Social Movements and Prefigurative Organizing: Confronting entrenched inequalities in Occupy London

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Abstract

Organizational scholars have examined how social movements generate institutional change through contentious politics. However, little attention has been given to the role of prefigurative politics. The latter collapses expressive and strategic politics so as to enact the desired future society in the present and disrupt the reproduction of institutionalized structures that sustain deep-seated inequalities. The paper presents an ethnographic study of Occupy London and protesters' encounter with people living homeless to examine how prefigurative politics is organized in the face of entrenched inequalities. Findings show how the macro-level inequalities that protesters set out to fight resurfaced in the day-to-day living in the camp itself. Initially, the creation of an *exceptional space and communal space* helped participants align expressive and strategic politics and imbued them with the emotional energy needed to confront challenges. But over time these deeply entrenched institutional inequalities frustrated participants' attempts to maintain an exceptional and communal space, triggering a spiral of decline. The dilemma faced by Occupy invites us to reflect on how everyday constraints may be suspended so as to open up imagination for novel and more equal ways of organizing.

Keywords

Introduction

> It's one thing to say 'Another world is possible.' It's another to experience it, however momentarily. People expecting lists of demands were missing the point of the movement. Prefigurative politics is not about demands. It's about being the change you want to see in the world!

The above observation in *The Occupied Times London* (Lawson, 2012) captures the notion that prefigurative politics is not about staging a political protest with concrete demands but a political process that allows experimenting with alternatives in practice.

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The role of social movements as engines of institutional change has led to a fertile dialogue between social movement and organizational scholars (de Bakker, den Hond, King, & Weber; Soule, 2012; Weber & King, 2014). While institutional theory has grappled with questions of change and power (Lawrence, 2008; Munir, 2015; Rojas, 2010), and entrenched power structures that make resistance challenging (Martí & Fernández, 2013), social movement scholars have shown how relatively powerless individuals can instigate institutional change through contentious politics (King & Pearce, 2010; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008). Scholars from both sides have focused on organizational strategies to mobilize resources, promote change-oriented collective action and challenge institutional authority.

Yet the rise of horizontal, leaderless and prefigurative movements (Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013; Graeber, 2013; Sutherland, Land, & Böhm, 2014), illustrated by the Indignados in Spain or the global Occupy movement, opens up questions about movements *as* organizations. Rather than using organization as strategic means to achieve predetermined ends, prefigurative movements reject hierarchical organization and refuse articulating specific demands (Calhoun, 2013; Graeber, 2013). For these reasons, they have been criticized for a lack of demonstrable outcomes or successes. However, this misses the point, as the quote above suggests. Instead, studying them 'in their own right', namely as prefigurative forms of organizing, can provide an alternative account and overcome the prevailing defeatist discourse about these movements (Maeckelbergh, 2011a, 2011b; van de Sande, 2013, p. 237).

Even though prefigurative movements have emerged as a new institution of political practice ranging from Puerta del Sol to Occupy, organization scholars have paid surprisingly little attention to them. In fact, prefiguration has been virtually absent from the literature at the intersection of organization studies and social movement studies (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007). An organizational perspective on prefigurative movements can help gain a better understanding of alternative ways in which social movements challenge institutional authority and confront inequalities. Rather than theorizing change, prefigurative politics seeks to address inequalities by directly intervening in the ongoing reproduction of institutions at the local level, such as by enacting horizontal decision-making. This chimes well with practice-based perspectives of institutional change (Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012), which start from the premise that institutions are not abstract reified categories but 'inhabited' by people and therefore re-created in everyday social interactions (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

A central assumption is that prefigurative politics requires forms of organizing that are both 'instrumental' to and 'expressive' of desired change, and thereby align means and ends of movement organizing (Graeber, 2002; Maeckelbergh, 2011b; Polletta, 2002). Activists model or *prefigure* the future society at a micro-level that they hope to realize at a societal level, thereby instantiating radical institutional transformation in and through practice. While scholars widely agree on this premise to which activists subscribe (Boggs, 1977; Maeckelbergh, 2011b; van de Sande, 2013), we know much less about how actors reconcile expressive and strategic politics in practice.

To examine how social movement actors organize in line with prefigurative politics, the paper draws on an ethnographic study of Occupy London camps at St Paul's and Finsbury Square. Occupy London is associated with the global Occupy movement, which has been widely described as prefigurative as well as credited for bringing back the issue of inequality into the mainstream of political discourse (Graeber, 2013). While Occupy's slogan 'We are the 99%' powerfully challenged inequality, the study reveals how the macro-level inequality articulated in the juxtaposition of the 99% with the 1% resurfaced at the micro-level of organizing. The encounter of protesters with people living homeless tested their ability to disrupt institutional structures of inequality and replace them with more egalitarian ones in the face of extreme forms of social inequality within the camp itself. This challenged protesters to not only demand change

from others but enact it themselves. Findings show how they initially rose to the challenge and enthusiastically worked to align expressive and strategic politics, but ultimately failed to escape the entrenched nature of inequality.

Theoretically, the paper aims to bring insights from prefigurative politics into organizational social movement scholarship and, vice versa, to study prefigurative movements through an organizational lens.

The papers starts by discussing the role of social movements in fomenting institutional change and by contrasting contentious and prefigurative politics. Next, the paper presents an ethnographic study of Occupy London and protesters' encounter with people living homeless. It then derives theoretical insights by developing a more general model explaining the mechanisms that allow participants to align expressive and strategic politics in prefigurative organizing versus spiraling out of alignment. Finally, the paper offers implications for social movement organizing more broadly.

Social Movements as Institutional Challengers: Contentious versus Prefigurative Politics

The recognition that social movements have been an engine of institutional change has fuelled a growing dialogue between institutional and social movement scholars (de Bakker et al., 2013; Soule, 2012; Weber & King, 2014). Social movements are a core mechanism by which relatively powerless individuals can, through collective action, change entrenched and oppressive institutions such as slavery (King & Haveman, 2008) or promote civil rights (McAdam, 1982) or LGBT rights (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). Most scholars have focused on 'contentious politics' (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). *Contention* is understood as making claims that bear on someone else's interest; while *politics* means targeting institutional forms of authority. On this account, social movements contribute to institutional change by 'theorizing change' aimed at others (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007), defined as the 'production of theoretical accounts' and 'justification of abstract possible solution' (Greenwood, Hinings, & Suddaby, 2002, p. 60).

But critics argue that contentious politics 'generate[s] a narrow definition of "politics"' (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008, p. 77) and assumes a 'general model of institutionalized power' (McAdam, 1982, p. 36). Social movement tactics are evaluated in terms of being effective or instrumental to the mobilization of allies against targets of social grievances, while dismissing strategies that are merely 'expressive' (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008).[1]

Prefigurative politics is an emerging institution that has received less scholarly attention but presents an alternative way of challenging the ongoing reproduction of inequality.

Prefigurative politics

Prefigurative politics is grounded in a radically alternative understanding of institutional change and consequently how social movements can challenge entrenched structural injustices. Rather than *theorizing* the need for change in ways that bear on *someone else's* interest, actors themselves model the new values, institutions and social relationships they aspire to in their present-day practice as part of their strategy to bring about change at the societal level (Polletta, 2002). This attempts to create change 'here and now' through the attempted construction of 'local, collective structures that anticipate the future liberated society' (Boggs, 1977, p. 103; Epstein, 1991; Yates, 2015).

The concept of 'prefiguration' originates in anarchist discourse and practice of direct action (Franks, 2003). It has been used to describe the 1960s 'New Left' civil rights and women's liberation movements (Breines, 1982; Polletta, 2002), 'new anarchist' movements (Graeber, 2002),

alter-globalization movement (Maeckelbergh, 2011b) and autonomous grassroots organizations (Sutherland et al., 2014).

Central to prefigurative politics is the ideal to collapse the distinction often made between movement tactics that are 'instrumental' to mobilization and those that are merely 'expressive' of aims (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; van de Sande, 2013). Against the prevalence of means–end decoupling that characterizes modern organization (Bromley & Powell, 2012), prefigurative organizing recouples means and ends by aligning strategic and expressive politics. As *expressive politics*, organizational means of protest become expressive of the ends. Organizing is no longer merely 'instrumental' to movement goals but becomes an aim in itself (Haug, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2011a). As *strategic politics*, activists confront authority and make strategic political interventions aimed at 'major structural changes in the political, economic and social order' (Breines, 1982, p. 7; Polletta, 2002).

The intended alignment of expressive and strategic politics has two implications. *First* is the need to bring the 'day-to-day organizing into line with the groups' underlying ideological commitments' (Sutherland et al., 2014, p. 770). Rather than diagnosing problems and mobilizing support, prefiguration implies the primacy of practice. Institutions producing inequality or injustice are not reified abstractions that need to be re-theorized. Instead, institutions are 'inhabited' (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Powell & Colyvas, 2008) and reproduced through everyday interactions of ordinary people embedded in obdurate social relations and contexts. Hence, change at a broader level is impossible without challenging the reproduction of power and injustice at the level of everyday practice. Therefore, 'the aim can no longer be to create a moment in the future after which power and inequality will disappear' (Maeckelbergh, 2011b, p. 10). Instead, prefiguration involves participants imaginatively and experimentally constructing alternative ways of living, organizing and relating in the 'here and now' to challenge the way power inequalities are deeply embedded in various institutions (van de Sande, 2013). In other words, 'to prefigure is to anticipate or enact some feature of an 'alternative world' in the present, as though it has already been achieved' (Yates, 2015, p. 4).

However, enacting change in one's own everyday interactions and practices is also difficult because it would involve activists' ability to escape from being 'conditioned by the institutions that they wish to change' (Marti & Fernandez, 2013, p. 1196; Lawrence, 2008; Munir, 2015). While activists may escape such conditioning when they are institutional outsiders at the periphery of fields (Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2008), change at the level of practice requires actors to remain inside the practice and change institutions from the inside out.

Second, collapsing strategic and expressive politics implies continuous learning, experimentation and transformation. It breaks with 'consequentialist' theories of change associated with the 'Old Left' (Boggs, 1977; Franks, 2003; Maeckelbergh, 2011a). These assume a linear path towards revolutionary goals, which are predetermined even before collective action starts. But future society cannot be theorized upfront. Activists thus engage in an open-ended process of learning where goals may shift. Prefiguring then involves 'literally trying out new political structures to see if and how they work' (Maeckelbergh, 2011a, p. 313). As utopianism without utopia, activists experiment with alternative institutions that aim at horizontality, inclusivity and 'reciprocity in power, influence, and attention' (Polletta, 1999; Maeckelbergh, 2011b), including self-organization and consensus-based decision-making (Breines, 1982; Epstein, 1991; Graeber, 2002).

However, if activists focus on enacting these ideals only among themselves, they risk building isolated, inward-looking communities that escape rather than change wider society. In 'Occupy the Farm' like-minded activists created an agricultural commons but isolated themselves from wider institutional challenges (Murray, 2014). This can make organizing expressive of desired change, but fails to leverage change outside.

Even though prefigurative movements have attracted increasing attention from activist-scholars (e.g. Graeber, 2013), most studies have focused on their historical roots (Maeckelbergh, 2011a, 2011b) or principles (van de Sande, 2013). Few studies have taken an organizational perspective to understand how organizing is aligned with prefigurative principles. The central premise that expressive and strategic politics should cohere suggests that prefigurative organizing faces a double-sided challenge. On the one hand, actors need to make the means of the protest expressive of the ends and enact the change in their own everyday interactions and practices (expressive). On the other hand, they also need to confront authority and institute wider changes (strategic). Thus, how do actors attempt to reconcile expressive and strategic forms of organizing, and what conditions might affect their ability to accomplish this reconciliation?

Methods

In order to explore this question, I studied Occupy London (hereafter: Occupy). Refusing to make demands, the global Occupy movement has widely been described as 'prefigurative' (Graeber, 2013), providing a revealing case for studying how social movements organize in line with prefigurative politics. Occupy, established 15 October 2011, was part of a global wave of occupations that reached over 951 cities in 82 countries in 2011. It protested under the banner 'We are the 99%' against increasing social and economic inequality. While most land in the City of London was privately owned, unclear ownership structures allowed protesters to establish two of the longest occupations lasting four and half months at St Paul's and almost six months at Finsbury Square. These protest camps became spaces of utopian experimentation with organizational practices based on anarchist ideals of self-organization, mutual aid and consensus-based decision-making. But prefigurative organizing was tested by the challenge to integrate occupiers identifying as homeless and drawn to the camp for food and shelter.

Data collection

Data include ethnographic observation and semi-structured, in-depth interviews collected from October 2011 to November 2012.

Starting with the beginning of the occupation on 15 October 2011, I came regularly to the campsite at St Paul's and, after its eviction in late February 2012, Finsbury Square, totalling over 280 hours of ethnographic observation. Being an 'occupier' was a fluid category ranging from full-time camping to part-time participation in general assemblies, working groups, meetings and camp activities. The latter was chosen due to competing duties. I participated as occupier while disclosing my concurrent role as researcher. I took field notes on site and wrote up detailed accounts after each visit.

Ethnographic observation was supplemented with interviews; 30 interviews were conducted during the occupation, followed by 12 interviews after the camp's eviction to refine emerging themes and invite reflections on nascent findings. Interviews lasted 30 to 120 minutes. Respondents were initially identified through personal contacts made on the campsite, and then through snowball sampling techniques. I also had informal conversations with more than 40 occupiers, most several times.

To capture the voice of people living homeless, the research followed the triangulation strategy recommended by Snow and Anderson's (1993) seminal work on homeless street people. First, to gather ethnographic observations, I would 'hang out' with occupiers identifying as homeless, such as in the tea tent. Second, I used two different methods of interviewing; less formal interviewing by comment to enable nondirective, conversational listening, and listening unobtrusively

to conversations that arose naturally rather than in response to the researcher's intervention. In addition, I participated in events such as the Homelessness Action Week or shadowed participants in the Tranquillity working group. This 'elicitation of perspectives in action' can provide 'a reasonable approximation of a multiperspectival understanding of street life as it was actually lived by the homeless' (Snow & Anderson, 1993, p. 24).

I also collected a wide variety of documents and social media data. Selected livestream videos, meeting minutes, press releases, twitter, websites, blogs and Occupy's alternative media podcasts 'radio Occupy' and *The Occupied Times* were archived and analysed.

Data analysis

The analytical approach was open-ended and inductive (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I wrote analytic memos after each observation, interview or conversation and created an initial list of chronological events and emergent themes. Two issues struck me at this stage: (1) how the occupation was underpinned by a very distinctive logic of collective action – prefigurative politics – and (2) how this logic was tested by the challenge of dealing with homelessness. In line with 'engaged scholarship' (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006), I co-organized a workshop on 'Occupy and the politics of organizing' in March 2012 to stimulate collective reflection among occupiers, academics and students on the challenges of inscribing 'radical practices' into everyday organizing, and to discuss the dual objective of prefigurative politics as being both expressive and strategic.

In the next stage, several cycles of data coding took place with the help of NVivo. Analysis progressed from descriptive codes to aggregating them to broader concepts and themes. Themes emerged that clustered around (a) prefigurative organizing, (b) the role of an exceptional space and (c) community building in such a space.

As a third stage, analysis zoomed in on protesters' encounters with people living homeless, one of the defining themes in the organization of everyday camp life. A chronological account was created to track shifts in the relationship over time from seeing homeless participants *as* occupiers to a growing 'conflict between campers and campaigners', which was seen as undermining both expressive politics ('worn out by it') and strategic politics ('overwhelming our ability to focus on our aims'). Tracking the construction of homelessness as a problem revealed a shift from the initial alignment of expressive and strategic politics to subsequent breakdown.

The fourth stage, in line with inductive interpretive analysis (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I returned to the conceptual lens of prefigurative politics (e.g. Polletta, 2002) and the question of what enables alignment between expressive and strategic politics, or leads to tensions (between 'big "P" politics and organizing ourselves on a smaller level'). By interrelating theoretical concepts with the analytical clusters derived from the empirical material, I identified the social mechanisms through which interactions among actors were 'transformed into some kind of collective outcome' (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998, p. 23); here, sustaining the alignment of expressive and strategic politics vis-a-vis tension or breakdown. A label for each mechanism was created through iteration with the literature. For instance, I identified 'exceptionality' by drawing on the concept of 'exceptional space' (Feigenbaum et al., 2013). Similar to 'free space' (Polletta, 1999), it enhances autonomy and creates resistance to institutional authority, but can also emerge from within authoritative structures (Courpasson, Dany, & Delbridge, 2017).

In writing up the account, I struggled to explain the unfolding dynamics without myself reproducing the problematic distinction between types of occupiers. Yet, it may be naïve to imagine one might be able to provide an 'objective' description in a paper that deals with re-emerging social inequalities between groups of participants. Eventually, I decided to follow the language used by participants. 'Occupier' refers to all participants. 'Protester' and 'homeless occupier' is used based

on whether participants identified themselves and each other as 'protesters' or as 'homeless'. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants.

Prefigurative Politics in Occupy London

The following analysis explores how protesters aimed at putting prefigurative politics into practice. The first section explores how expressive and strategic politics initially reinforced each other, and how this was achieved by creating an *exceptional* and *communal space*. The second and third sections examine protesters' encounter with homeless occupiers, and how the manifestation of macro-level inequality (99% versus 1%) at the micro-level of the camp itself challenged protesters to confront their own institutionalized expectations. The second section explores how the inclusion of homeless occupiers provided proof of concept that prefigurative organizing could align expressive and strategic politics. The third section documents breakdown.

Aligning expressive and strategic politics

As fieldwork rapidly revealed, prefigurative organizing was both grounded in everyday practice *and* aimed at wider societal change. A prominent banner above Occupy's camp stating 'This is not a protest. This is a process' implied expressive politics. While the more prominent 'We are the 99%' slogan drew attention to the staggering social, economic and political inequality, emphasizing 'process' pointed to the aim of confronting inequality by way of practising rather than preaching politics: 'It is about politics through practice, Occupy. It's not politics of theoretical engagement with a series of theoretical statements' (Liam).

Occupiers attempted to create, through an ongoing process of experimentation, the organizational practices that prefigured a more just, inclusive and democratic society. This suspended the distinction between means and ends of organizing: 'Saying how things should be is one thing,… bringing it about with all the determination you can muster is another' (Danny). A recurrent theme that was frequently expressed was the ambition to 'create the path by walking on it' (Kim) or 'be the change you want to see' (George).

As a politics of practice, the movement was underpinned by 'a quite deep understanding of how politics pervades every aspect of our organization.' Thus, there 'was a recognition that the means need to follow the logic of the end you're trying to achieve' (Jose), and:

> It was very clear right from the start of the movement that every tiny minute decision had a political impact…And so…where you piss and where you stand was a political issue very early on, which reveals the kind of intimate relationship between our micro relations in the organization and the macro politics we're trying to enact. So yeah, processes is where the politics live. (Jose)

In turn, expressive politics were underpinned by an overarching ambition to leverage wider institutional change: 'We haven't just come together to create a commune, a mini utopia…We've come together to change the world, to have an impact on the concrete, yeah, reality!' (Jose).

The creation of an inclusive, self-organized community was 'more than setting up camp in a particular place'; it was a demonstration how utopian ideals could become real by creating a 'platform to put political ideas out into the public sphere' (Anindya writing in *Occupied Times*; see Bhattacharyya, 2012). The camp served as a model for wider society: 'Occupy functions on a small scale to what kind of change we want to see in a society as a whole' (Ali).

Alignment of expressive and strategic politics provided a sense of emotional achievement. When participants felt that their activities were prefigurations of a broader goal, such as

'actualizing radical notions of democracy' (Finn), they drew passion, enthusiasm and a deep sense of purpose from their participation. Partaking in a four-hour general assembly 'felt beautiful and it felt unique and that was what I was most excited about, about what I was part of' (Jamie).

In sum, occupiers were acutely aware that their choices of how to organize had to be expressive of the political goal, if aimed at prefiguring future society. In the camp, organizing itself became political: 'It's here in Occupy that the means become the ends, and that method of organization becomes a politics for the future' (Kim).

Creating an exceptional space

Creating an exceptional space through occupation was central to both expressive and strategic politics. The creation of a protest camp in the heart of the City of London – host to the largest concentration of wealth in Britain – was instrumental to strategic politics because it challenged taken-for-granted structures of social inequality. Occupation of a privatized place in the City spatially manifested resistance to the exclusion of the 99% from the wealth of the 1%: 'The physical presence is really, it's an act of defiance' (Danny). Presence was transgressive because it physically challenged the privatization of public space: 'We're actually quite literally taking ownership again and that's what this symbolizes' (Danny). It also defied existing norms of exclusion (activists, citizens, homeless) and inclusion (bankers, consumers, tourists) in the City: 'This space is completely inclusive, where the public can just come and see us' (general assembly break-out group).

The camp was also a platform for expressive politics because it provided a testing ground to experiment with radically alternative ways of living, organizing and decision-making. In contrast to securitized urban space, inside the camp participants could experience a sense of autonomy, free from control by capitalist corporations or state authorities. This experience was described as transformative and was credited with freeing participants to 'conceive, develop and implement radically new, freer, more equal systems to organise ourselves as human beings' (Luke writing in *Occupied Times*; see Shore, 2012). This liberating experience is reflected in notes from a general assembly (28/02/2012):

> Break-out group 1: We have learned that the occupation of public space has been crucial to the imagination of alternatives that would be impossible without the camp. We have subverted social norms. As we have power structures. We have reconfigured what is and what isn't possible.

Creating a communal space

The alignment of expressive and strategic politics was also supported by the creation of a communal space. Communal camp life contrasted theoretical thinking about progressive organizational principles, such as management of common pool resources, to the experience of 'doing it for real, physically doing it in practice' (Kim). The task of organizing 'every aspect of corporeal existence from sanitation and latrines to campaigning strategy' was described as 'the revolutionary politics of actually living together' (Kim). It forced occupiers to live the change they were demanding:

> Imagine you turn up on the 15th of October…we just thought we'd shout and go home. But instead we had to be the change that we were all fucking shouting for. We had to create that alternative society…No one fucking expected it! (Andy)

By 'doing it for real,' occupiers were able to demonstrate the possibility of enacting a utopian vision in the present.

Living in a camp with strangers also created a transformative experience differentiated from everyday life: 'It's an actively transgressive thing being there every moment. Cold and whatever' (Kim). Coming 'into a more naked space' released participants from their normal roles, expectations and identities that they previously got 'locked into' and challenged them to 'experience every single thing' from a fresh perspective (Tina). One dimension which occupiers learnt to see afresh was each other. 'The intimacy and the necessity to live alongside one another' (Kim), including cooking, eating, building tents and cleaning while pursuing a common purpose, generated affective solidarity and intimacy: 'You're very intimately related, you're sharing the same mud' (Kim). The sense of bodily co-presence suspended differences in protesters' social and economic background:

> I remember sitting in a circle [...] we all looked a bit icky and not smell great [laughs], don't have makeup on, don't care what you look like, all bloody cold sitting on the floor. [...] I looked and I thought 'you know what? ...I don't know...whether you're rich or poor,...whether you have a job or don't have a job' and yet, and it didn't make an ounce of difference. (Tina)

The fact that Occupiers 'came together' whatever their reasons was what 'actually made us all the same. For all our differences...I think it was the lack of social indicators that made us so open to each other' (Tina).

In sum, the creation of a space that was exceptional and inclusive rendered the occupation a transgressive space for resistance as well as a transformative experience for participants.

Testing Prefigurative Politics: Dealing with Inequality inside the Camp

The following section focuses on how protesters initially rose to the challenge of including people living homeless into the protest camp *as* occupiers. One rather unintended, if foreseeable consequences of 'setting up a camp to fair economic justice [was] that you have pretty much every street alcoholic in London coming there and staying with us' (Andy). The arrival of people who had previously lived rough and who joined the camp for food and shelter, physically confronted protesters with inequality in their own community. While Occupy's slogan 'We are the 99%' articulated the problem of inequality between the 99% and 1%, suddenly, inequality was no longer an abstract macro-category for others to address. Instead, inequality became actualized in the 'here and now' of the camp, testing Occupy's prefigurative politics.

Protesters immediately agreed that 'you couldn't reject them' (Tina). 'They are part of the 99% of the population who are systematically exploited by the extremely wealthy 1% elite...that's why they are here at Occupy!' (Kim). Thus, Occupy's slogan 'We are the 99%' instilled a political discipline on the movement that challenged protesters to prove in practice that they could break with the reproduction of inequalities and enact more equal and inclusive forms of organizing.

As examined below, the inclusion of homeless occupiers served as proof of concept that organizing could become expressive of its ends, and in turn, reinforce strategic politics.

Proof of concept 1: Creating an alliance of bodies

Initially, the category 'occupier' was inclusive of people living homeless. Protest through embodied occupation, rather than subscription to a particular ideology, meant that by virtue of contributing one's body to the occupation, anyone camping could automatically be an occupier. Such as Bobby, 'you could tell he was constantly on the edge of just falling apart. But you know, he was

just welcomed in' (Gini). Including occupiers without permanent homes rendered the protest expressive of its claim 'We are the 99%', as opposed to representing just a group of middle-class students drinking pricey Starbucks' 'café lattes', as critics taunted.

The physical presence of homeless occupiers also fulfilled a strategic function: they helped occupy space and kept the camp alive during daytime when others went to their place of work. Presence was politically important since British tabloids challenged the authenticity of the occupation by claiming that 90% of tents were empty at night, prompting criticism of the movement.[2] The production of presence through this alliance of occupying bodies was a 'poetic symbol of the determination of the movement' (Kim). It demonstrated resistance: 'The only way to protest that will create change is to not go away. And that's what is Occupy is doing. Not go away. No, we're here to stay till you listen' (Danny).

Proof of concept 2: Creating affective solidarity

Cohabitation with homeless occupiers made many middle-class occupiers experience first-hand the harmful effects of inequality and develop a deeper political consciousness:

> It forced us to live hand-in-hand with people who are on the margins of society […]. You don't do that in your normal life at all. So that was fucking brilliant. Because you saw the real what you might call 'bottom rung of the ladder of society' and you were living with them day to day. And it brought home how devastating inequality is! (Andy)

Occupiers *with* homes gave up their warmth and comfort for the cold, harsh and messy life in the camp and thereby partook in the physical hardship that homelessness entailed. Tina recalled the freezing cold during one winter night in the camp, minus 7 degrees, when she 'was really feeling sorry for myself'. She compared herself with Jimmy, who had been sleeping rough for years without even a tent, and told herself: 'Selfish bitch, you have a bed to go to, he doesn't.' Experiencing inequality first-hand grounded the protest in concrete social reality:

> We couldn't resolve their issues. But I think it's right that we experience them. It's right that they exhausted us. It's right that they made all our theories on society real. (Tina)

This fuelled protesters' sense of purpose and determination to confront the dysfunctions of an unequal, capitalist society: 'So, we admit defeat and pack up right? Wrong!' (Nidia writing in *Occupied Times*; see Castro-Rojas, 2012).

Participants dealt with hardship by 'nurturing each other, we were carrying the ones who couldn't carry themselves' (Tina). By opening a 24/7 welfare tent providing food, shelter and care for the 'homeless, druggies and mentally ill' they could prefigure a better, though not perfect, society:

> They saw human warmth and kindness. We did 1,400 meals in a day in the beginning. This was everyone being fed, three times a day…Even if they were drunk and dirty, they were warmer, they were safer, they were more fed… (Tina)

Care-giving also sent a wider message. It defied the dominant assumption of self-interest pervading capitalist society by practically demonstrating that selfless, generous and caring organizing was a real possibility rather than an abstract utopia: 'People here want to help each other and to send a message saying 'This is how the wider world could be' (Joey).

Proof of concept 3: Creating inclusive voice

Some homeless occupiers integrated particularly well into camp life. Occupiers took pride in the fact that they could endow each other with dignity and voice: 'I've seen homeless people who would barely say a word and then a month in, they were opinionated, knowing people. They'd found that voice again. That was very powerful to see' (Andy). One such individual was Joe. Joe described himself as suffering from schizophrenia and unable to function in society. But at Occupy, he took charge of recycling. Cases like Joe's were seen as proof of concept that Occupy's prefigurative politics worked:

> We had like a GA [general assembly]…and Joe is like 'You guys have literally helped me come back in society.' Like 'I never used to have contact with anyone apart from my mental institute'…and he's like 'Now I feel like a functional human being again' and he was like 'Thank you everyone.' Everyone was like 'Oh my God!' Fuck! That's what we're doing. It's literally there. (Ansa)

Testimonials by homeless occupiers such as 'If you represent the society you're fighting for I would give my life for it' (Jim) provided an energizing sense of emotional achievement: 'This made me cry, man!…How fucking amazing!' (Andy).

Tammy Samede, a single mother (with home), courageously volunteered to represent Occupy as single named defendant in court ('City of London vs. Samede'). Participation in Occupy had empowered her to speak up: 'When you come from an abusive background, you forget that you have a voice. It's beaten out of you as a kid. But Occupy gave it back to me' (quoted in *The Guardian*, 2012).

Vignette: The Homelessness Statement

The production of a public Homelessness Statement illustrates the ongoing, balancing effort required to align expressive and strategic politics. In an attempt at mobilizing attention to the societal injustice that homelessness exemplified, occupiers organized a Homelessness Action Week. Resulting demands were captured in a Homelessness Statement,[3] which aimed at breaking down the distinction between the categories of 'homeless' and 'occupier': 'Many homeless people have become part of Occupy London […] and a part of Occupy London has become the homeless.'

However, its production manifested the very division it challenged. The draft that 'contained the original words of the homeless people' (Jack) was long, convoluted and badly written. When proposed to the general assembly, discussion revealed the tension between expressive and strategic politics. If strategically aimed at wider mobilization, the statement had to conform to 'the logic of the media [that] needs a couple of key bullet points' (Gerry). Occupiers who identified as homeless conceded that a much shorter, edited proposal was 'better from an objective point of view…Yet, we are Occupy. And from that perspective the longer one may help homeless people to find their own words represented again' (Jack).

After a long debate, homeless occupiers agreed that the process of writing itself had inspired their learning, creativity and confidence. They backed the adoption of the shorter version on grounds that it was more conducive to furthering the strategic objective it aimed at: being widely read and mobilizing support from external audiences.

Breakdown of prefigurative politics: Reproducing inequality

This section describes how conflict between occupiers surfaced and translated into tension between expressive and strategic politics. Then, the comparison between two Occupy camps reveals how

privileging either strategic or expressive politics both led to breakdown of prefigurative organizing, reproducing inequality.

Despite efforts to include homeless occupiers as equal participants, inequality inadvertently crept back in a few months into the occupation. Rather than a reunited 99%, protesters reluctantly admitted to observing 'a conflict between campaigners and campers' (Kim), or between occupiers using the camp for campaigning versus for camping. On one count three months into the occupation, 67 out of 97 camping occupiers identified as homeless. Occupiers referred to this as a 'tipping point':

> The ratio has tipped to a point where our energies are ploughed into directly helping or simply surviving the situations and individuals who most need the change we demand; the homeless, the mentally ill, drug addicts and alcoholics. (Tina)

Protesters feared that this situation could result in a 'vicious cycle' where 'more people drop out and fewer people join in' as the 'environment becomes less habitable, and productive activities become more challenging' (Josh).

Below I describe how the divide between occupiers became manifest and created tensions in the three dimensions that earlier served as proof of concept, undermining protesters' aim of creating a camp that was both prefigurative and politically effective.

First, rather than seeing homeless occupiers as equally contributing to the camp, the emerging distinction made between 'who really is an occupier' and who was not (Kim) put into question the alliance of occupying bodies. At worst, homeless occupiers were described as 'the damaging forces that are attracted to the camp' (Tom) whose presence undermined its functioning as a 'political' space needed for strategic politics. This was reinforced by negative media reporting, such as the *Daily Mail* (2011) denouncing the camp as 'a "magnet" for criminals, alcoholics and drug addicts.'

Camp visitors expecting political discussion were now most likely to meet homeless occupiers dismissed as 'campers', many of whom were drunk. One wearing a teddy bear costume, called Teddy, would welcome female visitors with friendly but obsessive hugs. This sometimes led to uncomfortable and stressful situations, which I experienced first-hand: '[Teddy] in info tent, insisting on an extra-long hug. Awkward feeling […] He presses his body too closely to mine. Smell of alcohol and body odour' (notes from the field diary).

Second, rather than seeing the organization of communal living as a political activity in itself, a divide emerged between the 'politically productive activities' done by 'campaigners' and 'non-productive' welfare activities necessary to care for homeless occupiers, now called 'campers'. The former grew increasingly demoralized about 'putting 90% of our energy into keeping the camp okay'. 'It was so exhausting and draining…People were just worn down by it' (Tina). Care-giving became a 'drain on resources' that distracted from 'productive activities' (Josh) to advance strategic politics, rather than being part of it. This questioned protesters' sense of purpose: 'If we are just dealing with the homeless we are social workers, not protesters' (Jacky).

In the weeks preceding the eviction in February 2012, general assemblies became dominated by the 'homeless issue'. The deviation from political goals was seen as frustrating: 'When do we stop discussing community affairs; could we talk about the unsustainable system, banking crisis?!' (15/02/2012). Protesters grew increasingly angry: 'I was angry because there was this political movement and gradually there was this welfare need that came in and swamped us' (Jacky). But they felt trapped in a dilemma: the more they had to cope with the welfare of those 'who most need the change we demand' (Tina), the less energy and resources they had to focus on strategic politics.

Third, the aspiration to include all occupiers equally in horizontal decision-making was now seen as conflicting with political efficacy. At general assemblies, criticism was made that

'homeless people do not have a voice' (Maja). But when they exercised political voice, it was often experienced as unproductive: 'They actually have become very disruptive' and 'kept blocking' proposals (Aaron). Over time, the distribution of political decision-making power in the camp shifted towards occupiers identifying as 'campaigners', who were active in working groups and general assemblies. Homeless occupiers spent most of their time hanging out in the tea and kitchen tents. 'Class structures repeat themselves in the camp – some clean the toilets or work in the kitchen, and others liaise with the *Financial Times*' (Liam). This created 'a hierarchy even if it's not intended' (Kim).

Breakdown of expressive and strategic politics in two Occupy camps

Two different attempts at dealing with homeless occupiers at St Paul's and Finsbury Square camps revealed the breakdown of expressive and strategic politics. At St Paul's, the reproduction of organizational hierarchy through 'policing' non-compliant participants betrayed expressive politics. At Finsbury, the failure to ensure camp safety undermined strategic politics.

At St Paul's, protesters were fighting the looming eviction of their flagship camp, which the City of London described as 'a public nuisance' and a health and safety threat. To improve camp safety, a Tranquillity team was created, the camp's 'police force' or 'security guard'. 'Noisy, confrontational and disruptive campers' were policed by unofficial camp 'managers', such as Paul. Paul and his team moved around the tents using walkie talkies, patrolling the camp day and night. Paul's team would intervene in incidents of 'verbal and physical abuse', or 'defending the kitchen from campers' drunken rummaging' (Stacey writing in *Occupied Times*; see Knott, 2011). Repeat offenders were expelled from the camp.

The City of London police found that Tranquillity was doing a 'remarkable job'. Among occupiers it was contested:

> The tranquility team, which has a hard job staying up all night dealing with drunken abuse, paranoid schizophrenics, argumentative bankers, while surviving on coffee, is repeatedly called fascists, or the police, deemed by the group as another form of authority to oppose. (Knott, 2011)

Policing exacerbated inequality in the camp. It made homeless occupiers 'feel left out, there is a hierarchy' (Kim), and in turn frustrated many protesters: 'We've kind of let Tranquillity be our police force and they'll deal with those people. That's not what we're about!' (Davide). In sum, re-introducing hierarchies reproduced inequality between different occupiers rather than making organizational structures expressive of the political end.

When police evicted St Paul's camp on 28 February 2012, homeless occupiers moved to Occupy's smaller sister camp at Finsbury Square. Here, they refused similar forms of policing. At the first general assembly (28/02/2012) a Safer Spaces Policy[4] enforceable by a Tranquillity team was proposed. This would make the camp 'less chaotic, more approachable for other people' (Josh). Yet, re-introducing such organized authority would delimit a legitimate 'occupier' category:

> If we exclude people [to enforce Safer Spaces] we will essentially say there is an Occupy 'type'. Who defines that? The 'disrupters' feel they are just as much (if not more!) a part of Occupy than anyone else – otherwise they wouldn't be there! (Marianna)

After much shouting, the general assembly broke up in disarray. Finsbury's homeless occupiers had blocked the Safer Spaces Policy. Frustrated and fatigued, protesters seeing themselves as

'campaigners' accused them of being disruptive and 'muscling their behaviour rather than trying to get to grips with their voice' (Kim).

After a series of incidents of drink and drug abuse, night-time noise and aggressive behaviour, most female residents reported 'feeling unsafe' and left the camp. An increasing number of protesters refused to attend meetings on campsite. Meetings started taking place in nearby cafes to avoid confrontation and tension, which exacerbated the divide that was described as one between Finsbury 'campers' and Occupy 'campaigners'.

Protesters identifying as 'campaigners' maintained a dominant position controlling access to donated funds (about £8,000). As the Finsbury camp 'seems to have no political output' (Kim), they proposed to cut off funding for site maintenance unless Safer Spaces were implemented to allow political 'work towards alternatives'. Discussions turned antagonistic, reflecting the divide between 'us' and 'them': 'They ["campers"] think that camping alone should get them a subsidy. We ["campaigners"] are their welfare state, they are protesting against us!' (Jack).

The division between occupiers identified as either 'campers' or 'campaigners' became definitive when the latter proposed abandoning what they considered a 'dysfunctional' and 'failed' camp that was 'undermining the Occupy movement'. A divisive document circulated in late March 2012 with endorsement by a number of 'campaigner'-controlled working groups. It called for officially abandoning Finsbury Square because '[g]roups not practising safer spaces policy do not represent Occupy London.' I joined an off-site meeting where the proposal was discussed.

> Shamir: We created that thing that is the Finsbury camp now. Therefore it's part of Occupy London.
> Tessa: Can I suggest that we didn't create that thing? We created a political camp at Finsbury but not *that* camp! They pee into their own water. *We* didn't create that! *You and I* didn't do that!

Others insisted that addressing inequalities at Finsbury was the prerequisite for inspiring wider change: 'We can't change what's going on "out there" before we sort out what's going on "in here"!' (Marianna).

In absence of consensus, the Finsbury Square camp was de facto abandoned, left without sanitary facilities and running water. It was evicted in mid-June 2012 after 236 days. While horizontal decision-making at Finsbury respected expressive politics, the deteriorating camp undermined strategic politics. The frustration that 'we weren't kind of doing politics anymore' (Kim) stripped protesters of their sense of purpose: 'I don't know…I can talk about this shit, but I don't know in practice' (Liam).

A Model of Prefigurative Politics

Based on the above analysis of the rise and subsequent failure of organizing in line with prefigurative politics, I develop a model that explains how actors can reconcile expressive and strategic politics, under what conditions these attempts are more likely to succeed, and, conversely, what conditions may precipitate breakdown. Observations reveal two sets of mechanisms: *exceptionality* – the creation of a temporary exception to prevailing norms, and *communality* – the experience of togetherness, feeling of social equality and affective solidarity. Figure 1 illustrates how their interplay can create the conditions needed to align expressive and strategic politics. The first condition is *renewed political subjectivit*y, or renewed sense of self as an actor in a political struggle. This provides a basis for changing one's own institutionalized perceptions and practices, prerequisite for expressive politics. The second condition is *a sense of purpose.* This provides a basis for resisting institutional authorities so as to create wider change, fuelling strategic politics.
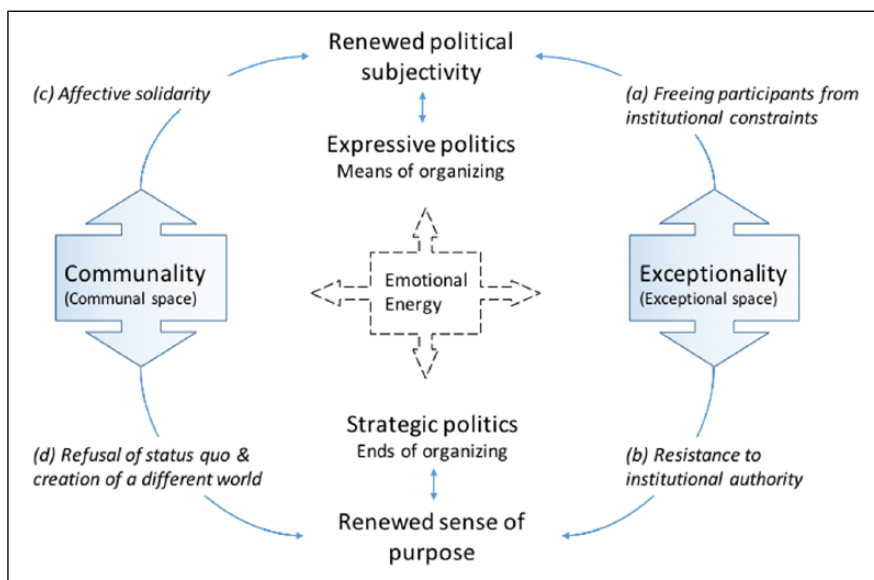
Figure 1. A model of prefigurative politics.

The case showed that this can be a reinforcing cycle, which energizes participants to overcome challenges, provides confidence and increases their persistence in the face of setbacks. Prefigurative politics then produces 'emotional energy' – a powerful feeling of solidarity that generates 'a positive flow, the sense that what one is doing has a higher importance, even a magnetic quality' (Collins, 2001, p. 29). As participants see a higher purpose mirrored in their actions, they 'become pumped up with enthusiasm and confidence' (Collins, 2001, p. 28). Such feelings are ordinarily absent in people's daily lives, and are experienced as personally transformative (Juris, 2008). Below, I describe how exceptionality and communality each contributes to expressive and strategic politics.

Exceptionality and expressive politics

Exceptionality – the creation of a temporary exception to prevailing norms – is central to expressive politics because it can free participants from their own institutionalized perceptions and constraints (Figure 1, arrow a). This can forge new political subjectivities that deviate from existing institutional prescriptions (Juris, 2008). In particular, the deviant use of symbolic space (Courpasson et al., 2017) and its transformation into an 'exceptional space' through occupation is a powerful tactic to 'enhance autonomy' of participants, foster collective empowerment and create 'a vantage point for the critique of the status quo' (Feigenbaum et al., 2013, p. 191).[5]

In an exceptional space, individuals can develop resisting capacities because they are not interrupted by hierarchical control or authoritative expectations (Courpasson et al., 2017). Because institutions are reproduced through everyday activities of individuals (Powell & Colyvas, 2008), a radical break with everyday life can free imagination and foster the realization of people's 'self-creating, self-altering and self-instituting capacities' (Kokkinidis, 2015, p. 848). New political possibilities become conceivable as participants discover their own agency, begin to see the world differently and start penetrating 'the prevailing common sense that keeps most people passive in the face of injustice' (Polletta, 1999, p. 3).

As seen in Occupy, the deviant use of symbolic space was an empowering and transformative experience. The protest camp provided a platform for living collective moments of freedom and liberation. Radically differentiated from everyday life, it offered a temporary release from normal roles and expectations. Rather than being constrained in advance by previous experience of what would or would not work, exceptionality motivated occupiers to reject instrumental reason, envision alternative futures and experiment with ways for realizing them.

In sum, creating exceptionality is productive of new political subjectivities because it creates an exception, even if only temporarily, to the institutional constraints that participants would otherwise encounter in their ordinary daily lives.

Exceptionality and strategic politics

Exceptionality also sustains strategic politics because it incubates counter-hegemonic challenges to authority as participants confront, negate and ignore the power structures that dominate day-to-day life (Figure 1, arrow b). In Occupy, the creation of an 'exceptional space' through occupation served as a strategic tactic to disrupt institutionalized structures of inequality by producing '"presence" by those without power' (Sassen, 2011) – the 99% – in a symbolic space typically occupied by the 1% – the City of London. Rather than formulating abstract demands, the occupation created a temporary exception to prevailing norms of the City. Homeless occupiers played an important role in this production of presence. This demonstrated the possibility of creating change in the here and now, namely a collective appropriation and reinvention of privatized space in the City that was no longer defined and controlled by prevailing authority. As place is significant (Lawrence & Dover, 2015), the

> material and symbolic disruption to the dominant social order of the City captured wider political imagination. It allowed the movement to arrive 'at one of those rare and sought-after moments when a majority of the society is paying attention'. (Collins, 2001, p. 32)

In sum, creating a temporary exception to prevailing norms directly challenges the status quo upon which such norms are based.

Communality and expressive politics

Communality – *the experience of togetherness, feeling of social equality and affective solidarity* – can foster the emergence of new political subjectivities (Figure 1, arrow c) and enable expressive politics. Participants divest from the trappings of their previous social positions, develop affective bonds with each other and foster a distinct form of being and connecting with others (Juris, 2008; Kokkinidis, 2015). Communality is generated by 'transformative encounters' in protest events (Feigenbaum et al., 2013), where the sense of bodily co-presence and common purpose produces high levels of affective solidarity and unites participants in a 'conscience constituency' (Collins, 2001, p. 32; Juris, 2008). Because the sense of 'being in it together' and sharing a common fate is essential for collective action (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013), communality is productive of a sense of 'collective agency' (Snow, 2001).

At Occupy, communal living and close proximity enhanced affective solidarity and a sense of belonging as participants formed attachments to each other. Protesters' experience of corporeal hardship and mutual care-giving was productive of a shared sense of 'we-ness' (the 99%) that foregrounded more inclusive ways of relating to one another. Occupiers began to transcend narrow stratified perspectives towards a shared sense of destiny that included homeless people. As

protesters became homeless to occupy, and homeless people became occupiers, the alliance of occupying bodies allowed uniting a formerly divided 99% in joint activist struggle.

In sum, communality provides a vantage point from which new ways of being and relating to one another become possible. This informs choices of organizing and make them expressive of the end.

Communality and strategic politics

By embedding the protest in affective social relations, communality also creates a platform from which to launch an intervention into the everyday reproduction of embedded institutional structures that (re)produce inequality, thereby driving strategic politics (Figure 1, arrow d). This takes the form of collective experimentation with new organizational forms, which is simultaneously 'a collective act of refusal and creation' (Kokkinidis, 2015, p. 848).

As an act of refusal, replacing hierarchical structures with horizontal, independent and self-governed ones challenges the institutional reproduction of inequality by refusing to 'accept organizational hierarchies and their inherent power differentials as given' (Munir, 2015, p. 1). As an act of creation, participants can live out alternatives and demonstrate that 'a different world is possible'. As seen in Occupy, the camp provided a laboratory to incubate and experiment with viable futures in practice, rather than just theorizing them. As other alternative, non-capitalist organizational forms inspired by anarchism (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014; Perkmann & Spicer, 2014), they provide 'laboratories for a post-capitalist future' (Kokkinidis, 2015, p. 849). Communality can then fuel political imagination in ways that motivate others to take part in forms of political action that they would not otherwise.

Breakdown of exceptionality and communality

The failure to maintain prefigurative organizing in the two Occupy camps showed that the alignment of expressive and strategic politics always remains partial and contested. The less protesters can prefigure ends in the 'here and now', the more difficult it becomes to advance strategic political ends, and vice versa. Neglecting one pole makes it harder to sustain the other, resulting in a downward spiral in which alignment breaks down. With a sense of achievement lacking, emotional energy is no longer replenished and participants become demoralized. Feelings of collective solidarity, confidence and commitment to the protest ebb away. Conflict between expressive and strategic politics is precipitated by the breakdown of the mechanisms sustaining their alignment; exceptionality and communality.

First, exceptionality is difficult to reproduce over time. Anarchist thinkers have contrasted the temporary nature of 'non-ordinary' moments of uprising with participants' 'ordinary' consciousness and experience (Bey, 1991). In a state of exceptionality, participants may momentarily feel 'as if one is already free' (Graeber, 2004, p. 35; Franks, 2003). But over time norms and constraints can creep back in, especially when the conditions of unfreedom are historically impressed and embodied. In the Occupy camp, participants could neither completely change themselves nor 'prefigure away' differences between occupiers. Homelessness is reflective of real, structural divisions in society that become embodied in the body of an alcoholic or drug addict or a person without a home. Unless like-minded activists insulate themselves and escape confrontation with societal challenges (Murray, 2014), prefigurative politics can temporarily suspend but not extinguish such entrenched and embodied inequalities.

Second, communality depends on participants continually re-embedding the protest in each other's lived realities. As Polletta (1999, p. 4; Giri, 2013) emphasizes, 'counterhegemonic frames

come not from a disembodied oppositional consciousness' but from grounding the protest in concrete, social relations. When movement organizing becomes abstracted and separated from these relations, participants lose their sense of being 'in it together' as part of a 'conscience constituency' (Collins, 2001). Political choices are then no longer informed by a sense of togetherness, common purpose and destiny. In Occupy, participants spoke of a tipping point that occurred when they ceased to share communal life and a common fate with homeless occupiers. The stratified use of the camp either as home or political instrument reproduced the inequalities that protesters hoped to revoke.

The failure to sustain the camp as an exceptional and communal space ultimately led to protesters reproducing the status quo of inequality, even if inadvertently.

Summary of the model

In order to organize in line with prefigurative politics, participants need to create spaces that are both exceptional and communal. The interplay of exceptionality and communality can bring expressive and strategic politics into alignment. The production of emotional energy helps create a reinforcing cycle. However, it is extraordinarily difficult to sustain exceptionality and communality over time, especially when tested against the deeply entrenched nature of social injustice and inequality that frustrates attempts at prefiguration. When no longer sustained, expressive and strategic politics are likely to become conflictual. This risks triggering a spiral of decline in which prefigurative organizing breaks down.

Discussion

The paper began by asking how prefigurative movements attempt to reconcile strategic and expressive politics, which is central to the concept of prefiguration. The rise and fall of Occupy offered a deep understanding of how social movements organize in line with prefigurative politics and revealed the conditions under which this is more likely to succeed or fail. The case revealed that this involved not merely a tension between the survival of the camp itself and movement goals. Instead, while strategic political action aims at changing the institutionalized perceptions and practices of others, expressive politics, or the enactment of movement goals in practice, challenged occupiers to confront their own institutionalized perceptions and practices.

The paper studied a prominent and extreme case of a prefigurative movement but can inform social movement scholarship more generally.

First, by explaining organizing in line with prefigurative principles, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on alternative forms of organizations as emerging institutions. These often adopt anarchist principles of organizing (Parker et al., 2014), including self-managed workers' collectives (Kokkinidis, 2015) or alternative media (Perkman & Spicer, 2014). While some authors believe that prefigurative endeavours 'resist formal structures of organization' or imply a lack of organization (Calhoun, 2013, p. 36), on the contrary, they are a fertile context to study the creation of 'new forms of organization' (Graeber, 2002, p. 70). By explaining the mechanisms through which actors can sustain participation, commitment and emotional energy when enacting political ends in everyday practice, the model developed here informs these alternative ways of organizing.

But it is equally important to understand the conditions leading to failure and to explain how and why the 'pathologies' observed in prefigurative projects emerge (Feigenbaum et al., 2013). Evidence from the case highlights the challenge when prefigurative organizing ceases to be an 'exception' and becomes ordinary. As a transient uprising, it can expose and challenge inequality,

inspire imagination and open up novel possibilities. Over time, however, the conditions of unfreedom that occur every day, such as homelessness, are likely to re-appear. When seeking to confront inequality, participants need to be prepared to deal with the present as they try to enact the future.

Second, a deeper understanding of prefigurative politics can enrich theories of collective action beyond contentious politics and expand how we study social movements as agents of institutional change. While literature at the intersection of social movements and institutional theory assumes that institutional change requires the exercise of 'theorization' (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Greenwood et al., 2002), this study highlights the role of everyday practice in understanding how movements challenge the operation of power and reproduction of institutionalized inequality. This is in line with an 'inhabited' view of institutions (Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), where institutions are not inert categories of meaning or reified abstractions but 'inhabited' by people and therefore recreated in everyday social interactions, so that institutional change is driven by changes at the level of practice (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007; Smets et al., 2012).

The model developed here situates collective action in the everyday organization of protest. Activists practically and viscerally experience the complexity of the problem at hand, rather than focusing on solutions that fix symptoms but cloud the operation of power (cf. Khan, Munir, & Willmott, 2007). Practice-level change then not only requires theorizing change for others but confronts participants with the need to change oneself. The model highlights the role of transformative experience in an exceptional and communal space that forges new subjectivities and helps participants confront otherwise normalized expectations, including their own, and generate potential to act in new ways.

Third, the study contributes to our understanding of how social movements are organized. Previous scholarship has focused on the way in which social movements influence organizations (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; King & Pearce, 2010; Soule, 2012), rather than on the organization of social movements. This has led to a focus on strategic politics or on how social movements mobilize organizational means to achieve political ends, such as resource mobilization or political opportunity structures. In contrast, this study highlights the organizational struggle of making means expressive of substantive ends. Social movements face scrutiny from members and audiences alike about aligning their organizational practices with proclaimed values (Perkmann & Spicer, 2014). Tilting too much towards strategic opportunities risks alienating core activist-supporters, while privileging internal organizing risks losing sight of wider objectives. This study highlights that aligning expressive and strategic politics is a crucial process that sustains participation and commitment, while privileging one over the other can exacerbate tensions and latent conflicts can spiral out of control.

A deeper focus on the relationship between means and ends of organizing also carries implications beyond social movement scholarship and raises fundamental questions about the nature of organizing. Scholars have observed a growing disjuncture between organizational means and ends (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Means–ends decoupling can undermine the performance of institutions and divert attention away from substantive goals. Engagement with prefigurative politics can inform organizational scholars by refocusing attention on the conditions that enable members to place the means of organization in the service of ends.

Conclusion

Even though prefigurative politics has emerged as a global practice ranging from Puerta del Sol to Occupy, organization scholars have paid surprisingly little attention to it. By offering an organizational perspective, this study suggests the need to look beyond contentious politics as a mechanism of collective action through which social movements challenge the operation of power and

reproduction of institutionalized inequality. In particular, it examines what it means when political ends can no longer be separated from the way they are enacted in everyday organizing.

While Occupy created ripples in the public discourse by raising the public salience of inequality, it is worth returning to the question of the movement's role as a driver of institutional change. Rather than a consequentialist account of social movement praxis, prefigurative politics offers a different political strategy that refuses to focus on the pursuit of predetermined demands but on the democratic process of determining goals from below and experimenting with new institutions in practice. If taken seriously, success cannot be judged by the 'outcomes' of individual protests and whether they succeeded in replacing unequal institutions with durable alternatives, but by their ability to expand social imagination of what might be possible and by the creation of new organizational possibilities. Similar to how the 'semi-failed experiments' with participatory democracy of 1960s movements created a lasting transformation informing social movement praxis today (Maeckelbergh, 2011a), prefigurative organizing is a perpetual process of experimentation that can contribute to the organizational repertoire of wider social movement praxis, and to envisioning real utopias more broadly.

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Notes

1. Instrumental movements are sometimes contrasted with identity movements, which use frames, symbols and narratives that are expressive of alternative identities and cultural codes (e.g. Creed et al., 2002).
2. Newspapers, including *The Times, Sun, Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* in the UK, had to recall this claim later as it was not grounded in official police footage and was found to be 'misleading information'.
3. Occupy London Homelessness Statement. [http://occupylondon.org.uk/homelessness-statement]
4. 'A safe space is a place where the people inhabiting and visiting that space are practising the following: sober, process respecting, non-violent, peaceful behaviour' (Safer Spaces policy proposal). http://occupylondon.org.uk/about/statements/safer-space-policy/
5. The 'state of exception' has been theorized as the temporary suspension of the rule of law by the state as an act of sovereignty (Agamben, 2005). Organizational scholars argue that through the strategic creation of protests camps, activists can construct (symbolic) exceptions to the political status quo (Feigenbaum et al., 2013).

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