this method as a way to examine relationships between domination and people's responses, whether that be resistance, avoidance, or negotiation. As Burawoy outlines, this framework derives from cultural anthropology (see Burawoy 1991b; 2000). However, in human geography we also see ethnographers using similar methodological frameworks to examine how people respond to local transformations dictated by the global political economy, but not simply in ways that are linear and deterministic (see Katz 1996a; 2004; Herbert 2000). Katz, in particular, has argued for a framework where we understand responses to global capitalism as resilience, reworking, and resistance (2004, 241). Clearly, both Katz and Burawoy refer to a range of strategies that people use when confronted with the whirlwind of capitalist domination. And both scholars view the method of participant observation amongst people engaged in these strategies as a powerful tool for understanding the social phenomenon at a micro and macro level.

In this vein I utilized an ethnographic extended case method to answer the above questions about new forms of protest that blend anti-capitalist critique and community social
reproduction. The research project was designed as a case-study of this particular tendency of
“free” mutual aid politics in New York City in the period following the mass demonstrations
against the Republican National Convention (RNC) in August 2004. The protests against the
RNC followed the same logic as many previous summit protests of the Global Justice or Alter-
Globalization Movement, most notably the protests against the World Trade Organization in
Seattle in 1999 but followed by similar mobilizations in Washington DC in 2000 (IMF),
Philadelphia in 2000 (RNC), Genoa in 2001 (G8), Miami in 2003 (FTAA), and Georgia in 2004
(IMF) just to name a few (see Gautney 2010; Podobnik and Reifer 2005). During the week of
actions in New York City in 2004 against the Republican National Convention, activists
organized a variety of events that spanned the spectrum between the labor parade and the
carnival. Amongst those events were some signature elements of this breed of DIY tactics,
including a Critical Mass bike ride and New York City’s first Really Really Free Market.

By late 2008 when I first began to formulate the idea of the case-study, a robust network
of anti-authoritarian activists had already developed or were in the process of developing
multiple projects in the vein of this new form of protest. A lot of this activity centered around an
infoshop in Bedford Stuyvesant called the 123 Space, but also around a small network of
collective, or communal, houses throughout Brooklyn. The 123 Space feature several “free”
projects. There was a free after school program on weekdays for young people who lived around
the infoshop. On Saturday afternoons, Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs cooked food in the kitchen,
then shared a free community meal at a park around the corner. The basement of the 123 Space

Throughout this study I use ‘anti-authoritarian’ to refer to people who are anti-statist and anti-hierarchy in their
political organizing. In many ways ‘anti-authoritarian’ is synonymous with ‘anarchist.’ However, many people
who share anarchist organizing modes have deep reservations about other elements of anarchist social
movement culture (as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 11). Day (2005) uses the term ‘anarchistic’ to deal
with this issue, while I prefer ‘anti-authoritarian.’
housed the Freegan Bike Workshop, which opened two days a week as a place where people could find parts, skills, and knowledge for free. Additionally, the space hosted free sewing and screen-printing classes, political prisoner letter writing nights, fundraising parties and pancake breakfasts, and generally brought together a community of young, white, anti-authoritarian radicals and a small number of black families from the surrounding neighborhood (most of whom were connected to the 123 Space through the free after-school program). By this time, the Really Really Free Market had become a regular event and multiple Food Not Bombs chapters were up and running or budding in areas of Brooklyn where this network of young anti-authoritarians congregated.

Around this time I began to participate in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs on Saturday afternoons. I moved to an apartment near the 123 Space and I found the energy in the Food Not Bombs kitchen electric, especially during a several week period when we cooked how meals without electricity. Soon thereafter, I was introduced to the Really Really Free Market at Judson Memorial Church, which at that time was organized by a group of people with some overlap as Food Not Bombs and the 123 Space. Although I did not initially think about making a research project that involved these groups, I had been searching for a way to “operationalize” a project about Do-It-Yourself, disalienated labor, and anti-capitalist desire. As Duncombe (2002) describes it in the early 2000s, DIY had been “percolating in the cultural underground” for quite a while. Yet outside of a few cultural studies such as Duncombe's monograph on zines (1997) and some older work on punk from the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies (see Hall and Jefferson 2006; Hebdige 1991), not much had been written about DIY. In the discipline of human geography, scholars of geographies of resistance have noted the DIY culture of contemporary
movements (see Routledge 1997) and the DIY spirit to strategies such as making autonomous space (see Chatterton and Pickerill 2010).

However, as I became more familiar with this anti-authoritarian network it became clear that there was something particularly geographical going on, that these activists claim particular spaces for non-capitalist relations. This included the public space for a Food Not Bombs meal, the private yet semi-public space of a radical church to host an open market of shared goods and services, the private space of the 123 Space infoshop for a variety of participatory programs, and the private spaces of collective houses where people organized alternative forms of reproduction or hosted music and art shows. In the language of Lefebvre (1991), this network prioritized the production of space. Certainly, these activists did not have the resources to transform the city on a mass scale; they were not people responsible for what Lefebvre calls “the representation of space” (1991, 38). But they produced space 'from below,' to borrow a term from Marxist historians that is substantially less cumbersome than Lefebvre’s notion of “representational space” (39). While the scale of these spatial strategies remained small, and in many cases temporary, there were many indications that these spaces served a broader function than the immediate local scale of the projects. I saw how people's capacities for foraging and preparing free food, for example, played an integral role in other protest demonstrations, such as a building occupation. Additionally, activists visiting the city for radical convergences or demonstrations would often rely on the infrastructures of these spaces for their basic survival and for readymade ways of making connections with like-minded individuals. In the way that the mass convergence of protesters against the Republican National Convention gave birth to a number of local projects, so did these projects constitute an infrastructure for other convergences.
Here was, I began to feel, a particularly social and geographical expression of the Do-It-Yourself philosophy. And much of it centered around creating “free” alternatives to the capitalist market. With some experience and connections to this network, I designed an extended ethnographic case study with three groups that were of this organizational philosophy and organized some element of social reproduction outside of the private market. In addition to the Really Really Free Market and Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs, both of which I was familiar and connected with at this time, I sought out the Rock Dove Collective. The original members of the Rock Dove Collective met at a general assembly of the New York Metro Alliance of Anarchists (NYMAA) where they came together in a smaller breakout group discussing mutual aid mental health alternatives. Over time that breakout group became an official collective, and the collective organized a healthcare exchange network. In the Rock Dove network, health providers and seekers work out individualized mutual aid exchanges. In contrast to the other two groups the Rock Dove network does not exist in a particular place in New York City, but instead it is an infrastructural network for radical mutuality to occur in when and where providers and seekers can find the time and space.

The case study design takes each of these groups both as a discrete object of study, what Yin (2009) calls 'sub-units' of a case design that has multiple cases, and as a part of a whole case—the politics of “free” in New York City after the demonstrations against the Republican National Convention. In this research project the goal is to examine a particular mode of political organizing that seeks to develop political solidarity based in non-commodified relations of reproduction. The Rock Dove Collective, for example, is much less carnivalesque than the Really Really Free Market, and much less of a public politics than Food Not Bombs. But the members
of the Rock Dove Collective, through their familiarity with the organizing tendencies of these other groups, have borrowed some elements of the politics of “free” while discarding other qualities of which they were very critical. Bringing the Rock Dove Collective into the research served a dual purpose. Firstly, health services represent another way that activists use mutuality (in addition to free food and a free goods market) for radical politics. Secondly, the Rock Dove Collective organizers explicitly sought to overcome what they saw as limitations of anti-authoritarian mutual aid politics. As I will show in subsequent chapters, activists in Food Not Bombs also sought to overcome certain limitations, but with much less success than the Rock Dove Collective. Examining multiple groups from the DIY, anti-authoritarian “free” politics provides the opportunity to see how both complementary and conflicting visions about this organizing strategy lead groups in different directions. This provided rich source material for understanding how activists interpreted the purpose of their non-commodified social reproduction work in different ways, material which ultimately revealed how activists dealt with (or did not deal with) the way neoliberal urbanization exacerbates race and gender hierarchies.

**The Research**

This case-study is designed around the collection of two kinds of data: original fieldnotes and transcriptions from semi-structured ethnographic interviews. During periods of participant observation I used pen and paper to make three different kinds of notes: observational notes (ONs), theoretical notes (TNs), and methodological notes (MNs) (see Schatzman and Strauss 1973). In the moments of participation observation, these were typically short notations describing what I saw or participated in (ON), or a note describing how what I saw reflected
upon theoretical concepts that I had been thinking about or bringing into the fieldwork (TN). Methodological notes (MN) were typically notes about how a particular field observation required a methodological follow up, such as seeking out a particular interview, or asking a particular line of questions to a particular person or group of people. Following a period of participant observation, such as an afternoon spent in the park with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs, I typed up the fieldnotes and filled in the details that I signified in a shorthand format. This not only gave me the opportunity to have the fieldnotes in a searchable and more legible format than my quickly written hand-notes. It also became a time to reflect more deeply on the field observations, and write up reflections—a process of 'memo-ing'—alongside the fieldnotes. The interviews in the research were approximately one hour long (although sometimes longer or shorter), semi-structured, and audio-recorded. The interviews were based upon a small set of questions but were open enough to digress from the prompt where necessary. I used my fieldnotes as a way to prepare for the interviews, in order to highlight observations that I wanted the interviewee to comment upon, or lines of inquiry that the fieldnotes signaled as important for follow through. In these interviews, I followed the method of situated ethnographic interviewing outlined by Heyl (2002). Heyl argues against a 'mining' metaphor of interview data, where researchers seek to 'mine' information from subjects (2002, 370). Instead, she outlines an interview practice based upon the co-creation of ideas and qualitative data (2002, 371). Following the collection of the audio recordings, I transcribed the interviews and subsequently used the transcriptions and fieldnotes as the objects of analysis.

I collected field observations and interviews while working with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs from March 2010 to July 2013, although I had worked with this group as early as late
2008. During the time of the case-study research Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs shared free groceries and a hot meal at Von King Park in Brooklyn every Saturday at 3pm. After the 123 Space was evicted in the fall of 2009, Food Not Bombs lost its community kitchen. As a result, the project began to focus more on sharing groceries than on cooking a meal together in a collective kitchen. Instead, some individuals regularly brought their own dishes like a public potluck. My work with Food Not Bombs, therefore, involved collecting groceries with other organizers on Saturday mornings, then helping to share the food at the park in the afternoon, enjoying a hot meal while socializing with those in attendance, and then helping to clean up. During the time of the fieldwork this process, which typically took six to eight hours, became a weekly ritual for me. However, organizing with Food Not Bombs also involved meetings and socializing at a coffee shop near the park after we finished cleaning up. Sometimes, these meet-ups were official meetings, where we announced the meeting ahead of time and had an agenda. But more often than not they were semi-social gatherings where a small group would wind down from the day, talk about politics and our lives, and informally organize who was going to do what tasks the following week. Additionally, because Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs shared some organizational connections with Long Island Food Not Bombs I also visited Hempstead Food Not Bombs on several occasions, Huntington Food Not Bombs on one occasion, and also traveled out to Long Island for dumpster diving nights hosted by Long Island Food Not Bombs.

For an eight-month period in 2012 I worked both with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs and Bed Stuy Food Support, a short-lived group that spun off from Food Not Bombs due to conflicts in the group. During this period my research focus remained on Food Not Bombs. However, I worked with Bed Stuy Food Support for reasons that were both personal and research related.
From a research perspective, three individuals who were unhappy with Food Not Bombs were the catalyst for the new group. And these individuals also reached out to other estranged past participants for ideas and recommendations. This meant that the development of Bed Stuy Food Support, even though the project did not last long, highlighted some integral dynamics of Food Not Bombs and it was very important for me to follow these processes. At the same time, however, working with Bed Stuy Food Support was never a question of 'research' because I shared the criticisms of those that were leaving the group and hoped to see this new project flourish, as sad as it was to see Food Not Bombs split. From the standpoint of data collection I did not keep research notes of organizing work with Bed Stuy Food Support, but I did make notes on public meetings of the group when those meetings dealt with the topic of Food Not Bombs.

In addition to the the fieldnote observations made while organizing with Food Not Bombs, I also conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with a range of individuals active in the project, from co-founders to people who just came out to the park to get free food. These interviews were generally an hour in length. Five of the interviewees were former organizers who had either helped to co-found the project or became integral very early on in the project. These five interviewees did not participate in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs during the time that I conducted my research. Seven other interviewees were individuals who took on a variety of organizational roles during the time that I was active with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. The two remaining interviewees came to the food share in order to get free food but had experience working with Food Not Bombs in other cities. Like the DIY culture in general Food Not Bombs has a reputation as a young white middle class project. The founding members of Bed Stuy Food
Not Bombs and subsequent core organizers fit this demographic characterization. However, people involved with this chapter frequently expressed that they valued that specific black and Caribbean members of the surrounding community took more active roles. These roles included organizing and cooking hot food and taking an active part in the distribution of the groceries. While some white organizers saw this dynamic as eclipsing the whiteness of the project, a deep organizational divide remained. In the selection of the interviewees, I did not take a 'representative' sample of all the people who came out to the park. Instead, I sought out people who could speak on these dynamics in particular based upon their roles in organizing the process. Of the seven interviewees who worked on the project while I was there, three were black or West Indian Bed Stuy residents that did not have previous connections with the young white DIY milieu but who took some ownership in the project.

From September 2010 to July 2013 I worked with the New York City Really Really Free Market, collecting fieldnotes and interviewing organizers and participants. At the time that I began working with this group, the event was once a month on the final Sunday of the month from 3pm to 7pm at Judson Memorial Church. Previously, the event was held outside in a courtyard area of St. Mark's Church. Beginning in 2012, the event switched to four times a year on the last Sunday of January, April, July, and October at Judson Memorial Church during the same afternoon time slot. My work with the Really Really Free Market involved helping out with all elements of the event: attending monthly volunteer meetings, promoting the event (both online and through posting flyers), helping to set up on the day of the event, staffing the welcome table, facilitating workshops during the event, as well as cleaning up and taking care of leftover goods. Typically volunteer meetings, which were sparsely attended, were the main place where
organizers discussed feelings about the Really Really Free Market because we were much more busy during the market itself. On a few occasions we scheduled a special dinner for core organizers or planned a gathering to make a pinata for the market, and these were other times where we discussed politics in general and the market in particular. Otherwise, organizers communicated through an online email list.

The fieldnotes from this two year period are supplemented with 13 interviews, also semi-structured and around an hour in length. These interviews included six individuals who were actively organizing the event during at least some portion of my tenure with the group. Four of these interviewees stepped back from organizing or substantially curtailed their participation during the time I was involved, while one interviewee became more involved. Of the remaining seven interviews, four of them were with individuals who did not attend the volunteer meetings but who regularly attended the market and informally participated by helping to set up the event on the day of or by facilitating skill-shares. These individuals did not participate in decision-making about the project, which happened at the volunteer meetings and online, but were integral to the functioning of the market. After I stopped working with the Really Really Free Market, one of these individuals became a core organizer. And finally, three interviews were conducted with regular attendees who, although they certainly brought free things to give away, did not either formally or informally help out with the event.

Finally, I collected interview data with members of the Rock Dove Collective. This data includes nine interviews but no fieldnotes. This substantially diminishes the depth of the data representing the Rock Dove Collective within the total case-study. The nine interviews includes five interviews with core organizers of the health network, three interviews with health providers
who provide mutual aid services in the network, and one interview with an individual who accessed the network in order to find health services. This interview data lacks complementary field observations because the Rock Dove Collective, which is a closed collective, did not in the end find ways in which I could become a participant-observer with their group. Initial plans that involved me working with the group did not come to fruition. As such, the analysis of the Rock Dove Collective relies heavily on how the organizers represent themselves, as opposed to an analytical process of comparing what individuals say with what they do. While this is a shortcoming in the research data when compared with the two other groups, the hour long interviews with activists and the health practitioners they worked with provided plenty of qualitative data to analyze. Conclusions from this section either focus on a discursive analysis of what people said in their interviews, or are based upon what the activists said in relation to my total fieldwork within a social movement culture that they were critical of, and in which several members had extensive experience. My experience as a white man in the anti-authoritarian social movement culture differs immensely from the experiences of this inter-racial group of women activists. However, the social dynamics that they spoke about were observable in the other 'sub-units' in the case-study, which provided a substantive basis for their qualitative interview data.

Do-It-Yourself:
The Politics of Neoliberalism, or the Political Culture of Anti-Neoliberal Resistance

Neoliberal ideology celebrates individuals while criticizing unions and other forms of social solidarity. Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, for example, summed up this position when she said publicly, “there is no such thing as society.” In the statement from which this passage is taken, Thatcher admonishes the people who look to the government for help, the
people who demand that social problems such as homelessness and poverty be met with
socialized solutions. Society, for Thatcher, is not a robust government-funded social safety net
replete with public welfare programs but rather an agglomeration of individuals who must take
responsibilities for themselves and when possible also take care of those who are less fortunate.
Critical geographers argue that these ideas provide the ideological scaffolding for the
privatization of public infrastructure (see Harvey 2005). If there is no such thing as society, the
neoliberal thinking goes, then public goods and services should be cut. The social wage needs to
be destroyed because it alters the efficient workings of the labor market and it forces regulations
upon private firms.\(^3\)

In New York City groups like Food Not Bombs, the Rock Dove Collective, and the Really
Really Free Market (among others) politicize care through direct action community social
reproduction. These groups do not directly agitate for state solutions. The political tendencies
underlying these projects are critical of the biopolitical disciplinary mechanisms of the welfare
state (see Heynen 2010; cf., Nelson 2011). In the most superficial sense, they do what neoliberal
ideology calls for; they take it upon themselves to organize communities that care for one
another. This is the legacy of the Do-It-Yourself attitude, the subterranean culture that Duncombe
(2002) argues is the cultural basis of a new mode of politics. Historically, we can point to
effective political movements that advocated for new ‘scales’ of care. Marston argues that middle
class white women in the club movement rescaled the ideas of domesticity from the home to the
city, and subsequently laid the groundwork for the social wage (see Marston 2000; Marston and
Smith 2001). Gandy argues that the community survival programs of the Puerto Rican Young

\(^3\) Hackworth (2007) and Harvey (2005) provide leftist critical intellectual histories of neoliberal ideas derived
from F.A. Hayek's and Milton Friedman's critiques of Keynesian liberalism, a rightist critique that became
known as neoliberalism or a renewal of classical liberalism.
Lords Party laid the foundation for the much larger environmental justice movement (see Gandy 2002). Heynen argues that the success of the Black Panther Party's community breakfast program ultimately led to the passage of state and federal legislation providing free breakfasts as a way to blunt the community support for Black Panther activists (see Heynen 2009). But in each of these examples, the politics of care were not also accompanied by a political culture that values the DIY ethic, that is anti-statist, and that eschews a revolutionary program of taking power (see Holloway 2005).

Geographer Heynen argues that because Food Not Bombs provides free food to all people—meaning it refuses the biopolitical statecraft of means-testing—in public spaces that neoliberal regimes have privatized and sanitized, it is a quintessentially anti-neoliberal project (2010). As such it becomes a challenge to parse out whether these DIY-inflected forms of community reproduction create resilience that is functional for neoliberalism, or if their DIY resilience functions politically as resistance. Both Katz (2004) and Massey (2000) argue that geographers have become too romantic in broadening their understanding of resistance. In this research project, I probe the politics of “free” in order to sharpen our understanding of the way people avoid, negotiate, and resist global neoliberal urbanization. The pessimistic view suggests that DIY community cooperation helps people to become resilient when facing household crises, but this just serves the devolution of the social wage. In other words, the state outsources its functions to private individuals. However, in order to hold this pessimistic view, one must ignore the well-established connections between the local versions of this DIY politics (e.g. Food Not Bombs) and mass confrontational direct action politics such as the demonstrations against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Food Not Bombs activists cooked free meals during
multiple day protests against the FTAA in November 2003—just one of the many examples of
Food Not Bombs 'serving' confrontational resistance (see Chapter 7).

Duncombe argues that the carnival is an important way to understand these political
tactics because they turn the world upside down, for a brief period of time in a particular location
(2002). In some instances, such as Reclaim The Streets and Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown
Army (CIRCA), the carnivalesque is quite literally a party or some kind of playful action that
turns one's expectations (of a public space or of a protest) upside down through theater. In other
cases like Food Not Bombs, a public meal that is open to all serves as a way to turn the notion of
economic scarcity upside down. An afternoon eating a meal in a public park with Food Not
Bombs may not be playful or theatrical, but it still relies on the same method of inversion (and
the same DIY spirit) as Reclaim The Streets and CIRCA. The Really Really Free Market blends
both ends of the spectrum, as the space is designed to turn scarcity upside down through gifting.
But Really Really Free Markets typically feature the kinds of playful and tactical frivolity (Evans
2003; Exposito and Vila 2007) more akin to political theater, such as a game of pinata that allows
people to ‘smash the war machine'. It is both easy and tempting to oversimplify what is meant by
carnival here as just a festive ritual of the senses, or a place to openly and ritually celebrate the
leveling of domination. However, the (relatively) open space that rituals of reversal create are “a
lighting rod for all sorts of social tensions and animosities” (Scott 1990, 173). The same reason
that makes carnivals useful for the airing of economic antagonisms—typical relations of
domination are more symmetrical (though never completely symmetrical) than in other times and
spaces—is also the reason that carnivals are a “festival of spleen and bile” (174). For the political
tendencies that adopt these tactics, the question remains as to how the various asymmetries that
neoliberalism creates affect the efficacy of turning the world upside down.
2

Neoliberal New York and Its Discontents
Neoliberal New York City

[T]he neoliberal turn, in contrast to the narrative put forth by its localist promoters, has created enormous challenges to the capacity of municipalities to facilitate collective consumption or, more generally, social reproduction. (Hackworth 2007, 16; emphasis added)

Should this latter outcome occur [further entrenchment of neoliberalism], we have every reason to anticipate the crystallization of still leaner and meaner urban geographies in which cities engage aggressively in mutually destructive place-marketing policies, in which transnational capital is permitted to opt out from supporting local social reproduction, and in which the power of urban citizens to influence the basic conditions of their everyday lives is increasingly undermined. (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 376; emphasis added)

From the infamous fiscal crisis in 1975 to the present New York City's power brokers have successfully, albeit unevenly, transformed the city from a social democratic polity to a quintessential neoliberal city (Freeman 2000; Hackworth 2007; Moody 2007). New York City's restructuring has significantly changed the lives of the New York City's working families for the worse. Amidst all the praise for New York City as a global epicenter of financial services, tourism, real estate and cultural production, it is easy to forget that the city was once at the leading edge of social services, public infrastructure, and collective consumption for its residents. The human geography of collective New York, Moody argues, “included a public hospital system that had twenty-two hospitals at its height, an expanding City University system, extensive public housing, significant union-provided cooperative housing, rent control long after it was eliminated in other cities, and civil rights legislation before most other cities” (2007, 16).4

4 The “unique cluster of urban social institutions” (Moody 2007, 16), what I call “collective New York,” remained profoundly uneven. Lincoln hospital in the Bronx is a good example that is relevant to later narratives in this research. Lincoln was technically a part of New York City's system of public hospitals, but it was underdeveloped precisely because of its location in the social geography of white supremacy in New York City (see Mullen (2006) for a description of the hospital). As such Lincoln could not be said to have served working class families of color in the Bronx in the same manner as other public facilities serving white neighborhoods. The uneven geography of public resources was a major target of working people's resistance during the long-1960s. Historian Fernandez writes, “The conditions at Lincoln laid bare the severe underdevelopment of
These public infrastructures, both in policy and the built environment, were the target of powerful interests who wished to take back gains made by labor unions in the 1930s and radical community groups in the 1960s. And take them back they did. “By the end of the 1980s, New York had become one of the nation's most socially polarized cities,” writes Hackworth (2007, 35).

From a generalized standpoint neoliberal urbanization is defined as a process where municipalities pursue market liberalization and deregulation as the primary goal of government policy (see Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350; Hackworth 2007, 16; Larner 2000; 7; Peck and Tickell 2002; 381; Gough 2002). It is the manner in which municipal-scaled actors transform the city according to an ideology that intensely promotes individual property rights and market solutions to urban problems. Neoliberal cities, Hackworth argues, are “characterized by the reduction of public subsidies and regulations, the aggressive promotion of real estate development (particularly spaces of consumption), and the privatization of previously public services” (2007, 16). Additionally, Kingfisher and Maskovsky argue that neoliberalism is a “project with totalizing desires,” yet also a project that is never able to bring to fruition the full extent of those desires (2008, 118). The totalizing dreamworld of neoliberalism is:

- to remake the subject, reassert and/or consolidate particular class relations, realign the public and the private, and reconfigure relations of governance—all with direct implications for the production of wealth and poverty, and for raced, gendered and sexualized relations of inequality. (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008,118)

For the proponents of neoliberal urbanization, these totalizing goals remain glossed by ‘utopian’ ideas of unfettered market forces as the solution to, not cause of, inequality and uneven development. In other words, neoliberalism is a totalizing project with an ideal image that masks municipal hospitals in the midst of unprecedented economic expansion in the post-World War II health industry” (2004, 204-205).
the project's real outcomes.

However, while neoliberal ideas rose to a dominant status amongst conservatives and social democrats alike, the project still had to confront organized groups of people, entrenched regulatory regimes, and concretized public infrastructure that contradict the abstract ideals of neoliberal doctrine. In a city like New York City the barriers to a pure neoliberal urban dreamworld include rent control and regulations, public housing, public hospitals, civil rights legislation, and an urban workforce with higher than average union rates among other factors. As such, the difference between the utopian ideology of neoliberalism and what geographers Brenner and Theodore call “actually existing neoliberalism” is stark. “A purely definitional approach to the political economy of neoliberal restructuring contains significant analytical limitations,” they argue (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 353; cf., Larner 2000; Larner 2003; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008). For this reason many scholars have come to refer to neoliberal urbanization as a dialectical process of destruction and creation, of “rolling back” elements of Keynesian welfare statism and simultaneously “rolling out” new forms of state intervention that, while perhaps appearing to be non-interventionist, serve to create new conditions for capital accumulation. “[T]he contemporary consensus is that this 'retreat of state' argument is inaccurate, and that descriptions of neoliberalism should instead emphasize critical shifts in the ways that governments intervene in markets,” Kingfisher and Maskovsky argue (2008, 117).

The both/and model of neoliberalism does not just look at the way neoliberal urban governance intervenes in real estate, labor, and other markets. Theories of 'actually existing neoliberalism' also examine the disconnect between neoliberal ideology, which “poses itself as the end of the social” (Gough 2002, 405), and neoliberal forms of social cooperation at a variety
of scales. “This has meant that many important forms of socialisation have not been destroyed altogether, but rather have been reformed in particular, always problematic, ways by neoliberalism,” Gough argues (2002, 406; cf., Ruben and Maskovsky 2008). For Gough, there are clear examples of social cooperation in the neoliberal agenda. Privatization of governing, for example, often takes the form of business associations or Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) (see Kohn 2004) in which, Gough argues, “individual firms have to engage in debate, compromises and commitment to implement collective decisions—that is substantial forms of socialisation” (2002, 414).

For the purpose of this research project I want to focus on another form of neoliberal social cooperation identified by Gough and many other scholars: the deployment of 'community cooperation' on the neighborhood scale as a scalar ‘fix’ for crises of social reproduction produced by neoliberal cuts to the social wage (Gough 2002, 418; Peck and Tickell 2002; Herbert 2005; Rosol 2012). In this body of research, scholars examine how the state promotes forms of community cooperation as a solution to the precariousness and poverty that result from neoliberal 'roll back' policies. In this regard, state devolution induces crises of social reproduction—hence Bourdieu's claim that neoliberalism is a mode of “domination through precariousness” (quoted in Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008, 117). However, as Herbert argues, “the state still seeks to counterbalance some of the negative consequences of its rollbacks, though often through mobilizing voluntary or other private institutions to fill the resulting gaps” (2005, 851). This is not to argue that neoliberal urban governments only deploy community cooperation as a way to deal with the disruptive effects of poverty and inequality. Overwhelmingly, cities use police forces and the criminal justice system in order to control the
disruptiveness wrought from crises of social reproduction (Gilmore 2007; LeBaron and Roberts 2010). But, as Herbert argues, even the expansive deployment of police forces involves community policing “and community efforts at mediation between those accused of crime and their victims” (2005, 852).

Empirical research on state-supported forms of community cooperation reveals that while it is a feature of neoliberal urbanization, it is not a failsafe strategy. Rosol (2012) looks at Berlin's attempts to use community volunteering as a way to deal with the city's cut to resources for public parks, as a form of “outsourcing of traditional state functions to civil society organizations” (2012, 241) or what has elsewhere been called the “shadow state” (Wolch 1989; Mitchell 2001). But Rosol finds that community gardeners “seek a self-determined use and organization, which necessarily also involves decision-making power,” which meant the gardeners had different interests than the local state (248). He finds that generic calls for volunteers to support the parks department fail because “people are not willing to give their unpaid time for tedious cleaning tasks nor do they want to take responsibility for a whole park” (249). In Herbert's ethnographic research with community policing projects, he finds that citizen volunteers exhibited a “deep skepticism about the degree of state off-loading that community policing expects,” which ultimately led people to think of devolution “as illegitimate attempts to avoid fulfilling basic obligations” (2005, 859). Herbert found that residents recognized that such processes led to unequal outcomes as different neighborhoods have unequal private resources. “Devolution was thereby rendered suspect, because it fueled rather than frustrated inequality,” Herbert writes (862). Finally, he concludes that citizens “resist simple incorporation into schemes of community governance” (862).
How we understand the function of community cooperation in neoliberal urbanization directly effects understandings of political resistance to neoliberalism. While Herbert’s and Rosol’s research show that community cooperation is not always functional as a stopgap for devolution, Maskovsky’s (2003) findings present an even more complicated picture. He examined “the politics of neighborhood stabilization” in the context of mass anti-Republican National Convention protests in Philadelphia in 2000. Maskovsky (2003) found that local civic activists, having become accustomed to a climate of fiscal austerity, do call upon the state to function in neoliberal ways. Examples include working with the pro-growth neoliberal local state in order “to make the neighborhood more attractive for capital investment” or to create “novel forms of policing and other governmental strategies to rid their neighborhoods of low-income renter and homeless people” in order to prime the area for reinvestment (2003, 157). Furthermore, Maskovsky found that these civic activists involved in the politics of stabilization aligned themselves with the city with regards to global justice protests, and engaged in practices of ‘othering’ the protesters. For Maskovsky, the way civic activists condoned the city's unlawful treatment of protesters as important for the city’s growth demonstrates “how coercion meets consent in the construction of neo-liberal political subjects” (159). However, in contrast, the global justice activists did make successful links with so-called “undeserving” poor residents precisely because these were the individuals left out of the pro-growth stabilization agenda (162). Neoliberal forms of community cooperation, even when successful in aligning civic groups with elites against protesters, created the foundation for “a nascent cross-race, cross-class coalition comprised of anarchists, sectarian Leftists, queers, puppeteers, drug users, homeless men and women, the chronically unemployed, and the super-exploited in certain devalued sectors of the
informal economy” (163).

In each of these examples, forms of community cooperation born of state devolution are potentially but incompletely functional for the neoliberal state. In this research project I seek to understand how organized individuals in neoliberal New York City politicize community cooperation in search of anti-neoliberal futures. The organized groups that I examine are mutualist anarchists and/or anti-authoritarians. These are groups that organize local free services as a strategy to build community resilience and oppositional consciousness through moments of reversal that are at once pragmatic and convivial. Because state devolution has caused immense crises in household reproduction, the free food, household goods, and health services made possible by these albeit small cooperative projects become valuable resources for New Yorkers in need. Which then raises the question as to whether these urban activists then become functional to the process of neoliberal urbanization, or if they successfully transform resilience into resistance as they intend (see Katz 2004). Both Herbert (2005) and Maskovsky (2003) indicate that citizen participation in community projects is contradictory, that even the active attempts by the state to develop neoliberal subjects are imperfect political alignments. In contrast, these cooperative communities are autonomous local initiatives born from the global justice, or alternatively the alter-globalization, networks that organized the demonstrations against the Republican National Convention in Maskovsky’s research. These groups seek to mobilize the instabilities wrought by neoliberal urbanization into relationships of mutuality and support that give a particularly radical political meaning to everyday frustrations. Intentions do not automatically lead to success, but it is evident that these projects are a different modality of cooperation as those created, stimulated, or promoted by (and for) neoliberal governments.
In the mid- to late-2000s New York City entered the fourth decade of its neoliberal development following the fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s. While the city once boasted a robust social wage won by waves of militancy in the 1930s and 1960s (see Freeman 2000), neoliberal urbanization has increased economic insecurity for working New Yorkers. Changes to welfare policy in the mid-1990s led to a massive decrease in the number of New Yorkers receiving public assistance, a process which drove the rollback of the municipal welfare structure. According to Moody, the number of persons on public assistance fell “from over 1 million in 1996 to just over 400,000 in 2005” (2007, 285; see NYC Independent Budget Office 2004). Ain-Davis et al. write that a substantial amount of this decrease happened between 1998 and 2003, when the number of recipients of public assistance decreased 47 percent from just under 800,000 to just over 400,000 (2003, 26). Despite the fact that the city experienced an economic downturn in the early 2000s, these numbers only increased marginally (by about 15,000 people) during 2003 and 2004 (see NYC Independent Budget Office 2004). In September 2008 the numbers dipped as low as 330,000 (Lopatto 2010). Researchers at the Independent Budget Office argue that these lowered numbers were not the result of increased economic standing of low-income New Yorkers, but the result of policies that first led to several years of increased rejections followed by several years of decreased applications (NYC Independent Budget Office 2004). Following the economic collapse in 2008, this dynamic held relatively constant\(^5\), although the number of New Yorkers on food stamps, as opposed to public assistance, did increase (Lopatto 2010).

During the neoliberal era, New York City's tax priorities and budgetary expenditures shifted away from redistributive functions towards a developmental agenda. From the late 1960s

\(^5\) While the public assistance caseload has remained low, the cost to the city has increased as the amounts of the grants have increased (Lopatto 2010).
to the mid-2000s the city's expenditures on redistributive functions declined as a percentage of the total budget. Welfare, social services, health and housing made up 35.8 percent of budget spending in 1969, 30 percent in 1989, and down to 22 percent in 2005 (Moody 2007, 287). “Spending on education fell from 29 percent of expenditures in the late 1960s through 1975 to 24 percent in 2005,” Moody argues (2007, 287). As an indication of the neoliberalization of public education, the decline in education spending hit the City University of New York hardest. While the percentage of CUNY’s budget that came from the city (and state) declined, tuition rose from zero in 1975 to $1,250 in 1985, $3,200 in 1997, and to $5,130 in 2011 (see CUNY Board of Trustees 2011; Perez-Pena 2011). The CUNY Board of Trustees approved a future increase to $6,330 in 2016, which would mean a 400 percent increase in tuition since 1985. On the tax side of the city's budget, “the real estate tax fell from 50 percent of the tax levy in the 1970s” to “just over 30 percent by fiscal year 2005” (Moody 2007, 286). In the mid-2000s the city distributed over $3 billion in tax expenditures, many of which go to a development agenda and therefore subsidize large property owners and developers (286).

These changes brought New York City's bond rating steadily up from 'Caa' in October 1975 to 'A2' in August 2000 and as high as 'Aa3' at the time of the 2010 Census (Hackworth 2007, 34; 'Bond Ratings' 2012). While the change from a rating of 'vulnerable' to 'very strong' has helped New York City shore up its debt financing (and certainly helped owners of New York City debt), these changes have had detrimental consequences to underemployed and unemployed working families. And in New York City's post-Fordist finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) economy, underemployment is a significant problem resulting in immense income polarization. Researchers from the Fiscal Policy Institute argue that “no large city is more polarized than New
York City” (2012, 2). Some of this polarization can be attributed to New York City being the center of the financial services industry, with its high pay rates. However, New York City follows the same trends seen throughout the US during the neoliberal era. The very top income earners are taking home an increasing percentage of total income, while middle and lower income households have not seen income growth to match productivity growth (Fiscal Policy Institute 2012). In New York City, the richest one percent of the population took home 12 percent of total income in 1980, but 44 percent in 2007 before the Great Recession in 2008 (Fiscal Policy Institute 2012, 4). The recession lessen the inequality gap momentarily, but the trend returned to pre-recession form beginning in 2010 (Fiscal Policy Institute 2012, 10).

From a public housing standpoint, New York City has fared better at retaining public housing units than other large cities where HOPE VI award grants have lead to mass demolitions and overall loss of units. But success in this regard means that the city and organized tenants have had “the political power to fend off the clamor from local business leaders and conservative ideologues encouraging the [housing] authority to pursue a HOPE VI grant” (Hackworth 2007, 53). Success has not meant the creation of more or better public housing units. As such, the largest public housing system in the nation, which includes 180,000 apartments (and 2,750 section 8 households) serving 620,000 New Yorkers has a wait-list of over 165,000 families for conventional public housing and over 120,000 families for section 8 (with 23,000 applicants on both lists) (NYCHA 2013). The demand demonstrates the challenges to finding low-cost rental housing in New York City during an era of intense gentrification. Bach and Waters found that over the span of 2005 to 2011 low-income residents in the private rental market—those unassisted by the public housing authority—“carried heavier and heavier rent burdens through
the six-year period, whether or not they lived in rent-regulated apartments” (2012, 7). A large percentage of low-income renters experience what is called 'high rent burdens,' where half or more of household income goes to paying the rent. During the same six-year span, Bach and Waters found that among households below two times the federal poverty line the percentage experiencing high rent burdens rose from 41% to 49% (2012, 7). Among those officially in poverty the high rent burden rate rose from 66% to 80% (7).

These numbers still do not reveal the full extent of inequality in New York because disaggregated unemployment and poverty numbers show that the immense class divide is unevenly distributed by race and gender and age. Close to a third of New York City children live in poverty. While the total poverty rate rose from 18.2% to 21.2% from 2008 to 2012, the “poverty rate among New York City's children has risen faster than the overall increase” (Fiscal Policy Institute 2013). In 2008 the rate was 26.5% but by 2012 31.4% of New York City's children were living in households in poverty (Fiscal Policy Institute 2013). As of September 2013, there were 22,000 homeless children in the New York City shelter system, while more than 60,000 people experience homelessness (Coalition for the Homeless 2013; Navarro 2013). The “recession’s impact also reveals the disparities that characterize the city, with unemployment rates and economic well-being clearly diverging along lines of race, ethnicity and neighborhood” (Fiscal Policy Institute 2009). Two years into the recession, the unemployment rate among black New Yorkers was 15.7% compared to 7.3% for white residents, 11.8% for Hispanics and 10.1% overall (2009). But even these numbers reveal more upon further disaggregation by gender and urban geography. Throughout the city the unemployment rate for black men was 19.9%, but in certain neighborhoods this number was particularly high. In central Brooklyn the rate was 23%
while in 'west Brooklyn' it was 46% (2009).\textsuperscript{6}

The imperatives of the credit ratings agencies demand that New York City politicians do not respond to this poverty crisis through redistribution, taxation on the wealthy, increased unionization, or minimum wage law. Hackworth argues that urban neoliberalism is marked by an inability of municipal governments to control local outcomes because deficit financing requires cities to demonstrate to investors and ratings agencies that the city's bonds are a failsafe investment (2007, 17-39; cf., Greenberg 2008). To the extent that any city's sterling bond rating is tied to the signifiers of labor being weak (e.g. low unionization rates and/or declining union wages, private fees for public goods in the form of transportation fees and public school tuition) then city governments will be forced to pursue neoliberal strategies. The flow of financial capital into and out of municipal bonds, which is a process operating on multiple scales outside of the municipality, plays a governmental role in the urban scale. Very few politicians reveal these relationships\textsuperscript{7} and instead neoliberal city leaders blame deficit financing on the social expenditures of the welfare state. They blame working people for costing the city too much money, while the underlying causes of budgetary issues such as federal cuts to local aid, lower taxes, or economic recessions rarely get mentioned as sources of budget shortfalls (see Moody 2007). Meanwhile the neoliberal policies these leaders pursue, such as real estate tax abatements and tax breaks for corporations, reduce revenue and create a kind of positive feedback loop that maintains budget deficits even when social expenditures decline.

\textsuperscript{6} In the Fiscal Policy Institute's (2009) research Central Brooklyn includes Bedford-Stuyvesant, North and South Crown Heights, and Prospect Heights, while West Brooklyn includes Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene, Park Slope, and Carroll Gardens. The former area is currently undergoing gentrification, while the later area is in a much further along in the gentrification process.

\textsuperscript{7} Dennis Kucinich's mayoral term in Cleveland in the 1970s is indicative here. Kucinich ran on a platform against privatizing Cleveland's public energy. When he became mayor and followed through with his promise, ratings agencies that had been previously fine with the city's bond outlook threatened to downgrade the city if the mayor did not sell the public utility (Hackworth 2007).
Occupied Hospitals, Bridge Blockades and Garden Lockdowns: Direct Action Resistance to Neoliberal New York City

Under neoliberalism, Brenner and Theodore argue, “the power of urban citizens to influence the basic conditions of their everyday lives is increasingly undermined” (2002, 376). Certainly the neoliberal transformation of New York City is a story marked by victories of businesses against tenants and workers. However much these victories have reduced wages and chipped away at public goods and services, the period has also seen many moments of powerful resistance.

In the second half of the 1970s activists in neighborhoods facing “planned shrinkage”8 fought to prevent the city from closing public infrastructure. In the Bronx, students and community residents occupied Hostos Community College for 20 days in 1976 in order to save the school from cuts. The struggle saved Hostos Community College, which was established at the beginning of the decade as a result of the late-1960s 'open admissions' struggles by New Yorkers of color, and stopped the transformation of two CUNY senior colleges into community colleges. Riots erupted in many New York neighborhoods in 1977 during blackouts. Coming in the wake of the restructuring forced upon the city during the fiscal crisis, these riots revealed the tears in the social fabric created by putting more lives, and more of people's lives, at the whim of the market. In this governance climate, community groups continued to organize to stop closures of their neighborhood resources. Community activists struggled to save Sydenham Hospital in Harlem and Metropolitan Hospital in East Harlem from closure, a struggle against racist cuts to healthcare which culminated in a takeover of the Sydenham building in 1980 (Adelona 1983, 4;

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8 Planned shrinkage was a policy promoted by housing commissioner Roger Starr in 1976, which promoted “the withdrawal of capital and services from [low-income] neighborhoods in hopes the devastation would drive the poor from the city” (Moody 2007, 76).
Starr 2010, 135). While the fight to save Sydenham was unsuccessful, residents in other neighborhoods did successfully use building occupations to save resources such as fire stations (Susser 1982). These uneven geographical outcomes, where some activists were able to save public infrastructure while others did not succeed, are a hallmark of the fragmented and incomplete way that neoliberal urbanization policies play out on the ground.

During the 1980s that spirit of direct action and civil disobedience continued to enliven diverse fights against neoliberal policies. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was one powerful strand of this fabric of resistance. Having inherited tactics and organizers from earlier civil rights, radical pacifist, and feminist movements (Schulman 2002: Shepard and Hayduk 2002; Gamson 1991), ACT UP sprung up to resist the way the New York City power structure willfully ignored the AIDS crisis. Fundamentally, ACT UP struggled to make the city's large institutions more equal while simultaneously confronting the economic system that places businesses ahead of people. That ACT UP framed their actions in terms of capitalism and the economy is an oft-neglected element of their history, which is typically framed as a gay struggle rather than an economic struggle. However, ACT UP's very first demonstration in 1987 targeted Wall Street (Shepard and Hayduk 2002, 1). The other targets of the group's media-savvy direct actions ranged from city hall to hospitals to famous churches. In each case the message to those in power was essentially the same: your policies are killing members of our community and we will defend ourselves by standing up and fighting back. With their innovative blend of direct action and support networks for caring for each other, ACT UP won some major victories that led to housing and healthcare for impoverished and homeless New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS (Shepard 2007).
During a moment when the municipal state was rolling back social services, ACT UP demonstrated that direct action social movements could force the city's government to pay for services that did not previously exist. But ACT UP also developed direct action tactics that later movements drew upon. Shepard argues that ACT UP's direct action work was the prelude to the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle (2002). Wood and Moore place ACT UP in a long tradition of direct action resistance.

ACT UP pioneered a new political stream by drawing upon the affinity group model used by American anti-nuclear activists, using the anarchist, pacifist, and civil rights tradition of localized decision-making; the direct action techniques of pacifists who physically confronted systems of power through “misuse” of space; and the feminist emphasis on process. (2002, 28)

ACT UP is not typically considered an anti-neoliberal direct action group because treatments of the group tend to focus on issues of queer identity and tactical innovation, rather than the group's critique of the economy and the state. But Shepard (2002) and Wood and Moore (2002) work against this tendency and situate ACT UP as one bridge between the long-1960s era of resistance and the contemporary North American arm of the alter-globalization movement.

Another strand of direct action resistance to neoliberalism in New York City consisted of a loosely federated network of squatters, urban gardeners, radical artists, homeless people, and community centers such as CHARAS/El Bohio, all in and around the Lower East Side spanning the 1980s and into the 1990s (Patterson et al. 2007). These various groups did not constitute one particular organization or movement, but they often worked together to fight the gentrification of the neighborhood. At the center of this hive of anti-neoliberal activity were the squatters. “So squatting, the reclamation of hundreds of abandoned buildings in places like the South Bronx and the Lower East Side, was seen as a defensive strategy to deal with the offensive that was
taking place on the part of the state against the poor,” argues Morales (2007, 195). Squatters occupied buildings in the neighborhood, established adverse-possession claims, and organized an eviction defense network in which members of other buildings would quickly mobilize direct action blockades in order to stop a neighborhood squatted building from being evicted (Morales 2007). Writer Peter Lamborn Wilson, under the pseudonym Hakim Bey, formulated the spatial theory underlying the social-spatial relationships growing in the Lower East Side at the time. Bey (1991) argued that resistance movements need to create Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs). TAZs are spaces that are free from the regulatory apparatus of the state, spaces where people can develop relationships unfettered by authoritarian disciplinary structures. Further, they are spaces which do not necessarily pursue durable territoriality but are flexible enough to skirt repression in order to proliferate new TAZs (1991). The Lower East Side represented something of a TAZ for Wilson (see Wilson and Weinberg 1999). The neighborhood was a space left out by capital to underdevelop. It was wracked by building abandonment. And yet it became a space in which groups of people not under the authority of state or capital created a vibrant place of subsistence and conviviality.

However, the Lower East Side never did exist outside of the purview of the state and police. The city, wishing to lubricate gentrification in the area, battled this motley crew of neighborhood residents over the future plan of the neighborhood. As Smith writes, the police riot in Tompkins Square Park in fall 1988 was a moment where the state forces firmly took an upper hand, evicting homeless people and taking territorial control over the park as a way to restructure the neighborhood for newly arriving wealthy tenants (see Smith 1992b). Despite the loss of the park this loose network continued to coalesce into a potent anti-gentrification, anti-neoliberal
force. About a decade later when Mayor Giuliani moved to sell all the city’s squatted gardens to developers, it was this radicalized community that used similar direct action tactics for garden eviction defense. Although the city was able to take back many gardens (and privatize many that survived), residents and activists resisted the process using organized direct action tactics drawn from both ACT UP and the squatters.

The mid-1990s brought Mayor Giuliani’s heavy-handed policing tactics, ongoing privatization schemes, fare hikes for public resources, and the above mentioned attempt to sell gardens to developers. But the decade also brought continuing forms of resistance. The Lesbian Avengers spun off from New York women's experiences in ACT UP, and quickly rose to 60 chapters in North American cities engaging in direct action campaigns (see Schulman 2002). In March 1995 20,000 CUNY students demonstrated at City Hall against tuition hikes (see Scherer 1995). A month later a broad coalition of student, homeless, anti-police brutality, AIDS, and disability activists used direct action tactics to simultaneously blockade the Brooklyn Bridge, Battery Tunnel, Manhattan Bridge, and the Queens Midtown Tunnel during rush hour traffic (see Kaplan 2002). Kaplan writes that this action, which the Village Voice coined the Rush Hour Revolt, “ultimately involved more than two thousand demonstrators, four rallies and 185 planned arrests” (2002 41). “It was a mass civil disobedience action at time when no one but ACT UP had used that tactic in years,” Kaplan writes (42). This coalition provides a counterpoint to the notion that resistance to neoliberalism has been unable to eclipse parochial concerns, as organizers were able to make connections between CUNY cutbacks, discriminatory policing, and structural inequality. In many ways this action prefigured the mass demonstrations to shut down the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Seattle four years later. At the same time the Rush
Hour Revolt also included a much more diverse group of organizations than the mostly white battle of Seattle (see Martinez 2000; Kaplan 2002; cf., Starr 2004).

Furthermore, new strands of resistance grew out of this broad action. Especially important in this regard is the Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM). SLAM was a multi-racial affinity group at the City University of New York that was led by and primarily made up of people of color and women. Like the alter-globalization movement, SLAM used direct action and consensus process. However, in contrast to the North American arm of the alter-globalization movement, SLAM committed itself to organizing against neoliberalism in a way that was more in touch with people of color communities and the local issues that affected community survival, issues such as police brutality, political prisoners, and the political economy of the prison industrial complex. In this way SLAM’s actions targeted a variety of issues, not just corporate globalization in an abstract form. In response to the police killing of Amadou Diallo, SLAM organized 41 days of civil disobedience (signifying the 41 bullets police used to kill Diallo). SLAM also organized actions against privatization and fare hikes at CUNY, using direct action techniques to disrupt the CUNY Board of Trustees meetings. And on July 4th 1999 17 members of the group were arrested when they took over the Liberty Bell in protest of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s imprisonment (Subways 2010). SLAM imprinted their political analysis during the organizing against the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in August 2000. Kai Lumumba Barrow, former SLAM member, put it in the following way.

This was post-Seattle. There was a lot of energy and excitement about raising questions around neoliberalism and globalization. And then there were some of us who felt like, yes, that's true, however, we felt like we needed to link these issues of global capital to conditions of people of color in the U.S. And we felt like one of the most prevalent places to make that association was related to the prison industrial complex, because you couldn't talk about racism, white
supremacy, capitalism, and not talk about the PIC. (Barrow, quoted in Subways 2010)

As Barrow makes clear in this passage, contesting neoliberalism for SLAM was about the ways in which neoliberalism heightened the use of police and the criminal justice system to control people of color. Although white organizers in the alter-globalization movement sometimes rejected this analysis on the grounds that it diluted their message, SLAM’s work demanded that people understand neoliberalism as a part of ‘the changing same,’ the enduring history of colonialism and white supremacy.

In New York the direct action street tactics used during the Rush Hour Revolt and other SLAM actions proliferated in the late 1990s and into the 2000s. In the late 1990s New Yorkers started a chapter of Reclaim the Streets (RTS), a movement marked by “a shared concern with public space and a common practice of carnivalesque protest” (Duncombe 2002, 218; Starr 25). During the political moment when SLAM organizers carried the flame of working class people of color pushing back against CUNY hikes and cuts, young people versed in the white Do-It-Yourself culture blockaded the streets in order to celebrate an anti-capitalist public culture.

Reclaim the Streets demonstrations were tactics that came from highway construction blockades in the UK and logging road blockades used by forest defenders in the Pacific Northwest. What RTS did, however, was remove the blockade tactic from the protest context and place it in service of celebrating a convivial, pedestrian-centered public space. During RTS “actions” organizers would typically schedule a car to ‘breakdown’ in the street, immediately after which coordinated groups of people would use the blocked traffic to start a dance party. From SLAM to RTS, from ACT UP to the Lesbian Avengers, these were the many strong currents of resistance versed in direct action tactics spanning the 1980s and 1990s in New York City.
On a national level, New York City's currents of resistance represented a microcosm of the direct actionist dynamism that mobilized during the World Trade Organization (WTO) summit protests in Seattle in November 1999. Furthermore those successful demonstrations in Seattle energized new waves of resistance to neoliberalism in New York City in the 2000s. As mentioned above, groups active in New York City participated in follow-up summit protests in the region, especially the 2000 protests in Washington DC against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, in Philadelphia against the prison industrial complex and Republican national convention, and in Montreal against the G20. As many activists and scholars argue, the summit protests in Seattle were not the beginning of a resurgent people's power but more like a world stage for the many groups resisting neoliberalism in North America. As a result the already vibrant direct actionist energy that fueled the WTO protests was further energized by the victories in Seattle. 9/11 led to a moment of uncertainty and less militancy amongst activist in New York City. However in 2003, when the US began its war with Iraq, New Yorkers took to the streets along with protesters throughout the globe (Podobnik and Reifer 2005). The following year New York City activists organized mass demonstrations, political education, and radical cultural programming into a week of actions against the Republican party's national convention in August 2004. The 2004 RNC events, while perhaps not as “successful” as the Seattle protests in shutting down the RNC, showcased mass direct actions in a similar tactical and organizational style as Seattle in 1999.

I highlight the social history of direct action resistance in New York up to the monumental protests against the Republican national convention because the 2004 convention marks the beginning of the era of this research project. Certainly the individuals in this study
have histories that go back further to activists groups in New York City in the 1990s and to summit protests in the early 2000s. But the decade that followed in the wake of the RNC protests marks a period in which the tremendous energy of the summit protests waned, and anarchist networks in the city worked to build a local radical culture on the principles of mutual aid, anti-authoritarianism, anti-capitalism, and self-determination. The first Really Really Free Market (RRFM)—an alternative mutual aid economy of free goods and services that continues today—happened during the week of events and actions contesting the RNC in August 2004. While the RRFM was certainly not the first anarchist-informed mutual aid project in the city, this moment marks the beginning of the story of this research project. Many scholars and activists argue that anarchism has been a major source of political energy during the most vibrant period of the alter-globalization summit protests (see Graeber 2002; 2010; Day 2005 cf., Purcell 2012). In telling the history of resistance to neoliberal policy-making in New York, I do not want to present anarchism as the only thread of resistance. Powerful and innovative groups such as ACT UP and SLAM were not anarchist groups. As quoted above members of SLAM both criticized the tendencies of North American anarchism and organized in very similar formations.

However, a significant North American 'anarchistic'\(^9\) current fueled the mass demonstrations against the RNC in 2004, building occupations at New York City universities in the late 2000s, and the more recent and well-known #OccupyWallStreet movement that began in September 2011. These moments of anarchist direct action are sustained by much more quotidian collective work that typically falls under the umbrella of “mutual aid,” “social anarchism” or simply “DIY,” meaning do-it-yourself. These everyday forms of direct action—I use the term

\(^9\) Day uses the term ‘anarchistic’ to denote a non-uniform collection of groups that share many anarchist affinities but do not all identify in this manner. As noted earlier, I prefer the term anti-authoritarian since it denotes a broader spectrum of traditions in the contemporary moment.
“everyday” here because these groups take on more of a community-building or community-sustaining function than the confrontational aspect of demonstrations or protests—includes IndyMedia Centers (IMCs), Food Not Bombs (FNB) and other community meals, bike workshops, infoshops, and the aforementioned Really Really Free Markets (RRFM) just to name a few. This list includes some of the more well-known groups because groups like IndyMedia and Food Not Bombs typically have numerous independent chapters operating in multiple cities. Thus, they have a certain name recognition. But this list does not exhaust all the lesser known collective houses and anarchist affinity group projects that do not proliferate in name in the same manner as Food Not Bombs.

Often, these groups are not entirely independent of one another but overlapping or interconnected. For example, the former squat turned social center ABC No Rio is an anarchist space in the Lower East Side that bridges the earlier squatters movement with the more recent mutual aid projects. Until recently when the space began construction, chapters of Food Not Bombs and Books Through Bars (BtB) used the infrastructure of the community center for their respective projects. ABC No Rio has, throughout it’s tenure, been the location of many affiliated projects such as hosting New York City chapters of Riot Grrrl, showcasing radical art in its gallery, housing a zine library, and hosting fundraisers for a variety of ongoing projects. In this way, an earlier moment when squatting proliferated in the Lower East Side as housing resistance created a social infrastructure where common spaces or a community kitchen can be used by today's crop of mutual aid groups.

One of the qualities of the anarchist current in the North American alter-globalization movement is a contemporary form of what earlier anarchists referred to as 'parallel institutions'
or 'counter-institutions.' In its earlier incarnation parallel institutions were projects in which activists built life-giving structures outside of the state and marketplace, both as a living model of the world for which they are agitating and as a pragmatic institution that would be situated to step in during the moments of crisis that would likely ensue when state and markets fail. Today, projects like Food Not Bombs and IndyMedia Centers fill that role, although the language of parallel institutions has faded. In the IMCs journalist-activists create and distribute media outside of the mainstream channels, which means that they document news that goes under- or unreported, and they frame events in progressive frameworks that the mainstream media eschew. And in their work the IMCs cultivate the capacity of activists to become media producers and participants, not just consumers. Similarly, Food Not Bombs groups use rescued food to cook community meals which they then share with all comers in public spaces. Just like the act of creating people's media builds media skills, so too does cooking community meals build people's capacity for organizing and cooking large meals that are nutritious and sustaining. While these groups do the lion's share of their work during the quotidian moments of everyday life, sharing meals in a public park on a weekly basis for example, they also bring these skills to confrontational moments of protests and demonstrations. Media activists schooled in the IMC model create temporary IMCs at mass summit protests, where they report on police activity and the political content of the protests in ways that media outlets never do. Food activists from various Food Not Bombs and other food support projects also converge at the summits, where they organize field kitchens and feed the masses of people that converge in a city to participate in a demonstration. It is this connection, where people engaged in everyday forms of cooperative life then bring their capacities and philosophies to a mass action, that leads theorists such as Day
(2005), Carlsson (2008), and Klein (2002), and to suggest that anarchistic DIY projects such as FNB and IMC (among others) form the backbone of a powerful anti-neoliberal force (cf., Holloway 2005).

**Anarchist Mutual Aid, or Direct Action Politics of Social Reproduction**

What new strategies for reproduction will households develop? What types of collective action will result? (Pratt 1989, 103)

This brief history of resistance to neoliberalism in New York is certainly not comprehensive. Contemporary New York City is home to innumerable unions and community based organizations engaged in community mobilizations and legal battles against landlords, employers, and the police department just to name a few. I have left the story of many of these powerful organizations out in order to document and contextualize the direct action organizing that either is overtly anarchist or shares anarchistic qualities. My goal has been to both set the context for the research and to disrupt the idea of the neoliberal era in New York as an era of political quietism. The many threads of this emergent form of militancy, although diverse in their tactics, share an important quality. They are not engaged in what are commonly understood as workplace actions. Instead, they are all forms of direct action in the diverse spaces of social reproduction. Social reproduction, Katz argues, is “the biological reproduction of the labor force, both generationally and on a daily basis, through the acquisition and distribution of the means of existence, including food, shelter, clothing, and health care” (Katz 2001b, 711). Unlike the realm of production, reproduction “pertains to kitchens, families, schools, neighborhoods,” Linebaugh argues (2012, 4). “[I]t is the realm of society, service, and a very special “commodity”—actually no commodity at all, rather: human beings” (2012, 4). The above abbreviated history of direct
actions against higher school fees, against health disparities, against the enclosure and
development of community gardens, and against police brutality all deal with the conditions in
which the city's residents learn, heal, eat, worship, and participate in community culture.

I highlight the distinction between social production and social reproduction because
union rates and workplace militancy have fallen dramatically during the neoliberal era. The
Bureau of Labor Statistics' data on work stoppages during the period from 1975 to 2010 show a
steep decline in strike activity (see Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). These statistics give
credence to the narrative that neoliberalism has been met with general quietism from people hit
hardest. Labor historians and political scientists attribute this trend to a variety of factors, ranging
from organized labor's move to business unionism and political action committees (PACs) (see
Moody 1988), to a breakdown of class identification based upon one's paid work (see Carlson
2008), and to a failure of activists to reconcile calls for individual freedom with the necessity of
collective action (see Harvey 2005). In this study I do not attempt to explain the nature of this
downturn in militancy in paid workplaces. However resistance in New Yorkers' paid workplaces
is simply one place where resistance occurs. The downward trend of militancy at the point of
production does not reveal the total picture of overall resistance. This is especially so if the
dissenting response to neoliberal urbanization—a form of governance based in the liberalization
of labor markets through crises of reproduction (Linebaugh 2012, cf., Katz 2001b)—manifests
itself in the many spaces of social reproduction.

The distinction between production and reproduction rarely makes it into research on
resistance during the neoliberal era, although theorists of neoliberalism certainly highlight social
reproduction in their models (see Katz 2001b). Resistance in the realm of social reproduction is
difficult to measure as a trend. Students and teachers engaged in direct actions against tuition hikes, school closures and budget cuts; neighborhood residents organizing against hospital closures, gentrification and displacement; these actions sometimes make it into the mainstream media but not into the annual statistical abstract for the United States. Without quantitative measures, it becomes difficult to make strong claims about a rise, fall, or plateau in resistance at the point of reproduction. As such, my goal here is to demonstrate that while we know that work stoppages in paid workplaces are down during neoliberalism, we cannot use this as the only metric for understanding resistance to neoliberalism.

Social reproduction, as both a social geography of resistance and framework for understanding resistance vis-a-vis gender difference, became an important concept during the long-1960s era of uprisings. Socialist feminists who were organizing, agitating, and theorizing during what is commonly known as feminism's second wave began to push back against the Marxist orthodoxy of the old left. The Old Left's interpretation of Marx's political economic concepts did not frame the unpaid work typically done by women as valuable work, or as work that the working class movement should focus upon with its tactics. As such, these interpretations did not posit women who do paid work, unpaid work, or both as agents in revolutionary transformation. Scholars responded to these shortcomings in a variety of ways, with social reproduction becoming a conceptual innovation that could tie class analyses to the everyday geographies of working families (Dalla Costa and James 1972; Coulson et al. 1975; Gardiner 1975; Bruegal 1973; cf., Seccombe 1974; 1975).

The women behind the Wages for Housework movement developed the strongest analysis tying gender and gendered forms of labor into an analysis of class exploitation in capitalism
while proliferating movement chapters throughout Europe and the Americas. Their goal, as their name suggests, was to agitate in order to make the state pay wages to compensate women workers doing unpaid housework. In March 1974 Maria Dalla Costa spoke at a rally to launch a Wages for Housework campaign in Italy. Her speech ties together the spaces of so-called women's work in the home and the uneven conditions of work done by women in paid workplaces with the structures of domination women faced in mainstream medicine.

The questions we are raising today are many: the barbarous conditions in which we have to face abortion, the sadism we are subjected to in obstetric and gynaecological (sic) clinics, our working conditions—in jobs outside the home our conditions are always worse than men's, and at home we work without wages—the fact that social services either don't exist or are so bad that we are afraid to let our children use them, and so on. (Dalla Costa 1975, 125).

In this passage it is clear the way the WfH organizers conceptualize gendered capitalist class domination occurring in a multitude of spaces, and through an equally diverse array of labors. For Dalla Costa and other WfH activists, the focus on gendered class relations created a more powerful basis of resistance precisely because it created the context for women to identify with each other and organize. A movement of millions of women based in their shared experiences of unpaid work in homes is larger and more potent than a smaller number of women in a particular factory or industry. And a general strike that reached so-called women's work would be vastly larger than one limited to men engaged in a general work stoppage (Dalla Costa 1975). Finally, the WfH movement reveals the class character of their actions in the way they outline that state wages for housework would profoundly influence the labor market in the favor of working people. “If I have 120,000 lire for housework,” Dalla Costa says, “I'll never again sell myself for 60,000 lire in a textile factory, or as someone's secretary, or as a cashier or usherette at the cinema” (1975, 126). It is the crisis of money, of the need for money for family reproduction,
which forces women into super-exploitative paid work. Eliminating that everyday crisis will transform the power relations of the labor market, Dalla Costa argues.

This climate of militancy and theory led to deeper investigations of the inter-relationship between production and reproduction, between workplaces and homes, and between public and private space. Research by Mackenzie and Rose (1983) and McDowell (1983; 1986) demonstrated that the so-called 'separate spheres' of home and work were highly gendered productions of space. The socio-spatial relationship between work and home functioned for capitalist accumulation. The appearance of separation also served to disguised these inter-relationships and naturalize relations of domination in and through space. But these feminist geographers were also keen to not make this functionalist reading of the gender division of space totally void of social struggle. Thus for Mackenzie and Rose (1983) the separate spheres are the spatial outcome of struggle, not a functionalist design by capital. Additionally, Rose's (1987) research on the subsistence practices of home-owning Cornish miners examined the way workers utilized their house for subsistence production in ways that gave households more leverage in the labor market. Hayden's (1980) work on housing and urban design showcased the same kind of dialectical thinking about gender, space, and accumulation. She criticized the way suburban form concretizes gendered reproductive work, yet Hayden simultaneously speculatively sketched out ways in which the concrete space might be altered for new collective forms of work that dismantle those gender hierarchies.

Still other feminist geographers brought the same critical lens to the so-called separation between public and private space in the city. Domosh (1996) documented how the gendering of urban space lubricated the success of the department stores in New York, and the role these
gendered spaces played in the necessary turnover of mass produced commodities. The department stores, in their need to capture the female heads of the household economy, followed the design principles of bourgeois domestic space in their stores (Domosh 1996). Wilson (1996) analyzed how the discourses of urban purity (order) and blight (disorder) were coded using gendered stereotypes of good and bad women. All of these feminist interventions served to validate and promote the many forms of resistance that were happening outside of people's paid workplaces precisely because the research demonstrated that economic relations were not confined to paid workplaces. Social reproduction became a conceptual tool for unpacking gender oppression in capitalism and the many 'new' subjects and 'new' spaces of resistance that emerged during the New Left era. The Wages For Housework movement had a famous slogan: Power to the Women and Therefore the Class. This captures their analysis as based in life experiences of gender discrimination, without repudiating the class nature of capitalism.

There is no direct lineage between older forms of social reproduction political organizing and the current thread of anarchist tactics, such as Food Not Bombs, that promote mutual aid in the realm of social reproduction. There are indirect connections, such as the feminist influence on the anti-nuclear movement (see Chapter 7), a movement that gave birth to Food Not Bombs. But if we look closely at what Food Not Bombs does (or the other groups in this study), we see people organizing collective responses to the crises of social reproduction brought on by neoliberal devolution and economic restructuring.

In her research on Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC), Gilmore (2007) looks at these dynamics in reference to incarceration. Mothers ROC is an organization that began as a self help group for mothers (and others) to share information and resources in order to help
their children in the criminal justice system. From this foundation of self help they developed into a group that “critically used the ideological power of motherhood to challenge the legitimacy of the changing state” (2007, 238). However Gilmore argues:

The insistence on the rights of mothers to children and children to mothers was not a defense of traditional domesticity as a separate sphere; rather, it represented political activation around rising awareness of the specific ways that the contemporary working-class household is a site saturated by the neoliberal racial state. (239)

Here Gilmore analyzes how mothers contest the way their households are made functional for the neoliberal racial state, not by repudiating motherhood but by leveraging its ideological force in public space. For Gilmore Mothers ROC follows in the tradition of other mothers’ movements throughout the globe, such as the famous Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, that do not petition for a share of the social wage but become opponents “of the state's changing form and purpose with respect to the life chances of their family members and those like them” (2007, 239).

Mutual aid groups like Food Not Bombs leverage the same kind of unassailable moral force about household poverty, redirecting household care and mutuality that the neoliberal state seeks to make functional for accumulation into an oppositional force. However, Gilmore stresses the neoliberal state as 'the neoliberal racial state,' which is consistent with feminist research on the uneven gender and race outcomes of neoliberalism (Gilmore 2007; cf., Katz 2006; LeBaron and Roberts 2010; Bakker and Gil 2003; Luxton and Bezanson 2006; Bezanson 2006). Crises of social reproduction are distributed unevenly precisely for the same reasons that feminists spoke of in the early years of theorizing social reproduction. Women continue to do the lion's share of unpaid housework (see Folbre 2001; Van Meter 2012), and the devolution of social wage has
meant more (paid and unpaid) work for women as a result (see Bezanson 2006). For Katz, disinvestment “has resulted in the serious deterioration of [social reproduction’s] key sites, including schools, housing, and public open space, as well as health, welfare and child care programs” (2006, 111; see also Mitchell et al. 2003). Deterioration, coupled with the utter necessity of social reproduction, means diminished labor conditions for the women upon which such work falls (Katz 2001b). But these are not relationships confined to patriarchy. Racism also plays a major role in household outcomes during neoliberalism. Racism limits access to labor, housing, and credit markets (see Massey 2007; Pager and Western 2006; Western and Pettit 2005; Pager and Shepard 2008), and is the basis for what LeBaron and Roberts (2010) call the carceral state (cf., Gilmore 2007). All these factors place tremendous stress on reproduction, and signal a deeply uneven quality between reproduction crises between white households and people of color households.

As a result, movements that redirect or reorganize social reproduction in order to oppose the neoliberal state are forced to contend with these forms of inequality produced by capitalism and exacerbated in capitalism’s neoliberal form. As crises of household reproduction are distributed unevenly, this raises questions about how organizers will create critical frameworks and organizing tactics that deal with these differences. “Organizing is always constrained by recognition,” Gilmore writes (2007, 191). She asks the broad question as to how people come to identify and act collectively in ways that eclipse both identity politics and fixed economic interests in order to become an “evolving, purposeful social movement (e.g., real class politics)” (2007, 191). Writings about white anarchist organizing strategies suggest that these direct action social reproduction tactics struggle with issues of gender and race (see Martinez 2000; Crass
2000; 2013) and sometimes become homogeneous middle-class 'white activist ghettos' (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006). In this research, I will examine if the mutual aid politics of 'free'—in other words the direct action politics of social reproduction—in New York remain in this register. While social reproduction is not a part of the conceptual language of the anarchistic alter-globalization movement, as the social geographic location of much of this direct action mutuality and one locus of uneven development among subordinate groups of people, gendered and racial social reproduction provides a theoretical scaffold for this research on mutual aid groups. The neoliberal (racial and gendered) state seeks to make community cooperation bear the burden of the consequences of devolution. Mutual aid activist take up cooperation to create resilient (Katz 2004) structures of social reproduction durable enough for people to fight neoliberalism, and different enough for people to desire a new economy. North America alter-globalization activists have had some monumental successes (in Seattle against the World Trade Organization for example), but it remains unclear if their tactics and organizational strategies will develop into what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called a 'new and unsettling force.'
3

The Contradictions of Autonomous Space
What is at issue politically is not so much where the spaces are (centre or margins) but what kinds of spaces they are. What kinds of spatialities of power do we want to build? (Massey 2000, 285)

To celebrate [our] vision, we invite everyone to join in the creation of a people's bazaar—the “Really REALLY Free Market.” November 21st will be a day to move our resistance from a courageous NO! to many irresistible YES's! and to strengthen our opposition to the FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas] by celebrating the alternatives that already exist. Our vision is a positive, non-confrontational festival of generosity, healing, and mutual care.

We call for individuals and groups to organize bazaar “booths” (defined creatively by you!) that contain performances, creative events, items to barter and give away, and other items that express our vision of a better world. Create community currencies; offer gifts of all kinds; share stories, music, dances, ideas; barter goods and services; receive, give thanks; create any other kind of exciting “booth” or event that you can imagine; or just come and enjoy! (Really Really Free Market flyer – Miami 2003, image available in Daro 2009, 185)

Ever since activists put out the first call out for a Really Really Free Market in Miami on November 21st 2003, anti-authoritarian organizers in many North American cities have replicated the tactic in their home locales. Although the New York City Really Really Free Market adopted a policy of no bartering or trading (everything is strictly free), the underlying philosophy remains the same as that outlined by the originators in Miami. In the following chapter I will discuss the history of the Really Really Free Market and draw connections to Free Stores from the past. However, in this chapter I want to present theoretical concepts that help us to understand the Really Really Free Market as a spatial politics, while also assessing how the case of the Really Really Free Market reveals some limitations to our conceptual language.

In the simplest terms, the Really Really Free Market is designed to make space for alternatives to the capitalist marketplace. As the text of the call suggests, it is a celebration of alternatives that already exist. Feminist scholars frequently highlight that the production, circulation, and consumption of commodities does not define the entirety of economic activity.
Proponents of this critique sometimes figure the commodity economy as the tip of a much larger iceberg (see Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999, 31) or as the icing on the top of an economic cake (see Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003, 148; cf., Mitchell 1998). The unseen economy includes a whole range of activities, some licit others illicit. In this total economy, a variety of property relations effect the social relations of work, social relations which eclipse wage work and can span from slave labor to unpaid domestic labor to cooperative labor. As such Cameron and Gibson-Graham prefer to refer to the economy as a “diverse economy” in order to sharpen our understanding of the vast economic relations outside of capitalist production and reproduction (see 2003). Gibson-Graham use this model of a diverse economy as a tool to disarticulate the discursive bond between 'economy' and 'capitalism' in neoliberal ideology, an ideology commonly referred to using the phrase 'There Is No Alternative.' In their action research, they use economic dislocations—a community's loss of a major employer to outsourcing for example—as the groundwork for discursive political education that seeks to get people thinking about the diverse economy as a first step to overcoming economic subjection (see Gibson-Graham 2006).

With the advent of the Really Really Free Market, activists acknowledge the diverse economy—minus this particular phrase—as an economy that includes many forms of gift-giving, cooperation, and care that sustain people in communities. They simultaneously tacitly acknowledge that the methods of political organizing can impart more social value to gift-giving and community cooperation in dynamics where money has otherwise become the community (see Katz 2004, 136; Marx 1973, 225-226). In other words, they assert that alternatives to capitalism exist, but that we need to quite literally make space for these alternatives. Thus the
purpose of the market is to hail these practices into a particular time and space, typically a ritualized time and space, in order to politicize them. Simultaneously, by aggregating these practices in a particular place the activists hope to strengthen their movement against neoliberal globalization. This is because on the one hand the Really Really Free Market provides a dedicated time and place for activists to care for one another, care that is utterly necessary for any social group. On the other hand the emphasis on care and conviviality signals to non-activists or not-yet-activists that the confrontational anti-capitalist values of the alter-globalization movement includes an affirmational and nurturing set of alternative values as well.

The cultural anthropologist Daro (2009) writes about the Really Really Free Markets in her study of summit protests in the period following the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in November 1999. Drawing from the fields of ecological science and photography she conceptualizes the spatiality of the Really Really Free Market as an 'edge project' or 'edge effect.'

Drawing these senses of the term into the context of social movements, a focus on edge effects suggested exploring the enrichment and variety of “ecotonal populations” at the edges between activist communities and between activists and non-activists; exploring distortions in the images—and imaginaries—of what a particular form of activism is about; and finally exploring the boundaries inscribed through popular, activist and official discourse, for example between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” forms of protest, that generate indeterminacy and bias in interpretations of the “shape” of social movements, including who belongs inside and outside of them. (Daro 2009, 15)

For Daro, the notion that the Really Really Free Market is an edge zone or edge project implies that it is a space where multiple communities come together. Furthermore, it is also a place where the meaning of the space and social practices therein is in a process of transformation and/or negotiation based upon the visions of those overlapping communities. She follows the
Really Really Free Market as it transforms from a people's bazaar meant to complement summit demonstrations to a ritualized community sharing economy independent of the summit protests. She examines the way the language of contemporary anarchism begins to fade at the community events where organizers try to signify an open community not defined by any particular political tendency (2009, 198). But she also documents the conflicts and frustrations that ensue based upon very different ideas about the political tenor of the market, and especially disagreements about how to interface with local politicians given the anti-statist positions of the anarchist participants (2009, 207).

Although Really Really Free Markets are typically created by anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist activists, the space is open to all. This structure invites a dynamic where one particular community of resistance overlaps with a variety of people who do not share the same anti-capitalist and cooperative goals. In this sense, Daro's notion of the Really Really Free Market as a zone at the intersection of multiple social ecologies is apt. However, the emphasis on edges and communities negotiating meanings tends to distort the original intent of the event as a project that makes room for positive forms of sharing in order to simultaneously nurture one another while producing alternative economic subjectivities (see Gibson-Graham 2006). The quality of being open—as in lacking barriers of entry to the space and welcoming to multiple forms of participation—is meant to mirror a process of opening up one's subjective understanding of economy and of the possibilities of mutual aid as an economic logic. So while it is certainly true that the Really Really Free Market is open to people negotiating the meaning of the event, there remains a foundational logic to the event. This combination of openness and purpose appears contradictory, although Daro sees this dynamic in a potentially productive light.
The significance of Daro's work is that she refuses to pit utopian tactics like the Really Really Free Market against more confrontational tactics such as building occupations, street fighting, or militant work stoppages, as is sometimes the norm. With the idea of edge projects, Daro implies that there are social and spatial relationships that tie these impulses together. However, the continued emphasis on edges also has problematic unintended consequences. So-called 'edge projects' like Food Not Bombs and the Really Really Free Market blend utopian prefiguration with community survival, thus altering the social and spatial organization of social reproduction. When demonstrators gather for a summit protest, it is often members of various Food Not Bombs groups who prepare meals at field kitchens, who make sure that demonstrators have sustenance throughout the protest. This is the kind of sustenance that the organizers of the first Really Really Free Market signaled in their call. To conceptualize these practices, and the spaces that sustain them during periods of movement downtime, as edges does a disservice to their role in resistance movements. This serves to also undervalue movement reproduction practices.

The Really Really Free Market is an open festival that celebrates a community sharing economy. But it is also a place where people come together and offer free food, goods, and services. The purpose of the Really Really Free Market tactic is to simultaneously make space for positive elements of the diverse economy and to become a node in a nurturing geography that is a basis for ongoing struggle. The understanding of utopianism as political exile is so pervasive that it is easy to overlook the many ways that utopian tactics are overtly designed to help with issues of movement longevity and burnout or conflicts. In other words it is easy to overlook the role of utopian tactics for dealing with issues of reproduction. In this way Really Really Free
Markets might appear as if they have escaped the realm of summit protests. But one function of this geographical movement away from the immediacy of the summit actions is that they become another tactic in a growing spatial network that includes free bike workshops, anarchist book fairs, infoshops, Food Not Bombs kitchens, and solidarity networks among many other nodes of social and spatial infrastructure for creating, maintaining, and reproducing an anti-systemic movement.

In human geography there is an emerging debate about the role ‘autonomous space’ plays in the constitution of anti-capitalist forces. Carlsson and Manning (2010) see experimental utopian projects in this light. Drawing from Carlsson’s (2008) research on bike workshops, community gardens, alternative festivals, and open source software development, the authors speculate that the material practices that working people develop in order to deal with the alienation of everyday life may serve to help communities recognize themselves as oppositional forces. “Joining together to meet basic needs reproduces communities and can lead to new networks of human conviviality,” writes Carlsson (2008, 4). This scholarship probes utopian experiments to see if these spaces and practices serve new forms of class identity.

Carlsson relies heavily upon the concept of class composition, a feature of autonomous Marxism that stresses working class identity as a social relationship that forms (or deforms) over time based upon contingent factors in working people’s everyday lives. A key feature of class composition theory is the idea that working class identities that marked Fordist regimes of accumulation have been successfully decomposed by the capitalist class counter-offensive (see Carlsson 2008, 14; cf., Wright 2002). In class composition theory, the material and symbolic elements of working class identity during the Fordist era have been attacked and subsequently
no longer serve as the identifiers of an oppositional force. For these thinkers, a new class identity will not be simply the repetition of older solidarities, but an entirely new formation based in material and social relationships that are specific to people's everyday lives.

Precisely because so many people find their work lives inadequate, incomplete, degrading, pointless, stupid and oppressive, they form identities and communities outside of paid work—in spaces where they are not working class. It is in these activities that people, who are reduced on the job to 'mere workers', fully engage their capacities to create, to shape, to invent, and to cooperate without monetary incentive. They “work” or “labor” in a way in which the particular substance of their activity is meaningful. These communities may not look much like the working class organizations of the past two centuries, but it is important to recognize that in this topsy-turvy period of system breakdown and transition, new political forms are emerging to reshape the endless struggle between capital and humanity. (Carlsson and Manning 2010, 925; emphasis in text)

Because gardens and bike workshops do not resemble the working class institutions of the past such as labor temples, it may appear to be a leap to place these new spaces into a theory of radical class power, as Carlsson and Manning have done. But Carlsson argues that he is engaged in a process of class analysis that begins by looking carefully at people's existing practices (2008, 14). In the same way that Duncombe (2002) finds that there is a new breed of protest that moves away from the labor parades of the past, Carlsson and Manning find that alternative or 'autonomous spaces' are those spaces where people build oppositional consciousness.

For Carlsson and Manning, nowtopian projects produce spaces where people can explore working alongside others based upon a joyful form of creation, based upon a desire for meaningful, life-sustaining work. These are projects that typically involve a series of inseparable qualities. First, all of the projects place a heavy emphasis on participation over passive forms of consumption. Spectatorship and simply consuming the space or the products of other people's freely given work is frowned upon in favor of freely giving one's own work. Thus, Carlsson finds
that in vacant lot gardening and DIY bike workshops, the primary ethic is that people learn skills and do the work with others; no one has their bike fixed for them at a DIY bike workshop, they either fix it themselves or learn from others the skills to fix it themselves. Second, the projects seek to create oases of common property relations, amidst the immense field of private tenure and privatized public space. This can and does often lead to conflicts when market forces cannot be kept at bay (see Carlsson 2008, 91-95), but it remains a common quality of the spaces that those who build, maintain, and participate in the projects seek a form of ownership in common. Third, while the projects may have a political critique, they typically work to present the space as not already coded with a particular political party or movement tendency. This directive may fail, especially in the way that it is not so easy (or even desirable) to erase or downplay certain cultural codes, codes which newcomers can then sense and do lend themselves to inviting some people while alienating others. But even though it may fail, it remains a priority of nowtopian spaces. For Carlsson and Manning, these ideas stem from people's attempts to alleviate alienation. Through the process of instantiating these feelings in actual spaces and concrete forms of work, alienated individuals transform themselves in unpredictable ways. This is the dialectical social and spatial theory scaffolding the theory of nowtopia. This research is empirically rich in terms of its description of the history and present of these social spaces, but the conclusions about the constitution of new class solidarity remain speculative.

The Really Really Free Market certainly exhibits the qualities of nowtopian space. The discourse of participation suffuses the event. Monetary relations are strictly forbidden from the space, and the ideals of freely given goods (or effort) are expressed in the way the event is conceived. Organizers stress that everyone has skills that can be shared with others, either in the
form of a free service or as a workshop to teach others the skill. Although the space of the Really
Really Free Market is temporary and therefore fleeting compared to a community garden or bike
workshop, the space must deal with many of the same issues having to do with the creation of an
open and welcoming community commons in a larger social field which is anathema to these
relationships.

Chatterton and Pickerill (2010) conceptualize very similar spatial practices as an ongoing
struggle to create ‘geographies of autonomy.’ For Chatterton, autonomy is synonymous with self-
organization and self-governance. It is “always a tendency, a partially fulfilled desire that is
fought for and struggled over” (2010, 899). The geography of autonomy is a social geography
opposed to the disciplinary structures of market economies and representative politics. It is an
idea that stems from activists who lay claim to public and/or private spaces (through both legal
and illegal means) and subsequently turn those spaces into living critiques of neoliberal urban
space (Chatterton 2010; 2006). “What we see among those struggling for autonomy is an
impulse to find creative survival routes out of the capitalist present, through a rejection of
hierarchy and authoritarianism, and a belief in collective self-management,” writes Chatterton
(2010, 899).

The parallels with Carlsson’s work are especially evident in the way Chatterton and
Pickerill define autonomous spaces. These are “those spaces where there is a questioning of the
laws and social norms of society and a creative desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective
forms of politics, identity, and citizenship ” (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010, 476; see also
Pickerill and Chatterton 2006, 1). Much like Carlsson stresses the freely given work that creates
nowtopia as a transformative force, Chatterton and Pickerill highlight that autonomous spaces
become the locations where people become politicized agents. Through interviews and action research Chatterton and Pickerill find that activists see their identities as complex, messy, and in the process of becoming, rather than a unified, romantic activist subject (2010, 479). “A strong desire was to reject simple divides between activists and their other—the non-militant, ordinary citizen. Indeed, there was a mistrust of those who present themselves as social change specialists who know best and have the requisite tools and skills,” they argue (2010, 479). Autonomous spaces take on the role of being both the place where becoming happens but also spaces as an active facilitator of becoming. These spaces are therefore inseparably tied to struggles for radical change because it is through the process of creating autonomous space and participating in the projects therein that one is activated as a political subject. In their case study of three autonomous geographies in the United Kingdom, Chatterton and Pickerill “found that political identities were constituted through the everyday practices of doing activism in particular projects and campaigns, rather than political identities pre-existing fully formed” (2010, 479; emphasis added).

Despite the proliferation of these spaces, research on social centers in the United Kingdom demonstrates that these spatial tactics have serious limitations and contradictions. The creators seek to produce space that does not foster an “activist ghetto,” or a niche community space that is unwelcoming to outsiders. However, Hodkinson and Chatterton claim that “social centres become ghettoized around fairly homogeneous class, race and cultural identities (middle class, white, sub-cultural)” (2006, 312). The creators of social centers want participants to take on active roles in producing, not just consuming, the autonomous space by volunteering with existing programming or taking initiative to start new programs within the social center. “The
reality is that despite hundreds of people circulating through social centres each week, only a handful actually make that space happen, leading to burnout, resentment and inefficiency” (Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006, 312). These scholars find that autonomous politics draws strength from its rejection of Leninism and top-down organizing, but must eclipse some of the limits of their own organizational style if these tactics are to overcome the gap between their ideals and the reality.

The UK social centers owe much of their inspiration to spatial tactics that come from the occupied social centers in Italy. Geographer Mudu (2004) argues that occupied social centers became a political tactic because economic restructuring created a lack of political space in Italian cities.

The reorganization of Fordist production and the transition to flexible accumulation models...brought about a drastic change in the possibility of carrying out political activity in conventional spaces (ie workplaces, schools and universities) and in the traditional premises of political parties. The result was a dramatic decrease in political spaces. (Mudu 2004, 918)

Here Mudu echoes the spatial elements of class decomposition theory, arguing that flexible accumulation reduced the amount of spaces where people could (and previously did) develop themselves as an oppositional force. However, for Mudu activists then seized upon new opportunities that were opened up by the post-Fordist economy, where uneven urban development meant high rents in some areas and unused buildings elsewhere. Activists took over “disused industrial premises, deconsecrated churches, unused schools and movie theatres, etc, which had remained deserted for decades” (2004, 923). The took over these spaces because they were motivated by a desire for social connections outside of the capitalist market. Maggio argues that the squatted social centers are a “fight against the commodification of spaces and of social
relations, and [a] battle for a different way to socialise” (1998, 232). Once created, the squatted social centers become “laboratory spaces outside the dominant circles” (Maggio 1998, 236). Like the geographies of autonomy in other places, these social centers host a broad range of social activities from political events to concerts to educational classes to community mutual aid (see Mudu 2004, 926). Whether a cultural event or political mobilization the social centers emphasize self-management, collective decision-making, and a eschewing commodified relationships (Mudu 2004, 925; Maggio 1998, 234; Montagna 2006).

The case of the Italian social centers presents a more compelling validation for Carlsson’s speculative ideas about nowtopian material practices. This is because the social centers have been more directly tied to anti-capitalist mobilizations.

The importance of Social Centers within the movement opposing neoliberalist globalization processes lies in their ability to mobilize thousands of people in a snap. People take to the streets in their [sic] thousands even for local demonstrations, earnestly and constantly committed to gaining fresh understanding and experimenting with what they have learnt in an effort to make available fresh social spaces and press for global political space. (Mudu 2004, 933)

Additionally, Montagna uses the case study of the Rivolta social center to argue that the strategy can effectively escape becoming an urban activist ghetto through a careful process of political planning (2006, 299). For Montagna, in the early days of Rivolta the occupiers mostly pursued a strategy of organizing cultural events and maintaining a self-contained space “where they could defend their identity” (299). Over time, however, participants in the Rivolta occupied social center opened up to a more engaged politics. At the local scale, Rivolta become the source of political campaigns (against poverty and environmental degradation) and social services 'from below' (2006, 300). While at the transnational scale, participants in the occupied social center
organized demonstrations against immigrant detention centers and joined summit protests of the alter-globalization movement. Similarly, in 2001 Klein toured social centers in Rome and Milan and concluded that the spaces play a substantive roll in anti-capitalist militancy. “But the social centres are more than the best place to be on a Saturday night,” Klein writes, referring to the many cultural events and performances hosted at the centers (2001). “[T]hey are also ground zero of a growing political militancy in Italy—one that is poised to explode on to the world stage when the G8 meets in Genoa next month” (Klein 2001).

Still most scholars of the Italian social centers acknowledge some major contradictions in the politics of these tactics. Mudu argues that the social centers, while successful at mobilizing large numbers of people, do not have the potential to overcome the balance of power in Italy “simply by criticizing the existing state of affairs and suggesting alternative social models and lifestyles” (2004, 937). This, Mudu claims, would be naïve. “As an 'exodus' from, or 'scream' against, dominant practices” (Mudu 2004, 937; cf., Chatterton and Pickerill 2010; Carlsson and Manning 2010), the social centers do not aim to take power in the conventional revolutionary sense. Yet Mudu argues that they must still do a better job of expanding their oppositional practices to include other sectors of the population (937).

The politics of the Really Really Free Market mirror the spatial strategies known as “geographies of autonomy.” As outlined above, research on autonomous geographies claim that these spaces arise from people's needs for respite from capitalist social relations, arise from people recognizing that commodified spaces limit the possibilities for more meaningful relationships and for political mobilization. Thus the intentions are that autonomous spaces differ qualitatively from commodified space. Activists transform existing spaces in order to accomplish
this goal. This means that autonomous geographies are literal spaces, such as the church where the New York City Really Really Free Market is located or an abandoned factory turned occupied social center. But as particular spaces they are important mostly because of their relational qualities. In other words, churches or abandoned factories do not hold the qualities of autonomy in their abstract materiality. They are simply spaces that activists have identified as potential oases of alternative relations. Organized spatial practices convert a variety of abstract spaces into autonomous space. In the Italian case, political and economic factors created a lack of political space and a simultaneous surplus of abandoned private and public buildings. In Carlsson's case of vacant lot gardeners in New York's Lower East Side, political and economic processes created a surplus of abandoned lots. Activists seized upon these spaces because they presented opportunities to make new relational space.

However, the challenge to the theoretical concept of autonomous space is that the existing research celebrates the role such spaces play in political mobilization while simultaneously providing sober analysis on how these spaces fail to reach many of their lofty goals. On the one hand this suggests that autonomous spaces are deeply contradictory. On the other hand this suggests that autonomous space is also space filled with conflicting and even contentious social relationships. In other words autonomous space is not so much a respite or oasis in the sense that they alleviate tensions. Rather, by striving to close off a space from commodified relationships, activists create space that still reveals highly uneven social relationships.

Reading the literature, one gets a sense that the conflicts and contentiousness could just as easily be the story as the successful mobilizations. Reflecting on the politics of the Pollock Free State, an encampment that served as both a prefigured autonomous zone and a road blockade,
Routledge argues that the affinity amongst the heterogeneous group of participants “was precisely not an 'identity', rather it represented a collectivity based upon the processing of differences through symbolic and direct action” (1997, 365). But what of the potential breakdowns of this 'processing of differences'? What of the potential for the structural inequalities in capitalism to saturate these spaces? Routledge writes of different social conflicts in the space. One conflict emerged from women frustrated with the divisions of labor and traditional gender roles in a space that was meant to be egalitarian. Another conflict arose when people who lived in the liberated zone became frustrated by differences of status with those who only visited when they were not at work or school (see Routledge 1997, 367-368). Even though Routledge presents an optimistic view of these spaces, he argues that “such 'homeplaces' of resistance are hybrid, ambiguous sites, entangled within relations of resistance and domination” (Routledge 1997, 372). However, as Hodkinson and Chatterton argue above, these autonomous spaces tend over time to become homogeneous zones where the culture of resistance is middle class, white, and sub-cultural. Here too, the authors hint at deeper conflicts of race and class privilege that are belied by the optimism of resistance and theoretical emphasis on the becoming of radical subjectivities through autonomous self-management.

As I argued above The Really Really Free Market is a project created in the same spirit of autonomy, with the same emphasis on making a place for non-capitalist relationships of cooperation, the same emphasis on self-management and participatory, horizontal connections among individuals. In contrast to some of these other autonomous spaces, it is a temporary space with a specific beginning and end. This alleviates some pressure to maintain alternative social

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Routledge uses the concept of 'homeplaces' from bell hooks (1990), defining them as social spaces “insulated from control and surveillance” that “act as sources of self-dignity and agency, sites of solidarity in which, and from which, resistance can be organized and conceptualized” (1997, 361).
relations in perpetuity in one space amongst the pressures of being surrounded by commodified spaces and social relations. As a celebration of “alternatives that already exist,” the Really Really Free Market is an agglomeration of cooperation. Still we might expect to find the Really Really Free Market to be a contradictory space in similar ways as those who have examined other autonomous spaces precisely because it is an alternative space that is simultaneously open to all.

One major theoretical difficulty with the concept of autonomous space is that, as appropriatespace for autonomous relationships, the spatial tactics of autonomous politics seek to be both open and closed. Scholars of domination and resistance argue that 'free space,' 'radical space,' or even 'social space' is utterly necessary for subordinate groups to congregate outside of the surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms of the structures of domination (see Evans and Boyte 1986; Kohn 2003; Scott 1990). In these theories of space and resistance, the emphasis is on separate space where subordinate groups can turn embodied frustrations with the social order into collective rituals, and collective critique. Kohn (2003), for example, focuses on how Italian Casas del Popolo—community mutual aid societies—were the literal places where oppositional consciousness grew precisely because the factory shopfloor was an incredibly harsh place designed to prevent workers from developing collectivity. Both Evans and Boyte (1986) and Scott (1990) use the example of hush arbors where enslaved Africans congregated and practiced an oppositional form of religious rituals using spatial tactics to escape the disciplinary mechanisms of the plantation economy.

One highlight of this work is that it does not focus on separation as a spatial strategy for planning insurrectionary action. Rather the emphasis is generally on the importance of separate space for creating oppositional practices that are much more quotidian than planning rebellion.
The Casas del Popolo are the location of community services, cultural events, and education in addition to worker study groups. The hush arbors are the site of religious worship. For the scholars of these spaces separation and control over space allows subordinate groups to create collective forms of resilience (see Katz 2004) as well as simply avoidance. Free space, meaning literally free from potential retribution, allows for collective programs where people care for each other, celebrate community ties, and voice frustrations with the social order. In these spatial theories, collective resilience becomes the foundation for resistance. It is a necessary condition for rebellion.

There are some obvious parallels between the production of free space and the production of autonomous space, but also one major difference. Activists who create autonomous space certainly argue for the need for space in order to cultivate political action because, they argue, capitalist relations are ubiquitous and such ubiquity serves to create a material basis for the notion that there is no alternative to capitalism. They are, in the most straightforward sense, looking for a place to be with others away from the hierarchy and social inequality of capitalism, market competition, and the community of money. Furthermore, there is a strong sense in the literature on autonomous space, that the congregation of people with these same desires allows people to communicate frustrations and create communal rituals. In other words to create mundane forms of resilience which on the surface do not appear as acts of resistance but could be the fecund social basis of resistance.

However, the primary difference is that geographies of autonomy are not closed spaces. This is precisely because activists hope the spaces will be inviting to groups of people whose frustrations with the social order will be unlocked by an engagement with alternatives. In this
way, autonomous space attempts to leverage the qualities of free space—the congregation and collective criticism through ritual—but in an open and public format. We can see this dynamic in the way carnivalesque actions such as Reclaim the Streets or Critical Mass take over a public space for alternative social relations (see Wood and Moore 2002, 30-34). Or similarly we see this dynamic in the way the self-managed social centers in Italy, even when they are technically private spaces, attempt to cultivate public access and public programming (Montagna 2006).

Due to this emphasis on being public the politics of autonomous space have been very powerful interventions against neoliberal public space (see Duncombe 2002; Heynen 2010). This is because activists claim public spaces in ways that disrupt various flows, whether that be of traffic or of the many ways public space can serve private interests (see Harvey 2006; Low and Smith 2006 for examples). Most often these actions, when they are in public spaces, subvert the design imperatives of neoliberal public space by enabling propinquity and interaction. “Imposing limits and controls on spatial interaction has been one of the principle aims of urban corporate planners during this century,” writes Mitchell (2003, 140). To the extent that autonomous space is irreconcilable with this particular planning ideology, any attempt to turn privatized public space into a form of autonomous space marks a subversion of neoliberal urbanization and a potential confrontation. However, not all autonomous spaces are literally public spaces, and not all public spaces that are appropriated for autonomous zones are legion for those who control and manage neoliberal public space. This returns us to a central question about geographies of autonomy. How do these productions of space negotiate the contradictory qualities of being both ‘free spaces’ where people can congregate and develop an alternative culture and publicly accessible spaces which are thereby never totally separate from the structures of domination?
Mitchell argues that claims to rights are also claims to space precisely because fights over rights become intensely *locational* conflicts (2003). In his examination of the Free Speech Movement and the public space organizing of the International Workers of the World (IWW), Mitchell argues that these fights over freedom to speak were also fights over access to the best locations to protest and organize (2003, 104). Through their demonstrations, these groups take over so-called public space and thereby make it public (2003, 35). “The very act of representing one's group (or to some extent one's self) to a larger public creates space for representation. Representation both demands space and creates space,” he argues (35). 'Free space,' on the other hand, specifically avoids the locational conflict with power because the social functions therein require the safety of being unseen by dominant forces (Scott 1990). Both are important spatial strategies of resistance movements, but each has a particularly different locational and relational goal. Autonomous space, in contrast, is about the creation of a community of alternative economic and social relationships, which we might imagine require the sanctuary of 'free space'. But autonomous space is simultaneously about the 'making public' or 'making available' of said community. The desire is to avoid the negative and parochial elements of community (see Joseph 2002), including what some people call 'the activist ghetto' (see Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006; Montagna 2006).

But there remains the question as to how the activist producers of autonomous space negotiate the contradictions of their own spatial strategies. To say that autonomous space is contradictory is not to say that it is wrong. The desire to be open and avoid becoming a closed community is a highly contextual process that involves the contingencies of social struggle. Furthermore, in some respects alter-globalization activists faced a pressing challenge in the late
1990s and early 2000s (which continues into the present). The media and the state seized upon the imagery of the black-bloc anarchist bent on property destruction. As state forces equated these anarchist street fighting tactics with terrorism\(^{11}\) (and exercised their 'monopoly' on violence to brutalize demonstrators at summit protests), alter-globalization activists felt the need to play up the playful, to play up the carnivalesque and openly mutualist elements of their practice (see Evans 2003; Exposito and Vila 2007; Routledge 2005; Routledge 2010). The desire to create strategies that blend the functions of closed space—to shelter alternatives from surveillance and encroachment—with the functions of public space (or publicness) is based in these real challenges. However, new challenges arise from these contradictions, which activists must also address.

In the following two chapters I examine the history (chapter 4) and present (chapter 5) of the New York City Really Really Free Market, paying keen attention to these dilemmas and how conflicts and contentiousness derives from these contradictions. At the beginning of this section I criticized Daro’s conceptualization of the Really Really Free Market as an 'edge project' because this emphasis on the productivity of the overlap of multiple communities actually hides the underlying goals of the project. However, it is apparent that the contradictory qualities of these spatial strategies do place the communitarian and collective ritual functions of a culture of resistance—what we might call the functions of a free space—directly in the location of any public that wishes to participate. Certainly this creates an 'edge zone' where activists and non-activists interact, as is the purpose of the openness of the event. In my research, I found this 'edge' not to be productive but to ultimately contribute to hollowing out the political content of

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\(^{11}\) Shepard (2002) argues that although the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center gave the US government a perfect crisis for labeling dissidents as deviant terrorists, the process was already underway before 9/11. In May 2001 the director of the FBI Louis Freeh named Reclaim the Streets among a list of anarchist and socialist groups that “represent a potential threat in the United States” (Freeh, quoted in Shepard 2002, 16).
the market, or what might be called the radical 'edge' of the project. This dynamic, as I will demonstrate in chapter 5, arises from the contradictory elements of autonomous space. In other words, I found that edge zones were ultimately a symptom of contradictory elements of autonomous projects. Seeking out and inviting in other communities is certainly an important element of any radical project, but in the case of the Really Really Free Market in New York City, the openness transformed it from a form of resilience that begets resistance, to simply a form of urban resilience that does not develop a collectively shared oppositional consciousness.
From Free Stores to Really Really Free Markets: The long and short history of an alternative economy
“First free the space, goods and services”:
The San Francisco Diggers, Free Stores, and the long history the Really Really Free Market

You can't steal here because it's a Free Store. Read the sign—everything is free! You can have the whole fucking store if you feel like it. You can take over and tell me to get lost.

She looked at me long and hard, and I went to the rack and fingered a thick sweater. 'This?' I queried. She looked at it critically, then shook her head. 'No, I don't like the color. What about that one?' We spent a good part of the morning 'shopping' together. About a week later, she returned with a tray of doughnuts, probably day-olds from a bakery somewhere. She strolled in casually, set them on the counter for others to share, and went to browse the racks. She knew which end was up. (Coyote 1998, 90)

Although the first Really Really Free Market was an outdoor people's bazaar during the demonstrations against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami in 2003, the idea has its forbears in earlier social geographies of resistance. “The roots of Free that grounded the Diggers, Kaliflower, and numerous other communes sees its fruit in Food Not Bombs, the Really Really Free Markets, cooperative food systems, bicycle repair and tinkerer workshops, community gardens, and farmers' markets,” writes Roth in his assessment of the legacy of communitarian experiments in San Francisco (2011, 205-206). In this passage Roth argues that the present tactics are a new iteration of an older communalist tendency. In order to map those origins as radical source material for the present we have to return to the dramaturgical 'free' politics of the San Francisco Diggers. The San Francisco Diggers initiated a comprehensive tactical program of 'free' projects in the late 1960s, beginning with free food in public parks. Soon thereafter they created free stores, free crash pads, free health services, free legal services, and free forms of communication.

The San Francisco Diggers were a group of cultural radicals in the San Francisco Bay area during the New Left era. They were, according to Chan and Sharma, “an anarchist guerrilla
street theater group that formed to challenge the dominant US commodity system as well as the assumptions of the counterculture of the time” (2007, 177). Many of the Diggers got their start in radical politics as actors in street theater productions with the San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT) in the mid-1960s (Doyle 1997; 2002; Coyote 1998; McKenna and Hollander 2012). Based in a blend of Brechtian theater and Italian *commedia dell’arte*, the Mime Troupe brought theater out from official venues and into public spaces for free or by donation. These plays were “nothing if not topical, suffused with radical content, and enlivened by biting satire and repartee improvised to suit the occasion” (Doyle 2002, 72). For R.G. Davis, the founder of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the purpose of this work was to bring political radicalism into the field of cultural production. Borrowing political concepts from Che Guevara, Davis hoped to create a cultural guerrilla force, which would fight anti-imperialist struggles on the cultural front. Thus they took their cultural fight out into public spaces and began to engage in political theater as direct action. With this idea of direct action in mind they defied the San Francisco Parks and Recreation Commission and were arrested when they attempted to stage a play in a public park after the authorities had rejected their permit due to the content of the play (Doyle 1997). It was in this context that the soon-to-be Diggers cut their teeth as actors familiar with staging radical content using experimental dramaturgical techniques.

The Diggers were Mime Troupe members who were critical of Davis’ vision of the troupe as a cadre group. They continued to perform guerrilla theater in public space. But they opted for anarchist forms of organizing that eschewed organizational hierarchies and the importance of leaders in favor of horizontal relationships (see *Listen, Marxist!* in Bookchin 2004). In addition the Diggers took the concept of guerrilla theater to another level. One part guerrilla theater, one
part street demonstration, the Digger 'plays' veered further away from conventional theatrics toward theatrical interventions in everyday life. Doyle argues that this entailed a politics steeped in the dramaturgy of the San Francisco Mime Troupe with an added notion of free life. “The operative term for these various enterprises was 'free,' a word that in the Digger lexicon was used as a noun, verb, and modifier indicating a plan of action,” he writes (2012, 15). Members of the group “maintained that the desired goal of maximal personal freedom would be realized only when the goods and services essential to social life were provided gratis” (2012, 15). Thus the free economy was the logical extension of guerrilla theater because dramaturgical techniques could serve to create staged versions of maximal freedom in the present. “First free the space, goods and services,” the Diggers manifesto *Trip Without A Ticket* argues. “Let theories of economics follow social facts. Once a free store is assumed, human wanting and giving, needing and taking, become wide open to improvisation” (see McKenna and Hollander 2012, 127).

For the Diggers guerrilla theater shatters the facade of consumer subjectivity. And once the plate glass of one's subjectivity is broken, the Diggers present the social economy of free as the new normal in which freed individuals can become active participants.

Guerrilla theater intends to bring audiences to liberated territory to create life-actors. It remains light and exploitative of forms for the same reasons that it intends to remain free. It seeks audiences that are created by issues. It creates a cast of freed beings. It will become an issue itself. This is theater of an underground that wants out. Its aim is to liberate ground held by consumer wardens and establish territory without walls. Its plays are glass cutters for empire windows. (see McKenna and Hollander 2012, 126)

Digger Peter Berg described the politics of Free in the following way. “It was just a great thing to do for theater. You could theatricalize any social event, any economic event, any personal event, by injecting Free in it. Because it just blew out the parameters” (Berg, in Lee and Noble 1982).
For Berg, putting free to a project “would be better than what we had then, and it would probably lead to some sort of revelation on your part, and social revelation for somebody else” (Berg, in Lee and Noble 1982). The politics of the Diggers was designed to proliferate dramaturgical spaces of maximal freedom—that freedom which emerges from making the satisfaction of basic needs a social fact—in order to generalize the consciousness-raising of guerrilla theater into any and every social space.

The Digger free stores were one of the many instantiations of their attempt to inject free into all arenas of social life. Doyle writes, “The project of “Free” all started in early October 1966 with free food dished out in Golden Gate Park every day at 4 PM” (2002, 80). The Digger free meal, Doyle argues, “converts the quotidian act of eating into a form of theater, a public enactment of people freely providing for each other's most basic needs” (1997, 121). Next, ‘free’ manifested itself in the Diggers' transformation of a six car garage into “the free store, which parodied capitalism even while redistributing the cornucopian bounty of that system's surplus” (Doyle 2002, 80). The Digger free stores—other stores opened later after the city shuttered the first one—“included clothing, blankets, shoes and, at times, household appliances,” says Cavallo (2001, 121). And much like the Really Really Free Markets of today, the 'customers' at the Digger Free Stores “regardless of their appearance or incomes, could enter the stores and take whatever they wished, in whatever quantities they desired. There were no cash registers” (Cavallo 2001, 121). With these spaces, the Diggers created a more permanent location for

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12 While the free stores did not last as long as the Diggers hoped, they did give permanency to the 'free' projects. Doyle claims:

The free store fulfilled an important set of functions for the New Community. It provided the only institutionally unaffiliated and non-commercial gathering place indoors for people to meet and exchange goods, ideas, and services. Because of this singular status, it constituted the nucleus of the alternative society the Diggers aspired to create out of the teeming Haight-Ashbury scene. (1997, 149)
staging their free philosophy. The free stores became a location where free goods hails people into the Digger method of life-acting. Hence, Digger Peter Berg referred to the free stores as “ticketless theater.”

However, the Digger free stores were not simply spaces where people could take home free goods and temporarily embody new economic relationships. Very soon after opening the first free store, members of the group connected with physicians from the University of California Medical Center to provide free health services (Doyle 1997, 150). The Diggers used the Free Store space to host survival workshops multiple nights during the week, which included free legal and free health services. They were especially keen to help the influx of young people who left their homes and sought new lives in counter-cultural centers such as the Haight-Ashbury (Nibbe 2012; Doyle 1997), where it was estimated that 50,000 young people flocked during the summer of 1967. Public sentiment and the San Francisco Police were unsympathetic to the growing counter-culture in general and the Digger free stores were no exception. Authorities shuttered the first free store and raided the second one during a film screening on opening night (see Doyle 1997, 176). Thus, the Diggers recognized the need for autonomous infrastructures for the social reproduction of this new community. “The Diggers also provided free legal and medical services, donated by lawyers and physicians who worked with them,” claims Cavallo. “The services were given to poor people and hippies who were harassed by the police or haunted by the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases in Haight-Ashbury” (2001, 121). Through these free survival programs, the San Francisco Diggers influenced later free health projects that would have a much more lasting influence, such as the now famous Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic (Nibbe 2012) and the Black Panther Party’s People’s Free Health Clinics
(Alston 2013; cf., Nelson 2011). The story of the survival programs adds depth to the free stores which complicates the politics of the Diggers. In one sense the free stores were an idealistic and ticketless 'stage' meant to allow people to leave behind their old economic frameworks and experiment with a non-capitalist future in the present. But these spaces were also durable infrastructure for a movement, a place where people cooked meals and cared for one another. These were strategies for 'bending the scale' of community reproduction away from individualized households, strategies which many other groups across the nation would later replicate.

The Diggers' political tactics were steeped in their experiences in the San Francisco Mime Troupe, but breaking away from Mime Troupe founder R. G. Davis signaled a move into new political territory. On the one hand they were intensely critical of New Left groups. The Diggers felt the “New Leftists were not only self-righteous, but needed to dress themselves in the ideological armor provided by Marx, Lenin, Che or Mao” (Cavallo 2001, 120). The Diggers often expressed this sentiment as an irreverence towards abstract political economic theory. “Let the theories of economics follow social facts” can be read in this regard as a call to action over theory (see McKenna and Hollander 2012, 127). Digger Peter Coyote explained the Diggers' penchant for action in the following way. “From the Digger perspective, ideological analysis was often one more means of delaying action necessary to manifest an alternative. Furthermore, ideological perspectives always devalue individuals and serve as the justification to sacrifice them when the ideology is threatened” (Coyote 1998, 70; emphasis in original). On the other hand the Diggers were notoriously critical of apolitical hippie 'love' culture and the rapacious commodification of 'love' by music promoters and Haight-Ashbury shopkeepers. They
irreverently mocked these trends in their actions. They would picket music shows that were marketed using the language and symbolism of 'love' yet charged admission. In fall 1967 they held an action called 'The Death of Hippie' where they led a funeral procession symbolizing the death of hippie culture as a way to showcase the political dead end of the subculture (Doyle 1997).

As a result the Diggers cross the lines of the oversimplified typologies of the counter-culture. One typology codes radical political action with revolutionary cadre organizing. In contrast this typology codes reformist action with hippies, drop-outs and merely cultural action. The Diggers, the editors of *Imagine Nation* argue, “fused utopianism with (literally) bread-and-butter practical considerations” (Braunstein and Doyle 2002, 69) in such a way as to muddle any clean and totalizing separation between politics and culture. For Doyle, the “mingling of artists and political activists facilitated by the Mime Troupe ensured that culture and politics would not be as bifurcated in the Bay Area as it may have been elsewhere” (2002, 76). The same claim applies to the radical dramaturgical utopianism of the Diggers. If the public theater of SFMT was meant to be highly organized and accessible confrontations with normative culture in the service of revolution, the Diggers’ method attempted to leapfrog a violent revolution and create the social facts of the new world in the here and now. In other words, the Diggers did not retreat from politics but sought a different kind of political resistance.

But how effective were the free stores as spaces for staging life-actors and leading people to alternative economic subjectivities? The free stores served as a more sustained stage than conventional theater, but they were by no means permanent fixtures. These projects were hamstrung by a variety of factors that led them to be short-lived. The first factor that limited the
longevity of the stores was the harassment that the stores, and the professionals who helped out with the survival programs, received from authorities (see Doyle 1997; Nibbe 2012). The second factor was that it was extremely difficult for the Diggers to keep their free projects going. “Of course, the Diggers faced no shortage of obstacles in keeping this production going, especially in maintaining its playful nature as the Haight’s population swelled with thousands of scene-making hedonists, vagrants, teenaged runaways, and petty criminals who were inclined to take without giving in return and who consequently drove out those who practiced reciprocity” (Doyle 2012, 16; emphasis added). Similarly Cavallo argues, “Many free-store life-actors did not understand the Digger distinction between the goods as “props” and property,” (2001, 122). Coyote stresses, “While we developed refined vocabularies to discuss free economies…we possessed almost no tools for discussing interpersonal conflicts and personal problems or resolving the sometimes claustrophobic stresses and strains of communal existence” (Coyote 1998, 291; see also Doyle 2012, 18).

However, the free stores did succeed in arousing desire to recreate the tactic in other places. In this manner the spaces were more akin to what Bey calls temporary autonomous zones (TAZ) (1991), or temporary viral utopian spaces, than permanent social movement infrastructure. Despite the brevity of the original stores, the tactic began to pop up in other places where the Diggers’ seeds of ‘free’ found sympathetic soil in other alternative communities. Free stores soon spread to other neighborhoods in San Francisco and then ultimately from the Bay Area out to the other epicenters of the counterculture such as New York’s Lower East Side. Soon after the Diggers opened their free store black activists created the Black Man’s Free Store. Digger Peter Coyote described the project as “a parallel to the Trip Without a Ticket based in the
predominantly black Fillmore district” (1998, 95). A May 1967 memo from the Communication Company, a Digger commune also known as Com/Co, also makes reference to the Black Man's Free Store. “A degree of meaningful dialogue is established with blacks who come in [to the free store], as they are not expecting this type of operation from whites. Roy Ballard has now opened the 'Black Man's Free Store' at 1099 McAllister, a block from Filmore [sic], doing the same thing” (McKenna and Hollander 2012). Later that year, in September of 1967, Berkeley activists with the Free Church incorporated several elements of the Digger Free store into their budding free health programming (Nibbe 2012). “The Free Church rented a larger, nonresidential space, which they christened the “Liberated Zone,” writes Nibbe. “The Free Church used this space to host arts and crafts workshops and an affiliated free store, drama and music workshops, and a puppetry workshop” (2012, 96; emphasis added). Both of these examples showcase how quickly other organizers took up the free store and adopted it to their organizing goals.

But the dispersal of the tactic was not confined to the San Francisco Bay Area. Doyle argues that the Diggers influenced New York activists through the underground press and direct contact between Abbie Hoffman and Diggers Peter Berg and Emmett Grogan in New York in 1967 (Doyle 1997). Ed Sanders, of The Fugs and the Peace Eye Bookstore, writes that he first became aware of the San Francisco Diggers in early 1967. “They proposed to transform the economics of the Now through the Creativity of Sharing,” Sanders writes (2011, 234). “One of their lasting concepts was the concept of the Free Store, in which items were given away free” (234). New York activists soon created their own Free Store, which also opened in September of 1967 on East 10th Street (Doyle 1997; 2002; Sanders 2011). This New York City free store was also short-lived. By mid-December the store was closed.
The first few weeks of the [New York] Free Store were a time of bounty. The dailies wrote stories, and a wide assortment of poets, novelists, artists, radicals, anarchists, actors, nuns, and those sympathetic to socialism brought tons of clothing and household items down to Tenth and A. Soon the store was packed with Ukrainians, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and Hippies mingling politely, trying on shoes and working through the bins and shelves. In addition to duds, they took home hundreds of useful kitchen utensils, toys, appliances, and things like reading lamps! (Sanders 2011, 271)

But Sanders then goes on to say that the store “seemed to attract trouble” because people were struggling between creating free life and experimenting with drugs. The situation was further exacerbated when “owners of used Hippie clothing stores began plundering the Free Store, filling up their bags with largess to stack on their own shelves” (2011, 271). Ultimately, he argues, the organizers of the free store did not have a structure to deal with 'spiritual parasites' or 'hip capitalist mooches.' But the timing of the free store's opening demonstrates the viral nature of the Digger framework. Further, Sanders argues that, although the Free Store did not last, “the Spirit of Free was hard to rub out, as evinced by the Community Switchboards that were being set up around the nation, the Free Clinics here and there, [and] the Free Stores in places like Woodstock” (2011, 274).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, historian of San Francisco conmmunalism Roth claims that the Diggers were responsible for ideas about 'free' economy that continue to flourish today in projects such as the Really Really Free Market (see Roth 2011). No single free store has had the permanence in space to span the two eras because individual free stores have a very short life span. However, many lesser known free stores, the history of which is beyond the scope of this study, have emerged in the same viral nature as those that spontaneously followed the Diggers' free stores. The Diggers birthed a spatial tactic that was one part ticketless theater and one part bending the scale of care, but that ultimately struggled with its own limitations. This
too, in addition to free goods and conviviality, is a legacy that 'autonomous space' must confront. The history of the Diggers, because they are lesser known radicals from the New Left era, must be explored and celebrated. But for activists working in the anarchist political tendencies that value the geography of autonomy, celebrating the hidden history of the Diggers requires a sobering analysis and assessment of ways in which projects such as the Really Really Free Market repeat, rather than eclipse, these limitations.

Confronting Global Capital, Staying Local: Summit-hopping and the short history of the New York City Really Really Free Market

This November 20-21 thousands of people will demonstrate in Miami to protest the next big meeting of the FTAA. Protesters will educate the public, demonstrate alternatives to the FTAA and show the world that the corporations and governments creating the FTAA aren't working for the people of the Americas. (IMC STAFF 2003, 4; emphasis added)

The history of 'free' that began in San Francisco in 1966 remains a lesser known hidden history of the long-1960s era (see Berger 2010). Understanding this hidden history of radical economic experiments as historical source material for the Really Really Free Markets sharpens our understanding the present. But there is a more recent history that illuminates the context from which the Really Really Free Market emerged. This history begins in Miami in November 2003 in the throes of the alter-globalization movement, during a two-day demonstration that featured a notoriously brutal police crackdown (see Scahill 2003; Lennard 2011). The story of the demonstrations against the Free Trade Area of the Americas typically focuses on the excessive

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13 There is no consensus on the best terminology for this movement which really is no one single movement but more appropriately 'movements' or the 'movement of movements.' I had always understood these movements using the term 'anti-globalization movement,' which seemed to me to make perfect sense because the summit protests were against neoliberal globalization. Alter-globalization came to be used as a way to denote the fact that the movement is not against simply globalization but capitalist globalization in the neoliberal form that it takes today. While I find the term 'alter-globalization' to be clunky, I agree strongly with the emphasis and so use this term.
police tactics—notably pepper spray and rubber bullets—and the estimated 8.5 million price tag for a city-wide security detail that would later be praised as a model for future summit protests (Lennard 2011). As a result it is easy to overlook that, like other summit demonstrations, the mass demonstrations against the FTAA featured a diversity of confrontational and carnivalesque strategies. The Lake Worth Global Justice Group, for example, organized a Free Carnival Area of the Americas (FCAA) in the lead up to the demonstrations, where they designed props and puppets for participatory theater during the protests (IMC STAFF 2003, 6). As the epigraph above claims, the demonstrations sought to educate about and demonstrate alternatives to the FTAA with equal earnest as they sought to protest against it.

The alter-globalization movement is best known in North America for a series of anti-capitalist summit protests which featured a combination of celebratory and confrontational direct action tactics. The Battle for Seattle, the most well-known of these mass demonstrations but certainly not the only one, was a mass convergence of people dissenting against the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in November 1999. The demonstrations featured mass direct actions organized by unions, community based organizations (CBOs), churches, and anarchist affinity groups. Although the Battle for Seattle typically receives the most attention, the alter-globalization movement was active well before Seattle and continues to this day. The Zapatista uprising on January 1, 1994 is often cited as the originary moment for the movement because the Zapatistas revolted against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), among other things, and because Zapatismo ignited a new internationalist politics that would later formalize into the World Social Forum (see Gautney 2010, 40). However Gautney traces the origins of the movement to riots against the International Monetary Fund in the 1970s
in Peru, Liberia, Ghana, Jamaica, and Egypt (2010, 39), while others also talk about the emergence of mass protests against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in the 1980s (Walton and Seddon 1994). Drawing the origins all the way back to these uprisings highlights the texture of the movement as an inter-connected struggle against the mechanisms of trade liberalization and land enclosure, both hallmarks of neoliberalism (see Harvey 2005).

“[P]rotests against structural adjustment and liberalization policies have occurred with remarkable regularity across the developing world,” concludes Podobnik (2005, 56). Furthermore, these summit demonstrations generated their own kind of momentum, such that a “popular protest form that grew up along the edges of global capitalism...became a means of challenging the 'neoliberal agenda' for literally millions of people around the world” (Daro 2009, 1).

The white North American anarchist sector of the alter-globalization movement had a kind of coming-out party at the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999. According to Starr, the Battle of Seattle is significant, not because it was the beginning of a movement, but because of “the entry of US citizens into [the] movement” which was already in full swing for other groups of people, especially those in the global south (2005, 30). “Although maximum estimates of 70,000 protesters [in Seattle] could hardly compare with ordinary manifestations in the Global South, Seattle was nevertheless significant for the rest of the world,” Starr writes (30). Similarly, Daro argues that there were several earlier summit actions “but Seattle concretized the summit mobilization as a globally recognizable—and recognizably global—protest form” (2009, 17). At the time the press in the United States was mostly unaware of North American anarchist organizing. Day writes, “For most people in the G8 countries, the Seattle anti-World Trade
Organization (WTO) protests in late 1999 mark the point at which a new militancy erupted onto the surface of an otherwise serene liberal-democratic polity” (2005, 1). Rather than report on the full range of anarchist politics at the demonstrations (or the full history and geography of anti-IMF and World Bank actions), the press focused on property destruction and economic sabotage carried out by the black-bloc. The black-bloc is form of anonymous street fighting that anarchists borrowed from the German anti-fascist movement in the 1980s, (see Katsiaficas 2006) a fighting formation that German 'autonomen' deployed at the demonstrations against the IMF and World Bank in Berlin in 1988 (Grauwacke n.d.; Katsiaficas 2006). This is the 'new militancy' to which Day refers, direct actionist street tactics along with smaller formations committed to highly visible forms of sabotage.

The anonymity and property destruction monopolized the attention, but the black-bloc represented just one tendency of the alter-globalization movement in Seattle. Other less controversial groups engaged in more theatrical forms of direct action, bringing out the playful and carnivalesque side of the movement that was evident in groups such as Reclaim the Streets (see Duncombe 2002; Starr 2005) and years later in the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) (see Routledge 2005; Routledge 2010). The teamster-turtle alliance is a good example in this regard because this prong of the demonstration featured environmentalists in elaborately designed turtle outfits. The alliance brought together labor unionists and radical environmentalists, two groups that have a history of conflict with one another (see Bari 1994), for an earnest but altogether theatrical direct action (Thomas 2000). This action showcased that carnivalesque and playful forms of protest were equally a part of the alter-globalization movement, that confrontation and carnival were inseparably linked in the model of the summit
protests. Indeed, the June 18, 1999 global day of action which preceded Seattle was called the Carnival Against Capitalism and it prominently featured Reclaim The Streets road blockade dance parties (Starr 2005; Evans 2003).

Alter-globalization activists refer to this spectrum as a 'diversity of tactics,' a shorthand phrase that encapsulates the movement's dedication to welcoming a variety of political formations. Sometimes referred to as a 'movement of movements' the alter-globalization movement courted an 'and and and' strategy. Activists argue for a militant anti-capitalist theory that is flexible and open as opposed to the structuralist theories of orthodox Marxism (see Team Colors Collective 2010). Day argues that the alter-globalization movement actively rejects the logic of hegemony and does not seek to create a counter-hegemonic bloc or framework under which all other groups must unite. Instead, he argues, the diversity of groups and their goals are held together by “the interlocking ethico-political commitments of groundless solidarity and infinite responsibility” (Day 2005, 18; emphasis in original). Day defines these commitments in the following way:

[G]roundless solidarity means seeing one's own privilege and oppression in the context of other privileges and oppressions, as so interlinked that no particular form of inequality—be it class, race, gender, sexuality or ability—can be postulated as the central axis of struggle...[I]nfinite responsibility, means always being open to the invitation and challenge of another Other, always being ready to hear a voice that points out how one is not adequately in solidarity, despite one's best efforts. (2005, 18)

This diversity of tactics manifests itself in a variety of ways. As mentioned above, the summit protests frequently featured a range of tactics from the carnivalesque to the confrontational. Counter-convergences such as the World Social Forums (WSF) and their regional counterparts such as the United States Social Forum operate as 'summits from below,' in other words
gatherings where people exchange ideas, set policy agendas, and build solidarity (see Gautney 2010). At these people's summits, the key is to counter the undemocratic processes of the WTO, G8 or FTAA. As a result the organizers actively court diverse participation and direct democracy. And finally, the alter-globalization movement leans on its identity as a 'movement of movements' to tie together ongoing local forms of resistance that in older forms of political theory may have been in conflict. Thus, South Asian farmers fighting genetic privatization and indigenous Bolivians resisting water privatization and US Northwest forest defenders blocking logging roads and La Via Campesina creating a federation of food sovereignty groups and First Nations peoples fighting extractive industries in northern Canada are all connected. Yet none need to be subsumed to another's fight or political framework.

But all of this openness was not without complications, and the movement stumbled in the wake of Seattle as summit protests and the highly visible black-bloc tactic began to take on the type of central focus that belied the openness of the movement philosophy. Much like the Battle of Seattle had its precursors, the success in Seattle led to subsequent summit protests of meetings where global elites gather to conduct supra-national economic policies. In the decade that followed the 1999 WTO meetings, major demonstrations happened in Washington DC at the meetings of the IMF and World Bank in spring of 2000, in Philadelphia at the Republican National Convention in summer 2000, in Prague at the IMF and World Bank meetings in fall of 2000, in Quebec City at the Summit of the Americas in spring 2001, and in Genoa at the G8 summit in summer 2001. This is just a short list of the many summit actions in North American and Europe that spanned the first decade of the century (see Podobnik 2005 for a more comprehensive list). Each of these summit protests featured, like Seattle, a wide-variety of
workers, farmers, families, professional civil society organizations and the anarchist black-bloc.

Nevertheless the tactics and aesthetics of the black-bloc tendency came to take on a representation as the movement's hardcore. White people wearing black masks in global cities, not Mayans in the Lacandón Jungle or Aymaras in El Alto, came to be figured as the culture of the alter-globalization movement. And with this process, the summit protest also came to take on a central role in what people understood as the movement. “Summit hopping” began to be criticized, denoting a privileged tactic that was beginning to overshadow local forms of resistance. This criticism became especially acute as police forces developed increasingly repressive methods for neutralizing summit protests, as the success of the tactic appeared to wane and the halcyon days of the Battle of Seattle seemed difficult to recreate.

Self-critique regarding the practice of summit hopping itself quickly became a mainstay of activist discourse. Despite the energy, creativity, and skills involved, summit hopping was a practice that most global justice activists dismissed in some way; indeed, the term “summit hopping” was often used derogatorily by Summit-hoppers [sic] themselves, who described it as a practice for the privileged—those who could afford to travel, to leave their jobs, families and communities, and to expose themselves to the risk of arrest or injury—or as predictable, ineffective, or simply “insufficient” for producing desired effects (new kinds of politics, economies, societies, etc.). (Daro 2009, 19)

For those critical of summit hopping activism the efficacy of the global movement was becoming hindered, rather than amplified and dispersed, by and elite class of activist able to fly around the globe to protests yet lacking a deep connection to place and local economic justice (see Martinez 2000; Kaplan 2002 for a North American take on this dynamic; cf., Starr 2004).

This is the contemporary political context from which the Really Really Free Market emerged, a context in which the movement valued the 'diversity of tactics' in theory but in practice the black-bloc (and summit protests) seemed to take on a central role. Daro documents
the first Really Really Free Market in Miami in November 2003 during the summit protest against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas meeting. The first Really Really Free Market took place on the periphery of the confrontational direct action tactics that resulted in altercations with Miami police. Much of the language of the call for participation, the location, and the day of the event (the day after the most confrontational protests) all point to the Really Really Free Market as a concerted effort to be a more celebratory, healing, and communitarian form of direct action (see Daro 2009). These celebratory elements were not presented as contra those other forms of direct action, as if the Really Really Free Market organizers were against confrontation. Rather, these elements point to the notion that the confrontational protests are necessary but in some ways incomplete without elements of mutual care and support. In other words, the whole framing of the event stressed the importance of place-based, mutually supportive environments that prefigure the kind of economy that the militancy seeks to make possible.

The first Really Really Free Market mimicked a spatial strategy known as Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZs) that were frequently organized around the periphery of the street fighting at summit protests (Daro 2009; Bey 1991; cf., Starr 2005, 121-124). Organizers set up TAZs in interstitial spaces close to but still outside of the major conflict zones, creating a space where people converge in order to sleep, eat, recuperate, dance, laugh, testify against police brutality, and drum just to name a few activities. At these summit protests the 'geography of survival' (see Mitchell and Heynen 2009) for activists consists of an elaborate network of homes and support spaces where people sleep, eat, socialize, educate themselves, or train one another in direct action tactics or street medic support. The TAZs, which make up one node in a summit protest geography of social reproduction, brought the nurturing and social elements of
reproduction together in one place. These spaces also brought an element of utopian festivity and the carnivalesque to the intense confrontational space of the demonstrations. This provides respite for weary activists engaged in street battles with the police, while also creating a more sheltered zone of participation for those unwilling or unable to engage in the confrontational direct actions.

The Really Really Free Market, like the TAZ tactic, collectivizes and spatially centralizes a series of social reproduction functions that demonstrators need. This is the inseparably social, psychological and biological nourishment that comes with a collective event filled with free goods, food, skills, services, and entertainment. Much like the Digger free stores sought to both stage transformational theater and simultaneously serve basic needs in the same space, the Really Really Free Market also blends the same goals of carnival and survival. Summit protesters, especially visitors who do not live in the host city with no local networks to tap into, still require all these elements of social reproduction if they are to be reproduced as summit protesters during that week and into the future. The simple fact of social reproduction at mass demonstrations cannot be overlooked. The mass mobilizations at summit demonstrations included “well-organized structures for coordinating across diverse activist contingents, and for meeting the basic needs of protesters” (Daro 2009, 1; emphasis added). The demonstrations against the FTAA were no different in this regard, as activists organized a welcome center in order to host “trainings, meetings, free food, a wellness center, independent media, art space and more!” (IMC STAFF 2003, 7). This support for basic needs included street medics, a legal collective, and Food Not Bombs “providing two meals each day at the Welcome Center” (7). The first Really Really Free Market followed the mass demonstrations that this support work made possible. The Really
Really Free Market celebrated alternatives to the capitalist market, and made space for those in attendance to support one another through an open-ended gift economy. Like the TAZs of early summit protests, the Really Really Free Market contributes to producing and reproducing the people who will continue to engage in the direct actions.

In this way The Really Really Free Market brought the energy and spirit of larger alternative gift economies, such as Burning Man and the Rainbow Gathering, to bear upon a much more confrontational space. Whereas those gift economies are explicitly removed from the spaces of direct confrontations with global capitalism, the Miami Really Really Free Market invited people to allow the confrontational and festival tactics to feed into each other. The Miami Really Really Free Market embodied all of these elements. Daro describes it in the following way.

The atmosphere was celebratory. There were free cookies, free hugs, various forms of free music, and an expansive and chaotic arts and crafts area. There was an ongoing Pagan healing ceremony, all kinds of free activist literature, and free advice. A surprising number of people came prepared with something to give away, but most people came out of curiosity to see what it was about. (2009, 187)

The Really Really Free Market created another “yes” alongside the “no” that was the protests against the free trade agenda on the table in Miami. Furthermore, the organizers worked against the idea that the movement was becoming overly focused on street fighting at the expense of a balance between 'oppositional' and 'propositional' tactics (see Cornell 2011).

In the aftermath of Miami, the Really Really Free Market tactic continued to grow. Very soon after the first Really Really Free Market, alter-globalization activists organized others at summits and demonstrations in 2004. In early June of 2004 two Really Really Free Markets were held on opposite coasts, one in Raleigh in solidarity with summit protests against the G8 on Sea
Island, GA (Daro 2009; Seymour 2004) and the other in San Francisco in protest against the BIO 2004 international biotechnology convention (Hua 2004; Simpich 2004). The San Francisco Chronicle reports that about “500 people thronged the 'really really free market' in Union Square —part carnival, part swap meet, part be-in—that espoused the principle of a 'gift economy,' or things given away without the expectation of return” (Hua 2004). An IndyMedia reporter wrote the following after the San Francisco event.

At presstime, no complete report of all the activities going on, but they included plants, seeds, vegetables, clothes, books, spoken word, a complete art attack, comedy, music, stilts, dancing, tarot, hypnotherapy, massage, rental advice, political organizing, and, of course, [sic] chocolate which had the way-uptight-Union Square-security up in arms (and, admittedly, laughing later) about a very sweet mess. (Simpich 2004)

Organizers designed the Raleigh, NC event on June 12, 2004 to be a potential stop for those leaving the summit protests which were in Savannah, GA (while the summit took place on Sea Island, GA). “Local artists, activists, and community members will gather at Chavis Park in Raleigh on June 12 for a festive manifestation of cooperative values,” read the website for the event (quoted in Daro 2009, 189). In the promotional material for this Really Really Free Market, the organizers referenced the Miami event the previous fall. They explicitly made an appeal to those leaving the summit protest, offering the Really Really Free Market as a democratic space in contrast to the exclusivity of the G8 meetings and also a space that provides sustenance to those not engaged in dissent. “Rather than a protest against the injustices of the so-called free market and the fat cats who benefit from it, this will be a celebration of the cooperation and gift-giving that make life possible beyond the constraints of mere economics,” the website continued (see Daro 2009, 189). The Raleigh Really Really Free Market foreshadowed the manner in which these events became community-based gift-economies
geographically and temporally independent of the summit protests, while the tactic did continue to flourish at summit demonstrations.

Despite the emphasis on celebration and the location away from the protests, the Raleigh Really Really Free Market was policed heavily as if it were a confrontational mass summit demonstration. Seymour reported on this dynamic by emphasizing the bizarre contrast between the goings-on at the event and the presence of the police.

The description on the permit application had called The Really Really Free Market ‘a festival of performances, art and gift exchange to celebrate the spirit of community sharing’ and that’s exactly what it turned out to be. No money changed hands: everything at The Really Really Free Market was, in fact, really really free. People set up blankets and rugs under the trees...and spread out their old books, clothing, stuffed animals, and homemade crafts. A concrete platform near the entrance to the park became an ad hoc buffet table as people laid out trays of food and baskets of produce from their gardens to share. As the peaceful afternoon progressed with fresh-baked vegan muffins, free massages, a bike repair workshop, face painting and wildflower bouquets the bizarre police response took on an increasingly surreal character. Several stories up in a building across the street a police officer was visibly videotaping; down in the park people were square dancing to the music of a string band set up under an oak tree. (Seymour 2004)

This disconnect between the police presence (which also occurred at the first Really Really Free Market) and the event as a congregation of gift-giving in an affirmational social space demonstrates the extent to which the authorities perceived the white North American anarchist culture as a threat.

By fall 2004 the Really Really Free Market tactic had clearly caught on with the white sector of the alter-globalization movement, the same sector that struggled with the centrality of the black-bloc and police repression at summit actions. This is not to say that the Really Really Free Market allowed activists to eclipse those dynamics, which it did not, but that it became one affirmational tactic this sector took up earnestly. Following the June events in Raleigh and San
Francisco, organizers staged a Really Really Democratic Bazaar in July in Boston during the Democratic National Convention (CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective N. D.; Archer 2004). Though using the slightly altered name, the event followed the same basic blueprint of earlier Really Really Free Markets.

And on the Boston Common, approximately 2500 people of all flavors celebrated "another world is possible" while ignoring the police. Live music on two stages, free haircuts, free massages, free bikes, and free hugs were just several of the ways people expressed their commitment to the creation of community and the living protest to consumptive living. (Archer 2004)

Additionally New York activists organized a Really Really Free Market on August 21st 2004 during mass protests against the Republican National Convention (Trocchi 2004). This event was the first Really Really Free Market in New York City, which would later become an annual, then monthly event.

Later in 2004 residents of Carrboro, NC hosted a Really Really Free Market both geographically and temporally unrelated to any particular alter-globalization summit action. The project grew out of meetings of individuals who were in Miami during the FTAA, and who were looking to develop local projects. Thus the Carrboro event came directly from experiences people had at previous Really Really Free Markets, combined with a desire to make the concept flexible enough to be a community event tout court (as opposed to a community event at a summit demonstration). Organizers, through some back and forth, developed promotional content that focused on “alternative economies', and not on global trade agreements, globalization, or consumer culture” (Daro 2009, 198). Details of the organizing process reveal the choices that were made in order to make the event more open and inviting.

Although we agreed fairly easily on leaving out the phrase “Calling all anarchists” (which was how the Raleigh email announcement began), we decided to
incorporate the idea of ‘self-organization’ and insinuate the idea of ‘autonomy’ (“all are encouraged to give, receive, and create on their own terms”; “not corporately sponsored or institutionally organized”), both of which are central anarchist principles. (198)

This passage reveals very clearly the strategies that one particular group used as a way open up the geography of autonomy (e.g. the overt anti-free trade anarchism of the summit Really Really Free Markets) to communities that do not share the same politics and who might otherwise have been turned off by certain anarchist discursive tropes.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Daro frames the Really Really Free Market as an 'edge project' where the social ecologies of activists and non-activists come together, a zone of overlapping communities.

What I am calling summit hopping “edge projects” are those projects that activists developed (or revived) in direct relation to summit protests, but which extended beyond summit settings. These were projects developed by alter-globalization activists and/or their predecessors that carried the ideas, critiques, proposals, practices, and relationships cultivated through summit hopping activity into other arenas. Edge projects often mobilized people who might not have participated in alter-globalization activities otherwise, and they activated already mobilized people in new ways. (Daro 2009, 180)

For Daro the Really Really Free Market in Carrboro, NC showcases how the tactic began to 'extend beyond summit settings,' even while the many other budding Really Really Free Markets in 2004 remained connected to mass demonstrations. This process brought the life-affirming non-capitalist elements of the alter-globalization movement into the everyday lives of people who would otherwise not participate in anti-capitalist actions.

The New York City Really Really Market, along with many others in North America, followed the model set out in Carrboro to make the project an autonomous space independent of summit protests. Certainly, older projects like Food Not Bombs and Reclaim the Streets also
provided a sense of how to model local DIY tactics in a regular manner. In New York City, Benedetto (2005) documented the activities of the second annual Halloween Really Really Free Market in October 2005 in the courtyard of St. Mark’s Church, which featured free goods, free literature, stenciling, free massage, and a ‘US army’ pinata. From the first event in 2004 to fall 2008 the Really Really Free Market was held on an annual or at times semi-annual basis as the church (Moynihan 2009). Those that I interviewed spoke favorably of those past events. Describing her first experience at one of the early Really Really Free Markets, Jaime told me that “it was very disorganized in a nice way,” an answer which made me laugh (Jaime 2012). She then explained what she meant.

[I]n the yard of this church there were towels and tarps set up and sometimes nothing at all. And people kind of strew their things out in various ways and some people put their things up near similar items and some people didn't and some people just had you could tell this was all the belongings of one particular person or it seemed like it was. (Jaime 2012)

Similarly, Henrietta spoke to me about how the early Really Really Free Markets in New York engendered a level of social interaction that she enjoyed.

At the time what was being done was people would bring their own stuff and lay it out themselves and kind of hang out like flea market style but Free Market. And I liked that model a lot because I felt like I got a lot of interaction with people who were getting my stuff. You know that we would talk, that I would be able to say things about what this was or that was, it felt like a really great way to let go of my stuff, really enjoyable way to let go of my stuff. (Henrietta 2012)

Henrietta emphasized a palpable excitement that permeated the event during this period, which inspired those in attendance and provoked a lot of spontaneous participation. “People would spontaneously volunteer, very similar to how it happened at Zuccotti Park” (Henrietta 2012). For Henrietta, the palpable sense of reciprocity gave value to the work that she was doing at the

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14 Zuccotti Park is a reference to the lower Manhattan park occupied for two months from September to November in 2011.
market: preparing free food for those in attendance.

In the fall of 2008 the New York City Really Really Free Market became a monthly event (Moynihan 2009), and the following January it relocated to Judson Memorial Church where it is still today. In fall 2010 when I became a regular volunteer in the informal group of core organizers, the Really Really Free Markets were happening once a month on the final Sunday of the month. However, due to a lack of new volunteers and dwindling organizing capacity, we shifted the frequency to four times a year beginning in January 2012, a frequency that stands today.

In the following chapter, I analyze my observations and interviews while organizing the Really Really Free Market in New York City. While Daro focused on the productivity of the 'edges' that the Carrboro Really Really Free Market created, I observed a trend where the New York City Really Really Free Market lost almost all of its radical political content. I found a social and spatial process where the community of people who envisioned alternatives to capitalist modes of exchange as a potent politics grew to either outright dislike or feel very tepid about the political possibilities of the Really Really Free Market. Rather than finding that the autonomous space of the market—the agglomeration of existing alternatives in one celebratory space—contributed to the efflorescence of non-capitalist economic alternatives (Gibson-Graham 2006), I found that the project struggled mightily with destructive social relations that were difficult to keep out of the space given the organizing model. In her conclusions about the Carrboro Really Really Free Market, Daro claims that there were many other stories that she could have told, including stories that focused more on conflicting relationships between the overlapping communities as the market. In New York, the contradictions of the Really Really
Free Market's 'geography of autonomy' made it difficult to not focus on some of these conflicts.
It's Environmental, Not Political:
The case of the Really Really Free Market New York City
The 'Politics' of the Really Really Free Market NYC

Acts of resilience and instances of reworking often provide the groundwork for stronger responses, but so, too, can an organized oppositional movement, for instance, create the political space or opportunity for various autonomous initiatives—the restorative and strengthening acts of what I am calling resilience. While each of these responses is necessarily situated, it is possible, and indeed important, to build upon and across them so as to oppose the mutable structures and forces of oppression and exploitation in ways that both transcend the particularities of location and “jump” geographic scale, both of which are necessary to match the fluidity and reach of globalized capitalism. (Katz 2004 242-243)

I arrived about 20 minutes late to the meeting, which was supposed to start at 7 o’clock. The mid-April weather was cool. And it was just drizzling where you could feel the precipitation but you did not need an umbrella. I was shocked to see Henrietta at the meeting of core organizers because in the past she said that she is frustrated with the Really Really Free Market and did not want to be centrally involved. As I learned pretty quickly, Henrietta was not actually there for the meeting. She was leaving an earlier engagement but had stayed around to chat with the Really Really Free Market organizers.

The meeting had not formally started but people talked about how to deal with hoarders at the market, a now frequent conversation at the meetings where we debrief the previous Really Really Free Market and plan upcoming ones. “If only there was a way to ban those crazy people who accumulate,” Liza said. Henrietta, who was initially standing and about to leave, was now sitting down opposite me in the little circle of the meeting. “You can ban people,” she said. I sensed that Henrietta had gotten caught in a topic she feels passionate about, which took precedent over her intention to leave. She went on to tell us that this same topic—the question of

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15 This section is based upon interviews and participant observation. Individual's names have been changed for the purpose of anonymity.
16 I hope here not to misrepresent Liza as a cold person, which she is anything but. Rather, this statement came from a place of longterm frustration with experimentation with how to best cultivate cooperation in a market which is not based upon money.
banning people who are not following a mutualist ethic—had come up in the #Occupy movement. The conclusion in her circles was that no group should feel like they cannot ban someone. There is no “ban on banning,” she said. Her tone also communicated that we should use this strategy with respect to hoarders at the Really Really Free Market. Finally, Henrietta said that she does not come at the beginning of the market (around 3 pm when it opens) because the “feeding frenzy” of people trying to get free things makes it evident to her that the market does not live up to what it claims to be about, a space to engage in alternatives to capitalist social relations.

It was talking to Henrietta at the May 2011 Really Really Free Market that I first began to get a sense of her criticism. She said that she hoped to see more workshops and skill-shares because they help to make what’s ‘free’ in the space more about mutual aid than the other form of ‘free’ which affirms “the commodity fetish.” I mentioned to her that I also felt that the longer term sustainability of the organizers also relied on the Really Really Free Market being a space that was much more palpably about mutual aid and less about free stuff. She responded to this with an anecdote. Her partner decided not to bring a particular item of clothing to the market because it was “too nice” for the Really Really Free Market. He wished to give it to someone more meaningful than someone at the Really Really Free Market who was taking things simply to hoard them. If her partner is feeling it, Henrietta argued, then it seemed likely that other people had similar thoughts.

Henrietta left the meeting after she expressed her opinion about banning people. Both Liza and Peter appeared to feel a little bit liberated by what Henrietta was saying. It was evident that they felt that Alice's anti-authoritarian politics was an obstacle to banning people, and
Henrietta had just validated a position they were willing to support. Alice is not at the meeting this night, so the whole conversation took place without her input. However, we were not going to make a decision on the topic without Alice, so we gradually shifted to topics on the meeting agenda. I was uncomfortable with the way the conversation unfolded because it highlighted that some members of our group of core organizers come from an anti-authoritarian organizing perspective while others do not.17.

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During the time I spent organizing the Really Really Free Market in New York City I found that the market became increasingly less a political project and more a politically neutral community economy, albeit one that remained helpful for people facing the vicissitudes of neoliberal New York City. In the conceptual language of Katz, the Really Really Free Market began as a mode of reworking which was made possible by the resistance of an oppositional movement, which was meant to serve the movement as (temporary) lived proposal for a new economy (see Chapter 4). But the project shifted to a form of reworking which was increasingly divorced from any oppositional force or movement.

I found that the maintenance of the market as reworking in the service of resistance—a place where reworking the scales of community cooperation serves the needs of a community engaged in resistance—was predicated upon the continued presence of the politically conscious radical community that started the Really Really Free Market. Further, I found that the continual reproduction of the market as a political space is predicated upon the reproduction of a radical organizing committee that commits itself to doing the extra work needed to make an otherwise

17 This vignette is written from two particular fieldnotes, one from the night of the meeting in April 2012 and the other from the Really Really Free Market in May 2011.
anodyne “community economy” into a mutual aid institution that builds oppositional cooperative power. One part of this commitment involves the work of organizing all the ancillary elements of the market beyond just the free goods (e.g. relevant skill-shares, services, literature, and radical cultural production among other things). And the second part involves activating existing networks of like-minded radical people to become participants in the marketplace, people who will themselves become participants that will invariably infuse the autonomous cooperation in the space with their critical consciousness.

However, I also found that the strategy of autonomous space upon which the Really Really Free Market is modeled contained the limitations that ultimately led to the loss of those participants with critical frameworks. Thus, I conclude that the contradictions of autonomous space (see Chapter 3), in the model practiced by North American anti-authoritarians, lead the Really Really Free Market to fail its own dual purpose. I understand this dual purpose to be a (1) location that agglomerates the mutual aid economy in literal space and, in so doing, a (2) social practice that strengthens communal bonds of resistance, provides alternatives in order to envision new economic subjectivities, and simply validates caring and carnival practices as legitimate forms of radical action. Finally, in the particular case of the Really Really Free Market, I conclude that the limitations that ultimately led to the depoliticization of the market reveal a particular picture about social reproduction in anti-authoritarian forms of organizing. This anti-authoritarian tendency in oppositional movements remains keen to create prefigurative social relations and to proliferate the geographical imagination of the commons. However the imperative against hierarchical relationships, which serves this oppositional force productively in

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18 I use ‘geographical imagination’ (Harvey 1973) here to indicate a kind of knowledge making ‘from below,’ which is both valorizes places where commons are a source of resistance and projects a framework of the commons for other places where capitalism has colonized everyday life. On the ‘knowledge-practices’ of social movements, see Casas-Cortes et al. (2008).
many other ways, is a barrier to creating an “actually-enduring” commons that is simultaneously a product of and a nurturing foundation for resistance. I argue that if we are going to rework our everyday lives to include alternative commons such as the Really Really Free Market, then we have to produce spaces that value the social reproduction work of commoning, while also creating mechanisms for managing common resources that live up to the high standards of horizontalism.

I draw these conclusions from an analysis of social dynamics at the Really Really Free Market that I observed and that participants spoke about in interviews. First I analyze a divide between individuals who see the market as politically driven and those who see it in other registers (such as environmental) but not political. I focus on the way those who do not see the Really Really Free Market as political spoke about frustrations they have with the capitalist economy. Yet participation in the alternative sharing economy at the Really Really Free Market does not hail those frustrations into an oppositional framework in alignment or solidarity with those who already have strong oppositional feelings enmeshed with their reasons for participating in the project. I then analyze how this divide is not just a neutral quality at the market, but that it drives a negative feedback loop that leads to diminishing participation for radically inclined individuals. In conclusion, I argue that anti-authoritarian radicals must reconcile the management imperatives of a commons—they must recognize the Really Really Free Market as a real (but potentially fragile) commons—with the deep antipathy towards management within the social movement culture. In the case of the Really Really Free Market, the contradictions of autonomous space as closed (and community constituting) space and as freely accessible public space manifest themselves in symptoms that destabilize the commons.
Through organizing the Really Really Free Market and conducting in-depth interviews with other organizers and attendees, I observed a divide in people's frameworks about the politics\(^\text{19}\) of the Really Really Free Market. A small number of organizers and former organizers framed their participation in the project as one element of a broader anti-capitalist politics. These individuals spoke of the Really Really Free Market in terms of larger social geographies of resistance and/or in terms of time and energy for resistance created by community cooperation. Each person who took this position had a reservoir of political organizing which they drew upon to talk about the Really Really Free Market and their own political development. However, in contrast, others that I spoke with did not frame their participation in the market in terms of oppositional politics, and therefore did not find the Really Really Free Market to be political. These individuals tended to have little or no past experience in groups that held oppositional positions.

My interview with Peter exemplifies the latter position that the Really Really Free Market is not political. Peter is a white man who lives in low-income housing. In fall 2010 Peter became more actively involved in organizing the Really Really Free Market, around the same time that I became more involved. Peter really found an affinity with the Really Really Free Market because he dislikes to waste things. When he first began to go to the Really Really Free Market he was already in the habit of taking collected unwanted goods from people in his building to churches and other donation locations. Peter relishes the way the Really Really Free Market is more participatory and less institutional than the various churches with which he has worked.

When our conversation turned to the philosophies of the anarchist and freegan activist

\(^{19}\) In my questions with people about 'politics' I was hyper-aware of the potential for miscommunications. Contemporary anarchist practices view autonomy and direct action as 'politics,' while electoral 'politics'—the common sense understanding of the word in representative democracy—is seen as a diversion from 'politics.' Typically, the errors of meaning around such questions about politics were revealing.
communities that created the market, however, Peter stressed that he participates in the project for environmental instead of political reasons. “[I am not in it] as an anarchist, I'm in it for environmental reasons, basically that I'm just trying to keep this stuff out of the landfill. And of course for me I like freeganism because it's good for the environment that you—that everybody—should consume less,” Peter argued. Later in the interview I clarified my question by not stressing so much that I wanted to know if he identified with a political group, but instead more about how he frames his participation in the Really Really Free Market. “Do you see you your participation in the [Really Really] Free Market as a form of political action?” I asked. “Environmental action but it's not really political because we don't ever...we don't really discuss or delve into politics, we don't really have workshops about politics,” he replied (2012).

Ultimately Peter felt that the Really Really Free Market could become something political if he were to invite the Sierra Club, or to use the space to host debates between local politicians running in an election. Here, Peter and I were not speaking on the same register about politics, but the disconnect helped to clarify his position. Keeping goods from going to landfills, cultivating a realistic desire to use less, these are the reasons that Peter thinks of the project as environmental. But he does not also see these same environmental actions as deeply political, or acting environmentally at the Really Really Free Market as constituting an oppositional politics.

Next I want to turn to Tracy. Like Peter, Tracy does not see her participation in the market as political, but unlike him she does not think about it in environmental terms either. On the surface, she enjoys the Really Really Free Market because it is social and she is able to find things she needs for her family. On a deeper level, she responds to the feelings of abundance that the project creates, which she attributes to having grown up poor. Tracy is a white woman, a
mother of two teen-aged children, who is not able to find as much work as she would like in the depressed economy. She is one of a small group of people who regularly and enthusiastically help to set up the Really Really Free Market about an hour before it begins. I asked her if she thought of the Really Really Free Market as political, or as part of a political practice. “I mean maybe I’m naïve but I really don’t see a political thing going on here. You know maybe I'm just not zeroed in on that or whatever, but not really. Like I've just seen everybody enjoying themselves and no politics coming in to it. Do I have sort of blinders on?” she said (2012). I followed up in order to clarify what she thought and she said, “I guess you do have to be a certain [type of] person, like if you're into shopping at Bloomingdales, then certainly you're not going to go [to the Really Really Free Market]” (2012).

Like my interview with Peter, there were obvious discontinuities between my questions about politics and Tracy's own meanings of politics. However, over the course of the conversation, Tracy began to talk about some ideas she was just beginning to give more serious reflection. She wanted to know why I liked the Really Really Free Market, and if it had anything to do with being poor growing up. For her, the experience of being “really really poor” growing up structures the meaning of the Really Really Free Market in a particularly positive way. “Yeah I'm wondering if there's an element of doing without,” Tracy said.

Because for some reason the [Really Really] Free Market totally does it for me, and I think it's because I went without and it's just like if you want it you can take it. There's so much, I hate to say it but for lack of a better word, happiness there. You know what I mean, just going without I think it makes you crazy. (2012)

Tracy's experience, along with others that I interviewed, validates the idea that the Really Really Free Market can turn experiences of lack and stigma upside down by prefiguring an economy of
abundance. If the purpose of the carnival is to create a world turned upside, where the first will be last and the last will be first, the Really Really Free Market uses the same strategies to turn that which was scarce into abundance. For this reason, Tracy expressed ambivalent feelings about the tension between regulation and openness in the structure of the Really Really Free Market. She sometimes goes to clothing swaps that are much more regimented, but they do not engender the same feelings of happiness as the (relatively) unregulated Really Really Free Market.

Before analyzing these examples in greater detail, I want to contrast them with interviews from those individuals who see the Really Really Free Market in a much more oppositional framework. Each came to the work via other kinds of political work, and framed the project as an affirmative space within an oppositional social geography. This meant that all saw the Really Really Free Market as one part of multiple projects with which they were involved. These individuals held firm views about systemic change and articulated how/where the Really Really Free Market fits in with such change. But it was also clear that they are less sanguine about the project because of changes they have witnessed at the Really Really Free Market over time. Thus, I left these interviews feeling that these individuals held strong views about the value of autonomous spaces like the Really Really Free Market, but more tempered views based upon the trends they experienced at the market.

My interview with Alice demonstrated this combination of factors, a strong oppositional consciousness, a strong vision of how the Really Really Free Market could serve a community of resistance, and a general feeling that the project was not fulfilling those lofty goals. Alice is a young white woman who works as an arts educator. She had extensive experience doing anti-
corporate organizing before beginning to work with freegans, which was what led her to doing food support work at the Really Really Free Market. When describing to me her own organizing arc, she expressed how she felt that she was constantly confronting the limitations of anti-corporate campaign work.

I came to the sense of freeganism through many many years of anti-corporate campaigning...You know doing one boycott after another and you boycott this company on three different issues. Then what do you do when, one of the issues, you win. And realizing that while boycott and corporate accountability campaigning could be useful for short-term gains, that it wasn't addressing the main problem, which is capitalism. That it wasn't one company or another, we needed a general boycott essentially of consumers and so that brought me both to freeganism and to seeing the [Really Really] Free Market as more than just a place to give away free stuff and get free stuff, to being more interested in mutual aid projects and building community mutual aid. (Alice 2012)

I don't want to over emphasize Alice's dissatisfaction with the anti-corporate campaigns because she stressed to me that she continues to do that kind of work because it is valuable. However, reflecting upon the limits of anti-corporate campaigning pushed her analysis to look systemically at the political economy of capitalism.

Our battle was always, even when we were doing the anti-corporate stuff, trying to tie various oppressions together [into an analysis]. So, trying to tie environmentalism and animal rights, and animal rights to human rights, and things like that. We were always trying to confront the analysis on that level but then realizing that our criticisms weren't taking it far enough, that if you start connecting oppressions then you have to take it to the point that it's the economic system that's the problem. (Alice 2012)

Alice's language here is very clear about the need for systemic change. She saw the freegans as those confronting systemic, not just surface issues. Given her story, I asked her to expand on the idea of the general boycott and speak on how the Really Really Free Market fits into it.

I want the [Really Really] Free Market to be a political action. I'm not sure how much it fulfills that but I think it can be one aspect of a series of mutual aid that help people meet their needs...[You] keep people from having to buy stuff and
keep things out of the landfill but also introduce the idea of a free-sharing economy to people who would never [otherwise participate]...Introducing that idea out there. I think maybe that idea has to get pushed a little more, but how to do it without being the one who hands the bible tract out.²₀ (Alice 2012)

Alice wants the market to engage in the blend of community mutual aid with an analysis that she finds integral to the freegan group. She is ambivalent about whether it does, and cites the challenge of wanting it to be a part of a more collective form of consciousness-raising about new economic potentials, but not wanting the space to be saturated with the social dynamics of proselytizing. Her shift away from one form of action does not necessarily mean a panacea. Rather the Really Really Free Market presents its own contradictions.

Jaime, who is also a white woman and a full-time teacher who is older than Alice, echoed the same sentiments. Jaime came to the Really Really Free Market after working with animal rights groups and engaging in anti-fur demonstrations. Over time she became frustrated with those particular strategies and found that she had affinity with the way the freegan group combined an anti-systemic analysis with communal strategies for living without purchasing things. Jaime spoke to me about being drawn to the fact that the freegans were not only about living without purchasing, which she finds limiting, but also “dedicated to changing our current capitalist system that [they] see as destructive, violent, and short-sighted and wasteful” (Jaime 2012).

Jaime expressed to me that she wishes that the Really Really Free Market felt more like a place connected to social movements. She certainly feels that way while doing political work with the freegan group.

It would be nice to have people feel like they're a part of a movement and realize

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²₀ This is a reference to an earlier point in our conversation, where we talked about how the Really Really Free Market does not operate like a charity where the service given comes with a bible passage.
that this is more than just people sharing, which is what it is, but to realize that it's part of something that's different than [the] usual capitalist American way, that you can have a different American way that's totally rejecting capitalism. (Jaime 2012)

For Jaime, it is limiting to think about the market as just a location where people share things. Rather the power of the project lies in connecting the space—in this example historically—to movements that reject capitalism. In our interview Jaime proposed that these ideas could be stressed in more overt ways without having to say outright that the market is 'anti-capitalist' because that language can push people away. She feels that her message could be as simple as saying on a flyer, “there's a tradition of this for decades and this is a way that we can not be slaves to our jobs and not be slaves to the dollar bill” (Jaime 2012).

I found the contrast between Peter and Tracy on the one hand and Alice and Jaime on the other hand to exemplify the limitations of the geography of autonomy. Autonomous space is space that both constitutes a political community through an organized location for mutual care (or alternatives to the capitalist market), and also produces public space that invites people to experience a different economy—a world turned upside down. In my questions to Peter and Tracy about politics, we talked around the concept because we did not begin from the same framework. However, even though both said that the Really Really Free Market was not political, both spoke about deep personal discontent with the economy in their lives. For Peter this discontent had to do with environmental degradation and obvious forms of waste that he experienced on an everyday basis. For Tracy the discontent had to do with the lingering effects of growing up poor. Between the environment and class inequality, these are two social issues that are political issues. But neither Peter nor Tracy, both of whom regularly and actively participate in the Really Really Free Market, are hailed into a political community of oppositional
consciousness. Peter and Tracy were not outliers in this regard, but rather increasingly and overwhelmingly the norm during the time I spent organizing with the Really Really Free Market. On the other hand when I spoke with Alice and Jaime, conversations about the politics of the Really Really Free Market invariably led to discussions of its effectiveness for creating a politically conscious community. Alice spoke of this in terms of space, in terms of the Really Really Free Market as “one in a series” of mutual aid spaces. Jaime spoke of this in terms of time, in terms of the Really Really Free Market as a mode of sharing that has gone on for decades and helps us to not be slaves to our jobs. In other words, for both it was a given that the Really Really Free Market is an experiment in creating a political community, but questions remained about whether it fulfills its goals.

Herein lies some of the contradictory elements of the Really Really Free Market. It can be and often is successful at bringing members of an already constituted political community into regular contact with many different other people not of that particular community. But I did not find that the overlap of multiple communities—what Daro (2009) calls an edge zone—was productive at the Really Really Free Market. By productive I mean simply that I did not observe a process where people, neither those already politicized or those not, transformed themselves or were transformed by being active in this sharing economy. In contrast to other scholarship on geographies of autonomy (see Chatterton and Pickerill 2010), I did not find the Really Really Free Market to be a space of becoming, or a location that engenders self-development.

There is an undercurrent of spatial determinism in the model of the Really Really Free Market, and in theories of autonomous geographies in general. The Really Really Free Market is not a pedagogical space, where those with anti-systemic frameworks use various pedagogical
methods to reproduce radical consciousness. Neither is it a recruitment space, where participants are pitched to become members of a political formation. Both of these practices are anathema to the white North American anti-authoritarian political culture that proliferates the Really Really Free Market. In the absence of more formalized structures of politicization, it is the affective quality of being in a zone of sharing, cooperation, and abundance that is left to do the work of transforming subjectivities. The space must do the work, so to speak, while it is up to people to make sure they participate in the relations of reciprocity in the space. This is the notion that to participate in the carnival, even if momentarily, turns the world upside down and opens one up to desire to make that world a reality. This is akin to what the San Francisco Diggers thought of as life-acting in 'ticketless theaters' such as the free store (see Chapter 4). Being in a space with particular alternative qualities is thought to create desires for alternatives to capitalism because those desires are already latent. In other words, desires do not need to be created, just given space to go from latency to activity. This method treats consciousness-raising, in the form of political education or collective study, as unnecessary because being a full participant in autonomous space will do the work.

But the space of the Really Really Free Market did not accomplish this feat. In contrast, I found that people participating in the Really Really Free Market ascribed their own meanings to the market and to their participation in the project. Some of these meanings were anti-systemic, while others were far from it. People expressed surprise and delight that the Really Really Free Market exists, but such feelings were not the basis of a shift towards oppositional frameworks. Rather than the autonomous space influencing people's ideas about economic topics such as scarcity and abundance, I found that people remained wedded to political ideas that they brought
to the Really Really Free Market. This is not to say that individuals such as Peter or Tracy would develop oppositional consciousness if the Really Really Free Market also incorporated overt anti-capitalist political education in its method, only that it was observable that being in the space failed to do so.

However, in addition to finding that the overlap or 'edge zone' of politicized and non-politicized communities\(^\text{21}\) is not a zone of transformation, I also found that disequilibrium between these two dynamics can lead to a de-politicization negative feedback loop. In accounts of the early years of the New York Really Really Free Market, people spoke positively about there being a strong sense of reciprocity in the space. There were a critical mass of people earnestly engaged in mutual aid, and this dynamic minimized the impact of individuals acting otherwise. During this time, the fact that the 'free' economy of the Really Really Free Market remained open to all—even those not inclined to mutual aid—was not a problem because the few individuals who undermined the ethic by acting competitively were not able to outstrip the palpable sharing and cooperation of others. To put it differently, the alternative economic relations in the autonomous space eclipsed the social dynamics that were stubbornly capitalistic: competing for goods, acting selfishly, compulsively accumulating, ignoring the social quality of goods and services.

What if the relationship between those dynamics shifted in the other direction, if the sharing lessened and competition and accumulation increased? I found that not only did this shift take place, but that the shift creates a negative social feedback loop where the loss of radical participants can signify to others to not participate (or temper the amount and/or quality of their

\(^{21}\) The group of non-politicized individuals at the Really Really Free Market cannot be considered a 'community' but rather a disparate group of individuals, many of whom are regular attendees and come to know each other superficially via the event.
participation). This is a common topic that came up in conversations that I had with politically active people familiar with the New York City Really Really Free Market. These individuals dislike that an uncritical competition for free goods has come to dominate the space of the market. The presence of individuals acting in ways that appear much more like intensified consumerism serves to signify to radicals that the market is not a transformative community economy, and therefore not a prefigurative community. This signals to people to not participate or alter their participation so as not to be burned by exerting energy that recreates, rather than temporarily prefigures, capitalist social relations.

Standing outside of Judson Memorial Church one evening before a Really Really Free Market meeting, I began speaking with a middle-aged man named James who was familiar with the project but does not attend any longer. When I said I was waiting for the other people from the Really Really Really Free Market James told me about how excited he and others were when the project was in its infancy. But, he continued, over time the market began to feel like going to the low-cost store “Filene’s Basement,” more so than the event that initially held so much promise. He emphasized that people who come for the free goods act more like shoppers than a community of people engaged in a convivial political event involving free food, goods, entertainment and so forth. For James, this was disappointing and the main reason why he does not come around any more.

This was not the only time that someone compared the Really Really Free Market to a discount retail store. Henrietta, a person who has a lot of experience with mutual aid projects, claimed that the Really Really Free Market was on its way to becoming the ultimate Walmart, where the consumer dream of super low-price shopping reaches its apex, free goods. In a
conversation that Henrietta and I had at one of the Really Really Free Markets, she spoke of being frustrated by the rapacious 'shopping' that occurs at the beginning of the market when people rush in eager to get the first look at what is available. She stressed her frustration, and the way she alters her participation in lieu of it. She, for example, prefers to come later in the day, when the initial rush for the free goods has subsided. And she prefers to do very low key skill-sharing, such as basic mending, because this will often lead to other like-minded friends sitting down at a table with her to mend, sew, or darn. In other words, her skill-shares are not something she likes to broadcast, as if she were doing a public workshop, but rather a slower, more deliberate niche within the space of the market that she prefers to protect from the competitive elements of the Really Really Free Market. Additionally, as mentioned in the vignette, Henrietta has also used her partner as an example for the negative repercussions of the 'shopping,' which she sometimes also calls a 'feeding frenzy'. He refuses to bring nice things to the RRFM because of a strong feeling that the value of his contribution is diminished in the context of people shopping for free goods, which is in contrast to a space where people meaningfully share with one another. Henrietta was a very early participant in the Really Really Free Market, who freely and enthusiastically provided a lot of food support work (rescuing and prepping food). Just as James went from enthusiasm to disavowal, she has toned down her exuberance, limited her contributions, and increased her criticism.

I also experienced the challenges of this negative feedback loop personally. I witnessed and felt how it leads to confusions amongst the organizers about the value of the Really Really Free Market. Just like any demonstration or any other kind of political event, the Really Really Free Market involves quite a bit of work. People who attend the event bring the goods, food,
workshops, and entertainment mostly on their own initiative, but the total event from planning and promotion to setting and cleaning up can be quite a bit. When those who want to make the community economy connect with radical politics start to leave or participate less, while those who compete and accumulate become a focal point, it became very easy for the organizers to begin to question the value of all the work. These were the kinds of conversations that took place before or after our volunteer meetings (as in the vignette at the beginning of this chapter), or at the end of a long day that involved a couple hours of clean up and hauling boxes of books and clothing to different locations. In these conversations we typically focused on the pragmatic issues at hand, such as a need for more volunteers or the best strategy to deal with hoarding, rather than the deeper issues that dealt with the effectiveness of the market and the loss of radical faces in the crowd.

I experienced this most vividly when a newcomer became involved in the project in the early part of 2013. Mark brought the new energy of a beginner to our small group of organizers, and also the kinds of open questions (about why we do what we do) that come from doing something with a newcomer's eyes. In conversations with Mark and others, I felt reflexively the same apprehensions about the politics of the Really Really Free Market that Alice and Jaime spoke about when I interviewed them. It brought up how disappointed I was that the market was no longer a “carnival against capitalism”—to borrow the phrase the demonstrations in London that preceded the Battle of Seattle. No longer was it a place where I would connect with familiar anti-authoritarians tabling about political prisoners, or where I would see members of the Radical Reference collective of librarians. The communities of those projects (and many others) remained active, just not active in the Really Really Free Market. As the Really Really Free

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22 We struggled because it was difficult to convince radical groups to come around and table or skillshare. This
Market began the trend of de-politicization, so too did it lose many of the individuals who were committed to contributing in the cooperative mode. This is not to say that all those with an oppositional consciousness are cooperative and those with out one were competitive and accumulation seeking. These qualities do not match up on a one to one basis, but they are related.

Those motivated by the Really Really Free Market's potential integration of cooperation, care, carnival and political culture can become some of the strongest contributors to the structure of feeling in the space. To return to the language of the San Francisco Diggers, these are the individuals most willing to 'life-act,' the individuals who draw meaning and political community from being in a particular location that agglomerates like-minded people and mutual support and care. But if those individuals leave or decide to hold back their contribution, because they don't see the space fulfilling those particular functions, then the 'life-actors'—those that make the space what it is meant to be—are fewer in number. They exert less influence on the generative reciprocity required to reproduce these social relations over time. Those individuals that remain, especially those less inclined or motivated towards cooperation, are the ones more likely to see the goods as private 'property' (potentially theirs) than as the 'props' in a willfully staged commons amidst a harsh sea of capitalist property relations.

If we look closely at the contradictory elements of autonomous space (see Chapter 3), it becomes clear that the tactic generates a tension between the needs to be closed off (from the

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23 Both Peter and Tracy are great examples in this regard because, as noted above, they did not frame their participation as political, yet both are cooperative, and could never be mistaken for individuals who are competitive.

24 Cavallo (2001) speaks about the relationship between 'props' and 'property' in his examination of the San Francisco Diggers.
competitive relationships of the market, for example) and the imperative to be open and accessible to all. In the case of the New York City Really Really Free Market, the project avoided becoming an 'activist ghetto' but could not overcome the opposite tendency. The loss of participants with an oppositional framework ensued. With that loss of deliberatively cooperative energy the market not only lost its political edge but also the social mechanisms that made the project functional.

**Reclaiming the Commons Means Managing a Common Property Regime**

Given the double contradictory function that produced the revival of the notion of the commons, I especially want to discuss the political implications of a distinction between two kinds of commons: (1) pro-capitalist commons that are compatible with and potentiate capitalist accumulation and (2) anti-capitalist commons that are antagonistic to and subversive of capitalist accumulation. This distinction between pro-capitalist and anti-capitalist commons is not simply one of intention. (Caffentzis 2010, 25; emphasis in original)

The task at hand is to recognize the commons that already exist, learn how people are reclaiming and managing them, figure out how to expand them, and theorize how doing the work of reclaiming, managing and expanding the commons can help create more just and democratic cities. (Hurun 2012, 39; emphasis added)

Invariably, this story of the New York City Really Really Free Market frames the project in such a way that makes its depoliticization appear to be the logical conclusion to a set of contradictory social processes that were self-evidently flawed from the beginning. Such an understanding is much too mechanistic because the Really Really Free Market utilizes strategies that have otherwise been very generative for anti-authoritarians in the alter-globalization movement (see Starr 2005). Openness and an aversion to anything that resembles hierarchical relations are central qualities of contemporary anti-authoritarian organizing. These qualities, even if they proved detrimental to the Really Really Free Market in the long term, cannot be
divorced from the successful mobilizations against neoliberalism that anti-authoritarians have sparked.

However, I conclude this section on the Really Really Free Market by arguing that anti-authoritarians must find ways to deal with these contradictions. In the case of the Really Really Free Market, we need to recognize the market as an 'actually existing commons' (see Eizenberg 2011). Additionally, we need to recognize that successful common property regimes have defined ethics about what the action of 'commoning' means and a community willing to do the work to manage the resource held in common. To put it differently, anti-authoritarians must confront that their ideals against 'managing' other people do not always align with the practices of creating and maintaining a commons as the basis for an economic system beyond capitalism.

The geographical imaginary of 'the commons' figures prominently in the radical culture of the alter-globalization movement, the movement that gave birth to the Really Really Free Market in the throes of halcyon demonstrations against a free trade agreement. The June 2004 demonstration in San Francisco against a major biotech conference—the demonstration that hosted one of the early Really Really Free Markets (see Chapter 4)—was called 'Reclaim the Commons' (see Starhawk 2004). This slogan has become an important rallying cry amongst activists in the alter-globalization movement. “The idea of 'the commons' is emerging as a powerful tool for political, legal and social action on the part of existing and would-be extant communities,” write Holder and Flessas (2008, 299).

As a geographical imaginary for an oppositional framework, real common property regimes—those enclosed in the past in order to 'free' land and labor for accumulation and those under the threat of enclosure in the present—become a powerful trope in the cultural production
that constitutes the symbolic field of a rebellious community. Holder and Flessas call this the
notion of “commons as resistance” (2008, 305). As such the commons becomes a readymade
response or a retort to the discourse that ‘there is no alternative’ to capitalism. But as a cultural
figure it also does much more. It situates our framework about who struggles, where they
struggle, what the struggle is for, and why it is important. In this regard the imaginary of the
commons has been an incredibly powerful and flexible figure for the alter-globalization
movement. Thus, ongoing demonstrations in underdeveloped nations against structural
adjustment programs or mass land privatization plans are struggles against the enclosure of
commons. And demonstrations in developed nations against privatization of public housing,
hospitals, or education are also struggles against a different kind of commons. And
environmental direct actions against deforestation or pollution are struggles against the
degradation of the water or air as a commons. The alter-globalization movement has adopted
what scholars call an ‘and...and...and’ (see Purcell 2012; cf., Day 2005) approach to radical
analysis, which the figure of the commons facilitates due to its capaciousness as a geographical
(and historical) imaginary.

However, in North American anti-authoritarian social movement culture there remains a
gap between the imaginary of commons as resistance, and the material qualities of actually
existing commons (see Federici 2010). This gap is evident in the way anti-authoritarians struggle
with the managerial imperatives of a commons. As Huron (2012) points out, commons cannot be
understood as things but instead must be understood as social processes. Contrary to the way
Hardin (1968) infamously described the commons, a commons is not a form of property that is
open to all (see Huron 2012; cf., Blackmar 2006). Instead commons are social products of self-
management, which typically involve the development of a defined community or communities who have access to the commons, and mechanisms by which the defined community prevents both outsiders and members from using the social product of the commons in detrimental ways (see Caffentzis 2010, 30). For Caffentzis, such economic logic can reduce the commons to “a form of a capitalist firm” (30), but ultimately his descriptions of the anti-capitalist Hobo jungles and Atlantic piracy networks include variations on these managerial elements (cf., Bey 1991) . In the case of the New York City Really Really Free Market, we struggled to prevent the depoliticization and degradation of a temporary commons of goods and services. As organizers, part the problem was that we did not conceive of the project as a commons and instead more often spoke about it in vaguer terms such as a ‘sharing economy,’ ‘community economy,’ or even ‘alternative economy.’ Furthermore, as the opening vignette to this chapter shows, we were very reluctant to impose managerial elements, such as bans or restricted access, precisely because the anti-authoritarian underpinnings to our organizational model stress that organizers not work in vanguardist or hierarchical ways. The problem arises when all forms of management, including the work of creating and managing a commons, are understood to be hierarchical. The needs of a real commons—as opposed to the ideal of 'commons as resistance'—do not match with such a capacious reading of anti-hierarchy, which we found out over time as people retreated from the market or withdrew forms of reciprocity precisely because other individuals consistently acted in ways detrimental to the market as it was conceived.

While I do not think that all understandings of 'commons as resistance' must be reduced to the effective self-management of common property, projects such as the Really Really Free Market will likely struggle and can easily falter without this level of precision. Furthermore, if
one purpose of the 'geography of autonomy' is for people to become more familiar with alternative economic relations, then it is imperative that those economic relationships be functional and liberatory, not dysfunctional due to competitiveness and materialism. Valorizing the commons in speech acts, but being unable to develop strong commons in action, presents a contradiction that anti-authoritarian activists must overcome. When in fact we do create a new commons such as the Really Really Free Market, we need to see it as a commons—even if it is also a carnival, or an autonomous space—and treat it as such. Doing so will invariably involve ways to fulfill both anti-authoritarian principles and the community management demanded of actually existing commons.
Conviviality and Confrontation: 
Making space, making culture with Food Not Bombs
Eating in Public: Quality-of-Life Violations and Urban Confrontations

During the mid- to late-1990s human geographers leveled trenchant criticisms at the spatial tactics of 'quality-of-life' urban regimes. Rather than deal with the political and economic factors that lead to people losing their homes, these regimes opted to criminalize homeless people and use the power of the state, sometimes in concert with private business improvement districts (BIDs), to push people out of highly visible public spaces (see Katz 1999; Smith 1992a; 1992b; 1998; Davis 1990; 1992; Vitale 2008; Kohn 2004, Mitchell 2003; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). In New York City mayor Giuliani increased police crackdown of infractions such as sleeping on public benches or panhandling. For a period in the 1990s the figure of the 'squeegee man'—a metonymic figure that leaned heavily on national racial (and gender) discourses about the 'ghetto' and working class people of color—took on immense proportions in public discourse (see Clines 1993; Kaufman 1993; 'Charges Against Squeegee Users' 1994). The proponents of quality-of-life campaigns used these squeegee men to mask the underlying difficulties that came with New York's FIRE economy (see Moody 2007; Darton 1999). As squeegee men and dispossessed people sleeping in doorways or panhandling came to be coded as the problem rather than the people harmed by neoliberal urbanization, public despise for and vengeance against poor people became common sense.

During an era of scholarship when Marxist class analysis lost favor in the academy, critical scholars like Smith (1992b; 1996; 1998) analyzed the elite class interests of these public policies. In his conceptualization of the revanchist city, he argues that white middle class urbanites tied their interests to urban elites in a collective effort to punish the poor, to enact revenge upon the same people that mid-century urban liberalism sought to assist by
redistributing social surpluses (see Smith 1996; cf., Vitale 2008). In doing so Smith inserts class struggle over claims to social wealth and the production of urban space into debates about the validity of quality-of-life regimes. Similarly, Katz (1999) argues that the political victories of the long 1960s led to such a forceful push back by those who lost ground during those defeats. For Katz, New York City’s uneven development under neoliberalism reflects these values as urban policy punishes poor people and serves business people and corporate interests (see Katz 1999). Like Smith and Katz, Vitale writes about the political uses of urban disorder by power elites. A political scientist who saw these processes unfold during his time organizing with San Francisco Food Not Bombs throughout the 1990s (see Vitale 1990), Vitale argues that quality-of-life regimes succeeded because they were able to mobilize middle class feelings of loss of control over their neighborhoods (see 2008). In this way neoliberal urban regimes created the material facts of disorder, “spatial facts” that they simultaneously leveraged to justify the cruel side of the development agendas. For this crop of scholars, the key was to challenge the pseudo-science of the Broken Windows theory of crime as an epiphenomena that had as its root economic relationships in a city in the throes of neoliberal transformations (see Mitchell 2003 for an analysis of Broken Windows).

Smith even analyzed the Homeless Vehicles, artist Krysztof Wodiczko’s shopping carts modified to maximize their utility for homeless people, into a theory of spatialized politics in neoliberal New York (see Smith 1992a). The crux of Smith's argument lay in an analysis of the way Wodiczko's customized vehicles specifically allowed homeless people to remain both in public space and mobile. As such, Wodiczko's artwork confronts the public polices of quality-of-life regimes, which enforce territorial control by moving people out of certain public spaces and,
as Davis revealed in Los Angeles, containing other people in certain neighborhoods (see Davis 1990; 1992). Displacement, containment, militarization, and criminalization, these were the top-down spatial tactics that scholars of neoliberal urbanism documented and situated within contemporary political economy. Wodiczko began work on his Homeless Vehicles in 1988. That same year riot police attempted to stop San Francisco Food Not Bombs from serving free food in Golden Gate Park after they had been doing so every Monday for several months (see Parson 2010; Chapter 7). Smith uses Wodiczko's art to tease out a spatialized politics, a politics Smith felt was immanent to Wodiczko's work but required a more direct articulation. Simultaneous to Wodiczko's work, Food Not Bombs groups in several cities actively created a spatial politics that confronted the way city mayors treated homeless people and produced neoliberal forms of public space. While Smith's reading of the homeless vehicles stressed issues of mobility through public space, Food Not Bombs groups in the early 1990s pursued a strategy that congregated people in highly visible public spaces. At Food Not Bombs 'actions' a nutritious and warm meal becomes a reason to congregate in space, and the community meal where all people eat together fulfills Food Not Bombs idea of the purpose of public space as an infrastructure for community congregation, community conviviality, and more importantly community survival.

Food Not Bombs space-claiming tactics mirrored the strategy of a major wave of homeless mobilizations in the late 1980s known as 'tent cities,' (Wright 1997) which were organized encampments that congregated homeless people in a highly visible public space. The tent cities provided homeless people strength in numbers and demanded that their issues not be brushed aside. Although not always designed to be political spaces, such encampments became central hubs of organizing against neoliberal urbanization in cities like New York and San
Francisco among others. In New York, Tompkins Square Park became the location of a tent city in the late 1980s. Casanova and Blackburn (2007) describe the dynamic in the park in 1989 as an unintended community that came together out of necessity yet soon grew into an oppositional force that led street demonstrations (to 'evict' the Parks Commissioner from his home, for example) and worked with squatters against gentrification (cf., Smith 1992b). “Now we were doing things for ourselves,” Casanova and Blackburn write. “We began educating people about the politics of poverty” (2007, 321). In 1989 in San Francisco “homeless people created a tent city, dubbed “Camp Agnos” [after Mayor Art Agnos], across from city hall in Civic Center to protest the miserable conditions on the streets” (Crass 2013, 41). Individuals in Camp Agnos asked San Francisco Food Not Bombs to support the encampment, which led to a new Food Not Bombs field kitchen that “became a hub for poor and working-class people to plan next steps over hot food and coffee” (2013, 41). In the case of San Francisco organizers recognized the parallels between Food Not Bombs and the tent city strategy, which led to collaboration and to Food Not Bombs becoming permanent food support for people's everyday needs at Camp Agnos.

Food Not Bombs was just one node in a network of decentralized, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) projects that contested neoliberal urbanization by strategically and temporarily claiming public space in order to model new social relationships. Critical Mass and Reclaim The Streets were two other projects, both products of the same anti-authoritarian, DIY movement. And both of these decentralized tactics share a variety of qualities with Food Not Bombs: they are based in the principles of direct action in that they eschew representational politics in favor of building collective capacity and autonomy; they use the organizational tactics of horizontalism in order

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25 This is not a claim that these DIY projects were the only (or most potent/important) organized resistance, simply a claim that they were overtly organized against neoliberalism and one front of resistance.
strengthen the relationships amongst organizers and model the new world in the present; and they 'make' the space in order to materialize their ideas out of public spaces in neoliberal cities. These projects are predicated on temporarily taking over public space in order to use it in ways that promote the use value of the space over its exchange value. Critical Mass began in the early 1990s in San Francisco and, like Food Not Bombs, soon spread to other cities around the globe. At Critical Mass rides cyclists meet up at a regularly determined time and place, generally once a month, to go on a collective bike ride. While they often draw the ire of commuters and the attention of city police—one of the original rides in San Francisco was called the 'Commute Clot'—the cyclists claim the space because they believe that public streets should serve a different kind of a transportation system (see Carlsson 2002; 2008). Reclaim The Streets also emerged in the 1990s. It is a tactic for, as the name plainly announces, taking over public streets. Reclaim The Streets organizers borrowed road blockade strategies from environmental defense activists and indigenous peoples. With Reclaim The Streets the tactic is used to block car-filled urban streets (see Duncombe 2002; Starr 2005). Unlike the roving quality of Critical Mass bike rides, Reclaim The Streets actions are a stationary dance party and/or some other kind of convivial celebration in the streets. Blocking traffic, Reclaim The Streets participants express their desire to create a city with a qualitatively different public space.

While neither Critical Mass nor Reclaim the Streets can be said to mobilize homeless people in the same manner as Food Not Bombs, these two groups shared a similar spatial politics with Food Not Bombs. The groups share distinctive qualities that turn the logic of neoliberal public space upside down. In practice, these groups all take over public space and they typically block the flow of people in order to hail individuals into some slower, more deliberative, and
communal use of the space. They 'materialize' their critiques of neoliberalism by stealing public spaces away from market-centric uses, whether those uses entail the circulation of capital and labor power or the reorganization of parks as keystones spaces for real estate speculation or retail consumption (see Hammett and Hammett 2007). Taken independently these projects appear small and inconsequential. But taking in to consideration the circulation of ideas and people that ties these groups together, they create an organized form of poaching public space for community use-values. This, despite the logic of neoliberalism which seeks to utilize these spaces solely for purposes of exchange-value. In this manner, we can see the way in which the proliferation of DIY tactics creates a distinctively anti-neoliberal spatial politics. What we see in the case of groups like Food Not Bombs is a 'politics of public space' (Smith and Low 2006) that continues to evolve in relationship to the spatial strategies of control deployed by particularly neoliberal urban elites, state strategies which are mainly: privatizing public spaces; deregulating housing markets in order to unleash intense market pressures; and deploying police methods that inhibit the movement of some people (containment) while demanding that others keeping moving (displacement).26

Contesting neoliberal public space in this direct and confrontational manner has led to literal confrontations between Food Not Bombs and local police departments (see Parson 2010). These confrontations reveal the underlying qualities of neoliberal public space because they demonstrate the friction between the interests of the wealthy and the most impoverished city residents. Mitchell and Heynen (2009) argue that the quality-of-life strategies that cities use to control public space evolve over time in order to deal with changing circumstances. As Food Not

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26 The strategy known colloquially as ‘Stop and Frisk’ is the prime example of the state containing poor people of color. In contrast the primary method for dealing with homeless people who stay in public space has been to force them to keep moving. Neoliberal forms of policing combine tactics of containment for some, and displacement for others.
Bombs contests the neoliberal order by continuing to create the conditions for poor and homeless people to be visibly in public spaces, cities respond by seeking ways to make illegal what Food Not Bombs does (Mitchell and Heynen 2009). For Mitchell and Heynen, this ongoing struggle to be in public space has led city lawmakers to devise methods to criminalize intervention. Whereas earlier quality-of-life regimes sought to displace homeless people by criminalizing many of the everyday actions that they are forced to do in public space (such as sleeping) (see Mitchell 2003), in the past decade these regimes have actively written laws that outright ban or limit sharing food in public spaces (Mitchell and Heynen 2009; cf., NCH-NLCHP 2007; NCH-NLCHP 2010). Typically, these laws create barriers such as permitting functions or numerical limits that make it impossible for Food Not Bombs to continue their work. But in other instances the laws go so far as to make it illegal to share food in public space with poor people (see Mitchell and Heynen 2009). For Mitchell and Heynen, this marks a new moment in the political repression of Food Not Bombs and an exacerbation of the urban policies that circumscribe the urban geography of survival.

Facing criminalization on a much broader scale, Food Not Bombs groups continue to fight back with the exact same spatial strategies that they have done throughout the life of the Food Not Bombs model. Individual Food Not Bombs chapters must negotiate how to deal with this repression in terms of legal means, direct action, or a combination of both, but chapters remain wedded to their central reason for being, which is to share free meals with all people in a highly visible public space. Heynen (2010) argues that this tactic resonates because it so precisely works against neoliberal space.

Shannon examines how such negotiations can lead to inter- and intra-group conflict about the legitimacy of working with the state apparatus (see 2011, 102-127).
The restructuring of urban public space—through both law and urban design—is meant to make, for example, ‘quality-of-life’ violations not just difficult, but unthinkable. Yet quality-of-life violations—sleeping on a sidewalk, or panhandling or, indeed, sharing food—are really just so many acts of survival...What FNB does is cook up resistance to just this urban order, just this state of affairs in the city. (Heynen 2010, 1233; emphasis in original)

In this way Food Not Bombs developed ‘from below’ a trenchant critique of neoliberal urbanization. They take the very simple idea that everyone needs to eat and has a right to food and they celebrate that right in public space, not by agitating for the right but by congregating people for a community meal. Neoliberal ideology, on the surface, appears to align with Food Not Bombs since neoliberalism promotes community cooperation and personal responsibility to solve issues such as poverty. However, ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (see Brenner and Theodore 2002) has a distinctive spatial logic that cannot allow groups such as Food Not Bombs to make poverty and homelessness visible, regardless of the ideology of ‘community’ and ‘personal responsibility.’

Claiming Local Neoliberal Space, Building Global Oppositional Culture

In contrast to research on Food Not Bombs that focuses on neoliberal urban space, scholars such as Day (2005) and Shannon (2011) focus on the role that Food Not Bombs plays in constituting a particular culture of resistance. In this line of research Food Not Bombs is understood to be a set of material and social practices that are foundational for resistance at scales beyond the neoliberal city. Here the emphasis tends to be less on how the congregation (and visibility) of homeless and poor working people disrupts the smooth working of quality-of-life urban regimes and more upon the practice of cooking and eating together as a ritual that makes the community of politicized individuals who are Food Not Bombs activists.
Day, for example, argues that Food Not Bombs is one node of a very diverse network of radical groups that share the quality that their anti-authoritarianism eschews older forms of radicalism modeled upon a logic of hegemony. For Day (2005) decentralized groups such as Reclaim the Streets, IndyMedia Centers, and Food Not Bombs share common ground with more militant decentralized direct action methods of EarthFirst!, Earth Liberation Front, and Animal Liberation Front. And all of these groups represent the instantiation of a new kind of politics inflected with the DIY spirit. In this way, Day's method is to simply point out the DIY thread that runs through each of these groups (cf., Duncombe 2002; Hotlzman et al. 2007). This is because Day's goal is to demonstrate how the newest social movements have surpassed the limitations of forms of organizing based upon the notion of building counter-hegemonic blocs (Day 2004; 2005).

Groups like Food Not Bombs engage in prefigurative action, a philosophy that prioritizes aligning a group's means and ends. In contemporary white North American anarchism this generally means using consensus process and working to eradicate hierarchical relationships in inter-personal relationships within the group. The 'newest social movements,' to use Day's terminology, reject using authoritarian organizing methods in order to bring about a horizontal society. Generally speaking the Food Not Bombs social movement culture is critical of authoritarian groups, especially Leninist groups, from the past. This organizing culture attributes past failures to the limitations created by separating means from ends. For Day, this signifies the way contemporary movements have internalized radical feminist and anti-racist critiques of organizing culture, and made a clean break with past hierarchical social movements. This break illustrates that the newest social movements have dispensed with the Marxist theory of
hegemony and counter-hegemony.

[M]any of the most vibrant elements of contemporary radical activism are driven by a common political logic that escapes the categories of traditional social movement theories. Unlike revolutionary struggles, which seek totalizing effects across all aspects of the existing social order by taking state power, and unlike the politics of reform, which seeks global change on selected axis by reforming state power, these movements/networks/tactics do not seek totalizing effects on any axis at all. Instead they set out to block, resist and render redundant both the corporate and state power in local, national and transnational contexts. And in so doing, they challenge the notion that the only way to achieve meaningful social change is by way of totalizing effects across an entire 'national' or 'international' society. (Day 2005, 45)

Day sees all the vibrancy of contemporary radicalism sharing this feature, a disavowal of previous conceptions of revolutionary transformation. However, for Day the political theorist, this is the result of the shortcomings of liberalism and classical Marxism. In what amounts to a deeply idealist reading of the present from a materialist theorist, contemporary resistance movements are the result a set of ideas reaching its limits, rather than the result of a combination of discursive and material processes that unfold as people create communities of survival in the face of the whirlwind of neoliberalism.

However, there is a latent materialism of Food Not Bombs in Day’s work that can be teased out with a generous reading of his work. Day argues that theories of hegemony hold their own hegemony in the minds of left scholars (cf., Gibson-Graham 1996; Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003). For this reason, most thinkers are unable to even see the vibrancy of groups such as Food Not Bombs or Reclaim The Streets. This inability to see is a result of their frameworks filtering out such practices as outside of the field of radical politics. Purcell (2012) argues that this is a recurring trope in writing about contemporary anti-authoritarian movements, that they are potent yet unrecognized. What Day argues is that social practices such as Food Not Bombs
actively produce new frameworks of action in which people escape the 'hegemony of hegemony' (Day 2005). If so, then it is through participation in these affinity groups that people begin to craft their desires about creating new horizontal relationships. Through participation people create vernacular criticisms of hierarchical organizing strategies, and communicate their shared goals which differ from creating a counter-hegemonic force. Chatterton and Pickerill's (see 2010; cf., Chapter 3) research on autonomous space makes similar claims about the role of creating space in constituting solidarity, as does the research on autonomy and squatted social centers in Italy (see Mudu 2004). If we read Day in this fashion, Food Not Bombs operates much like a 'free space' where subversive ideas—in this case ideas about working together in cooperative ways and inverting economic notions of scarcity—can grow and thrive outside of the space of the dominant frameworks of liberalism and classical Marxism. However, in contrast to a strict free space where spatial separation is legion, Food Not Bombs consists of a dual approach. The Food Not Bombs kitchen operates more like a separate and bounded space (mostly) free of the strictures participants might find in other social spaces, but the products of this kitchen, as in both the food and the ideas, are then taken out into neoliberal public spaces.

In his research on Food Not Bombs Shannon (2011) argues that it is important to see Food Not Bombs as producers of culture. For Shannon (2011), the work Food Not Bombs does forces theorists of social movements to dispense with some older strains of thinking precisely because they do not make claims on the state using commonly understood forms of politics. In this regard, Shannon agrees with Day that contemporary movements produce a different set of values as past movements. However, Shannon is much more explicit about Food Not Bombs as a project that produces a political culture, or what we might call a culture of resistance or simply a
social movement culture. By first taking the cultural field to be a legitimate object of political action, Shannon then examines the cultural conventions that Food Not Bombs activists produce as they perform their prefigurative meals. His purpose is to understand not just what the conventions are, but how those conventions constrain and/or produce certain outcomes. “The production of culture perspective,” he argues, “focuses on structural features that constrain the process of cultural production, such as work roles, organizational arrangements, and distribution channels” (Shannon 2011, 15).

Using ethnographic methods he documents, for example, moments when the culture of Food Not Bombs fails to sufficiently welcome in newcomers unfamiliar with the punk DIY conventions that have come to dominate Food Not Bombs kitchens (see Shannon 2011, 55-57). In one particular case where a new woman volunteer voiced how challenging it was to come into a well-established cultural field that was inconsistent with the popular culture, the Food Not Bombs group struggled to deal with the criticism and lost a potential volunteer. The reasons why members of the group relished the alternative culture—their DIY cultural conventions collectively express their frustrations with the hierarchies associated with dominant society, which allow insiders the catharsis of dwelling amongst others with similar views—creates barriers of entry for others. The cultural forms that constituted the segregated 'free space' were not desirable or accessible to all, yet the purpose of the Food Not Bombs structure is to be accessible. Here, Shannon shows how the tension between the demands of a subcultural code inhibited Food Not Bombs from developing the kind of political culture of its goals.

In this example social movement culture is not just something that people produce in linear ways. Latent and layered tendencies of multiple cultural fields play a role in the otherwise
willful attempt to create cultural products. In fact, Shannon found that negative issues of cultural latency constituted the reason why Food Not Bombs focuses on consensus and prefiguration. These organizing strategies “constrain the ability of hierarchies to emerge and [are designed] to prevent the disruption of the egalitarian practices” of the group (Shannon 2011, 52). Here we see both the virtues and the challenges of a group like Food Not Bombs as a producer of social movement culture. Food Not Bombs has a strong and unequivocal critique of hierarchy, and as such has a defined set of conventions designed to constrain and prevent the latent tendencies of hierarchy to emerge. The group is not always successful with these goals (see Shannon 2011; cf., Pickerill 2007), but they have a well-defined set of conventions upon which to draw when hierarchies emerge. On the other hand, group members felt much more ambivalent about the latent tendencies from the DIY punk subculture as they wavered about its positives and negatives. As Shannon shows, following the newcomer's criticism of Food Not Bombs DIY punk culture, people did try to minimize these tendencies for a little bit, but these actions faded. “But within a few weeks, it was back to the common cultural frames, music, and abstractions...[that] everyone was used to and comfortable with,” Shannon writes (2011, 57).

Shannon's work ultimately substantiates Day's claims that Food Not Bombs creates an everyday practice that is actively anti-hierarchical. For Day the signature confrontational moments of the global justice movement (summit protests if one is speaking of white North American activists) are made possible by the affinities and responsibilities cultivated during the smaller-scaled, place-based, DIY forms of direct action. Food Not Bombs does not jump scale by becoming bigger (although it does grow new chapters), but rather by feeding—which is to say reproducing—a particularly global form of militancy. In this reading of Day's work, these groups
are in a sense the incubators of a new culture of community that sees its fruits in the more visible moments of resistance. By implication these place-based practices are necessary to stage everyday performances where a sense of affiliation and responsibility to one another grows.

But in the case of Food Not Bombs we cannot attribute a culture of affinity and solidarity only to a set of internal practices of anti-hierarchy because these socially connective frameworks also unfold in and through people's confrontation with the local neoliberal spatial order. This is where Day's focus on the limitations of Marxism and liberalism abstracts from the on-the-ground resilience (Katz 2004) that Food Not Bombs builds with poor people in public space. Shannon argues that members of the Food Not Bombs group he worked with were dedicated to the ideal that the food be shared in locations that “are self-consciously chosen to allow the easiest of access to a given area's most marginalized residents” (2011, 70). In addition to the principles of anti-hierarchy, this imperative to be in specific public spaces sharing food with all people, especially the most marginalized people, remains fundamentally important to Food Not Bombs. Shannon struggled to see how this imperative influenced the radical culture Food Not Bombs produced. He writes, “I'm not sure that this had an effect on the kind of culture that was produced by SBFNB, but I am certain that it had an effect on who had access to it” (70). However, given the long history of Food Not Bombs in struggles against urban neoliberal quality-of-life regimes, it is evident that the imperative to be in particular public spaces, with particularly marginalized people effects the quality of the group's culture of resistance. The spatial politics of Food Not Bombs need not be separated from the group's cultural politics. Food Not Bombs is a struggle against neoliberal urbanization that cultivates a globally-focused anti-capitalist culture.
“First the Dishes, Then the Revolution”
Social Reproduction Work in Social Spaces of Resistance

In the first long form expression of the Food Not Bombs principles, Butler and McHenry write, “Food Not Bombs groups in general do not have the time or resources to attack, tear down, and overthrow existing death culture” (2000, 72). They continue on to say that however, “not spending our time trying to overthrow the existing power structure does not mean never struggling with it. By simply exerting our basic right to free speech and association, we challenge the power elite, and they will try to stop us from focusing on what needs to be done” (2000, 72). The basis of the philosophy is a sober assessment of power, and of what is needed to change the circumstances of these power imbalances. This is not to say that the purpose of Food Not Bombs is to build power—though I think this is implicated in the quote from Butler and Henry—but rather to say that the purpose of Food Not Bombs is to struggle. The purpose is to especially struggle when power is stacked in the favor of the power elite. Butler and McHenry do not separate the practice of cooking food and eating in public space from any other form of struggle other than to argue that they have the ability to do these forms of struggle. The qualities of struggle take shape in relationship to alignments of power, and to people's capacities for particular forms of resistance in the face of power.

Our thinking on Food Not Bombs (and similar tendencies in affinity group organizing) could be bolstered by bringing in a deeper understanding of culture and social reproduction in the constitution of mass mobilization. Beginning in the 1960s Historians from below, most notably E.P. Thompson (1964), Hill (1972), and Herbert Gutman (1987), began to challenge the

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28 ‘First the dishes, then the revolution’ is a short film depicting a community dinner called Grub in Brooklyn. The film, which has no dialogue, shows all of the labors that go into the Grub meal in reverse order, beginning with people washing the dishes and ending with shots of people foraging the food from dumpsters. These shots are interspersed with shots of people eating the food, all to a musical score by the band The Books. The film represents the community (and communal work) focus of anti-authoritarian activists in New York City.
idea of labor history as the history of unions and the people who lead them. Rather, they began to simultaneously look at the everyday people and the cultural practices that played substantial, although not always readily available, roles in more well-known uprisings. For scholars such as Gutman and Thompson, labor histories showcase a struggle to create culture as a source of power that subordinate groups must cultivate and maintain, power which oppressors wish to subvert and weaken.

This work interfaces quite well with the work of scholars such as Scott (1990) who focuses on everyday forms of resistance. Scott (1990) argues, counter to theories of hegemony, that oppressed people are forced to engage in a variety of different public performances that are determined by those in power. Subordinate groups must follow through with these performances precisely because not performing has consequences. In spaces where subordinate groups exercise control and confidence that they are not under surveillance, they typically express what Scott calls the 'hidden transcript' of life under domination (1990, 14). In Scott’s framework, cultural productions and the ritual spaces that constitute such productions—if they meet the criteria of autonomy—can thrive and become the place where the 'hidden transcript' lives. These are places sealed off or hidden from the likelihood of repression or social control. However, Kelley (1996) uses this framework to talk about the highly contested space of public transit in the Jim Crow US south. Kelley (1996) looks at arrest records during the period leading up to Rosa Parks' famous arrest on a bus in Birmingham that led to the bus boycott. And what he finds are records of people's everyday forms of resistance (often individual and futile) by refusing to move, speaking back to racist bus drivers, or dragging their feet when forced to leave the bus. Looked at individually these acts seem isolated and ineffectual. But Kelley's point, using the framework of
the public/private transcript, is that the spaces of public transit became a space where the 'hidden transcript' increasingly broke through, so to speak. The period in the run up to Parks' direct-action, as those familiar with the arrest of Claudette Colvin know all too well, was marked by an increasing inability of those in power to maintain the public transcript in the space of buses in Birmingham (Kelley 1996).

By looking at the work of historians from below and Scott, we are reminded that not only do people produce radical culture, not only is that radical culture necessary to building power, but that our assessments of such culture must always be aware of the forces of power that limit people's actions. These are forces that influence (although not wholly determine) people's ability to collectively confront the public transcript. The neoliberal era, as most critical scholars will argue, is one of intense capitalist class composition and intense backlash against the movements of the long-1960s (see for example Katz 1999; cf., Parenti 2001). Groups like Food Not Bombs mark a shift towards making 'social space for a dissident subculture,' to use a phrase from Scott (1990, 108) because people recognize that they need these spaces in order to build a collective basis of resistance. Why are such spaces needed? They are necessary because, as so many scholars argue, neoliberalism has penetrated into so many elements of people's lives that had been (at least partially) closed off from market relationships. That the neoliberal state has attempted to more thoroughly articulate community mutual aid to the logic of accumulation is precisely the reason why people feel the need to use mutuality for respite or resilience. What was once reliably (or at least relatively so) free of market relations now is not.

We might ask, then, if Food Not Bombs kitchens and public community meals are comparable to other autonomously controlled spaces of radical culture production. The project is
open to all. And it is about 'making visible' inequality, hunger, the abundance of food, and the role that cooperation plays in life-giving community meals. In this way Food Not Bombs can be said to be not about clandestinity at all. It appears as the opposite of a hidden social space. However, it might be useful to use the example of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (without taking away anything from the sheer risks the madres take). The Madres de Plaza de Mayo come out into public spaces in order to make the disappeared 'visible,' but they carefully do so in an unassailable way due to the repression in Argentina. They make public the private transcript of anger towards political repression, but they do so in carefully scripted ways about the unassailable rights of motherhood (cf., Gilmore (2007) on mothers agitating against incarceration).

Similarly, Food Not Bombs brings a very simple and unassailable message out into public space, a message that is often much less overtly subversive than the conversations that go on in the more private spaces of the Food Not Bombs kitchen. This is why people looking for a specific anti-capitalist community will use the public space of the Food Not Bombs meal as a door way to find a culture of resistance—although not always a welcoming culture (see Shannon 2011). In this way, we need to understand Food Not Bombs as a social space that uses separation and openness to constitute a political culture, marked by an overt edict to bring the private transcript into public space. If the rebelliousness and foot-dragging that Kelley (1996) documents in the period before Rosa Parks' defiance of bus-driver Jame Blake was collective but unorganized, Food Not Bombs in a small way formalizes public defiance of the public transcript about poverty and the nature of public space in neoliberal cities. This is why Heynen argues that Food Not Bombs cooks “up resistance to just this urban order, just this state of affairs in the city”
Heynen 2010, 1233). This framework gives us the strongest theory of Food Not Bombs because it allows us to not separate culture and social reproduction from other scales of resistance, while situating the spatial tactic firmly within the spatial power relations of neoliberal urbanization. However, much like the earlier discussion of 'autonomous space' (see Chapter 3), the blend of openness and separation poses challenges for Food Not Bombs.

The trouble with the cultural basis of anti-systemic power is that it is extremely difficult to understand in the present precisely because its relationship to uprisings is at best circuitous. In his influential study of the development of the English working class, Thompson (1964) talks about how specific organizational structures of antinomian religious sects contributed to the mobilizing capacities of what would later become a more coherent anti-systemic force. Thompson is able to work with known outcomes in order to determine what elements of class culture were more or less important for later mobilizations. Looking at a group like Food Not Bombs in the present, we know that to dismiss the cultural role in building power would be dangerous political theory. Yet the qualities of Food Not Bombs' culture, the conventions they concertize through performances, and the community they build may not relate to any particularly important moment in the future. The contingency of future political alignments is not predictable, while we may be certain that future mobilizations will borrow some elements from the political experiments of the present (and past).

We do know, for example, that individual Food Not Bombs chapters provide food support to localized struggles, such as the San Francisco chapter did in the early to mid-1990s. And we know the movement's earliest actions included feeding people at mass anti-nuke demonstrations in Central Park and at weapons sites in the western United States. And more recently the network
has converged to provide food support during mass mobilizations at summit protests such as in Seattle in 1999 and Miami in 2003 among others (see Parson 2010; Crass 2013; Chapter 7). These connections provide us with something of a guidepost that points to the culture of resistance that Food Not Bombs produces as certainly an integral part of mobilizations beyond the immediacy of their regular public meals.

It is with this in mind that I believe any understanding of Food Not Bombs must consider the social reproduction aspects of the group. Shannon (2011) is right to focus on Food Not Bombs does as a group engaged in cultural production, especially so since cultural production is too often thought of as media and art production rather than cooking and eating together. Yet one of the things that needs to be highlighted is that Food Not Bombs group engage in reproductive work as the central element of cultural production. Procuring food, prepping and cooking it, cleaning up, and being in a position to do the process again on a regular basis—these labors are quintessential labors of social reproduction. In this case, the work differs spatially and organizationally than the gendered and individualized norms of social reproduction in capitalism because the model is to do it collectively, organized horizontally, and then eat together in public rather than private space. Here I stress 'the model' because the conventions that emerge in practice do not always meet the expectations of the model. The work is absolutely social reproduction work, however. The radical culture that Food Not Bombs seeks to create is a culture of cooking and eating together, which are labors and collective acts that are not typically understood as valuable as political action. Radical second wave feminists, especially Marxist-feminist tendencies in the second wave, certainly made interventions into political theory that stressed the role of reproduction and reproductive labor. But their victories, as immense as they
were, did not abolish the intersecting gender, race, and class hierarchies of social reproduction work.

What this means for any theory of Food Not Bombs in social movements is that, by creating a radical culture of doing social reproduction, the group becomes inextricably enmeshed in the existing politics of social reproduction, hidden as those politics might be in the contemporary moment. If it were a project steeped in second wave feminist thought, and if it were about women collectivizing and controlling (as well as potentially withholding) cooking, then it would make more sense as a project that challenges the relations of social reproduction. Or conversely, if it was a men's group dedicated to challenging male-supremacy and male desire by creating a radical culture of men not shirking but rather taking up social reproduction, then it might also challenge social reproduction in a similarly overt and direct kind of way. However, it is only by specific interventions that particular chapters begin to take on a specifically feminist project that is anti-male supremacist and anti-racist (see Crass 2013; 2000; cf., Butler and McHenry 2000, 75). Food Not Bombs puts forth the idea that it is important for people to share resources, cook, and eat together, but the analysis is so broad as to overlook a gender critique of social reproduction. If movements require social movement cultures in order to build power and experiment with mobilizing tactics; if the work of cultural production includes a vast spectrum of the labors of social reproduction; and if the conventions of social reproduction in capitalist culture are sexist, racist, and classist, then we must deal overtly with who produces social movement culture, under what working conditions, with what capacities for withholding work, and how to value the work. The answers to these dynamics will affect the social movement culture that is produced.
Earlier in this section I pointed out the way in which Food Not Bombs is a response by the powerless as a way to struggle against the powerful. The lack of power suggests in itself strains on the capacity to deal with all of these issues. Crass (2013) speaks, for example, how the emergency organizing during an era of repression in San Francisco made it appear as if the group did not have the capacity to also deal with internal problems such as patriarchy and racism. In other words, Crass makes the seemingly self-evident point that crises force activists to choose certain tasks over others, to prioritize time and space. It is particularly disturbing that San Francisco Food Not Bombs prioritized police confrontations over internal political work precisely because the stated basis of Food Not Bombs is to prefigure egalitarian relationships through collective social reproduction. The value of those collective forms of social reproduction lies in their ability to cultivate the cultural power to push back upon the forces that are the source of the crisis. But sexist social movement culture inhibits rather than cultivates such power. If political theorists begin to recognize that the production of radical culture—a production that is based in social reproduction work—is integral to political action, not simply as culture but as power then we can begin to analyze the social reproduction cultural work of Food Not Bombs activists. In Food Not Bombs questions about community, solidarity, and charity are questions about the project's efficacy to build a sustained and powerful culture of resistance during an era when older radical cultures have been destroyed by resurgent elite power. Following a history of Food Not Bombs (Chapter 7), I show in Chapter 8 that Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs struggled to overcome the cultural conventions of Food Not Bombs that coded white, punk, and activist identities together.
From Anti-Nuclear to Alter-Globalization:
The long history of a new model of food solidarity
The story of Food Not Bombs begins in the late-1970s with the anti-nuclear movement. The anti-nuclear movement was a broad-based direct-action movement with regional epicenters located around power plants, nuclear weapons facilities, research laboratories, and uranium mines. In the US west, activists from the Abalone Alliance and the Livermore Action Group used non-violent direct-action in efforts to shutdown the Diablo Canyon Power Plant and to stop nuclear weapons projects at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratories respectively. In the US Northeast, anti-nuclear activists focused on blocking construction of the Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant through mass occupations of the construction site. In the Southwest, white anti-nuclear activists worked in solidarity with indigenous organizers in their fight against uranium mining, a toxic extractive industry that provides the fuel for nuclear power.

When in 1975 approximately 30,000 Germans, organized in citizen actions groups, occupied the nuclear power plant construction site in rural Wyhl and organized a cooperative village in its place, the US movement found its model for mass direct action (see Epstein 1991). The German activists' blend of principled civil disobedience and communitarian ideals successfully mobilized mass numbers and the construction site occupation ended the plan to build at Wyhl (Epstein 1991). In the US the Clamshell Alliance sought to replicate the German success on May 1, 1977 with an occupation at the Seabrook Station construction site (1991, 66). Perhaps best known for that action, which resulted in the mass arrest of over 1400 protesters, the anti-nuclear movement featured several mass actions that matched or even eclipsed the scale of the occupation at Seabrook. During a two week period in September 1981 over 1900 protesters were arrested while blockading the Diablo Valley plant (1991, 103). In June 1982, following on
the heals of a mass anti nuclear war demonstration in Central Park in New York that featured a million demonstrators, 1300 people were arrested while blockading access to the Livermore Laboratories (“1,300 Arrested in California” 1982).

This wave of organized protest activity across the United States was not coordinated by centralized, hierarchical national institutions or political parties. The movement consisted of smaller-scaled regional alliances or action groups made up of even smaller affinity groups. Generally a group of 8 to 12 people (or less), affinity groups were the fundamental unit of action. Whether the action was a road blockade or a construction site occupation, people participated as members of these smaller affinity groups. The organizational imperative of the movement stressed that affinity groups be organized horizontally, not hierarchically, and that decisions be made using the consensus process, also known at the time as 'feminist process' (see Epstein 1991, 12). Consensus is a mode of making decisions that eschews simple voting that can lead to majoritarian power. Instead consensus decision-making emphasizes a process whereby proposals seek unanimous group approval. In the absence of that approval a proposal goes through a series of iterative changes to meet the needs of all members of the group, each time once again seeking unanimity. If the process leads to a standstill or someone wishes to formally 'block' a proposal—meaning they have irreconcilable problems with the proposal that would compromise their participation in the group—then the proposal does not go through. For the anti-nuclear activist this decision-making format embodied the principles of participatory democracy (see Menser 2009) and signaled an innovation over forms of decision-making that were based in democratic centralism or majoritarian voting. Finally, in addition to adopting affinity groups and consensus as movement conventions, the anti-nuclear movement also committed itself to non-violent direct
action as its primary tactic to achieve the goals of ending nuclear power and nuclear weapons production.

Anti-nuclear activists developed this blend of consensus and affinity groups from a few different sources that grew in influence during this wave of intense mass direct actions. The politics of the community of Quaker radical pacifists was one of those sources. Quaker pacifism has a long history that begins well before the anti-nuclear movement. But in the early 1970s this community began to develop new strategies for sustaining movement activity over time, a priority that emerged after organizers witnessed the exuberance of the uprisings in the late 1960s followed by a period of exhaustion and burnout. Activists from the Movement for a New Society (MNS), for example, brought many of the emergent Quaker ideas to the anti-nuclear movement through extensive trainings in revolutionary non-violence and participatory democracy (see Cornell 2010a; 2010b; 2011; cf., Graeber 2010 on MNS). “MNS emerged in 1971 as the new face of A Quaker Action Group (AQAG), a Philadelphia-based direct action group that carried out creative ‘witness’ against the devastation of the Vietnam War,” argues Cornell (2011, 18). The Movement for a New Society set out to put into action the principles of direct democracy that were foundational to the New Left but rarely fulfilled in practice. These were principles to end racist and sexist hierarchies within organizations and to prefigure in everyday organizing relationships the radical egalitarian future that the work sought to create. MNS prioritized combining political study and direct action organizing with communitarian living, deliberative democracy using consensus, anti-racist and anti-sexist training amongst the organizers (which were predominantly white US citizens). “We need to simplify and organize our life together so there is time for the confrontations that are needed if the old order is to fall,” argued the early
founders of the movement (quoted in Cornell 2011, 25; Gowan 1976). With these egalitarian practices more thoroughly integrated into organizational structures and mechanisms for making decisions, MNS felt that they could weather the loss of participants that follow upsurges in radical actions—especially loss due to burnout, conflicts, and racist and sexist behavior.

The second source of innovation for the anti-nuclear movement was a major revival of social anarchism in the 1960s. Anarchist scholar-activist Bookchin, who became an integral organizer in the anti-nuclear movement, brought to North American activists his study of anarchist thought and revolutionary formations in the Spanish Civil War. Chiefly among the lessons Bookchin took from the Spanish anarchists: they organized themselves in small leaderless units of people working together and making decisions on a collective basis. Bookchin and his network at the Institute for Social Ecology leveled a critique of the hierarchical nature of Marxist-Leninist organizing and promoted anarchist principles as the panacea to such hierarchies. Outside of this circle of thinkers, there were other nodes of the budding anarchism (see Cornell 2010, 37). In the latter half of the 1960s the San Francisco Diggers (see Chapter 4) broke away from the cadre-style format of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and criticized their Marxist-Leninist peers for posturing and theorizing but not doing much else. The Diggers remained an amalgamation of tendencies, but they did promote anarchist ideas of leaderlessness, mutual aid, and prefiguration (though not using these terms). Theirs were a politics designed to “create the situation you described” in the present, a goal that would later become synonymous with 'prefiguration' in anarchist organizing. Cornell argues that these geographically dispersed nodes of anarchist activity, which included groups in Boston, Chicago, and Detroit in addition to New York and San Francisco, revived anarchist thought in the US.
The other source of organizational inspiration for the anti-nuclear movement was simply the growing feminist and anti-racist calls to eradicate sexism and racism from radical culture, calls to create organizational forms less susceptible to domination and control. The values of direct democracy and anti-authoritarianism that were the focal points of Quaker and anarchist ideas gelled with these existing currents in the radical culture of this era. Feminist organizers, for example, pushed back against sexism in organized resistance movements, especially where they found the relationships amongst organizers mirrored the patriarchal relations inseparable from capitalism. This push back took a variety of forms. Radical feminists carved out free spaces—meaning free from male power and discipline—in their homes or in national organizing conferences where they could develop an analysis of oppression and build power to transform the institutions of which they were a part (see Evans 1980; Evans and Boyte 1986). They built other free spaces that focused on women collectively caring for each other, especially women survivors of domestic violence (see Enke 2003; Law 2010) and women seeking abortions when the practice remained illegal or unavailable (see Kaplan 1995). In many of these spaces, decision-making and roles were deliberatively designed to not replicate the forms of sexism and racism in other institutions.

Beyond white feminism the black power movement also generated a powerful current of anti-authoritarianism. This current included a range of critiques, some directed inward at the black power movement itself, others directed outward at white radicals and racism in inter-racial organizing. Black feminists, for example, agitated for anti-authoritarian goals in both black power and the white feminist movement. Additionally, other black anti-racist organizers criticized white power in radical groups, and pushed their white peers to organize white working
families in anti-racist methods (see Tracy 2010). Black feminists within the black power
movement challenged the commonly held ideas about the centrality of male leadership and the
In the communal houses where black power activists lived together, they also pushed back
against sexist behavior and the gender division of housework (Spencer 2012). These black
feminists drew from an already existing black anti-authoritarianism of earlier (and lesser known)
leaders Ella Baker and Septima Clark (see Payne 1995).

The anti-nuclear movement did not fulfill the ideals of all of these challenges to authority
and hierarchy (nor come close). Rather, the movement emerged from the groundwork done by
many of these groups. Consensus decision making, as Epstein notes, also went by the name
'feminist process' (1991) and this highlights for example the extent to which consensus was not
simply identified with Quakers or anarchists but also with feminist organizing. Likewise, placing
value on small affinity groups with deliberative egalitarian processes was not simply due to a
spirited interest in the Spanish Civil War but also due to the decentralized small groupings that
proliferated during the feminist second wave. Affinity groups, consensus process, revolutionary
non-violence, communalism in everyday life, and political training that focused on power and
privilege and domination both within and without the movement—these were the formalized
qualities that became hallmarks of the anti-nuclear movement. Although the historiography of
the long 1960s era tends to overlook important organizing in the 1970s, (see Berger 2010 for a
discussion of periodization), the anti-nuclear movement produced a major wave of civil
disobedience in the latter half of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. These were the tactics and
organizational forms used to successfully push back against the nuclear industry (and later US
imperialism in Central America). Although the Diablo Canyon and Seabrook Station power plants did eventually open, the anti-nuclear movement brought construction of subsequent plants to a halt (see Milne 1989).

The Movement for a New Society, in the style of Quaker action groups that activists feel have run their course, was officially laid to rest in the mid-1980s, by which time the anti-nuclear movement had passed its apex. Some anti-nuclear organizers had moved on while others continued to organize direct actions such as the 1987 encampment at a Nevada weapons facility (see Crass 2013; Butler and McHenry 2000). Cornell argues that MNS dissipated because it could not overcome some major organizational limitations, particularly the tension between communalism that is meant to facilitate confrontational direct action work and communalism that remains stuck on the level of lifestyle (2011). The inward-looking strategies such as living communally and addressing inter- and intra-personal relationships, strategies which were designed to produce long term militants, created their own barriers.

The small group of activists who created the first Food Not Bombs chapter came from these organized struggles to block the construction of the Seabrook Station nuclear power plant. They were active in the Clamshell Alliance and steeped in the conventions of organizing in the anti-nuclear movement. “Food Not Bombs was created during the anti-nuclear direct action movement and continues to be fundamentally a direct action organization,” writes Vitale (1990, 21). Understanding the conventions of the anti-nuclear movement is key because the group of individuals that developed the Food Not Bombs model continued to use the organizing tools developed in the Seabrook Station struggles, tools such as consensus, affinity groups, and direct action. Cornell argues that contemporary anti-authoritarian organizing has essentially adopted
these tools wholly and uncritically, despite prominent individuals from MNS and the Clamshell Alliance who are critical of this particular organizational toolkit in general and consensus in particular (see Cornell 2011). While Cornell's work on MNS does not provide a detailed genealogy that connects consensus, affinity groups, prefiguration, and direct action to the white North American anarchists active in the alter-globalization movement, the history of Food Not Bombs represents one connection between these two eras.

The First Food Not Bombs

Veteran activists from the Seabrook Station campaign created Food Not Bombs as the anti-nuclear struggle waned in the early 1980s. Keith McHenry, one of the co-founders of the first Food Not Bombs, explains that the inspiration for Food Not Bombs came while his affinity group was doing local anti-nuclear work in Boston (Butler and McHenry 2000; McHenry 2012; 1997; cf., Hirshon 1982). Two particular actions that they worked on foreshadowed what would later crystallize into the mature Food Not Bombs model (Parson 2010). Both actions showcased a particular blend of food and political theater in public space as a way to criticize militarism. In one action, the anti-nuclear activists were literally fundraising for a fellow activist who had been arrested and needed a legal fund. McHenry and others held a bake-sale in order to raise money for the legal fund. But they added a theatrical twist that infused the fundraiser with their anti-war politics. They dressed as members of the military and acted as if they lived in a world where the armed forces, not public schools, needed to conduct bake sales in order to make up budget shortfalls. Because it was a fundraiser, they were literally selling baked goods (and soliciting donations), yet they simultaneously used dramaturgical techniques to stage a prefigurative world
—the kind of world they wished to make real. In a subsequent action, the group targeted a bank that had investments in the nuclear arms industry. Once again they used food and a bit of political theater to push their message. Once again they literally shared food while also figuring an alternate world. In this demonstration they wanted to spread the idea that the bank's policies were leading the public into an economic and ecological crisis. They created an outdoor soup line to enact their message: the bank will create a world of resembling depression-era soup lines. All were invited to partake of the free meal, including homeless people from a nearby shelter who had been notified of the nature of the demonstration beforehand. Whereas the first action used theater to turn the world upside down—where the schools will be first and the military will be last—the later demonstration did the opposite. It enacted a capitalist future based upon a visual trope from capitalism's grisly past.

During this period in the early 1980s when the anti-nuclear movement was alive but transitioning, this small group of Boston activists also began to transition. They turned these food-centric, theatrical political demonstrations into a formal model with the very clear message. The message is an emphatic 'yes' to food for everyone and 'no' to the military, hence the name Food Not Bombs. “The original eight activists initiated FNB to make connections between militarism and poverty and to provide direct services while raising political consciousness,” writes Crass (2013, 39). For this group, the public soup line from the demonstration against the bank became a more celebratory and collectively shared free meal in a highly visible public space. Just as the San Francisco Diggers wished to use theater to make their free services a stage for life-acting in a liberated zone29, Food Not Bombs sought to create a similar dynamic in highly

29 The Diggers famously had people step through a large empty painted-yellow picture frame when they served free food. They wanted people to change their frame of reference and become participants in the life-acting. Similar frame symbols were used at the free store, which was also called the Free Frame of Reference (Doyle 1997).
visible public spaces. They claim public spaces to create in the present the future world they wish to see. Their vision is a world where food is not a commodity but rather a community, where the military and hunger have ceased to exist. In Boston fifteen years after the Diggers began their free meals in Golden Gate Park, Food Not Bombs revived the Digger spirit with free meals in the Boston Common.

Following the organizational conventions they inherited from the anti-nuclear movement, the group organized Food Not Bombs according to some basic principles: one, the use of consensus for decision-making; two, the practice of non-violence; and three, the promotion of vegetarianism in their meals. The development of Food Not Bombs as a decentralized network of groups would come later, with these three principles forming the basic backbone of new chapters run not by a central hierarchy but by the affinity group members that start a new chapter. But at this point Food Not Bombs was just the one group in Boston. They lived and organized together as an affinity group, and they incubated a new tactic that combined the nurturing qualities of communal food with the confrontational qualities of non-violent direct action against militarization. In addition to regular public meals, the group used the rescued food from bakeries and alternative grocers as a form of material support for other self-organized groups that could use it. This included women's shelters and public housing tenants associations (McHenry 2012). They also prepared food for demonstrations, famously feeding people in Central Park during the June 12th, 1982 demonstration against nuclear war that had a million demonstrators (Butler and McHenry 2000). In 1987, Food Not Bombs provided food support in Nevada at a peace camp that was established to protest nuclear arms testing on Shoshone land (Crass 2013, 40). In its earliest inception the local community meals and communally cooking

30 The origins of this principle, vis-a-vis the anti-nuclear movement, are less clear.
together served not just an inward function. It also served to facilitate the development of food support as movement infrastructure for mass mobilization.

Claiming Public Space and Confronting the Criminalization of Homelessness: San Francisco Food Not Bombs and the proliferation of new chapters

In the late 1980s Keith McHenry moved to San Francisco and brought the now mature Food Not Bombs model with him. He started a San Francisco chapter and began to share free food in Golden Gate Park late in 1987 (Parson 2010, 59). Twenty years after the San Francisco Diggers, free food returned to Golden Gate Park, the public park where the Diggers began serving free meals in 1966. San Francisco Food Not Bombs very quickly caught the ire of a conservative neighborhood association called the Cole Valley Neighborhood Improvement Association which did not like that the free public meals congregated a lot of people who were poor (Parson 2010, Crass 2013, Vitale 1990). Although the group had been serving weekly meals on Mondays for several months during the first half of the year in 1988, the police began to give the group trouble in late summer. The trouble began in mid-August with 14 police officers arresting nine Food Not Bombs volunteers for serving free food in Golden Gate Park. Two weeks later police arrested 29 people when the free meal led to an impromptu rally down Haight Street. When San Francisco Food Not Bombs did not stop sharing their regular meals the conflict came to a head on labor day Monday, 1988. The riot police came out to the meal while an estimated 700 people showed up to support the group. That afternoon 52 people were arrested for serving food in the park (see Parson 2010; 75).

While the Boston chapter dealt with some minor brushes with police over the use of public space for free public meals prior to 1987 (see Butler and McHenry 2000), the arrests in
August were the first for Food Not Bombs volunteers. The conflict in San Francisco—especially the amount of force the police brought to the conflict—signaled that struggles over who uses public spaces and for what purposes would become a much greater issue. From the inception of its model, Food Not Bombs activists proclaimed that their strategy was a politics of making visible the uneven geography of food insecurity and immense military spending. In other words they argued that their purpose was to produce public spaces (see Mitchell 2003) that reveal the inequality of capitalism, as opposed to the ways that states and private companies produce public spaces that hide inequality.\(^{31}\) The manner in which the city sought to stop (or at the very least displace) San Francisco Food Not Bombs, following the organized resistance from property and business owners, validates the political economic analysis that underlies the Food Not Bombs model.

In his assessment of San Francisco Food Not Bomb’s negotiations with city officials, Parson zeros in on Mayor Art Agnos’ offer to allow the group to keep doing their public free meals if they did it at a different intersection. For Parson, as well as the Food Not Bombs activists involved at the time, this confirms that the crux of the conflict was not really about the politics of food permits, which were consistently cited as the reason why Food Not Bombs could not continue to share food. Rather the struggle was really a conflict over who has unfettered access to claim public space and for what types of activities. Members of the Cole Valley Neighborhood Association and the Haight-Ashbury Merchants Association wanted the public spaces in and around their properties or businesses to serve the exchange values of those interests. The use of public space as a temporary infrastructure for poor people, homeless people,

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\(^{31}\) Harvey (2006) is a good examination of how the state and private capital restructure public space in ways that hide and displace working people. Although the example is Paris of the Second Empire the framework is equally applicable to neoliberal urbanization. See Hammett and Hammett (2007) for examples from contemporary New York City.
and anti-capitalist activists to share food with one another and represent their criticisms of inequality, this did not serve the exchange values of private businesses and property owners. On the other side of the conflict San Francisco Food Not Bombs wanted to use the space to feed people, which they saw as firmly within an understanding of public space as space held in common for its use value to all users. In this manner, they used public resources as infrastructure for feeding people as well as to leverage the visibility of public space to send their message (see Mitchell 2003). However, the city “continuously sided with businesses and real estate interests at the expense of the homeless while both blaming and criminalizing these people,” writes Vitale (1990, 22).

In the aftermath of the labor day arrests, these conflicts did not subside but instead escalated around San Francisco Food Not Bombs' second food sharing location, the park directly across from San Francisco City Hall. With the wave of union busting, de-institutionalization, and austerity that marked the Reagan presidency, homelessness became a major economic justice issue in cities across the United States. The increase in homeless people literally living in urban space, coupled with post-industrial cities seeking to restructure many central districts for the purpose of retail consumption, tourism, or to appeal to middle-class commuters, led to these struggles over access to public space (See Katz 1999, Smith 1992a; Wright 1997, Mitchell 2003; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). As these social and spatial dynamics played out in San Francisco, Food Not Bombs found itself situated alongside organized homeless people at the front lines of a major struggle in the early 1990s. In the early days of Food Not Bombs in Boston, the anti-nuclear activists dramatized a depression-era soup line in order to criticize a potential future based upon the actions of the banking industry. A decade later San Francisco Food Not Bombs
were ladling out soup in an all too real version of what they had dramatized. Instead of a soup line, the Food Not Bombs field kitchen served a 'tent city.' Tent Cities emerged as a spatial tactic where homeless people converge in one place, set up forms of mutual support for one another while also pushing their demands into highly visible public spaces (see Wright 1997). After homeless San Franciscans created a tent city across from city hall called Camp Agnos, Food Not Bombs began to do food support for the camp. “[T]he new FNB field kitchen became a hub for poor and working-class people to plan next steps over hot food and coffee,” writes Crass (2013, 41). This led to a court injunction banning Food Not Bombs from sharing food in public space, an injunction which the group refused to follow. Police arrested Food Not Bombs volunteers and shut down the field kitchen at the tent city (Parson 2010).

In 1992 these processes escalated once again when new mayor Frank Jordan created the MATRIX program, which was an early version of the so-called quality-of-life campaigns that are best known because of their deployment by New York City major Rudolph Giuliani. The crux of these campaigns is that they prioritize the enforcement of quality-of-life violations, which are minor violations such as sleeping in public parks, loitering, panhandling near ATMs, or urinating in public (among others). The MATRIX program marked the moment when the San Francisco police began to crack down on these violations by citing and arresting homeless people. Food Not Bombs, in conjunction with a larger coalition of groups, pushed back against these moves by the administration. The injunction against Food Not Bombs remained. As a result, waves of arrests ensued. Argues Wright, “San Francisco's Matrix program, combining sweeps with enforcement of nuisance laws, routed those homeless who slept in the Civic Center Plaza and was used to arrest members of Food Not Bombs who had attempted, without a permit, to feed the
homeless” (1997, 193). Throughout the month of September 1993 San Francisco Police clashed with Food Not Bombs volunteers, arresting several volunteers and charging some of those arrested with a felony conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor (see '12 Arrested' 1993; '4 Arrested' 1993; 'Police Break Up Food Giveaway' 1993; Lynch 1993a; Lynch 1993b). According to Wright, “over 350 Food Not Bombs volunteers were arrested for distributing free food in San Francisco between September 1993 and September 1994” (1997, 193).

The following year, San Francisco hosted the United Nation's 50th anniversary and Food Not Bombs organized a week of action to coincide with the events. Looking to make visible the human rights abuses that were ongoing in the city's homeless community, San Francisco Food Not Bombs called a nation-wide gathering of other Food Not Bombs chapters in order to have additional volunteers in the city during the event. Throughout the week cops tried to prevent the feedings, which led to numerous arrests. According to Parson, “[i]n total, over 700 arrests and citations were given to Food Not Bombs activists under [Mayor] Jordan's reign” (2010, 108).

Crass places Food Not Bombs' work during this period within the larger struggle that ultimately led to Mayor Jordan losing the election in 1995. The mayor elect that year was a district attorney who pledged to “not prosecute FNB arrests” and “work against punitive measures targeting homeless people” (2013, 58). For Parson (2010), Mayor Jordan's defeat demonstrated that Food Not Bombs had successfully fractured Jordan's electoral coalition by representing quality-of-life campaigns as punitive human rights abuses.

However, during this intense period of confrontation San Francisco Food Not Bombs was marred by sexism in the group. According to Crass (2013), after the arrests subsided the group needed to do internal work because race, gender, and class hierarchies had suffused their group
structure, which led to conflicts about finances and leadership in particular. As early as 1990, Vitale claimed that the San Francisco chapter struggled with gender relationships. “A separate women’s group has formed to support women in the group and to improve gender relationships within the whole group,” he writes (1990, 22). This meant that serious organizational contradictions negatively affected the group’s ability to create an enduring culture of resistance. The crisis organizing they did during years of police confrontations held the contradictions in abeyance, but only by suppressing rather than dealing with the issues. Through the interventions of strong women organizers, the group began to address that women in the group were subject to an unceasing form of male power that disguised itself as just ‘natural’ male desire. Those that supported ending this dynamic sought to build an organizational culture that challenges male supremacy (see Crass 2000; Crass 2013).

My short summation of this process belies the fine-grained tensions, failures, and loss of organizers that led to that outcome (see Crass 2013, 71-82), because I want to highlight the broader contradictory dynamics at play in the history of Food Not Bombs. The reasoning for consensus, non-violence, and communitarianism, in other words the tools they inherited from Movement for a New Society and the political culture of the anti-nuclear movement, is the idea that these tools create deliberative modes of organizing that are radically egalitarian in the present moment. Activists believed that these tactics could fulfill anti-authoritarian ideas of direct democracy and equality in organizations, which the New Left valued in theory but failed to create in practice. What we see in Crass’ story of San Francisco Food Not Bombs is that even with these tools Food Not Bombs did not have a failsafe method to eliminate sexism, racism and classism. In the tension between working outwardly against the state and working inwardly
against group dynamics, San Francisco Food Not Bombs went through a protracted period where confrontation became the priority at the expense of internal work.

Despite these shortcomings, the San Francisco chapter’s success lead to a proliferation of new Food Not Bombs chapters. Food Not Bombs began to grow beyond the networks of the original activists and become more akin to the decentralized network of autonomous chapters that one sees today. In the early 1990s, “FNB groups in Long Beach, Berkeley, Boston, and San Francisco served food to thousands of people at anti-war demonstrations, spreading the ideas of FNB through their example and literature,” argues Crass (2013, 55). In 1990 Vitale identified chapters in Long Beach, Sacramento, Washington DC, New York, Minneapolis, Houston, and Portland, Maine in addition to the Boston and San Francisco ones (1990, 22). These early chapters grew the movement according to decentralized, DIY principles. They encouraged people to start their own chapters and proliferated information on how to do so along with helpful resources such as recipes and readymade flyers (see Butler and McHenry 2000). Additionally, during this period Food Not Bombs began to organize national gatherings of chapters. In 1992, Crass explains, “SF FNB hosted a national gathering of seventy people representing twelve groups” (2013, 55). Whereas in 1988 there were just three chapters in Boston, Washington DC, and San Francisco by the time of the national event in 1992 there were “FNB volunteers from Boston, Massachusetts, San Francisco, Berkeley, Long Beach, and Santa Cruz, California, Seattle, Washington, and Victoria and Vancouver, British Colombia” all of whom “spent several days talking about their local efforts, meeting processes, and inter-group structure” (Butler and McHenry 2000, 101). Crass singles out the Long Beach chapter in

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32 By 'success' here I mean very narrowly the success they had in delegitimizing MATRIX and building a direct action resistance in coalition with homeless people and other organized groups.
particular as being influential in movement building, arguing that they “helped over a dozen FNB groups in Southern California get off the ground” by giving seed money for equipment and sharing skills (Crass 2013, 55).

The decentralized approach coupled with the widespread attention that San Francisco Food Not Bombs received from the Golden Gate Park and City Hall confrontations led to continued rapid growth. Butler and McHenry claim that by “1995 there were over 100 Food Not Bombs chapters.” And by the end of the decade there were “175 chapters scattered around the globe” (2000, 102). With this scale of growth, it is not surprising that other chapters very quickly found themselves caught up in contentious dynamics with police and city governments. Even a small city such as Arcata in the rural northern California coast attempted to stop Food Not Bombs from publicly sharing food. In fall 1994, the Arcata city council filed a lawsuit against Food Not Bombs and then later voted to support a court injunction against the group. The group refused to stop and for several years, until a resolution of the conflict in 1998, the Arcata police regularly ticketed Food Not Bombs volunteers for serving food without a permit (Gravelle 1995). During this period marked by the earliest attempts to criminalize Food Not Bombs, we see how the model of cooking and sharing food holds the potential to become an everyday form of social movement infrastructure. In San Francisco, Food Not Bombs became a public field kitchen for a tent city that was the spatial strategy for organized homeless people. Additionally, Food Not Bombs call upon their decentralized network to mobilize protests during a UN celebration. This work prepared Food Not Bombs activists to be the food support infrastructure for mass summit mobilizations that, although already in full swing elsewhere, very soon would become the primary tactic for the North American alter-globalization activists.
Feeding the Alter-globalization Movement, and a new round of criminalization

In the late 1990s the local work of individual Food Not Bombs chapters took on new meaning as North American activists entered the ongoing struggle against neoliberal globalization. The routine work of rescuing food and cooking a meal to be shared with others in public space did not change. However, the organizing skills Food Not Bombs develops—finding sources of food, assembling field kitchens, cooking flexible recipes for large groups with uneven access to ingredients, DIY fundraising—became indispensable skills for mass summit protests. In 1997 members of San Francisco Food Not Bombs traveled around the country on an 'Unfree Trade' tour in order to politicize free trade agreements and the supra-governmental bodies that draft and sign the agreements. Other members organized 'Reclaim May Day' mass mobilizations beginning in 1998, which were large-scale marches “incorporating street theater, large puppets, dance, music, and food” that “brought together economic and social-justice organizations to honor the tradition of working-class resistance embodied in the Haymarket martyrs (Crass 2013; 95-96). Crass argues that this work helped people to develop the street tactics and economic analysis that bloomed in Seattle at the demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (96). As a result, when the November 1999 mass demonstrations to shut down the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Seattle occurred, Food Not Bombs activists converged and set up free meals for the demonstrators (among other contributions to that demonstration).

Soon Food Not Bombs became a decentralized food support arm in the alter-globalization movement. Food Not Bombs became one type of support infrastructure at summit

33 “From 1996 through the early 2000s, we served nightly dinners and two lunches each week,” writes Crass (2013). See Gans and Karacas (2000) for fine details on how East Bay Food Not Bombs, which began in 1991, set up their routines for collecting food, cooking it, and cleaning up afterward.
demonstrations that also includes housing, legal assistance (and training), first-aid (and training), direct-action workshops, political education, and cultural expression. The Seattle protests signaled Food Not Bombs’ role in summit protests as a dualistic form of movement infrastructure, as food support during mass mobilizations and as a kind of local infrastructure or home-base for activists in between the heightened confrontational demonstrations at the summits. With these developments in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Food Not Bombs became a bridge from the anti-nuclear movement (and its organizational strategies) to the the alter-globalization movement. The small-scale project that emerged from one social geography of mass resistance, had grown and helped to seed a new mass movement (alongside many other organized groups). New chapters sprang up and continued the practice of regularly sharing free food in public space. This practice remained the constant. However at this point many of the chapters, new and old, became local nodes in the alter-globalization network along with other decentralized groups such as IndyMedia Centers (IMCs). Individuals who wished to participate in alter-globalization work in their home cities started new chapters or went to existing chapters in order to find like-minded peers.  

As the summit actions became a more frequent and regular tactic of the alter-globalization movement, organizers relied upon groups like Food Not Bombs to provide much needed support infrastructure for the influx of out-of-town demonstrators. And, logically, the capacity building qualities of doing regular community meals in public positioned Food Not Bombs volunteers as the kind of people with the skill, know-how, and desire to feed large groups

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34 Daro (2009) argues that the alter-globalization movement gave a new life to Food Not Bombs chapters, although the story is likely more complicated. West Coast Food Not Bombs activists were participants in the early anti-free trade and Zapatista solidarity work that spawned the Seattle protests. And subsequently the Seattle protests (and later summit protests) led to a new vitality and to a role for Food Not Bombs within this new force.
during the summits. The stated logic behind Food Not Bombs is often explained by prefiguration, enacting the future sharing economy in the present moment, however small. Poetic as this logic may be, even this overlooks the utterly pragmatic quality of food support for mass mobilizations. It is a given that demonstrators need nourishing food, as well as many other forms of care and mutuality, in order to participate in the demonstrations. Finding the people and resources to make that food available is anything but a given. Food Not Bombs, though it can never be assumed that certain individuals will cook for the movement so to speak, became a reliable source of food support workers during the summit protests of the 2000s. This included the infamously brutal protests in Miami in 2003 at the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas summit (see Chapter 4), where the Miami police attacked a Food Not Bombs kitchen.

The period that spans from the Seattle demonstrations to the present is also a period marked by a new round of criminalization in the mid-2000s. Like the arrests that the San Francisco chapter dealt with in the early 1990s, this latest wave of criminalization is a result of Food Not Bombs' unrelenting support of homeless people's rights to food and to simply be in public space. These conflicts arise from the same political and economic dynamics as the conflicts in San Francisco. However, there are legal innovations to this latest round of criminalization that reveal just how far some municipal governments will go in their attempts to stop a free public meal with a political message. Whereas in the past city legislators used health regulations as ways to indirectly block Food Not Bombs, the current trend is to more overtly ban sharing food with poor people in public spaces. As Mitchell and Heynen (2009) argue, because the stated purpose of Food Not Bombs is to feed people in public space, these laws end up

35 Health regulations are still used as a method to stop Food Not Bombs from sharing food in parks (see Shannon 2011, 111-122). Authorities use legislation that limits who food can be shared with or how many people food can be shared with in addition to health department regulations.
operating as a much more overt form of political repression which they call the “criminalization of intervention.”

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) documents this phenomenon in a 2007 report titled *Feeding Intolerance: Prohibitions on Sharing Food with People Experiencing Homelessness* (NCH-NLCHP 2007). In 2010 they released a follow up report titled *A Place at the Table: Prohibitions on Sharing Food with People Experiencing Homelessness* (NCH-NLCHP 2010). In the most recent report the authors argue that “[t]hree years later, cities are still implementing these measures through ordinances, policies, and tactics that discourage or prohibit individuals and groups from sharing food with homeless persons” (2010, 7). “Uncomfortable with visible homelessness in their communities and influenced by myths about homeless peoples’ food access,” the authors continue, “cities use food sharing restrictions to move homeless people out of sight, an action that often exacerbates the challenges people experiencing homelessness face each day” (7).

Although these laws apply to church groups and other charities sharing food in public space, the NCH and NLCHP research demonstrates just how elaborate the Food Not Bombs network has grown because the reports document numerous cities in which these laws have led to direct confrontations with Food Not Bombs chapters. This trend demonstrates the lengths that municipal governments will go to in order to curb Food Not Bombs free food sharing. During the neoliberal period in which the state promotes the idea of people taking responsibility for themselves and their communities, here we find an emergent trend in which neoliberal municipalities are willing to arrest and prosecute people who are sharing free food in an attempt
to stop a community anti-hunger program. Critical geographers stress that 'actually existing neoliberalism' is not just about rolling back the social wage and leaving citizens to function outside of the command and control of the state. There is a complementary process of rolling out other forms of state power, best exemplified by growing police forces and the use of state capacities to grow the prison system (see Gilmore 2007). The case of Food Not Bombs vividly expresses how 'rolling back' does not apply to organized groups of radical activists who regularly claim public space to share free food and make visible the devastating effects of neoliberal urbanization on people's lives. In such cases cities have been more than willing to use the power of legislation and law enforcement to stop people who take responsibility for one another, people who are critical of government social programs when they are constructed to enforce work discipline and provide undignified forms of support.

In 2006 the city government in Denver, Colorado attempted to persuade Denver Food Not Bombs and several other groups feeding homeless people outside to bring their meals indoors, citing park cleanliness and bathroom access as the issues (Zeveloff 2008a; 2008b). During the process of trying to bring these groups indoors, the city let it be known that group events with more than 25 people in public parks require a permit and that mass feedings are not allowed by law. However these interactions with government and police officers came on the heals of revelations in 2004 and 2005 that the Joint Terrorist Task Force spied on Denver Food Not Bombs. “[D]ocuments reveal that the FBI is particularly interested in Food Not Bombs, which opposes the government’s prioritization of war and military programs over social programs,” writes the Colorado chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (see ACLU 2005). Denver Food Not Bombs consistently refused to move inside because the principles behind their project
reject the notion that homeless people should be rendered invisible. The conflict came to a head in summer 2008 with police regularly monitoring the Food Not Bombs meal, but no one was arrested or cited for breaking the prohibition against mass meals. In this case the threat of legal repercussions did not stop Food Not Bombs from sharing free meals in the park, and it appears as if the city of Denver was not willing to take the confrontation to the next level.

However, other Food Not Bombs chapters felt the brunt of law enforcement in more dramatic ways. In July 2006 the Las Vegas City Council voted in favor of an ordinance that, according to the New York Times, bans individuals from giving food to “the indigent” for free in city parks (see Archibold 2006; NCH-NLCHP 2007; Mitchell and Heynen 2009). A couple months prior to the legislation activists were arrested for serving free food in a Las Vegas park. But having no formal law against doing so, the police were forced to cite the activists for violating a different law that requires having a permit for gatherings of more than 25 people. However, once the new law was passed, the police were allowed to arrest individuals for simply giving away free food to homeless people. Mitchell and Heynen write, “The local Food Not Bombs (FNB) chapter, aided by FNB activists from around the western United States, challenged the law directly by continuing to set up tables and ladle out free food in public park” (2009, 623). During one of these direct challenges to this law, when several northern California activists came into town to show support, Food Not Bombs activists were arrested. In addition to these direct action challenges, the American Civil Liberties Union sued the city over the ordinance and was officially given a permanent injunction against enforcing the law in August 2007. The law limiting non-permitted gatherings to 25 people remained enforced, and led to continued disputes between city government and Food Not Bombs. In 2010 the two sides came to an agreement on
an alteration to the law that allowed up to 75 people before requiring a permit (NCH-NLCHP 2010, 11). In this case the legal basis for criminalization remained in place, but at 75 people the number is high enough that an average week at Food Not Bombs would not trigger the law. The combination of direct action and legal challenges forced the city to back off for the time being.

During this same period several cities in the state of Florida came into conflict with local Food Not Bombs chapters, including Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando, which led to arrests of Food Not Bombs activists. In September 2007 city councilors in West Palm Beach passed a law banning food sharing in several downtown parks, including Centennial Park where Food Not Bombs serves meals on Saturday afternoons (Vizcardo 2009; NCH-NLCHP 2010). After Food Not Bombs sued, and did not stop sharing meals while the lawsuit was pending, the city rescinded the law in 2009. In Tampa three Food Not Bombs activists were arrested in the spring of 2004 when they continued to serve free food every week for months after the Tampa police warned them that what they were doing was illegal (NCH-NLCHP 2007). In Fort Lauderdale the police threatened Food Not Bombs in 2007 to stop serving food, citing park regulations that prohibit using parks for social service purposes. When Food Not Bombs returned the following week and once again gave out free food in Stranahan Park, the police did not arrest the organizers and claimed there was a miscommunication. Like the situation in Denver in 2006, the commitment to direct action following legal threats appeared to call the city's bluff. However, the situation remained unresolved for years as the Fort Lauderdale government sought to find a designated space where mass public meals could go on.

The city of Orlando has taken the most drastic steps to block Food Not Bombs from sharing food in public space. In 2006 the city of Orlando passed an ordinance that made it illegal
to share food with groups larger than 25 people without a permit, with a limit of two permits per group per year. Soon after the law passed the American Civil Liberties Union sued the city on the grounds that the law was unconstitutional (NCH-NLCHP 2010). Like other chapters, Orlando Food Not Bombs refused to stop what they were doing while the issue played out in courts. In early 2007 Orlando Police arrested one activist for serving food to more than 25 people (Howard 2011; Kamph 2011). He was later found not guilty. When a final ruling came down in support of the Orlando law in April 2011, Food Not Bombs mobilized to keep sharing food in the park (Howard 2011). During a span of three weeks in June 2011 Orlando Police made over 20 arrests of Food Not Bombs activists sharing food in Lake Eola Park without a permit (Donohoe 2011). Food Not Bombs co-founder Keith McHenry was among those arrested. He and many other Food Not Bombs activists converged in Orlando in order to support this struggle against virulent criminalization by the city, which notoriously included Orlando mayor Buddy Dyer publicly calling activists “food terrorists” (Donohoe 2011).

From Denver to Orlando, this list is only a partial sample of the most recent wave of criminalization that Food Not Bombs chapters have struggled against. Further, this focus on criminalization and the most high-profile arrests says very little about numerous other Food Not Bombs chapters that regularly share food in public spaces without threats or harassment from the police. Focusing on arrests demonstrates the way neoliberal urban policy attempts to contain and control homeless people lives rather than abolish the processes that lead people to lose their homes. However, arrest numbers and municipal legal strategies do not give a full accounting of the origins, growth, and activities of every Food Not Bombs chapter because chapters may operate for years without attention from the police. Keith McHenry maintains a broad history of
the movement on the web and in publications, which highlights the growth of new chapters, major victories, and confrontations that led to arrests and media attention (see Butler and McHenry 2000, McHenry 2012). Members of East Bay Food Not Bombs published their own history with detailed accounts of their work and very brief personal accounts of several volunteers (see Gans and Karacas 2000).

Aside from a recent spike in dissertation research (see Parson 2010; Shannon 2011; Giles 2013) these internally produced histories have not been complemented with work by social historians, labor historians, urbanists, or political theorists, most of whom have overlooked this movement. The work of documenting, analyzing, and contextualizing the many individual chapters remains to be done. Gelderloos, for example, provides a model, however brief, with his critical history of Harrisonburg Food Not Bombs (2006). Parson's research on the era of mass arrests of the San Francisco chapter provides substantial information on that era but he tells the story using journalistic source material rather than the voices of the activists themselves (2010). Crass fills in with deep experiential detail much information about the San Francisco chapter to which Parson did not have access (2013). But the San Francisco chapter is just one of the major chapters and its story cannot stand in for other people's experiences in different cities, for the victories won or the challenges faced. Oral histories with a broad spectrum of Food Not Bombs activists still need to be collected. Research that asks finer-grained questions about the conflicts and challenges the Food Not Bombs method faces stills needs to be done. Crass' (2013) writings on the process of building Food Not Bombs into a feminist, anti-white supremacy project are a start. And Cornell's (2011) work on the Movement for a New Society—though not directly referencing Food Not Bombs—maps several potential research threads about Food Not Bombs
methods in the lineage of white North American cultures of resistance.

In the following section, I outline the challenges that the Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs chapter in particular faced while trying to overcome the limitations of Food Not Bombs as a white movement. The Bed Stuy chapter began as Brooklyn Food Not Bombs in spring 2008 when two Brooklyn based co-workers, both of whom worked in social services, decided to start a new chapter. One co-founder drew on a wealth of previous experience with DIY projects through her organizing with Riot Grrrl at the famous ABC No Rio squatted community center in the Lower East Side. The other co-founder drew on experience working with various anarchist free projects in the US south before moving to Brooklyn. The two co-founders began what was then called Brooklyn Food Not Bombs by bringing a home-cooked meal out to Fort Greene Park. They cooked these early meals in organizers’ private kitchens, as the group did not at that time have a community kitchen in order to make the cooking a more collective form of work. Soon after beginning their public meal, the core group of organizers grew to include a few other committed newcomers. Together they very quickly came to the conclusion that Fort Greene Park was not an ideal location for their project because the Fort Greene neighborhood around the park had gentrified to such an extent that their claims to public space with a free meal did not congregate a broad group of working families, homeless people and solidarity activists. Members of the young project then began to network with the 123 Space in the late spring and early summer 2008, which led to a change in format for Brooklyn Food Not Bombs. The group began to cook their meals every Saturday in the kitchen at the 123 Space and take the food out to Von King Park in Bed Stuy. When another Food Not Bombs group began to share food on Thursdays in Bushwick, Brooklyn, the group at Von King Park became officially Bed Stuy Food Not
Bombs.

Using personal observations and transcripts from in-depth interviews with activists, in the following chapter I examine how the de-facto anti-racist ideas in the group were insufficient when group conflict about gender and community revealed serious discrepancies between people's visions about the project. This fissure, which led to two women leaving the project and which was the source of previous instances where other women chose to no longer participate, revealed long term trends about the project. These trends speak to Food Not Bombs' limitations as a movement that produces radical culture through social reproduction work (cooking food), but which is based upon a form of utopian prefiguration without a strong gender and race critique.
Place-based Politics, Out of Place: The case of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs
Introduction:

Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs Seeks to Break the Food Not Bombs Brand

I think that it's this weird sort of balancing act between identifying local communities and local organization as powerful and necessary to building a new society. But then also realizing that our politics and our ideals are not really based anywhere and is a sort of traveling thing. So it's this weird sort of thing where you're not from there, you're sort of a traveling tribe, but you recognize the limitations of only joining up with that tribe everywhere you go. And I don't know, I think it's a very interesting subject to examine because it brings up so many of these elements of just where does this movement live. And I think it lives somewhere in the intersection between the traveling group [and the place-based community], because personally I feel connected to the place that I live but I also feel connected to this global, this other aspect of globalization, [which] is this positive global culture that has emerged. (Philip 2012)

I do like that one thing that happened [at the 123 Space] was different people went out and asked people what do you want. And that's the only reason we had an after-school program was that people wanted it. No one said 'we need a bike project.' (Ruth 2012)

These quotes come from two activists who were deeply involved in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs in 2008 and 2009 but who no longer participated in the project when I interviewed them in early 2012. In these passages both individuals speak about Food Not Bombs with reference to two communities. Philip expresses this as a tension between a local and global community. What he talks about as the traveling tribe connotes the network of anarchist alter-globalization activists whose ideas and politics are not place-based. This tribe gathers at mass summit demonstrations. In the time and space between these mobilizations, the tribe creates and circulates through local nodes of autonomous space (Food Not Bombs, IndyMedia Centers, infoshops, Anarchist Bookfairs, collective houses, punk shows). For Philip, it is easy to see the limitations of only connecting with this group of people, and easy to see the limitations of place-centric organizing if it is unconnected to a globalized culture of resistance. Ruth's quote is a variation on the same theme, but suffused with more criticism. She speaks about the difference between the various
projects housed at the 123 Space community center, which was the location of the Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs kitchen until the community center was evicted at the end of the summer in 2009. Of the various 'free' projects in the space—free bike workshop, free screen-printing, free food—the free after-school program was the one project that came about because organizers solicited feedback from Bed Stuy residents. The free bike workshop, which Ruth says no one asked for, comes from the white DIY community, from what Philip calls the traveling tribe. Philip and Ruth did not simply express that these two communities are different. They spoke about inequality between these 'two communities,' inequality that creates organizing obstacles in projects like Food Not Bombs that are meant to build communities of resistance.

Although Food Not Bombs does not self-identify as a white movement—meaning a movement that organizes white people or uses whiteness as a group identifier—Food Not Bombs has a reputation as a movement that is predominantly white and middle-class activists. In addition to white and middle-class, Food Not Bombs chapters are also known to be punk and/or DIY subcultures marked by certain lifestyle choices, codes of dress, and uniformity of aesthetic tastes (see Shannon 2011). This DIY culture is in many ways celebrated as a culture of resistance to capitalism (see Holtzman et al. 2007). Food Not Bombs “activists are immersed in anarchist DIY (do-it-yourself) cultural production that attempts to create ‘a means to subvert and transcend capitalism’ as they try to create new communities outside of the purview of the state and capitalist social relations,” argues Shannon (2011, 14) using a phrase borrowed from Holtzman et al. (2007, 44). For both Duncombe (2002) and Shannon (2011), the blend of the DIY counterculture and direct action politics has been productive for contemporary resistance.

36 This is not to say that the Freegan Bike Workshop did not blossom into something relevant to multiple communities, which it certainly did. Ruth's point remains salient though.
movements. Shannon found that members of Food Not Bombs drew cultural sustenance from the DIY scene. “This was an area where the underground music scene and anarchist-inspired politics merged,” he writes (2011, 109).

Alternatively, in the specific case of Food Not Bombs this DIY reputation is also understood to be a hindrance to the group doing good work because the conventions of DIY culture are expressions of white privilege and therefore create limitations to effective inter-racial organizing (see Food Not Bombs People of Color 2008; Kilwaii 2009; Crass 2013, 52-55; cf., Cagle 2010). This line of criticism points out that white Food Not Bombs activists' tendencies are to ignore how issues of privilege structure their actions in the project. White activists' emphasis on 'dropping out' and living by dumpster diving is not an appropriate framework for radicalism given the differences between those who choose to 'drop out' and those who were never in the position to 'drop out.' The consistent promotion of this framework exacerbates the problem for people of color in Food Not Bombs groups and limits connections of solidarity (see Food Not Bombs People of Color 2008). For the People of Color Caucus, white activists not confronting their privilege, appropriating black culture, and tokenizing people of color organizers are all “phenomena [that] are offensive, annoying, and contribute to people of color not feeling welcome in this 'movement', or not feeling okay calling out fucked up shit” (2008). Further, Crass argues that in the 1990s the San Francisco Food Not Bombs chapter “rarely examined the material and psychological benefits of whiteness and, thus, race seemed like an issue of color and identity rather than history and power” (2013, 53). In Crass' example, the one-dimensional approach to racism created serious problems when white Food Not Bombs activists criticized San Francisco police officers of color in ways that expressed the latent white supremacy of the
group. Crass writes:

When a mostly white group like FNB engages in political work, white privilege will influence how the group develops its politics and practice. A group can choose to also have anti-racism shape its politics and practice, but that must be a conscious decision with a plan for moving it forward. (2013, 54-55)

How activists understand and work against these tendencies has been a major, but underdeveloped, focus for Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs, a chapter that shares free food in a predominantly African-American and Caribbean neighborhood yet was started by a few young white people.

Amongst the white organizers in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs I found a unanimously held criticism of the whiteness of Food Not Bombs. In the story of the Bed Stuy chapter, the critical analysis of Food Not Bombs and whiteness began in the earliest stages of the development of the project when the co-founders vacillated about whether or not they should call the project Food Not Bombs or simply use a different name (Ruth 2012). Early organizers feared that a middle-class, white, and punk subculture might arise from the draw of the Food Not Bombs 'brand' name, but they ultimately chose to stick with creating a Food Not Bombs chapter because they felt confident in their ability to work against those tendencies. In interviews, the earliest members of the group expressed a strong desire to create radical culture through cooking and eating, but also a strong criticism of the culture of Food Not Bombs that manifested itself as a desire to move beyond the limitedness of a middle-class, white, punk Food Not Bombs.

Self-reflexive critique and genuine desire do not necessarily translate into action, or even into success when action is taken. I found that white Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs activists did not overcome the obstacle they had hoped to overcome—a white cultural logic as a mode of organizing in a black community—so much as they found a false 'resolution' in the form of the
eviction of the white anarchist 123 Space. With the eviction of the 123 Space, Food Not Bombs lost its kitchen and many of the white activists that congregated at the infoshop stopped participating. The project continued on, however, and several black and Caribbean Bed Stuy residents took on more active roles. Here, the absence of white anarchists and the participation of residents of color came to stand in as successfully overcoming a dilemma of the overlap of two unequal communities. In the process, absence, not deliberative anti-racist organizing, came to be understood as the cause that created a space more available to residents of color.

However, I found that once absence was thought to be the cause of anti-racist outcomes, then the presence or the appearance of white anarchism had the potential to be seen as a threat. The 'resolution' of the problem of the whiteness of Food Not Bombs was revealed to be temporary and not a resolution at all. This had negative repercussions in conflicts between white activists when questions about 'the community' (who constitutes the community) and about the purpose of food support as a mode of political mobilization arose during a conflict about gender and the politics of safer spaces. These conflicts in the Bed Stuy chapter demonstrate that the Food Not Bombs model, as successful as it has been in confronting neoliberal urban space and in conducting reliable food support for summit protests, still struggles with issues of patriarchy and racism that plagued the San Francisco chapter during the halcyon days of mass arrests in the early 1990s (see Chapter 7). The increasingly internalized self-criticism of Food Not Bombs—in which most if not all Food Not Bombs activists are critical of the movement's whiteness—gave the co-founders of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs pause as they contemplated giving a new name to their practice. In order to find solutions to these issues, Food Not Bombs activists must look

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37 The 123 Space hosted a variety of free projects that constitute DIY community tactics, such as a free after-school program, a Freegan bike workshop, Food Not Bombs, regular sewing and screenprinting skillshares, and a zine library. In 2009 the 123 Space was evicted and the project dissolved.
beyond a narrow anti-racism based upon the addition or subtraction of DIY cultural signifiers.

When I interviewed one of the co-founders and several early participants in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs they all spoke of their efforts to create a chapter that overcame well-known Food Not Bombs issues. The basis for this self-criticism and desire to move beyond the model was often a criticism of the whiteness of punk culture and/or a criticism of the political limitations of the DIY tactics of dumpster-diving and re-appropriating waste.

Ruth, for example, expressed to me the way her and one of the co-founders reacted negatively when some white punks came around to Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs very early on in the project. Ruth is a young white queer woman who was a graduate student at the time of our interview. In this passage she expresses that DIY is not always synonymous with punk culture, and that she tried to pull these two cultural practices apart.

**Ruth:** [Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs] was DIY in the most literal of senses. I knew what Food Not Bombs was and still I am not a punk. I wasn't a part of that community...and we even experienced early on some of the kind of people who do have experience with Food Not Bombs, but they didn't meet my expectations of it. So early on we had a couple of white punk kids [laughs] come and just hang out and eat. Those of us who did all the work would have meetings as to 'How do we address this, 'cause this isn't what I want it to be? I understand that this is what it is a lot of times but this will not become that. I am not OK with that. Or how can we counter that?' So my knowledge of it was 'Let's not be what everyone else is [laughs]'. (Ruth 2012)

In this passage Ruth expresses that although the chapter that she helped to start was DIY in the literal sense of a group of people taking initiative and creating a project themselves with minimal resources, it was not meant to be culturally punk in that sense of the term DIY. She talked to me about how she felt confident in working against those tendencies because she had the support of her co-organizer. Further she was aware that the non-hierarchical and decentralized nature of Food Not Bombs meant that she “knew that this was not an organization where someone would
tell [her] what to do” (Ruth 2012). Her instincts were confirmed and her resolve bolstered when she and her co-founder approached the 123 Space about using their kitchen for Food Not Bombs collective cooking. At that time the 123 Space was a new community space in Bed Stuy in the model of an anarchist infoshop. The mostly white organizers of the community space were concerned about working against the whiteness of their project too, and they were not keen on bringing in Food Not Bombs because it seemed like to do so would only exacerbate their own issue. However, since Ruth and her white co-founder were not punks and were equally critical of those tendencies in Food Not Bombs, they were able to eventually convince the 123 Space organizers to let them use the kitchen. “I think it helped that I was the one who approached them and didn't look that way,” Ruth said. “If I had been some dirty punk I really think they would have said fuck that” (Ruth 2012).

One of the conditions of the agreement was that Food Not Bombs needed to actively work with the neighborhood children, several of which attended the free after-school program hosted at the space during the week. Ruth expressed to me that this was a strategy that the 123 Space thought would help to integrate Food Not Bombs with other programming and existing cross-racial relationship building, which was primarily happening through the families accessing the free after-school program. That Ruth was genuinely excited about working with the kids further ingratiated Food Not bombs with the concerned organizers of the community space.

In my interview with another white organizer named Paul, he speaks similarly about the problems of white punk culture in a burgeoning Food Not Bombs chapter. Paul became active in

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38 Here I want to make it clear that while it is a commonly held view that punk is a white subculture and it is commonly noted that qualities such as different dress and cleanliness codes are an obstacle to working in communities of color, there exists a vibrant afropunk culture that speaks back to these assumptions. That said, the point here is the way in which certain forms of whiteness follow Food Not Bombs and how those tensions play out in specific organizing contexts.
Bed Stuy after he had worked with Food Not Bombs in Long Island. When we spoke about his experiences getting Food Not Bombs going again (because active chapters from the 1990s had faded), he talked about these issues. Speaking about the beginning of a chapter in Long Island, Paul said:

The biggest hindrance we had was that we were a bunch of pretty well off white kids coming in to a very diverse lower-income community that kind of looked at us with resentment because a lot of people that were like us, that looked like us, would come in there and either mock people, they’d be there to buy drugs, they’d be there to harass people, and they weren't there to try to build up a sense of community. (Paul 2012)

Within this context, Paul spoke about how one element that exacerbated this issue was that when they established an organizing presence online it more often than not brought people from specifically white activist and punk circles. Describing those earliest attempts to establish their chapter, Paul says that their public meal was met with that skepticism for a little while. During this time period:

there were a lot of people that would contact us from online, and it was mostly people from the activist community and punk rock folks who had experienced Food Not Bombs and wanted to volunteer but it wasn't that many folks from the community. And it was very typical of what you'd see a normal Food Not Bombs chapters looking like, it looked like that. (Paul 2012)

In Paul’s explanation, once again we see the delineation of two communities, one of which is signified as an activist and punk rock community and the other as 'the community,' which becomes a shorthand for the 'very diverse lower-income neighborhood' where they set up the Food Not Bombs meal. Their breakthrough happened when an elder who was well-respected in the neighborhood began to support them. Yet Paul reiterated again that even with this elder's participation “it was mostly just a lot of punk rock kids and activist kids for like the first year” (Paul 2012).
As the topic of our conversation turned to the Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs chapter, which Paul became active in about a month after the chapter began serving food, he expressed to me that this chapter had the same kind of growing pains that they had experienced in Long Island. He echoed once again this idea of a community of ‘activists and punk rock kids.’ The following long dialogue ensued when we began to talk about the role of the 123 Space and the consolidation of this latter 'community (of activists and punks)' at the expense of 'the community.'

Paul: [The communal cooking] is really awesome but it was kind of a hindrance too because it was a lot of work. There was a lot involved in just the communal cooking aspect, a lot of times you'd burn things, there's the dishes. Do you want my prejudices in this?

David: Well I just want to know your feelings. Whatever you're comfortable with communicating you should just say it.

Paul: My feelings are that the Bed Stuy food-share, for the entirety of the 123 Space was activists and punk rock kids on one side of the table and community members on the other side of the table. And like all the other food shares the idea was to get community members involved and that was the motivation. I was volunteering in a very different position at the Bed Stuy share but trying to push for this idea of community members partaking in it. But I think I saw the biggest hindrance was the 123 Space, because the 123 Space made it easy. It made it easy to get things done, and the cooking done because you always had 30 people there and there was like a certain group of people that would always be at the bike shop, or the sewing program, or all these different things, and it was great and there was a great sense of community but it was a niche community. You know there were people from the community that would partake perhaps in the after-school program. I think that was the most dynamic and awesomest program there and maybe the bike workshop was the second best, but it was very hard for someone to come off the street, maybe of a different race, maybe of a different age group, if we're all in our teens and twenties. (Paul 2012)

In this passage we get a strong sense of Paul's interpretation of the way the space of the 123 Space community center brought together particular communities that were variously young, white, activist, and punk/DIY, but in so doing the 123 Space did not integrate with 'the community' that constituted the neighborhood demographics. Paul presents this as an idea that he
pushed in particular, but Ruth (and others) shared the same goal.

Shannon's ethnographic work with another Food Not Bombs chapter revealed similar tensions between the inwardness of the cooking space and the goal of the group to be an open and inviting space. Shannon describes a story of a woman who “came a few times to participate, learned about the group, largely agreed with the group's political goals and methods, then left and did not return after describing to us how alienating and unwelcoming the space seemed to her” (2011, 54-55). Shannon's thickly detailed fieldnotes tell the story of the group cooking food and chopping vegetables when the woman brought up the music that was consistently played in the kitchen, how she expressed that “after working all week, the last thing I want to do is listen to people scream while I cook for two hours. It's not the most welcoming environment” (quoted in Shannon 2011, 56). Pressed on whether or not it was just the music, she continued on to say, “No, no, though I can't stand the music. I guess when I first came I wondered if I'd fit in. You're all very nice people, but it's obvious that you listen to similar music, dress and talk the same way. I guess I wondered if I'd be welcome” (quoted in Shannon 2011, 56). Reflecting on this, Shannon expresses complicated feelings of disappointment that cultural factors presented a barrier while at the same time acknowledging that many of the Food Not Bombs regulars “belonged to those subcultures to find inclusive spaces for [themselves] outside of a stifling dominant culture that [they] found unwelcoming and oppressive” (56). When Holtzman et al. (2007) speak of the community of resistance that has grown up with the DIY ethos, they imply this latter point of Shannon's. Mainly that it is through making these spaces and coded value systems that a group of people who feel deeply alienated come to know one another and work together. For Shannon, the conflicting feelings come from recognizing both the power of those subcultural norms and the
real barriers those norms present to other people who may wish to participate.

Philip, another Food Not Bombs organizer who began to help out very early on in the project, expressed many of these same issues. Philip was present as some of the early conversations where people expressed complicated feelings about doing the project under the name of Food Not Bombs, which were feelings that Philip shared. In those discussions people were concerned that the rote repetition of the same model in a new place would erode the political content of what they wanted to do.

**Philip:** I think a lot of what was going on early on was people thinking, 'How do we get beyond this model of Food Not Bombs?'

**David:** [Interrupting] Even early on?

**Philip:** Early on! Immediately. In talking with the people who started [it], from the beginning they were even questioning calling it Food Not Bombs because they didn't want it to be the Food Not Bombs model. I think some of that got lost. But I think a lot of it at the beginning was 'How do we get past this model?' (Philip 2012)

For Philip, the big issue was the way in which the model became a static environment where it becomes a cultural practice that consolidates the culture of people who identify with Food Not Bombs like a brand, a self-identifying group of people who rescue food waste and feed homeless people. He expressed criticism of the tactics of dumpster-diving, though he at one point was very active in doing it himself, and living off the waste of capitalism because he feels it does not build people towards abolishing those sources of marginality off of which they are living. For him this quality of Food Not Bombs as a known entity becomes double-edged because it gives the project a certain cache and a certain amount of volunteers, but with this it can get out of the control of the individuals who wished to push it to a new level.

**It's a branded project. And it's a double-edged sword. On the one hand you're gonna get all these people coming and saying 'Oh yeah I did Food Not Bombs in Ohio. I did Food Not Bombs in wherever.' And that's great because you have this**
recognition. People know what Food Not Bombs is, when they go to a city they look it up. They want to volunteer in it. They know what they're getting into. But at the same time if you're trying to create a Food Not Bombs model that moves beyond that traditional model now you've got all these people coming and saying, 'No, this is Food Not Bombs,' coming with these expectations of what Food Not Bombs is and you know that starts to bring it back towards where it was. (Philip 2012)

By bringing in the phrase 'branded project,' Philip triggered in my head something that I had read in Day's (2005) work on the contemporary social movements. Day calls the various groups he examines, from Food Not Bombs to Reclaim the Streets to Earth First!, 'non-branded tactics' (2005, 19). Day does not deploy this phrase as a conceptual tool but rather as a way to signify that these tactics are unaffiliated with specific political parties, that they are in a sense politically ecumenical. Day writes, “[M]any of the most effective tactics are non-branded, that is, they tend to spread in a viral way, with no one taking ownership or attempting to exercise control over how they are implemented” (19). I brought up Day's idea to Philip, expressing to him that I had been thinking about whether Food Not Bombs was branded or non-branded given what people said about wishing to break out of the model. I brought up how people expressed to me that they sought out Food Not Bombs in their locales because they wanted to gain access to a community of radicals, and they felt that Food Not Bombs could provide a gateway into that community. In this way, the branded-ness signaled something beyond what was just on the surface of the public community meal, a whole network of places and people with some overlapping politics. Philip responded by saying that even this is “still a limiting factor because if you move to a city and the first thing you do is seek out Food Not Bombs you're essentially seeking out the young, white, alt, hippie, anarcho scene” (Philip 2012). He continued:

You're not getting the full radical layout [of the city]...I think the actual radical layout of any given city community is much broader, and Food Not Bombs in any
given city might be plugged into that but I think going there expecting to find this crowd is very limiting. (Philip 2012)

What Philip and others experienced, and what those who are critical of the whiteness of Food Not Bombs point out, is that Food Not Bombs is far from 'non-branded' in practice even if it is not controlled by a central hierarchy. Rather it is deeply branded with specific cultural conventions. In interviews Food Not Bombs organizers, both those who no longer work with the group and those who do, expressed a deep antipathy for the white punk culture so commonly associated with Food Not Bombs. This became a kind of shared, but shallow, form of anti-racism which expressed itself as the desire to disassociate from or downplay the role of punk culture in Food Not Bombs. In other words, disassociating from punk culture was a discursive way for us (I include myself in this process) to overcome these issues. 'Punk' became a mechanism for othering specific people and practices; it became the abject form of whiteness that limits the ability of Food Not Bombs to overcome the separation between young white activists and 'the community' of working class people of color in Bed Stuy.

Conversely these same individuals were not sanguine about their own ability to escape these dynamics even if they enthusiastically wished to do so. What remained evident was that eschewing punk culture was not the same as abolishing the power dynamics of white skin privilege in the space of a public meal (and free grocery distribution) in a people of color neighborhood. This quality infused my interviews with a sense of no one specific answer to how to do things the right way, but plenty of examples of how not to do things. Philip, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, struggled with figuring out how to build power locally without closing off connections to the positive elements of the alter-globalization movement. Ruth spoke to me how she felt that these issues can be simplified in examples where people of
color led groups have specific ally support working groups or action call-outs direct to white allies, where there are clear roles delineating people of color leadership and white ally work. After she left Food Not Bombs she began to work more exclusively on feminist projects. She expressed to me that this work made her less vulnerable because she spent less time as “genderfire,” but it also meant she was not as actively working on these issues of whiteness and community as she had been during her time with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. For Ruth, there was something valuable about Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs in that people felt compelled to confront these issues, but this value was still too indeterminate to outweigh stepping away from the project.

While these interviews showed that white organizers consistently agreed about the potential problems of cultivating a young white punk community, for a time the issue became something of a moot point because the 123 Space was evicted in early fall 2009. With the loss of the social space that brought together young anti-authoritarian activists, the number of white people participating in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs dropped drastically. Paul, for example, attributed this eviction to solving the issues of an insular and inaccessible young white culture at Food Not Bombs. For Paul the eviction of the 123 Space was a moment that demonstrated the true colors of the niche activist community, whose lack of solidarity was evidenced by the way they stopped participating in the absence of a kitchen. Additionally that moment created an opening for ‘the community’ to step in to participate. In other words, the matrix of white people and their specific musical tastes, dress codes, and cooking practices stopped when the kitchen was no longer available. With these barriers gone, other people stepped in.

39 By ‘genderfire’ Ruth meant that working with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs placed her in the position of fighting against sexism in the group.
When that space fell apart the amount of people literally went from 30 people coming to the food share and volunteering to two. There's me who's stubborn doing Food Not Bombs and this is what I believe in. And there's Donovan who really loves [to bring home-cooked food]. I knew that a lot of people would go but I didn't think it was going to be that many...I think it was the best thing for the Bed Stuy food-share because the hot food stopped and the women in the community were like 'We want the hot food so we're going to do it and because we're going to be cooking the hot food maybe we should volunteer too.' (Paul 2012)

During the time that I became a regular volunteer at Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs, I found this to be a common idea amongst people who brought an anti-capitalist political analysis to the group, but not an idea that we examined critically. In the group we tended to value this outcome precisely because there was a shared understanding that too many white people sharing food out in public space in a predominantly people of color neighborhood exhibited the paternalistic elements of charity instead of building community power to fight hunger, poverty and waste. On numerous occasions Donovan, an older white man who brought home-cooked food out to the park on a weekly basis, expressed to me (and others) that Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs used to be problematic because the dynamic was all white people on one side of the table serving food to people of color on the other side of the table. Erin, a queer white woman and graduate student, described her feelings in the following way when I asked her to describe why Food Not Bombs emphasizes working in visible public spaces.

That's a really good question because I actually had a really hard time with the public space element. It was very difficult for me. I understood that we were all supposed to be eating together but it often still felt like there was an us and them, like we made this food and now you're eating it. Even though philosophically I understood 'We're all eating it because I'm eating it right now [too],' but it didn't always bare out for me...Even if a lot of kids [who lived nearby] cooked with us they wouldn't want to take the cart over [to the park] and do all that shit, so it would be a bunch of white people saying 'Look, free food!' Definitely, we would talk to people but it always felt like a difficult interaction for me. (Erin 2012)
Given these types of sentiments, it is evident that people involved with the project would be excited that the loss of the 123 Space, otherwise a depressing defeat at the hands of a landlord, led to such an outcome at Food Not Bombs where a group of local residents of color not otherwise affiliated with the young white organizers became much more involved.

However, Paul's reading of this shift in participation gives too much weight to the absence of white activists as a generative dynamic, and not enough attention to the fact that after all the other young activists left he became the de facto white leader of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs (along with Chuck and later myself when I started participating on a weekly basis). In other words, the dynamics of white power do not so easily vacate the space even if a large number of white people do. This dynamic came out in interviews with the Bed Stuy residents of color who became much more active. They did not frame their participation as though the loss of white activists (or punks) provided the opportunity for people to take ownership over the project. Rather, they spoke about their participation as reciprocity and/or appreciation for the work that Paul, Chuck (a middle-aged, middle class white man who also helped collect food), and I were doing. Rather than opening up the space for the dispersal of power, the loss of the 'activist community' actually consolidated the power amongst a fewer number of white people, which for about six months was limited to mostly just Paul and Chuck as the project transitioned after the 123 Space eviction.

Derrick, for example, spoke in this register of Food Not Bombs as something that is Paul's, Chuck's, and my free food program. For Derrick, participation remained on the level of helping to fill in when and where needed. Derrick is a middle-aged, working-class black man and long time Bed Stuy resident who regularly helps to distribute the food at the park and for a
fleeting period used his wife's car to pick up food donations from grocery stores. When Derrick spoke to me about how he would like to see Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs have more order and discipline (in terms of how the food is distributed), I asked him if he felt like he was a full participant in making Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs what it is. He responded in the following way.

> Look at it from my standpoint. OK, I'll give you an illustration. You have a husband and a wife. If both of them are seeking to be the captain, then the ship sinks. But if the wife is supporting her husband even when she doesn't agree with him but she actively supports his decision then the ship is going to float peacefully and things will be able to get done. It's the same way, I might have my own philosophy on things but my main objective is to support what's going on. It's not mine, it's theirs, and obviously they've been doing it longer than I have, so I just look at it as a learning experience. Both mine and their philosophy can work, that's what I believe both philosophies can work. (Derrick 2012)

We continued to talk about the kinds of latent social dynamics in the space and Derrick began to talk about how, even without the well-defined order he'd like to see, some order emerges from people getting to know each other. But this 'maturation' that he spoke of was still quite hierarchical, nothing akin to the horizontal relationships that Food Not Bombs strives for.

> When people appreciate the work that everyone does, then they're able to cooperate with each other more fully, and I think there's an appreciation for what you, Paul, and Chuck do, there's an appreciation for what Jean does...she keeps order behind the table, so she makes sure that everything is where Paul wants it to be, and she makes sure that those who are distributing are doing it the way Paul wants us to do it, so in a way there's that flexibility where even though it's open there's still order. Both can work harmoniously. (Derrick 2012)

In this passage, even though Derrick is speaking about questions of order and how to distribute free food fairly, he speaks openly (just not negatively) about Paul as the leader in an indirect way. Jean takes the initiative to make sure people do what Paul wants. Jean is an older, working-class Caribbean woman. She is one of the main people who became more active after the 'activist

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40 We got into this line of conversation because Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs, like many white anti-authoritarian projects, has very few rules. The idea is to stay away from the punitive elements of social services, such as means-testing and excessive discipline, and develop forms of self-organization in the space (both in terms of Food Not Bombs kitchens and in the public space).
community’ dwindled. In my interview with Jean, she reiterated that she sees her participation as
giving back to the people doing the ‘good’ work of giving away free food, namely Paul (but also
to some extent me and Chuck).

If you remember we had a meeting and I said [to other volunteers], we volunteer
to help put out the tables, help bring out the stuff. When the food gets there [to the
park], it's our duty to take over from Paul. That's our responsibility. (Jean 2012)

For Jean, this duty and responsibility is a manifestation of appreciation for the free food. This
quote followed a longer story where Jean talked to me about how she used take the initiative to
collect small amounts of money, like five dollars, from those that could afford it in order to give
Paul and Chuck some gas money at the end of the month. When Chuck used the money to buy
more produce to give away, and Paul asked Jean not to collect money, she decided to still look
for ways to reciprocate because she wanted to give respect to Paul and Chuck for what they do.
Later in the conversation, Jean and I talked about how there have been times during the food
distribution when someone did not listen to her, even though she is a central volunteer, but
instead they looked to Paul as a higher authority. I asked Jean if she ever got frustrated that it
seems like Paul is the leader.

Truthfully, my respect is tied to Paul. Paul is a person to me who is a leader of
that Food Not Bombs, because that's all going on because Paul is the one bringing
the food. So I always think of Paul as the leader. Whatever Paul says to me, goes.
(Jean 2012)

I want to highlight a few things here. Derrick and Jean certainly were not speaking for all
Bed Stuy residents of color, nor is it self-evident that they are speaking about how they truly feel.
Given the power differences between Jean and I and the way she identifies me with Paul, it is
both possible and plausible that she would not talk about being frustrated with Paul. These
conversations are not revealing because of the frustrations expressed, but rather through the
asymmetries of power that are signaled by the lack of frustration. Conversations that I had with Jean and Derrick reveal that, even after the loss of the ‘white activist community,’ Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs had not genuinely dealt with the problems of whiteness in the Food Not Bombs brand. Increasing participation in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs by members of ‘the community’ showed that we were all a part of a collective form of resilience based in some bonds of reciprocity. At the same time, we were not leveraging that resilience into collectively held oppositional frameworks, or collective forms of resistance. In the myopic focus on ‘the community’ we were not building community power together.

**Conclusion:**

*Activist* Women Confront White Male Power in Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs

We do not want to provide services and maintain the status quo by helping it deal with its worst excesses. We want to highlight the misery created by the system and build social justice movements for systemic change. FNB groups often struggle to keep the focus on services and social change and not to slip into a “charity” mode. (Crass 2013, 70)

It is a cold and windy Saturday morning in late January 2012 and I’m riding the ‘C’ train uptown with Natalie. We are headed from Brooklyn into Manhattan to meet others at a grocery store around 10am, where we will rescue the food that we give out in Bed Stuy later in the afternoon. I enjoy these trips with Natalie because they offer a space to talk about our feelings about Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. And, the ‘work’ of getting up early on a Saturday, traveling to a grocery store and then lugging around large boxes of produce is much lighter when we do it together.

In general, I also enjoyed working with Natalie and her friend Jorie because the three of us worked together against the grain of some of Paul’s tendencies in the group. We wanted to
have more meetings, and begin to work more deliberatively with the group of active Bed Stuy residents of color, such as Jean and Derrick, but also Martin, Lily, Beth, and Miss Shauna. Natalie and Jorie pushed for more group decision-making in the space of the park, and Jean and Martin became much more active in the formal group meetings. In this regard, we were making progress, and because Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs had been going on for several years there was a substantial amount of trust that provided a foundation for becoming a more integrated group. The group just needed a push, which Natalie and Jorie provided.

Today’s conversation on the train, however, is depressing because Natalie is speaking to me about how she is likely going to be stepping away from Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. She had been reflecting on recent group discussions, she said, about the purpose of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. She had been thinking about whether or not Food Not Bombs is more closely related to a street demonstration or to a community safe space, and about who is and is not figured as ‘the community’ being built by the project. As we ride the train, Natalie says she feels strongly that Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs is a charity, that Paul's method moves the model away from solidarity and more towards charity.

Over the previous month and half, a major conflict had come up in the group around the presence of a man known in the white activist anarchist culture for emotionally and sexually abusive behavior. This man started to come around to the food-share off and on, and he typically brought a lot of clothes and some food he’d rescued. He was not coming to group organizing meetings or seeking entry into the group of organizers, but of late he certainly came around to the food-share more often to get food and eat a meal with everyone. This brought up the question of safer spaces⁴¹ and how Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs could become a safer space. The problem

⁴¹ Newman (2011) defines safer spaces in the following way:
that we were having as a group was that Paul, Donovan, and Chuck did not think that the presence of this man was a problem because we were talking about a public space where people come for food. They argued that everyone has a right to food. In contrast, Natalie and Jorie argued that the issue was much more complicated because other people's rights to food and to participate are compromised by the lack of safety that this man's presence signified. For example, in the spring of 2011, Johnnie, a young, trans person, had started to become more involved but stopped coming because they were concerned about times when this man came around. Further, when Johnnie brought it up to Paul, Paul was dismissive of the issue, which further signaled to Johnnie that this was not a good project to be involved with. Subsequently, Johnnie stopped coming. Now, Natalie and Jorie were beginning to feel the same way, but hoped to resolve the issue and build Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs into a stronger group, much as we sought to build it into a stronger group with regard to working more closely with Jean and Martin (and others). In this conflict, I felt that even though I did not feel unsafe around this man—or rather especially because I did not feel unsafe—that it was important to support Natalie and Jorie. Jean, Martin, and others of the older Bed Stuy residents of color said they felt like this was something we needed to deal with independent of their input, because they did not know anything about this man, or the conflicts in the anarchist culture.

What I found during the discussions about how to move forward with a better gender politics in the group, was that Paul continually presented the commonly held notion that the

The term “Safer Space” originated in Women’s and Queer movements of the past decades as an identifier of space that is explicitly committed to safety for individuals or communities that are targets of oppression. The identifier implies that the space takes an explicit anti-oppression stance, and will address oppressive behaviors directly. (Newman 2011, 138)

See Newman (2011) for a discussion of the safer spaces committee's work on mental health and trauma at the Decolonize/Occupy Oakland encampment.
white anarchist 'activist' culture was an obstacle to 'community' participation. This came to a
head for Natalie and Jorie because the stance of Paul, Donovan and Chuck went against the
idea of building a close, supportive, nurturing 'community' of organizers. Paul aligned the
politics of safe spaces with all the codes of whiteness, anarchism, and punkness. He lumped the
call to create a safer space in with all that had come to be seen as abject. In our group
discussions, Natalie pushed the idea that the purpose of the work is to work against the
separation of the 'anarchist community' and 'the community,' to build a community of people
organizing together. In contrast, Paul and Donovan had rejected the idea that we could create a
safe space because we were doing a variation of a street demonstration, where we have no
control over who comes out to the street. Paul wanted us to focus on our 'duty,' which was to
make sure all the people that came out got food. 'Duty' became a key word in this conversation.
Natalie expressed a deep frustration that we were downplaying the community building aspect—
meaning the community of anti-authoritarians and others that do the work of rescuing the food
and organizing the project. She was frustrated that we were organizing a project where
individual people take on individual tasks in order to give food to 'the community,' meaning to
the poor people who live in the neighborhood. For her, if this is the limit of our work then it
becomes a charity, not solidarity. Paul's feeling about the group, in contrast, was that if we do
not think of this work as a job, if we do not think of it as our 'duty' to do this work, then it
becomes more like charity where people just show up once and do a charitable act and that's it.
In his view, making the project more 'work-like'—meaning consistently and unequivocally
dedicated to 'the community'—was precisely what distinguished it from charity.

After several meetings to work through this impasse, the group remained stuck. Without a
solution, Natalie and Jorie sought to create a different food solidarity group working with other
people who felt equally critical about Paul's method at Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. This was the
crux of what Natalie explained to me on the train, mainly that based in our group discussions
she felt that we were a charity. She explained to me to that she didn't necessarily think charities
were bad, per se, just that she had a limited amount of time and could not afford to use that time
on a charity when it could otherwise be used for a project more explicitly about solidarity and
social justice.

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The messiness of these ideas of 'charity' and 'solidarity' when they are put into practice
does not mean we should dismiss them. When it pertains to doing food rescue, the politics of
doing such work gets complicated because of what Katz calls “the necessity of social
reproduction” (Katz 2001b), meaning simply that the need to get rescued food to people who are hungry can easily trump the development of other arms of the project. When it is not readily apparent that a Food Not Bombs chapter is fighting against repression, as might be said of the San Francisco chapter in the early 1990s and the Orlando chapter in the late 2000s, then it can easily become unclear how people cooking and eating together relate to political mobilization. But this may be because the US political tradition in its labor history and political theory has not adequately dealt with the way the labors of social reproduction function in creating spaces and cultures of resistance. Aid societies, secret societies, communalism, and cooperatives typically get neglected in theories of social transformation, yet scholars that look back at moments of uprising often find these forms of cooperation feeding into the more well-known elements of the struggle. But even when we are aware of these groups, we do not have a strong understanding of

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how the people involved conceived of their work. Did those who organized mutual aid societies worry that they were doing charity, not politics? Or did they have a clear sense of the value of their work in creating a political community? If so, how was that value represented to them by others in their movements? And how did they represent themselves?

Most anti-authoritarians would agree with Natalie and Jorie's concept of charity and disagree with Paul's. However, the underlying dynamics of this conflict were about white male power, so it is not clear how other white male anti-authoritarians would respond to Natalie and Jorie's desire to make Food Not Bombs a safer space. Calls by feminists (and others) to make safer spaces are typically met with stubbornness precisely because these calls for particular kinds of space contest the patriarchy of social movement culture. Paul simply leveraged an existing discourse—the discourse that white, punk, activist DIY culture is an obstacle to participation for people of color—in order to maintain the status quo. As I demonstrated in my interviews and and critiques of Food Not Bombs such as the one from the People of Color Caucus (Food Not Bombs People of Color 2008), many people come to the same conclusions that qualities of punk culture are not particularly effective for building cross-race solidarity. This conflict reveals the different ways in which white people attempt to separate punk culture from whiteness, and the kinds of outcomes produced. Paul's notion of erasing all elements of anti-authoritarian activist tendencies ultimately meant just doing the work of making sure there's free food for 'the community.' But his 'let's just get things done' attitude reproduced forms of power and privilege that are not solely about punk culture but really about whiteness and maleness.

On the other hand, Natalie and Jorie (as well as Johnnie and Ruth), looked to develop a cross-racial community that was not about 'punk' culture or fetishizing 'the community.' In
contrast to the idea that the loss of the 123 Space was a good thing, Ruth argued that the loss of space hamstrung the ability of the group to do the high-quality organizing work that needed to be done:

I think the problem is our culture is so embedded in the charity model that it's hard. You have to work against it constantly. [It] also doesn't help [when] we don't have a space 'cause a space is the place where people can come in and visit with us and hang out for a longer time period. To just do Food Not Bombs once a week over a table is really difficult. I believe strongly in 'solidarity not charity.' I don't think we lived up to that. Though I think we did what we could which was great and I think it's very much a work in progress. And I think that's something that all of 123 [Space] struggled with and I still struggle with. How do you work as an ally especially in racial, class lines? Gender as well though. How do you work as an ally? (Ruth 2012)

In this passage of Ruth's, we see that she feels the purpose of autonomous community space is to stage long term connections which will allow people to work against the charity model. But neither is she particularly sanguine about how it was working in the 123 Space, nor is she confident about actually how to do it. In Ruth's frame, the function of duty is much more a 'duty' to work against tendencies of the mainstream culture.

Here I want to return to a discussion of social reproduction work in building communities of resistance. The primary model of Food Not Bombs is for people to cook a meal together, and then eat it in public space in an open way that is inviting and open to all. In other words, it combines elements of ongoing collective work in a relatively closed space, with a political claim to public space for the combined message of free food and a capitalist critique. In this schema, the kitchen becomes a place where people engage in acts of resilience (such as helping one another to turn wasted food into a nutritious meal) that stage connections between people for the creation of an oppositional framework for action. Alternatively, the public meal becomes the location where such oppositional ideas lay claims to space and make those ideas public; this is
where Food Not Bombs ‘takes space and makes it public,’ to use Mitchell’s (2003) formulation. Furthermore, the purpose for doing things this way is precisely because, as people without the means to overthrow capitalism, we are forced to struggle with it in ways that are much more manageable. In other words, cooking food together and taking it out into public space is a way to struggle within our means, but struggle that is also diligent to send a visible message in public space. In doing this simple and manageable act, we build connections and capacities that see their fruition in different moments of uprising. We see Food Not Bombs volunteers taking the lead in feeding thousands of protesters at mass demonstrations, or collecting food for a blockade or occupation. In other words, in the much more manageable day-to-day social reproduction work, Food Not Bombs volunteers develop the infrastructure to integrate support work into confrontational movements.

However, the simplicity and beauty of this model, as the case of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs shows, becomes much less cogent when we are talking about the real social geographies of gender, race, and class in capitalism. In kitchens in general, the gendering of social reproduction work becomes an immediate issue. Women in Food Not Bombs kitchens typically face patriarchal assumptions about who should do what kinds of work. But in a neighborhood such as Bed Stuy, the notion of a kitchen as a location of resilience is further complicated by racism and segregation because white newcomers cooking food together—not simply ' punks' but white people in general—tend to have very few connections to draw people of color in as participants in the kitchen. We tend to focus on the outward codes of punk culture as an obstacle, but the reality is that the process has much more to do with legacies of white supremacy and

42 My interviews demonstrated that this was also a problem during the time that Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs used the kitchen at the 123 Space. This itself was another story that I could have developed in this section, but because it dealt with the project in a form previous to my research, I decided to not center the findings around this dynamic.
residential segregation. Furthermore, in Bed Stuy racism complicated the political claims to public space. As black and Caribbean neighborhood facing gentrification, white people claiming public space does not resonate with the same political force as if, say, the meal were in a public space in which the neoliberal state was actively attempting to erase poverty and inequality.\footnote{The fact that Brooklyn Food Not Bombs moved from gentrified Fort Greene Park to Von King Park in Bed Stuy is actually a curious move in this regard, because making poverty and inequality visible in Fort Greene may have resonated with more force. However, those that I talk with pretty much agreed that nothing much was going on when they brought food to Fort Greene Park. This suggests that there are multiple variables for Food Not Bombs groups to consider, between the relationship of the space to the urban real estate economy as well as the social dynamics in the park.} All too often the assumption is that Food Not Bombs is a project that is actually well-suited to overcome these hierarchies because, to use a simple example, there are men cooking as a part of their social movement work. This is certainly a tantalizing prospect that drew me into researching Food Not Bombs in the first place. But what we see in this case is that the model is much too oversimplified for the complex social dynamics on the ground. In order to develop into a model that is more suited for the realities of capitalist uneven development, Food Not Bombs must develop concrete anti-racist and anti-sexist strategies beyond the cultural conventions of white anti-authoritarianism. In many ways, these are the same conclusions that some members of San Francisco Food Not Bombs came to in the mid-1990s (see Crass 2013) and clearly the impetus to the People of Color Caucus statement (Food Not Bombs People of Color 2008), which means that a Food Not Bombs chapter that began in 2008 with strong intentions to be different, replicated many of the exact same problems as other chapters.
Both the Clinic and the Streets:
The dialectical geography between radical care and action
Finding the Clinic Amidst the Confrontation

The 2011 occupations of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt and Zuccotti Park in New York City, two mass demonstrations in a wave of occupations of public space\textsuperscript{44}, exemplify a spatial politics that fuses confrontational tactics (claiming space) with affirmational tactics (prefiguring a new economy through mutual aid). In the US, the occupied parks included collective kitchens, medical areas, and even 'comfort stations,' all spaces where people provided freely given social reproduction work in order to make the occupation last by taking care of each other on a daily basis. Together, these spaces of social reproduction gave the occupations their durability and their vitality. It is self-evident that the duration of any occupation relies on support work that reproduces the individuals occupying the space on a daily basis. In other words, in order for an occupation or any confrontational tactic to reproduce itself on a daily (or even generational basis), the the demonstrators must account for their own social reproduction.

But the self-evident fact that social reproduction must happen says very little about how that social reproduction will be organized (who does the work and under what conditions) or how it will be framed in relationship to the confrontational direct action of claiming space and 'making it public' (Mitchell 2003). In Zuccotti Park, these spaces of social reproduction were the product of autonomous initiatives that became formal working groups. They were not a result of planning by a central leadership committee, or by a centralized distribution of work. Freely given food and care for all people became a visible message that the movement is about people's most basic needs. But the form this occupation took also derived from the DIY anarchist practices that have developed over the last two decades. Much like a 'scaled up' Food Not Bombs\textsuperscript{45},

\textsuperscript{44} Zuccotti Park is a Privately Owned Public Space (POPS).
\textsuperscript{45} I mean 'scaled up' in terms of numbers of people, in terms of the kinds of needs met (not just food), and in terms of the exposure the action gained.
#OccupyWallStreet activists made visible the issues of poverty and lack by congregating people in a public space to meet those needs through sharing and cooperation. Activists' experiences building autonomous initiatives such as Food Not Bombs field kitchens, IndyMedia Centers, and street medic teams provided the foundation for recreating this social reproduction infrastructure in occupied Zuccotti Park, complete with media center, medic station, and kitchen.

Just like an occupation requires social reproduction, the strategy of creating 'autonomous space' implies social reproduction work. If geographies of autonomy are, according to Pickerill and Chatterton (2010), “survival” routes out of capitalism, then autonomous space must simultaneously be a space of social reproduction. Furthermore, questions of social reproduction saturate the whole concept of autonomous space. Activists create autonomous spaces because they recognize the need for spaces wherein cooperative social relations provide a reprieve from capitalist social relations, and where participation in a collective project engenders a sense of possible future alternatives. At the crux of this goal to 'engender alternatives' is the sense that capitalist space reproduces people as capitalist subjects. In contrast, the purpose of autonomous space is to break the reproduction of capitalist subjectivity—to undo myopic understandings of economy (Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). Framed in this way, autonomous space is a spatial strategy for reworking (Katz 2004) the social conditions of social reproduction in order to stop one form of reproduction (capitalist subjects) and engender another (subjects open to alternative economies).

However, theories of the geography of autonomy rarely deal with social reproduction from a feminist-Marxist perspective. There is some work that gestures in this direction, but it is very superficial. Chatterton, for example, argues that Katz's work is useful for understanding
geographies of autonomy because she outlines “how the work of movements for change simultaneously weaves together caring, survival, reworking and resistance functions, all of which are tactically necessary” (2010, 903). He finds that “political movements win by building capacity and resilience,” not simply through goal-oriented confrontations (903). In this piece Chatterton cites Katz’s work on resilience, reworking, and resistance. But this thread of thinking remains underdeveloped because it restates the point that geographies of autonomy are geographies of social reproduction but does not develop a theory of autonomous space based in a gender critique of capitalist social reproduction.

Although geographies of autonomy imply a theory of anti-capitalist social reproduction, concepts of autonomous space do not overtly deal with the relationship between gender and the value of social reproduction work. In capitalism, social reproduction work is simultaneously gendered and undervalued (see Katz 2001b; Fedirici 2004). Do geographies of autonomy revalue social reproduction work? If so, in what ways? Or conversely, do the gendered value relations in capitalism find their way in to autonomous space and ultimately color the social reproduction work of autonomous politics? These are questions that theories of the geography of autonomy leave unanswered when they do not address autonomous space qua social reproduction space.

However, it is clear that social reproduction work in movements is not as highly valued as other forms of movement work. Social reproduction work is vulnerable to charges of reformism, and to be left out of histories and geographies of resistance, precisely because social reproduction work takes community resilience and people's capacities to struggle to be its object. This, in contrast to other work that more self-evidently signifies resistance because it is militant, oppositional, or confrontational. To put it differently, in social reproduction movement work
subjects are the object. We are the object. Whereas in confrontational movement work macro
power relations are the object. If reworking is not always resistance, but some modes of
reworking serve resistance (see Katz 2004), then the same practices of reworking can be both
highly valued (because they further resistance) and devalued (because they stop short of
resistance). Uncertainty about the final outcome of reworking, uncertainty about whether the
subjects of social reproduction will become an oppositional force, creates an ever-present
problem of value for social reproduction movement work.

But, as examples, Tahrir Square and Zuccotti Park represent the powerful moments when
the confrontational and the reproduction elements of a movement are combined in time and
space. The relationship between these tactical moments, however, is not just a function of
simultaneity. Reproduction and confrontation also relate to one another through time and across
space. Resistance and the reproduction of the subjectivity of resistance can be both causes and
effects of one another in unsynchronized times and places. The geographical (and temporal)
movement from the reproduction of the capacities to resist to the deployment of those capacities
in acts of resistance is a dialectical geography, oscillating between the clinics and the streets.
Here 'streets' and 'clinics' are spatial metaphors for the incredible variety of spaces where the
production and reproduction of radicalism happen.

Taken together, the struggle for People's Park in Berkeley, CA and organizing to create
the Berkeley Community Health Project, known colloquially as the Berkeley Free Clinic,
provide a case example of the dialectical relationship between the clinic and the streets. In
Mitchell's (2003) reading of the struggle for people's park in Berkeley in 1969 he finds this
struggle to be an example of the way conflicts over rights often are expressed in confrontations
over space. In this narrative, Mitchell frames the origin of People's Park vis-a-vis the Free Speech Movement. He stresses how the student activists' claims to campus rights fit into the larger social geography of the south campus area, which at the time was developing into an epicenter of radicalism. The University of California sought to fight the emergent counter-culture indirectly through land use redevelopment. UC purchased a series of properties using eminent domain, demolished the buildings and then subsequently left the space to become something of a muddy, informal parking lot. Activists put out the call through the underground press to create a park in that space. As Mitchell writes, activists “were planning to take (or perhaps take back) another space in the name of creating an open community-controlled political space. They were planning to make a People's Park” (2003, 108; see Scheer 1969). However, since Mitchell’s primary goal in retelling the park's origin story is to show how conflicts over rights necessarily take on the texture of fights over spaces, he emphasizes the confrontational elements of the street-fighting and especially the tragic death of one student, James Rector (Scheer 1969, 43). Unfortunately, health radicals and their spatial strategies are left out of the story. The organizational work that activists did to create a radical free clinic is missing from the story. The role this work played in the creation of field hospitals and the training of street medics, both integral to the confrontational demonstrations to defend the park, is subsequently missing as well. For Mitchell's purposes these aspects are less relevant, but they are nevertheless an important part of the story. Their omission from the narrative is another reminder that radicalized care has not been integrated into radical theories of confrontational spatial tactics.

In 1967 a group of Berkeley residents created an ecumenical street ministry designed to meet people's needs because they, like their counterparts in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood
(see Chapter 4), saw the potential problems of an influx of young newcomers into a radicalizing counter-culture. Following the politics of the San Francisco Diggers across the bay, this project became known as the “Free Church” and focused on helping people with housing and medical needs. According to Nibbe (2012), the Free Church developed a spectrum of programming that combined radical politics and community care. By September of 1967 “the Free Church rented a larger, nonresidential space, which they christened the 'Liberated Zone,'” a space they used “as a canteen, a planning area for street actions and a first-aid center, and offered an employment service and draft counseling” as well as “to host arts and crafts workshops and an affiliated free store, drama and music workshops” (2012, 95-96). The influence of the San Francisco Diggers is evident here, but it is the role this liberated zone came to play in protests and street battles from late 1967-1969 that is most compelling.

During these two years the transformation of the Free Church into the Berkeley Free Clinic included the development of health infrastructure for political protests. Early on in the Free Church project, medic Chuck McAllister influenced the ministry to provide assistance for protesters in Oakland during the 1967 Stop the Draft Week in the form of aid and 'violence intervention.' Violence intervention was essentially a group of clergy who would attend the protests in their vestments and place themselves between the police and protesters, thereby hoping to prevent police violence against protesters. The following year in the summer of 1968 the Free Church supported a rally in Berkeley which was in solidarity with French student demonstrations. The Free Church provided a nurse on the scene, made sure to have doctors and nurses standing-by, and set up first aid stations along with the Medical Committee on Human

46 This section is based heavily upon the detailed historical research done by Nibbe (2012) on the origins of the free clinics movement.
Rights. By organizing to meet the needs of people left out of medical services, the Free Church made themselves available to the struggle that was happening around them, which invariably served to further that struggle. Pitched confrontations ensued between protesters and the police during two nights of demonstrations. Health organizers with the Free Church responded to those nights in the following way:

Staff and friends are unanimous that these 48 hours have constituted the final justification of the work, as being the one institution in south Berkeley which could serve as [the] center for communication and relief around the clock. (quoted in Nibbe 2012)

In this quote it is clear that the experiences providing support for radical protests in the street bolstered these health organizers. As their support work served the demonstrations, so too did the demonstrations serve the health project by giving meaning to it as much-needed health infrastructure. As the Free Church continued to work towards opening a free clinic, organizers continued to develop the tools and human capacities for supporting what was happening in the streets.

In May of 1969, the University attempted to take back the land that had been turned into People's Park. In anticipation of another police confrontation, Free Church organizers set up a first aid station at their location and worked with others to make medic stations in the park and around the surrounding areas. It was during the first day that James Rector was killed. Throughout the subsequent two weeks of confrontations, the Free Church organized doctors, nurses and medics to help people. They also leveraged contacts in the city health department to release much needed aid supplies. According to Nibbe (2012), at the height of the protests, they were running 10 ambulances (private cars adapted to their needs), 5 first aid stations, and had trained and coordinated 500 medics. The testimony of Free Church organizer Isabel Weissman
reflects on the visibility this work:

I remember the sight the medics made – they appeared seemingly out of the walls at the first sign of trouble on the avenue; hairy and/or bearded, wearing white or once-white bus-boy-like jackets with red crosses crayoned on, or made out of red cloth and sewn on the sleeves and back. They carried little tins of first aid and supplies, slung from straps across their shoulders. With what angry derision was this sight greeted by the “real” Red Crossers! (quoted in Nibbe 2012)

The previous summer’s work supporting protests and the ongoing preparations for the opening of the clinic provided the foundation for the successful coordination of these field operations. And the success of the field operations in turn actually expedited the opening of the clinic—the two processes fueled each other. The free clinic was set to officially open in the beginning of June 1969. However it actually opened earlier than planned when clinic organizers moved Chuck McAllister’s field hospital from its temporary location during the demonstrations to the new home of the clinic. The new Berkeley Community Clinic, also know as the Berkeley Free Clinic, opened and it featured the street first aid station (now permanent) and switchboard services (Nibbe 2012).

According to Nibbe the organizers of free health services in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, unlike the Berkeley Free Church, were demoralized by police violence they witnessed. Instead of feeling that support for demonstrators fulfilled their mission and fueled their continued work, service providers in Haight-Ashbury felt stretched and diminished by the police violence. In contrast the organizers in Berkeley were able to bring the violence and their role in caring for others into their radical analysis. The Haight-Ashbury case means that it is not a given that the participation of health organizers in confrontational struggles will further the process of integrating and expanding the struggle. Resilience and reworking will automatically be the basis of resistance. Yet, the story of the Berkeley Free Clinic provides a powerful example
of ways that service oriented health radicals brought their skills into the struggle, and how the struggle subsequently informed the service work.

On this latter point, the innovative training and deployment of lay people during the street fighting is particularly important. Health radicals of this era sought to redistribute health knowledge beyond doctors and build capacities for care amongst regular people. The horizontalism of the barefoot doctors program in China and the general rebelliousness around the idea of participatory democracy that marked this moment inspired activists at the Berkeley clinic to move their model away from physician care and “toward a fully lay-healthworker-based care model” (Nibbe 2012). Furthermore, activists' desires to emulate the barefoot doctor model were not just impractical desires. While developing the services housed in the free clinic, they were able to draw on their grounded experiences working with laypeople during the street-fighting. In other words, their experience in the dialectical space between care and confrontation laid the life experience necessary to create new horizontal institutions that they desired.

The brilliance of Mitchell's work on the People's Park conflict is the way he demonstrates that fights over rights are at their core fights over space. This theoretical point materializes rights discourses. It also reminds us of the ongoing mystification of space in social life. Precisely for this reason, critical geographers echo Berger, who argued that “it is space not time that hides consequences from us” (Berger 1974; quoted in Katz 2004, 156). By bringing the story of health radicals' process of creating a clinic into the social geography of the moment, I am making a slightly different argument. Whether it be the Black Man's Free Clinic in the Fillmore, the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic or the Berkeley Free Clinic, free clinic organizers demand the right to well-being through freely given mutual aid, not through demands upon public spaces. For
Mitchell the crux of the spatiality of rights demands is the manner in which groups take over spaces and thereby make spaces public. Mitchell argues against the idea that public spaces are predetermined locations with public property rights, important as those rights might be.

Rather, [what makes a public space] is when, to fulfill a pressing need, some group or another takes space and through its actions makes it public. The very act of representing one's group (or to some extent one's self) to a larger public creates a space for representation. Representation both demands space and creates space. (Mitchell 2003, 35; emphasis in original)

In contrast, representation is not the purpose of the demand for a right that is articulated in the form of mutual aid\(^\text{47}\). The purpose is to take space for social reproduction, to take space in order to create a collective space of reworking. Confrontations over space are not implied in the demand, precisely because the demands of reworking are about duration and reproduction. The lack of confrontation can be disquieting because it makes it difficult to assess the efficacy of collective reworking as it fuels resistance. This dynamic certainly troubled the individuals at the Berkeley clinic after the clinic had been established and their role in pitched street confrontations waned. They conducted workshops about the clinic's role in health struggles. They grappled with whether or not the clinic's existence—its place in a social geography of resistance—takes away from the confrontation with the medical establishment because people can get free care at the clinic (Nibbe 2012). In other words, they struggled with the idea that their work had become a kind of 'release valve' for processes that would otherwise lead to confrontations with the medical establishment. “This was a question that was posed to, and struggled over by every alternative institution at that moment in history,” writes Nibbe (2012).

The joint story of the struggle for People's Park and the struggle to create the Berkeley

\(^{47}\) People certainly can take over space both for the purpose of representation and reproduction. Tahrir Square and Zuccotti Park are good examples.
Free Clinic provides a rich historical case of a dialectical social geography of resistance from the clinic to the streets and back again. Over a period of two years the struggle to take and maintain the space of People's Park and the struggle to take and maintain a space to rework health-care formed a powerful unity of rebellious action, at times converging in the same location although not necessarily so. Compared with later years in the life of the clinic, this brief halcyon period gave the clinic organizers a clearer sense that their reworking constituted an integral part of the struggle. Alternatively, the organizers of free health services in the Haight-Ashbury experienced the intensity of police violence and felt they did not have the resources to engage in reworking that directly served (and is served by) resistance. The dialectical movement between the clinic and street, therefore, is not a given. Since it is not a given, it is a social geography that people must willfully create. Furthermore, if a unity between the clinic and the street is to be maintained, activists must deliberatively overcome any tendency for spaces of reworking to separate from spaces of resistance.

**Social Reproduction Work as Arts of Resistance**

Cornell (2011) argues that the Movement for a New Society (MNS) (see Chapter 7) struggled because their method of communalism, which was designed with the original intentions of serving as a foundation to give people the time and space for sustained confrontations, tended towards a lifestyle in such a way that it created an unresolvable tension with the demands of confrontation. Thus the Movement for a New Society provides a counter example where activists failed in their attempt to make alternative institutions (communal life) align with confrontational resistance. Failure to align one's practices of resilience and reworking
with resistance, however, does not alter the dynamic that resistance requires spaces of reproduction. In other words, with regards to the Movement for a New Society or to the Haight-Ashbury free services, the key is to understand that these projects failed to fulfill a real need. Rather than a failed strategy, they failed to execute a much needed strategy.

But why are reworked spaces of social reproduction necessary for confrontational resistance? This is simply because resistance is a social product. Scott calls the individual resisting subject “an abstract fiction” (1990, 118). “None of the practices and discourses of resistance can exist,” he argues, “without tacit or acknowledged coordination and communication within the subordinate group. For that to occur, the subordinate group must carve out for itself social spaces insulated from control and surveillance from above” (118; emphasis added). Here Scott provides the rationale for why taking space and making it public cannot be the only spatial tactic of resistance, and why taking space for the purpose of socialization is utterly necessary for resistance. This is essentially same rationale behind concepts of free space (Evans and Boyte 1986), radical space (Kohn 2003), and autonomous space (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010). Groups must produce spaces that are separate from spaces of domination in order to create the social basis of their resistance, or what Scott calls “the socialization of resistant practices and discourses” (118).

First, the hidden transcript is a social product and hence the result of power relations among subordinates. Second, like folk culture, the hidden transcript has no reality as pure thought; it exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites. Third, the social spaces where the hidden transcript grows are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power. (119)

What is striking about Scott's theory of producing social space for resistance practices is that he speaks of socialization and of the importance of mutuality but, like theories of autonomous
space, still ignores social reproduction in key ways. This is due to Scott's critique of Marxist concepts of false consciousness and hegemony (see 1990, 70-107). Even though Scott argues that individual resisting agents are an abstract fiction, he argues against notions of hegemony. Instead, he argues that individuals hold embodied criticisms of the social order based upon their everyday lives. For Scott, actions that appear to affirm hegemony or false consciousness are actually public performances of the public transcript. Thus, for Scott, people create social spaces in order to locate a 'public' to share the hidden transcript that is an already known (but hidden) negation of the dominant social order. Which is to say that for Scott social spaces are not the location where false consciousness develops into a radical consciousness; they are spaces where the public performance of elite culture is unnecessary. As a result the private performance can find an audience amongst people in the same or similar subordinate positions.

But what is socialization if not a process that results from social reproduction work? What is mutuality, which Scott argues is an important element of social space, if not a form of reworking the social relations of reproduction? Scott indirectly concedes as much. “[T]here is probably no such thing as completely raw anger, humiliation, or fantasy, even if it is never communicated to another; it has already been shaped by the cultural history of one's experience” he writes (119). “The essential point is that a resistant subculture or countermores among subordinates is necessarily a product of mutuality” (119). The challenge with Scott's formulations is that, although he argues that social spaces are 'achievements of resistance,' 'the cultural history of one's experience' is sometimes presented as a given—as 'mutuality' tout court—not something that people deliberatively produce and reproduce. Scott sees resistance as social, and social space as a prerequisite, but he does not highlight social reproduction work as
the labors that produce social space and the cultural history that gives specifically *oppositional meanings* to anger and frustration.

Scholars such as Katz (2004) and Massey (2004) have argued that recent scholarship has tended to make just about everything appear as resistance. For Katz, champions of small acts of resistance, most notably Scott, have developed “conceptualizations of resistance that have come to seem too broad and too uncomplicated to be of much use in the face of the erosive conditions associated with contemporary capitalism” (2004, 241). Her typology of resilience, reworking, and resistance is meant to parse out actions that transform people's everyday lives—through community cooperation for example—but do not do so in the service of oppositional movements.

However, there is an underlying debate over the nature of hegemony that lays the foundation for Katz's refinement of Scott's work. For Scott, small acts are practical acts because of power imbalances, not because of any lack of oppositional consciousness. For Scott, there is no such thing as a subordinate person lacking oppositional consciousness. If power relations were different, small acts would be bigger acts.

One might argue perhaps that even such practical resistance, like the discourse it reflects and that sustains it, amounts to nothing more than trivial coping mechanisms that cannot materially affect the overall situation of domination...At one level this is perfectly true but irrelevant since our point is that these are the forms that political struggle takes when frontal assaults are precluded by the realities of power. (Scott 1990, 191-192)

Katz, in contrast, sees the difference between many of these actions not so much in terms of their scale in the face of power, but in terms of producing “a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation at various scales” (2004, 251).

If reworking reorders and sometimes undermines the structural constraints that
affect everyday life both to make it more livable and to create viable terrains of practice, resistance takes up that terrain with the invocation of an oppositional consciousness. (251)

There is a Gramscian framework of hegemony and anti-hegemonic consciousness in Katz’s work, a framework that Scott unequivocally rejects in his work. However, even though Scott rejects hegemony, his concept of the social space of the hidden transcript is not so fundamentally different than Katz’s typology of resilience, reworking, and resistance. If social space is understood to be the location where subordinate groups create resilient relationships in order to give culturally specific oppositional frameworks to anger and frustration with the social order, then Katz’s and Scott’s work can fit together.

But this once again leads back to a question of social reproduction. It leads to a politics of taking space (be it ‘free,’ ‘radical,’ or ‘autonomous’) in order to socialize critical consciousness. This is a spatial strategy in a different register as a politics to of taking space and making it public (see Mitchell 2003), but both strategies are essential and inseparable. The former strategy is a space where reproductive work (upon others and oneself) instantiates critical consciousness through the transmission of cultural meanings. When Scott speaks of mutuality, he signals something much richer than simply congregating in space. Mutuality implies cooperation and commitment to creating the well-being of others designated in the group. “The elaboration of hidden transcripts depends not only on the creation of relatively unmonitored physical locations and free time but also on active human agents who create and disseminate them,” Scott writes (1990, 123). In this passage, Scott presents a more dynamic reading of social spaces. They are not just offstage locations where the hidden transcript finds an audience. People actively make these spaces. Which is not to say that they just secure the location, but that they produce the
cultural rituals and mutual aid structures that give the space meaning. This brings Scott's ideas much closer to Katz's, because it demonstrates that oppositional frameworks—even if people do not have 'false consciousness'—are the product of human agents creating the conditions for such frameworks. For Scott, the political activity of making social space for the development of a hidden transcript is a form of infrapolitics, which “provides much of the cultural and structural underpinning of the more visible political action on which our attention has generally been focused” (1990, 184). Here Scott's concept of infrapolitics and Katz's sense that resilience can be a potent baseline for resistance (and vice versa) appear to be very similar formations, despite fundamental disagreements on questions of hegemony.

In light of this discussion I want to return to the idea of the dialectical space between the clinic and the streets. The dialectic between the clinic and the streets is a social geography that is: (1) committed to caring for people in order to reproduce critical consciousness, in other words to elevate resilience and reworking to serve resistance: and (2) diligent to the challenges presented by the (at times necessary) geographical and/or temporal separation of this reproduction from confrontational politics. All oppositional movements rely on successfully negotiating this dialectic, whether their concepts of it are highly developed or underdeveloped. This is nothing more than saying that all movements require effective spaces of reproduction and mechanisms for transforming reproduction into confrontation.

Unfortunately, the devaluation of social reproduction work in capitalism presents a formidable obstacle to creating a successful resistance between the clinic and the streets. The gender and racial divisions of labor in capitalism have been inseparably tied to the values of male supremacy and white supremacy. Social reproduction work is coded as naturally women's work,
and it is not valued. As a result, even though spaces (and relations) of reproduction are utterly necessary for resistance, movements continue to struggle to find effective ways to build (and defend) clinics—or schools, or communal homes, or collective kitchens, or resources held in common—in order to serve resistance movements. Like every element of resistance, some of this struggle can be attributed to the fact that powerful forces push back. The mutuality that kept occupied Zuccotti Park going did not end by virtue of internal failure, but by a violent police eviction. But gendered power relations did strain the relationship between reproduction and confrontation in #OccupyWallStreet as well (see Chapter 12).

Power struggles between subordinated groups of people with all manner of unequal rights and status privileges play out in these spaces of social reproduction. Capitalism does not produce a uniform and homogeneous subordinate class. Instead race, gender, and sexuality hierarchies mark the distribution of money, civil rights, and privileges amongst the total group of people who must sell their labor power in order to live, amongst what might be called 'the working class.' This incredible unevenness amongst subordinated peoples means that there ultimately is no one hidden transcript (or critical consciousness) of frustration and anger, but rather many transcripts.

If this now-articulated anger is to become the property of a small group, it will be further disciplined by the shared experiences and power relations within that small group. If, then, it is to become the social property of a whole category of subordinates it must carry effective meaning for them and reflect the cultural meanings and distribution of power among them. (Scott 1990, 119)

The space of the hidden transcript is not a space of unmediated frustration and catharsis, but rather a space of struggles saturated with power imbalances, struggles to create the frameworks that give oppositional meaning to frustrations. In many instances we see these struggles produce
free social space within existing free spaces. Radical feminists, for example, created their own 'free spaces' within oppositional groups precisely because the frameworks of the radical (and overwhelmingly white) men reproduced male supremacy (see Evans 1980; Evans and Boyte 1986). Women felt the need to create their own free space for the development of a critical consciousness within a social space already designed for the creation of oppositional politics, but marred by male dominated interpretations of resistance. Black caucuses, or broader people of color caucuses, serve the same purpose, to make space for the development of a particular critical analysis in political formations where white supremacy dominates the frameworks. Matthews argues that, within the Black Panther Party and other black power organizations “contestation around the politics of gender formed a significant component of the 'hidden (and not so hidden) transcript' in the intracommunity discourse” (Matthews 1998, 269; cf., Spencer 2012). The material and immaterial infrastructures of resistance that subordinate groups create can and do reproduce other axis of domination. Social spaces that constitute the conditions or infrastructure for confrontational resistance are not marked by homogeneity and a smooth process of capacity building. They are the social site of a contested micropolitics over the values, rituals, symbolism, and even the divisions of labor that constitute such infrastructure.

Spaces of Direct Action: From the Clinic to the Streets and Back Again

This question of care can never be answered in the abstract, but only in the context of our lives, our stories, and the challenges that such lives and stories bring to bear. (Van Meter 2012)

Louise is a social worker who has a long history of organizing work in the realm of care. From cooking in collective solidarity kitchens to creating mutual aid alternatives to mainstream
mental health modalities, Louis has a strong sense of the movement of radical energy between the clinic and the streets. In 2006, she began organizing with the radical health collective known as the Rock Dove Collective, and in 2011 she brought this whole history of radical care to occupied Zuccotti Park, along with many other people with experience as radical health practitioners. In 2012 I interviewed Louise about her work with the Rock Dove Collective. Although Zuccotti Park was not the primary focus of the interview, she spoke to me about how she came to recognize the need for care at the park, and about being positioned as someone skilled and prepared to do it because of her work with the Rock Dove Collective. Although the Rock Dove Collective was not created for the specific purposes of aiding the durability of an occupied park and bringing an analysis of care into the space, the Rock Dove Collective is about serving the needs of movements. Drawing on this work, Louise brought her skills in healing to occupied Zuccotti Park. Van Meter uses the term “care-giving” to delineate a practice that is caring but is different than waged or unwaged “care-work,” or work that “is the vessel for the production of labor power” (2012, 45). For Louise, care-giving is something that she cultivates through a variety of radical projects all focusing on group self-determination through taking care of one another.

In the same set of interviews Nicky told me a story that involved the movement of radical energy in the opposite direction, from the occupation to the clinic. As a provider in the Rock Dove Collective network, Nicky makes her acupuncture services available as mutual aid and she is dedicated to providing health services to enhance the well-being of others as a way to create social justice. She attributes her current care-giving work to multiple movements, but especially to her experiences in the Bronx during the occupation of Lincoln Hospital in 1970, where the
Young Lords Party created new forms of communal care (see Gandy 2002; Fernandez 2004; Starr 2010). Despite the decades since that experiment in radical care, she spoke to me of the Lincoln experience as an enduring presence in her life as well as the baseline model for work that she continues to develop today with the Rock Dove Collective. In her experience at Lincoln, she saw the way that Bronx residents reacted to community acupuncture that was open, accessible, and produced in a totally different manner than the way services at the hospital had been performed. She saw the radical potential of collective well-being in praxis at Lincoln, a confrontational occupation that was itself the product of the interconnections of individuals from the Student Health Organization, the Young Lords Party, the Black Panthers, and other community organizers (see Mullen 2006; Nelson 2011). From the space and time of the confrontational building occupation, Nicky has since carried that praxis to the clinic.

Stories such as Louise's, Nicky's, and those of the Berkeley Free Church organizers provide a powerful counter-narrative to the tendency to overlook the clinic's role in confrontational tactics. Both scholars and activists are beginning to uncover these stories and revisit ideas that code clinics (and other radical experiments) as therapeutic 'retreats' from political engagement. Berger, for example, argues that many of the hidden histories of the long-1960s era are examples of grassroots initiatives “to build from the ground up organizations and institutions able both to meet people's needs and to withstand the reaction of state institutions” (2010, 5). Not all who embraced these ideas, he argues, were retreating from politics (5). Furthermore, scholar activists such as Federici (2008) and Van Meter (2012) argue that movements must find ways to expand the material practices of collective reproduction, which they present as a call to build a strong value for care-giving work and develop a strong critique of
social reproduction work in the capitalist division of labor. As I will demonstrate in my findings on the Rock Dove Collective's mutual aid health network, we still have a long way to go in valuing care-giving work. Even though occupied Zuccotti Park and many other occupied parks during the fall 2011 were the site of autonomous forms of care-giving, and even though geographies of autonomy frequently take up social reproduction work, there still remains a lack of valuing these practices, especially in the white North American anti-authoritarian social movement culture. In the following chapter, I look at some historical roots of health radicalism in the social geography of the long-1960s, and then in Chapter 11 I analyze how the Rock Dove Collective does organizes radical care-giving and simultaneously revalues reproduction work as social movement work.
10

Health Movements/Movement Health: The roots of health radicalism
Radical Reproduction in Context

In the historiography and memory of the 1960s and the 1970s, militant direct action—sit-ins, takeovers—and mass protests have been so valorized that it is difficult to recognize radicalism in other forms and contexts. (Enke 2003, 163)

In addition to the Panthers, the radical health movement of the 1970s included feminist groups; hippie counterculturists; leftists such as Students for a Democratic Society and Health/PAC; politicized medical professionals and students, including the MCHR and the SHO; and the Party's allies in the 'rainbow coalition,' most notably the Young Lords Party...In keeping with the DIY spirit of the era, the activists enacted the better world they imagined by establishing their own independent healthcare initiatives and institutions. (Nelson 2011, 81)

In the previous chapter, I examined claims by geographers that theories based upon small acts of resistance have gone too far, claims that these theories have stretched the idea of resistance so far that almost everything is a form of resistance (see Katz 2004; Massey 2000). In contrast, in the above quote Enke argues that radical actions that did not fit a specific concept of militancy have not gotten the attention they deserve as radicalism (2003, 163). For Enke, the valorized actions are sit-ins and takeovers. These are the kinds of actions that take space and make it a public space of representation of group grievances and demands (see Mitchell 2003). But, as outlined in the previous chapter, there is a whole other mode of resistance that is inseparably linked to these valorized forms of militancy. This other mode is based upon taking space for the micropolitics of turning discontent and frustration into critical mutuality. These sites of 'infrapolitics' (Scott 1990) typically feature elements of community reproduction. The sites tend towards a logic of separation in order to avoid exposure, and they are marked (or have been marked) by conflicts between unequal groups as the participants negotiate the value of different critical frameworks and the existing power dynamics amongst differently empowered groups.
For Enke our understandings of political action remain biased towards certain orthodoxies. The passage above comes from her history of the radical women's shelter movement, which Enke argues has been absent from historiography because these radical groups created autonomous shelters, and because they took the reorganization of the domestic sphere to be the object of their struggle. In human geography there is no lack of work that deals with the social construction of the space and scale of the home as an object (and product) of struggle (see Marston 2000; Marston and Smith 2001). In certain ways, the absence Enke speaks about is not for a lack of feminist theoretical work that situates the home in capitalist political economy. Rather, despite the tremendous theoretical work, the old biases stubbornly remain. Whether the recalcitrance of these biases has its source in the general culture or in the academy, the lines of causation are not clearly visible. But the dynamic is observable, and came out very clearly in my research with members of the Rock Dove Collective (see Chapter 11). In the worst instances, radical theory locates rebelliousness only in certain places (such as the shop-floor), or only emerging from certain groups' life-experiences (such as so-called working-class men), or only constituted by a limited set of tactics (such as economic sabotage, strikes, street-fighting, mass demonstrations).

And as such, political actions that radicalized health and well-being remain largely outside of the history of radical politics in the United States, with some notable exceptions such as Nelson's (2011) work on health cadre in the Black Panther Party and Fernandez's (2004) history of the Young Lords Party. Like a news headline that highlights the spectacle of a protest over the quotidian aspects of organizing, historians and sociologists of social change and social movements have focused on the spectacular protests and street battles, leaving the work of the
street medics, strike funds, childcare sharing, and free clinics behind in the archives (that is, if the source material even made it to the archive). As origin stories and archival sources become concretized over time through the layering effect of secondary sourced research, historians are forced to make challenges or interventions in order to expand the story to include other source material or different origin stories. With regards to health radicalism, we are seeing the beginning of this process with scholarship that looks more deeply at the health radicalism of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords Party.

The layers of elision within this larger dynamic can be complicated, intersecting, and difficult to unpack, even though the general lessons of white male supremacy and capitalism provide a good if at times messy fit. For example, Black Power politics have been overshadowed by the tendency to valorize the non-violent direct action (NVDA) tactics of the civil rights movement. This dynamic mimics the way that Martin Luther King, Jr's life has been memorialized by state institutions but Malcolm X's life has not. As a counterforce to this trend scholars have deliberatively brought the Black Panther Party more firmly into the center of the civil rights narrative (see Jones 1998) and the narrative of prefigurative politics in the New Left (see Spencer 2012). Additionally, work such as Churchill's (2007) pushes back on the idea that non-violent direct action was the sole tactic responsible for the victories of the civil rights movement. He looks at how armed defense in general, including Robert Williams, the Deacons of Defense, and the Black Panther Party created a militant terrain in contrast to which those engaged in NVDA gained an added legitimacy. In this example, it is militant histories that are marginalized precisely because they are histories of black militancy.

Yet, despite this, the armed community defense strategy of the Black Panther Party has
been given more scholarly treatment than their community survival programs, which were integral to building community power (see for example Abron 1998; Matthews 1998; LeBlanc-Ernest 1998; Huggins and LeBlanc-Ernest 2009; Nelson 2011). Furthermore, until quite recently the work of Johnnie Tillman and other black women in the Welfare Rights Organization have been excluded from ideas of black power (see Nadasen 2009; Gore et al. 2009, 15). This suggests that while Non-violent Direct Action has gotten more attention than armed self-defense, examined through the prism of gender and social reproduction, these two tactics may both seem to be over-represented. The dynamic tension between armed defense and community survival is sometimes characterized by a fight between Eldridge Cleaver, who felt that community work was reformist, and Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, who saw the BPP's influence with black people in their community waning (see Goldberg 1972 for this narrative). Yet at other times, the tension is explained with regard to the gender dynamics of the organization. This explanation suggests that the community survival programs were a result of the intervention of the women Panthers asserting the need for the party to radicalize and collectivize the resources necessary for community survival (Spencer 2012). In other words, the ongoing success of the party—not its reformist decline—resulted from the way the survival programs were gendered interventions into a male-dominated program which tended to focus on race and class at the expense of gender (see Matthews 1998). In this manner, it makes sense that undervalued reproductive work—work that radical feminists not just in the black community were variously agitating to transform—continues to be undervalued in the historiography of the movements. The gendered divisions of labor and the de-valuing of such labor continues today, and radical practices in the realm of social reproduction continue to deal with the stigma of being seen as reformist at best. This
despite a transformed global political economy with different social conditions of production and reproduction; despite a general but misinformed discourse that women's rights have been fulfilled and the struggle is over. In other words, we live in the myth of a post-feminist world, and one residue of that myth is that we (mostly) do not celebrate or theorize the social reproduction aspects of struggles, much less those struggles that are already lesser known.

But it is not simply the relationship between gender and social reproduction that creates these elisions of history and theory. The armed defense work of non-urban black people such as the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) has not gotten the scholarly treatment of the urban revolutionists in the Black Panther Party. Berger and Dunbar-Ortiz (2010) make this claim in their work on the RNA's armed defense of their land, attributing biases in historical accounts to a general bias against rural actions as well as the tendency for land disputes to not receive the same attention as urban insurgencies. And of course this brings to the forefront indigenous struggles for sovereignty and against uranium mining, among many other forms of indigenous struggle, which are often left outside of the purview of understandings of social change and resistance when it comes to the US settler state. Indigenous occupations and resistance to stolen or polluted land (such as the occupations of Alcatraz Island, Wounded Knee, and Anichinabe park) have been treated in the historical record much like women's and dispossessed people of color's struggles, with much less attention (see Stone 2012; Berger and Dunbar-Ortiz 2010).

I do not highlight these elisions of social history and social geography for the purpose of sorting and taxonomizing social groups and their struggles according to who is most marginal. Rather, I want to highlight that the movements that we know of and what we know of them come to us through the distortion biases of actually existing racism, of actually existing class war, of
actually existing male supremacy. The social geographies of resistance, despite being about resistance, are not in themselves resistant to distortion. Those distortions exist in the materially dense present as products, and they help produce the conditions of the present. The lack of knowledge about the gender dynamic between community defense and community survival in the Black Panther Party program can serve to further fuel the idea that survival programs are reformist, but at the same time the proliferation of work on the survival programs can work against this tendency.

Social reproduction is one thread, not the sole thread but one thread, that ties a number of these distortions together, because social reproduction is intimately tied to gender domination in capitalism in particular; because social reproduction is what ties human life to the wage system in general. Deep suspicion about social reproduction politics as reformist action infuses understandings of radicalism. This is the case whether those politics consist of tactics for taking over, transforming, or otherwise occupying the spaces (and labors) of social reproduction, or if the tactics consist of people taking on the labors of caring for people engaged in social movements. The deep cleavage between the realm of production and reproduction that is a hallmark of capitalism, and which indelibly scars orthodox Marxism, continues to be a specter hanging over rebellious action from below. So much work has been done to undo the shibboleth of this cleaving, yet our social theories and social histories of radicalism continue to exhibit deep biases against politics in the realm of social reproduction.

The most trenchant evidence of this process comes not from a genealogy of the gaps in social movement knowledge. It comes directly from the members of the Rock Dove Collective themselves (and others), from their experiences in radical spaces and their choices to work in a
different way and who to seek out as models and support for their work (see Chapter 11). They describe the development of their project as the repudiation of movement tendencies that uncritically repeat the values of the dominant society. This is evident in the two main thrusts of their work, which can be interpreted as two stage process in the becoming of their radical health politics.

Their initial idea, which they later eclipsed, was to create the conditions for the expanded participation and ongoing reproduction of the activists in their social network loosely represented by the New York Metro Alliance of Anarchists general assembly. Their desires for the project were based in a combination of self-necessity and self-reflection. Of the group that would become the Rock Dove Collective some were motivated to bring well-being into movement from the position that the movement had used them up, or what people commonly refer to as 'burnout.' Others keenly observed the trend of burnout even if they didn't at that particular moment require relief from it. Fulfilling this lack constituted the basis of group formation. Recognizing the way others disregarded these ideas and beginning to speak an analysis of that disregard created one foundation for their collective action.

The second thrust of the Rock Dove project actually de-emphasized the groups articulation towards certain tendencies in the anarchist milieu from which they emerged (tendencies which the group was critical of). Instead they broadened the idea that their purpose was the well-being of movements, plural rather than the singular movement. In this process they moved beyond the immediate reactions of their initial criticism (and frustration) at the movement for being dominated by able-bodied young men with an intense disregard for the well-being.

48 It is important to note here the founding members of the Rock Dove Collective who were at the NYMAA general assembly expressed deep misgivings about it. So to say that the NYMAA participants was their 'community' would be incorrect. But it is important to hold this idea in the balance because it was the beginning stage of the project.
They developed broader and more positive critique of survival within the struggle. I will analyze this shift in more detail in the following chapter. Here I simply want to highlight that members of the collective identified the need for a network where healing is available to serve people so that the struggle can continue sustainably despite the interruptions of ill-being, conflict, lack of time, lack of resources, intra- and inter-community violence or simply the raw stress required for household reproduction. The Rock Dove Collective is a form of radical action in the realm of social reproduction and as such they work against the absence of attention to this work and they feel the effects of that dynamic.

**Digging into the Roots of Health Radicalism**

Despite any contemporary elisions, it is important to identify the deep roots of activist work that forged a connection between health work and radical tactics. One can find these roots in a variety of moments during the long-1960s upsurge of struggle. While no one particular conceptual frame represents all of these movements, they share an emphasis on survival. Whether the concept of survival came from de-colonization, as was the case with indigenous and third world liberation movements, or from a movement to end violence against women, the move to turn survival into a political concept coincided with the development of collective tactics that combined social protest and pragmatic group well-being.

One thread of this work can be found in the pluralistic strategies of the radical women's movement. Here it is easy to envision how the fights around women's issues would necessarily transform theories based upon the spaces and tactics of men. These were struggles for equal terms in labor market; struggles for access to medical care appropriate to gender difference;
struggles against the gender division of labor that placed the burden of childcare, food, and care for three generations of kin on women; and struggles against male violence in the home and in public space. Considering the way each of these struggles deals with the intersections of capitalism and patriarchy, one can imagine how the creation of collective, autonomous, and mutualist tactics would serve the struggle. Using strategies of spatial separation and mutuality, women developed frameworks that identified individual women's healthfulness as a product of social processes such as violence against women, class discrimination, and degradation of lands and homes. They developed an analysis of women's health as a function not of individual responsibility but social power relations, an analysis that made these power relations (from the way doctor's treat women, to the way management pays women) open to agitation and confrontation.

In this environment of upheaval, radical forms of self-help grew up such as the famous JANE collective in Chicago which lasted from 1968 to 1973. Also know as the Abortion Counseling Service (ACS), JANE developed from a referral group into a women-run abortion service that performed 11,000 abortions during a span of the three years before it became legal for US doctors to perform the procedure (Kaplan 1995). Not simply a clandestine abortion service (although that is a tremendous feat in itself), JANE activists designed their service to include their vision of what healing care would look like. This was based in a trenchant criticism of the consumer model of care in which women were the objects of doctor's expertise rather than equal participants in their own well-being. As Surgal and the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU) Herstory Committee explain, "Jane's medical techniques were very good, but Jane always felt that technical knowledge wasn't enough. The women seeking the abortions needed to
feel that they were part of the process” (2004, 15). JANE’s actions were the result of a two-fold criticism. They of course were critical of women's lack of access to abortions. But they were also critical of the way that the existing model placed women in a subordinate and disempowered positions vis-a-vis their own bodies and their relationships to other struggling women. In Surgal's own words about the experience she expresses how in the wake of legalization she thought that JANE created a model that was better than what the medical profession could provide. “I thought we had learned in the counseling service how to deliver services in a very respectful way that made it so much easier on everybody, and particularly for the woman. We could go out into the world and the medical world would take it and everybody would then practice medicine differently. Well, you know, of course wasn't going to happen” (2004, 18).

In retrospect, JANE's work seems anything but reformist. The illegality combined with the sensitivity of the work reveals the JANE organizers to be deeply committed and courageous organizers. Furthermore, their work has all the hallmarks of direct action because they eschewed asking for permission and worked to solve an issue that was immediately relevant to their lives on their own terms. The editors of a 2004 pamphlet on JANE from firestarter press emphasize these qualities in their analysis. They argue:

The group [JANE] is not only worth uncovering because of its (non-existent) role in the Roe vs. Wade decision. JANE is more importantly worth examining today because of its impressive display of effective self-organization and self-activity, its disregard for Western medicine and morals, and its indifference toward legalization with an implicit class struggle politics. (2004, 5-6)

Yet this analysis stands in stark contrast to the way JANE was initially received at the first organizing retreat of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU). As Kaplan (1995) outlines, bringing JANE into the CWLU was hotly contested precisely because a vocal
contingent of radical feminists felt that JANE's work did not reflect their desire that the Chicago Women's Liberation Union have an explicitly radical focus. The anti-JANE CWLU contingent was wary that service work, which is social reproduction work, would bring reformism into their budding radical union. “Abortion counseling, they argued, was not a radical activity but merely reformist social service work,” Kaplan writes (1995, 45). However, backed by an influential radical organizer who felt otherwise, JANE did become a part of the radical union at that initial gathering. It was through their praxis and their negotiation with other radical women's groups, that JANE's combination of 'self-activity' and 'implicit class struggle politics' emerged. In other words, JANE's story represents the factitious and vexed fusing of social reproduction work and radical political work. It was factitious because some radical women were skeptical about JANE as a reformist group. Instead of wholly rejecting JANE from the radical union, the outcome of the conflict demanded that the JANE abortion service deal with intersecting issues of class, race, and gender liberation. Rather than dismiss social reproduction tactics as outright bad politics, negotiations amongst conflicting feminisms led JANE activists to develop the radical politics of abortion services. In the JANE story, we see how prevalent it was, even amongst radical feminists, to view service work as reformist.

In the wake of JANE's work, the radical shelter movement continued the strategy of combining direct action services with political analysis and group solidarity. Just like the JANE activists faced some harsh criticisms and unwelcoming behavior from radical women, protecting women from domestic violence was not always valued by radical feminists. Law (2010) argues that radical feminists overwhelmingly focused on providing support and solidarity for women who engaged in self-defense against violence by strangers. She claims that support groups
largely ignored or did not put in the same effort to radicalize people against violence that occurred in homes. Law claims:

A women's right to defend herself (and her children) from assault became a feminist rallying point throughout the 1970s. However, these same groups and individuals often ignored the issue of intimate violence and continued abuse, concentrating on higher-profile cases of self-defense against strangers. (2010, 39)

However, as Law cites, there were some powerful counter examples where support and care for survivors of domestic abuse came with radical politics, such as the group Women's Advocates.

Women's Advocates began as a consciousness-raising group. But over time as they began conducting formal and informal shelter services, they decided to develop an autonomously run shelter that combined care, safety, and a radical political analysis. Enke argues that although Women's Advocates played a formidable role in what became the shelter movement, which itself had a deep impact on the the women's movement as a whole in the 1970s, their story “is rarely included in the history of radical social movements” (2003, 162). When Women's Advocates began in 1972 by providing information and legal advocacy, they simultaneously began informally housing and caring for women and their children in what Enke calls “a sort of underground shelter system” (2003, 167). These informal shelters faced threats based in the combined structures of racism and patriarchy. Some white neighbors became fearful of too many mothers of color (and their children) coming and going from the house of a Women's Advocates member (Enke 2003). In this way inter-racial women's solidarity confronted the neighborhood geographies that used white purity as a basis for mortgage investment. Alternatively, men's groups intimidated advocates by threatening to sue for discrimination. In the face of these threats to their informal shelters, Woman's Advocates bought a home in 1974 with the explicit intention of creating a formal, autonomous shelter.
Just like JANE enacted a critique of Western medicine by making the process of well-being more participatory, Woman's Advocates also had a dual critique of the forces they were up against. They wished to create shelter spaces for the pragmatic purposes of survival but explicitly did not want their shelter to have the look or feel of a treatment facility or institution. These principles applied to a variety of social and spatial dynamics in the shelter. The interior space was deliberately meant to signify a home and engender the social relations of family and community, not the state and patriarchy. These ideas applied also to the development of horizontal governance and to ongoing evaluation of the internal and intersecting power dynamics between all the women in the shelter. This latter element was especially contentious in instances where the white middle class culture of the staff and WA founders was being imposed upon others (Enke 2003). Once again here is an example where social spaces of mutual aid become the location of a micropolitics to define group values. Power differences among women (especially racial and class differences) led black shelter residents to push back against a white value system that did not adequately frame the pain and frustrations of their lived experiences as women (Enke 2003, 174-176). Law summed up the shelters in the following manner. “These early shelters utilized the self-help methods, egalitarian philosophies, and collective structures that had developed within the women’s liberation movement, striving to be democratic alternatives in which women had the space to safely communicate, share experiences, examine the root causes of the violence against them, and begin to articulate a response” (2010, 49). Once again, the shelters exhibited qualities that do not appear to be reformist unless one thinks only of service as fundamentally reformist, and ignores the way that the women actively sought to integrate the shelters into radical practice.
If one focuses only on certain kinds of militancy, or views care as something separate from radical action, then the typical claims of the end of the 1960s activism with the end of the 1968 uprisings may ring true. Berger (2010) argues against this periodization and places the 1970s decade firmly within a periodization of 'the long 1960s.' He cites a handful of important radical moments that happened in the 1970s, such as the Attica riot (1971), the occupation of Wounded Knee (1973) and the Seabrook Station Nuclear Power Plant (1977). Furthermore, organizations like JANE and Women's Advocates demonstrate the ways in which the insurgent energies of the 1960s continued into the 70s not just in the spirit of riots and occupations but also in radical care and autonomous control of domestic space. These groups and the communities they built engaged in a form of direct action that placed them in precarious positions with regards to the law and their homes. They challenged the social construction of the scale of the home within capitalism and patriarchy (see Marston 2000), and they worked to make these organized methods of resilience and reworking (Katz 2004) the basis for oppositional consciousness. But to say that JANE or Women's Advocates burnished their radical credentials by engaging in risky behavior is to play into the kind of thinking that initially excludes these groups and their tactics from view. Rather it is more important to shift focus to an understanding of radicalism involving care as a practice that develops and expands the interrelationship between care and confrontation, or what in the previous chapter I have called the dialectical space between the clinic and the streets. In doing so we stop fetishizing certain tactics and look at rebellious actions in a deeper and more meaningful way. Argue the firestarter editors about JANE, “These women operated (and were highly successful) in direct defiance of the state and in cooperation and solidarity with those on the frontlines absorbing its blows. By their actions, they confronted the
dogmatic liberalism of the women's liberation movement of time” (2004, 6-7). Because they
served people in their struggle, service was not the signifier of their reformism but the practice
that separated them from other forms of liberalism.

The story does not begin with JANE any more or less than another group. Once one
adjusts the framework and begins from a place that acknowledges these kinds of actions, then the
history and geography of the entire long-1960s era looks much different. The spirit behind that
wave of uprising showcased the dual identity of militant and caregiver, or the dual identity of
guerrilla and doctor. Put in another way, this spirit reflected the life-histories and ideas of Che
Guevara, Fanon, and Chairman Mao, liberation leaders who were either themselves doctors or
who seriously valued the role of doctors in social transformation (as in the case of Mao). Kelley
and Esch (1999) and Nelson (2011) highlight the influence that ‘colored’ liberation struggles had
upon the various tendencies in the black power movement. Che, Fanon, and Mao's influence on
the Black Panther Party, Nelson argues (2011), can be seen in the way their revolutionary health
activism combined radical ideas of love, care, self-defense, and service to the people. And it was
during visits to socialist China and newly independent African nations that Panthers such as
Elaine Brown and Huey Newton saw elements of revolutionary service and community-scaled
social medicine. In China, for example, Panthers became aware of the barefoot doctors program
and community acupuncture (Nelson 2011, 70-71), the same programs that inspired the radical
health organizers at the Berkeley Free Church (see Chapter 9).

From this source material, the Black Panther Party created their survival programs in
1971\textsuperscript{49}, forging an action-based link between the community self-defense of their earliest armed

\textsuperscript{49} Abron notes that various chapters were engaged in community service projects before they were officially
designated as survival programs. As an example, she mentions that “the Seattle branch initiated one of the early
free breakfast programs in 1968” (1998, 178).
street efforts and collective care. These programs tackled not one but an entire panoply of issues that hamstrung families in black neighborhoods throughout the US. Their free breakfast for children program and people's free health clinics were two of the most well-known of these programs. The free breakfast program did just as its name suggested, free meals for community children before the school day. These actions were a response to self-evident concerns in the black community, that children were unable to learn to the fullest extent because they were hungry and stressed out at school. “Through the Panther's free breakfast and educational programs, for example, black women devised strategies that, in varying degrees, challenged capitalism, racism, and patriarchy,” write Kelley and Esch (1999, 25). In the manner that the JANE women decided that they could not wait for the time that it might take the state to come around to legal abortion, the Panthers also felt the urgency of the problem required direct action community resilience. Before the founding of the Black Panther Party Newton and Seale worked on a federal anti-poverty program and were keenly aware of the ways in which state programs were problematic for their community (see Nelson 2011). Much like JANE sought to not just give abortions but give them in a way that framed women's empowerment, the Panther free breakfast programs were not just free food. It was free food unfettered from mechanism of state discipline, a form of control that many poor people in the Welfare Rights movement criticized. It was also free food prepared through the prism of the Black Panther political platform; it was free breakfast with analysis. The free breakfast program was so successful that J. Edgar Hoover infamously cited it as the reason why the militants had such strong support (see Matthews 1998). It was so successful that then California Governor Ronald Reagan passed a statewide free breakfast program (and later as President he passed a federal program) to blunt the political force
of the Black Panther version (see Heynen 2009).

Not limited to the issue of children's hunger, Panther cadre identified all the various ways that the healthcare system was racist and cruel to black people. They tied their understanding of colonialism with the everyday forms of health discrimination. This discrimination ranged from at best derisive indifference to black people's needs to at worst the coercive treatment of black people as guinea pigs for health experiments (Nelson 2011; Schiller 2008). Their analysis was informed by high-profile events that provided visceral evidence to their ideas. In 1972, news broke of the Tuskegee syphilis experiments where the United States Public Health Service had been conducting experiments on poor black sharecroppers for 40 years, deceptively telling the men that they were being treated when in fact the purpose of the study was to monitor the untreated life-cycle of the virus (Heller 1972; Jones 1993). Medical experiments on prisoners, but especially on black prisoners, in Philadelphia also came to light at this time (Hornblum 1998), further signaling to the Panther thinkers that healthcare meant something different depending on one's race (see Schiller 2008). In other words, the system that cared for white people either ignored, experimented upon, or managed the 'slow death' (see Berlant 2007) of black people. In response to this nexus of immediate necessity and political, economic, and cultural liberation, the Panther revived a much longer struggle that black people have waged in the US for quality care (Nelson 2011).

The combination of the lack of access and racist care when given access provided the basis for the Black Panther Party to do the caring labor themselves. In 1970, Bobby Seale issued the call that each chapter of the party set up a free health clinic. “Called the People's Free Health Clinics, the resulting clinics became the infrastructure for the Party's health programs,” writes
Nelson (2011, 77). A few clinics had already been established in the late 1960s, in Kansas City, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, and Los Angeles. Following Seale's call, subsequent clinics were set up in New York, Cleveland, Boston, Winston-Salem, and Philadelphia (2011, 90). And in 1971, two years after the opening of the Free Church's Berkeley Free Clinic, the Panthers opened the Bobby Seale People's Free Health Clinic on Adeline Street in Berkeley. According to Nelson, the Panthers opened 13 clinics, all of which “contained examination tables, offered primary healthcare, collaborated with medical professionals, and relied on donations of supplies and labor” (2011, 92-93). Through the infrastructure of the clinics, the Panther health cadre developed radical critiques of the state, of healthcare, and of the way technical expertise in healthcare served white supremacy, and they simultaneously built these critical discourses into the form and programming at the clinics. For example, they worked closely with trusted medical professionals, but also distributed medical knowledge and skills widely to rank-and-file members and community volunteers. Through a demystification of medical power, which took the dual form of medical education for people and political education for health professionals, the Panther health cadre sought to give dignity to people otherwise experiencing the brunt of oppression through the medical system (Nelson 2011).

As mentioned above, there has been a tendency to overlook the health programs in the historiography of the Black Panther Party as the armed revolutionary internationalist group in the black liberation struggle, a tendency substantially lessened by Nelson's (2011) recent work. But to the extent that the tendency continues despite exceptions, it is easy to lose the notion that autonomously controlled social reproduction spaces serve to build and sustain powerful movements. Huey Newton, for example, spoke about his fight with Eldridge Cleaver by talking
about the Black Panther Party's defection from the black community (Goldberg 1972). For those Panthers that supported the survival programs, the over-emphasis on armed confrontation and the revolutionary symbolism that went with it created a barrier between the party and black non-members. Newton argued that he felt this dynamic most poignantly when a Panther rally in Washington, D.C. In 1970 brought out an audience made up almost entirely of white radicals (Goldberg 1972, 24). Huey Newton claimed:

> The black community was not interested in us, and was not interested in that Constitutional Convention. We had lost the blacks long before that, but we were still in the lead of the white radical movement. This was evidence of the whole wrong tactic that the party used in giving up its roots in the community in order to lead the white radicals who didn't have any roots in their own community as far as organizing goes. (quoted in Goldberg 1972, 24)

Just a few short years later, free community breakfasts for children and free care (among many other free programs) were seen as the primary reasons why the Black Panther Party had such a strong pull amongst black people. In even the most narrow reading the autonomous survival programs connected the movement to people in a way that bolstered their overtly revolutionary actions. But they certainly did much more as they developed politicized analyses of health care that tied health discrimination to white supremacy and colonialism.

The Panthers were not the only group creating free medical clinics but rather they organized in a zeitgeist where free clinics were emerging all over the country. The history and origin story of the free clinics movement in general has focused overwhelmingly on the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, and especially the Haight clinic as a drug clinic set up by heroic white professionals in order to deal with overdoses in the white hippie community. But the free clinics movement was deeply informed by radical social movements. Nibbe's (2012) work presents this alternative understanding, showcasing the ways that social movements, not simply professional
doctors, were major forces in the beginning of the free clinic movement. By de-emphasizing the heroic white doctor origin myth, Nibbe makes room for other actors. She documents the people of color led clinics (prior to the Black Panther Party clinics) that emerged simultaneous to the Haight-Ashbury clinic. These clinics dealt with many of the same community health issues that the later BPP clinics politicized. But she also resurrects the radical elements of the white left that participated in the creation of the Haight-Ashbury clinic, but whose stories later became subsumed by the heroic doctor narrative. The San Francisco Diggers (see Chapter 4) began broadly conceived free community survival aid in their free store, which was called The Free Frame of Reference and later The Trip Without A Ticket (Doyle 1997, Nibbe 2012). For the Diggers survival meant the full spectrum of social reproduction, ranging from helping people avoid being harassed by the police to how to survive without money. At the location of the free store they held a “survival school” in the evenings (Nibbe 2012, 58). On “Thursday nights doctors provided medical services; this began as referral and consultation without medical examinations but expanded to include medical examinations, contraception and first aid provided by doctors, who were mostly medical residents at nearby hospitals” (58). The Diggers were one of the primary elements of the white counter-culture to fuse radical anti-capitalism with a commitment to providing free access to survival, all in the service of what they called the New Community or the Free Family (see Chapter 4).

Moving beyond Haight-centric and professionalized origin myth of the free clinics actually serves to highlight the explicitly radical and often anti-statism of health activism during this era. This is a quality that can be seen in the radical women's movement, black nationalism, and the white anti-imperialist and anarchist tendencies, where the ideas of direct action,
community control, and self-defense permeated, even if they were simultaneously complicated by uneven privilege and ongoing disputes about the nature of solidarity across groups. Health radicals supported a DIY or community self-determination ethic because their experiences revealed that the state and elites could not be solely petitioned to care for those they oppress. Radicalized care was the tactic that translated this analysis into praxis, a tactic that, as demonstrated in the examples above, circulated through a variety of radical milieus. Despite ongoing critiques that care and nurturing and even service were elements of reformism that siphoned off revolutionary energy, these movements experimented with new methods of collective, participatory forms of survival that were designed to work with and intensify liberation movements. Any social theory that concludes a priori that providing care or focusing on collective provisioning is distracting from radical action must still contend with the on the ground social geographies that these groups created. In other words, people's self-activity led them to a praxis in which they wanted to make giving abortions, or conducting health tests, or providing care into overtly radical acts. Willfulness and desire, of course, do not necessarily translate to success but it does signal that these are examples where resilience was not the ends of the strategy but an infrapolitical space dialectically connected with other acts (and spaces) of resistance.

Where groups such as JANE or the BPP stand as outsiders to the health profession building alternative health structures—although they collaborated with trusted professionals in their communities—health professionals also organized radical projects within the health system. Medical students inspired by the tactics of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) led efforts to transform the profession.
These medical students directed their efforts at the American Medical Association (AMA); they criticized institutionalized racism of hospitals; they created place-based innovative models in conjunction with local residents and the health cadre of the Young Lords Party and the Black Panthers Party.

The Student Health Organization (SHO) and the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR) were two short-lived groups within the professional field that arrived on the scene in the mid-1960s. These groups grew from the experiences of medical students who participated in the social movements of the era. Many of these students were white northerners who traveled south when the organizers of the Freedom Summer made a call for health workers to provide basic care for victims of racist violence during the intense civil rights confrontations (see Mullen 2006; Nelson 2011). Armed with these personal experiences of the voracity of white racism, medical students weighed the biomedical triumphalism proffered in their classrooms with the health discrimination in their home cities. For some of the early SHO founders, their budding political analysis came from the conditions in the teaching hospitals, where the racism of unequal care seemed self-evident. These students mined the disconnect between the technological advancement and the lives of others. Although many had white privilege and educational assets, they thought deeply about the exculpatory role of the medical profession in this uneven development. In the journal of one of the SHO chapters, an activist wrote “The real world isn't in classroom A or B. It's outside where children in North Philadelphia are eating lead paint and being bitten by rats” (Rogers 2001, 20). Though reflected through the privileged framework of a medical student, the content of this passage is clear: the biomedical techniques and triumphalism of the classroom are a problematic contrast to poor people's everyday lives. Other early SHO
members had participated in the famous Mississippi Freedom Summer. According to Mullen's (2006) account, what they gained was not so much the experience of doing practical medic work for protesters, but an understanding of the virulence of white racism and the uneven health outcomes that came with it. Like their peers who were making those connections in the urban teaching hospitals, they returned from the freedom summer with a strong desire to transform medicine, and to radically change the model of how a doctor should act in the world.

As might expected these groups have also been left out of narratives of the 1960s wave of resistance and theories of social change. Rogers argues, “Despite a recent explosion of studies about the United States in the 1960s, SHO has received almost no attention from historians and has been all but eradicated from the collective memory of the health professions” (2001, 8). There were some primary differences between SHO and the radical institutions created by women's and black power organizations, namely the differences in privilege and expertise. Some of the SHO projects were short-lived, for example, because medical students were likely to uncritical about their uneven status privileges and white liberal culture. Thus, some early SHO projects failed to live up to their people of color peers and community participants because, as infrapolitics for radical movements, the experiences and frameworks of the white medical students took precedent over the community groups and patients who had to deal with the health consequences of white supremacy (see Rogers 2001). In their earliest efforts SHO conducted summer health programs (SHPs) where quality care would be provided in areas needed most. “They set up health clinics for migrant farm workers, provided dental screening in Watts (a year after the riots), and acted as patient advocates,” (Rogers 2001, 13-14), simultaneously providing care and getting students acclimated with the reality of the uneven geography of healthcare.
These programs were funded and had many student-applicants. But they drew strong criticism from the black caucus of the organization for serving the white students, who came into the neighborhood only to be gone at the end of the summer, more so than the programs served the people in the communities (Rogers 2001, 15). Later, SHO activists began to look internally as a result of these lessons. They began to work on union organizing in hospitals, supporting staff in efforts for better work conditions. They participated in occupations of health spaces, challenged the racism of their training, and confronted the hegemony of the American Medical Association. These tactics were developed as ways for the privileged students (and by now some interns/doctors) to organize within their culture as middle class whites and as professionals, to engage in solidarity work instead of paternalistic or misguided assistance to the 'the community.'

To those with a firm belief that care does not have a role in the essentially confrontational nature of revolutionary work—whether 'care' refers to the tactics of radical care or the radicalization of paid and unpaid care workers—it would be easy to cite these examples in support of failure narratives. Each of the stories presented can be framed in such a way to argue that energy spent on care and mutual support was a waste. The legalization of abortion in 1971 neutralized the moral force of JANE as a form of mutuality. The group ended, yet patriarchy continues today. Initially fiercely radical, the women's shelter movement increasingly distanced itself from radical politics and moved toward strictly sanctuary spaces as shelters institutionalized, got funded, and their staff professionalized. The community survival programs of the Panthers coincided with the party's reformist move into electoral politics. The medical student radicals, or even the white radical anarchists in the San Francisco Diggers, could not create radical change because they began from a position of middle class privilege and that is not
the identity from where true radicalism emerges. These are all possible narratives for each of these groups. Yet each of these frames relies on a misguided assumption that community reproduction work is not valuable in struggle. Within radical movements the disputes about care and service as reformism—for example the initial suspicion that members Chicago Women’s Liberation Union expressed about JANE’s abortion referral service—signal that promoters of radicalized care must overcome the tendency to devalue this work. Often these internal struggles are micropolitical struggles over the values of a radical movement. In Scott's framework of resistance, such 'wasted energy' theses do not have weight because he finds that spaces of mutuality and support are necessary, and necessarily less visible, infrastructure for rebellious actions (see Scott 1990).

My purpose in bringing these narratives together is to reject the commonly held assumptions about care as reformist. As I find in my research with the Rock Dove Collective, activists continue to struggle against entrenched value systems that disregard social reproduction as one element of a dialectical geography of resistance (see Chapter 9). By broadening the understanding of the practices and spaces of care in resistance movements, I highlight the many attempts by radicals to unify the caring aspects of the clinic with confrontational tactics. In concluding this section, I do not want to overly focus on the tactic of radical health service as something discrete and disconnected as if it is its own social history independent of the sit-ins and takeovers and occupations that overshadow health radicalism. This is because what the social geographies of movements need most is to examine the ways that these radical health projects intersected, co-constituted, and otherwise engaged with all the various street demonstrations, occupations, and militant direct action that are already understood as the core of
radicalism from the period.
11

Badass Organizing:
The case of the Rock Dove Collective
You better put everything you have [into the movement] until you get sick. And if you get sick you better just go away. And when you go away we’re not going to even, we’re not going to fucking call you and we’re not going to bring you soup, right? (Catherine 2012)

The Rock Dove Collective is a small group of six anti-authoritarian organizers who, beginning in 2006, created a radical community health exchange network based on mutual-aid exchanges and principles of solidarity. From 2006 to 2013 when the project ended, the organizers grew and cultivated the network, which consisted of 44 providers (individual practitioners) and 12 organizations (such as community health centers). The types of care one could find via the network included: alternative medicine, bodywork, community education, conventional medicine, counseling, reproductive health, sexual health, spiritual-based healing, and traditional Eastern medicine. As can be gleaned from this list, the community health network included a mixture of practices, Western and Eastern, mainstream and alternative, that are sometimes placed in antagonistic relationships to one another. Additionally, the community education category included individuals who provided training in consensus process, non-violence, and group facilitation, broadening the commonly held understanding of well-being to include healthful communication and anti-oppression community organizing. Self-determination, not the conventional healthcare monoculture, is the mantra of the organizers of the Rock Dove Collective.

The members of the collective engaged in a variety of tasks in the creation and maintenance of this network. They screened providers, looking not just for health practitioners who were willing to engage in mutual-aid or provide sliding scale care but who also subscribe to radical perspectives of care. Additionally, the Rock Dove Collective produced a provider
workshop series, where they trained practitioners in a variety of skills, from working with trans clients or to creating workable sliding scale payment systems for their services. The Rock Collective screening process required, among other things, that providers agreed with the mission statement created by the collective: that mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being be attended to with the same care as physical well-being; that the separation between these modes of care be eliminated; that creating anti-oppressive, anti-hierarchal, and horizontal means are necessary to create genuinely revolutionary ends; that self-care and mutual aid are necessary for people to transform society; that everyone has a right to good holistic healthcare; and that it is “our shared responsibility to ensure access to such services and to work towards dismantling any barriers that stand in the way” (Rock Dove Collective n.d.). Once providers enter the network, they chose to be publicly available on the Rock Dove Collective's website. At which point care seekers were able to find them and together work out the individualized circumstances of the mutual exchange. In the case of providers that did not wish to be publicly accessible via the website, the members of the collective assisted in facilitating the exchanges. But otherwise the organizers did not manage the network, but allowed providers and seekers to work things out amongst themselves. In some cases, providers would notify the members of the collective that they were able to accept a couple individuals during the course of the year, but wished to otherwise remain anonymous. They entrusted the collective to mediate their connection to

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50 In contrast to the Really Really Free Market and Food Not Bombs, where there is no money and nothing exchanged, the Rock Dove Collective felt that for their network to work there needed to be direct mutuality between providers and seekers. In many cases this meant that providers sought money on a sliding scale, while also making it known that they were open to other forms of exchange. One provider, for example, sought the following as potential exchanges: “paint and other Do-It-Yourself home repair supplies, bike tools, bike parts, bike services, bike skillsharing, exercise/fitness class/skillshare (dance/yoga), and meals.” An herbalist in the network was willing to provide services in exchange for “massage, car trips upstate to gather herbs, jars, high-content alcohol, house cleaning, and local raw honey.” These lists were two that were available publicly on the Rock Dove Collective website.
seekers.

This quote at the beginning of this chapter comes from my interview with Catherine, a young women who co-founded the Rock Dove Collective. Catherine, as is evident in the passage, finds it frustrating when social movement cultures ignore the well-being of those putting in work, when movements treat people as disposable. The Rock Dove Collective, like other radical health projects (see Chapter 10), is a project with a dual purpose. One purpose is to make dignified healthcare accessible through mutuality and cooperation, to make the infrastructure for health practitioners and seekers\textsuperscript{51} to help one another independent of the commodified marketplace. The other purpose is to remake the cultural values of social movements in the image of the project. In other words to enact an organizing model that does not reproduce the values that Catherine so forcefully criticizes in the above passage. In this latter sense, the Rock Dove Collective is a project to fill the gaps of movement culture that allows people to get sick but does not prioritize making sure they have hot soup. However the members of the collective, as I will show in more detail later in this chapter, distance themselves from the particular movement called out in this passage. As they moved to value the well-being of social movements, they also began to make specific choices about the movements they wish to support.

In interviews with the members of the Rock Dove Collective and health practitioners from the network, I found the Rock Dove organizers created a closed collective in order to create a free space, or a separate space, where they could develop their frustrations—frustrations like the ones Catherine spoke of—into an analysis and a set of practices. The need for a free space to develop strong bonds and deep trust signals the vexed relationship the collective members have

\textsuperscript{51} In the discourse of the Rock Dove Collective ‘seeker’ is the way the organizers rename what might be commonly called ‘patient.’ One goal of Rock Dove Collective is to alter the power relations of medical expert (empowered) and patient (disempowered) by valuing the life-experience and embodied knowledge of the seeker.
with contemporary white North American anarchist social movement culture. In the trusted
domain of the separate space the organizers were able to develop frameworks that redefine
commonly held understandings of well-being (or lack of well-being) as an individual quality and
therefore as the individual’s responsibility. In contrast, the Rock Dove Collective frames well-
being as fundamentally social, much like health radicals in the radical feminist and black power
movements (see Chapter 10). In this way, the organizers tie issues of inaccessible healthcare or
undignified treatment to the social structures of domination. Finally, as they call out social
movement culture for reproducing values of domination they make claims on what “badass”
organizing really means. They develop a value system that defines doing support work for the
organizing efforts of communities hardest hit by domination as badass work. If badass work is
commonly understood to be the most militant, the most confrontational, or simply the most
intense, the Rock Dove Collective reject this view and develop a an alternative value system in
conversation with other activists with the same anger and frustrations.

**Closed Collectives as Free Social Spaces**

In contrast to the openness of most geographies of autonomy, the Rock Dove Collective
is much more guarded about having newcomers in their group dynamics and their group
processes. Although they created a health exchange network that is open, they organized as a
'closed collective.' The topic of the closed collective came up explicitly in multiple conversations
that I had with the Rock Dove Collective organizers, though in each instance it percolated out
from different threads of the conversation. For the Rock Dove Collective the anarchist social
movement culture that they found themselves in (or marginally around) in the mid-2000s became
a culture to be kept out or kept in check in order for their project to flourish. Contemporary
anarchists produce autonomous space, or geographies of autonomy (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010), as specific social sites to negate capitalist social relations of domination. The founders of the Rock Dove Collective found that these ideals were undercut by the way white male privilege permeates anarchist social movement culture. The Rock Dove Collective required their own separate space—in this case not so much one separate location but rather a closed collective—to create the group mutuality necessary to accomplish their project.

During my conversation with Helen for example, she spoke of the Rock Dove Collective being a closed collective as a strategy for building deeper forms of mutuality, mutual relations strong enough to withstand conflicts that have broken down other groups. Helen and I were talking about Rock Dove's success forging close relationships over a long period of time. Other groups working in the horizontal model—with it's concomitant intense close relationships and inter-weaving of political and social lives—have been rewarding in the short-term but unsustainable in the long-term. But the Doves seemed to eclipse those limitations. In my line of inquiry I wanted to figure out how it is that the Rock Dove Collective, while utilizing the strong centripetal force of close ties, was able to sidestep the often strong centrifugal or disruptive forces that can come with these strategies. Helen, though, answered a slightly different question in addition to the one I asked.

You know it's a closed collective and [other people] say 'Oh, it would be uncomfortable to try to join the collective.' And we talked a lot about that and tried to figure out about why is that. We don’t want to be seen like that, and we just recently brought on another collective member who was in our provider network for about two years, and who we got to know really well. We really trusted them, so we invited them to join. But we're aware that it's sort of like a clique in a way, which sucks. Hey as long as we're doing good work, but it's hard because on the one hand we are very possessive of our dynamic and each other and the idea to open it up scares us a little...I think we know each other and see each other as people, not just as comrades or whatever. (Helen 2012)
Helen's answer showcases many elements of the Rock Dove's political work. She talks about the intense care that they take when bringing in new people, and the kind of standards of trust that the new member met before becoming a part of the group. Helen also reveals the depth of the ambivalence that the group feels about it, that they weigh the negatives of this while cherishing those dynamics. As my conversation with Helen continued, it became clear that the Rock Dove collective works by simultaneously committing to the goals of their project and to one another. Catherine spoke to me about how this commitment to each other included respecting and supporting, rather than guilt tripping or dismissing, other members when they needed to step away from the work for a period of time. As Helen mentions, they commit to one another as total individuals.

Speaking with Louise, the topic of the closed collective came up when we began to talk about anarchism in New York City. I was aware that the group emerged had come from a working group that formed at an anarchist general assembly, but I wanted to understand what relationship they had to anarchism six years later, if they maintained one at all. Louise references the closed element in a much more assertive and unapologetic way than Helen. Like Helen, Louise attributes the success of the Doves to this quality of being closed.

**LG:** Which is a really interesting thing that, from that starting place [as a working group at the New York Metro Alliance of Anarchists], that we're here. I feel like in some ways the anarchist community tries to claim the Doves. When people say 'Well, point to successful models of anarchism working?' They'll say 'Oh, the Doves.' And we're like 'Fuck you motherfuckers.'

**DS:** (laughing)

**LG:** You know there's a reason why we've been a closed collective. And it used to be that we'd have to table at the Anarchist Book Fair and do three workshops and whatever, and now we don't. We don't actually table there. Maybe we'll give some resources to one person or whatever [to put out on a table]. (Louise 2012)
Louise talked about the need to keep the group closed as a protective measure from elements of the anarchist movement culture that might compromise the project. The defensive strategy is much more forthright in her statement than the way in which Helen talks about feeling 'possessive' of the supportive dynamic amongst the organizers in the Rock Dove Collective.

I found that moments like Louise's above were fleeting cracks that just momentarily revealed the depth of frustration and anger at the white privilege that suffuses anarchist organizing. They were brief and often signaled by the presence of curses that had not been a part of the rest of our conversation. “We're not going to fucking call you and we're not going to bring you soup,” Catherine said facetiously, for example (2012). In these moments I sensed the ambiguity born of voicing public sentiments delivered to me as a white male outsider active in anarchist mutual aid projects, which communicated that there is a robust 'hidden transcript' among women and especially women of color about white power and male power in anarchist organizing.

Catherine, for example, initially spoke of anarchism in leveled tones with generosity smoothing the edges of her criticism. Yet at other times Catherine spoke of a much more potent frustration. At the very beginning of our discussion, I got a taste of the former as we began to talk about the origin of the Rock Dove Collective in the New York Metro Alliance of Anarchists (NYMAA) general assembly.

I didn't identify as an anarchist and didn't really know much about anarchism. My impressions of it were still largely that it was like white boys who burned things. Which in some ways were really undercut by my experience in that community, and over time were actually in many ways reaffirmed. So the philosophy [of anarchism] kind of caught me off guard and interested me and was something different than what I had seen in the news, and was moving to me. (Catherine 2012)
Here is Catherine using some standard methods of signaling a criticism but not wanting to be overly harsh. As she got to understand contemporary anarchist organizing through personal experience she found some of her pejorative feelings towards anarchism to be mis-characterizations while others feelings were bolstered by her experience. When she speaks about the parts of anarchism that moved her she speaks about the philosophy of anarchism, not the organizing culture that is imperfectly based upon the philosophy.

Catherine described her own experiences growing up amongst informal, poor people's organizing as a strategy for collectivizing work through mutual aid that was powerful (see Stack 1974; Levitt and Saegert 1990). But these resilient strategies were not based in the abstract languages of academic treatments of social justice or anarchist economics. Informal sharing of childcare work and/or informal inter-familial redistribution of necessary resources, for Catherine these were a kind of *mutualism of necessity* rather than a formal *politics of mutual aid* debated and theorized by people with privilege.

There are deep values that drive [the Doves shared ideas] but it's different than the kind of tussling between anarchists and communists. And I'm thinking 'Honestly?' We are so far from the choice between those two things. 'Are you out of your mind?' And there's something about the enormous lack of urgency that I think is revealed in those debates. And that is the urgency, the kind of ease and patience of privilege, where you can kind of wait through ten years of debate to decide on a first step, where the most important thing is to decide who's right, as opposed to doing something. And so we started doing something. (Catherine 2012)

This passage is revealing because it shows that even though anarchist politics of mutual aid mimic poor people's strategies for survival, the manner in which particular people act while promoting mutual aid condescends the individuals who use mutuality for reasons of necessity. The experiences of poverty and inequality borne by those who are forced into resilient strategies, can easily be trivialized by those who promote mutual aid in an overly abstract manner, such as
debating between anarchism and communism. Where anarchist philosophy and action matched Catherine's experience of community care and group responsibility, she was caught 'off guard' and interested. In contrast, where anarchism failed that litmus test it reaffirmed some of her expectations that it was either 'white boys who burned things' or just people lacking a sense of urgency debating abstractions.

However, in contrast to the criticism of people doing nothing but talking about resistance, members of the collective typically spoke about frustration with movements that use up people's capacities too quickly with little regard for long term well-being and people's ability to continue to work. Nina talked about this not just as an issue with contemporary anarchism but in the social justice movement in general.

[O]ne of our original concerns and one that continues to be our concern is how to make healthcare period more accessible and more useful to people who are doing social justice movement work...[T]here's just this really typical arc in the social justice movement of people getting really deeply involved and engaged in organizing work, doing a lot of street based work, protesting, building campaigns that take place over the course of several years, and then burning out within like four or five years of getting involved in the work. And so in those initial conversations a big piece of it was about how do we make healthcare accessible to all the the people that we're already politically organizing with and build it into the movement. (Nina 2012)

Similarly, Rachel described working on an independent media project where deadlines became the reasoning for a culture of intense late nights racing against a publication clock. With no mechanisms for care within this environment, Rachel found that she was one of the only people checking in on how others were feeling, how they were managing the intense work. She noticed that she was engaging in care in an informal way.

So it was tons and tons of work. And after a while I just found myself in those production meetings or through those day in and day out all nighters in the role of checking in with people, a lot of making sure people were okay and staying hydrated or staying fit or
taking a rest when they needed to or [laughs] encouraging people to go home when they needed to. And at the time, self-care in that kind of activist radical organizing scene was really looked down upon and the harder you went and the longer you went the more badass you were and the more committed you were. (Rachel 2012)

For the Rock Doves the primary way that the white anarchist culture fails is that it disregards caring for people and instead uses up bodies that are abled in certain ways. The movement values people who can work at a certain level of intensity. This acts as a barrier to participation for people with different abilities and commitments, or to people who cannot keep up with the pace. Or, in still other cases people who attempt to overcome that barrier and try to keep up with the pace may find that they get sick or simply burnt out and are unable to continue participating. For Catherine, this dynamic is a microcosm of the kinds of work we already have in the world, where choice and participation are blocked by processes that are only available to young, able-bodied, white men.

And some [of these ideas] came from the fact that any time any of us tried to do any movement building everyone was a mess. People were on an activist bender and then crashed and disappeared and no one went looking for them. It was like you show up, you better be young, you better be articulate in a certain frame, you better be able-bodied, you better have a certain kind of political analysis, you better be able to work unsustainably, you better put everything you have in it until you get sick, and if you get sick you better just go away...It'll take a movement that allows for people who aren't all able-bodied fucking type-A personality rich white men. Or people who can adapt to roll the way they do. If our basis is what an able-bodied straight rich white man in his mid-twenties can do, and when we're trying to built a new world in the shell of the old, we might as well just stay in the old, we've got that. (Catherine 2012)

In this passage, Catherine expresses the ways in which her initial unformed ideas about anarchism were reaffirmed, but in a much more informed and embodied kind of way, not simply an abstract criticism of people who break windows. In the way she expresses herself it is evident that her frustrations are deeply felt, and they form a foundational basis for why she continues to
do the kinds of political work that Rock Dove represents. Catherine expresses that something profound is missing from a particular tendency in anarchist organizing, which can be understood by the absence of participation of people who are not as abled and privileged as young white men. For her and the other Rock Doves, the 'thing' that is missing is not simply the people (as if just placing other people in those spaces would solve the problem), but the kinds of work and movement culture that would make their participation possible.

The Rock Dove Collective created a free social space, in the form of a closed collective, precisely because the frustrations and desires that brought the group together would otherwise be under threat by (and threatening to) the prominent anti-authoritarian social movement culture. They recognize that most DIY anarchist mutual aid groups—projects synonymous with 'autonomous space'—are designed to be open and they have some reservations about the potential for their group to be seen as a clique. One member of the group spoke about how she relied on experiences in another separated free social space, the Anarchist People of Color (APOC) group (Nina 2012), as a way to build an understanding of anarchism as something beyond the conventional white culture. These are the separated places and/or closed groups where people develop alternative cultural values that need room away from disciplinary mechanisms that force dissenting ideas to the margins. These spaces are not homogeneous spaces, even if the discontent that births them is based in shared experiences as women facing sexism or people of color facing racism. Several Rock Dove Collective members made reference to intense (but always supportive) disputes as they developed the combination of ideas and action that give meaning to the project.
Rebellious Revaluing: The Rock Dove Collective and Badass work

But I am also a working-class raised/mixed-class femme of color with a
disability who is invested in creating badass movements that don't explode and
combust from unsustainable models, and who believes the genius of poor and
working class folks, sick and disabled folks and femmes will be a huge amount
of what gets us there. (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2012; emphasis added)

'Value' can at times seem like such a banal word that it was sometimes easy to overlook it
in conversations. While my research is deeply informed by anarchist direct action services that
come out of the white DIY social movement culture, I also approached my interviews with
members of the Rock Dove Collective thinking about social reproduction as a perennially
undervalued realm of the economy. Radical feminists have long talked about the value of unpaid
social reproduction work for making profits in capitalism, the value of so-called women's work
qua work, and the value of resistance in the realm of social reproduction. There are of course
many feminist writers who write about the value of social reproduction (see Federici 2008; Katz
2001b; Folbre 2001; Mitchell et al. 2003; Bezanson 2006) but because of the waning influence of
Marxist feminism in the field of radical organizing, I expected that the members of the Rock
Dove Collective would not speak about their work in the conceptual language of 'value' and
'social reproduction.' In a strict sense, my expectations were correct. However, as I analyzed my
transcripts from the interviews, it became very clear that 'value' was a profoundly central element
to their work in a variety of ways.

On one level, the members of the collective spoke of the way that they felt that
organizing around care was not given its proper value in the social movements that they had been
participants in. The formation of the group represented both their unwillingness to follow the
typical patterns of the movement culture (for example by being careless about care) and their
desire to transform that dynamic. Catherine, for example, spoke back against the tendency of people in anarchist spaces to look pejoratively upon the kinds of work that the Rock Dove does. She spoke to me of her commitment to movement building.

I think we had a sense of at once real disappointment in various activist spaces and movements we've been a part of and also a sense of real commitment. In the sense that this [Rock Dove work] isn't soft work. Everyone's sort of like 'Oh we'll talk about [confrontation] and you all can go talk about healing.'...[W]hat happens is there's a devaluing of work that isn't about [the confrontations]. (Catherine 2012; emphasis added)

Here Catherine speaks about how she felt that other activists would talk about militant confrontations, yet those same activists denigrate healing work in the realm of social reproduction that could otherwise be interwoven with the confrontational struggles given the commitments and desires of the individuals who wished to do healing work.

Rachel talked to me about how she felt the bias against care in a deeply embodied way because her movement work was leading to her being unwell. Recognizing the patterns of what was going on, the lack of valuing the care for and well-being of people doing movement work, led to her desiring to change the dynamics. Through a process of self-reflection, of seeing the way she got caught up in this mode of organizing yet remained someone who still engaged in these care-ful interventions, Rachel took time away from this movement space and began to consider what it might look like to do things differently. Through a bit of coincidence, she found out about the formation of the Rock Dove Collective. When she revisited her initial, coincidental meeting with Catherine as she talked with me, she described her feelings at the time.

I'm really interested in self-care and bringing that back to the activist community and making that cool. But you know I'm only feeling that now after a year of trying to take care of myself...And so I was super psyched [to learn about Rock Dove] and at that point I was interested in getting involved and doing organizing work. But in this capacity, in the capacity of cooling self-care, bringing self-care
as an idea and a value and a practice to people within the activist and organizing community...So you know in a one-sentence short [explanation], I came to Rock Dove Collective out of this journey, I came out of my choice of shifting values, of knowing that I needed to take care of myself if I wanted to continue working within the movement building the world that I want to be a part of. (Rachel 2012; emphasis added)

Rachel's description of her desires is revealing because she talks about how she stepped back from unhealthy work in order to be able to work again. Her motivation to return to movement work was explicitly geared towards not returning to unsustainable forms of a work. Working in a manner that used up her body and mind with little care or support was not a choice for her; she needed to participate in a different way and to make that new value system a part of the movement.

Louise spoke to me about her background doing the kinds of organizing work that thinks critically about questions of value. She refers to an entire constellation of work that for her created some of the foundational thinking that led her to the Rock Dove Collective.

And so I was an organizer in New York City, and came up during the time of Amadou Diallo and all sorts of police violence, and saw a lot of trauma in my organizing. My high school organizing was a lot around that. And a lot of women-and queer community-centered organizing, which I think had a lot about communities of care and nurturing. That was just a central part of the work, and so paying a lot of attention to who was valued. (Louise 2012)

Further, in the way Louise described her experience moving through different places and different organizing tendencies, she expressed the way that this kind of work—meaning the kind that pays attention to who is valued—has been important for her but not always by others. Two examples from our interview stood out in this regard.

[T]here's a sense of family that's emerged [in the Rock Dove Collective] and that for me has been almost more of a motivating factor to keep doing the work than anything else. You know like here were these glowing people who in the face of
this tragedy in our community
came up with the [idea]. (Louise 2012)

In a subsequent section of the interview, she expressed the way her community in another city
felt about some of her decisions about her own health needs. Louise felt that the culture of
confrontation precluded people being able to recognize particular needs for care.

My anarchist community and crazy circus punk friends and all of those folks were
kind of down on [the choice about my health needs]. There's this specific brand of
radicalism that is just over the top in terms of being ready for battle all the time,
and not that sensitive to people's health needs. I can't say that anymore, I haven't
been there in a long time but that's how it was at that time...And that moment for
me of 'What do you need to do?' 'What's right for you?' To me that was such an
interesting moment of health self-determination...You know actually we do a lot of
policing in radical communities, there's a lot of policing about how people take
care of themselves. (Louise 2012)

In this example, Louise, like Rachel, expresses a story of looking self-reflectively at the norms
and practices within her community. And even though she has a rich experience in some
communities that think a lot about care, about value, and who is valued, she found herself in a
particular anarchist community that did not reflect those values at that particular moment.

The stories from the Rock Doves demonstrate that even though there is a rich history of
radicalizing care, movements have not internalized this history. Nor have they created successful
embodied theories of action that fully integrate the reproduction of their own rebellious culture
as the reproduction of the spaces, people and networks that constitute the culture. In an economic
system where people need to sell their capacity to work in order to live, social movement
cultures struggle to value reproduction and continue to equate those that work in this register as
reformists that reproduce labor power, not radicals that engage in care-giving (see Van Meter

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The tragedy referenced here is the death of organizer Brad Will in Oaxaca in 2006, who participated in the
organizing effort that would become the Rock Dove Collective.

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Failure to separate social reproduction in general from social reproduction that supports radicalism is a destructive slippage. This slippage denigrates the infrastructural work that is inseparably connected with confrontational resistance. It feeds cleavages between groups of people with different privileges, cleavages produced by capitalist divisions of labor that then get reproduced in social movement cultures that are meant to be 'autonomous.'

In response to this the Rock Dove Collective actively redefines their work, and the work of similar collectives, as 'badass.' They have been told what 'badass' work is, and they tell it back. Through negation and reversal in speech (and in print) the Rock Dove Collective and a whole network of disability justice activists claim 'badass' as their own. They push back on the notion of who does 'badass' work and what 'badass' work looks like. “At the time, self-care in that kind of activist radical organizing scene was really looked down upon and the harder you went and the longer you went the more badass you were and the more committed you were,” Rachel (2012) said as she retold the story of the environment at the IndyMedia Center where she organized before getting sick and then becoming a member of the Rock Dove Collective. In contrast, disability justice activist and writer Piepzna-Samarasinha hails 'badass' to speak back to the macho meaning.

I think conversation and mutual support is a particular form of organizing that is often a femme organizing skill (not that other genders can't also do this) that isn't valued or witnessed enough in organizing due to sexism and femmephobia and trans misogyny. I think that knitting through meetings, and creating an organizational culture where that's seen as badass, is something that many of my badass working class femme of color and white femme organizers do. (Piepzna-Samarasinha 2012; emphasis added)

This passage comes from a piece where Piepzna-Samarasinha critiques an article in which the author criticizes self-care in social movements (cf., Chen et al. 2011). In a particular section of
the article, the author argues “We can't knit our way to revolution.” This is the source of Ppiezna-Samarasinha’s reference to knitting. In this space, I want to focus on the use of 'badass' as a strategy of redefinition. In the community of healing justice activists, building resiliency into movements is 'badass' work. The Rock Dove Collective are members of this community of radical care practices, along with an Oakland-based healing justice group called the BadAss Visionary Healers.53

In my interviews, members of the Rock Dove Collective utilized this trope of reversal and redefinition. Typically this took the form of interviewees talking about the other members of their group as having those badass qualities. While I was talking with Helen about what keeps her committed to the work, she responded by talking about the qualities of her peers in the collective.

Yeah, I mean part of it is I love working with these women. They are just badass women, you know what I mean. Just amazing, they inspire me, and just knowing them let alone working with them just makes me feel so good. You know, so that's definitely a part of it. (Helen 2012; emphasis added)

As an isolated utterance, this reference to 'badass' women appears to be just an idiosyncrasy of Helen's communication. But other variations on this topic peppered the transcripts, along with other direct references to 'badass' groups. Louise, for example, talked about one of the reasons that she works with Rock Dove being just self-evident based on how awesome the other members of the group are. The way she said it resonated with this theme.

And I think with Rock Dove as soon as I heard about it I was just like 'Oh this!' And you know [because] you’ve met the other folks in my collective, we're fucking awesome. (Louise 2012)

53 “The BadAss Visionary Healers (aka the Healing Babes for Justice) are a 6-person Bay Area-based collective of radical healers who build connections between radical healers in the Bay Area & beyond. In the thick of healing justice movements building and growing, we want to help weave a web of badass healers for liberation so we can support and learn from each other” (brownstargirl 2012; emphasis added).
Later in the interview, when Louise was clarifying her stance on anarchist organizing in New York, she called out a specific group that does support for survivors of sexual violence for her praise. In praising this group, which also works outside of what is typically understood as 'badass' work, she said:

There are plenty of really good, awesome [groups such as this survivor support group]. I think they're an anarchist project. They'd probably describe themselves that way, and those kids definitely look like punks, but they're also awesome and doing really badass work. (Louise 2012; emphasis added)

In this quote, Louise is not talking about the Rock Dove Collective, but she still engages in a re-interpretation of what constitutes 'badass' work, bestowing the term on a group that supports survivors of interpersonal violence in social movements. Putting her characterization of the other Rock Doves and this support group within this framework it is clear that Louise, like her fellow Doves, activates this revaluing process in the way she appropriates this language about different kinds of social movement work. I found that Catherine, while not specifically using the term 'badass,' still used language in the same manner.

[We were] interested much more in figuring out within a community how we can start to take care of each other and understanding that as being fiercely political, understanding it also as a missing dimension to what was happening in the movement work we were doing. (Catherine 2012; emphasis added)

In this passage Catherine uses 'fierce' to engage in the same kind of negation and reversal. Being 'fierce' is commonly associated with the same attributes as being 'badass,' attributes that signal certain realms of social movement work that involve militancy but not care. Instead, Catherine invokes the notion that the Rock Dove Collective's project is 'fierce.'

Rather than see these expressions as just moments of group self-appreciation, a kind of self-evident and relatively meaningless individual boosterism of one's own projects or ideas, the
Doves shared a common language in the way they valorized one another and other groups. This language turns upside down the movement norms that they have felt the brunt of. As a rhetorical process, the way the Doves speak about their project and other projects has to be distinguished from the marketing or branding logic. They are not simply selling themselves but instead asserting themselves as 'badass' social justice workers, demanding that people re-assess commonly held views about what is 'badass,' and the problematic repercussions of reproducing the current values.

**Badass Care, But For Whom?**

The concept of revaluing saturates the Rock Dove Collective's work on many levels. In the section above, I found that the Rock Dove Collective revalued social reproduction work in social movements as 'badass' and 'fierce kinds of work, not 'soft work.' They also spoke about their attempt to revalue the so-called 'patient' in relationship to the expert doctor or health professional. They spoke about valuing alternative health modalities. However, in this section I want to highlight the way the Rock Dove Collective shifted their project away from the network of young and mostly white activists and towards becoming the health justice arm of

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54 This is similar to the way the Black Panther health cadre and feminist health radicals sought to make the embodied expertise of the patient more valuable as a way to confront the unevenness of medical knowledge as a form of domination (see Nelson 2011). Rock Dove Collective member Nina put it in the following way.

The way that I would define it is we want people to have access to practitioners who recognize that every individual human being has innate wisdom about their bodies and their minds and what they need and that they need help unlocking that wisdom usually. A good health-care practitioner should be helping us work from a place of our own best wisdom as opposed to making us feel like we don't know what's good for us. (Nina 2012)

55 Lest anyone dismiss the Rock Doves as being against the methods of Western bioscience, several of the Rock Doves argued that they have no desire to see an end to bioscience but instead a valuing of multiple modalities. Indeed, Rock Doves such as Louise described to me that what they are working towards is health-care where people have access to a whole variety of methods simultaneously. Echoing the mantra of the Zapatistas, she said “What we want is everything for everyone” (Louise 2012). But then she went even further to state that she is explicitly not opposed to western medicine. “And there's a lot of good things about western medicine. I'm sorry when I have strep throat I'm really grateful for penicillin,” she said (Louise 2012).
working families of color who need social reproduction work to support their organizing efforts. This process entailed a shift not just towards making health-centric work more valuable as political work but also towards making decisions about which communities their work should support and why. For the Rock Dove Collective, this entailed de-prioritizing the reproduction of the radicals who constituted the culture they criticized, and prioritizing or revaluing support for working class families of color.

Very quickly upon launching their mutual aid health exchange network, members of the collective began to have visceral negative reactions about the project becoming another form of privilege and power for the young white activist social movement culture. Members of the collective spoke about this as not wanting to be just a project designed to 'hook up' their friends with more affordable care, or to help people to out-compete others in need by 'skipping a line.' Right away, collective members saw that if the activist culture that they were critical of began to utilize the health infrastructure they created, the project could very easily fill the social reproduction gaps—in other words help activists stay afloat—and simply help those same already privileged individuals continue to work in the same manner. If the project did not demand that activists take up care, then the their infrastructure actually might serve to prop up an unhealthful social movement culture.

Passages from Rachel and Catherine illuminate these issues. I asked Rachel how the project, which started out with intentions to bring care to an activist community, very quickly became something focused beyond their immediate networks, in other words became something which wasn't necessarily geared towards 'activists.'

I think in part it was because we didn't want to be just hooking our friends up. We realized that there are many movements. There's many movements within the
movement. There's many different incredible communities and organizations and collectives and people out there who are doing really incredible work, on either a really local level or much larger level. And in some of the emails we were getting or feedback we were getting from people we thought, 'Wait a minute we just don't want to be like hooking our friends up to like skip lines at the doctor's office with the connections we've started to make.' We want this to be available to all people out there who are doing organizing work and community betterment work that we might not even know. And a lot of it was you know the collective is not all white at all. We're definitely mixed but we found that we were having a lot of folks just coming to us treating us as though we were some cool kind of hook-up that they could get so that when they needed to go get something they can get it really quick and we're like 'No' (laughs). This is not what this is about. We don't want to be that. We don't want to be some privilege point here. We want to be an access point for all people and all communities. (Rachel 2012)

Catherine argued that this move was not just about moving away from the white activist social movement culture and helping out any person who is a person of color or poor.

I think if you're supporting activists you're supporting the people who are already in the room. If you're supporting a movement then it is also your business to be doing something of use to the people who are not in that movement because of how things currently are. So the people who would show up to whatever that movement's work is if they had childcare, would show up if they didn't have a migraine, would show up if their kid wasn't sick, would show up if they weren't so tired, would show up if they had a few more hours, all of those people... That's who you're there for and its a really different lens that has to do with really understanding what the structural and social limitations are to growing meaningful movements in this city as it is, in this country as it is. And so it's not just that we thought, 'We don't want to serve activists, we want to serve a randomly selected group of poor people.' It's not some patronizing shit in that way...And so it meant shifting how we thought about who it was our responsibility to be available to. (Catherine 2012)

These two passages highlight just how the move to do political work through a framework of health led the collective members to make value judgments about who they should support.

Those choices are based on their assessment that the political economy of New York City makes organizing much more difficult for those caring for children and those whose time is squeezed by extensive paid and unpaid work. In other words, the Rock Dove Collective used the lens of
revaluing health to work against the ways that neoliberal political economy creates barriers for the mobilization of working people of color, especially women who take care of children and/or parents. As Louise put it, “Our work is most closely aligned with, hopefully, with poor communities and communities of color and sex workers and queer and trans folks” (2012).

Having taken up this lens, the collective developed ways to not become just the 'hook-up' for people who are already present in movement building. This meant taking deliberative steps to both limit the use of the health infrastructure in this way and to make more connections outside of their previous organizing networks. The group developed a recommended policy that individuals seek out the highest form of care available based upon factors of one's economic status and privilege. Under this rubric the Rock Dove Collective emphasized that if you can find appropriate and dignified care through your health insurance, or if you do qualify for state forms of insurance\textsuperscript{56}, or if you can pay for services because you have disposable income and are single, then seek out the highest form of care before going to the mutual aid services on the network. This variation on a means-testing policy is self-enforced when individuals access the network online independent of the collective's core organizers, and it is designed for individuals to self-determine instead of being subject to an authority. Setting up the policy gave the members of the collective a baseline ethic for best practices when utilizing the network, and something to point to when people came to them for the 'hook-up.' Additionally, the group made the move to connect with working families outside of their immediate social network. This involved moving the location of their acupuncture events away from the central location of Judson Memorial Church in the West Village, to the Sunset Park neighborhood in Brooklyn. Doing so brought the members of the collective into contact with the Si Se Puede worker's cooperative, a worker-

\textsuperscript{56} Social workers in the Rock Dove Collective or the wider network helped people with this process.
owned cleaning service. Working with Si Se Puede and acupuncturists from their network, the Rock Dove Collective set up a Saturday community acupuncture clinic that met the financial and time needs of the Si Se Puede workers (and their families) and the acupuncturists. In interviews multiple members of the collective used this case as an example of the network successfully serving, not just random poor people, but a group of women of color already in movement.

When the Doves speak about why they are doing radical health work, they speak about the need to value this kind of work amongst the range of movement work that people do. The speak back against the colloquialisms that code certain kinds of work as 'badass' by asserting themselves as 'badass' and committed organizers, by signaling other projects that are doing similar valuable work as also 'badass' projects. And along with these forms of revaluing, they do support work for communities that are valued less, recognizing that communities that are valued least are simultaneously the communities whose social reproduction is most precarious. In this way, they establish a political connection between the devaluing that capitalism puts on social reproduction work and the devaluing that happens to communities facing the uneven distribution of resources based upon racial, gender, sexual, and ability hierarchies. The Rock Dove Collective uses strategies of resilience in healthcare in order to relieve some stress of social reproduction for these undervalued communities, the purpose being that the added time, or energy, or healthfulness that comes from resiliency will further anti-systemic organizing efforts.

Conclusion:

From Social Reproduction to Radical Reproduction

Before creating the Rock Dove Collective, the group's organizers found themselves in a social movement environment that did not place a value on the well-being of organizers. They
found the values of this community were so anathema to care that they needed to become a closed collective, to secure a free space to develop a meaningful framework for their frustrations. In the end, they distanced themselves from the movement culture they were critical of and sought to limit the ability of members of the movement culture to access the support infrastructure they created. The Rock Dove Collective withdrew caring work from the social movement culture that devalued such work, and they worked to make the infrastructure available to other movements. This is the product of patriarchy and white supremacy in the anarchist social movement culture. Tenuous members of the community wished to do caring work, but doing the work for people who ultimately devalued that work made little sense and was offensive to the Rock Dove women. Making health a focal point of their politics set in motion the dynamic where the hierarchies of the environment in which they organized were no longer tenable. To put it differently, the power of the focus on health is that it lays bare the problems and inconsistencies of the social relations of anarchist social movement culture. A focus on health does not fundamentally alter those problems—the Rock Doves ultimately chose to withdraw labor rather than agitate against those tendencies—but it does reveal the contradictions.

Some of the most vocal champions of the North American anarchist social movement as a major force in the alter-globalization struggles, such as Day (2005), tend to gloss the struggle that is ongoing on the level of the infrapolitics of the movement. For example, Day argues the anarchistic newest social movements are guided by a logic of affinity, or what he calls an infinite

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57 Formally, this limiting was minimal in the sense that the policy for accessing the network was not monitored. However, informally, I found that the Rock Dove Collective limited support for the young white anarchist social movement culture by gradually disconnecting to anarchist projects. Recall how Louise described how the group used to hold workshops at the Anarchist Book Fair, then they brought some materials to set up a informational table, then they sent some materials, and finally they stopped interfacing entirely. Louise indicated a similar process happened with the Really Really Free Market. She thought it was interesting years ago but gradually just stopped going because the project was not relevant to her (see Chapter 5).
responsibility. For Day, the anti-authoritarianism of the newest social movements, which is pro-
horizontalism and direct democracy (in contrast to democratic centralism and vanguardism),
means that groups do not attempt to enforce one hegemonic framework upon other groups.
Instead, macro-frameworks such as 'the movement made of many movements' or the 'diversity of
tactics' attempt to hold together a variety of positions within a broad critique of capitalism.
Certainly there is something substantive to Day's ideas. The alter-globalization movement has
successfully organized mass summit demonstrations and witnessed huge success (not the least of
which was the Battle of Seattle) using the principles of horizontalism and without centralized
authority. However, at the same time, patriarchy and misguided values about political work
remain firmly at the center of conflicts in these newest social movements, conflicts which are not
resolved or ameliorated by affinity but rather remain unresolved by the recalcitrance of forms of
domination within organizational structures.

In the case of the Rock Dove Collective, the idea that there are 'many movements' meant
something entirely different. For the Rock Dove Collective, many movements meant they they
should support other more marginal movements and withdraw from the one that operated as a
kind of center. The Rock Dove Collective forces us to consider that concepts such as 'a
movement of movements' and 'infinite responsibility' are shallow if support and care is
undervalued within the social movement culture that created and promotes such ideas. On the
other hand, as the case of the Rock Dove Collective shows, there literally are many movements,
including ones that do not undervalue social reproduction work. There is no lack of movements,
but rather a lack of support work for the movements that need mutuality the most. For the Rock
Dove Collective, building resilience into resistance means more than a simple notion of doing
social reproduction work while having a political consciousness. It means knowing that support work actually produces (and reproduces) the 'who' of resistance, it means knowing that people who rebel are a function of the kind of support work a movement engages in. The work of the Rock Dove Collective develops the idea of 'radical reproduction,' of reproduction work as a deliberative process of building radical power, as opposed to labor power.
12

Radical Reproduction
Alternative Social Reproduction and Everyday Performances

They're going to have to come down and arrest the bags of free food, they're going to have to arrest the factory that makes the free shoes, they're going to have to arrest our free medical clinics, they're going to have to arrest our free busing program, etc. And there's a contradiction between the people in the community and the police department. (Seale, quoted in Goldberg 1972, 26)

And I don't think you can talk about R2K [the mass direct action protests against the Republican National Convention in 2000] without talking about the Quakers. When I got out of jail, the Quakers staffed a place where people could be eating food, resting, drinking juice. That's what happens when you have a movement. Folks were really jamming, in a sense. It felt really good. (Balagun, quoted in Subways 2010, 6)

In July 2012 I sat down with Paul at a Brooklyn café to interview him about his work with Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. It was late afternoon on a Saturday after we had been collecting food all morning and sharing it alongside others in the park. At first we sat down in the back corner of the café. But as I checked the levels on my recording equipment, we realized that we were too close to a speaker above our heads in the corner. Nervous that we had picked a poor location that might compromise the interview, I asked Paul if we could move so that I could be sure to get a clearer recording. He of course obliged. When we finally got situated at a new table, I asked him to tell me the story of how he first began working with Food Not Bombs.

The story that Paul went on to tell me in the café highlights just how integral Food Not Bombs can be to confrontational, anti-capitalist actions. I first met Paul late in 2008 and at the time of the interview had been working with him once a week for about two years. We collected food together for the Bed Stuy food share; we delivered food to the occupied kitchen in Zuccotti Park; we took food out to Staten Island residents in the wake of hurricane Sandy. And I had also tagged along for some of the massive food shares and collective dumpster diving events that he organizes on Long Island. But I was not familiar with the story that began our interview. In fall
2002, when he was 18 years old and just a few days into college, Paul spotted a flyer for a summit protest that caught his attention. “I was commuting so I didn't really know anyone at the school. I think it was my first or second day I saw a big sign on the wall, saying 'Do you want to drive down to the World Economic Forum\(^{58}\) protest [in Washington DC]?' And I thought, 'Oh, that's cool' and I called the number” (Paul 2012). Paul then met up with a group of people and rode down to Washington DC in their van. They arrived early in the morning and joined other protesters in a park that served as a staging area before the beginning of one of the large marches. But the police surrounded the park and arrested a large group of people.

“I was probably there for about 5 minutes,” Paul said to me, laughing about the absurdity of the whole situation. He had just met his companions a few hours prior to being arrested and, he soon realized, they were able to slip out of the situation and avoid being arrested. He was arrested with many other people, but essentially alone. “They handcuffed our right arms to our left feet and I just remember being handcuffed arm to foot in this gymnasium,” he continued (Paul 2012).

“Right arm to left foot?” I said, trying to wrap my head around how uncomfortable that would be.

“Right arm to left foot like this.” Paul remained sitting at the table but motioned by twisting around in his chair and drawing his right wrist down toward his left foot. “And you could kind of hop and move. And we were on these mats, like workout mats, but there was like a thousand people in this big gymnasium area and I'm kind of getting freaked out because I thought I'd be in there for a few [hours], and a few hours became like a day, and then two days”

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\(^{58}\) In the interview Paul said that it was a protest either against the IMF/World Bank or the World Economic Forum. There was a summit protest against the IMF/World Bank, not the WEF, in September 2002.
Preemptive mass arrests became the norm at summit protest actions in the years following the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle. The epigraph from Kazembe Balagun of SLAM that opens this section comes from Balagun's experience during a mass arrest of 400 people, many of whom were making props and puppets for the demonstrations against the Republican National Convention in 2000. The police raid on the puppet workshop led to the detainment of activists before the planned demonstrations. In Philadelphia in 2000, some people remained in jail for three weeks and “many activists were physically and sexually abused” (Subways 2010, 2). In his oral history interview, Balagun speaks about the trauma of the experience. Due to dehydration he momentarily lost consciousness while being detained on a bus with other arrestees. Police dragged him off the bus and took him to a hospital where they then handcuffed him to a gurney. When he was later placed in a cell he spent three days in jail without “any access to water or phone calls” (Balagun, in Subways 2010, 5).

Balagun then recalls the Quakers' food support as a crucial element to his experience because their work nurtured those in the social movement. The Quakers presence signaled one important level of solidarity with those engaged in potentially traumatic confrontations with police. “A lot of folks went through a lot of trauma. Afterward, people in SLAM got really reflective,” Balagun told Subways during the oral history interview (5). During these intense periods of repression food support and legal support, in addition to jail solidarity and a variety of other small acts of support, solve practical needs and stimulate a feeling that trauma, while experienced differently by many individuals, will be met with mutuality and care.

Paul spoke to me about a similar conclusion to his experience being detained during the
summit protests in Washington, DC. After three days in detainment Paul opted to pay the
Washington, DC police $150 and sign a legal form that he equated with a bribe. He was
subsequently “released at three o'clock in the morning” (Paul 2012).

I had no idea where I was and I was walking out of this jail. They were releasing
people like one every five minutes...And I get out of the main gated area and
there's a table and it says 'Food Not Bombs' and [they're] giving out free vegan
oatmeal. I'm vegan and I thought, 'This is really awesome.' And so these people
said, 'Is there anything we can help you with?' And I was explaining my whole
situation and how I didn't know the people I came down with, I didn't have their
cell phone number and I was completely lost. I had no idea in DC where I was
and had no means of getting back because I spent all my money paying off this
'bribe'. They got on their cell phones and started making some phone calls. They
found the people I was staying with and they ended up being able to get them and
their van to come down and pick me up because they were still at the protest and
everything. It was my first real experience with Food Not Bombs and I just
thought it was really awesome, that degree of solidarity, because the reality is I
would have gotten out and I would've had no idea where to even walk. You know
it was in the middle of nowhere in DC and I really would have been screwed.
And so it was this really nice experience. (Paul 2012)

I want to dwell on the jail solidarity experience for a variety of reasons. Both Paul and
Kazembe Balagun describe their experiences of profound emotional and physical stress in a
positive light due in part to the presence of people doing movement support work. Both use the
language of solidarity and emphasize that meeting the Quakers or Food Not Bombs on the
outside was demonstrative of a high level of solidarity (and coordination). This is not to say that
all other activists involved in those mass arrests frame the experience in the same positive
manner (surely many would not). Yet the experience of deprivation and uncertainty at the hands
of the state magnifies the quotidian qualities of basic care such as warm oatmeal or a place set
aside for recuperation. These are two highly distilled moments where oppositional and
propositional direct action tactics feed into each other and heighten the meaning of both forms of
organizing. In these moments/spaces it becomes self-evident that strong movements require both
tactics in complementary roles with one another in order for the movement to be vibrant. In these
eamples, the anti-capitalist direct actions and non-capitalist communal sharing come together in
time and space to form a potent unity.

The alter-globalization movement prides itself as a movement made up of 'one no, many
yeses.' In an effort to develop a practice that integrates 'no' and 'yes,' or oppositional and
propositional, the white North American arm of the movement has developed a variety of tactics
that, to varying degrees, attempt to hold these two energies in a dynamic tension. Tactics like
Reclaim Streets, Food Not Bombs, Really Really Free Markets, Critical Mass, and IndyMedia
Centers among others all share this quality. Reclaim the Streets and Critical Mass block traffic,
for a street party or an alternative form of transportation, respectively. Food Not Bombs cooks a
meal together, and then takes it out into a highly visible public space. In each of these cases, the
confrontational or affirmational elements may lean further in one or the other direction, but there
remains the ethic to never let the 'no' and the 'yes' stray too far from one another. As such,
activists cultivate values and organizing strategies that are directly applicable to the skills and
capacities required for mass mobilizations. Everyday practices that combine community care and
confrontation (even if in deliberately muted forms), lay the foundation for making mass summit
mobilizations much less of an 'extraordinary' event.

These highly charged moments when care-giving work supports demonstrators at mass
protests are not spontaneous acts of kindness divorced from activists' everyday lives, but rather
the product of much more quotidian efforts to transform social reproduction in neoliberal
capitalism. The purpose of Food Not Bombs is not to be the food support infrastructure for mass
mobilizations. Instead, effective food support or jail support work is one product, but not the
purpose, of a method that is designed simply to prefigure a new way of cooking, eating, and cleaning up together. The purpose of Food Not Bombs is to make and consume food in an alternative fashion. But in the case of mutual aid models such as Food Not Bombs, community cooperation becomes threatening to, rather than functional for, neoliberalism. This is because the continual practice of doing social reproduction work differently reveals the shortcomings of neoliberal notions that “there is no alternative” to the capitalist order of production and reproduction. Working in a Food Not Bombs kitchen and eating together in public space are two concrete alternative ways to organize the spaces and labors of social reproduction. As a demonstrative performance of the communal organization of social reproduction and of communal alternative uses of public space, every Food Not Bombs meal becomes a potentially transformational moment for individuals who may find the collective meal as a way to turn everyday frustrations and grievances into collective action. It is not a given that such transformations will occur on a regular basis at a Food Not Bombs meal. However, even the potential for alternative social relationships becomes a threat for an ideological system that relies on making a spectacle of there being no alternatives to privatized capitalism in its articulations with patriarchal and racist social relations. We are able to “see” how threatening a group like Food Not Bombs becomes when, to borrow the phrase from Bobby Seale, the police come to “arrest the bags of free food” (Seale, quoted in Goldberg 1972, 26). For Food Not Bombs, it is the free bowl of soup that gets arrested. Organizing free food in just this particular way is a threat to neoliberalism that has become increasingly criminalized in cities across the United States (see chapter 7; Heynen 2010). However, the majority of the time that people engage in this form of political work, we are unable to “see” its fruits in such a clear and unequivocal fashion as
handcuffs on the volunteer who just ladled out a bowl of soup. Not being able to see these outcomes may make it harder to gauge the oppositional effectiveness of the work, but it does not change the underlying dynamics of the resistance. In a political economic system where so much energy is deployed to create a “public transcript” (see Scott 1990; cf., Kelley 1996) of there being no alternatives,\(^5\) reorganizing the most basic tasks of reproduction into collective practices has immense potential for radical social movements.

As such, anti-authoritarian mutual aid is a method of political action that takes existing forms of care-work (see Van Meter 2012) that are already prevalent within the diverse economy (see Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003) and reorganizes the work in such a way that its new orientation makes community resilience a call to resistance (see Katz 2004). What we typically find in the case of DIY, direct action social reproduction is an outright rejection (even if it is a temporary or otherwise limited rejection) of the household as the primary scale of social reproduction in favor of community social reproduction. Issues such as hunger or ill-health are framed as products of social inequality not individual responsibility, while cooperation amongst the community of those affected by inequality is understood to be a central element of the solution. Such abrogations of scalar relationships (see Smith 1992a; Marston 2000; Marston and Smith 2001; cf., Spataro 2011) help activists to build support for oppositional frameworks because mutual aid literally satisfies the necessity of social reproduction while simultaneously naming capitalism as the economic system that produces such household emergencies in the first place. In this way activists leverage community reproduction as an unassailable force in order to criticize the economic structures that produce household crises that members of the community

\(^5\) See Hackworth (2007) for a discussion of the resources used to present the image of neoliberalism as the best possible world.
experience in common.

Although 'community' is an oft-maligned (and at times ill-defined) scale of political action (see Joseph 2002), groups such as Food Not Bombs struggle to make community in a different mold than the neoliberal construction of community. Scholarship that is critical of 'community' politics in neoliberalism examines forms of community action that are functional for and promoted by the neoliberal state in order to fill the gaps in social reproduction left by cuts to the social wage. Such arguments about state devolution and governmentality refine our theories of neoliberalism (see Larner 2003). These arguments highlight the way the state can both retreat from the responsibility of the social wage and deploy power in indirect ways through processes of subject formation that are seemingly all-pervasive. By sharpening our understanding of the neoliberal state, in turn, these theories do not close off the possibility of community as a powerful basis of resistance. Instead, such theories give us a more acute sense of the instabilities and contradictions of neoliberal forms of community. In turn, organized groups of people can tactically exploit these instabilities and contradictions in order to create new subjectivities 'from below' (cf., Gibson-Graham 2006). Developed through tactical experimentation and the transformation of earlier tactics to fit new circumstances, Food Not Bombs in particular found a way to exploit one specific element of neoliberal urbanization: the tendency for neoliberal urban regimes to exclude the most impoverished individuals from highly visible public spaces (see Mitchell 2003; Mitchell and Staeheli 2006; Mitchell and Heynen 2009; Heynen 2010). Food Not Bombs' method of cooking together and then eating in public collectivizes social reproduction and uses public space in ways that neoliberal regimes do not wish to see flourish. Cooking and eating together becomes a mode of concretizing existing desires for alternatives to capitalist
social reproduction, as well as producing new desires for non-hierarchical ways of organizing collective work. As mentioned above, we see the fruits of those desires (and capacities) in the initiative that mutual aid activists take to do support work in other scales of action, from mass demonstrations to disaster relief (see Crow 2011; 2013) to other care-giving social movement work.

Radical Withdrawal and the Persistence of Conflict

However, community mutual aid groups must be realistic about their ability to keep unwanted social relationships from their project. Rather than see these reorganizations of social reproduction as clean breaks from neoliberalism, groups must struggle to overcome the encroachments of public partnerships (see Katz 2005) and the community politics of neighborhood stabilization (see Maskovsky 2003). As this case study demonstrates mutual aid groups also struggle because qualities that neoliberalism produces and exacerbates—competitiveness, materialism, sexism, and racism—will tend to find their way into so-called autonomous space. In this way, the concept of “geographies of autonomy” becomes limited if it is understood in a superficial manner as spaces that are literally outside of capitalist social relations. Geographies of autonomy are saturated with capitalist social relations (especially uneven relations of power and privilege based upon racism and patriarchy), which we struggle against both within and beyond autonomous space.

As such, scholars of geographies of autonomy typically use metaphors of movement and/or process to describe these concrete productions of space as “survival routes” (Chatterton and Pickerill 2010) or “strategic exodus” (Carlsson and Manning 2010) out of capitalism. In
these metaphors, geographies of autonomy are framed as efforts to move away from capitalism, not spaces that are literally outside of capitalism. Movement and process imply escape as an active goal or tendency rather than an accomplished state of being. Despite these metaphors, conceptual slippage can lead to misleading notions that geographies of autonomy are spaces outside of capitalist social relations. For the activists who create autonomous space or temporary autonomous zones, such slippage can be especially dangerous because collective identity can be undermined when some individuals feel they are outside of capitalism while others continue to feel disempowered within autonomous spaces in ways that mirror capitalist social relations (see chapter 11). The inability to diagnose destructive relations and effectively struggle against these conflicts can become a major source of conflict and loss of radical energy within geographies of autonomy.

I was drawn to this research because I initially saw a thriving local social geography that consisted of a community space (with free workshops, programming, and zine library), Food Not Bombs free meals in multiple neighborhoods, community dinners, Really Really Free Markets, free stores, anarchist book fairs and general assemblies, and multiple mutual aid health collectives. And these mutualist projects appeared to simultaneously serve the needs of activists (and others) while functioning as infrastructure for resistance at local and even global demonstrations. In the end, the case study revealed a variety of ways that some mutual aid groups struggle with conflicting social relations, conflicts which can become the basis of participants' withdrawal. Over the course of the research, I rarely felt that these projects were thriving, largely because the energy and vitality that initially caught my attention now seemed fraught with conflicts and micropolitical struggles. This was particularly the case with Bed Stuy Food Not
Bombs and the Really Really Free Market, but to a lesser extent the Rock Dove Collective as well.

In the case of the Really Really Free Market NYC, I found a project that struggled to remain vibrant and radical due to underlying contradictions in the way we conceived of and implemented the project. As a space that is meant to be an alternative sharing economy, we openly acknowledged that resistance movements need alternative economic models because the dynamics of the capitalist market take up so much space. In this manner, we sought to create a 'geography of autonomy' (see Chatterton and Pickerill 2010), but our principles of anti-authoritarianism proved limiting because they were insufficient to deal with the real demands of managing (and protecting) a commons in a sea of capitalist relations (see Chapter 5). The drive to be both alternative to the capitalist market and radically anti-managerial, which I argue is a contradictory quality of anti-authoritarian 'autonomous space,' led to diminishing forms of radical reciprocity in the space (see Chapter 5). In the Really Really Free Market example, the way the project operates as an edge zone (Daro 2009) or contact zone meant that mutuality serves to help out all who come to the space. The relationship between mutual aid for all—even those who do not practice reciprocity—and mutual aid for those who are in the community engaged in an oppositional movement created problems. Participants with an oppositional framework toned down their mutualist work (or left entirely), while core organizers struggled to see the value of their work when it was not expanding the community of people committed to a new world free from oppression or commercial exchange. Striking a balance between reproducing all comers and reproducing a rebellious community proved very difficult in the case of the New York City Really Really Free Market.
At Food Not Bombs other challenges surfaced around issues of race and gender. I found that those who started the project wanted to decouple the connection between Food Not Bombs and the white punk subculture and work against the charity model (see Chapter 8). In the spirit of anti-racist criticisms from within and without the Food Not Bombs movement, the founders of Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs recognized that it would not be appropriate to recreate the punk subculture in a predominantly African American and Caribbean neighborhood, especially a neighborhood vulnerable to forces of gentrification. While organizers succeeded in downplaying punk subcultural norms, the crisis of losing their communal kitchen led to a major loss of organizers who were keen to build connections between the young white anarchist community and the older residents of color in the neighborhood. Following the crisis, the group functioned much more like a charity where white organizers brought free food to ‘the community,’ meaning the neighborhood residents of color. This, rather than working to build a cross-racial radical community group based in bonds of mutuality. During my time with the group these dynamics came to a head when two women organizers confronted male power in the group. Unwillingness to work against these tendencies and build community bonds that framed white organizers in a community with black and Caribbean residents revealed to the women organizers an underlying dynamic of charity, and ultimately led to a subsequent loss of organizers (see Chapter 8).

The story of the Rock Dove Collective is one of a mixed-race group of individuals, mostly but not entirely women, who found common ground in a deep frustration with the way one arm of the anti-authoritarian movement does not value ‘care-giving’ (Van Meter 2012) work. As a result of not valuing care, this arm of the movement tends to burn through young able-bodied people, and does not work to bring those not already at the table (but who would be if
mutuality lifted them up) to the table. The Rock Dove organizers found these tendencies in the white anarchist social movement culture to be strong enough that they felt the need to create a closed collective in order to create a 'free space' in which to develop their critique and framework for action (see Chapter 11). I found that the Rock Dove Collective used a rhetoric of reversal to talk about support work as 'badass' work. Through this reversal they spoke back to the forces that ascribe 'badass' to confrontational work. Ultimately, the Rock Dove Collective withdrew from the movement culture they were critical of, and they sought out other movements in order to deliberatively support the organizing work of those whose organizing efforts need mutuality most (see Chapter 11).

The three cases in this research reveal that mutual aid tactics in the white sector of the anti-authoritarian movement are fraught with contradictory outcomes. As a result such tactics can at times unify care and confrontation in generative ways, while at other times they recreate structures of hierarchy and domination so prevalent in the capitalist system. Stories such as the one where Food Not Bombs provided jail support (and food support) to activists like Paul represent those successful moments. In contrast, Paul's own mode of mutual aid support work with Food Not Bombs was patriarchal and pushed out women organizers. These contradictory outcomes demonstrate that much work needs to be done to align the high principles of the anti-authoritarian movement with the tactics on the ground. Breaking the white 'brand' (see Chapter 8) of a tactic like Food Not Bombs, for example, will ultimately be much more difficult than simply avoiding the subcultural trappings of punk.

Despite all these conflicts and withdrawals, during the middle of my research the #OccupyWallStreet movement grew (and waned) quickly. During this time I saw many of the
mutualist activists in this case study play a role in the wide variety of mutual aid working groups that held the occupation at Zuccotti Park together and provide radical reproduction to the occupiers (and others). Members of the Rock Dove Collective worked on health mutualism in the park. Henrietta, whom I knew from the Really Really Free Market and other mutual aid projects, became a consistent presence in the occupied kitchen. It was during this period that I became more connected with Natalie and Jorie because they invited me to join them preparing large meals at Jorie's house for the occupied kitchen in the park. Using produce donated from farms, we re-created the atmosphere of collective work in a Food Not Bombs kitchen that the three of us felt was lacking at Bed Stuy Food Not Bombs. I also helped Paul to deliver a carload of food to the park on another occasion. Certainly, mutual aid in occupied Zuccotti Park was a collective effort of a much larger number of people. But seeing familiar faces around the park engaged in autonomous work that mirrored their everyday projects demonstrated the extent to which the withdrawal that I observed was not so much a withdrawal from anti-authoritarian mutualism in total. Rather, withdrawal typically meant a shift into other projects and working with other people, just as the Rock Dove Collective withdrew support from the white social movement culture in order to transfer that energy into other support projects. The proliferation of self-activity in the park provided another way to see the vitality of mutual aid projects that appeared to me to be waning, while new autonomous working groups emerged from the occupation and took up newer modes of mutual aid. Examples include the 'Rolling Jubilee,' a project of the Strike/Debt working group, which raised money to purchase medical debts in order to release people from their debts (see Gabbatt 2013). Once again, the value of everyday mutual aid is not measured by a mobilization like occupied Zuccotti Park (valuable as the mobilization may be),
but this mobilization helped me to literally “see” the fruits of a network of projects in which my participant observation revealed strained bonds, confusion about the effectiveness of work, and radical withdrawal (among other processes).

Radical Reproduction in Neoliberal Times

Providing jail support shows solidarity and care for the people in our movement. Outside of OWS [#OccupyWallStreet], jail support is included as a key part in planning an action. When you plan a lecture, the event isn't over until the chairs are stacked, floor swept, and lights turned off. It is problematic to assume someone else will clean up after your event. Isn't jail support similar?

Because jail support is a combination of care and clean up, two kinds of work traditionally labeled “women’s work,” it continues to be undervalued regardless of the gender of the people doing the labor. If OWS is to truly be a people’s movement, we must re-value compassion and clean up as crucial. We, as a community, must take responsibility and step up for jail support. Without this, we lack a sustainable movement where we act responsibly to our allies and ourselves and responsibly defend ourselves against state repression and law enforcement.

We have repeatedly asked organizers to plan for jail support when they plan an action with a risk of arrest, which is just about anything political in NYC. This has not happened nearly enough. Jail support needs to be done for actions regardless of size, number of people arrested, or whether or not the arrested are your friends. Occupation is also an action and needs jail support. This work should not fall on a few individuals. We are tired of organizers and activists thinking jail support is someone else’s responsibility. (Jail Support 2012, emphasis bold in original)

This passage is the statement that the Jail Support Group of the #OccupyWallStreet movement sent out when they went on strike on May 5th 2012 after all protesters from May Day actions were out of jail. The Jail Support Group going on strike suggests that it was not just the coordinated nationwide evictions of the encampments that debilitated the #Occupy movement but also a systemic lack of value for the work of “compassion and clean up.” Generally speaking, no movement can sustain itself if organized groups of people formally strike or informally withdraw support work. Outwardly, the #OccupyWallStreet movement appeared to focalize
mutual aid and support work because, as mentioned above, the park occupations grew up around a variety of autonomous services and communalism. Occupied Zuccotti Park featured free meals, a free medic station, and a free library just to name a few of the support services created by autonomous initiative in the park. However, what we see in the statement of those in the Jail Support Working group is that support work in the movement took on the quality that mirrored the Rock Dove Collective's criticism of white anarchist culture; the work was necessarily valuable but undervalued unnecessarily. While outwardly mutual aid was important, the work tended to fall to certain individuals because it was not being valued vis-a-vis other kinds of movement work.

Throughout this research I have argued that the systemic undervaluing of social reproduction work in capitalism affects the way we understand the work we do in building and sustaining social movements. Hidden histories of radical movements reveal tactics of communalism and mutual aid that have gotten less attention. Giving less attention to mutuality and to the work that makes it possible, means that we are left with underdeveloped notions of the relationship between radical care-giving practices and other tactics. It also means that the voices of those people engaged in care-giving work have been marginalized. In their history of the Oakland Community School (OCS), for example, Huggins and Leblanc-Ernest (2009) use the framework of “visible invisibility” in order to describe how women's work throughout the Black Panther Party was highly visible to other people in the organization and to the communities they worked with. At the same time that this work was highly visible “BPP women's voices have been relatively silent in published literature” (2009, 166; cf., Abron 1999). That certain kinds of labor can be both visible, in other words be self-evidently valuable, and invisible, or undervalued, is a
function of the way patriarchal domination frame’s work ascribed to women as a natural, rather than social, product. If the work is understood to be a given because some people do it “naturally,” then the work is not valuable enough to mention. While black feminists and Marxist feminists have ruthlessly critiqued these ideas, neoliberal globalization continues to rely on a blend of patriarchy and white supremacy that places social reproduction work at the bottom of wage hierarchies and feminizes work when seeking to de-skill workers and lower wages (see Wright 2006). On-the-ground mutual aid projects that reorganize social reproduction work but do not develop a working critique of race and gender in social reproduction become susceptible to mirroring the value structure of neoliberalism, even as the organizers seek to become survival routes out of capitalism. As I argue above, such projects remain potentially transformative spaces and communal threats to neoliberal urbanization, but they also become likely sites of intra-group conflict.

For bell hooks, for example, black women's work in support of black liberation has a long history in the construction of 'homeplaces' that have a “radical political dimension” (1990, 384). As Routledge (1997) argues, hooks's concept of homeplaces is akin to the tactics of DIY autonomous communal projects. Hooks argues that “this task of making a homeplace was not simply a matter of black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination” (1990, 384). But despite this, hooks argues, sexist assumptions about women's work being 'natural,' or a force of nature (see Federici 2004), frames the political work of building homeplaces as simply something that black women should be doing as a given rather than a chosen political practice (1990, 386). Hooks’s work gets at the heart of the issue.
Preventing the creation of homeplaces is a primary element of domination (hooks 1990, 387; cf., Scott 1990). Yet the very creation of these sites of resistance, when black women successfully struggle to make a homeplace, may subsequently be overlooked/undervalued due to sexism. Here, hooks's work gives us the spatial basis of the care-giving work that is foundational for resistance, while simultaneously making it clear that this particular kind of spatial strategy holds a specific meaning in a long history of black liberation struggles.

My research suggests that we need to do more intra- and interpersonal work in order to both reorganize and revalue social reproduction work. By this I mean political work that challenges unwanted forms of power and subjectivity that compromise our social movement tactics. We will not be able to abolish capitalism in one discreet place, such as a collective kitchen or a used goods commons, while being surrounded and saturated by it in our daily lives. Hooks's work is germane here because she grounds her analysis of strategies of resistance within a contradictory social field where racism and patriarchy intersect in ways that devalue social reproduction work. In contrast, literatures on geographies of autonomy tend to slip into a notion of escape or exodus from capitalism that can easily eschew questions of work, value, and the production of identity in neoliberalism. As a result, it is imperative that we incorporate a black feminist and Marxist feminist critique into notions of autonomy. Accomplishing this goal will involve more people taking up care-giving work in their social movements, especially those white men whose position in race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability hierarchies codes them as “free” to do less social reproduction work. However, at the same time as we take up this work we need to do so using frameworks that acknowledge, not erase, the women who do the overwhelming majority of social reproduction today and who have done it in the past. Through
mutuality we tie our survival to one another, but survival still remains distributed unevenly. Mutual aid brings people together in ways that the neoliberal ordering of production and reproduction does not, but we cannot fetishize mutualism as if cooperation or sharing is itself a final leveling of power and hierarchy. It remains up to those engaged in mutualism to create the oppositional practices and the frameworks that give meaning to action when people come together for mutuality.

“Preguntando caminamos” is a phrase popularized by the Zapatistas following their uprising on New Year’s Day 1994. The English translation is “asking, we walk” and Holloway argues that it is a central element of Zapatista political thought as well as a radical break with Leninism (2005; cf., Gibson-Graham 2006). The phrase can take on many meanings, but I want to highlight one in particular. For the Zapatistas, this means that answers to questions of political action do not derive from theory. We do not know the answers ahead of time. It is rather by walking—a metaphor for practice in general—that we ask the questions and find the answers that define our political action. Above, I argue that black feminist and Marxist feminist theory are necessary for a more robust mutual aid politics. But I do not mean that these theories would solve complex issues of practice if only those of us engaged in mutual aid knew these theories and chose to abide by their internal logics. Rather, I see these theories as the best fit to analyze this case study, as a way to intervene in the conceptual work of geographies of autonomy, and as a way to amend and alter existing explanations of DIY mutual aid. The purpose is, as Katz argues in her formulation of minor theory, to make theory that “is not about mastery” (1996b, 490). What makes these feminist theories “necessary” is the way they analyze the struggle for survival in capitalism as an uneven process across differences, and how this allows us to see the conflicts
that beset mutual aid groups as micropolitical struggles to make sure that resilient resistance does not leave behind those who have done it so deftly even when no cared to theorize its value.

Following what I have learned from these projects, from listening to the people who celebrate support work and who are also frustrated by it, I argue for a black Marxist feminist politics of mutual aid, not for mastering theories but for carrying them with us as we walk, change, and keep asking new questions.
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