MAKING SOCIAL MOVEMENT: THE REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR OF ORGANIZING FROM CHIAPAS TO CHICAGO AND BEYOND

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Abstract

This is a dissertation about acting on inspiration. The Chicago-based Autonomous University of Social Movements (AUSM) coordinates one of the most long-standing, intensive engagements with the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, through its study abroad programs fomenting such inspiration among university students from across North America. Yet my research into the ensuing political activity of alumni of this program exposes a dilemma: despite the Zapatistas' success in building autonomy on the land they reclaimed during their 1994 uprising, the great majority of alumni do not invoke them or replicate their organizing structures within their organizations back home. Rather than exposing a break in the chain of inspiration between the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni, the continuity between the three lies in their common organizing activity.

What does the activity of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni teach us about the collaborative practices that comprise "organizing"? I contribute to Social Reproduction Theory in finding organizing to be reproductive labour: collaborative activity producing use values in an effort to transform the distribution of abundance and scarcity across society, as to reproduce people with more life and less exhaustion. Secondly, I contribute to the practice of organizing by highlighting common activities across the organizing of the Zapatistas, AUSM and its alumni, including maintaining initiative, confronting "messes" by strengthening collaborative arrangements, practicing care on ever-broader levels, and building subjectivities of self-determination. Third, I contribute to Marxist theories by linking the everyday practice of organizing with an enriched understanding of "social movement," as struggle to transform the relations shaping flows of health and wealth across society. This shows that inspiration continues, inasmuch as it feeds organizers' initiative to do the difficult work of strengthening militant ways of being-with.

For the steadfast dreamers

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Introduction

"The EZLN declares it doesn't know anything about Jorge Santiago" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1995a). It was 2009, and I had moved to Chicago just a few days ago to begin a job with the Autonomous University of Social Movements. It was a rocky start: Jorge Santiago was set to arrive in the US in less than a month for a series of university speaking events, but I'd hardly booked him any. And, rushing to write a passable bio for a guy I knew nothing about, I instead found what looked to be a denunciation by the very organization he was supposed to speak about. Thoroughly confused, I chided myself for acting like I actually knew anything about the Zapatistas during my job interview.

Thankfully, I managed to schedule a handful of events, and Jorge gave me a masterclass in the history of Chiapas while I drove him across seven states. He had participated in making this history for forty years: He recounted decades spent assisting the radical bishop Samuel Ruíz; coordinating the 1974 Indigenous Congress where – for the first time ever – 1230 Indigenous delegates from across Chiapas' ethnic groups convened to discuss their own agenda, speaking their own languages, sparking the formation of numerous radical organizations (Santiago S, 2016); collaborating with scores of communities to create a solidarity economy of cooperatives (Santiago S, 2017); and – after the Zapatistas' 1994 uprising – his imprisonment under false charges of being an EZLN leader. Unable to arrest the EZLN's actual *comandantes*, the government was rounding up anyone they could get their hands on, in a pathetic bid to paint them as the organization's leaders. Hence the Zapatistas' assertion that Jorge had nothing to do with them.

The next jolt to my political education came later in 2009, when I first visited Zapatista liberated territory and began teaching undergraduate students about a struggle that I was still scrambling to understand. I quickly learned that the Zapatistas' primary message for curious visitors such as us is "And what about you?" (S. Galeano, 2017c): beyond just learning *about* us, what will you do back home to struggle *with* us? Fair enough, but sometimes I was hardly home long enough to do my chores, let alone community organizing. Instead, I

began an immersion that changed my life, spending one-to-three months a year teaching study abroad students as we lived in one of the Zapatistas' autonomous "good government centres," two months teaching these students in other parts of Mexico as we lived with families who participated in allied organizations, and another six weeks driving and interpreting for Mexican organizers as they explained their political work to university audiences across the US.

It was a frantic pace, one I could not sustain after 2015. By that point, the Autonomous University of Social Movements (AUSM) had brought over five hundred university students to Chiapas. The study abroad program was designed to both support the Zapatistas by enrolling these students in their Language School and to emphatically pose this question – "And what about you?" – to students before sending them back to their campuses and collectives at home.

As I transitioned away from my work of coordinating and teaching the study abroad program, I turned toward a related question the AUSM staff had often pondered: "Is this project working?" It is important to ask, as AUSM's is one of the deepest engagements with one of today's most celebrated organizations. True, the Zapatistas have hosted many encounters with attendance in the thousands, or even tens of thousands. From opening their treaty negotiations to include Indigenous nations and allied organizations across Mexico (Vera Herrera & Hernández Navarro, 1998) to travelling to Europe in 2021 on their own version of a radical study abroad program (Moisés, 2020a), the Zapatistas have persistently and creatively sought to strengthen organization among the Left. Yet many of their encounters last only a few days, while AUSM's study abroad program lasts thirteen weeks, allows students to understand the everyday activities that comprise their organizing process, includes a rigorous course of study on social movements, and features a two-week "re-entry" course wherein students experience how AUSM is translating these lessons into its community organizing in the Chicago neighbourhood of Albany Park. Was all this encouraging returning students to answer the question "And what about you?"

Alumni of AUSM's program were surely inspired by the Zapatistas. As I turned from coordinating the study abroad program to investigating it, I quickly learned that when I asked alumni whether Zapatismo continued to resonate with them, the answer was an emphatic "Yes." I interviewed 104 alumni in 2016 (Schussler, 2017) and found that most felt a lasting sense of hope paired with principles for how to act on it. The Zapatistas are masterful at synthesizing their philosophy into slogans such as "Everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves," "Leading by obeying," "Walking by asking questions," and "A world where many worlds fit." Nearly all alumni affirmed that learning about these principles while living in liberated territory had changed their outlook on life, leaving them with an inspiration that they continue to hold in their hearts for how to change the world. This experience matters. It has taught many hundreds of people to immediately heed the call when a local family is threatened with deportation, when an Occupy encampment pops up, or when the Movement for Black Lives calls for the abolition of police. Zapatista inspiration sparks change. It fuels militant commitment during tough times and staves off burnout.

Yet this is only so if the spark initiates movement, if inspiration catalyzes action. And laudable feelings such as inspiration, resonance, hope, and liberation can all too readily remain mired in anxiety. This was an underlying tension I sensed during my first round of interviews: at first many participants were hesitant to raise such concerns with their former professor, but once we settled in, their answer to "What are you involved in now?" did not include participation in the Zapatista solidarity movement, the use of Zapatista organizing forms, or even their slogans. Instead of recounting a glorious succession of victories, they more often referred to the daily slog, creeping burnout, interminable disputes, deflating defeats – all of them arising from local dynamics and not Zapatismo. The reality was more complex than the fantasy of alumni marching onward to become revolutionaries. Like so many people who have grown conscious of injustice, they desperately *wanted* to "get organized" but felt overwhelmed about how to go about it and frequently inauthentic, especially when comparing themselves to the Zapatistas. Inspiration is therefore absolutely necessary – without it there is nothing – yet alone it is insufficient. Somehow, some way, intention must become action, and this action must progress according to its own context.

This dissertation is therefore about *acting* on inspiration. Instead of looking for a chain of inspiration carrying Zapatismo through AUSM and then across North America, we find continuity within the organizing activity of each. Instead of searching for a causal relationship wherein AUSM incites its alumni to replicate Zapatismo, my focus is on the practice called "organizing" that is common to all of them, the labour of making social movement. This is an activity that the Zapatistas themselves emphasize is necessarily different in each context, in each "calendar and geography" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional et al., 2021; Moisés & Galeano, 2018b). By synthesizing the diverse collaborative practices of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni, in this dissertation I explore the reproductive labour of organizing.

I explore this in pursuit of a larger question: What is to be done? Instead of suffering under relations we detest, how do we become collective artists of our lives? If the answer is not to replicate Zapatismo, then what should guide those inspired *by* them as they take practical steps today, tomorrow, and the next day to act *with* them? The "doing" I seek to sort out here is a question of labour, of coordinated, purposeful effort. What does it mean to get organized? Furthermore, what does it entail if we resolve not to begin with the grand goals of organizing, with victories rolled into flashy words like autonomy, abolition, and revolution? Surely the hope is to reach these goals, but what about the everyday labour of meeting immediate needs? If organizers are not to follow the path of a distant vanguard, then this everyday labour can only take up ways of being-with developed within their own context, with its own rhythms and spaces, in response to the practical needs of those exhausting themselves and somehow rejuvenating each other there. Amidst such particularity, what is common about organizing? To better understand the ways the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni respond to the question of "What is to be done?" we should first explore the how the "doing" gets done and then look for how it may overcome all manner of obstacles to effect broader change.

There is an urgent need for a practical approach such as this. The reader surely needs no reminder of the horror of mass graves of Indigenous children, the quickening succession of ecological calamities, the sacrifice

of life at the behest of "opening the economy," or the hatred politicians mobilize as a sure-fire way to win votes. It requires a feat of courage not to shy away from such gruesome realities while also maintaining confidence that collective action can indeed counteract them. Unfortunately, this hope is further strained when we are buffeted by the cynical refrain that the left was destroyed fifty years ago and remains dead today (Winlow & Hall, 2022), that we can merely pick through the ruins of a bygone era while the right erects fortresses. Rather than falling into such defeatism, with this dissertation I seek to nurture hope by showing that, through our everyday reproductive labours, we are already strengthening right relation, and this is a material basis upon which to reproduce society differently, with more generosity and without so much violence. Yes, there is a long arduous road ahead. Thankfully, there are immediate steps we can take to nurture militancy, build collectivity, extend care, and make social movement. We can turn inspiration into organized activity, more expansively reproducing it.

Research question and organization of the dissertation

The question animating this dissertation is "What is organizing?" More specifically, what does the activity of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni teach us about the collaborative practices that comprise organizing? How do these activities make social movement? In answering these questions, I make various contributions. I contribute to social reproduction theory in finding organizing to be reproductive labour: collaborative activity producing use values in an effort to transform the distribution of abundance and scarcity across society, as to reproduce people with more life and less exhaustion. Secondly, I provide practical lessons to organizers by highlighting common activities across the Zapatistas, AUSM and its alumni: turning inspiration into initiative, confronting "messes" by strengthening collaborative arrangements, practicing care on ever-broader levels, and building subjectivities of self-determination. Third, I contribute to Marxist theories by linking the everyday practice of organizing with an enriched understanding of "social movement," as class struggle to transform the relations shaping flows of health and wealth across society.

I begin this endeavour in chapter 1 by offering a conceptual framework that recognizes organizing as socially reproductive labour, a form of labour capable of making social movement by changing the flow of wellbeing and suffering across society. I argue this by elaborating a series of concepts, beginning with dialectical materialism and the world of relations that it posits. I then define labour as purposeful, collaborative activity within these relations, stretching beyond a narrow workplace-oriented understanding. Turning toward social reproduction theory, I explore the various ways it conceives of the labour of recreating society, concluding that organizing is reproductive labour, albeit of a peculiar sort since its immediate effect is to further exhaust organizers rather than rejuvenate them. Yet organizers militantly press on in their efforts to care for society, to shape the flow of health and wealth less according to relations of scarcity-violence and more towards relations of abundance-generosity. When organizers transform this flow, they make social movement.

I then move to a more detailed discussion of each of the groups whose practice is synthesized into the theory in chapter 1. All three are threaded together: We begin with the Zapatistas' struggle for self-determination on recuperated land; then AUSM attentively introduces students to the history and principles of Zapatismo through its study abroad program; and finally some of these inspired students continue organizing after returning home. Yet there is no direct line of causality running from Chiapas, through AUSM, and into one inspiring translation of Zapatismo in North America. Even AUSM, which is more explicit in adopting Zapatista-inspired slogans and organizing forms than any of the alumni's groups, recognizes its everyday organizing is quite distinct.[1] The three groupings therefore vary greatly – from a massive, well-organized Indigenous organization that has reclaimed large extensions of their territory; to a humble, urban non-profit staffed by mestizos and whites seeking to be more militant by shifting to community organizing; to the range

[1] AUSM wrote in 2009 that "Throughout the more than ten years of our organization, we have been influenced by the ethical and political principles developed over the 25 year history of the Zapatista movement. It is not possible, nor would it be advisable, to try to reconstruct a set of ethical and political principles developed in Chiapas indigenous communities in the context of Albany Park [Chicago]. The historical and cultural contexts are very different, and hence the way we understand social change and the tools and resources available to us are necessarily different. The Zapatistas would be the first to argue that they don't want to be – nor can they be – an example for anyone to follow like a recipe. Rather, the Zapatista movement has served as an inspiration, and the ethical and political principles upon which the movement is constructed should be interpreted in each particular historical and cultural context" (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 2).

of collectives, non-profits, survival projects, and base building groups alumni are involved in. A secondary objective of this dissertation is to recount these histories, highlighting often-overlooked aspects of the Zapatistas and their recent activity, and telling a full history of AUSM for the first time. Yet this is a secondary objective in part because I cannot recount the histories of each of the alumni's 19 organizations, which is why my reflections in their chapter are more general. Nonetheless, for each of the three groups the core practice of organizing is similar, as members seek to navigate the messes that constantly threaten to fray their coordination, while strengthening relations of care. The lessons emerging from their common practices are all the stronger across this wealth of difference.

After the theoretical chapter, chapter 2 is on the Zapatistas' organizing, as described in various testimonies and communiques by both the EZLN's Subcomandantes and the civilian support bases participating in autonomous "good government." These are incredibly rich documents and, because many were released after the Zapatistas' popularity diminished, I am one of few scholars to analyze them in depth.[2] While there is a enormous body of scholarly work on the Zapatistas, I prioritize these firsthand accounts of their organizing practice, as well as the work of authors who have done the long, hard work of building accountability with Zapatista communities via their good government structures (Fernández Christlieb, 2014; Mora, 2017; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). I also draw from scholars writing about the often-ignored periods of the Zapatistas' history, during their decade prior to the uprising (Oikonomakis, 2019) and the decade leading up to the present (Baschet, 2018).

[2] Of note is the 19-part "Them and Us" series of communiques (Marcos, 2013a), released after the EZLN ended a long period of silence and announcing the 2013 Little School, where nearly five thousand visiting students were each paired with a Zapatista teacher and spent a week living with a Zapatista family on recuperated land, learning about their autonomy. The School's "textbooks" are comprised of the testimonies of scores of Zapatista support bases who have served as good government authorities (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d). The speeches in the 2015 seminar "Critical Thought in the Face of the Capitalist Hydra" are also a landmark statement of Zapatista principles, analysis, and methods, especially testimony from three generations of Zapatista women (Sixth Commission of the EZLN, 2016). The group calling itself Zapatista Women has also released a number of communiques (2019b, 2020, 2018), and Fernández Christlieb's Zapatista-approved research brings together testimonies from various generations of support base members (2014). Mora (2017) and Klein (2015) have also conducted Zapatista-approved, community-supported research detailing their everyday organizing practices.

The first purpose of this chapter is to explain why so many find inspiration in the Zapatistas. In recounting their history, I highlight the successes that have led them to become so beloved. In doing so, I also focus on the material activity of their organizing, on the actions that made for so much inspiration. I do this so that we may understand organizing more broadly and be better prepared to practice it in radically different contexts.

At the centre of the Zapatistas' organizing process is their massive land reclamation in 1994, allowing them to then strengthen their capacity to self-determine by coordinating collective work on collective land. Developing this self-determination was never easy. Instead, the Zapatistas have confronted one enormous problem after another, treating each as an exercise in a "textbook," guiding them as they create new collaborative arrangements, producing new forms of wellbeing, strengthening new relations. I trace these obstacles and reorientations through the transformation of a vanguardist guerrilla organization into an Indigenous army; their attempt to extend land reclamation across the Indigenous territories of Mexico through the San Andrés Accords (Hernández Navarro & Carlsen, 2004; Vera Herrera & Hernández Navarro, 1998); their creation of "good government" when all three electoral parties united to gut the Accords (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001); the flowering of their collective re/production projects on collectively-held land into an autonomous project of "resistance and rebellion;" and Zapatista women's organizing to overcome patriarchy and pursue a "project of life."

Chapter 3 is the only substantial history of AUSM ever written. I experienced the transformation of its organizing practices as a staff member and also explore it through internal documents and discussions with current staff. Theirs is a transition away from the non-profit mode of organization they originally practiced as a traditional Latin American solidarity group. They first understood this transition primarily in the negative, and these critiques evolved into more constructive proposals after the EZLN released the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle (2005). Still, AUSM had to make "the Sexta's" call to organize "from below and to the left" into concrete organizing practices responsive to their own context. The twin projects that emerged were ASUM's study abroad program in Chiapas with university-educated activists and the Centro Autónomo

in Chicago, its community centre for organizing with undocumented workers. I end the chapter with a critical reflection on this strategy of seeking to avoid non-profit modes of organizing by making the participation of university-educated activists accountable to the leadership of undocumented workers. This sort of base building requires more work than staff – who were already busy meeting the formal requirements of the study abroad program that paid the bills – were able to give.

In chapter 4 I explore organizing more generally by synthesizing common practices from across the experiences of the 19 AUSM alumni I interviewed, a group whose political activity is representative of university-educated activists in general. My analysis of their organizing connects Marxist theories of social movement with an appreciation of its everyday realities. Again, because I synthesize the organizing practices of many different groups in this chapter, and because a majority of the interviewees requested anonymity, the level of analysis is more general than it is in the preceding two chapters. (I seek to remedy this by providing an Appendix summarizing the insider's perspective of their organizing that each interviewee explained to me in our interviews.) Surveying their diverse groups, I highlight five aspects of organizing, finding it to be 1) a process of acting on inspiration by collaborating to care on ever-broader levels. Their experience teaches us that it is never easygoing, as 2) the tendency is for coordination to fall into a mess of disarray. But if organizers can treat these messes as guides for how to strengthen their collaboration, 3) they can succeed in reproducing themselves – and perhaps their broader communities – more through social relations of care and less through reactive relations of violence. 4) They can become the sort of people who are able to collaborate in many different ways, producing whatever forms of wellbeing the situation calls for. 5) By strengthening right relation, they make social movement. Here and throughout the dissertation, I emphasize that, while organizing is material, socially reproductive labour, it is also fed by inspiration, which initiative catalyzes into action. Yes, organizers seek to make social movement, and they can only pursue this grueling task if they can collectivize it, strengthen it through an ethic of militancy, and inhabit it as a way of being-with.

Finally, in the concluding chapter I offer a mapping exercise as a way for organizers to discuss their own responses to the question of "What is to be done?" Synthesizing key lessons from the dissertation, the exercise poses questions through which organizers can consider the reproductive labour that allows them to "show up" in organizing spaces, the usefulness of the collaborative efforts they undertake there, the dominant flow of life and labour they are attempting to transform through their organizing, and their strategic orientation toward achieving this change. It is a tool for more explicitly reflecting on the material activity of organizing and how it makes for social movement. I then highlight some of the specific organizing lessons emerging from chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Intended audience

I address this discussion to settlers on the left. People on the right surely organize as well: they can also labour to reproduce society in a certain (colonial, capitalist, authoritarian, violent) way. The difference is that these social relations are already dominant, so right-wing organizers can easily appeal to common sense notions of the frontier, sanctity, authority, and fear to motivate people to take collective action. They can more easily raise money to help coordinate this action, and their collaboration is less likely to be punished by law enforcement and the courts. Hence their proclivity for "failing upward." However, my priority is not to elaborate a general theory of social movement that is equally applicable to both right and left. Instead, this dissertation pursues the same goals that motivate the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni: to struggle for a society of right relation, of generosity instead of violence. To create such a society, to achieve self-determination by becoming collective artists of our lives, we must overcome capitalism.[3] And to overcome capitalism we need to organize. Thus my preoccupation with "What is to be done?," with synthesizing lessons for all those doing anticapitalist organizing.

[3] This is certainly a broad statement. Thankfully, Marx did the heavy analytical lifting in *Capital* (1976), showing that even if we accept the assumption of pro-capitalist economists that markets can function perfectly capitalism still enriches a small minority by immiserating the great majority. He shows that, regardless of attempts at regulation or reform, capitalism is a system of fundamentally violent social relations. We cannot escape this violence so long as we are obligated to participate in capitalist production to access the use values that renew our life.

I address settlers because these violent relations are predicated on the colonizers' dispossession of the land from Indigenous peoples. By violently dispossessing it from peoples who interact with the land through self-determined, non-capitalist relations, colonial powers seized the material basis for perpetuating relations of violence, for ensuring that people can only gain the use values needed for survival by participating in relationships that further empower the dispossessors. Seizure of the land is therefore the basis for constructing a system of self-reinforcing relations. For this reason decolonization is fundamental, and also incommensurate with other struggles (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 28–36). Precisely because settler ways of being are predicated on our material relation to stolen land and the privileges it allows, we cannot be the agents of decolonization. As I argue throughout the dissertation, we live in and through a contradictory web of social relations, and organizing is the collective labour of surveying our location within this web and working to strengthen relations of generosity so as to weaken violent ones. This is precisely why settlers, who are thoroughly subjected to the colonizer-Indigenous relation, cannot be the agents to strengthen Indigenous ways of relating with the land and its people. Settlers who purport to do so are instead appropriating Indigenous identity, attempting to become innocent of colonization. We can support the struggle, as we have much to gain from ceasing to live within relations of violence, but cannot be its leaders. Yet we can, and should, be collective agents of anticapitalist struggle, especially since – as the Operaistas argued (Tronti, 2019, Chapter 7) – as workers we are situated both within and *against* capital. Anticapitalist struggle is therefore a form of resistance accessible to settlers, one we are obliged to participate in if we are to abolish the social relations perpetuating endless cycles of dispossession and accumulation, devouring Indigenous, settler, enslaved, and displaced peoples. As Coulthard stirringly writes, "For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die" (2014, p. 173).

I therefore address my fellow settlers in exploring how to best relate to Indigenous struggle as we also organize against and beyond capitalism. The Zapatistas repeatedly request the solidarity of non-Indigenous peoples in struggling against capitalism (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005, secs. 5–6; Ejército

Zapatista de Liberación Nacional et al., 2021; Sixth Commission of the EZLN, 2016, pt. 3), yet this should not be understood as a "move to innocence" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 9–28), granting us absolution from relations of dispossession. Instead, through this dissertation I seek to aid fellow leftist settlers in recognizing the array of social relations that constitute us and, furthermore, recognizing the contradictions among them. How to support decolonization while living on, with, and through stolen land? How to struggle against capitalism while relying on its commodities to survive? I argue that settlers can only engage these messes *collectively*, through organizing, caring, and militantly "keeping the faith" that – while we will not emerge from these contradictions during our lifetime – we should continue trudging on toward that horizon. The most immediate task in this process is to relate to Indigenous nations through existing treaties, by appreciating these as living documents that must be renewed continuously with the consent of our treaty partners. Importantly, only well-organized groups of settlers can practice such relations in collective, concrete, and consistent ways. Indeed, treaties are agreed-upon sets of relations, and relations only exist in collective practice. Honouring treaty relations therefore requires that all parties exercise their self-determination – understood as the collective conception and practice of desired collaborative arrangements, producing desired forms of wellbeing, as to reproduce life in desired ways – while also accountably *limiting* the extent of this self-determined activity. This is the work of being good neighbours, of transitioning from a dispossessive settler subjectivity into an as-yet-unnamed one. The process requires the same organizing needed to overcome capitalism.

As has been said of freedom, organizing too "is a very good horse to ride, but to ride *somewhere*" (cited in Williams, 1958, p. 118, emphasis mine). I argue that this "somewhere" is toward right relation. I use this concept quite specifically throughout the dissertation. It is a concept used across many Indigenous cultures, for whom it surely encompasses historical, geographic, spiritual, political, and ecological relations of which I am completely ignorant. I have nothing to offer in explaining it in that sense, yet "right relation" inspires me to ask what settlers on the left might do to right *our* relations, what we can do to strengthen radical aspects of Western subjectivity. I therefore look to the European philosophical tradition of dialectics – or what Ollman

calls the "philosophy of internal relations" (2003) – and its radical potential. McNally writes that "a good and true life is one that increases in the richness of its relations" (2017, p. 103). Accordingly, my philosophical goal throughout the dissertation is to explore organizing as the practical activity of increasing the richness of the relations that constitute us. I do this with the hope that the lessons emerging from this reflection can aid us leftist settlers in coming into "better relation" with neighbouring Indigenous nations, with each other, and with the more-than-human life we live with and through.

There is much more to say about the practical steps settlers should take to accountably relate to Indigenous peoples struggling for self-determination. Yet this is not a central focus of this dissertation, which is an investigation of the collaborative practices that allow for social movement in general. Again, it is imperative that we abolish colonial relations, and there are many authors offering poignant reflections on specific, accountable ways that settlers can support this struggle.[4] For my part, I recognize that in chapter 2 my reflections are sparse on Zapatismo and indigeneity as well as its approach to Indigenous-settler relations, and in the following chapters they are absent. There is much more work to be done.

Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods

Dialectics and materialism

I begin my analysis with premises from the philosophy of dialectics. Instead of assuming a reality that is the sum of discreet objects, each with their individual properties, dialectics posits a differentiated whole structured by a series of relations through which distinct parts of the whole relate to each other internally (Ollman, 2003, pp. 12–15). Therefore, we *are* the relations that reproduce our organic whole and are not reducible to any relation in particular (McNally, 2017, pp. 104–106). Because these relations are multiple, internally contradictory and possibly in tension with others, the reproduction of the whole is a messy, ever-changing process. Our task is to wrestle with these conflictual relations, an activity that is best coordinated

[4] This is a theme that Barker (2012), Barker & Pickerill (2012), Carlson (2017), the Catalyst Project (2019), Fortier (2017), Koleszar-Green (2018), Lewis (2017), Steinam (2020), and Tuck & Yang (2012) all engage with great insight.

using "concepts that are internally dynamic and self-transforming, concepts that capture the very becoming of things in their many-sidedness" (McNally, 2017, p. 103). This is not easy. As Moore writes, "everything is connected to everything, but always unevenly, always in motion, always with new points of fracture and new levers of change. It has been easier to assert a dialectical method than to practice it" (2015, p. 25).

A first step in this practice is to pair dialectics with materialism. Marx considered this one of his greatest contributions to philosophy (1976, p. 103). I follow in his tradition because, as exemplified by texts such as the Theses on Feuerbach and Communist Manifesto (Marx, 2002; Marx & Engels, 2017), it is dedicated to the pursuit of emancipation, searching for the understandings that will strengthen the struggle for radical change. That said, I consider Marxism to be a dynamic field of study, not the testament of a prophet. I am honoured to join the many organizers and scholars "stretching" Marxism in new ways (Fanon, 1963, p. 40), especially as I look to social reproduction theory. Marxist materialism is opposed to both idealism, where ideas are believed to have an impact in and of themselves, and to previous forms of materialism, which considered objects as self-contained and unmediated, instead of recognizing them as actively created by others, who are in turn also immersed in a process of creation (Marx, 2002, pt. 1). This materialism is therefore a philosophy of becoming, of "human activity or self-change" (Marx, 2002, pt. 3). Labour, the material activity that produces this change, is therefore central to Marxist materialism (Jameson, 2011, p. 111; Marx, 1973, p. 84; Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 64; McNally, 2001, pp. 75–77). For humans – whose activity is nearly always both immediately collaborative and utilizing objects, language, and ways of being-with developed historically – this means *social* activity is fundamental. Materialism centres labour as the life animating our social world (Marx, 2002, pt. 8), the embodiment of our social relations (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 42). In other words, *through* our labour we live *as* our relations. We are therefore constrained by these relations but nonetheless have a fundamental agency to shape them. In uniting dialectics and materialism, we can begin to appreciate the labour of moving social relations.

Institutional ethnography

How to inquire into these relations and people's collaborative activity within and against them? Instead of approaching the question ideologically[5] – presupposing concepts by asking something like "Are you doing Zapatismo?" – Dorothy Smith urges us to begin with "the constant ongoing intercoordination of actual activities" and their arrangement into "concerted sequences or courses of action" (D. E. Smith, 1987a, pp. 139, 155). Or, as Marx and Engels write, we should begin with "real individuals, their activity, and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity" (1970, p. 42). This is the epistemology that sustains the feminist methodology that Smith names institutional ethnography. Rather than beginning with the concepts people use to summarize their activity, we begin with the facts of their labour and then construct concepts to synthesize and emphasize various aspects of this practice (Ollman, 2003, Chapter 5). Researchers can only understand "a socially constructed world by knowing it from within" (D. E. Smith, 1987b, p. 92), at the level of the concrete, immediate, and everyday. As feminist standpoint theory also asserts (Hartsock, 1987), each person's position within society is a *perspective* from which they perceive the social relations they engage in, illuminating some while failing to perceive others. The *understandings* people construct about these relations are a question of theory, of which aspects of collaborative activity they choose to emphasize or ignore, but the point is to seek an understanding of this material basis before moving on to the work of conceptualizing it.

[5] Bannerji defines ideology as "obfuscating, evacuating forms of consciousness" characterized by "essentialism, homogenization, ungrounded abstraction, and ahistorical universalism" (2011, pp. 24, 37). Based on her reading of *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1970), Smith summarizes the three movements of ideological thinking: to discard social actors, supplant them using a concept that is said to represent their activity, and then assume the concept actively shapes reality (2004, p. 453; see also Bannerji, 2011, p. 29). Both Smith and Bannerji are quick to assert that this sort of thinking is an outgrowth of alienated social relations. The capitalist division of labour (for example, between waged/productive and unwaged/reproductive work) leads to a division between mind and body, between thought and the work required to produce it (Bannerji, 2011, pp. 31–33). It all results in a systematic suppression of the subject (D. E. Smith, 1987a, p. 117), leading us to believe that Great Men make history, the State grants rights, and workers toil to earn their wages (Ollman, 1976, p. 227). Importantly, ideology is not necessarily imposed on us by some external (let alone conspiratorial) force. Objects such as money and markets really do impose themselves on us, forcing people to do things against their will. This is why materialism is so important, as it exposes the social activity that animates these imposing objects.

I only learned through trial and error to consider research as an inquiry into material practice. Eager to evaluate AUSM's study abroad program, in 2016 I conducted semi-structured interviews with 104 alumni. Not having reflected on materialist ontology or epistemology, many of my interview questions either pre-supposed concepts ("What is your vision of social change?" "What does autonomy mean to you?") or were framed in an ambiguous way, sometimes eliciting descriptions of practical activity and sometimes reflections on aspirations whose material content remained unsaid ("How did the program in Mexico impact you?" "What have been some of the obstacles and successes or your organizing work since?"). When I began analyzing this mountain of material, I found I had both apples and oranges. There were reflections on "impacts," "social change," "successes," and "obstacles" in which new beliefs – in and of themselves – were deemed impactful, and there were also reflections on the concrete efforts of specific people and their material effects. One thing was clear: interviewees were greatly inspired by learning with and from the Zapatistas. Yet activity resulting from this inspiration remained obscure.

When preparing in 2019 for my next round of 19 interviews (a much more manageable number), I resolved to persistently inquire into the concrete activities that comprise organizing, searching for the social relations through which people coordinate them. By this point I had clarified that my research would inquire into social relations. This class of relations operates on the level of society, and they "are neither initiated nor completed by a single individual" (G. W. Smith, 1990, p. 635). Nonetheless, people's activity is a point of entry for understanding them. While they are frequently collapsed into labels such as race or class, social relations are "a *constellation* of practices motivated, consciously and unconsciously, by political or power imperatives with implied cultural forms … that range from the quotidian to the institutional" (Bannerji, 2005, p. 149, my emphasis). In other words, they are the quality of people's togetherness, the flavour of their articulation, the nature of the flow of life and labour among them. This may be a generous sort of togetherness, or it may be a more violent kind, such as the social relations of dispossession, exploitation, repression, and difference that the Zapatistas say constitute capitalism (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005, pt. 3). In the space between our everyday activity within social relations and their culmination

in social systems like capitalism lies collective effort to strengthen certain relations and weaken others, to engage in social movement.[6]

Methodology and methods

Methodologically, the point is to "read organization" into how people act (G. W. Smith, 1990, p. 644). For this reason, my second round of interviews with AUSM alumni consisted of learning about the activities that comprise their organizing, the ways this organizing is arranged, the material supports that allow members to dedicate time to it, the obstacles and difficulties they confront, and how it all has changed over time. I began by asking which cooperative activities interviewees dedicate the most effort toward. Such a question may seem overly broad, as all social life is cooperative, but it proved to be a useful entrée, as all the interviewees focused on their more politicized, self-determined cooperative activities. I then asked interviewees to "walk me through" the everyday experience of this cooperation, especially when it was something they did outside of waged work. Throughout the interview, I consistently returned to this question of "walking me through" whatever arrangement, obstacle, or intention we were discussing, especially when the interviewee began describing it though conceptual shorthand (and I appreciate my interviewees' patience with this tedious insistence). What are the various tasks that comprise it, how are they coordinated, and with whom? Similarly, what do these tasks look like "on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday"? Branching out toward broader social relations, what lent the coordination coherence? Through what consensus-building, accountability-asserting activities was this coherence achieved? Toward what ends or in pursuit of what goals were these activities pursued? And what was the process of coming to agreement about these goals? Most interestingly, how had this cooperation changed over time? Were there instances when it was strained or broke down? What concrete, material supports were lacking when these problems occurred, and what practical changes ensued? Conversely, what were instances when "things clicked" or moved in a positive direction? Who was doing

[6] In this way, I attempt to de-fetishize the concept of social movement. Rather than only treating movements as objects to be classified, I follow Frampton et al in "explicating the social relations of struggle in which these movements are engaged" (2006, p. 11).

what, when and how when this "click" happened, and through what activities was the group able to recreate it?

This is the empirical ground upon which I then elaborated concepts regarding organizing, concepts whose ultimate validity lies in "the extent to which they enable people to transform the world" (Frampton et al., 2006, p. 3). After conducting and transcribing the interviews in 2019, I spent all of 2020 engaged in a four-stage coding process to better understand the organizing activities interviewees explained to me (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Saldana, 2009). Therefore, the genesis of this dissertation is different than its exposition. The bulk of my analytical effort went into generating the concepts laid out in chapter 4 on the alumni. Only after laying this foundation did I use these same concepts to analyze the Zapatistas (chapter 2) and AUSM (chapter 3), and my final step was to bring these understandings into theoretical conversation with Marxism and social reproduction theory in chapter 1.

Following the methodology of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Gibbs, 2007; Strauss, 1987), my overall coding process was to review interview transcripts for organizing phenomena, give these phenomena temporary labels, compare related categories, generate provisional concepts to explain the activity grouped together under each category, revisit the source material to test the concept's validity, and inductively generate theory on this basis (Clarke, 2005, Prologue). In the first of the four stages, I tagged broad sections of text where collaboration, explanations of its coordination, obstacles, and changes in these collaborative efforts were discussed. This allowed me to discern themes in what were often wide-ranging conversations and gain a deeper familiarity with them. My second round of coding was more precise, as I created 64 tags for the various sorts of collaboration interviewees mentioned, which I subdivided into the immediate activity of collaboration, collaboration that reproduced group members' vitality, instances when collaborative capacity was strengthened, collaboration that affected broader flows of life and labour in society, and collaboration that failed to generate its intended outcome. I was then able to use qualitative data analysis software to query

these codes, finding common practices such as political education, as well as practices that commonly accompany each other, such as managing money and coordinating accountability.

In the third phase I moved toward a synthesis of each interview, writing what I dubbed "materialist maps" (included in the Appendix), a provisional summary of the primary collaborations, division of labour, reproductive supports, obstacles, modifications, and targeted social relations for each organizer's group. I sent each interviewee their corresponding map, to verify that I had adequately understood the insider's account of their organizing they had shared with me. I also summarized the ways I saw their organizing effort responding to the broader flows of life and labour within their locale and issue area.

Keeping with dialectics, I found that these explanations tended to be stronger when, more than just pointing out relations, they explained how the relations are reproduced. As I will explain further in chapter 1, this is "reproduction" in the sense of an analytical frame, one that considers the "circular movements" of relations and inquires into their "total, connected process" (Marx, 1976, pp. 239, 724): how they are able to repeat and grow, or how repetition is blocked and withers. For this reason, the mapping I conducted in this third stage focused on the constellation of organizers' collaborative efforts, how these efforts reproduce the energy needed for members' continued participation, how they impact the flow of resources through wider networks outside their organizations, and how they ultimately contribute to or oppose dominant social relations.[7] I paid particular attention to movement within these flows, to obstacles and breakthroughs, vicious and virtuous cycles. It all results in an understanding of organizing that emphasizes both the ways participants reproduce their collaboration from one day to the next, as well as the ways organizing either breaks down or alters the flow of life and labour through society.

[7] In doing so, I follow Kinsman's call to "map out the social relations of struggle [by] addressing our own powers and capacities in relation to the social composition of struggles, the cycles of struggles we are located in and the circulation of struggles between different movements" (2006, pp. 138–139).

In the fourth phase I synthesized across interviews by reviewing my maps, transcripts, and all the reflections I had written along the way and assembling common themes across them. Many of these themes emerge from common remarks. "The mess" is one of the strongest themes, and in chapter 4 there are others, such as burnout, care, "the work," "keeping the faith," and "whatevers." In order to avoid ideologizing, I sought to minimize the explanatory importance of the conceptual labels that interviewees sometimes used as shorthand to signal their practices and relations – and, just as often, their *intended* activity and the principles that guide it. Their theory and intentions are obviously important, but I endeavoured to prioritize the practices themselves, even if the interviewee felt conflicted or confused about them. This was especially helpful in allowing me to appreciate the importance of the mess, or its connection to something as nebulous as the "whatever" of unacknowledged reproductive labour. In this way, I constructed concepts emerging *from* interviewees' material activity, rather than presupposing explanatory concepts and ignoring whatever practices lay outside their bounds. To finish this phase, I explored more emergent themes that interviewees did not explicitly discuss, such as their sense of camaraderie, their various organizational relationships to institutions, and the sense that – apart from their stated mission – interviewees working at non-profits endeavored to "divert" resources toward more radical activities.[8]

After a year spent analyzing and synthesizing interview data, the result is the five concepts featured in chapter 4: the work of building collaborative arrangements, the mess of them falling apart, the care through which people are able to dedicate energy to this process, the ways of being-with that result, and the social movement of strengthening relations of generosity.

Next, as I transitioned into writing the dissertation in 2021, I read Zapatista accounts of their organizing with these same practical questions in mind, seeking to understand the everyday activities, reproductive supports,

[8] Again, beyond inspiration or aspiration, the questions driving this analysis were designed to prioritize people's concrete initiative, recognizing that – because attempts at organizing are "continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups" – we must grant "every trace of initiative on the part of the subaltern groups … incalculable value" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55).

obstacles, and modifications through which they prepared for their land reclamation or coordinate cooperative work and self-government.[9] Crucially, I found the same five aspects of organizing emerging from alumni's experiences to be present with the Zapatistas as well, lending credence to the assertion that organizing is a distinct form of labour, with similarities wherever it is practiced. I then repeated this process, asking the same questions of myself and current AUSM staff regarding our activity there. In this sense, I conducted my analysis of AUSM as a participant observer, using the same methodology outlined above to reflect on my six years spent organizing there, testing the same concepts for empirical validity. More generally, these years spent teaching in Zapatista territory, supporting base building work in Chicago, and giving presentations on organizing across the US provided me with a framework to make this complicated political domain intelligible. It was the training that made this labour of investigation possible. Finally, as explained in chapter 1, I turned to Marxist and social reproduction theory to better understand these commonalities across the activity of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni.

Like every method, mine provides insights while also imposing limitations. I prioritized practices over intentions and, furthermore, did a great deal of work to synthesize commonalities between these practices as to arrive at lessons for all those asking "What is to be done?" to move toward the utopian horizon. The downside of all this work of coding and comparing is that I lose the narrative aspect, the voices of those whose experiences provide the rich soil for this synthesis. Many interviewees did in fact use beautiful language to encapsulate common practices, and I am grateful to quote these passages. Yet more often the commonalities that ultimately became concepts were mentioned more briefly and implicitly by numerous interviewees. Or they were mentioned with a bewildered frustration that only made sense when compared

[9] This focus on Zapatista organizing *activity* led me to privilege the firsthand accounts cited above in note #2. Beyond this, there is a vast amount of scholarly material on Zapatismo that is beyond the scope of this dissertation either because it emphasizes the broad strokes of Zapatista history or because Zapatismo inspires the authors to reflect on philosophical topics distinct from my own focus on organizing as reproductive labour. Recent English language scholarship includes Gahman et al (2022), the Lightning Collective (Marcos, 2022), Fitzwater (2019), Grubacic and O'Hearn (2016), Vergara-Camus (2014), and Nail (2012). There is also an extensive literature linking Zapatismo to a network theory of social movement (Dellacioppa, 2009; Juris, 2008; Khasnabish, 2008; Olesen, 2005; Rovira, 2009).

with similar remarks from others. In fact, some of the most illustrative reflections on organizing came when interviewees reflected on mundane activities they did not consider radical enough to count as "organizing."

A second reason I lost interviewees' voices is that the majority of them requested anonymity, probably to have more liberty to frankly discuss the difficulties of organizing. This honesty is invaluable, as it taught me that any useful discussion of organizing must centre the mess. Yet the downside is that the inability to name their organizations or discuss them explicitly further limits me to a general discussion of their experiences. I attempt to counteract this through an Appendix in which I share my summary of how each interviewee described their organizing work. Thirdly, people are generally more quotable when reflecting on the sort of questions I asked in my first round of interviews – such as "Why do you find Zapatista autonomy so inspiring?" – than when recounting the labours of turnout, agenda preparation, and facilitation that make for a successful assembly. The resonant hope of this inspiration is incredibly important: It is the store of intention that initiative sparks into the activity organizing. Thankfully, there are many fountains of such hope. Yet inspiration alone is insufficient. Organizing is labour within the dialectical tension between this big picture and the mundane work of setting out folding chairs and sweeping up after the meeting. I hope I have not sacrificed the former by emphasizing the latter.

Theoretical guidance and contributions

My thinking draws from the insights of various academic fields and approaches – especially Marxism and feminism – and hopefully contributes to them in turn. As mentioned, I adapted my methodology from Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography (1987a, pp. 157–181). I also contribute to this methodology by inverting certain aspects of this approach. Smith's *institutional* ethnography is dedicated to tracing the "ruling relations" that allow institutions to "organize the locally and inexhaustibly various character of the actual into standard forms of organizational action" (1987a, p. 158). According to George Smith, ruling relations describe "how people's lives *are determined* from beyond the scope of their everyday world" (1990, p. 629, my emphasis). I flip this emphasis upside down by inquiring into what we might call "relations of liberation":

those through which people organize action to actively *determine* the flows of life and labour that nourish their everyday world.

Accountable research

I also draw from Participatory Action Research (PAR), which according to Jordan and Kapoor (2016) critiques quantitative researchers for their manipulative tendency to objectify their research subjects (Asad, 1986; Fay, 1975). PAR instead emphasizes locally-focused, qualitative methodologies. Most importantly, PAR emphasizes community engagement in establishing a research agenda, carrying it out, and mobilizing its outcomes. This raises broader questions of accountability and, crucially, helps build it into research practice. Hale writes that, instead of the individual pursuit of academic prestige, accountability means prioritizing the capacity of "communities to identify, analyze, and devise solutions to the key problems they face" (2008, pp. 15–18; see also Suet-ling Tang, 2008, p. 244).[10]

In this spirit, my research is accountable to and designed in collaboration principally with AUSM, as well as with study abroad alumni. This accountability is different for each group. I designed my research and formulated its conclusions in conversation with AUSM's staff collective. Accountability to study abroad alumni is more difficult since they are not an organized group. I therefore solicited individuals' input and consistently worked to foster individual consent. Regarding the Zapatistas, because I did not conduct interviews – a process that would require building consent with and accountability to the Zapatistas' Good Government Councils – and instead consulted published sources, my accountability is to a common political project. The Zapatistas outline this project in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle (Ejército

[10] Barmeyer (2009) provides a case study of how *not* to conduct accountable research. He circumvented protocols demanded by the Zapatistas by lying to them about his intentions, cultivated a relationship with a former Zapatista who was expelled from the organization, and based much of his analysis off this single informant's testimony. On the other hand, Mora fully cooperated in the Zapatistas' process for engaging researchers, providing a gold standard for PAR (2017, pp.39-69). She proposed her research to the regional Good Government Council, which added it to the agenda of the next regional assembly, and discussion there resulted in a counter-proposal reorienting her research questions and requesting specific outcomes and work to circulate them among participants. This process took the better part of a year, yet it also ensured that her work was beneficial and accountable to those being researched. The insightfulness of the resulting publication shows that the process aided her research theoretically as well.

Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005), also known as the "Sexta," proposing we organize from below and to the left (through non-electoral base building and against capitalism). Political accountability requires my research process also to be below and to the left.

The Sexta's criteria (2005) is clearer than what we find in most PAR literature, which – in its commendable appeal to do research with communities instead of on them (Halseth et al., 2016; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Sande & Schwartz, 2017) – still rarely defines "community." It is typically implied that community refers to non-academic people who live near the researcher and have a shared identity or practice, but the concept is otherwise nebulous. Jordan and Kapoor (2016) note that this sort of conceptual drift has led PAR to become contested terrain, used by both revolutionaries (Fals-Borda, 1969) and for World Bank program evaluations (Participation and Civic Engagement Group, 2003). The radical current of PAR compels academics to build praxis into our research, ensuring that beyond good intentions, our reflection strengthens collective liberatory practice. Following the Sexta, I am specifically interested in developing ideas to support those working from below to coordinate power-with rather than power-over, and those to the left working to socialize the fruits of collaboration rather than accumulate the proceeds of others' labour. My ongoing collaboration with AUSM ensures that these lessons will impact their political education work and wider networks of anticapitalist organizers. In this sense, I contribute to the radical currents within Participatory Action Research.

The two senses of social movement

This dissertation offers contributions to the study of social movements, social reproduction, and autonomy. Regarding social movements, it responds to Bevington and Dixon's call for "movement-relevant theory" (2005), defined by Flacks as "useable knowledge for those seeking social change" (2004, p. 138). As I will explain shortly, my contribution is to bring together the "useable knowledge" and "social change" aspects of this formulation. But first, taking a step back to consider the methodology that allows this, Choudry (2015)

compels researchers to take organizations' own theory about their work seriously.[11] I practice this by centring theory produced by the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni in their respective chapters. This prerogative emanates from movement-relevant theorists' critique of mainstream social movement theory, which they say seeks to "generate hypotheses and formulate empirical generalizations about an increasingly reified entity called 'social movements'" (Darnovsky et al., 1995, p. xv), only drawing upon actual practices as "grist for the testing of hypotheses" (Flacks, 2004, p. 136), which they then fashion into transhistorical concepts for explaining social movements (Choudry, 2015, pp. 52–55). Critics do not take issue with the pursuit of concepts with explanatory power, but instead with their lack of praxis.[12] Namely, relevant theory should emerge from concrete practices and be amenable to informing everyday practice.[13] The next step, as discussed above, is to elaborate explicit relationships of accountability with specific organizations (Bevington & Dixon, 2005), so that they may determine what research will best aid their efforts. Researchers then get to work by centring the question of "What is to be done?" and synthesizing lessons people can apply in their day-to-day organizing.[14]

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[11] Kelley's (2002) book on the Black radical imagination is an excellent example of such practice, using the pamphlets, newspapers, poetry, and art of organizers to understand their dreams of a new world. This survey leads him to reflect that "Social movements generate new knowledge, new theories, new questions. The most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression" (2002, p. 8). Furthermore, he argues that this movement knowledge is often unlike the cold, abstract theory we are all too familiar with. Instead, "Freedom and love may be the most revolutionary ideas available to us, and yet as intellectuals we have failed miserably to grapple with their political and analytical importance" (2002, pp. 11–12). He urges us to ask what are the dreams, spirit, love, and militancy that motivate movements' tireless, uphill engagement.

[12] On a related note, Flacks (2004) alleges that mainstream theory is oriented toward the practice of non-profit staff, causing it to implicitly favour the inside-the-beltway, accommodationist strategies of foundation-funded non-profit organizations (Choudry, 2015). I take up related critiques of "career-based modes of organizing" (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007, p. 3) in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Others allege mainstream theory often abandons strategic critique in favour of celebrating movements that exemplify authors' favoured concepts (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, pp. 191–193; Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014, pp. 17–20), and that this narrow focus on movements in-and-of themselves ignores the broader context of social relations within which they struggle (Frampton et al., 2006, pp. 11–15).

[13] As Lefebvre famously asserted, we do not live transhistorically: "Either man [sic] will be in the everyday or he will not be at all … As long as everyday life has not radically changed, the world will be the same as ever" (2002, p. 24).

[14] Carroll and Sarker's volume (2016) contains a wealth of examples, including investigations into the historical genesis of the police and their transformation within the relation of forces that is neoliberalism (L. Wood & Fortier, 2016), how counter-hegemonic queer and AIDS organizing gave way to homonationalism (Kinsman, 2016), and the mechanisms and viability of the "solidarity network" as an organizing form (Corbeil & House, 2016). Flacks (2004), McAlevey (2016), and Dixon (2014) all have a similar focus, asking what movements can do to build leadership and mass participation instead of remaining as small, isolated activist cliques and suggesting specific, tangible tactics that can aid with this. As explained below, these are informative reflections for those involved in "the movement," which can then be put into fruitful theoretical dialogue regarding how everyday successes culminate in "making movement."

Digging into this synthesis, I draw on Marxist theories of social movement to explain how the social moves. Those working in this field share movement-relevant theory's emphasis on practical, strategic thinking, and Marxist theorists are especially adamant about dialectics and its ontology of social relations. The editors of *Marxism and Social Movements* explain how they integrate the two, writing

> Marxism simultaneously entails a theory of the organisation of power within modern society, a theory of popular agency, and a theory of transformation with strategic consequences. It is an argument *about* movements, and an argument *within* movements …. It is part of Marxism's work to trace and highlight the interconnections between specific issues and particular repertoires of action, organisation and understanding within movements and the broader social relations of production that – explicitly or implicitly – they confront. (C. Barker et al., 2014a, p. 13)

My contribution is to bind together this dual conception of social movement. To parse out the complementary understandings that Barker et al. mention above, "social movement" in the first sense emphasizes the practical and micro. It is concerned with how those *within* "the movement" understand their involvement and its goals, their everyday tactical efforts, and how they build up organizations to coordinate their participation. "Social movement" in the second sense emphasizes the theoretical and macro. It is theory *about* movements, their broader strategic orientations, and how they go about transforming social relations. The challenge I take up is to connect the two by illustrating how people can take everyday steps to organize power and how these actions can make social movement by transforming entrenched "ways of doing society" (Nilsen & Cox, 2014, p. 65). I do this by making concrete suggestions for those who want to do this curious thing called "organizing" but do not know where to start (or who find themselves overwhelmed as the problems pile up), and I situate this activity within a broader theory of social movement. I find that the first sense of social movement often overshadows the second, leading to problems of tactics without strategy. Therefore, throughout the dissertation I emphasize the second sense, in all its materiality, as the labour of creating self-determination by strengthening social relations of generosity.

Lest organizers believe that success only requires we come up with better ideas, take more politically rigorous positions, and conceive more insightful plans, I also emphasize class struggle. The primary obstacle for those

organizing from below and to the left will always be counter-projects from above and to the right (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, Chapter 3). This means that social movement *is* class struggle, "the *friction* of interests … the heat, the thundering noise" (Thompson, 1965, p. 357; quoted in C. Barker, 2014, p. 43). Therefore, a primary lesson for those participating in "the movement" (in the first sense) is that organizing cannot remain inward facing, treated as an end in itself (Cornell, 2011, pp. 157–168). Organizers can only make social movement by overcoming the opposition of those whose position within social relations allows them to accumulate resources and use them to reproduce the social order in which they dominate. This is a massively unequal struggle against those sitting atop the social pyramid as well as the institutions that perpetuate their supremacy, a confrontation that constantly disrupts collaboration among those on the bottom and makes messes of their lives (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55). Ultimately, the only reprieve is to expropriate the expropriators (Marx, 1976, p. 929).

Turning toward social movement in the second sense, this is not as simple as seizing the wealth of the Forbes 500. The capitalist is not an individual so much as a *role* within a set of relations (Marx, 1976, p. 92). These relations are why each individual in the current cast of billionaire villains is so readily replaceable and why making social movement ultimately depends on changing our social relations. This sort of social movement requires self-determination, a "process [of] widening and deepening the scope and direction of collective skilled activity" (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p. 186), "the emancipation of our labor powers from the needless experiences of their constraint" (Jaffe, 2020, p. 97). Self-determination is therefore the widening and deepening of the ability to collectively produce new sorts of wellbeing, to engage in the multifarious labour of life, to actively shape our social world.

In this sense, radical organizations are social laboratories that – through struggle – churn out new forms and powers of collaboration (Negri, 2014). Furthermore, they create new "roles," new ways of being-with to engage in this class struggle. We see these laboratories' inventions in chapter 2 through the cooperatives, good government, and anti-militarist army (Moisés, 2015e, pt. 1) that constitute Zapatista autonomy; in

chapter 3 as AUSM transitioned from a traditional solidarity non-profit to doing both community organizing and rigorous political education; and in chapter 4 as alumni create collectives, survival projects, and base building groups. Organizations use these capacities to change the flow of vitality and exhaustion through society, thereby changing its relations. Making social *movement* means changing the relations that constitute our social world. Once again, my goal is bring together the practical and theoretical, the tactical and strategic, the micro and macro by better understanding how people can pursue such wide-ranging movement through everyday activity.

Marxist theories of social movement are helpful in spanning this divide between everyday practices within social movements and the utopian horizon of social transformation, especially through their insistence on using political economy to understand such transformation. Two decades ago, Flacks lamented that this strength had been ignored within the reigning paradigm of political process theory, writing that Marx's "effort to embed power relations in an analysis of political economy as a whole" was "missing from contemporary theories" (2004, p. 139). Hetland and Goodwin went on to document how, beginning in the 1990s, references to "capitalism" and "class struggle" virtually disappeared from the leading journals on social movements (2014, pp. 87–89).[15] Despite appreciating many aspects of political process theory (2004, p. 5), Goodwin and Jasper critique the structural bias resulting from its "invariant, transhistorical" search for a "universal theory or 'model' of social movements" (2004, p. 4). It is peculiar that theorists with such sweeping goals would ignore Marxist explanations of how capitalist relations of production act as a structuring force, shaping society. (Of course, materialists aim to be rigorously historical in this endeavour.)

I agree with these authors, both in their appreciation of laudable aspects of political process theory and their call to reintegrate Marxist political economy into social movement theory. We find an excellent bridge in Gramscian conjunctural analysis (1971, pts. 1, Chapter 3; see also Hall, 1988; Marx, 2009; Moody, 2017;

[15] They were particularly concerned with the complete absence of capitalism in Tilly and Tarrow's *Contentious Politics* (2007), based on a book the two had co-authored with McAdam (2001), given that Marxist political economy was prominent in earlier works by the authors (McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978).

Sassoon, 1980), as it pairs analysis of what Cox & Nilsen call "class struggle from above" –elite efforts to shape the "structures" so prominent political process theory – with an appreciation for its dynamic tension with "class struggle from below" (2014, Chapter 3). Most importantly, the political upshot of this pairing is that those on the bottom do not have to wait for openings to appear in the elites' political structure. Instead, we can actively build power and create our own history.

This bridge then extends into Marxist theories interpreting the world in order to change it. These theories are situated within the broader emancipatory struggle against class society (Aronowitz, 2003; C. Barker et al., 2014a; Dunayevskaya, 1975; Ollman, 1987; Piven & Cloward, 1979; Webber, 2011) while *also* providing practical reflections on how people can strengthen their political involvement (Crass, 2013; Dixon, 2014; Harnecker, 2003; Lenin, 1969; McAlevey, 2016; Sassoon, 1980).[16] Again, I attempt to conduct a similar synthesis here. Materialism allows for this connection between everyday organizing and class struggle, as the immediate activity of labour creates the value flows that shape society. Praxis also aids in spanning the divide, as theory is understood as the generalization of concrete experience accumulated through action (Krinsky, 2014, p. 115).[17] Haiven and Khasnabish argue that the goal of praxis is ultimately to overcome the researcher/researched divide, so that organizations are creating strategic *self*-knowledge. They call this the "radical imagination," a "vehicle for social movement self-conceptualization, self-creation, and self-management" (2014, p. 223).

[16] For example, Nilsen and Cox (Nilsen & Cox, 2014, pp. 73–79) write about how flashpoints that express a particular social relation (for example, conflicts over school closures, expressing inequities in social reproduction) can lead local "good sense" understandings of justice to grow into open confrontation with local power holders. The struggles grows further into a campaign as it draws in a range of groups calling for deeper transformation, which can then become a movement challenging the established hegemony.

[17] Similarly, Nilsen and Cox write that "Theory … is knowledge that is consciously developed out of experience, that has been worked through using experience as a touchstone, that has become explicit and articulate, and which has been brought to a level where it can be generalised" (2014, p. 8).

Social reproduction theory

My thinking is also shaped by feminist inquiry into social reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017c; Federici, 2012; Ferguson, 2020; Fortunati, 1995; Fraser, 2014; Huws, 2020; Jaffe, 2020; Vogel, 1987). Similarly to how I stretch institutional ethnography's concept of ruling relations by asking how organizers can strengthen relations of liberation, my contribution to social reproduction theory is to pivot from a focus on the reproduction of diligent workers to the reproduction of emancipated peoples.

The central focus of social reproduction theory is the mostly feminized, unwaged, and invisibilized care work that is absolutely necessary for capitalist profit-making, in that its reproductive labour renews the vitality of the productive labour power that creates value. Their theoretical thrust is to emphasize the importance of reproductive labour, especially since it is often ignored within patriarchal, bourgeois society at large, as well as by many Marxists. I join in this endeavour, especially by highlighting that care work is fundamental to both the reproduction of capitalist and anticapitalist labour power, to both the reproduction of capitalism and of struggles to overcome it. We can only appreciate this reproduction in all its breadth if we also appreciate the various forms of labour through which it happens. In addition to the waged labour that reproduces capital and the mostly unwaged labour that reproduces workers' labour power, there is also the labour of social movement, of reproducing a different sort of society.

Labour of the latter variety is distinct in some ways from the productive labour explored by Marx, and even from household-based reproductive labour. First of all, the labour of organizing is not directly subject to the "law of value" (M. E. Smith, 2019). Competition between rival businesses discipline bosses, who in turn discipline waged labour, imposing the most productive relations lest they be gobbled up by the competition. Likewise, reproductive labour is disciplined by the threat of unemployment and scarcity: if they do not raise diligent workers and rejuvenate exhausted ones, these caretakers will lose the income that puts food on the table.

The labour of organizing, on the other hand, is not subject to this pressure, especially within organizations not competing for grant funding. This frees participants, allowing them to creatively invent collaborative arrangements, but it also leaves the use values resulting from these arrangements open to stressful ambiguity. The value of commodities produced through wage labour is realized when they are sold; and the value of reproductive labour is realized as the worker maintains their employment; but it is exceedingly unclear if organizers' everyday efforts to block pipelines, radicalize charitable donations, or expand public healthcare are successful or not. Hard-and-fast victories only come after years of work, and in the meantime the thousand-and-one efforts through which organizations pursue these goals are mired in the ambiguity of the mess.

Secondly, there is a contradiction between "conventional," "domestic" reproductive labour and the labour of making social movement.[18] Indeed, we cannot understand "organizing" unless we understand how organizers engage this dilemma. As we have seen throughout the history of social movements fighting for the eight-hour day, for safety and benefits through unionization, for welfare rights, for publicly-funded education, healthcare, housing, and childcare – these long, hard struggles have successfully eased the everyday burden of care work for countless people. Yet those who participate in these struggles, who labour to reproduce a society of more generosity and less violence, are exhausted by their efforts. Their capacity for day-to-day rejuvenation is diminished by what Gilmore calls a "triple workday [of] job, home, justice" (2007, p. 237). Even when participation in these struggles does not expose people to police violence, it is exhausting to attend meetings while there is still dinner to be cooked and children to be bathed, to spend a weekend knocking on doors (and having some slammed in your face) when you could be at the park. Work to reproduce labour power is at odds with work to reproduce society differently, and both are at odds with capitalism, which consumes life and turns it into profit.

[18] I use scare quotes because, while it is necessary to differentiate between the two sense of reproduction, all social reproduction theorists insist that the labours of reproducing labour power extend well beyond the confines of the household and are increasingly bound into global care chains (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003).

How are organizers able to overcome this dilemma, to turn its vicious cycles of exhaustion into virtuous cycles of flourishing? This contradiction comes to the fore in chapter 4, where alumni reflect on the ever-present threat of burnout from their organizing efforts. Only by treating these problems as a guide for growth, as indications of how they must work to strengthen collaboration, can organizers engage in the jiu jitsu of turning vicious cycles into virtuous ones. This requires both a militant commitment to the struggle and practicing care at many different levels.

To understand these levels, I differentiate between five senses of reproduction and emphasize how each points to a different way that organizing is a labour of care. First is reproduction in its dialectical sense, as an attention to processes of repetition, the relations that guide them, and the contradictions within them. Second is what Marx calls the "expanded reproduction" of capital (1993, Chapter 2.2), through its circuit of money spent on labour power and means of production, to produce commodities, sold for more money, which is then reinvested to expand the circuit. Third is the reproduction of labour power in and beyond domestic life, the rejuvenation of those whose activity gives capital its motion, who produce its value. Fourth is reproduction "from above," the reassertion of difference as to strengthen the oppressive social relations that keep these processes in motion. The divide between the haves and the have-nots must be continually reasserted through the racialized, gendered, sexualized, spatial, bodily, and bureaucratic forms of division that constitute ruling relations – all enforced by their respective institutions. Fifth is reproduction "from below," the solidaristic struggle for social movement, to reproduce a distinct form of society whose relations of violence are weaker and relations of generosity are stronger.

In this dissertation I primarily focus on how reproduction in the third sense relates to the fifth. Normally, our "domestic" reproduction is at a deficit, causing waged work to be completely exhausting, leaving no energy to organize to change these dreary conditions. So how are groups able to turn this vicious cycle into a virtuous one? What are the labours of "domestic" reproduction that allow organizers to show up and engage in

political collaboration, how are these groups able to grow by incorporating reproductive labour into their organizing work, and how do they push outward and work to care for society?

Care is therefore a major theme, running throughout these categories, the seed of my answer to these questions of how virtuous cycles are nourished. In the first sense, care is not a numerical "health index" to be maximized, but the act of nourishing *relations* of generosity as such (Hyde, 2007). Secondly, capitalism is fundamentally antithetical to care as it is predicated on dispossession, thus allowing the imposition of scarcity and requiring the dispossessed participate in exploitation to survive. Third is the contradiction of care (Fraser, 2017). Capitalists rely on labour power to create value, yet this all-important commodity is created, nurtured, and sustained through non-capitalist forms of collaboration, labour the capitalist cannot fully control but must appropriate. Fourth, like weeds in the sidewalk, those on the bottom incessantly assert their abundance, their capacity for self-determined forms of generosity despite the most difficult conditions. The limitation of their appropriation of care work is a crisis for those on top, who continually scramble to reassert appropriation through new forms of difference.

Fifth, beyond caring for their comrades and kin, those on the bottom are sometimes able to practice militancy, meaning that – despite their exhaustion – they struggle to care for society. They are able to strengthen and expand their care work to such an extent that they make social movement. Importantly, this is an outgrowth of the same reproductive labour that allows for everyday survival under capitalism. To turn capitalism's vicious cycles of scarcity and dependence into virtuous cycles strengthening self-determination, groups engage in messy processes of trial and error to discover the collaborative arrangements that can consistently create wellbeing within the group. This allows members to dedicate more effort to its labour, becoming the sorts of people who can care in countless ways, allowing them to extend this wellbeing outward against those who wish to repress it.

Autonomy, self-determination and sparking the dialectic

Finally, this dissertation contributes to theories of autonomy (Bajo Tierra Ediciones, 2011; Baschet, 2018; Cleaver, 2000; Hardt & Negri, 2017; Holloway, 2002; The Situationist International, 2006; Tronti, 2019; S. Wright, 2017; Zibechi, 2010). However – instead of engaging in stale debates, mostly comprised of anarchists and socialists maligning each other – I focus on the *practices* that are sometimes labelled as "autonomy" and emphasize their specific forms of collaboration, use values, subjectivities, and obstacles. In this way, instead of pasting this label onto various groups and celebrating how spectacular they are, I aim to find common ground by emphasizing the material practices underlying the label. As shown throughout the dissertation, these practices are fundamentally reproductive, and strengthened reproduction is the basis for self-determination. Autonomy is therefore a project of reproduction through self-determined collaborative arrangements providing self-determined use values. When groups are able to stitch together virtuous reproductive cycles, the self-determination that began as initiative within the group extends throughout society, overcoming the designs of our class enemies. I therefore often find self-determination to be a more helpful concept than autonomy.

I also emphasize material practice to counter the obsession with the state in debates over autonomy. The state is obviously quite important in redistributing flows of life and labour across society,[19] using its institutions to reproduce forms of difference (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013), and internalizing class struggle (Poulantzas, 1980). None of the groups I discuss throughout the dissertation simply "ignore" it. Nor do they imagine there is an "outside" to capitalism they can immediately leap into.[20] Instead, each seeks a way to both meet immediate needs and influence the broader social relations that comprise their respective "calendars and

[19] For example, see Gilmore (2007) on how the state of California's mass incarceration project constitutes a flow that mobilizes previously-idled finance capital, agricultural land, state capacity, and surplus population.

[20] While I only mention the topic of inside/outside here in terms of strategy, I recognize that there are deeper philosophical debates at play. Autonomy connotes a movement towards independence, a distancing, exteriorization. This is at odds with dialectics as a philosophy of inner relations, holding the premise that there is no "outside" to escape to. Again, I find the concept of self-determination helpful, as it is more consistent with dialectical philosophy, suggesting that the task is to gain the collective agency necessary to *strengthen* certain relations relative to others, rather than escape them.

geographies" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b). A few support legislative initiatives as one tactic among many to achieve this. Instead of centring the state – often treated as a monolith – I centre organizers' everyday activity, as this is a better starting point for considering what is to be done. The theory emerging from these organizations' practice is that we are caught within a contradictory web of relations which shape flows of life and labour across society. To self-determine is to shape these relations instead of only reacting to them. This is a tall order, especially since we run headlong into state institutions asserting prevailing relations. Success requires organizing, collectivizing, coordinating with enough strength to overcome *specific* constellations of class struggle from above, perpetuating *specific* relations and reproduce ourselves otherwise, so that less of our labour empowers those on top and more enlivens those on the bottom. Call it autonomy or call it class struggle – what matters is how this collaboration is able to strengthen from one day to the next.

I also want to emphasize that inspiration matters. So far, I have emphasized materialist explanations of how collaboration strengthens. Reproduction is a question of metabolism, a question of caring for the relations that allow reproduction to repeat, and such processes can only be arranged through labour producing use values. Inspiration, on the other hand, is the ideal, the theory, the resonant emotion. Without it we are reduced to passivity, to "going along to get along." Without inspiration there is nothing. Initiative is the spark, the catalyst that converts this stirring theory into practice. In this sense, organizing is effort to reproduce this dialectic between theory and practice, inspiration and effort, the subjective and the material, to keep it sparking.[21] Militancy is a revolutionary, ethical subjectivity, a way of being-with committed to continue this organizing through the difficult days when all seems lost and, during the sunny days, to push on toward "everything for everyone" (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994c) rather than settling for "socialism, starting with me" (E. Benavides Guevara, personal communication, August 23, 2021). Therefore, throughout my analysis, I also seek to maintain this generative dialectic in which inspiration sparks the initiative that organizing works to sustain.

[21] This formulation is inspired by Lorde's call to hold differences in generative tension with each other, so they may "spark like a dialectic" (2007).

In that spirit, I wrote this dissertation for the Stuart who, fourteen years ago, had just parked the car after driving Jorge Santiago across the US, is brimming with inspiration, and opens to door to a community centre in a working class, Latinx Chicago neighbourhood where he is supposed to "do organizing." It is for the hundreds of AUSM alumni who surely had similar moments upon returning from the liberated territories of Chiapas. It is for all those who hear the question "And what about you?" and respond with "Well I still don't know exactly what, but anything that is worth doing should be done collectively" (S. Galeano, 2015a, p. 207; Kaba, 2019). What to do today, tomorrow, and the next day to turn this inspiration into collective action and action into right relation? My message to them begins with the recognition that they are beginning a reproductive labour, a labour of love. This sounds wonderful, but more often than not, organizing is a grueling endeavour. It is a very otherly labour, full of ambiguity and tension. If inspired initiative is to be reproduced despite this tension, it requires care, wellbeing, use value produced through a division of labour. To make this labour more intentional, it is important to map its collaborations, their results, how these both enliven and exhaust the collaborative process, and how these results may be deepened and extended. To better understand how this all comes together, I first elaborate the concepts that aid in explaining organizing and then turn to its practice by the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni.

Chapter 1 – Organizing is the labour of social movement

"Power is not a thing but rather a capacity composed of active and changing relationships enabling a person, group, or institution to compel others to do things they would not do on their own … People can and do *make* power through, for example, developing capacities in organizations … When the capacities resulting from purposeful action are combined toward ends greater than mission statements or other provisional limits, powerful alignments begin to shake the ground. In other words, *movement* happens." (Gilmore, 2007, pp. 247–248)

Inspiration is a tricky thing. The Zapatistas are widely regarded as one of our generation's most inspirational social movements, yet they are the first to say that their inspired supporters cannot simply recreate Zapatismo back home (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional et al., 2021). Instead, they should "get organized" (Moisés, 2015c). This is surely good advice, but it is exceedingly difficult to follow, as supporters are often inspired by their crisp, enlivening experience visiting Chiapas, whereas "organizing" is often a vague aspiration lacking such immediacy. Moreover, even if the inspired supporters resolved to dedicate decades to orchestrating their own variation on the theme of Zapatismo, complete with its assemblies, cooperatives, and self-defence, those without a similar genealogy of five hundred years spent struggling to take back the land would probably find their efforts at recreation to be in vain.

To our great frustration, each attempt at organizing is a completely unique process. So, amidst so much variation, what exactly does this concept called organizing mean? And how does organizing make for social *movement*? In this chapter I will explore these questions, treating them as ways to work through the all-important question of what is to be done. Here I will elaborate in theory of what the following chapters explore in practice. I will argue that – as collaborative activity producing use values – organizing is labour. More specifically, it is socially reproductive labour, the work of recreating society. We can draw on Marxist understandings of labour to better comprehend organizing, especially how its efforts are able to impact the fluid distribution of wellbeing and suffering across society – what I call "flows of life and labour" – and thereby nudge the social relations that shape these flows as to weaken the "wrong" relations of violence and strengthen the right relations of generosity. To change flows and relations is to engage in the labour of social

movement. In this way, instead of only focusing on inspiration, this chapter theorizes the activity resulting from it. There is much that can go wrong, but when it goes right, this activity succeeds in reproducing the inspiration that motivates it.

Plan of the chapter

Building on the dialectical and materialist framework outlined in the Introduction, I will elaborate this argument by working through a series of concepts. I begin with relations, because dialectics posits a world where things *are* their relations, and also because it is easy to misuse such a simple-yet-profound word to mean "those I relate *to*," losing sight of the relation as such. I define relations as the quality of things' togetherness, the flavour of their articulation. Second, I move to labour, where it becomes necessary to stretch Marxism to understand organizing as labour. This is because Marx and many of those following him are keen to explain the exploitation of labour power that is the beating heart of the capital accumulation process, labour *within* capitalism's "hidden abode" (Marx, 1976, p. 279). The labour of organizing, on the other hand, is dedicated to creating wellbeing, not turning a profit. In this sense it is labour characterized less by relations of exploitation and more by self-determined relations, labour *behind* the hidden abode (Fraser, 2014). I look to social reproduction theory to better understand this variety of labour and its contradictory position between reproducing relations of violence and enlivening those of life-making. Might reproductive labour be the key to coming into right relation?

The glut of prepositions that surges forth when discussing capitalism can be quite confusing. Are we "behind" it, "below" it, "within and against" it, or "against and beyond" it? Third, I argue that instead of debating over prepositions, any society – a capitalist one included – is better understood as many relations coming together to form a *flow* of life and labour. Instead of thinking we can magically, completely jump from inside to outside capitalism, as one would hop out the factory door, it is more helpful to think we can alter the flows that determine where in society resources accumulate in vast reservoirs and where life-giving wellbeing is reduced to a mere trickle. The contours of these flows change as people collaborate differently,

create wellbeing differently, and reproduce our lives differently, ultimately strengthening alternative social relations which, to continue the metaphor, are the flow's new embankments.

Yet this is no lazy river. I look to the concept of subsumption to explain how capital has fought against widespread resistance to siphon as much collaboration as possible into the service of accumulation. Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag* (2007) provides a contemporary example of how flows are both built and challenged. It illustrates how class struggle is a fight over the relations that direct flows of life and labour. Looking to social reproduction theorists who argue that – powerful as it is – capitalism relies on a great deal of *non*-capitalist collaborative activity, I argue that the ways we reproduce life within this current flow are the basis for reproducing it in even more emancipated ways.

Finally, I return to the question of "What is to be done?" as we fight for our lives against the capitalist death machine. Here, I elaborate five aspects of everyday organizing I see emerging from the activity of the Zapatistas, the Autonomous University of Social Movements, and alumni of AUSM's study abroad program. In each of the three cases, this is labour within less-capitalist relations, the collaboration of people looking to create wellbeing on their own terms, without having to buy it by suffering through the workday. In each case the organizers are beset by a mess of problems, and they practice these five aspects by treating their problems as exercises in a textbook (Moisés, 2015d, p. 176), learning how to build virtuous cycles instead of falling into vicious ones. Organizing therefore begins with 1) the inspiration that life can indeed be better and the initiative to act on that hope, 2) it takes shape through the messy process of building the collaborative arrangements that will provide some sort of wellbeing, 3) by providing care, these use values then strengthen the group's reproduction, 4) this touches off a virtuous cycle, strengthening ways of being-with that approach social relations as things we can actively shape, and 5) by strengthening the collaboration of people who reproduce life through less-capitalist flows, organizing makes social movement towards right relation.

Organizing is therefore a production process, the process of producing social movement. This is the theory emerging from my conversations with organizers about their everyday work, my experience as staff at the non-profit AUSM, and having learned from the Zapatistas. Their experiences show us that seeking to alter capitalism's flows instead of accommodating to them is hard work, with more obstacles than victories. And they also teach us the meaning of self-determination. In this chapter I seek to provide some concepts to help digest those lessons.

Social relations

Materialism and social labour

> Whilst in ordinary life every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won even this trivial insight. They take every epoch at its word and believe that everything it says and imagines about itself is true. (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 67)

Materialism means that, instead of taking people at their word, we judge them by their social activity. Therefore, as we seek to understand the world, we must begin with people's "living sensuous activity" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 64), with the "living and working body" (Jameson, 2011, p. 111; see also McNally, 2001, pp. 75–77) and build up our understandings on the facts of its physical activity. Since no one can live and work alone – even when we work in solitude, we draw on language, tools and culture that are the product of many others' collaboration (Marx, 1973, p. 84) – this living, sensuous activity is also social. Indeed, Marx considers labour to be the basic "social substance" of materialism (1976, p. 138). As such, materialism begins with the interplay of physical activity, the co-operation of many labours (hence "co-laboration"). This is quite different from common assumptions that materialism means only wages and profits, factories and infrastructure, energy and output. Beginning with collaboration, Marx explains that the materialist method proceeds by looking into the ways it is coordinated, its outcomes, and the various ways in which these outcomes prove (or fail to) be useful in reproducing the living, sensuous people in question. By investigating their social labour, production of use value, and reproduction of life, we can begin to understand the general relations that serve to both empower and limit activity within a certain historical context. We can then use

these general concepts to understand the intricacies and contradictions of their specific activities in even greater detail. (Marx, 1973, p. 83, 1976, p. 493n4; Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 59)

Labour is the most common word Marxists use for what Marx sometimes called "living sensuous activity" and I call "collaboration." Adopting Dorothy Smith's "generous notion of work" (1987a, p. 167), I consider labour to be more than a job, including all "purposeful activity aimed at the production of use values" (Marx, 1976, p. 290).[1] Or, labour is the concrete *activity* through which people deploy their general *capacities*, in order to satisfy their *needs* (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, pp. 27–33; Marx & Engels, 1970, pp. 48–49). People can labour alone, but when they do so together and each person or grouplet carries out a task that complements that of others, this co-operation produces more than the sum of its individual efforts. This marvelous abundance is the fecundity of *social* labour, a "power [that] arises from cooperation itself" (Marx, 1976, p. 447). The resulting use values are as diverse as the message communicated on a banner, the convenience of a potty-trained child, an agreement reached through consensus process, the joy of music, or the succulence of a home-grown tomato. Because labour can enrich life in so many ways, Marx characterizes labour itself as "alive, … as the living subject," an "animating soul" (1973, pp. 272, 461) that raises from the dead the past labour embodied in machines (Marx, 1976, pp. 290, 308). None of its life-giving use values – which I also often call forms of wellbeing – are manifest out of the void. Even the more intangible ones, like the outcome of a consensus process, are collaborations in constructed spaces with other physical bodies, brains, and the language and culture built historically by others.

This is why, immediately after defining labour, Marx goes on to write that "It is an appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man [sic]. It is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction between man and nature" (ibid 1976, p. 290, see also ibid 1976, pp. 283–284; J. B. Foster, 1999; Moore, 2015, Chapter 3). In other words, labour is the activity of living organisms (including humans) within nature's

[1] For more Marxist definitions of labour in general, see (Braverman, 1974, Chapter 1; Cohen, 1978, pp. 40–45; Ferguson, 2020, pp. 14–17; Ollman, 1976, pp. 97–108).

broader metabolic relations, activity to make use of what is available and to satisfy needs and thereby reproduce life. As energy moves through the "flow of flows" from the sun, geothermal transfers, the climate, and through the entire web of organic life (Moore, 2015, p. 7), this life is always orienting its activity toward richer, more useful flows of energy. It is easy to see life strategically orienting itself toward richer metabolic relations when trees grow strong where they find a flow of water that leaves them neither drowning nor dry and a place with both shelter from the wind and plentiful light.

Social life, on the other hand, can seem far removed from such biological questions. Our reproduction is as much a question of hashing things out, coming to terms, and learning new ways of being together as a question of food, hygiene, and shelter. Complicated as these affective aspects of our reproduction may be, materialism reminds us that they too require energy, are collaborative, and allow for more strategic collaborations that can better meet our needs. Instead of being strictly a question of calories and efficiency, use value also includes care.

What's a relation?

This web of life is a web of relations: ranging from astrological and geological relations to those of biology and ecology, and from juridical and financial relations to those of pedagogy and caretaking. Within such astounding diversity, humans and all other life can orient our activity *strategically*, toward metabolizing what is most useful and available, what is least problematic, within the constellation of relations that comprise a given time and place. Where to set up camp within this particular confluence of land and water, at this time of year, given today's weather and the standing agreements between us and our neighbours? Given our immigration status, the state of the economy and policing, and the needs of everyone at home – is it better to apply for social services, go back to school, pick up gig work, or write resumes? More than just reacting to relations, humans and life in general also works to shape them, as when the immigrant rights movement fights to regularize undocumented immigrants. We structure and are structured.

What exactly are these "relations"? A relation is a connection, the quality of things' togetherness, the flavour of their articulation. If energy is flowing in all sorts of ways, looking to relations makes us question the nature of those flows. In addition to lending a "quality" or "flavour" to the things it brings together, Marx describes the relation as "a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it" (1973, p. 107). Such poetry belies the difficulty nailing down what exactly relations are, especially since they comprise both the ether determining the connection between things, as well as the things themselves that are brought together in relationship.[2] Such a philosophy of "ands" can quickly make your head spin, which is why philosophical atomism is much more popular, instead imagining that people can first be understood in complete isolation from one another, before looking to their relations as an external, incidental association. As "a philosophy of internal relations" (Ollman, 2003), the thought process of dialectical materialism also begins with what we can touch, taste and feel, but it immediately moves to investigate these things by tracing and mapping their relations. In this way, things are understood *as* their relations – or rather, people and objects are but the crystallizations of the relations that constitute them. Such an understanding leads Marx to often say things like "Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of the relationships and conditions in which these individuals stand to one another" (1973, p. 265).

Centring relations means centring reproduction, as relations are either continuously renewed or they fade away.[3] Throughout this chapter I will discuss reproduction in five senses, and this is the first: as a conceptual tool that dialectical thinkers make notable use of. In this sense, reproduction is a synthetic lens, a mode of abstraction wherein we consider both the process by which a thing was created and its use in further processes. As Marx writes,

[2] Ollman notes that Rubel, who translated Marx into French, said the various German words for "relation" confounded his work most of all (2003, p. 26n3).

[3] Because Marx always thinks in terms of relations as processes requiring reproduction, we also often find quotations of this sort: "The capitalist process of production, therefore seen as a total, connected process, i.e. a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital-relation itself; on the one hand the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer" (1976, p. 724).

> Whatever the social form of the production process, it has to be *continuous*, it must *periodically repeat* the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a *connected whole*, and in the constant flux of its *incessant renewal*, every social process of production is at the same time a process of reproduction. (1976, p. 711, my emphasis)

Therefore, Marx's inquiry of capital as a *relation* between workers and capitalists, production and consumption, use and exchange value, poverty and wealth becomes an investigation into capital as a continuous, incessantly renewed *process*. This is "reproduction" in the second sense, as it pertains to the reproduction or "self-valorization" of capital in particular. Importantly for my point here, capital is a process that perpetuates the relations that serve as its preconditions. Looking to Marx again, "Individual consumption provides, on the one hand, the means for the workers' maintenance and reproduction; on the other hand, by the constant annihilation of the means of subsistence, it provides for their continued re-appearance on the labour-market" (1976, p. 719). Bereft of the necessary resources, workers must sell their labour power for wages if they are to access the things they need to survive, but in spending this money they empower the same capitalist class that bereaved them in the first place. Understanding capital as a process – complete with dynamism and movement, obstacles and limitations – helps us better understand it as a relation. This, in turn, helps us imagine how we might intervene in the process as to change the relations.

Capitalism is a social relation

This all leads us to *social* relations in particular. Amidst the diversity of relations that comprise us – including everything from the relations of astrophysics to those of cellular biology – social relations are the subset of relations between people, "the sum of the relationships and conditions in which these individuals stand to one another" (Marx, 1973, p. 265). These relations can be further divided into any number of categories: sexual, gendered, and racial relations; production, consumption, and ecological relations; military, justice, and political relations; religious, pedagogical, and cultural relations; health, care, and family relations. They are all qualities of our endlessly varied ways of collaborating. There are obviously no absolute dividing lines between assumedly-human social relations and the more-than-human relations so often walled off as "Nature"

(Moore, 2015). Indigenous treaty-making offers some wisdom here, as it is an effort to navigate a sea of often-conflicting relations by building consensus as to what "right relation" should look like.[4]

In contrast to such consensual relations, Marx defines capitalism as "a particular relation belonging to a historical form of society" (1973, p. 264). It is a relation wherein the ability to collaborate to create use values – otherwise known as labour power – has been rendered a commodity, something people must sell to survive. This transaction appears to be one of equivalence, yet it masks relations of exploitation that allow for accumulation. Murray Smith describes these peculiar social relations saying they have "usurped from conscious humanity effective control over the socio-economic life process and imposed a set of socially grounded laws *that are both very powerful and deeply hidden from view*" (2019, p. 13 emphasis mine). Marx's oeuvre was dedicated to determining which specific relations are most fundamental to this mystifying operation of exploitation and profit-making. As Huws writes,

> The labour theory of value is the knot at the heart of Marx's conceptualisation of capitalism as a social relationship. It integrally links three things: workers' need for subsistence, their labour [power], and the surplus value expropriated from the results of that labour [power], without which capital cannot be accumulated or capitalism perpetuated. (2014, p. 82)

We can understand these three categories more explicitly *as* social relations: the caretaking relations of subsistence, the productive relations of labour, and the exchange relations of expropriation.[5] Marx's genius

[4] For example, the Dish with One Spoon treaty (Lytwyn, 1997) is one of reconciliation between Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations, as well as an agreement to interact with the land and its peoples through relations of generosity instead of violence. The numbered treaties between Indigenous nations and the British Crown across so-called Canada, as well as the Two Row Wampum between the Haudenosaunee and Dutch, are in effect "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the rivers flow," which couches political relations within broader natural relations. Reflecting on a conversation with Judy Da Silva of Grassy Narrows First Nation, Simpson writes that "According to Nishnaabeg traditions, our relationship with the moose nation, the deer nation and the caribou nation is a treaty relationship like any other, and all the parties involved have both rights and responsibilities in terms of maintaining the agreement" (2011, Chapter 6). Spirituality can be seen the same way, as an ordering of relations, plus intentions for which relations to strengthen and weaken through collective action within them. This is why TallBear suggests that Lakota and Dakota thought has often been mis-translated, using the word "sacred" where it should read "in relation" (2019, p. 66).

[5] I would add a fourth category here: the metabolic relation, the form that people's relationships with other people-as-nature and the wider living world takes under capitalism.

was to explain how they operate as an organic whole, as a single process that is continuously reproduced.[6] More than simply asserting an orderly cycle of the self-valorization of capital, Marx complicates things by showing how classes of people have struggled historically to strengthen and weaken them.

Social movement means moving relations

The lesson is that the quality of human collaboration can *move* toward greater subsumption into capitalist relations or autonomy from them. Subsumption is the strengthening of relations of forced collaboration, the movement of progressive alienation, displacing pre-existing relations so that abstract exchange value dominates concrete use value (D. Harvey, 2007, pp. 14–19, 2014, pp. 15–24; M. E. Smith, 2019, p. 13) and objectified, dead labour controls subjective, living labour (Ollman, 1976, pp. 145–146). Autonomy is the opposite movement. Understanding that capitalist social relations are constituted by the collaborative activity of purposeful people, the great majority of whom are oppressed by these relations, this is the movement as they assert their agency in self-determining, showing that abundant life can never be fully subsumed, leaving capitalism in constant crisis, constantly reacting (Holloway, 2002, pp. 176–187).[7]

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[6] Marx writes that "Capital exists as capital only in so far as it passes through the phases of circulation, the various moments of its transformation, in order to be able to begin the production process anew, and these phases are themselves phases of its realization" (1973, p. 546; see also D. Harvey, 2007, pp. 20–24).

[7] There are many Marxist critics of autonomy, and they tend to hastily summarize it as an uncompromising rejection of state politics that confines autonomous movements to prefigurative activity, which critics deem to be isolated and inconsequential (C. Barker et al., 2014a, pp. 20–21; D. Harvey, 2014, pp. xii–xiii; Thwaites Rey, 2011, p. 145). Rather than restricting it to a strategic orientation vis-à-vis the state – and especially electoral politics in particular – I prefer to conceive of autonomy as the *movement away from* (and not an attempt at a clean break from) capitalist social relations. As we will see throughout the dissertation, each organization engages in this movement according to their unique context, using the unique resources they have at hand, and in response to the unique obstacles they confront. All of them take the state into account as they organize for greater self-determination, often in very nuanced, localized ways. Rather than prioritizing their orientation towards the state and electoral politics above all else, I believe a materialist focus on the collaborative activity through which they organize and the social relations this activity seeks to strengthen and weaken provides better insights into how we can engage in class struggle.

There are much broader philosophical debates concerning the opposition between – and imbrication of – autonomy and heteronomy that are beyond the scope of this dissertation (see Castoriadis, 1986; Reath, 2006). Suffice to say that critiques of autonomy are also predicated on a broader disagreement between the dialectical philosophy of *internal* relations, which asserts that there is only a contradictory whole and no "outside" to escape to, and an autonomist philosophy premised on such exteriority. Hence Lenin's emphasis on the messiness of operating within these contradictions and his denouncement of "ultra-leftists" who demand "no compromises" as they struggle for purity, outside capitalist cooptation (1940). In this regard, I side with those emphasizing dialectical, internal relations. And yet those who have become too accustomed to this messiness make it into an excuse for accommodating to capitalist relations, for renouncing militancy and instead struggling for "socialism, starting with me." In this sense, the greatest

Therefore, while it often feels like capitalism is timeless and universal, it is actually made up of a particular, contingent set of social relations (M. E. Smith, 2019, p. 14).[8] Furthermore, these relations are deeply contradictory, producing persistent crisis. And yet they are also mystifying, slyly casting "the productive power of labour" so that "it appears as a power which capital possesses by its nature" (Marx, 1976, p. 451), thereby leaving us unprepared to seize crisis as an opportunity for change. Marxism, as a tradition dedicated to demystifying the social relations through which our labours shape our world, thereby offers tools as we seek to identify and modify these exploitative relations, instead of taking them to be eternal structures deigned by God.

Looking across history, regimes of social relations are in constant construction and decay (Marx & Engels, 1970, sec. C), showing that – as diverse qualities of human *collaboration* – social relations are always changing. This is because some relations are in contradiction with others. As mentioned above, the smooth functioning of capital's self-valorization process is predicated on there being a supply of workers waiting to be hired and a supply of materials for them to work on. This requires the dispossession of land and bodies, the appropriation of nature, and appropriation of the reproductive work of life-making. These processes are always incomplete. Yet, to the extent that dispossession and appropriation are successful, they undermine the

tension revolutionaries hold – the deepest question animating their walking – is how to transform these relations from within, aiming to change them so completely that they cease to be capitalist.

[8] For example, property relations are central to capitalism, yet they are just one among many ways that people appropriate the objects of nature as to create forms of wellbeing (Marx, 1973, pp. 87–88). As possessive subject-object relations, they exist antagonistically alongside "co-constitutive relations between beings" (TallBear, 2019, p. 32). Furthermore, property relations do not exist simply because people became enamoured by John Locke's idea, but because of violent, sometimes colonial processes of enclosure (Marx, 1976, pt. 8; D. Harvey, 2004); of enslavement, its racialized justifications for making Blacks property, and the parallel assertion of whiteness as a legally-sanctioned claim on property (Harris, 1993); and a similar gendered process of consigning women to property while enclosing the common lands they tended (Federici, 2004). For all these reasons Holloway asserts that, instead of being an objectified noun, property is a verb, an ongoing historical process (2005, p. 174). Ferguson specifies that this historical process is one of ongoing differentiation, wherein capitalist social relations are perpetuated through the differentiating relations of things like patriarchy and race, which the system seizes upon to further exploit people (2020, pp. 114–118). Despite this historical project to strengthen relations of scarcity and accumulation, people continue to engage in relations of generosity, such as the caretaking relations of revolutionary mothering (Gumbs et al., 2016) and gift economies in which the "utility" of exchanging objects is to strengthen the social bonds between the givers (Hyde, 2007, pt. 1).

ability of nature and people-as-nature to reproduce themselves, creating crises such as the current mass extinction.

Moreover, there is constant resistance against this oppression by those who assert their self-determination. This is in addition to the contradictions we find in the sphere of production, including the problems of workers' resistance, overproduction-underconsumption, and the falling rate of profit. The revolutionary possibility of these contradictions led Marx and Engels to motivate the working class to become capitalism's "gravediggers" (Marx & Engels, 2017, sec. 1) and envision communism as a society of self-determined abundance. In this sense, self-determination is the work of people who must still do the messy work of reproducing life but – to the degree that they are free *from* imposed scarcity – are free *to* consensually shape the qualities of their collaboration, in explicit pursuit of relations of abundance. Rather than an individualist scramble to stave off exhaustion, they can elaborate increasingly collective ways for care to flourish. In this way the "self" in self-determination is an ever-widening "we," and we should focus our attention on the practical, everyday *collaborations* through which its relations are shaped.

How then to act to strengthen such relations? Who will the midwives of a self-determined society be, and how will they strengthen its nascent relations? Finding answers requires considering the extent to which our collaboration is characterized by capitalist relations (it will never be complete), how such ways of collaborating are perpetuated (there will always be crisis), and how we might collaborate under different relations (there will always be possibility).

Labour

Despite how important it is, discussions of labour are too often truncated. While it includes *all* purposeful activity producing use values, much analysis of labour focuses on the sub-category of "productive" labour (Marx, 1976, pp. 1038–1049; Poulantzas, 1978, Chapter 2; M. E. Smith, 2019, pp. 224–225) or labour "inside the knot" (Huws, 2014, p. 84). Productive labour not only creates use value but also exchange value – that

abstract measure of socially-necessary labour time that serves as the lynchpin for capitalist accumulation. Those following in Marx's tradition often also follow the argumentation of *Capital*, transitioning quickly from discussing labour as a concrete, living activity (1976, pp. 283–292) to discussing the way this activity becomes abstracted, shifting attention to the necessity of such abstraction for capital's process of self-valorization (ibid 1976, pp. 293–306).[9] Jameson writes of *Capital*,

> this Bible of the working class scarcely deals with labor at all. The existential experience of labor cannot be reproduced, and leads us in any case outside the realm of capital, which is not interested in the lived qualities of work as such, but only in its quantity and the surplus value to be extracted from it.[10] (2011, p. 112)

Let us follow his lead "outside the realm of capital," stretching the concept of labour as we shift from a focus on workers' difficulties in accessing life-sustaining use values under conditions of dispossession, exploitation, and alienation – that is, within capitalist social relations – to a focus on everyday labour practices in an unwaged, "unproductive" setting. Likewise, we should stretch the concept of use value past its primary example of the utility of a coat and other such pesky preconditions for the realization of exchange value. The first step is to look to the use values necessary for the reproduction of labour power (Marx, 1976, pp. 274–275), those that allow people to continue showing up to work from one day to the next. Then, possibly, we can stretch the concept further and look to the use values that might allow their lives to flourish.

Productive, unproductive, reproductive labour

To better understand organizing, I therefore begin with the assertion that this variety of collaborative effort is also labour, but as "unproductive" labour, organizing has important differences from that of most Marxist analysis. It is unproductive because work on a Zapatista collective farm, at a non-profit, or with a housing cooperative does not "create surplus value directly," as it is not "directly consumed in the course of

[9] For example, see (Braverman, 1974, pp. 45–52; D. Harvey, 2007, pp. 5–9; Ollman, 1976, pp. 182–184).

[10] Jameson goes on to say that, when Marx does write about concrete labour (for example 1976, Chapter 10), he draws on British governmental reports on the wretched condition of factory workers to document "the impossibility of work at its extremes, and about the body on the brink of exhaustion. Its deeper subject is not concrete labor but class struggle" (2011, p. 113).

production for the valorization of capital" (Marx, 1976, p. 1038). True, the Zapatistas may sell some agricultural produce, AUSM charges tuition for its study abroad program, and cooperative members must make collective mortgage payments. Yet none of this exchange enriches an owner sitting atop any of these organizations (forms of predatory rentierism notwithstanding). Instead, it belongs to an expansive category that Huws labels "subsistence labour for social reproduction,"[11] writing

> Some of this labour, such as that carried out by hunter-gatherers or in subsistence agriculture, predates capitalism by many centuries. But many forms have persisted in the capitalist era. These do not just involve activities related to physical reproduction and family maintenance (bodily care of the self and others, preparing food, cleaning, etc.) but also social and cultural production and reproduction (teaching children to speak, singing, passing on stories, adornment, etc.).

She goes on to say that, while people are certainly coerced into such labour,

> it may equally be a source of joy. To the extent that it includes the possibility of applying one's mind to solving new problems creatively … this kind of labour is perhaps the closest that many people get to the experience of what Marx in the *Grundrisse* described as 'free labour' … It sits firmly outside capitalist relations. (Huws, 2020, pp. 166–167, see also 2014, pp. 95–97)

Huws goes on to offer other categories of labour distinct from waged work for private companies,[12] and her mapping of this varied terrain helps establish some rough dichotomies for conceptualizing organizing as labour, such as characterizing it as unproductive for capital and reproductive for people. To understand organizing as labour, it is important to appreciate this reproductive aspect, all too often ignored because it is unproductive for capital.

[11] Non-profit organizations such as AUSM are arguably in a separate category that Huws labels "paid public service work" (2020, p. 168). Labour in this category is still deemed "unproductive" by Marx and "reproductive" by Huws, with the difference that its service provision is coordinated by the state. Non-profits are formally autonomous of the state, yet their legal status, the resulting regulation of their collaborative arrangements and the purview of their political work, and their dependence on donations that are regulated by the tax code all bring non-profits within the "integral state" (Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 21–24, 1980, pt. 2; Thomas, 2009, Chapter 4.1). On the other hand, Dunning argues that non-profits are state-regulated *private* organizations, strikingly similar to for-profit enterprises in terms of their contractual accountability, quantified metrics, concern with cashflow, and relentless competition (2022).

[12] These include paid private sector work in homes or farms (servant labour), paid private service work for companies (capitalist service work), paid public service work, and unpaid labour in the home and community (consumption work) (2020, pp. 167–169).

Before further discussing reproductive labour, I must pause here to mention the debate over the designation of social reproduction work as unproductive. Fortunati (1995, Chapter 6) and Dalla Costa (1972, p. 30) famously argued that, because this is the work of reproducing labour power, which is the source of all capitalist value, social reproduction work produces surplus value and is therefore rightly considered productive. I join Ferguson (2020, pp. 121–125) and Huws (2014, p. 87) in keeping with Marx's distinction between productive and unproductive labour, seeing one as labour that is directly exploited via wage relations and the other as labour that is appropriated. Moore (2015, Chapter 2) explains that appropriation includes the heavily gendered labour that reproduces human life and the biological, more-than-human (plant and animal) work that reproduces the entire web of life. Capitalism relies on all these foundational use values yet treats them as "free gifts" without an exchange value. Therefore, reproductive labour does not have (capitalist) value precisely because capitalism is predicated on its free services. It takes life-making for granted, yet systematically undermines the wellbeing necessary for this reproductive work to continue.

Moreover, categorizing certain forms of labour as unproductive or lacking value is not meant to be pejorative. Far from equating surplus value *production* with the *utility* of being valuable, Marx lamented that "To be a productive worker is therefore not a piece of luck, but a misfortune" (1976, p. 644). His discussions of the working day and working class housing illustrate this misfortune in morbid detail (1976, Chapters 10, 25). This is especially grievous because their work is what transforms nature's wealth into all social wealth, be it the resorts and caviar beloved by the rich or the family reunions and comfort food beloved by the rest of us. Those on the top find labour to be a menacing, many-headed Hydra (Linebaugh, 2012), so they pile one variety of police upon the next, each with their own brutality, corralling social labour into "productive" activity at the workplace. Seen in this light, capitalism's "law of value" is a set of social relations that systematically *devalue* the labour of life-making by rendering it unproductive, as to more easily appropriate it and force people to do the "productive" work if perpetuating profit-making to survive.[13] Moreover, the law

[13] I draw here from Murray Smith, who writes of "an Invisible Leviathan – a structure of socio-economic relations that has usurped from conscious humanity effective control over the socio-economic life process and imposed a set of socially grounded laws that are both very powerful and deeply hidden from view. Its crowning law, the capitalist law of

of value also obscures the power of labour, leading us to imagine the entrepreneur was solely responsible for our social abundance. Wealth becomes an abundance of exploitation and those who enrich life are condemned to exhaustion. Our challenge is to reclaim this monstrous power of collaboration.

Five perspectives on reproduction

We take no offense at being labelled unproductive, seeing as to how this is the labour of reproduction, the way people "express their life" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 42). Again, this is a shift to the opposite side of some crude dichotomies: from an emphasis on collaborative relations of scarcity, exploitation, and alienation, prioritizing exchange value, abstraction, and quantity; to a search for the abundance, self-determination, and fulfillment that are possible through collaborative relations prioritizing use value, concrete activity, and quality (Jameson, 2011, pp. 112–113). Bridging this divide, Huws points out that subsistence is the doorway between production and reproduction (2014, p. 82) or, as Fraser puts it, between the "hidden abode" of *Capital* and the world behind the hidden abode (2014). It is the threshold since – seen from one perspective – capitalist exploitation depends on squeezing workers' pay downward toward the minimum value for subsistence, instead of paying them for all the value their labour creates. For the worker, that squeeze is often the difference between being housed and evicted, between maintaining the workaday routine and falling into crisis. The struggle here is to keep on working one more week, one more year, to make it to retirement without accumulating too much disability.

There are two important points here. First, this "minimum" of subsistence is not biologically determined, but political. Marx notes that it varies across locations according to "historical and moral elements" including "the habits and expectations with which the class of free workers has been formed" (1976, p. 276). This is to say that class struggle can and does force capitalists to raise wages and accept a higher minimum (yet still paltry) level of subsistence. Second, this subsistence also depends on a great deal of mostly free, mostly gendered

value, compels humanity perforce to apply a single yardstick in the measurement of 'wealth': the yardstick of 'value,' of abstract socially necessary labour time" (2019, p. 13).

care within the family and community. These labours of life-making keep the gears turning, yet they are rendered so precarious that their life-making only amounts to subsistence, not flourishing.

The theoretical point I wish to make is that reproduction is a many-splendored concept. This care work and the political work of pushing the level of subsistence upwards are both forms of reproduction. In fact, I employ the concept in five senses throughout the dissertation. To recap, the first sense of reproduction is as an analytical perspective, one that sees a world of *flows* instead of a world of discrete *things*, inquiring into the relations that allow these flows to be connected and renewed. The second sense is that of the reproduction of capital, its flowing transformation from money into labor power and means of production, into commodities, into money accumulated as profit, and reinvested into production on an expanded scale.

Capital's process of self-valorization is only made possible by reproduction in the third sense, by care work renewing the vitality of the labour power that produces profit. This "social reproduction" is universal across human societies, defined as the collaborative activity of people labouring within nature to produce the use values they need to survive (for example Ferguson, 2020, pp. 10–12). Yet under capitalism "Labour becomes something more than a practical human activity to be set in motion to meet specific needs and desires. It becomes a means of producing commodities." Since people can only meet their needs by accessing commodities, they now live to work: living "goes underground" as "work for a capitalist comes to dominate all 'life-activity'" (ibid 2020, p. 12). Marx describes this work as a process of transferring the worker's "vitality" into the commodities they produce, a vitality which must be reproduced both day-to-day and generationally. He writes that

> Capital has paid him [sic] the amount of objectified labour contained in his vital forces. Capital has consumed it, and because it did not exist as a thing, but as the capacity of a living being, the worker can, owing to the *specific* nature of his commodity – the specific nature of the life process – resume the exchange anew … There is more labour objectified in his immediate existence than is contained in his mere vitality … namely the values he has consumed in order to produce a specific *labouring capacity*, a special *skill*.[14] (1973, pp. 323–324)

[14] This leads Colletti to conclude that "capitalist appropriation is not exclusively or primarily an appropriation of *things*, but rather an appropriation of subjectivity, of working energy itself, of the physical and intellectual powers of man [sic]" (Colletti, 1972, p. 102). This is why, beyond recuperating stolen value, anticapitalist struggle is ultimately to recuperate

This conceptual movement that ties together production and reproduction is crucially important, as it helps us understand labour within each sphere as part of a single "vital," metabolic flow. It helps us understand capitalism as a set of material relations that must be continually renewed, even though some of this activity is priced, while a great deal of other activity has been appropriated and does not enter into any ledger (Moore, 2015, Chapter 2). On a family level, the labour of social reproduction is the cooking, cleaning, nursing, venting, and caring through which we rejuvenate each other, so that we can continue being exhausted by work each day. Much of this happens within the household, leading it to be associated with the domestic sphere despite the fact that it stretches well beyond. On a generational level, it is the work of raising the next cohort of people with labouring capacity (labour power) by teaching them language and basic hygiene, socializing them, disciplining them through schooling, teaching them literacy and occupational skills. Because reproduction is "social" in all five senses listed here, I distinguish this third sense as "domestic" reproduction. And because its labours extend well beyond the private household, I employ the scare quotes.

This leads us to reproduction in the fourth sense: the class struggle to reproduce difference, which I also call "reproduction from above." It required an entire historical process of violent enclosure, dispossession, and appropriation for those possessing money to have at their disposal a readily-available mass of people hungry to sell their labour power. Moreover, the unequal exchange wherein workers are only paid wages while capitalists keep the profit continuously reproduces and perpetuates this class difference. As Marx writes,

> Capitalist production … reproduces and perpetuates the conditions under which the worker is exploited. It incessantly forces him [sic] to sell his labour-power in order to live, and enables the capitalist to purchase labour-power in order that he may enrich himself. It is no longer a mere accident that capitalist and worker confront each other in the market as buyer and seller. It is the alternating rhythm of the process itself which throws the worker back onto the market again and again as a seller of his labour-power and continually transforms his own product into a means by which another man can purchase him. In reality, the worker belongs to capital before he has sold himself to the capitalist. (1976, p. 723)

these subjectivities and working energies, directing them toward fulfillment strengthening right relation instead of accumulation strengthening oppression.

This form of reproduction, along with all the others, is more than simple repetition. All are beset by contradiction, as capital reproduces itself on an ever-expanding scale, leading to overproduction and the destruction of the natural vitality it relies upon. Likewise, those on the bottom resist the reproduction of increasingly polarized wealth and poverty, which is why capitalists support the state and its political efforts to reassert such power relations by perpetuating forms of difference: criminalization, the imposition of racial, gendered and migratory hierarchies, the cultivation of privileged pockets within the working class, corporate welfare, the well-intentioned "optimization" of poverty (Moisés & Galeano, 2018a), and channelling resistance into less antagonistic electoral, legislative and institutional contention (Piven & Cloward, 1979, Chapter 1; Poulantzas, 1980, pt. 2). Such efforts to mitigate contradictions never dispel them.

This leads us to reproduction in the fifth sense, since such efforts to reproduce an internally-divided working class are only necessary because they are constantly limited by class struggle from below, the reproduction of resistance, the reproduction of solidaristic relations of generosity, at odds with capitalism. I call this "reproduction from below." This dissertation is dedicated to exploring the organizing through which reproduction from below is strengthened. As a contradictory force within and against capitalism, the reproduction of relations of generosity is by no means "ever-expanding." Instead, organizers are at great pains to simply replenish the vitality that fuels their labour of love from one day to the next. Yet sometimes, to some extent, they are able to raise the "level of subsistence" and create a society with a little less violence and a little more life.

This leads to my wager: Seen from the perspective of those on the bottom, "subsistence" might be the foundation for reproducing *more* life, not enduring its perpetual diminution. As reproduction is strengthened, so too may resistance, because people who flourish are able to assert their life-making ever more. They can refuse to bear such suffering. Capitalism's arrangement hinges on a precarious, exhausted worker being forced to continue clocking in, so what if that imperative were not so strong and their creative efforts could be directed elsewhere? If the day-to-day reproduction of their vitality were not quite so dependent on these

wages, if they were not so obliged to send off workers to dutifully enrich the bosses, more vitality could be directed at reproducing each other as fulfilled, rebellious humans. In this sense, each bit of additional vitality is a foothold for pushing for social relations in which that vitality is consistently reproduced, allowing for even more. Each is the seed of a virtuous cycle. These vital footholds might make the difference between labouring under one set of social relations or other, better ones.

Struggling within the wiggle room

These dichotomies of production-reproduction and exploitation-self-determination are helpful starting points, but we must then move beyond them. Liberation is not as easy as quitting your job, walking out the door of the hidden abode, and into a marvelous communist utopia. As a system of *relations* that exist at various levels, unevenly across space, under various conditions, and with varying material strength, there is not a separate set of relations that are completely distinct and completely "outside" capitalism. There is but one web of life. Within this web, our reproductive efforts are sometimes able to contradict capitalist relations: they belie capitalism's weakness in that reproductive collaboration is not *completely* subsumed into capitalist relations, thereby posing a challenge to it. Withdrawing these "free gifts" of reproduction (Marx, 1976, p. 451) would pose a fatal crisis to capitalism. And yet, much of the time the opposite is true: The other side of the contradiction is that the system has *largely* appropriated reproduction, mostly digested our life-making efforts as to reproduce alienated subjects who will serve the demands of profit-making (Bhattacharya, 2017a, p. 82; Fraser, 2014, p. 70).

This space between "largely" and "completely" is the wiggle room of contradiction and struggle. It is naïve to imagine we can immediately break with these contradictory relations and immediately form purely harmonious ones. Instead, there is the mess, the painstaking struggle as we confront the ways capitalist relations have worked over centuries to shape our individual desires and aspirations, our organizations' vicious cycles, and the social flow that channels all wealth upward. The struggle towards right relation often

suffers two steps back after one step forward. It walks on the legs of theory and its practice:[15] the conceptual, hopeful work of understanding how labour is the source of all social wealth, potentially for the wellbeing of all; and the painstaking practical work of changing the activities that comprise our reproduction bit by bit.

"Organizing" is the political, reproductive work of creating a different social formation, the work of social movement, of moving our social relations.[16] As such, it is a particular variety within the array of reproductive labours. And while I enumerated the care work of reproduction and the political struggle for "reproduction from below" separately, they are not so different. As we will see throughout the dissertation, political organizations struggling for a different social formation engage in many of the same replenishing, caretaking labours commonly associated with "domestic" reproduction.

Additionally, both varieties of reproductive labour are conducted through *other* relations, yet labour within these relations has been (tenuously) appropriated by capitalism. A bureaucrat looking to orient their everyday work of social service provision can appeal to capitalist relations of ownership and its positivist, rationalist logics, but a comrade cannot appeal to these same relations in caring for someone who has been humiliated at the bureaucrat's window. The comrades may reproduce each other so they can return to the window tomorrow and collect their well-deserved disbursements, or they may draw on these same ways of relating to nourish the struggle to raise the rates, or to upend the bureaucracy. Similarly, these comrades may pursue raising the rates by applying for non-profit status, hiring staff, generating media attention, and pressuring elected officials – labour that often results in material gains yet seldom weakens the social relations that make for so much need. If they are to confront these violent relations, they will need to coordinate their political efforts in other ways, ways that draw from the strengths latent in social reproduction's wiggle room. This

[15] Pardon the ableist and anthropocentric metaphor. Life also moves on four, six or eight legs, any number of fins, and a seed's parachute.

[16] Such an assertion is uncommon within social reproduction theory. Authors often celebrate the struggles of unionized workers in the reproductive sectors of health and education (Ferguson, 2020, Chapter 8; Jaffe, 2020), yet it remains unremarked that organizing as such - and not just the organizing of workers who provide social reproduction *services* - is a labour of social reproduction.

labour is mostly corralled into reproducing capitalist relations, and it can also reproduce others. How to do less of the former and more of the latter?

I look to the experiences of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni in seeking to answer this question. It centres a contradiction that is the beating heart of social reproduction theory. As Federici writes, "To the extent that labor power can only exist in the living individual, its reproduction must be simultaneously a production and valorization of *desired* human qualities and capacities, and an *accommodation* to the externally imposed standards of the labor market" (2012, p. 99, my emphasis). How do we strategically turn this contradiction of *social* reproduction into *political* struggle? How to strengthen these "desired human qualities," pushing towards a rupture?

The provocation that I offer those thinking about and doing social reproduction – the question that drives this dissertation's search for what is to be done – is to ask whether this special sort of labour is key to coming into right relation. Can we struggle within this wiggle room, strengthening its relations of generosity and abundance? Might "organizing" be the common name for this political, reproductive labour of struggle, might "social movement" be the need it seeks to satisfy, and might we look to experiences of organizers to learn how to better go about it?[17] In the following chapters I will discuss in more detail such labour and the use values it produces, charting their everyday iterations and how, despite great difficulty, people are sometimes able to cobble together virtuous cycles of collaboration, altering flows of life and labour enough to move social relations.

[17] My motivation here is similar to Hardt and Negri's call to "recognize and foster the existing, widespread circuits and capacities for cooperation and organization, and indeed to comprehend that the talents of social cooperation are a broad and solid basis for political organization" (2017, p. 140). It is also similar to Negri's preoccupation with how to liberate living labour (1991, Chapter 8), although hopefully I consider this question through more concrete examples and with more practical conclusions. Finally, while I do not share his dogged commitment to negative dialectics, I support Holloway's call to "struggle to liberate power-to from power-over [, to] struggle for the reassertion of the social flow of doing, against its fragmentation and denial" (2002, p. 36, see also pp. 238-242).

Movement through flows

I have used a number of metaphors to emphasize aspects of capitalism, including the web of life, the factory abode and its environs, and a river through which life and labour flow. Each illuminates an important relation within this complex mess while necessarily obscuring others. The flowing river emphasizes the material force of our relations and change within them, and accompanying metaphors such as meanders, channels, dams, reservoirs, droughts, and floods are useful in suggesting struggles over the direction of an uneven river. While this metaphor might suggest that assumedly lifeless rivers should be manipulated, in reality the vitality of labouring humans – the collaborative effort we put into reproducing life – *is* the subjective force and substance of this flow. The quality of the flow is that of the social relations among the people whose efforts comprise it.

Instead of attempting to strengthen the metaphor by endlessly tacking on details, rendering it hopelessly convoluted, I will explain here the historical, material relations that "flows of life and labour" gesture at. Namely, they are relations resulting from struggles over the reproduction of class society, struggles over the extent to which this reproduction will be further subsumed under capitalist relations or be a self-determined process. Because some of these relations are formalized into legislation, policy, and streams of taxation and funding, which are then reproduced by institutions and even built into the physical and social environment, "flows" are not as malleable as the name may imply. Their fixity is precisely why it is a struggle to change them. Social movement is change in the relative strength and weakness of these opposing relations. Finally, I will draw on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *Golden Gulag* (2007) to show how the prison-industrial complex is an illustrative example of a flow, demonstrating the state's responsibility to coordinate the flows by which society as a whole is reproduced, as well as organizers' attempts to change their course through social movement.

Subsumption as social movement

First, on a more general level, Marx's concept of subsumption helps us understand class struggle as conflict over flows. Subsumption explains a particular form of social movement from above: the historical process in which formal, often quantitative changes in labour arrangements created new flows of life and labour, leading to qualitative, self-perpetuating changes in social relations. Marx's primary example of subsumption is the transformation from the labour arrangements of medieval guilds to a fundamentally capitalist society. He begins this history writing that

> all the arrangements of the guild are designed to ensure that work of a *definite quality* is produced. He [the master] has as little control over the price as over the methods of work. The *restrictions* that prevent his wealth from functioning as capital also ensure that this capital does not exceed a certain *maximum*. (1976, p. 1030)

These "arrangements" are the labouring relations between masters and journeymen, and Marx mentions that the power relations of this particular division of labour are akin to that of a professor and student (ibid 1976, p. 1029). In addition to social restrictions on the master's profit from this relation, accumulation is limited because earnings are bound to the specific use values of the craft and cannot be translated into abstract, fungible exchange values that can be readily moved across space, varieties of activity, and accumulated over time.

Contrast all this to formal subsumption into capitalism, a change in collaborative relations such that the master is now a "boss" who pays journeymen-cum-employees wages and is thereby able to direct and manage their work (ibid 1976, pp. 1019–1020). This is a quantitative change in relations, as the introduction of wages makes for abstract, quantifiable value; the boss can now earn more by compelling the workers to labour more intensively and for longer hours; and these changes progress slowly from one enterprise to another. Yet these workers' concrete, everyday activities remain the same as before.

"Real subsumption," in turn, is a qualitative change emerging from the quantitative change that occurred through formal subsumption. Instead of including a limited number of enterprises where former masters are

now relating to production as capitalists by paying wages and accumulating profit, this is a generalized relation, meaning that the "law of value" is fully developed (ibid 1976, p. 1038). Capitalists are all competing to extract as much surplus value from their workers as possible, as to further mechanize their production process, reduce prices, and beat out the competition. A full range of techniques to increase exploitation are available to them, including dissecting and reassembling the labour process as to impose an increasingly minute division of labour, increasingly orienting the labour process around its machines, investing in the technological development of these machines, and expanded management and incentive techniques. These wide-ranging changes increase profits, increasing the minimum amount of capital needed to compete in such an environment, further increasing economies of scale. As a result, "a complete (and constantly repeated) revolution takes place in the mode of production, in the productivity of the workers and in the relations between workers and capitalists" (ibid 1976, p. 1035). There is little left in the labour process that resembles labour during formal subsumption, much less the guild system.

These changes began in individual workplaces, and through the qualitative leap of real subsumption they increasingly remade society into one in which boss and worker alike "live to work," dedicating their efforts to the self-valorization of capital.[18] Subsumption thereby describes how practical changes in labour arrangements led to social movement, eventually creating an entirely novel flow of labour in which material wealth could be accumulated and reinvested in efforts to further perpetuate that flow.

Subsumption extends beyond the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Moore describes how the historical movement recounted above is predicated on a broader transformation, a processes of dispossession wherein nature is appropriated (2015, pp. 14–18). This too is a rearrangement of material activity to strengthen

[18] While some describe this process using the concept of subsumption (Das, 2017, Chapter 8; D. Harvey, 2007, pp. 106–119), Tronti and his fellow Operaistas – inspired by Marx's "Fragment on the Machines" (1973, pp. 690–695) – write about subsumption as a process by which "dead labour" comes to dominate "living labour" (2019, pt. 1 Chapter 2, pt. 2 Chapter 9; see also Negri, 1991, Chapter 7). Ollman, in turn, writes about it as a process of alienation (1976, pt. 3), and Braverman writes historically about the development of management (1974, Chapters 2–4). The prevalence of this bundle of concepts shows that a central task of Marxist theory is to understand the social movement through which capitalist relations came to predominate others, so that we may be better prepared to abolish them.

capitalist relations, as natural processes of geological, climatological, and biological reproduction are first rendered into cheap "natural resources" so that capitalists combine natural wealth with exploitable (and variably subsumed) workers in the labour process. Otherwise – lacking cheap materials, energy, food, and bodies – the costs of production are too high to turn a profit (ibid 2015, pp. 52–55).

Therefore subsumption of formal labour arrangements – wherein the social relations of work become waged, exploited, and then totally upended through industrialization – depends on the massive appropriation of non-human nature and feminized care work. This shows the flow of *value* that Marx summarizes as Money – Capital – more Money (1976, Chapter 4) is but the tip of the pyramid, atop a much larger flow of life and labour that must remain unpaid and discounted for capitalist valorization to function. Marx writes that the "free wage-worker has *no value* … His *valuelessness* and *devaluation* are the presupposition of capital" (1973, p. 289). The unique flow of labour known as capitalism is therefore an arrangement washing across distinctions between subsumed, productive, valued labour as well as appropriated, reproductive, devalued labour.

I mention all this to bring together three points. First, subsumption and self-determination are forms of social movement, a relative strengthening and weakening of the degree to which we collaborate through relations of exploitation and generosity. Second, the composure of all these relations at any point in time amounts a literal, material flow, a certain passage of collaborative life-making through the social metabolism. So there is *movement* in the relative strengths of conflicting relations, and during any moment within this process collaboration is constricted by its relations into certain *channels*, and carving out a new flow takes great effort. This is the fixity of it all, the way that flows get "locked in," making struggles to change them all the more difficult. Third, abstract as all this may sound, we find the everyday articulations of these flows in the ways we live to work, the passage of resources through state institutions, and in the travails of life-making in the pockets of the social pyramid where we live our daily joys and tragedies.

In the final analysis, class struggle is conflict over this flow, over the degree to which life and labour are rendered zombies, wholly dedicated to capital's *self*-valorization process, versus the degree to which labour and its fruits feed the collective flourishing of those reproducing life together. Capitalism therefore results from a social movement from above, and subsumption and appropriation are two forms of this movement, two ways in which social relations have been transformed. This goes to show that social movement travels in many directions, not just leftward toward anticapitalism. Nor are subsumption and appropriation guaranteed to continue into a barbaric future. As we will see with the anticapitalist organizing I explore in the following chapters, they too create novel labour arrangements, thereby creating new material flows and strengthening novel relations.

The prison-industrial flow

While class struggle is ultimately a conflict over flows, its battles are fought over the everyday assertions of difference that make the flow so uneven.[19] In *Golden Gulag* (2007), Gilmore offers a tremendous illustration of the array of institutions, laws, policies, knowledge, taxes, land, buildings, people, capital, enforcement, resistance, and mothering that altogether constitute a flow of life and labor. One of its principal aspects is that it is quite literally a flow of Black and Brown bodies from ghettoized neighbourhoods into rural prisons, channeled along massive slabs of concrete. This fixity makes the task of changing it all the more daunting.

Gilmore's analysis begins with the prior flow, that of the "Keynesian welfare-warfare state" in California (2007, pp. 37–38, 79). It was a response to the labour insurgency of the Depression, leading to the construction of water projects, arms industry, highways, and public education. However, by the 1970s stagflation, deindustrialization, drought, loss of defense contracts, and the revolt of Black, Chicano, and student communities all caused this welfare-warfare flow to fall into crisis.

[19] Hence Hall's assertion that "Race is the modality in which class is lived. It is also the medium in which class relations are experienced" (2013, p. 394).

Gilmore defines crisis specifically as "idleness," the stagnation of flows. She quotes Hall and Schwarz, who write that "Crises occur when the social formation can no longer be reproduced on the basis of the pre-existing system of social relations" (1988, p. 96), adding that struggle over the new formation is a question of "what to make of idled capacities" (2007, p. 54). This is important because capitalism is either growing or dying, in the sense that capital must continuously flow through its circuits of economic reproduction if it is to expand and perpetuate its social relations. If surpluses fall idle, their social relations weaken: idle capital is a heap of money that will be devalued through inflation and losing out to competitors' investments; the infrastructure that has rendered idle land "productive" will whither away; idle labour will be forced to find other ways to survive and not so easily recalled once needed; and idle state capacity will be downsized or put towards other pursuits.

Gilmore then uses these surpluses of capital, land, labour, and state capacity to tell the story of how groups reacted to this crisis by building an alternative, carceral flow. People across California felt this crisis as they lost their jobs, leading reactionary voters to support a "taxpayers revolt" in 1978 and pass a plebiscite to reduce their property taxes and voting down proposals to issue municipal bonds for public works (2007, pp. 42–43, 97). Capital was sitting idle as the bond market languished, and – facing conservative backlash against "big government" – politicians lacked projects that might revive it. The answer came in the 1980s, as white voters grew fearful of becoming a racial minority and became prone to "racist and nationalist conflict over the (mistaken) perception of a scarce state budget" (2007, p. 70). This made "tough on crime" into a recipe for electoral success (2007, pp. 93–95). It showed that majorities of voters were in fact willing to support public debt if it was for building new prisons and filling them with people they had come to fear.

This touched off the world's biggest "prison-building and -filling plan" (2007, p. 5) and made the Corrections department into California's largest agency, precisely because it presented an alternative flow able to mobilize formerly-idle surpluses. Financiers and state technocrats collaborated to roll out alternative bonds, not subject to voter approval (2007, pp. 97–101). Agricultural land idled by drought could be sold off to site the

buildings, promising jobs to neighbouring towns (2007, Chapter 4). State capacity could be put towards coordinating prison expansion (especially the budgetary work of legitimizing never-ending construction by projecting an ever-looming shortfall of beds) and processing the bodies that would fill them (2007, pp. 119–120).

Most importantly, this carceral flow proposed a solution to the problem of those who deindustrialization had made into a "surplus population." These excess humans – numbering one million statewide by 1994 (2007, p. 72) – were unwanted as labour power and could instead be warehoused to the profit of other groups. Reactively, their incapacitation would disrupt the ability of this "lumpenproletariat" to organize for power, as the Black Panthers had attempted (Newton, 1970). Constructively, the flow of bodies – mostly Black and Brown men from just five Los Angeles counties (Gilmore, 2007, p. 75) – from urban to rural spaces would mobilize a flow of wealth through taxes, bonds, expanding bureaucratic, judicial, and enforcement agencies, land sales, construction contracts, prison industry jobs and peripheral services, electoral campaigns, the media sensationalizing it, and academia either advising, auditing, or critiquing it (Blakely, n.d.; Gilmore, 2007, pp. 14, 117–120).

Yet this is only half the story. As a flow of *life* and labour, it has wide-ranging impacts across the communities whose members are systematically caught in its dragnet:

> For one thing, households stretch from neighborhood to visiting room to courtroom, with a consequent thinning of financial and emotional resources. Looking around the block at all the homes, research shows that increased use of policing and state intervention in everyday problems hasten the demise of the informal customary relationships that social calm depends on. People stop looking out for each other and stop talking about anything that matters in terms of neighborly wellbeing. Cages induce or worsen mental illness in prisoners, most of whom eventually come out to service-starved streets. Laws (such as lifetime bans from financial aid) and fiscal constraints displacing dollars from social investment to social expense lock former prisoners out of education, employment, housing, and many other stabilizing institutions of everyday life. In such inhospitable places, everybody isolates. And when something disruptive, confusing, or undesirable happens, people dial 911. As a result, crime goes up, along with unhappiness, and those who are able to do so move away in search of a better environment, concentrating unhappiness in their wake. In other words, prisons wear out places by wearing out people, irrespective of whether they have done time. (2007, pp. 16–17)

In other words, a flow of accumulation for some is a flow of exhaustion for others, primarily for women tasked with both waged work and the care work of holding their households and communities together. On top of all this, "each person and household, dealing with each arrest, must figure out how to undo the detention," adding up to a triple workday (2007, pp. 236–237). While care workers often shoulder this burden in "domestic" isolation, Gilmore's historic overview of Black women's clubs shows that racialized women have never had the luxury of separating the domestic and the political, as "the politics of motherhood required good housekeeping to include, as a matter of course, deliberately raising children to survive in racially defined, conflict-riven lives" (2007, p. 189).

Beginning in 1992, the group Mothers Reclaiming Our Children carried forward this tradition, collectivizing the reproductive work of "undoing detention." They did this through both mutual aid in fighting their children's incarceration and by "extend[ing] past the limits of household, kinship, and neighborhood, to embrace the political project to reclaim children of all ages whose mothers were losing them … into the prison system" (2007, p. 221). By "engaging a broadened community" to practice "interracial political solidarity among all kinds of caregivers losing their loved ones into the prison system" (2007, pp. 236–237), they were able to first broker a truce between rival Los Angeles gangs, then broaden this into a peacemaking process across the city, then fight to have their children transferred closer to home and have their sentences reduced, and then to coordinate a statewide coalition against the draconian Three Strikes law and the prison system in general (2007, Chapter 5).

In sum, their aim was to "*create an order* different from the one built by the state out of more and bigger prisons (2007, p. 236, my emphasis). "Mothers ROC's frontline relation to the state was not as a petitioner for a share in the social wage but rather as an opponent of the state's changing form and purpose with respect to the life chances of their family members and those like them" (2007, p. 239). Instead of fighting for a bigger piece of the pie, their goal was social movement towards a different flow of life and labour altogether.

I include this extended example because of how brilliantly it illustrates important aspects of flows of life and labour. First, the state is fundamental in the reproduction of flows, as it legitimates them, legislates them, directs tax funding toward them, dedicates institutions to perpetuating them, and builds them into the physical landscape. Yet instead of presenting it as an all-powerful monolith, Gilmore's analysis shows the state to be a multifaceted, conflict-ridden concentration of organizing *capacities*. The primary objective of the agencies, institutions, officials, and workers who comprise the state – the intended product of their labour power – is to coordinate a functional flow of life and labour, overcoming the resistance and disarray that threatens to idle it. Yes, this work of "reproduction from above" ultimately recreates the relation between the dispossessors and the dispossessed, but the intrigues of bond markets, budgetary battles, agribusiness interests, tough on crime bills, and taxpayers revolts show all the conjunctural complexity of reproducing this relation. They show it to be an incessant search for provisional solutions allowing for life, labour, and its surplus value to continue flowing, and allowing it to flow away from those on the bottom and towards those on top.

Second, flows are built as people collaborate according to certain social relations, and if their collaboration is successful in getting the life and labour flowing, it further strengthens those relations. Accordingly, we saw how the arrangement labelled "Keynesianism" was a flow built in response to the breakdown of the capital-labour relation during the Depression. As the Keynesian flow fell into crisis, elected officials found that appealing to the social relation of white supremacy won them votes, and this relation was strengthened through all the carceral collaborations – the sensationalizing, legislating, budgeting, building, arresting, and jailing – that erected the prison-industrial complex.

Yet Gilmore shows that these relations stretch far beyond the communities where police concentrate their kidnapping activities. The reorientation of the flow throughout the 1980s and '90s was a process of utilizing abandonment and criminalization in tandem to deny people use values formerly provided through the social wage (Blakely, n.d.). That is to say that social services were withdrawn, people were forced to improvise

informal ways to meet their needs, this informality was criminalized, and punishment caused them to be further denied social services. It was not just people xenophobically labelled as "criminals" who were abandoned, but the working class as a whole. The reorientation of the flow has strengthened relations of deprivation and dependence across society.

Finally, the state does not simply impose flows of labour on society. These flows are complex and provisional precisely because they are always resisted by projects for alternative flows. They are the tentative outcomes of class struggle. Resistance may be reactive, as with the 1978 Taxpayers Revolt and its implicit white supremacy;[20] they may struggle for a larger share of the social wage (that is, for more resources but within the same social relations); or they may constructively promote a "different order" that affords radically different "life chances" (Gilmore, 2007, pp. 236, 239). In all cases, we see that the state does not have a monopoly on coordinating capacity. Gilmore highlights the incredible capacity needed to pay the rent, care for family, and wage a judicial battle to free a loved one. Mothers Reclaiming Our Children was so impressive because its members collectivized and politicized the caretaking efforts needed to survive within such a violent flow of labour, turning their capacities towards the work of changing it. They show how the "domestic" work of survival is the foundation for social movement toward a different flow of life and labour, flowing according to different social relations.

Reproduction charts the class struggle

These mothers' task seems so daunting because the "social movement from above" known as capitalism (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, Chapter 3) appears to be all-encompassing, unopposed as it locks in repression via draconian legislation, ever-growing enforcement budgets, and towering prison walls. Yet all the police and barbed wire are necessary precisely because nothing less will sustain the capitalist flow of labour against all those whose

[20] Notice how conflicts regarding taxation are explicitly focused on "who gets to keep the value," making them struggles over flows of labour. They are usually reactive because they do not advocate for an alternative flow that would provide greater social wellbeing, but are instead "a general indicator of state illegitimacy" and "evidence of opposition to the particular means by which the balance in power relations is realized as a particular state form" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 80).

life-making continuously interrupts it. As Holloway writes, "We are the crisis of capitalism" (2002, p. 203). History indeed moves through class struggle (Marx & Engels, 2017, pt. 1), as the dispossessors scramble to respond to this crisis by innovating new methods of dispossession.[21] This is a struggle between those accumulating via relations of forced collaboration and those pursuing self-determination, a struggle to move social relations in opposing directions.

It is easy to see epochal social movements in this light. The labour movement lessened the amount of labour flowing to the top and accumulated as capital, redirecting more into reproduction. The Civil Rights movement ended an era of brazen lynching, torching, and terrorism, used to secure the super-exploitation of Black labour.[22] Through the second wave of the feminist movement (mostly white) women moved into waged labour and increasingly paid Black and Brown women for these life-making services. These movements all reoriented the flow of life and labour by strengthening or weakening the relations that comprise it, the classed, racial, gendered, migratory, etc *differences* through which forced collaboration is compelled or across which the solidarities of self-determination are forged.

Indeed, differences are another way of pointing to the relations that bridge their two sides. These relations are always changing because the powerful always seek new ways to create a "socially differentiated workforce" (Ferguson, 2020, pp. 114–118); one weakened because they cannot coordinate across such difference while the powerful can; a fragmented society whose activity can be more easily reduced to socially-necessary labour time (Cleaver, 2000, pp. 120–126). Liberatory movements, on the other hand, struggle for greater solidarity.

[21] The Operaista theory of class composition asserts that the working class is in perpetual struggle against capital, either through everyday forms of refusal such as "soldiering" (Braverman, 1974, Chapter 4) or through more organized and antagonistic forms such as strikes, occupations, and takeovers. The strength of their resistance is a question of organization, of their "political composition." In opposition, the capitalist class is perpetually reacting to this antagonism, seeking to re-assert control by innovating new methods of exploitation out of all the options made available under real subsumption, such as mechanization, management, and rearranging the labour process. The Operaistas call this reactionary movement "technical composition." The conflict is over the degree to which people's collaborative activity is articulated by capitalist or anti-capitalist social relations by political or technical composition. I find this understanding fruitful and propose we stretch it even further – beyond the factory walls and across all of society. (S. Wright, 2017, Chapters 2–3)

[22] As Honey documents (2018), this is why struggles for labour rights were so central to the Civil Rights movement.

Such struggles may seek new "parameters of exchange" (Huws, 2020, p. 175), new "boundaries" (Fraser, 2014, pp. 68–70) separating the activities that can be commodified and made to flow through the exclusionary market and, on the other hand, those which remain off the market or coordinated by the state. Nilsen and Cox call these provisional, contentious demarcations in the flow of labour "truce lines," such as those institutionalized as the Keynesian welfare state (2014).[23] After all, the "minimum" level of reproduction that wages must support is a political question, and these are the struggles by which that poverty line is set (Lebowitz, 2003, p. 127; cited by Bhattacharya, 2017a, p. 79). Conjunctural analysis is the art of mapping these material flows, the social groupings in which they pool, the fault lines they cross, the tensions that may upset them, and the strategic activity of groups within this lay of the land.

Movement and flows are also salient on the more immediate level of our everyday lives, but it is easy to ignore them and imagine our activity is limited by structures that won't be changing any time soon. Yet the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its study abroad alumni all show that, no matter how humble the project, organizing is collaborative effort to alter flows and make social movement. The Zapatistas were able to strengthen their reproductive collaboration enough to form an army, coordinate an uprising, recuperate land, displace the plantation-owner class, and dedicate their efforts to cooperative production. AUSM taps into the flow of tuition and tax subsidy dedicated to university education and directs some of it toward the Zapatistas while also inspiring students to organize. Its alumni work to alter flows of labour as low-wage workers organizing unions, tenants dispossessing their landlord, and in collectives that lessen the ability of the prison system to incapacitate people.

[23] Similarly, Polanyi writes of social movements struggling to further "embed" the market in society and its layers of relationship (2001, Chapter 5). The concepts I am developing here are similar in some ways, but I disagree with his suggestion that we can make capitalism kinder and gentler by promoting social regulation of the market. This speaks to Polanyi's distancing from the Marxist tradition (Polanyi, 2014, Chapter 16; cited in Behrent, 2016, p. 437). True, Polanyi's analysis also gestures toward relations. Yet I prefer the concepts mentioned above regarding "boundaries," "parameters," and "truce lines," as they are explicitly designed to explain the state of a class struggle over material flows, one where capitalist relations are no less exploitative, even when they have been regulated to some degree.

Whether we discuss epochal social movements or the everyday organizing that builds up to them, reproduction charts its course. As explained above, theorists of social reproduction depart from the assertion that capitalism "free-rides" on unwaged reproductive labour, relying on it to produce the waged labour power that creates profit (Fraser, 2017, p. 23; see also Fortunati, 1995, Chapter 1; Vogel, 1987). Yet this "'unique' commodity labor power is *singular* in the sense that it is not produced capitalistically" (Bhattacharya, 2017b, p. 3). In other words, reproductive labour cannot easily be subsumed (Federici, 2012, p. 107; Ferguson, 2020, p. 128) precisely because – if it is to remain devalued and unwaged – it cannot be done under supervision at a workplace. Nor can the complex tasks of caring for children and the infirm, maintaining a welcoming and rejuvenating living space, or processing the anxieties of loved ones be so easily mechanized.

This means that this behemoth of a system depends on life that it is incapable of creating on its own terms. There is a contradiction between the labour of creating and sustaining the absolutely necessary commodity called labour power through non-capitalist, reproductive relations and, on the other hand, the exploitation of labour power through capitalist relations of production. Because they cannot control it, the powerful – those who dutifully bear capitalist relations – try and keep the labour of life-making in check by devaluing it, attacking it, forcing those who do it into a perpetual crisis, as to prevent them from becoming even more of a crisis for capitalism.

On one level this appears as neglect. The rich depend on women and their communities to raise and rejuvenate collaboratively-enabled humans, yet as unrepentant misers they deny people the wages to purchase the resources necessary for life-making, and as tax-dodgers they systematically deny them the housing, nutrition, healthcare, transportation, and education resources to support it. These means of subsistence are made into private property and put at the service of profit-making, undermining the reproduction of the human labour power that creates those profits (Ferguson, 2020, p. 13).

Yet the conflict is more antagonistic than passive neglect. Life-making is a source of great power, and only sustained violence will corral it into the service of profit-making. As Ferguson writes, "Capitalism exists only by consistently thwarting the flourishing of human life on which it nonetheless depends" (2020, p. 112). This thwarting of human life occurs through the "production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (Gilmore, 2007, p. 28). It is obligatory childbirth plus the denial of social services; tearing the social fabric through mass incarceration, residential school, and forced adoption; severing relations across barbed wire borders; policing protest as to systematically injure and disable those who dissent; cultures of hatred forcing people to shelter in isolation, for fear of random acts of violence; pedagogies of hatred, convincing people they have nothing worthwhile to give; denial of healthcare, so that the only palliative options are highly addictive and criminalized; genocide of entire peoples who live autonomously of capitalist relations; paving over the greater web of life that sustains us, heals us, and teaches us right relation. Federici writes that "Capitalism fosters a permanent reproduction crisis" (2012, p. 104). Indeed, it must. It is no exaggeration to call it a death cult. These are the vast institutions dedicated to keeping life-making in check, to either annihilating it or disciplining it into obedient labour power.

Violent as they are, these institutions are a reaction, a flailing attempting to manage a power that cannot be contained. Turning to Ferguson once again, "precisely because social reproductive labour is *distinct* from capitalistically 'productive' labour, it can and does resist the alienating and life-thwarting pressures capital applies" (Ferguson, 2020, p. 119 emphasis mine). Social reproduction is a form of social power (Dalla Costa & James, 1972, p. 10). Despite the horrors listed above, communities of love and struggle persist and even grow. This is the point: not only does reproductive flourishing persist within capitalism, it also charts a course for emancipatory social movement. The ways we thrive are also the ways we build power. The labour of life-making is not only in contradiction with profit-making, it is also the labour of class struggle, a means for exploding the contradiction.[24] It is important to appreciate the full breadth of this power, especially since

[24] In this way, "What counts as an anti-capitalist struggle is much broader than Marxists have traditionally supposed … [since] all the indispensable background conditions for the exploitation of labour become foci of conflict" (Fraser, 2014, p. 72).

capitalist relations are designed to systematically obfuscate it, to glorify the gold in billionaires' vaults when the real wealth is our collaboration.

What then is to be done? If capitalism keeps communities' reproduction in check by denying them means of subsistence and attacking them, how to autonomously generate these means (the "yes," or what the Zapatistas call "resistance") and defend against these attacks (the "no," which the Zapatistas call "rebellion")? By asking what it takes to build power, we move from investigating exploitation and oppression (Vogel, 1987), to exploring *societal* reproduction and the labour of moving towards a new society (Brenner & Laslett, 1991; cited in Bhattacharya, 2017b, p. 6). This is the everyday work of moving the flow of labour, so that life-making can benefit the life-makers.

In this dissertation I argue that organizing is reproductive labour to strengthen relations of generosity. As labour, it requires organizers innovate collaborative arrangements and create use values. As reproduction, it requires they replenish their labouring capacity by caring for each other and – most importantly – extend outwards as to strengthen a society of revolutionary care. As effort to change social relations, organizing resists capitalism's drive to reproduce exploitative class relations, struggling to entrench relations of generosity and thereby "reappropriate the social wealth" (Dalla Costa & James, 1972, p. 40).

Beautiful as it may seem, this is no easy task. Hegemonic relations are powerful, and resisting them is messy, exhausting, contradicted. Ensnared in a society of violence, some people will treat their supposed comrades with violence as well. Or reproductive tools are coopted as ways of keeping the exhausted workers working, as when the Human Resources department offers free meditation sessions. This is the problem with any contradiction: that struggle to overcome it may fall into mere techniques to survive within (and thereby sustain) it. Organizers therefore try and uphold a tension of their own, between their everyday reproductive work that can often seem insignificant and the horizon of emancipation from capitalism. Sustaining this generative tension requires militancy: an implacable hatred of its violence and love for life.

It is well and good to describe society by prioritizing the concepts of labour, relations, flows, and social movement. But what does such an understanding mean for the concrete work of organizing, especially since – as with reproductive labour – organizing is also caught in the contradiction of both "support[ing] life" and "ensur[ing] adequate supplies of labour power are available to support capital" (Ferguson, 2020, p. 111)? How to fight our way out of this contradiction, where yesterday's innovations become the buzzwords jabbered by today's "progressive" corporations? Instead of organizers' novel forms of collaboration getting digested into capitalist relations, how do we radicalize popular forms of collaboration, digesting them into non-capitalist relations? The flashes of exuberant vitality within everyday reproduction are proof that right relation is alive, that growing it is possible. So what do we do on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday to move toward it?

Five aspects of organizing

In the following chapters, I turn from elaborating concepts toward answering this question in three, increasingly concrete ways. On the broadest level, in chapter 2 I look at how the Zapatistas have succeeded in substantially redirecting their flow of life and labour through collective work on collective land. Their success is a source of inspiration, showing there *is* something to be done. Next is the Autonomous University of Social Movements' attempt to channel their inspiration from the Zapatistas into organizing work in a very different context ("what is to be done *here*?"). Chapter 4 provides the most practical answer (albeit the one explained in the most general way). Here, I focus on how the labour of moving social relations requires a lot of effort, so recruits must receive immediate reproductive supports if they are to spend less energy "working to live" and more "living to organize." In other words, changing the flow of labour starts small, and organizers must collaboratively generate use values to replace what they forgo by not spending that time bringing in wages or recovering from the workday. This can take the form of tangible "benefits" like housing support or a hot meal. It is also often forms of care that are more intangible, especially those that sustain inspiration (prevent burnout). It all boils down to labour and the rejuvenation of its life-making efforts.

Based on the organizing experiences that AUSM alumni recounted to me, in chapter 4 I propose five aspects of the labour of organizing. They are also present in chapters 2 and 3, although not as explicitly. I will spend the rest of the chapter defining these five aspects using the understandings of labour, use value, flows, social relations, and social movement developed above. Then in chapter 4 I will draw on alumni testimony to discuss them more concretely.

To preview, the first aspect is that, to build the collaborative capacity to change social relations, organizers need initiative. Up against the entire mess that keeps people locked into dominant relations, their initiative launches the collaborative process. They take a gamble and begin to create use values in response to some problem in particular. Second, they build out their organization's collaborative arrangements, its division of labour, the concrete ways they create use values. As non-capitalist labour, this is an arduous process that introduces a host of new messes. Third, because people are so exhausted and organizing work is so tenuous, it can only grow through practices of care, by supporting members' immediate reproduction in some way. Organizations first create relations of generosity among their members, providing themselves forms of wellbeing so that they may dedicate more effort to both strengthening the organization and – most importantly – fighting to change the flow of labour in society at large. Fourth, this collaboration is stronger and more stable the more it is made into an explicit subjectivity, a way of being-with. Instead of taking the mess for granted, organizers recognize that any relation can be changed and that they are capable of collaborating in specific ways to do so. Fifth, by collaborating to create the use values that allow them to care on ever-greater scales, organizations can make social movement: they can do their part (however modest) to change flows of labour and strengthen relations of generosity.

Inspiration to action

Digging in a bit more, note the importance of initiative, the spark that converts inspiration into action, theory into practice. This spark is especially important because organizing is not forced collaboration, obligatory for survival under conditions of dispossession. Instead, attending meetings, knocking on doors, and working

through issues with comrades are all efforts in addition to those of workaday survival, and only inspired people will make the extra effort. Furthermore, a toxic member, a disingenuous public critique, an assault at a protest, the mere threat of legal charges (however spurious) or even endless meetings without concrete plans are often enough to send the group into disarray and burnout. This means that inspiration and initiative – despite often being distinguished as subjective – are key to a materialist understanding of organizing, . To organize is to create the material social conditions necessary to reproduce these labour-inducing sparks. Returning to the subjective side of things, militancy is an ethic guiding this collaboration through immediate hardship in pursuit of distant wellbeing (and even wellbeing that only future generations will live to see). Indeed, this is the quality often associated with Che Guevara, one that the first Zapatistas wished to translate into their organizing in Chiapas (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 113). While inspiration alone is insufficient, it is the *sine qua non* of organizing. I will discuss further in chapter 4 how alumni do this work of "keeping the faith."

The messy work of creating use values

Second, one of my principal insights is that, to best perceive the social movement of organizing, we should see it as labour that is reproductive in both the social and political sense and keenly follow the use values this labour creates. This is the tangible labour upon which all else rests. How is the group collaborating for each other's immediate reproduction, and how is it working to reproduce power relations across society differently? What sorts of utility or wellbeing is it creating to pursue this, and how does it go about creating it? This sort of materialist analysis is perhaps more important than evaluating the stated political positions of a group, discourse that may or may not be concretized into real, sustained effort. Such use values include political education, blockading an oil tanker, providing abortions, using the consensus process to reach an agreement, hydrating protestors, building a workers' committee to fight for unionization, using an accountability process to overcome internal conflict, or the warm feeling of comradeship. To produce any of them, the group must innovate the necessary collaborative arrangements to do so, without a boss's directives or competing enterprises to emulate. It must also begin with existing use values – lacking as they may be –

and use them to create new ones. This creative approach to engaging constricted, contradicted flows of labour is otherwise known as being "strategic." It is the work of making arid environments into nurseries of novel collaborative arrangements.

A further difficulty is determining the "strength" of an organization's use values. I employ this term frequently, recognizing its vagaries, since many alumni I spoke with were quite doubtful about the effectiveness of their organizing activity. The strength of organizers' use values is ambiguous since they are not commodities containing exchange values, meaning there is no abstract measure of equivalence between the outcomes of different activities that would allow us to measure their relative "strengths." This is why Marx writes that, "To say that a commodity has use-value is simply to assert that it satisfies some kind of social need …. Use-values are in themselves incommensurable magnitudes" (1976, pp. 286, 681). Because they are so contextual, their supposed "usefulness" is a political question of whether or not a given need is widely felt and what exactly will satisfy it. . Furthermore, standardized commodities come with their fuel economy and horsepower emblazoned on the tag, but most use values are not so clear. There is no guarantee that the things people agree upon as "wellbeing" are actually helpful. In fact, they may be outright harmful to others, as with white supremacists who see great use value in semi-automatic rifles. Hence the mess, as organizers struggle to determine what are "useful" outcomes of their labour, both immediately and for their struggle for emancipation.

Despite all this complexity, the strength of organizers' use values is ultimately a question of how well they address the need or mess to which they are oriented. A bit more specifically, strength is a question of how *consistently* organizers can articulate a division of labour and produce use values; the *breadth* of cooperation in their production and expanse of their distribution; and the success of this product in serving as the *foundation* for the creation of further use values. For example, is political education incorporated regularly, across a range of forums, to the full membership, allowing them to collaborate in new ways and with clearer purpose?

The question of growth is especially important, as everyone I spoke with had a keen sense for whether their organizing work was "moving in a good direction" or "falling apart." In dialectical terminology, this growth is akin to "expanded reproduction," renewal that spirals outward instead of merely repeating (Marx, 1976, pp. 727, 780). It is the ultimate measure of strength, of whether or a group is progressing towards making social movement: whether their collaborative activity and the forms of wellbeing they create trend toward virtuous cycles or vicious ones. Do their individual collaborative *activities* result in stronger *relations of production*, making for even stronger *use values*? Or do we find the opposite, that articulation fails, feeding relations of recrimination and burnout, leading the group to create even less wellbeing?

Strong, virtuous cycles come together across a range of strategic orientations, which I define as approaches to changing the flow of life and labour. A non-exhaustive list of such strategies includes that of the Zapatistas: the rebellion through which they took their land back and the resistance through which they collectively produce on it. AUSM's is a non-profit strategy, wherein they meet the bureaucratic requirements necessary to access the flow of labour through universities, diverting it toward radical organizations and into political education for university-educated activists. Survival projects' strategy is to minimize the disciplinary power of institutional gatekeepers by accessing these flows of labour collectively, allowing members to dedicate more energy to the struggle. Collectives' strategy is to offer specific use values to the broader struggle, such as medical care, kayak blockades, or financial tools for wealth redistribution. Base builders recruit a large membership as to directly produce reproductive use values, energizing their struggle for a society where such resources are widely available.[25]

[25] As I discuss further in chapter 4, an assembly, non-profit, or collective is an organizing form and not a strategy in and of itself. The two are distinct but closely connected. A strategy is an *approach* toward changing the flow of life and labour across society, be it insurrectionary, pedagogical, electoral, institutional, unionist, neighbourhood-based, or land-based. Just because a group of people forms a vanguard party or popular school does not necessarily mean they intend to take concrete action toward storming the halls of power or ideologically politicizing society. Organizing is a mess, so form and practice are often at odds. Yet if organizers are explicit about how they wish to pursue social movement, then they will surely attempt to create collaborative arrangements appropriate to that form of movement, which is to say that their organizational form will support their strategy. Thus the shorthand of using one to imply the other.

Caring for the organization, caring for society

Third, whatever the strategy, the struggle to produce ever-stronger use values and virtuous cycles is the pursuit of care. The alumni pursuing a base building strategy were clearest in illustrating this progression of graduated forms of wellbeing, of ever-sturdier footholds. Initially the process is often fed by the wellbeing of humanization, such as when people are happy to attend meetings and find community instead of remaining alone. A stronger form of wellbeing is the modest reproductive support that these organizations begin to provide, leaving members a little less exhausted, able to dedicate more energy to organizing. Stronger still are the use values that make membership broadly attractive, such as winning subsidized healthcare or forming a housing cooperative. Organizations creating use values of this strength grow by leaps and bounds and are able to expand the scale of their efforts towards creating wellbeing with the oppressed across their entire neighbourhood, city, or state. Beyond caring directly for each other, they are able to care for society.

Caring is a constant struggle, because the organization either struggles to care on ever-broader levels, or the forces of oppression cause it to implode. Dominant relations are strong, as they are enforced through force of arms, rigorous regulation, gatekeeping access to the means of survival, the boss's dictatorial power, relentless ideological assault, disabling and traumatizing those who resist, and material rewards for those who comply. More often than not, people go with the flow and those perpetuating these relations succeed in disabling, traumatizing, isolating, humiliating, converting, and coopting more than they are foiled. Even when anticapitalist organizers are not being attacked by the powerful, their collaborations are by no means free from relations of sexism and racism, plus toxic behaviour and garden variety flakiness whittle away at inspiration.

This is the mess, and if groups are not actively pushing against the violent flow of life and labour, this flow will wash them away. Just as neutrality is not an option, nor is remaining still.[26] This is why it is so destructive

[26] Stated in Operaista terms, labour is either engaging in class composition or capital is decomposing it (Bologna, 1972, p. 11; Mohandesi, 2013, pp. 85–86; Tronti, 2019, pp. 129–138; S. Wright, 2017, pp. 36–37).

to limit care to the immediate group, as in the practice of "Let's build socialism, starting with me" (E. Benavides Guevara, personal communication, August 23, 2021) to which non-profits are prone. Instead, there is a relentless struggle to gain the initiative, to create sturdier footholds for collaboration, to stoke the momentum of a virtuous cycle, to practice care with bxroader sweeps of society, to "make love powerful" (J. Jordan, 2016, p. 12).

Ways of being-with

Fourth is subjectivity. Living within capitalism, the struggle to make love powerful is quite a queer, otherly way of being-with. It is a subjectivity that stretches beyond the tragically dry language of use value, towards that of "utopian futurity" (Gumbs, 2016, p. 21), of our "encumbrance" upon each other (Dewi Oka, 2016, p. 53) in the struggle to be the midwives of such a future.[27] This is why I often prefer to speak of wellbeing, as it better characterizes the sort of "utility" that is abundant within right relation. Others call it "lifeforce" or "love made manifest" (J. Jordan, 2016, p. 11). Such things are only manifest through qualities of collaboration that are alien to capitalism, guided as they are by relations of abundance (Brown, 2016), by collectivity and life instead of isolation and death (Dewi Oka, 2016, p. 52), by the sort of relations that have allowed generations of Black and Indigenous peoples to thrive despite attempted genocide (Maynard & Simpson, 2022). We can only labour to give life to such relations through novel ways of being-with, which is why subjectivity is so important in organizing. We collaborate to create forms of wellbeing, as well as to re-create our collective selves.

Each subjectivity is marked by the accountabilities that knit its activity together (D. E. Smith, 1987a, pp. 161–167), and that of the organizer is characterized by an explicit commitment to collectivity, to recognizing the

[27] I follow Zibechi (2012, p. 48) in recognizing that the task for revolutionary subjects is not only to become capitalism's gravediggers, but to also become midwives, "to set free the elements of the new society with which the old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant" (Marx, 2010, p. 27). Who will these mothers and caretakers be, and how will they coordinate their labours of midwifery? These are the "no" and "yes" of the class war, its "rebellion" and "resistance" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b). While organizers in the Leninist tradition tend to emphasize the former and those labelled as autonomists emphasize the latter, both are needed to "spark like a dialectic" (Lorde, 2007).

contradictory wealth of relations that constitute us, and to strategically labouring within them. It is a militant subjectivity, one that prioritizes "everything for everyone" (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994c). It feeds nurseries of new collaborative arrangements, new forms of wellbeing, new ways of being-with. Emancipatory organizations are therefore "the germ of the education of the future … producing fully developed human beings" (Marx, 1976, p. 614). Another way to understand them is as a very queer sort of factory, not one producing the dead labour of capital, but that instead nourishes living labour, enlivens right relation. They are proto-institutions that, instead of overdetermining violent relations, overdetermine generosity by consistently deepening its theory and practice, socializing ever-more people into ways of being-with that allow them to collaborate in many arrangements, constructively confront many obstacles, create many forms of wellbeing. In this way, revolutionary organizations are the social manifestation of love, since "love transforms the world and creates a 'vita nuova,' a new life … Love is a practice of the common. Love is able to generate new forms of conviviality, of living together" (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 380).

Again, this is the revolutionary aspiration, the utopian horizon that nurtures inspiration as organizers trudge through the mess. The everyday reality is that capitalist institutions relentlessly socialize people into capitalist subjectivities – advertising and schooling being only the most obvious examples – meaning our ways of being-with are a battleground in the class war (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013, Chapter 8). Or, as mentioned before, capital is "a particular *relation* belonging to a historic form of society" (Marx, 1973, p. 264, my emphasis), meaning that its primary struggle is whether or not the way of being-with that capitalists enjoy relative to workers will be reproduced. The reproduction of class struggle from above is always at risk. Will enclosure, dispossession, living to work, and the oppressions of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and ableism exhaust people into relinquishing their humanity and becoming more subjectified as capital's labour power, as "the individual man [sic] who is absolutely available for the different kinds of labour required of him" (Marx, 1976, p. 618), or will people stubbornly assert their self-determination?

Make social movement

This brings me to my fifth point, that changes to the flow of life and labour make social movement, strengthening relations of generosity against those of violent accumulation. In this sense, the ultimate response to "What is to be done?" is "Make social movement." This understanding is inspired by authors such as Cox and Nilsen who write about the "social movement process as the widening and deepening of the scope and direction of collective skilled activity" (2014, p. 186). Likewise, Reyes writes about the "accumulation of autonomy" (2016, p. 164; see also Mora, 2017, p. 155), the ability to collectively produce any and all sorts of wellbeing that are needed. This accumulation of "collective skilled activity" may happen within movements as diverse as those for Indigenous self-determination, unionization, decolonization, or gay rights. In each, it is the activity of changing the relations of private property, employment, empire, and sexuality that force people to collaborate in certain, oppressive ways and foreclose other, more emancipatory ones. The "skill" that social movements widen and deepen is the multifarious labour of life, that of shaping our social world.

I also draw from Zibechi's reading of Porto Gonçalves (2001, p. 81), understanding social movements as "societies in movement" (2012, p. 208), as "people breaking the inertia" (ibid 2012, p. 210) preserving dominant flows of health and wealth. The stronger the forms of wellbeing they create, the more they alter the flow of life and labour, the more they "move" toward emancipatory social relations. These are the constructive-yet-messy, powerful-yet-fragmented forces that create history. They are the crisis of capitalism (Holloway, 2002, p. 203), whose elites and institutions are seized by reaction, casting about for ways to maintain inadequate hegemonic relations. Seen in broad, utopian terms, social movement is the movement toward communism, "the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 57), "so that the true history [of humanity] can finally unfold" (Dunayevskaya, 1975, p. 330).[28] "When

[28] This is also a theme that Debord frequently reflects on. For example: "History – the transformation of reality – cannot presently be used in everyday life because the people of everyday life are the product of a history over which they have no control. It is of course they themselves who make history, but not freely." He therefore characterizes self realization as "the organization of new chances" (The Situationist International, 2006, pp. 70, 72). Or, Ross writes that the "communal luxury" of revolutionary Paris lay in "the project of making art *lived*" and the "transfer of creative initiative

History wakes, image becomes deed, the poem is achieved: poetry goes into action" (Paz, 1976; cited in Kelley, 2002, p. 195).

Organizers paddle against the current and towards the utopian horizon through mundane, everyday activities that often seem totally alien to making history. The point is to keep moving, to move by organizing, and to organize by collaborating to create ever-stronger forms of wellbeing. How to make such lofty intentions into concrete activity, given the particular forms of exhaustion and oppression people confront in a specific location, the specific, limited resources they can muster, using only the ways of being-with they have laboured to co-create? These are the material constraints of organizing. They show that all the utopian dreams inspired by theory cannot be immediately practiced, nor can we simply recreate the successful social movement of other people, in another place, at another time. Instead, organizers must work with what they've got.

Because material context varies so greatly, the continuities distilled into these five aspects of organizing are necessarily abstract. Neither AUSM nor its alumni can simply "do Zapatismo" back home, just as Gramsci recognized that his comrades in Western Europe could not simply recreate the Russian Revolution. Instead, he had to theorize a distinct form of social movement – the war of position, distinct from the Bolshevik's war of maneuver (1971, p. 108) – to propose a strategy for how those west of Russia might succeed in establishing some continuity with its achievements by winning a revolutionary alteration to their unique flow of labour. Likewise, in the following three chapters I trace how Mexican guerrilleros created continuity between their inspiration from Che Guevara's outlook and the process of organizing in Mayan communities;[29] how a non-profit inspired by the Zapatistas created continuity as they organized a radical

from an isolated elite to the people as a whole" (2015, p. 59). Finally, in Lukacs: "genesis and history should coincide or, more exactly, they should be different aspects of the same process" (1971, p. 159).

[29] In the following chapter I explain how the founders of the National Liberation Forces – the precursors to the EZLN – originally wanted to recreate the Cuban Revolution in Mexico, but were rebuked by both the Cuban government and other leftist guerrillas across Latin America (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 53–54). Only by learning how to listen and be "digested" into Mayan social relations did they succeed in building toward a revolution there, one that coincidentally was now more influenced by the legacy of Emiliano Zapata and the Mexican Revolution, but with Mayan characteristics (Marcos, 2011a, Chapter 9).

study abroad program and community centre; and the continuities between the diverse organizing projects of that program's alumni. The basis for these continuities is that all are engaged in the reproductive labour known as organizing.

Conclusion

One last note on social movement. It occurs through violent conflict with class enemies and also as an unfurling of generosity. Seen in the latter sense, to organize is to give a gift. Hyde (2007) follows Mauss (2002) in highlighting the continuities of gift economies across a range of societies. In all, the gift is a not a commodity, not imbued with an exchange value for which the giver expects reciprocity. Instead, the gift is given without expecting to receive a personalized use value in return. Its use value is to strengthen a *relation*, to ensure that the collaboration through which the group creates *all* its use values is characterized by generosity.[30] Therefore, no matter how large or small, the gift is a tool of social movement.

Organizing too is a gift. Yes, the demands of survival within capitalist relations require organizing, as yet another effort atop all the others, to directly provide forms of wellbeing to its participants in a sort of non-commodified exchange. Yet the cooptation of "selling out" provides many more. There are some who do not resist this allure. The others are militants who "keep the faith" by foregoing immediate use values – even those they could gain through more hours of waged work instead of attending interminable meetings – in pursuit of social movement, attending to the greater need of self-determination. As such, their organizing is a gift among the oppressed. Like all gifts, it is an act of communion across difference.

[30] This "group" also often contains the more-than-human relatives with whom we labour to create wellbeing, strengthening the relations of generosity within the wider web of life, relations of abundance instead of those of scarcity. In "The gift of strawberries," Kimmerer gives a wonderful example of how such relations function on a biological level to shape those who act within them and, in doing so, further strengthen right relation. She writes that, "The plant has in fact been up all night assembling little packets of sugar and seeds and fragrance and color, because when it does so its evolutionary fitness is increased … The relationship of gratitude and reciprocity thus developed can increase the evolutionary fitness of both plant and animal. *A species and a culture that treat the natural world with respect and reciprocity will surely pass on genes to ensuing generations with a higher frequency than the people who destroy it*" (2013, p. 30, my emphasis).

The "value" of the gift – its strengthening of right relation – is very distinct as compared to value within capitalism's abode. The gift's value accrues within the relation itself, whereas under capitalism value is "crystallized" into the commodity produced through capitalist relations of production (Marx, 1976, p. 131). The giver is intentionally acting to strengthen relations of generosity, whereas the capitalist valorization process is one of mystification and objectification: the active, social collaboration that makes commodities useful is hidden, appearing to be a quality of the objects themselves, imbued by the capitalist. Organizers are moved to take initiative because they understand that this fetishized appearance of value is a lie. They see that wellbeing is not only available to those with the money to buy scarce, pricey, supposedly empowered commodities. Instead, they can intentionally collaborate and, in so doing, strengthen relations of abundance.

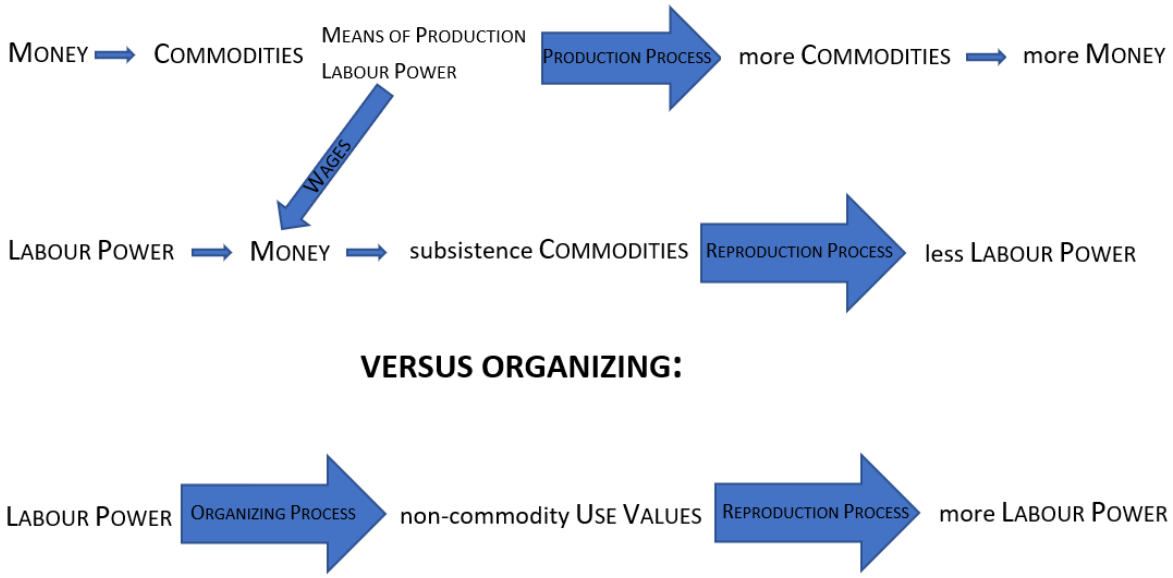
Tying everything together, my final point is that these contrasting practices of labour and valorization amount to contrasting productive processes. Marx elaborated the process through which capital reproduces itself, wherein the capitalist uses money to purchase labour power and means of production, the workers employ these resources to create commodities, which are sold at a profit, allowing the capitalist to invest more capital and accumulate more money (1976, Chapter 4). This is the process as seen from the capitalist's perspective.

From the worker's perspective, they receive wages, spend these to purchase the commodities they need to survive, employ these commodities in the mostly-domestic labour of social reproduction, resulting in the (always inadequate) renewal of their labour power, so that they may continue working for the same wages (Bhattacharya, 2017a, pp. 77–82; Cleaver, 2000, p. 123). Unlike the capitalist's process of accumulation, there is no growth here, only scarcity and survival. The hopelessly isolated worker continues clocking in year after year despite accumulating anxiety, aches, and pains, but eventually they reach their limit.

Yet note that this is the perspective of someone who only lives to work. What if some of the work of social reproduction is dedicated to organizing, to social movement toward the reproduction of a different sort of society? What if people begin to dedicate their efforts to self-determined ends instead of only rendering their

services to the boss? In this case, the five aspects listed above come together to form an alternative process, one of abundance. Acting on their inspiration, organizers begin to labour together, to create reproductive use values, which then strengthen their labour power and entice more people to join. This allows for a virtuous cycle wherein the group can engage in more labour, creating more use values, further strengthening their labour power. As they strengthen their collaboration, they gain the ability to change the flow of life and labour – that is, they rely less on the exhausting work of earning wages to survive and more on their self-determined life-making – thereby strengthening relations of generosity and making social movement.

Figure 1: Production and reproduction processes



This is how organizers act as mothers and midwives, birthing new worlds of abundance. May it feed our inspiration to believe that such a world already exists and awaits further nourishment. May that inspiration keep us trudging through "all such muck" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 52) toward the utopian horizon. This is not the march of heroes or blessed prophets, but of a collectivity that is disabled and exhausted by capitalism (Holloway, 2002, p. 104), thoroughly subjectified into wrong relations as it strives toward better relations.

There is great promise in creating self-determined forms of wellbeing, but in practice it is often difficult to separate the precious water from the dirt (hooks, 1994, p. 50). Amidst so much violence, extraction, and exhaustion, it is often difficult to determine whether hard-won everyday collaborations such as turning people out to a meeting, discussing accountability after an incidence of harm, or doing childcare during yet another night school session amount to "wellbeing" of any actual substance. Organizers often become disillusioned and burnt out, falling back into the dominant flow of life and labour.

However, the immediate outcomes of these everyday collaborations are not the point, so much as the empowerment of the collaborators. This a final difference between capitalist and anticapitalist productive processes. Marx begins *Capital* with a discussion of the commodity form because capitalism's entire process turns on the production and sale of this crystallization of living labour. This objectification of the fecundity of social activity is the means to the end of accumulation. On the other hand, when social movement toward right relation is the goal, the means is not simply to create more and more immediate forms of wellbeing – more block parties, more healing, more self-government structures. These are well and good, but the goal is to strengthen the labour power of those organizing these things, so that they may be more adept at coordinating all the sorts of wellbeing the collective may require, so that they may come to caretake with the oppressed at large, creating the form of wellbeing known as self-determination. Once again, this shows organizing to be a reproductive process, one of strengthening labour power so that it may forge the relations that will constitute a new world.

This materialist conception of organizing helps us understand the actions of inspired alumni, as well as that of AUSM and the Zapatistas. These concepts encompass them all because all are engaged in the purposeful, collaborative activity called organizing. Its purpose is to engage in reproduction from below, to strengthen the work of life-making enough to change the relations shaping how health and wealth flow through society. We now turn to the concrete experiences of those engaged in this reproductive labour, to better understand the

practices these concepts aim to synthesize and – more importantly – to more pointedly pose the question of what is to be done.

Chapter 2 – The Zapatistas

We begin our exploration of concrete organizing practices with the group that inspires study abroad alumni as they return home: the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. They are not a perfect organization to faithfully revere, nor are they a model to replicate. Yet they are engaged in the reproductive labour of organizing, through which they have made much social movement in their home state of Chiapas and across Mexico. For this reason, they are indeed inspiring. In this chapter I recount their history so that, first of all, we may understand where all this inspiration comes from. More importantly, my second purpose in discussing the Zapatistas is to better understand organizing in general, so that we may more fruitfully reflect on how to go about it in our own contexts. As we will see, through trial and error the first Zapatistas succeeded in turning their inspiration from the Cuban Revolution into action appropriate to their Mayan context. The genealogy of this struggle extends into the past, passing through Emiliano Zapata and the Mexican Revolution, toward the centuries-long fight for decolonization.[1] While we may not all be so fortunate as to create a revolution, hopefully a better understanding of organizing as reproductive labour can help others to create similar breakthroughs in moving from inspiration to action.

The Zapatistas' collaborative efforts have transformed over the years, from a few guerrilleros hunting for food in the Chiapas jungle in 1983 to cooperative work on recuperated land, allowing communities to host

[1] While I focus more on this first aspect, of the guerrilleros in the National Liberation Forces learning how to turn their inspiration from the Cuban Revolution into action within the Mayan communities of Chiapas, continuity with the Mexican Revolution is no less important. Indeed, the Zapatistas' "Zapata" is Emiliano, commander of the Southern Liberation Army, one of the strongest and most radical forces in the 1910 Revolution (Gilly, 2005). Zapata was the lead author of the Plan of Ayala (2003), which asserted the peasants' right to dispossess the plantation owners and establish communal ejidos, amounting to a decolonial struggle upending capitalist property relations. The ejido was enshrined in Article 27 of Mexico's 1917 Constitution, the crowning achievement of the Revolution. In turn, the EZLN's 1993 Revolutionary Agrarian Law (1993c), which formalizes the goals of their uprising, is modelled on the Plan of Ayala. All that said, rather than exploring this historical legacy, my focus here is to analyze the Zapatistas' organizing practices. Historical literature connecting today's Zapatistas with those of the Mexican Revolution includes (Bobrow-Strain, 2007; Gilly, 2005; N. Harvey, 1998; Joseph & Henderson, 2003; López Bárcenas, 2023; J. Ross, 1995; Rus, 2010; Womack, 1999b). Likewise, there is also a body of literature contextualizing the EZLN within the more recent historical panorama of the Cold War-era Latin American Dirty Wars, agrarian uprisings, and guerrilla movements (Aviña, 2014; Bellingeri, 2003; Castellanos, 2018; A. Cedillo & Herrera Calderon, 2012).

ten thousand attendees at the Women's Encounter in 2018. The inspiration we glean from experiences such as the Zapatistas' may be enough to initiate such action, but then – just as they do – organizers must work to reproduce inspiration and strengthen it into militancy. As we will see, the Zapatistas have done this by pledging to "not give up, sell out, or give in" (S. Galeano, 2021a) as they tirelessly search for the collaborative forms that will allow life to triumph over the capitalist death machine (Moisés & Galeano, 2017).

Why continue to insist that the Zapatista are inspiring? Within Anglophone, left scholarship (to which I am largely limited here), they are already one of the most-studied social movement organizations of all time. So am I trying to jump onto a bandwagon that left twenty years ago? Bhaskar Sunkara expressed a prevailing conception on the Marxist left when he wrote about the Zapatistas as a past-tense organization, a relic of a naïve alter-globalization movement and darling of misguided post-Marxists (2011). Without the carnage of the Acteal massacre in 1997 (Frayba, 1998; Navarro, 2012) or the multitudinous march and historic address to congress of 2001, the Zapatistas faded from the headlines and from leftists' awareness.

Stemming in part from the mischaracterization of the uprising as primarily a revolt against NAFTA, their rise to fame triggered an increase in scholarly writing on the Zapatistas and alter-globalization, often confusing the EZLN with the transnational activists who raised their banner (Brand & Hirsch, 2004; Dellacioppa, 2009; Juris, 2008; Solnit, 2004; Sunkara, 2011).[2] In response, critics of the alter-globalization movement imputed

[2] Whereas the Zapatista uprising is commonly explained as a rebellion against the North American Free Trade Agreement (Hesketh, 2016; Juris, 2008; Khasnabish, 2008; Olesen, 2005; Reitan, 2007; Walia, 2021), it only ended up coinciding with the free trade agreement because, late into their preparations for the uprising, a Zapatista Army camp was discovered by the Mexican military (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 89). This forced the EZLN to move the timeline up to January 1st, before the military could fully react to this new intelligence. More importantly, Zapatistas themselves refer to the reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 far more than NAFTA when explaining their uprising (EZLN, 2005, pt. IV; Moisés & Galeano, 2015). This article formalized the category of communal landholding known as the "ejido," allowed large estates to be expropriated in order to create them, and protected ejido land from being fragmented or privatized. Marcos recounts that, when recruiting communities into the organization, "We thought we were convincing people, but in reality it was something else that was convincing them: Salinas' reform of Article 27, which was the last missing piece" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 75), a point discussed further below. This may seem like splitting hairs, since the US and Canadian governments made this constitutional reform a precondition for Mexico's entrance into the agreement. However, Article 27 connects the Zapatistas with the Mexican Revolution, with a history of direct action against enclosure through reclamation of land – the material foundation of life. The reform of Article 27 was a declaration of war against those who had fought and died to make the social movement culminating in massive land redistribution via ejidos. Centring the free trade agreement reduces the scope of their project. It implies the

their judgment onto the Zapatistas as well, alleging the movement's idealist principles amount to a defeatist political isolation through a refusal to build coalitions or to think practically about how to confront capitalism and the state (C. Barker et al., 2014b, pp. 20–21; D. Harvey, 2014, pp. xii–xiii; Proyect, 2003; Sunkara, 2011). Then, as quickly as the flurry of debate began, Bush and his ilk used the War on Terror to quash the alter-globalization movement and interest in the Zapatistas faded with it.

Yet the Zapatistas persist. In fact, they are larger and better organized than ever, deepening their self-determination beyond the achievements of history's most celebrated communes. News of their accomplishments was limited until they broke years of silence with a mobilization of 45,000 members on December 21, 2012 (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 2012), and in the decade since the Zapatistas have offered an outpouring of information through encounters, seminars,[3] and most importantly the 2013 Little School where nearly five thousand visiting students were each paired with a Zapatista teacher and spent a week living with a Zapatista family on recuperated land, learning about their autonomy (Linebaugh et al., 2014; Marcos, 2013c, 2013d; Moisés, 2013). Apart from the communiques of Marcos (symbolically laid to rest in 2014 and revived as Subcomandante Galeano) (S. Galeano, 2014) and Moisés (one of the first Indigenous recruits to the EZLN, elevated to Subcomandante in 2013) (Marcos, 2013c), there is

Zapatistas consider such agreements to have a power of their own, whereas their analysis locates power within social relations and sees legal agreements as merely their formalization. On the other hand, as we will see in chapter 3, solidarity organizations like the Mexico Solidarity Network found it useful to frame the struggle in terms of free trade because it helped them convince activists that the everyday politics of their North American cities, unions, and the surrounding farmland were indeed connected to a faraway place called Chiapas.

As for their practical connection with the alter-globalization movement, the Zapatistas' 1996 Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1998) did indeed contribute analysis, strategy, and organization to the burgeoning social movement. The strongest thread in this genealogy is People's Global Action, whose founders met at the Encuentro and went on to coordinate five global days of action including over 1500 groups (L. J. Wood, 2005). While organizations like the PGA went on to popularize Zapatista-inspired organizing practices within the movement (Nail, 2013), the Zapatistas themselves did not participate in the protests against free trade and transnational finance that characterized it (Baschet, 2018, p. 141).

[3] These include the 2015 Seminar on Critical Thought in the Face of the Capitalist Hydra, CompARTE Festivals for Humanity in 2016 and 2017, ConSCIENCES for Humanity in 2017, the seminars The Walls of Capital, the Cracks of the Left in 2017 and To Watch, to Listen, to Speak: No Thinking Allowed? in 2018, the First International Gathering of Politics, Art, Sports, and Culture for Women in Struggle in 2018 and Second in 2019, and the Caracol of Our Lives film festival in 2019. Their most audacious mobilization came in 2021, when seven Zapatistas sailed across the ocean to Spain, to "invade" it in solidarity with all rebellious Europeans (S. Galeano, 2021a). They were followed by a delegation of 177 Zapatistas who spent over three months meeting with organizations across thirty countries and territories in Europe (Moisés, 2021)

now an unprecedented amount of information offered by support bases outside of the Zapatista Army. These include the communiques of the Zapatista Women (2020), the testimonies of good government authorities assembled in the Little School textbooks (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d) and by Fernández (2014). It is an incredibly rich archive of the everyday difficulties and successes of their social movement toward self-determination, or what the Zapatistas call "autonomy." And for anyone doubting whether Marcos/Galeano and Moisés – the Comandantes' chosen spokespeople – are indeed trustworthy, there are now many other voices to consider. Because this information is so rich, a secondary purpose of this chapter – beyond just studying the Zapatistas' labour of organizing – is to relate this under-appreciated wisdom.

The shift from communication by the Subcomandantes to the support bases highlights the difference between the Zapatista *army* and Zapatistas in general. The two are not synonymous. "EZLN" refers to the hierarchical military structure of tens of thousands of insurgents and militia members led by the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee (that of the "Comandantes") and – subordinate to them – the Subcomandantes. "Zapatistas," on the other hand, are a much larger grouping containing the EZLN and also hundreds of thousands of people in civil, support base communities who are integrated into decentralized good government structures.[4]

The wealth of information provided as of late by Zapatista support bases is summarily dismissed when they are relegated to the past. I make extensive use of it here, citing primary source documents as much as possible. I also draw from my experience as a student in the Little School and the nine months I spent in liberated Zapatista territory between 2010 and 2014, giving classes on social movements to study abroad students while they studied Spanish or Tzotzil (a Mayan dialect) at the Zapatista Language School.

[4] Furthermore, the various Tzotzil, Tseltal, Tojolobal, Zoque, Mam and Ch'ol communities that comprise the Zapatistas also select councillors to the National Indigenous Congress's Indigenous Council of Government (National Indigenous Congress, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), which coordinates Indigenous nations' struggle for life across the Congress's 93 regions.

That said, this chapter is still an outsider's analysis of Zapatista organizing. Whereas I can draw upon personal experience and more intimate conversations to explain the everyday realities of organizing with the Autonomous University of Social Movements or alumni's groups, here my access to information is reduced because the Zapatistas continue to resist the overt and covert violence of the Mexican government's counterinsurgency efforts.[5] The organization is already taking a risk in publishing participants' accounts, and they reject nearly all research proposals from outside researchers. As many Indigenous peoples assert (Carlson, 2017; McGregor, 2017; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), this is an important aspect of their self-determination.

Plan of the chapter

In this chapter I recount the Zapatistas' history of organizing for self-determination. I discuss this history using their own concepts – such as resistance and rebellion, autonomy, and justice – while also highlighting how it exemplifies – and was part of the genesis of – the theory I described in chapter 1, of organizing as the labour of social movement. Changing flows of labour is exceedingly difficult, and in this chapter I trace the various reorganizations, recalibrations, and reinventions the Zapatistas have undertaken over the past fifty years, finding ways to continue in the struggle despite all the obstacles they confront. Each is a way they have made their problems into exercises within a "textbook" for how to continue growing (Moisés, 2015d, p. 176).

I begin this history with the clandestine guerrilla organization that later gave rise to the EZLN. This is important because Zapatista organizing during the period prior to the 1994 uprising is frequently ignored, as is the extent of the massive land recuperation carried out during the uprising. This land recuperation was a revolution, as it dispossessed the plantation-owning class in Chiapas and ended the onerous landowner-peon relation (in Spanish, "finqueros" and "mozos").

[5] For example, a trove of emails from the Mexican Ministry of Defense leaked in September 2022 revealed that the Zapatistas continue to be monitored as much as, if not more than, drug cartels (García, 2022).

Second, I turn to their history after the uprising, to the Zapatistas' continual attempts to transform national and international social relations by pushing for greater organization among the broader left, beginning with the campaign for revolutionary reforms via the negotiations at San Andrés. Third, I outline "good government," the collaborative structures through which the Zapatistas have unilaterally create self-determined forms of wellbeing after the left, centre and right-wing parties aligned to deny legal recognition to the land recuperation that undergirds this labour. The Zapatistas call this "autonomy," and I define it both using their formulation of "resistance and rebellion" and as the process of creating a self-determined flow of life and labour through collective work on collective land.

Finally, I describe the deepening of their struggle over the past decade. The Zapatistas bluntly explain that the capitalist world system faces a violent collapse (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015), and only through greater organization can we achieve the social movement that will allow life to triumph over death. The commission of Zapatista Women has taken the lead in sounding the alarm and framing the struggle against capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism as a struggle for life (Zapatista Women, 2019a). They also assert that, to better struggle for life, their organization must abolish its own patriarchal relations. They resolve to labour under egalitarian, non-patriarchal relations, "without asking for permission" (Zapatista Women, 2020).

In so doing, the Zapatistas offer examples of how they have created relations of liberation to replace the mozo relation, as well as self-critiques of all their mistakes along the way. They show this to be a process of confronting innumerable problems with a sense of justice and care, thereby elaborating more appropriate collaborative arrangements to strengthen their labour of creating self-determined forms of wellbeing. Study abroad alumni are urgently called upon to engage in a similar process as they confront capitalist collapse. Yet Zapatista history teaches that this organizing cannot be the mere replication of a supposed model, but the strengthening of relations present in their own "calendar and geography" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b).

The long struggle against dispossession

Colonization, revolution and neoliberal counter-revolution

The Zapatista struggle has deep roots: over 530 years of resistance to colonization, including multiple uprisings across Chiapas before and after Mexican independence, Zapata's 1911 call for "land and freedom" during the Mexican Revolution, and the decades-long work of the Mexican guerrillas who founded the EZLN as the neoliberal government worked to reverse the gains of the Revolution. The most important of these roots is the lived experience of subjugation suffered by generations of indigenous Chiapanecans, by the parents of those who decided to risk the genocidal reaction of the Mexican military when they rose up in arms on January 1st, 1994.

This social relation of subjugation is that of the "mozo" (peon) living on the "finca" (plantation). It structured a flow of labour in which mozos, as landless Indigenous peasants, were sometimes literally tied to plantations as intergenerationally-indebted peons. At other times they were restricted to dependent "satellite towns" with land that was so poor that they were forced to take barely-paid work on nearby fincas and seasonal migration in coffee and lumber production (Mora, 2018, pp. 114–120; see also Bartra, 2020; Toledo Tello, 2002; Villafuerte Solís, 1999). In all cases, the finqueros' dispossession of land was the basis for rendering Indigenous peoples exploitable and accumulating the fruits of their labour. As Fernández explains,

> The finquero derives his power over the field peons through ownership of the land. Owning the land makes him the owner of the labour. Since their labour power is the only thing the peons, their wives and children have, the landowner considers himself the owner of their life as well, and he forces his peons to understand this in every moment of every day. (2014, p. 50)[6]

The brutality stemming from this enclosure of land, labour, and life was of such a degree that Zapatista elders, support bases, and Comandantes consistently and quite emphatically centre the mozo relation as

[6] This is my translation, as are the quotations from all other references whose titles are in Spanish.

something they will fight to the death rather than return to.[7] As I will explore below, this unshakable "no" is foundation of their rebellion.[8]

Testimonies of life on the finca relate a litany of horrors: orphans were taken in by the master's family as slaves; women, especially domestic servants, were systematically raped and finqueros reserved a "right of the first night;" mothers were forced to return to work the day after giving birth; humiliating tasks – like carrying wet bags of manure or the master's family members, seated on chairs strapped to one's back – were everyday occurrences; the only "justice" was violent and often homicidal corporal punishment by the overseer; people who tried to escape and establish new settlements had their communities burned; children were never educated and from a very young age made to work at mind-numbing tasks; healthcare was non-existent and pneumonia, diarrhea, and tuberculosis killed countless children; and scrip payments at company stores were used to maintain intergenerational debts (Fernández Christlieb, 2014; Miriam, 2015; Moisés, 2017a).

Subcomandante Moisés summarizes: "They were just slaves for the plantation owners. They were worked to the bone, paid nothing and abused like animals with no humanity" (2018). The Zapatistas interviewed by Mora gave such weight to the mozo relation that she centres it as "the principle framework through which members of these communities analyze oppression, not just of the past, but unequal power relations in the present as well" (Mora, 2018, p. 105). The Zapatista project as a whole is an inter-generational effort to abolish this social relation, based on the dispossession of land.

[7] Writing about the López Obrador government's megaproject building a railway through the territories of many indigenous nations across southeastern Mexico, the Zapatista Women state, "The truth is that they are coming for everything now, coming full force against the originary peoples, their communities, lands, mountains, rivers, animals, plants, even their rocks …. They want to turn our lands into plantations …. They want to turn us into their peons, into servants who sell our dignity for a few coins every month …. No, compañera, sister. We're going to fight with all our strength and everything we've got against these mega-projects. If these lands are conquered, it will be upon the blood of Zapatista women. That is what we have decided and that is what we intend to do" (Zapatista Women, 2019b).

[8] As Gilly writes, referencing Benjamin and Trotsky, "People do not go into revolution on behalf of an image of the society of the future … but because present society has become intolerable. Their revolt nurtures itself on the image of enslaved ancestors, not the ideal of liberated descendants" (2007, p. xvii).

Yet this "past" of obscene everyday violence is by no means distant. In fact, many of the oldest Zapatistas were mozos themselves. The fincas only came to dominate Chiapas at the turn of the century thanks to president Porfirio Diaz's aggressively pro-capitalist policies, favouring the concentration of landholding, integration into global commodity markets for rubber, cacao, lumber, sugar, and especially coffee, and international investment in exploiting Chiapas' reservoir of cheap labour (Mora, 2018, pp. 109–114). While the Revolution succeeded in reversing this dispossession in broad areas across Mexico, the finqueros in the far-off state of Chiapas managed to avoid land redistribution by "selling" parcels of their estates to family members, blocking peasant petitions through decades-long wars of attrition in a friendly court system, or allowing only the poorest hilltop land to be successfully converted into "ejidos" (Hesketh, 2016; Mora, 2018, pp. 114–120) – a collective form of property ownership that was the crowning achievement of the Mexican Revolution. Following an import-substitution industrialization model, in other areas of Mexico the ejidos received public subsidies in an effort to feed the urban working class (Soederberg, 2001). In contrast, the fincas continued to dominate the political economy of Chiapas until succumbing to globalizing agrobusiness during the neoliberal era (Bobrow-Strain, 2007, Chapter 8; Washbrook, 2020). Despite the slow economic weakening of the fincas, the relations of humiliation, rape, exploitation, and premature death that defined mozo life continued throughout the 1980s.

Meagre post-revolution land reform was enough to keep peasants' hopes alive through the 1960s, but by the 70s even this slow drip of land redistribution ceased. Meanwhile peasant organizations were growing rapidly throughout Chiapas, especially after the 1974 Indigenous Congress where, for the first time in history, 1230 Indigenous delegates from across the state's ethnic groups convened to discuss their own agenda, speaking their own languages (Baschet, 2018, pp. 21–22; N. Harvey, 1998, pp. 76–77; Santiago S, 2016). Instead of ceding land, the finqueros reacted by sharply increasing their murders of peasant leaders, averaging one assassination a month between 1974 and 1987 (Rus et al., 2003, p. 8).

More and more people concluded that the reformist route to justice was closed, as Indigenous peasants continued being killed with impunity for attempting to access their constitutional rights. Beginning in 1989, President Salinas heightened tension further by leading the neoliberal charge to amend the constitution and allow ejidos to be fragmented into private property. In this sense, while it was no doubt a revolutionary achievement and a blow to capitalist property relations, the legal establishment of the ejido in the 1917 Constitution had also been an act of passive revolution: It banished the mozo relation and granted Mexico's rebellious peasantry communal land, in exchange for their pacification and state-managed integration into a nationalist project of capitalist development (Hesketh, 2016; Morton, 2011). When the neoliberal ruling class later ended this class compromise, all legal avenues to accessing land and thereby ending the mozo relation in Chiapas were closed. As Subcomandante Marcos and the Indigenous peasants who became recruits to the EZLN saw it, "only armed uprising remained" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 75).

The National Liberation Forces

There were many pressures bearing down on the Indigenous peasants of Chiapas during the 1970s and 80s, yet pressures by themselves do not create social movement. It required an enormous amount of organization for the former mozos to carry out a veritable revolution in 1994 and displace the finquero class from the flow of life and labour. This organizing effort wove together many threads, including Indigenous communities who successfully escaped the fincas and created liberated villages deep in the Lacandón jungle, the consciousness-raising practices of Indigenous catechists preaching liberation theology, Maoist organizers, and the mass peasant organizations emerging from the 1974 Indigenous Congress (Baschet, 2018, pp. 21–24; Harvey, 1998, ch. 3; Rus et al., 2003, pp. 1–26; Womack, 1999).

Here I will focus on a thread that is absent in much of the literature on the Zapatistas: the clandestine armed organization called the Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN, National Liberation Forces). The FLN is especially important to my argument because, had these non-Indigenous, urban, Marxist guerrilleros not learned how to build out collaborative arrangements, create needed forms of wellbeing, and elaborate new

subjectivities within a very otherly, foreign context, there would be no uprising in 1994. Inspired by Che and the Cuban Revolution, they persisted through years of trial and error, searching for ways to act on this inspiration in a distinct context. Their initial clandestine organizing was the basis for the reproductive labour that has characterized the Zapatistas ever since.

The FLN was founded in the northern Mexican city of Monterrey in 1969 by a very small, very committed group of revolutionaries inspired by the success of Che, Fidel and Camilo in using a "foco" strategy (Debray, 1970; Guevara, 2006) to overthrow Cuba's US-controlled dictatorship and institute socialism (S. Galeano, 2017b; Marcos & Le Bot, 1997).[9] They called themselves forces for "national liberation" because they believed the path to socialism for all Third World countries passed first through a similar anti-imperialist struggle (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 54).

But there was a catch: while increasingly reactionary in its domestic politics, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI in Spanish) – the Mexican state-party – was still one of the few in Latin America that maintained supportive international relations with Cuba. Thus, Mexico was the exception to Che's call to make "two, three, many Vietnams" (Guevara, 1967). Subcomandante Marcos recounts that "All the armed organizations in Central and South America that we reached out to prior to 1994 responded to us with the same basic argument: the revolution was possible anywhere in the world, except in Mexico. The work in Mexico was to be in solidarity with the rest of the world's liberation movements and to not do anything in our country" since they considered Mexico their strategic "rearguard" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 53). The FLN remained committed to armed struggle against the PRI, which had massacred hundreds of students in Tlatelolco Plaza in 1968 (Aguayo, 2015; Hernández Ramírez, 2018; Poniatowska, 1992), but they were not going to be able to tap into the global network of national liberation struggles to do it.

[9] The FLN was one of many leftist guerrilla organizations in Mexico at the time (Aviña, 2014; Bellingeri, 2003; Castellanos, 2018; A. Cedillo & Herrera Calderon, 2012). Mexican radicals increasingly turned to this strategy after the Tlatelolco massacre, explained below.

The obstacle presented by this international conjuncture forced the EZLN's predecessor to make its first innovation to its collaboration. Because they could not simply replicate "Guevarism" and thereby tap into a revolutionary flow of solidarity and support, they had to reconceive their struggle, "to elaborate an independent political theory that was very much our own, relying above all on analysis of the national situation and Mexican history, … an analysis of the concrete situation more than development of Marxist theory, the problem of the State, or the issue of armed struggle" (ibid 1997, p. 53). They remained inspired by Che's foquismo, yet, lacking an adequate organizational form, they looked to Mexican history, especially the revolution, for practical advice.

One example of such inspiration is Emiliano Zapata's 1911 Plan of Ayala, a "sacred text" for the original Zapatistas who supported the Southern Liberation Army during the Mexican Revolution (Zapata, 2003; see also Gilly, 2005, Chapter 3). It set the stage for today's Zapatistas by radically upending property relations, dispossessing the plantation owning class, and putting this land under communal control. Indeed, the EZLN's 1993 Revolutionary Agrarian Law (1993c) closely resembles the Plan of Ayala. Under the plan, the Indigenous and peasant communities of Morelos lived under a commune (Gilly, 2005, Chapter 8) that resembles today's Zapatista communities in Chiapas. Furthermore, the Plan of Ayala was a key precedent to the revolutionary Constitution of 1917 that established the communal landholding category of the "ejido."

Yet the Morelos Commune and its ejidos were the result of a revolution, and here we are still discussing a small group of guerrilleros casting about for a plan. The point is that, like all successful organizers, they were forced to cultivate a curiosity for the collaborative forms that might help them pursue such revolutionary changes. Their rejection by the rest of Latin America's armed groups did not immediately result in a glorious new organizing form, but an openness toward adapting to their context in developing one. Instead of "hegemonizing and homogenizing" by dutifully implementing supposedly-correct forms of struggle, the FLN acted on the political principle that each must develop "their own ways" based on the specificities of "their own calendars and geographies" (EZLN et al., 2021).

Despite their search for novel collaborative forms, the FLN remained quite small for nearly twenty years and was nearly stamped out on multiple occasions. On February 14, 1974 their safe house in central Mexico was attacked by the military and all but two members were killed.[10] This raid allowed the military to discover a training camp the FLN had established in Chiapas two years prior, and all of its nine members were disappeared. A couple more members died thereafter searching for the bodies. When some of the remaining members made a second attempt to establish a camp in Chiapas' Lacandón jungle in 1977, it ended in disaster when one member died in an accident. The third, fourth, and fifth attempts at entering the jungle failed in 1978, 1980, and 1982 (Oikonomakis, 2019, pp. 59–68; see also A. C. Cedillo, 2010).

In between there were unexpected shoot-outs with police, infiltrations, and defections. Oikonomakis writes that all this "left the organization in a very difficult position, with most of its members having either died or deserted, having very few 'professional rebels' left – who must also have been massively demoralized – a destroyed network of contacts and safe houses, no guerrilla movement in the jungle after a number of failed attempts, and an urgent need for reorganization and recruitment" (ibid 2019, p. 60). The FLN's statutes of 1980 called for the formation of a "Zapatista Army of National Liberation," but at the time this was little more than wishful thinking (ibid 2019, p. 64).

Yet the FLN persisted. It was unable to reproduce itself through the foquista approach of living in the mountains and surviving on food and resources donated by nearby peasants, nor did it choose to follow other Mexican guerrilla organizations in sustaining itself through kidnapping and bank robbery, seeing this as too risky (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 54; Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 52). Instead, it pursued a slow process of strengthening revolutionary militancy while sustaining the organization through dues collection and a network

[10] For a detailed history of the event, as told through the life and letters of assassinated FLN member Dení, see the documentary film *Flor en Otomí* (Riley, 2012). There is also a rich literature documenting the broader history of the Mexican state's Dirty War against Mexican radicals (Joseph & Grandin, 2010; Mandolessi & Olalde Rico, 2022; Pensado & Ochoa, 2018)

of student organizers who generated the resources to sustain the clandestine revolutionaries, without allowing these students enough proximity to risk compromising the rebels' security (Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 65). This unique flow of labour allowed the FLN to survive the long, isolated years before it connected with a new flow, that of the Indigenous communities of Chiapas.

First defeat

On their sixth attempt (Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 66), the FLN finally established a camp in the Lacandón jungle on November 17, 1983. As recounted in Muñoz Ramírez's official history of the EZLN, this decisive event was achieved by six FLN members – three mestizo and three Indigenous – all disguised as engineers for the national oil company (2008, p. 21). They remained as few as ever during the next two years, learning to live in the wild and only contacting the outside world via delivery runs every few months. Community leaders who would later become Comandantes of the EZLN were at this time chasing the guerrilleros into the hills, thinking they were bandits (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 58). When Marcos first joined them in 1984, there were only between twelve and fifteen members (Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 68). Yet the organization was slowly recruiting Indigenous members, people who Marcos referred to as a political "elite" who had participated in the mass peasant organizations that began to flourish after the 1974 Indigenous Congress, were jailed for this involvement, had undergone intensive political education, and came to see armed struggle as their only way of accessing land (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 56).

However, these members were recruited into an FLN that was "coming to teach them [the Indigenous communities] everything we'd assembled for whatever audience. We thought talking with a proletarian, a peasant, an employee or a student was all the same. They would all understand the language of revolution" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 62).[11] In retrospect Marcos saw that, had they not recognized the failure of this

[11] Elsewhere, Marcos writes that the FLN was "a group of 'illuminati' who came from the city in order to 'liberate' the exploited and who looked, when confronted with the reality of the indigenous communities, more like burnt out light bulbs than 'illuminati' …. [They wanted] a classic revolutionary guerrilla war: armed uprising of the masses, the taking of power, the establishment of socialism from above, many statues and names of heroes and martyrs everywhere, purges, etcetera. In sum, a perfect world" (Marcos, 2003, pt. 2).

approach, the FLN would have remained "small and isolated and disappeared" (ibid 1997, p. 63). If they were to build a mass organization, they would need to do more than change their message – they would need to change their subjectivity, their entire mode of collaborating.

The breakthrough occurred when the FLN accepted "defeat" and began developing a new subjectivity. Marcos explains that "this organization, which was still in the Marxist-Leninist tradition, suddenly found there was a reality it couldn't explain, that it couldn't conceive, and with which it had to work. The virtue of this organization was to recognize that it didn't have a response and needed to learn. This is the first defeat of the EZLN, the most important, and the one that shaped it going forward" (ibid 1997, p. 62). This defeat was a turn toward listening to and learning from Indigenous "translators," exemplified by an elder named Old Antonio. Marcos recounts their first meeting:

> The guerrillero's dream is to find a peasant and explain politics to him and win him over. So I started to tell him about the history of Mexico, about Zapata, and he responded with the story of the Votán and the Ik'al.[12] The first village that we took in 1985 – that is, the first village that we entered openly as Zapatistas – was Old Antonio's. And from there on he acted as a sort of translator, explaining to us who we were and how we should be. (ibid 1997, p. 65)
>
> This old man becomes our contact with the communities, with their world, with their most Indigenous aspects. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation, through him, through those political leaders and heads of communities, begins to understand the political foundation of its history, its historical consciousness. And the result is that we're no longer talking about an Indigenous movement awaiting its saviour, but an Indigenous movement with a long history of struggle, with a lot of experience, with resistance, with intelligence – one that we simply served as its armed wing. (ibid 1997, p. 62)

This defeat was therefore much greater than the previous one, when the rest of the hemisphere's guerrillas spurned the FLN and forced them to search for organizing forms adequate to the Mexican context. That one had taught them to search, and with this defeat they found people to listen to. Moreover, they found what to listen *for*. Realizing they were within an entirely new array of social relations, the guerrilleros sought to

[12] In Marcos' telling of Old Antonio's story (2011a, Chapter 9), Votán and Ik'al are two gods joined together and looking in opposite directions, one in eternal day and the other in eternal night. They are paralyzed by this dichotomy until they realize that they can walk by asking questions, and furthermore they can walk continuously with Votán questioning by day and Ik'al by night. Zapata visits Chiapas as the unity of Votán and Ik'al, of past and future, of coming and going, of war and peace. He is their synthesis, the collective heart of the people, and he walks by questioning.

understand and integrate themselves into the modes of collaboration of the Mayan communities that surrounded them. Moreover, the sought to integrate their activity into subjectivities formed through a long history of organizing to transform colonial relations.

This defeat carries many lessons about organizing. First, a simple point that bears repeating is that problems showed the FLN members that their conceptions were mistaken, they had to re-evaluate and reformulate the ideas that guide action. This is what it means for problems to serve as exercises within a "textbook" for growth (Moisés, 2015d, p. 176) – not the typical textbook that dictates an orthodoxy,[13] but an otherly textbook that leads with the problems normally relegated to the end of each chapter.

Second, their reformulation began with patient listening, another practice that continues to define the Zapatistas. This is praxis with a large dose of humility, an attention to the types of "mess" a group is dealing with and an openness to discovering previously-ignored collaborative practices and forms of wellbeing that may help address it. The FLN was failing to build their intended type of collaboration, to recruit people into their division of labour: very few Indigenous people were leaving their communities to live in the jungle, do military training, and sit through political education sessions. Faced with such an impasse, the common responses are to stubbornly insist, to give up, to use money to induce collaboration, or to give in and sacrifice political principles (for example, becoming a public organization fighting for more agricultural subsidies rather than revolution). Listening allowed the FLN to instead solve the problem by discovering forms of collaboration that could be selectively strengthened, instead of "giving up, selling out, or giving in" (to use a common Zapatista slogan). This is "digestion," a form of movement we will return to shortly.

[13] Indeed, Artemio, a Zapatista who served on the self-government council of the autonomous municipality of Ricardo Flores Magón, said "We did not have a guide, we did not know how to make autonomy … We do not have a book to look at, to follow" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, p. 44)

Third, the FLN had to *allow* innovation to happen. To their credit, the organization survived isolation and tragedy through a heroic commitment to their revolutionary goals. This is the aspect of Guevara's struggle that remains throughout their transformation:

> The Che that leaves Cuba and goes to Bolivia. The Che who keeps fighting, who chooses to keep being a rebel, who decides to abandon everything and begin anew, in another place, with all the difficulties this implies and the failures and errors they committed. Our model is more of the humanist part of Guevara's proposal, that of resistance, of rebellion, of 'everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves,'[14] rather than his political proposal or his manual for taking power. (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 113)

This is the sort of ethical orientation toward the labour of organizing that I will refer to throughout the dissertation as militancy. It is an ethics of being-with marked by openness, listening, and – in the case of the FLN – "more than learning the [Mayan] dialect, learning to handle the language, what different things represent, the sense that its symbols communicate" (ibid 1997, p. 61). This listening then opens from theory into practice, from appreciating the collective knowledge that is encoded into language to appreciating the way this social understanding *articulates* collective action.[15]

If they were to collaborate in ways that were truly indigenous to their social context, the proto-Zapatistas had to understand people's ways of being in the world, their forms of collaboration, the concepts used to mobilize this struggle, and they had to take on these on. They had to render their energies more appropriate to the social metabolism in which they found themselves. The organizers had to be organized. This is why Moisés says they were "disconfigured" (2015d, p. 179) and Marcos calls the process "a translation, or rather an enriched digestion" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 62). The FLN members' initiative had previously been

[14] This is one of the Zapatistas' most popular slogans and strongest principles, first appearing in February 1994 during peace negotiations, as the Mexican government offered to meet Zapatista demands for things like nutrition and education, but only in certain regions of Chiapas. The EZLN consulted their communities, who rejected the offer saying they were fighting for "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994c; Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 76).

[15] *Autonomy is in Our Hearts* (Fitzwater, 2019) is an unparalleled exploration of this interplay between politicized Mayan language and the articulation of collective practice. Drawing on his studies at the same Zapatista Language School that AUSM study abroad students attend, as well as the Little School, Fitzwater illustrates how deeply dialectical meanings are woven into Tzotzil words that can only be crudely translated into English as "good government," "autonomy," "work," and "revolution."

elaborated into a (vanguardist) mode of collaboration, and through their defeat and "digestion" this collaborative form was broken down, reduced to its core initiative, and used to energize forms of organizing that had been ongoing for generations. The "substance" of what the FLN aimed to organize remained – it was still an effort to make revolutionary changes to class relations – yet this substance was digested, metabolized into an appropriate form, one that could nourish self-determination within their particular context.[16]

The second-grade course of the Zapatista "Little School" offers a rare description of these collaborative arrangements (Moisés & Galeano, 2015). Members recruited during the clandestine period prior to the uprising explain that they were tasked with finding new recruits and, before approaching them, were careful to observe whether they drank at community celebrations, whether they were prone to conflict with others, if they were widely regarded as responsible. They would then have political conversations with the potential recruits, transitioning into regular one-on-one meetings that were more educational. New recruits were not introduced to the entire project immediately, but were instead given tasks such as gathering resources, transporting provisions, or finding more recruits (often beginning with their family members). If they maintained good security and completed their tasks, they were introduced to more members and eventually invited to a camp. Generally, the adage was that "if you do good work, you'll be rewarded with more work" (López y Rivas, 2018), which is how members rose in rank, going on to recruit entire communities, coordinate assemblies, establish new camps, organize the community-wide provisioning efforts that were the basis for autonomy, and lead units of the army.

In sum, organizers looked for those whose everyday social activity marked them as what others call "organic leaders" (McAlevey, 2016, Chapter 2). Of course, this is according to Mayan understandings of what a "responsible" person acts like, how being "politicized" sounds in conversation and – as was hugely important

[16] This is in contrast to the more pervasive social digestion into non-profit modes of organizing that I will discuss later in this chapter as well as in the next.

during later, community-wide efforts – coordinating mass collaboration through the roles and protocols developed by Indigenous communities over centuries. Finding appropriate organizing forms also meant harmonizing with the material needs of the communities, specifically via health clinics to reduce the prevailing child and maternal mortality, literacy to prevent being swindled by the finqueros, and self-defence against their goons. When they arrived in the jungle as urban, non-Indigenous, Marxist-educated guerrilleros disguised as engineers, the original FLN members had no capacity to understand these pressures on the flow of life and labour, much less the historic forms of collaboration they might draw upon to ameliorate them. But they did have the militancy to self-criticize, allow themselves to be digested into them and, in so doing, enter a centuries-long struggle to take back the land.

With this transformation entire communities began joining the effort to build an army (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 76; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 24–25). An early success occurred in 1986, when the FLN established contact with the Land and Liberty community of the Lázaro Cárdenas ejido (A. C. Cedillo, 2010; Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 68).[17] Finqueros were killing more and more people for pursuing their rights, and community members agreed to help transport provisions and allow their youth to visit the jungle and be educated by the FLN, as long as they also taught them how to use firearms and respected their Catholicism (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 61; Oikonomakis, 2019, p. 62). The precipitous growth of the EZLN had begun.

[17] The ejido's situation was typical of the panorama described earlier: Lázaro Cárdenas was formed while the Mexican state was still granting ejido petitions, but on rocky hilltops unfit for agriculture, forcing residents to continue working for the finquero for starvation wages. Cárdenas was so desolate that one Zapatista recounts how people had to scour caves walls and puddles for water. Land reform ground to a halt, and ejido members spent years getting the bureaucratic runaround as they petitioned to enlarge the ejido and access water. All the while they were terrorized by the finquero who warned that his sons would rape any women who crossed his property on their way to the river. Later, community members were assassinated for pursuing their legal rights to land. Needless to say this radicalized the community. (Mora, 2018, pp. 118–120)

From the fire to the word

Towards an uprising to take back the land

Many dynamics in the broader conjuncture also favoured rebellion, and the "enriched digestion" of the FLN allowed them to seize the opportunity. The Mexican government declared bankruptcy and devalued the peso in 1982, touching off the global debt crisis that would be neoliberalism's opening salvo, and longstanding production and price supports were eliminated under the ensuing austerity (Harvey, 1998, ch. 7; Hesketh, 2016, p. 222; Howard & Homer-Dixon, 1996). When the 1988 bid of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to unseat the state-party was defeated through electoral fraud, many became convinced that a peaceful transition of power was impossible (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 75). The incoming president Salinas replaced the agricultural subsidy programs of decades past with his flagship welfare program Solidarity whose funds never trickled all the way down (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 76; Reyes, 2016, pp. 149–154). The move was devastating since commodity markets for coffee, corn, and cattle had all crashed (Harvey, 1998, ch. 7; Hernández Navarro, 1995).

Peasants showed their growing radicalization as they overhauled the mass organizations that had grown more reformist since the 1970s (Collier, 1994, p. 77; Harvey, 1998, ch. 5), rejecting leaders' clientelism and closed-door bargaining (N. Harvey, 1998, pp. 88–90; Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 64, 70–74). For decades, emigration to the Lacandón jungle had been a release valve, allowing people to access land if they could bear living beyond roads, the government, any other settlements, "or even God!" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 56; Rus et al., 2003, pp. 6–8). But in the 1970s the government moved to cynically invoke the Indigenous right to territory and make 66 ethnic Lacandón families owners of 660,000 hectares, so that the rest of the tens of thousands people living there could be dispossessed (N. Harvey, 1998, pp. 79–83). By the 1980s they feared imminent eviction as the government announced plans to build a highway through the jungle, along the Chiapas-Guatemala border. Epidemics swept through the jungle, possibly carried on the wind from chemical bombardments from the Guatemalan dirty war, killing hundreds of children in a matter of weeks (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 75).

Finally, and most importantly, Salinas amended Article 27 of the constitution and definitively ended any hope that peaceful, legal struggle could achieve land redistribution. In doing so, he aligned himself with the same enemies of the Mexican Revolution that Zapata denounced in the Plan of Ayala. Like the original Zapatistas, the neo-Zapatistas resolved to oppose his project by force of arms. This was the tumultuous flow of life and labour on the eve of the Zapatista uprising.

Their militant resolve to engage in armed struggle against the Mexican state is another mainstay of Zapatista strategy, although the contours of this resolve changed over time. No matter how many members they lost or how distant it seemed, the FLN had always remained fundamentally committed to armed struggle (Oikonomakis, 2019). Yet curiously they had not planned on *inciting* a revolution in Mexico, but merely being prepared to engage in armed struggle once that revolution began elsewhere (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 58; Oikonomakis, 2019, pp. 52–53). By the late 1980s, what had formerly been a dead-letter proposal to create a Zapatista *army* had turned into rapidly-expanding companies, battalions, divisions, militia, reserves, and civilian support bases in every village across the jungle (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 76). The EZLN also expanded beyond the jungle and into northern Chiapas and the densely-populated central Highlands. It became a pan-Mayan organization, uniting people of Tzotztil, Tseltal, Tojolobal, Chol, Mame and Zoque ethnicities for the first time in history (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p.104).

They continued to modify their organizational form as they grew, creating a military high command in 1992 composed of a council of Comandantes selected by their respective communities,[18] and these Comandantes were adamant about making a revolution instead of waiting on one (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 83). While the FLN also contained proto-guerrilla cells elsewhere in Mexico, the EZLN was by far and away the largest. This made for a fateful meeting in January 1993 when the Comandantes of the EZLN – who were resolved to go to war – met with the FLN's national leadership – who were against an uprising. The meeting

[18] This is called the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee, or CCRI in Spanish.

concluded with an agreement that the EZLN, now officially led by its Council of Comandantes, would have full control over its immediate preparations to declare war on the Mexican government, with the support (but no longer oversight) of the FLN members elsewhere in the country (A. C. Cedillo, 2010; Henck, 2007; Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 81–85; Oikonomakis, 2019, pp. 70–74).

The uprising began on January 1, 1994 with the EZLN mobilizing 4,500 soldiers (another 2,000 waited in reserve) to take two major military bases plus the cities of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Huixtán, Chanal, Oxchuc, and Ocosingo, where they burst into each city's government palace and trashed the land records (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 29–31).

Destroying the deeds was more than a symbolic gesture: for the next two years the Zapatistas and other Indigenous groups carried out a series of land invasions that totally displaced the finqueros from the class structure of Chiapas (Bobrow-Strain, 2007). Oikonomakis makes a conservative estimate of 352 square miles recuperated from the fincas (2019, p. 134), Núñez Rodríguez figures 531 square miles (2013, p. 45), and Reyes & Kaufman cite the much larger figure of 2,000-3,000 square miles (2011, p. 518). Given how remote much of this land is and that its recuperation is not recognized by the Mexican government, it is no wonder estimates vary. Moreover, other peasant organizations used the uprising as an opportunity to conduct their own land seizures, with Baschet estimating an additional 400 square miles reclaimed (2018, p. 33; see also Villafuerte Solís, 2005, p. 467). On a more local level, Mora reports that – in just one of the EZLN's 31 autonomous municipalities – twelve fincas were recuperated, with between seven and twenty families living on each (2017, p. 114).

Whatever the true numbers, clearly enormous amount of land was recuperated beginning in 1994, land that now sustains hundreds of thousands of people. This recuperation was the material fulfillment of Emiliano Zapata's Plan of Ayala and of Article 27 of the revolutionary Constitution (Vergara-Camus, 2014, p. 191). It was the culmination of an organizing process that began when a dozen guerrilleros accepted being "digested"

into the intergenerational struggle of Indigenous communities, eventually bringing together an army of thousands of soldiers and tens of thousands of support bases.[19] The success of their organizing lies in its material effect: collective control of the land, of the fruits of their labour on it, and the expropriation of those who had previously enclosed it.

I find the gravity of this event to be largely ignored in Anglophone literature on the Zapatistas, so I insist: The Zapatista uprising was an act of decolonization unprecedented both in our contemporary world and in history since the Mexican Revolution. The dispossessed massively rose up and reclaimed the land whose enclosure was at the root of their oppression. This is "land back" (The Red Nation, 2020). It is revolution. Just as the Haitian Revolution expropriated the slaveholders and the Cuban Revolution expropriated the bourgeoisie, the Zapatista uprising added another chapter to the Mexican Revolution by expropriating the finqueros. In their entirely reasonable excitement about Zapatista political culture, solidarity, and autonomy, many analysts miss the fact that the basis for this autonomy is the material recuperation of land. Because the flow of health and wealth in Chiapas no longer passed through (and accumulated within) a finquero class, the uprising was a massive social movement, weakening the violent relations of private property and enormously strengthening relations of generosity enshrined in collective ownership .

Reading transformation through the Declarations

The uprising quickly gave way to another transformation, of what Gramsci would call a war of maneuver into a war of position (1971), or what the Zapatistas call "the fire" to "the word" (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 277–317), from "rebellion" to "resistance" (EZLN, 2015, pp. 137–180). Marcos emphasizes what a jolt this was:

> For ten years we prepared to die. We didn't die, we realized we were still alive, so on January 2nd we started to improvise …. January 1st was detailed up to the exact hour and street corner where each combat unit had to arrive, what their job would be, all that. Nothing about what comes next. We didn't spend ten years preparing to speak. (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 86; see also Marcos, 2003c, pt. 2)

[19] On the EZLN's rapid growth during their clandestine period prior to the uprising, see (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 2; Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 74–78; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 19–31; Oikonomakis, 2019, pp. 68–75).

The EZLN had minutely prepared a lightning attack – literally "storming the palace" – hoping that this would set off other armed uprisings across Mexico, even if it meant they would be annihilated in Chiapas by the full force of the Mexican army (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 2). Instead, the resulting uprising was pacifist, with hundreds of thousands of people across Mexico and the world demanding the military stop massacring Indigenous people in Chiapas – as well as asking the masked rebels to explain themselves. After a twelve-day shooting war, the protests succeeded in pressuring the government into a ceasefire, and suddenly the EZLN had moved from the period of "the fire" into that of "the word." They were thrust into relation with national and international "civil society." Now it was time to learn how to collaborate with them and engage in social movement across Mexico.

After nearly thirty years and countless initiatives, the Zapatistas' "mode" of collaboration within civil struggle is well known. Yet at the beginning this mode of organizing – including comradely respect for difference ("each according to their calendar and geography"), the baseline criteria of struggling "from below and to the left," and autonomy building through "resistance and rebellion" – was vague and undefined. We can see it taking shape through the proposals and slogans of their various declarations, the defining documents of the Zapatista programme.

Their First Declaration (EZLN, 1993), prepared prior to the uprising by the Comandantes as well as the larger FLN, is at times hard to associate with the Zapatistas we have come to know. The EZLN declares their intention to fight their way to Mexico City in a nationalist, liberatory war against the foreign invaders who are supported by the PRI. They urge their supporters to pick up arms and join the struggle for democracy and a new constitution. It thereby reflects their organizing form, that of a popular army. Yet the declaration also includes their famous call for eleven demands – work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace (culture and justice were later added, making them

thirteen) – that, over the following decade, would grow into autonomy as the communities later worked to implement them unilaterally.

As the EZLN entered peace negotiations and were besieged first by journalists and then by solidarity groups (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 2), they made their first attempts to articulate a broader collaborative arrangement, one that could coordinate their efforts in Chiapas with those of their newfound supporters across Mexico and the world. The Second Declaration, issued in June (EZLN, 1994), begins by addressing the amorphous grouping called "civil society."[20] It continues their call for the democratization of the Mexican state found in the First Declaration, here through a National Democratic Convention that they propose take place in August. As we will see, this has become a favourite strategy of the Zapatistas, to launch a campaign or encounter as a pretext animating broader organization among their allies. The declaration also introduced slogans that would come to define the Zapatistas' understanding of militancy – "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" – and the political relation they strive to practice – "that the people govern and the government obeys," or "governing by obeying."

The Third Declaration in January (EZLN, 1995) continued with calls for the state to democratize, this time via a proposed National Liberation Mobilization that would include members of all political parties and all levels of government, as well as a civil society that is more specifically enumerated to include groups such as rural and urban workers, teachers, students, women, youth, intellectuals, and political militants. Their willingness to collaborate with electoral parties (including dissident members of the state-party) remained

[20] While this term now sounds antiquated, the EZLN made a sharp turn after their uprising and the mass protests that forced a cease fire, toward direct interlocution with civil society instead of the state (or the private sector). For example, they write that during their armed uprising "Another force, a force superior to any political or military power, imposed its will on the parties involved in the conflict. Civil society assumed the duty of preserving our country." Later: "Our call [of Enough!] transcends the question of presidential terms or the upcoming election. Our sovereignty resides in civil society. Only the people can alter or modify our form of government. It is to them that we address this Second Declaration" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1994). As seen through their various Declarations, the EZLN's approach to coordinating with "civil society" continued to evolve throughout the 1990s.

until the insidious constitutional reform of 2001, but the Third Declaration also broaches the concept of autonomy within their national struggle.

The Fourth Declaration was then issued two years after the uprising (EZLN, 1996), and after the recently-inaugurated President Zedillo had violated the ceasefire by sending the army to invade Chiapas, displace thirty thousand people, burn homes and fields, rape, and torture (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 126–128). The popular backlash against "Zedillo's Treason" forced the government to strike a Commission of Concordance and Pacification that would once again enter into negotiations, this time in the highland town of San Andrés. This declaration referenced the EZLN's indigeneity more than the previous ones, introduced the concept of neoliberalism (they did not identify as anticapitalist until the Sixth Declaration in 2005), and continued the routine of launching a convocation for civil society. This time their proposal was to form the Zapatista Front of National Liberation, which would steer the Zapatista army into a civil "front" and integrate allied groups from across Mexico.[21] They were careful to specify that the FZLN would not aspire to power or be an electoral party, but would seek to resolve collective problems as its members "govern by obeying."

Through these four declarations, each with their respective convocations, we see the EZLN engaging in a process of trial and error as they launch various organizing forms, to see whether collaboration comes together in practice. Their uprising was enormously resonant (Khasnabish, 2008), but how to organize this resonance to achieve social movement nationally? This is especially difficult since they abandoned their prior vanguardism yet were held in high esteem, so how to convoke a popular movement without simply issuing marching orders?

[21] The proposal to form the FZLN came out of a national consultation called by the Zapatistas and conducted in September 1995 by more than fifty thousand supporters, where 1.3 million people voted in support of the EZLN becoming a civil organization (Baschet, 2018, p. 35; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 129). The FZLN later dissolved after the publication of the Sixth Declaration (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005) and many of its members entered into the Other Campaign.

Their proposals reflect these attempts to find effective, non-vanguardist collaborative forms. Over the course of the Declarations, we can see the EZLN seeking a balance internally between their civil and military structures, between launching their own proposals and seeking consensus across difference, between making concrete demands of the state and the revolutionary call for "everything for everyone," between attending peace talks with the government and convoking non-electoral movements. Learning from Old Antonio, the FLN had spent ten years perfecting their process of building organization in Chiapas' Indigenous communities and now, suddenly, were looking for ways to collaborate with a much more varied assortment of actors. How to effectively coordinate amidst so much difference? This continues to be the primary challenge the Zapatistas pose to their supporters, study abroad alumni included. It is one of the foremost messes they continue to trudge through.

The road to autonomy passes through San Andrés

The Zapatistas' peace talks at San Andrés illustrate both difficulties and successes as they worked through this mess. Named after the highland town where they took place, the San Andrés peace talks began in the summer of 1995, and the government's Commission for Concordance and Pacification intended for them to be a typical, closed-door affair. Instead the Zapatistas took the radical step of asserting they would negotiate on behalf of all the Indigenous peoples and sectors of civil society that wished to participate, naming three hundred advisors to talks on "Indigenous rights and culture" – the first in five planned rounds of negotiations (Esteva, 2011, p. 117; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 129). In this sense, the Zapatistas subverted states' historic practice of using treaty negotiations to divide and conquer Indigenous nations.

To coordinate this inter-national Indigenous participation, the Zapatistas convoked the National Indigenous Congress, whose first meeting included over five hundred representatives from thirty-five Indigenous nations across Mexico (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 134). Beyond Mexico, they called for an International Encounter Against Neoliberalism and for Humanity, bringing over two thousand delegates from forty-three countries

(Rovira, 2009, pp. 198–203). This all shows there was an immense amount of organizing activity surrounding San Andrés, creating political structures that continue thirty years later.[22]

Instead of doing all this to simply improve their bargaining position, the Zapatistas followed the militant principle of "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" and sought to reverse the flow of support. San Andrés was a pretext for energizing broader struggles in defense of Indigenous territory and against neoliberal globalization (Baschet, 2018, p. 34; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 129; Reyes, 2015, p. 410; Vera Herrera & Hernández Navarro, 1998). The Zapatistas could very well have negotiated the legalization of the land they recuperated in 1994. Doing so would have prevented the violence they have suffered ever since, as the state wages low-intensity war against them (Gibler, 2008; Mora, 2008, Chapter 5) by promising party-affiliated Indigenous organizations and paramilitaries that their tenure will be swiftly legalized if they push out Zapatista families. Instead, the coalition struggled more broadly to reinstate the substance of Article 27 into Mexican law, this time via collective land rights for Indigenous peoples. They chose to struggle for social movement, even though it has cost members their lives.

Impressively, the allied forces successfully won the Commission's agreement to these demands. Neil Harvey summarizes:

> Significantly, the accords recognized the right of Indigenous peoples to decide on their own forms of government and development, thereby creating the opportunity to establish a new relationship with the State. Specific agreements included the rights of Indigenous peoples to practice their own cultures, enact their own forms of self-government, and *to use and benefit from the land and resources of their territories*. (N. Harvey, 2016, p. 9, my emphasis)

This is no small feat: collective land ownership was truly a "revolutionary reform" (Cornell, 2011, pp. 20–26; Hardt & Negri, 2017, pp. 251–258; D. Harvey, 2014, p. 180; Reyes, 2016, pp. 159–160). As previously mentioned, Article 27 "placed the ejido (and the productive labor therein) at the very center of the

[22] The National Indigenous Congress is bigger and more active than ever, currently including 43 nations comprising 523 communities (Zibechi, 2021). The Intercontinental Encounter kickstarted the alter-globalization movement, especially via the attendees who subsequently created People's Global Action, bringing together over 1,500 groups worldwide (L. J. Wood, 2005).

postrevolutionary juridical order" (Reyes, 2015, p. 413). Its collective landholding fundamentally subverted capitalist social relations of private property (Gilly, 2005, p. 73) and, by destroying this juridical order, Salinas had institutionalized new ways the state could dispossess communities at the service of capital. Then, four years later in San Andrés, the state was forced to revert to endorsing collective, non-capitalist forms of property, this time under the aegis of Indigenous control of land and resources.

Granted, the accords signed by the state-sanctioned Commission still required a constitutional amendment to become law. Yet the treaty opened the possibility of winning substantial, material concessions for a broad social sector, of changing the flow of labour by securing collective control over the land, of making social movement. The Zapatistas were feeding a virtuous cycle, wherein the internal organization that had allowed them to win land back inspired widespread solidarity, feeding even broader organizing, winning substantial reproductive supports, and further fueling the movement for self-determination.

The San Andrés process was the most genuine attempt the Zapatistas could possibly make to work through the channels of state politics. They slogged through the negotiation process for ten months, elaborated proposals, and – as Lenin would have urged (1940, Chapter 8) – accepted tactical compromises (Hernández Navarro & Carlsen, 2004). They honestly attempted to engage elected officials in instituting the will of their constituents to upend capitalist social relations, unlikely as it was they would dutifully carry out such demands. Their organizing strategy was therefore to make social movement by engaging the state, yet not through elections. Instead, they would use negotiations as a pretext to convoke social forces and use this strength to push for radical reforms that would in turn strengthen people's reproductive capacity. It was a strategy to build enough organization to obligate the state to give back the land. The strategy was ultimately defeated.

During the second half of the 1990s the Zapatistas continued to push for the constitutional amendment needed to enact the revolutionary reforms of San Andrés while the government continued to commit acts of

violence. Zedillo's presidency began with a largescale military assault in 1995 aiming (and failing) to capture the EZLN's leaders, and after the first round of talks concluded in San Andrés, his government torpedoed the second round by having notable Zapatista supporters tried for terrorism, vastly increasing the military occupation of Chiapas,[23] and by arming and training various paramilitary groups across the state (Marcos, 1997a). These groups began burning, raping, and killing in 1996 and had displaced six thousand people across the state by the end of 1997 (Marcos, 1997b).

This counterinsurgency campaign culminated on December 22, 1997 when forty-five people, overwhelmingly women and children, were massacred in the village of Acteal over the course of six hours while police two hundred meters away refused to respond (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 162; Navarro, 2012). Those killed were members of a pacifist Christian organization called Las Abejas whose members live in the same communities as and are supportive of the Zapatistas. Ten thousand people – eighty percent Zapatista and twenty percent Abeja – were ultimately displaced by the violence (Frayba, 1998, p. 13). The attack exemplified Zedillo's campaign to arm paramilitaries and unleash terror on the Indigenous population at large (Aubry & Inda, 2003; Baschet, 2018, p. 36). Furthermore, he used the massacre as a pretext to send an additional two thousand soldiers to Chiapas (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 163).

This escalation continued in the spring of 1998, with thousands of soldiers and police, sometimes openly accompanied by paramilitary groups, bursting into one Zapatista community after another to indiscriminately beat and kill residents, burn their homes, and make mass arrests, including of international human rights observers (Paulson, 2001). The government also made a concerted effort to manipulate its immigration policies as to deny observers entry or deport them (Global Exchange, 1999).[24]

[23] Following the uprising, military presence in Chiapas was increased to seventeen thousand soldiers by the end of 1994. Zedillo's further militarization of the state raised this number to around seventy thousand by 1999. In some municipalities there was one soldier for every nine inhabitants. (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 193–195)

[24] In chapter 3 I describe their first expulsion, of a human rights observer named Thomas Hansen, which helped prompt the creation of the Mexico Solidarity Network in 1998.

Instead of being goaded into a military response, the EZLN redoubled its efforts at constitutional reform. Support for the Zapatistas peaked during this period, as many more millions around the world were inspired by the legitimacy of their demands and horrified by the government's violence. Five thousand Zapatistas mobilized to fan out across Mexico in conjunction with twenty-eight thousand supporters and conduct a national referendum, asking if Indigenous peoples should be included in the national project, if Indigenous rights should be recognized in the constitution as outlined at San Andrés, if the soldiers should return to their barracks (as required by the constitution), and if the people should organize and demand that the government lead by obeying. This referendum enjoyed even broader participation than the first, with 2.85 million voting in Mexico and fifty-eight thousand Mexicans voting from abroad (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 178–185).

As with San Andrés, each referendum and each forum was a pretext for organizing society, and by the end of Zedillo's presidency in 2000 the extent of this organization was quite impressive, including striking students at the national university, members of the country's independent unions, activists combatting neoliberal globalization, citizens on the verge of finally ousting the PRI, Mexico's most beloved musicians, artists and novelists, all non-profits claiming to defend human rights, the academics who would make the Zapatistas into one of history's most-studied social movement organizations, and broad swaths of the Mexican population who were otherwise largely apolitical. It was truly a counter-hegemonic bloc.

The high point of this support was the 2001 March of the Colour of the Earth, where the Zapatistas and National Indigenous Congress convoked 77 mass gatherings in 13 states throughout south and central Mexico before fulfilling the goal of the uprising and "taking" Mexico City with a procession along avenues packed with tens of thousands and a rally of well over one hundred thousand in the central plaza (Mercier, 2001). It was a new political conjuncture, as the Zapatista struggle contributed to the state-party losing hold of the presidency for the first time in 71 years. Comandanta Esther stepped into this conjuncture as the first Indigenous woman in Mexican history to address Congress, demanding the San Andrés accords be adopted

into the constitution while giving a lesson in intersectionality through her analysis of patriarchal, colonial, and class oppression (Esther, 2001).

Again, it is difficult to imagine an effort to win revolutionary reforms with more popular support, moral authority, or legal argumentation than this one. As wars of position go, it was a masterful campaign. Yet this heroic endeavour was rebuffed, as the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) on the left, the centrist PRI, and the conservative National Action Party (PAN) agreed to an altered version of the accords that made a mockery of them. Rights to Indigenous self-government, to reject development projects, and to collective control of land and resources were all subordinated to the decision of state and federal government, thereby paring down autonomy into a feeble duty to consider Indigenous interests.[25] Stahler-Sholk sums it up writing, "Indigenous identity was to be recognized, but stripped of collective rights" (2005), rendering it a hollow "multiculturalism trap" (Stahler-Sholk, 2007). The amendments stripped the accords of all material substance. A final accounting of this period shows that the EZLN's twelve-day armed uprising had redistributed more land than the organizing around San Andrés, the strongest civil campaign Mexico had seen in generations.

Zapatista autonomy

This betrayal of democracy ended the Zapatista campaign for revolutionary reforms that began with the eleven demands of the First Declaration and their first negotiations with the Mexican state twelve days later. During this period, they invented new organizing forms: they transitioned from building an Indigenous army

[25] Stahler-Sholk enumerates the key ways the constitutional reform amended language from the San Andrés accords: "The original Article 4 of the indigenous rights law drafted by the congressional peace commission, COCOPA, affirmed that 'indigenous peoples have the right to free determination and, as expression of that, to autonomy.' Its replacement begins with the affirmation that 'the Mexican Nation is one and indivisible,' and adds that 'the right of indigenous peoples to free determination will be exercised in a constitutional framework of autonomy that assures national unity.' … Rights of indigenous communities to elect their own authorities, in the revised version, would only be granted 'within a framework that respects the federal pact and the sovereignty of the states.' In other words, the right to have rights will be at the discretion of the existing authorities. Crucial language guaranteeing indigenous peoples access and use of resources in their territories was replaced. Access would be decided 'with respect for the forms and modes of property and land tenancy established in this Constitution and relevant law.' … Article 26 of the original COCOPA law requiring 'the necessary mechanisms so that development plans and programs take into account the indigenous peoples and communities in their cultural needs and specificities' was eliminated along with a clause that 'the State will guarantee them their equitable access to the distribution of the national wealth.'" (Stahler-Sholk, 2005, p. 38)

to building a civil bloc through a strategic approach to negotiations, interpolating diverse social sectors through a novel discourse, and their non-vanguardist convocational practices of hosting encounters, convening congresses, and organizing through referendums. Yet these collaborations failed in their material aims, to provide Indigenous peoples across Mexico the use value of de-commodified, collective land (Stahler-Sholk, 2005, 2007).

Preparation for war was a period of fire, that of negotiations were a period of the word (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, pp. 277–317), and now the Zapatistas were compelled to organize through other collaborative forms, a project that was uncertain at first. This transformation was initially voiced in the negative, in the Zapatistas' decision to definitively end the peace process and – more importantly – appeals to the political class. Marcos wrote on behalf of the Comandantes that

> The constitutional reform categorically does not respond to the demands of the Indian peoples of Mexico …. It betrays the San Andrés accords … [and] only impedes the exercise of Indigenous rights …. Consequently, … there will be no more contact between the Fox government and the EZLN … [and] the EZLN will not re-engage in dialogue with the federal government until Indigenous rights and culture are constitutionally recognized. (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001)

Notably, this closure applied not only to the PRI (which EZLN had risen up against) and the conservative PAN that had recently won the presidency and brokered the reform, but also to the supposedly-leftist PRD. Whereas the Zapatistas are often maligned as electoral spoilers for the left,[26] the betrayal of San Andrés

[26] These critics' memory only goes as far back as 2005, when Marcos did a cross-country listening tour called the Other Campaign and also warned people about the PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador. He later explained the strategy behind the Other Campaign saying "We thought: AMLO will legitimately win the presidency with the backing of big business and the unconditional support of progressive intellectuals, [and then] the process of destruction of the nation will commence …. And the illusion will end when it's apparent nothing has changed for those on the bottom. Then a period of apathy, desperation and defeat will come, which is the Petri dish for fascism" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 1). AMLO later won a majority of votes, yet lost the presidency due to electoral fraud (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 3), yet critics persist in blaming Marcos for his defeat. It is cold comfort that, now that AMLO successfully reached the presidency, Marcos' warnings of his authoritarian, pro-capitalist orientation are borne out (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2022). A few examples are AMLO's creation of a National Guard to further militarize Chiapas and enforce the Mayan Train project over indigenous refusal (National Indigenous Congress, 2019a), the murder of anti-extraction activist Samir Flores Soberanes ten days after AMLO had rebuked his community's struggle against a pipeline project (a project that AMLO promised to cancel while campaigning) (Manning, 2019; National Indigenous Congress, 2019b; Pedroza, 2020), his eager collaboration with Trump on migratory policy (Lin, 2019), his antagonism towards the movement to end femicide (Rios Trevino, 2020; Zapatista Women, 2020), and his refusal to take pro-active steps to reduce coronavirus deaths (Agren, 2021). To add insult to injury Constantino Kánter –

capped seven years of collaboration with the PRD, including calling on the defrauded PRD presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to lead a Mobilization of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1995b) and supporting a PRD candidate for governor of Chiapas and continuing to support his government-in-exile after the election was stolen from him (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994b).

Nevertheless, when it came time to give substance to their claims of representing the "democracy" and "revolution" they bear in their name, the PRD's members of Congress abandoned them and sided with the parties to their right and against the enthusiastic will of both their electoral base and the country at large. The Zapatistas therefore concluded the PRD had abdicated any pretense of being an institutional vehicle for the left. Marcos summarized the lessons learned since 1994 writing,

> We thought that the politicians from "above" were going to understand and try to meet a demand that had already cost an armed rebellion and the blood of Mexicans; that this would direct the process of dialogue and negotiation with the Federal Government to a satisfactory conclusion; that this way we might be able to "come out" and do politics by civil and peaceful means; that with the constitutional recognition there would be a "juridical roof" for the processes of autonomy that were taking place in numerous parts of Indigenous Mexico; and that this would strengthen the path of dialogue and negotiation as an alternative for the resolution of conflicts. We were wrong. The political class as a whole was avaricious, vile, despicable, and stupid. The decision that the three principal political parties then made showed that the supposed differences among them were nothing more than mere simulations. The "geometry" of the politics from above had gone mad. There was no left, center, or right. There was only a band of thieves with impunity. (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 1)

After this betrayal, the EZLN entered into almost two years of silence as they considered how a ruinous mess such as this could also be a guide for further growth. They call their response autonomy, also known as "resistance and rebellion." Since they failed to change the flow of health and wealth through reform, now they would pursue it through their own self-determined labour.

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a finquero famous for proclaiming "a chicken's life is worth more than that of an indigenous person" and whose land was recuperated by the Zapatistas during the uprising – was selected by Morena, the party AMLO created, as its candidate for mayor of Comitán, Chiapas in the 2021 elections (Martín Pérez, 2021).

This was first announced on January 1, 2003 when the Zapatistas mobilized twenty thousand members to re-take the Chiapas highland capitol of San Cristóbal and celebrate their uprising. As Comandante Brus Li put it, "We won't wait for the bad government to give us permission. We should organize ourselves like true rebels and not wait for someone to give us permission to be autonomous- do it with or without the law …. That's how we self-govern" (2003). A short time later Marcos wrote, "Part of Indigenous autonomy (to which the "Cocopa Law" [signed at San Andrés] certainly speaks) is the capacity for self-governance …. The Zapatista communities are committed to this effort, and they have demonstrated … that they can do it better than those who call themselves the government" (2003c, pt. 2). Unphased by all three political parties uniting to betray their treaty obligations, the Zapatistas resolved to "unilaterally" implement the accords (EZLN, 2005, pt. 2). They would move from demanding legal recognition of Indigenous autonomy to the direct practice of it.

Over the next several pages I will depart from recounting Zapatista history and instead outline the practices that comprise autonomy. In particular, I will emphasize that it involves engaging the great majority of members in collective work to reproduce themselves on recuperated land. These are members of their many civil support base communities, and not members of the Zapatista army. They engage in this reproduction through a system of assemblies and councils called "good government" which coordinate productive and reproductive cooperative projects on this land. It is coordinated through relations of "governing by obeying," an expansive notion of justice (what I also call care or wellbeing), and steadfast militancy as they confront a mess of problems. Drawing from speeches by Subcomandante Moisés (2015a), the "textbooks" compiling interviews with Zapatista Good Government authorities (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d), and from Mora's community-approved research (2017, Chapter 5), I will also describe the "no" of autonomy: the refusal to collaborate according to social relations shaped by government institutions or by unaccountable allies, no matter how good their intentions.

Resistance, rebellion and land

Autonomy is the guiding thread of the Zapatistas' struggle to change the flow of life and labour. It began with the FLN's growth into a mass organization and continues to define the Zapatista programme up to the current day. Indeed, after a period of rapid transformation signified by the five major Declarations released throughout the 1990s, the Sixth Declaration – which announced their autonomous project – has remained the definitive statement of Zapatista analysis and strategy since its release in 2005.[27] This through-line began with the organizing of what Marcos calls a "people's army,"

> which is to say, an army for fighting and for producing, one that's not just prepared for combat but also does service work in the communities. Our army did collective work on milpas [of corn, beans and squash], and they did what is done in the Aguascalientes [today's Good Government Centres]: clinics, meeting places, sports fields …. We created production workshops for sewing, health, training, education, and always from the perspective of a war economy. The sewing workshop was to make uniforms, woodworking for boxes for the guns, stocks, spears, bows, arrows, everything we'd use in the war. Medical schools were for field nursing, teachers' schools so they'd read Mexican history, political positions, our manifestoes, our lessons. It was all from a war economy perspective. (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 76, 80) [28]

These "war economy" projects show how autonomy has always involved a dialectic between resistance and rebellion. "Rebellion" is the military side with vertical, defensive organizing arrangements, the "no" that refuses oppression, the side that takes on the challenge of "dying like human beings struggling for their lives" (Moisés, 2020b). "Resistance" is the popular side, with collaborative forms that are horizontal, creative, the "yes" that "collectively builds another path for life" (Zapatista Women, 2018). The uprising transformed this dialectic. The soldiers engaging in rebellion were prepared to fight and die. Their order was "to not give up, sell out, or give in." As for the support bases:

> Thousands of boys, girls, women, men and elders trained to protect themselves from bullets and bombs; to gather and retreat in orderly fashion in case the army attacked or bombarded the towns; to place and locate deposits of food, water and medicine that would allow them to survive in the

[27] Because the Sixth Declaration (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005) is also central to the work of the Autonomous University of Social Movements, I will analyze it in greater detail in chapter 3. For now, it will suffice to say that the declaration announced the Zapatistas commitment to building autonomy unilaterally, their explicit identification as anticapitalist, and commitment to non-electoral organizing, otherwise known as struggling "from below and to the left."

[28] These "war economy" projects were also immediately useful to the communities, since education and health services were otherwise completely absent. On the eve of the rebellion, statewide only a third of children went to school and half of homes were without running water (N. Harvey, 1998, p. 184), but these figures were much higher in the countryside than in the cities, and even more so on the margins in the Lacandón jungle.

> mountains for a long time. 'Do not die' was the only order that they were to follow …. When we [soldiers] came back to the mountains and we met back up with our communities, we fused the two orders and made them into one alone: 'Struggle to build our freedom' …. And we agreed that, if it wasn't possible to do so in this world, then we would make another world, a bigger one, a better one, one where all the possible worlds fit, the ones that already exist and the ones we still haven't imagined. (S. Galeano, 2016)

Land is the material basis for this struggle to build justice, upon which the Zapatistas strengthen self-determined flows of health and wealth by collaborating to both produce and self-govern (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, p. 105; Moisés, 2015a, p. 83). Reyes and Kaufman write that land is "the literal ground for the creation of autonomy, for the creation, sustenance, and growth of a self-organized collective subject" (Reyes & Kaufman, 2011, p. 519). Mora writes that a Zapatista elder named Macario who she interviewed "described autonomy as the heart and soul of the struggle, beginning when the support bases appropriated the land of their ancestors the Mayas" (Mora, 2018, p. 106). Only by reversing colonial, capitalist enclosure could they freely produce the use values that sustain this flow.

In other words, autonomy is the labour of collectively providing the use values of their thirteen demands – food, housing, education, health, work, information, land, democracy, freedom, independence, justice, peace, and culture (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1996) – plus the good government of collectively determining how this labour will be coordinated. Labour and self-determination, economics and politics, go hand in hand. Recuperating land meant Indigenous communities gained the use values needed to carry out social reproduction on their own terms, allowing for the accumulation of collaborative capacity instead of the accumulation of capital (Reyes, 2016, p. 164). This is how I wish to define autonomy, as a project of reproduction through self-determined collaborative arrangements providing self-determined use values.

Good government

Yet what exactly would these use values be, and how exactly would they be produced? In this sense Zapatista autonomy is also the messy process of coordinating collective work on collective land in a manner that strives to deepen *justice*. It is the long, slow process of self-determining collaboration in ways that work. The

Zapatistas call this coordination good government, but it is more of a process toward *better* self-government, and importantly one based on labour.

As Mora explains, collective work on collective land is the basis upon which "individuals [access] the right to participate politically in the Zapatista communities. It is the reproduction of concrete actions that fuels the politicized life of the collective in its relationship with the earth" (Mora, 2017, p. 20). Labour activity – in the form of the various projects wherein the thirteen demands are met, including agricultural, livestock, weaving, merchant, and boot-making cooperatives, as well as in health, education, and media projects – is the substance of assembly discussions, and those who put the most effort toward this collective labour are those with the most moral authority in these political spaces (Mora, 2017, p. 142). Once again, "if you do good work, you'll be rewarded with more work" (López y Rivas, 2018). In this sense autonomy prioritizes collective responsibilities over individual rights. It is a political structure governed by use value, whereas bad government is a tool for those with the most exchange value to perpetuate the social relations that allow their enrichment.

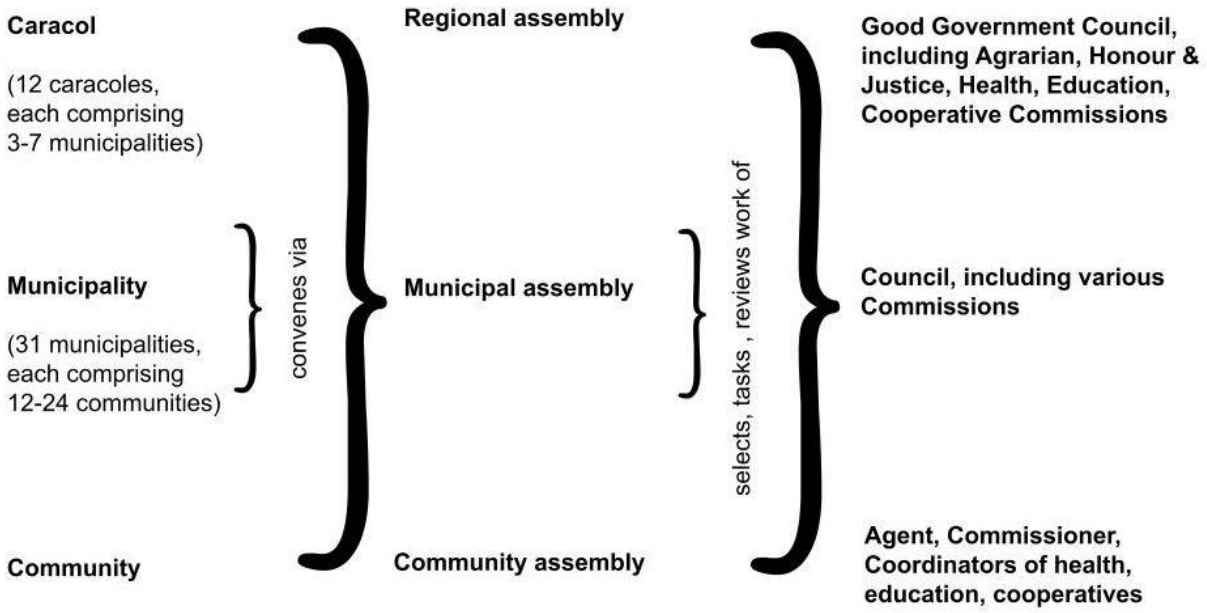
I repeat the word "collective" here because the Zapatista project seeks to engage as many of its members as possible into the day-to-day administration of autonomy. Mora writes that,

> in the communities I visited with a population of between twenty and twenty-five families, almost all the adults held positions of authority of some kind, either at the community level (for example, as a community representative at the head of a collective), at the municipal level (for example, on one of the commissions), or at the caracol [regional] level (for example, as a member of the technical committee for education). Of the communities with a population larger than twenty-five families, more than two-thirds of the inhabitants held such a cargo. (2017, p. 211)

These "cargos" (meaning a position of responsibility, and also literally a load or burden) comprise Zapatista self-government on the village, municipal, and regional levels. The role of "authorities," those tasked with cargos, is to coordinate the execution of decisions made at assemblies, which also occur on the village, municipal, and regional levels. Self-government is therefore a cycle of consultation through convoking community assemblies, proposal and agreement at these assemblies, implementation of the agreements by

authorities, their rendering of accounts at assembly, and then collective evaluation and modification – repeated continuously in every one of the hundreds of Zapatista communities and across three levels of good government. In this sense, autonomous government is the facilitation and implementation of collective agreements regarding collective work (EZLN, 2013a).

Figure 2: Zapatista good government (elaborated by the author)



Before getting into how these cargos work, I should clarify that another aspect of the resistance and rebellion dialectic is that the Zapatistas have worked since the uprising to make their civil, "good government" structure increasingly independent from their military structure. As described above, prior to the uprising the war economy of autonomous health, education, and production projects were all coordinated by people within the EZLN's military structure. Indeed, successful coordination of such projects was a key way recruits received more responsibilities and rose up the chain of command (Moisés & Galeano, 2015).

After the uprising, the EZLN worked to progressively separate these projects and the good government process of determining and executing them from its military chain of command. A first step was when the

Zapatista army conducted a flash occupation and, without firing a shot, occupied thirty-eight seats of municipal government on December 15, 1994 (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994b). Civil support bases were to autonomously carry out good government from these occupied seats of power.

During the wave of militarization following the Acteal massacre, the Mexican army drove these autonomous authorities out of all the occupied government buildings (except for the municipal seat in San Andrés) (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 174), yet the municipal good governments simply moved locations and continued to operate. Yet they did so under the guidance of the Comandantes (all those pertaining to the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee) until the civil structure of good government was completely separated from the EZLN's military structure in 2003, with the inauguration of the autonomous regions called "caracoles" (meaning spiral, conch, or snail) (Marcos, 2003b; see also González Casanova, 2005).

To further complicate things, "caracol" refers both to the regional level of good government and to the physical spaces where these councils convene. The first caracol was instead called an "Aguascalientes,"[29] a space created in the Zapatista village of La Realidad in 1994 for receiving their allies for the National Democratic Convention, "a space to learn and to listen and to speak with that plurality that we call 'civil society'" (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 2). More were established in the following years, and with the declaration of autonomy in 2003 they were renamed caracoles (ibid 2003b). As described further in chapter 4, they are not communities where people live full-time. Instead, they are spaces for cooperative projects and good government, where Zapatistas meet for assembly, to seek healthcare, to attend school, to discuss concerns with the municipal or regional councilmembers, to use the internet, to purchase cooperatively-produced goods and – as tens of thousands of Zapatista supporters know them – to host mass gatherings.

[29] The space is named after the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico, where the revolutionary Convention met in October 1914. The event was a turning point of the Mexican Revolution, as the organic intellectuals of Pancho Villa and Emiliano's Zapata's armies collaborated directly for the first time, not only strengthening the military force of the revolution's left but also providing enormous strategic and programmatic unity under Zapata's Plan of Ayala. Gilly explains its significance in Gramscian terms, writing that during the Convention organic intellectuals from the peasantry, working class, and radical bourgeoisie cohered into a bloc. The Convention therefore raised the revolution to its height. (2005, Chapter 5)

Returning to the structure of good government, in addition to the village and municipal levels (each of the 31 municipalities aggregates one or two dozen villages), each of the twelve caracoles groups between three and seven municipalities together and is governed by a Good Government Council. The creation of the caracoles was the culmination of a process of progressively separating resistance from rebellion, separating the work of the tens of thousands of people that is coordinated through the military structure known as the "EZLN" from the work of hundreds of thousands of "Zapatistas" that is coordinated through good government structures.

The relation good government strives for is "governing by obeying" (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994a).[30] The authorities chosen for cargos aim to carry out this political labour in a manner totally contrary to that of the conventional, alienated politics Zapatistas call "bad government." We may refer to both sorts as "authorities," but this authority stems from completely different social relations when comparing "good" and "bad" government. Candidates for positions within good government do not campaign and are instead nominated by peers at community assemblies, based on neighbours' consideration of the candidate's responsibility and adherence to the seven principles of Zapatista good government.[31] Each community, municipality, and region has its own nominating process, based on historic practice and geographical conditions.

At the local level, "authorities" include the Agent, whose focus is conflict resolution, a Commissioner who attends to land and agricultural issues, and local coordinators for education, health, and cooperative

[30] The information in the following two paragraphs was assembled from the four textbooks that the Zapatistas released for students of their 2013 "Little School" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d) as well as from the testimonies of Zapatista support bases compiled in *Justicia autónoma zapatista* (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, pp. 105–205). Together, these texts are the definitive account of the principles, process, obstacles, and everyday experience of Zapatista autonomy, as explained by the support bases who create it.

[31] The seven principles are to obey, not command; represent, not supplant; go further below, not above; serve others, not yourself; convince, not conquer; build, not destroy; and propose, not impose (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, pp. 73–74).

projects.[32] Municipal level authorities are a governing Council, whose members group into an Agrarian Commission, an Honour and Justice Commission, as well as coordinating teams for health, education, and cooperatives. On the most general level of the twelve Zapatista caracoles, each has a Good Government Council with 24 to 36 members who also create teams coordinating the various labours of autonomy. On all three levels there is gender parity amongst authorities, who always work as a team with their co-representative, treasurer, and secretary instead of each individual having a specific position.

Beyond popular consent, there are hardly any formal requirements for serving in a good government cargo. Literacy and fluency in Spanish are not required, but abstention from alcohol is. Baschet points out that this de-specialization is essential to authorities' ability to "govern by obeying," precisely because they do not assume to be experts who are distanced from the people (2018, p. 76). Rather, their participation in the *collective* labours of autonomy is the source of their respect (Fernández Christlieb, 2012).

Once chosen, there is a ceremony where a mutual promise is made: those chosen vow to respect the will of the community, and community members vow to participate in the collective work the person coordinates. This is followed by a party where outgoing authorities are celebrated, and the new ones are welcomed. Once on the job, they receive no payment for their service, though their fellow community members aid them with their agricultural and domestic responsibilities and money from cooperative projects pays for their transportation costs (thus the importance of the cargo as a "load" or "burden"). There is no re-election after the three-year term, and because the work is intensive and unpaid, few wish it were otherwise. If the assembly disapproves of an authority's work or book-keeping, they may be immediately recalled, as happened to the

[32] Note that the origin of the positions of Commissioner and Agent lies in the ejido. The revolutionary Constitution of 1917 mandated that all ejidos be governed by an ejidal assembly, which would elect people to these positions to carry out the day-to-day work of coordination and dispute resolution (Ibarra Mendívil, 1996). Their continued practice by the Zapatistas attests to the impact of the ejido on peasants' organizing forms and is an example of how the Zapatistas, in addition to unilaterally implementing the San Andrés accords, also continue to practice the social movement behind the original Mexican Constitution, as it was before its neoliberal dismemberment (Vergara-Camus, 2014, p. 131).

San Andrés municipal authorities when they unilaterally chose to spend money on remodelling the town square (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, pp. 31–32).

Governing by obeying

"Governing by obeying" is diametrically opposed to the conventional political system. The rule of the colonizers and finqueros was dedicated to violently imposing of relations of dispossession and exploitation (Mora, 2017, pp. 201–202), as well as the political parties they rose up against, which "govern by ordering" (mandan mandando). They all work to perpetuate social relations of alienation on dispossessed land, whereas good government authorities coordinate reproduction on recuperated land, integrating 'political' with 'economic' decision-making.[33] Don Ernestino, an elder who led a ceremony welcoming incoming good government authorities attended by Mora, explained governing by obeying to her beautifully:

> You don't become an authority by your own will, but because the people chose you. You have to respect the people, you can't surpass them. God, who is also the earth and the people, chose them. There is no authority without people and without people there is no life. That's where governing by obeying comes from. (2018, p. 233)

The term encapsulates the sort of politicized social relations the Zapatistas are building. Those who labour within it hold a dialectical tension, as the authorities are tasked with obeying the will of the people as agreed in assemblies, yet they must also practice a consensual sort of authority, working to coordinate this will, mediate disagreement, and motivate participation after the assembly has reached its decision. Anyone who has attended political meetings knows that all too often the passion that led to a group's decision suddenly evaporates the day after, once the hard work of carrying it out begins. In the case of good government authorities, this is the work of getting new productive cooperatives running, turning people out for collective projects like building a new meeting hall, finding teachers and elaborating curricula, or planning an international encounter for thousands of visitors. As the Zapatista teacher Fidel explained, "There's a time

[33] Zapatista-inspired theorists conceptualize this opposition in various ways. Baschet says that conventional politics perpetuates "dissociative power," in that it separates the government from the people, while good government is "non-dissociative" (2018, pp. 77–80). Zibechi contrasts concentrated state power with the "dispersed" power of social movements (2010). Holloway prefers the opposition between "power-over" and "power-to" (2002), and Reyes and Kaufman contrast the enclosure and domination of "sovereignty" with self-determining "autonomy" (2011).

when the people lead and the government obeys, and there's also a time when people obey and the government leads" (quoted in Baschet, 2018, p. 77).

Nonetheless, autonomy is only as strong as good government authorities' proximity to the people, as their ability to hold this tension as they coordinate the labour that emerges from collective deliberation (ibid 2018, p. 80). Thus the importance of the good government authorities' lack of specialization, their lack of compensation, their revocability, and their continued work as peasants while they serve. Despite making it a bit difficult to work with them at times,[34] the measures prevent good government from "dissociating" from the people and alienating from them of their capacity for self-determination. In this way, governing by obeying encapsulates the social relations the Zapatistas are strengthening as they alter the flow of life and labour on recuperated land. It is the way they make social movement.

Autonomous labour

Justice is another way to understand autonomy, an understanding that centres the wellbeing produced through self-determined labour on collective land. The health, production, and education projects I will outline below provide the use values comprising justice: health as justice for bodies, cooperatives as just production, and education as meaning-making about and through justice. Indeed, justice is similar to the ethic of care emerging from alumni organizing that I will elaborate in chapter 4.

Good government authorities also create justice through dispute resolution.[35] Each community assembly has established regulations regarding things like lumber, waste disposal, agro-chemical use, burning fields,

[34] Many municipal and Good Government Councils resolve the problem of finding time to both farm and serve in autonomous government by splitting the council in half and having them rotate on two-week increments. Mora relates the difficulties of doing her research in Zapatista communities, as she often had to re-explain her project to a new set of council members who would ask her to wait for an answer while they consulted their communities, just as the previous set of council members had requested a few weeks prior (Mora, 2018, p. 240). I had similar experiences during my time bringing study abroad students to the Zapatista language school.

[35] The information below comes from the testimonies of good government authorities included in *Justicia Autónoma Zapatista* (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, Chapter 3).

drunkenness, domestic violence, theft, and gossip, and local authorities are tasked with calling community members to attention if they violate these norms and assigning a penalty – nearly always labour on the community's collective projects – when the community's regulations call for it. When there are disputes within or between families (such as divorce, a husband preventing his wife from participating in autonomous projects, neighbours dissuading women from being authorities by gossiping about imagined infidelity, or concerning land allotments) the good government authorities facilitate a consensus process, often culminating in both sides writing and signing an agreement. More serious issues such as rape, murder, selling drugs, trafficking migrants, or disputes with other organizations are taken up with the municipal or regional good government authorities. Often a special assembly will be held to decide how to proceed.

As with autonomous health and education, autonomous justice is also open to non-Zapatistas, who make frequent use of it since, unlike the state's courts, this conflict resolution is free, conducted among community members and in Indigenous languages, and without the risk that those seeking justice end up finding themselves imprisoned.[36] Given that some of these people belong to the very organizations that have carried out paramilitary violence against Zapatista communities in the past, extending justice and other autonomous services to non-members opens the door to possible recruitment and, at the very least, "neutralizes" people who could otherwise be coopted into acts of violence (Moisés, 2015d, p. 168). In this way, justice and care are not insular activities, but forms of wellbeing that the Zapatistas extend outward to make broader social movement.

Cooperative production is essential to the material pursuit of justice. Lest this imply that they have advanced so far as to leave capitalism behind, that is not the case. Nor have they abolished patriarchy or dissociated themselves from the Mexican state. While all their land is held collectively, plots are allotted to each family and produce not reserved for domestic consumption or for distribution via cooperatives is sold in the market

[36] On the rare occasions that indigenous mozos travelled to court to denounce the brutality, rapes, and murders of the finqueros, they were themselves imprisoned for such an act of insubordination (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, p. 73).

economy (Moisés, 2015a, pp. 92–93). Cooperatives produce a range of important use values, but there are many others that Zapatistas can only obtain by purchasing commodities, notably including Coca Cola (Marcos, 2007c). As the Zapatista Women explain below, they are also still within patriarchy and continue to devalue care work and force it upon women. Furthermore, many Zapatistas live in communities alongside non-Zapatista families (who are sometimes even a large majority), meaning they are not isolated into some autonomous bubble. The soldiers of the EZLN may live in remote jungle camps, but Zapatista support bases remain in proximity to the Mexican state. In stronghold areas this proximity is manifest in the blunt force of paramilitary groups or barracks full of soldiers. In many other areas, Zapatista families encounter the state through its taxes, utility bills from the Federal Electricity Commission, its refusal to recognize their children's autonomous education, and – infamously – when its Secretary of Foreign Affairs resisted issuing Zapatistas passports, doubting poor, Indigenous people such as themselves were in fact Mexican citizens (Moisés, 2021).

Nonetheless, their collective projects are moving *towards* non-capitalist social relations, towards the relations they call autonomy. Good government authorities coordinate the various collective projects whose labour satisfies the thirteen demands. This means they are able to socialize, politicize, and acculturate their children, stay healthy, get news and media, and exchange goods in order to feed, clothe, and transport themselves – all without wages.

A brief accounting of the projects that allow this reproduction includes: a system of primary and secondary education, taught in both Mayan languages and Spanish by Zapatista education promoters using a curriculum set by the community (Baronnet, 2008); a system of clinics and hospitals that, in addition to general and preventative medicine, includes dentistry, pre-natal care, midwifery, herbal medicine, bone-setting, and even surgeries;[37] a number of cooperative banks, including banks dedicated to starting women's cooperative

[37] The strength of Zapatista autonomous health is especially apparent during the coronavirus pandemic. Mexico has the fifth-most covid deaths in the world, yet Subcomandante Moisés reported that during the first six months of the pandemic only twelve Zapatistas died of the disease, thanks to rigorous preventative measures and cooperative production of hygiene materials (Moisés, 2020a).

projects, banks for agricultural projects, banks for medical expenses, and banks for veterans and widows; radio stations transmitting music, news, and political education; a media project reporting on Zapatismo, by Zapatistas, for Zapatistas (and sometimes for the rest of us too); and a plethora of cooperatives dedicated to productive pursuits such as livestock, manure production, general stores, coffee production and distribution, transport of goods, passenger vans, warehousing, baking, butchers, poultry, pork, rice, ironworks, beans, corn, tortillas, and boot-making. There are also many women's groups that build organization by collectivizing reproductive tasks such as vegetable farming, food preparation, washing, and weaving – labour that was previously coordinated via patriarchal relations of domestic isolation (Mora, 2017, p. 153).[38]

In 2013 in the region of Oventic there were 52 health clinics, 158 schools, 8 agroecology centres, and 3 radio stations. The schools had 510 teachers and coordinators with 4886 students; there were 284 agroecology promoters; and the radio stations had 62 DJs and coordinators. There were a total of 268 authorities across the municipal governments of the region (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013a, pp. 26–27). When these figures were published, they were for only one of the five Zapatista regions, one-fifth of their territory, and since then an additional seven new regions were created (Moisés, 2019).

These lists illustrate how Zapatista autonomy is exceptional in both its scope and duration. Because they collectively own their land, cooperatives and other means of production, and because their only "managers" are rotating coordinators who are consensually selected, their communities truly are a classless society. The incremental flowering of this project lacks shock value, causing it to remain vastly under-reported, even in alternative media, and thereby under-appreciated on the left. Whereas the popular government of the Paris Commune is much more celebrated, the "Chiapas Commune" has achieved a depth, breadth, and most importantly a longevity that the martyred communards could not.[39] I cannot over-emphasize the immensity

[38] Note that this is exactly the sort of socialized reproductive labour that Angela Davis calls for in *Women, Race & Class* (1983).

[39] Baschet makes this same comparison (2018, pp. 87–88), observing how Marx's description of (autonomous) self-government in the Commune is remarkably applicable to Zapatista good government (see Marx's draft comments in Marx & Engels, 1971, p. 153; also Sayer & Corrigan, 1983, pp. 82–89).

of the combined capacity of hundreds of cooperative projects. Through this collective work, hundreds of thousands of Zapatistas obtain use values (that is to say, they enrich their lives) through the labour arrangements they self-determine on recuperated land. Having rebelled against colonial enclosure, these projects of resistance allow the Zapatistas to reproduce themselves less through violent social relations and more through relations of generosity. They comprise a flow of labour that enriches life instead of accumulation.

This process is also beset with countless problems, problems that are anticipated and embraced. As Galeano says, "Happiness is not our destiny. Our destiny is to struggle" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 196). Rather than obstacles to be lamented and circumvented, these problems are the essence of the autonomous process itself. As Moisés says, "Our textbook is the problems that arise, the way we have to resolve those problems" (2015d, p. 176). In this respect the Zapatistas have been candid in sharing pages from their textbook. Those interviewed by Fernández relate problems in recuperating money loaned by the autonomous banks, how many cooperatives still have to sell to non-Zapatista middlemen ("coyotes"), of families renouncing Zapatismo but wanting to keep their parcel of recuperated land, people who refuse collective work, men who prevent their wives from participating in good government and women who are painfully shy to do so, people who desert their cargo for lack of bus fare (2014, sec. 4.2). The list goes on (Baschet, 2018, pp. 80–86).

These are the everyday obstacles to collaboration, and justice is the process of collectively working through them, strengthening self-determined social relations by elaborating ever-more appropriate organizing forms. Just as capitalism must be remade daily through each police beating, sentencing, eviction, demolition, manager's write-up, and abusive altercation, autonomy is built by consistently reasserting its relations, through its falling apart and getting built back better. Social relations are strengthened by addressing discord within families, cooperatives, and good government councils and slowly, arduously, working through it to create better forms of organization.

In this sense, I hold that autonomy *is* the mess. Problems are its praxis, where the good intentions of theory meet the stubborn demands of practice. Zapatismo's slogans are merely a compass for navigating the mess, just as a ship's crew charts a course through the wind and waves they know they will confront. I will elaborate this concept of "mess" in chapter 4, as it resonates with alumni's organizing experiences. Indeed, creating intentional collaborative arrangements means upsetting unintentional ones, so creation is also a process of reconciliation. Zapatista women show the power of constructively upsetting relations, as their work to integrate women into the politics and economics of autonomy has greatly strengthened the Zapatistas' capacity to engage in an ever-more collective self-determination, in a broader project of justice. In doing this generations-long work, they teach us that "resistance" is the militant commitment that prevents people from giving up, selling out, or giving in as they work through so many problems.

Resisting welfare

The 2001 March of the Color of the Earth ended the Zapatistas' period of struggling for revolutionary reforms, and the creation of the caracoles in 2003 inaugurated their turn to autonomy. The state and federal bad governments reacted by pivoting from their paramilitary counterinsurgency strategy (which certainly continued) towards one seeking to foment desertion through various welfare programs. In this section I will focus on these welfare programs – both those offered by the bad government and (sometimes) those of the well-intentioned non-profits – showing how they articulate flows of labour that run counter to the resistance and rebellion of Zapatista autonomy.

Politics of refusal

A fundamental aspect of Zapatista resistance is strict refusal to accept handouts from federal, state, or municipal governments. Families who take them must leave the organization and cease to produce on collective land. Subcomandante Moisés explains that this resistance originated among the widows of soldiers who died in the uprising, who said, "If we took up arms and our compañeros died, why are we going to take

the leftovers, the charity, the crumbs of the bad government? What they want is to buy us off like they're buying off the non-Zapatistas, so that they don't become Zapatistas" (2015a, p. 87). Some researchers report that this policy led to desertions in the late 1990s.[40] Whether or not this is true, the ranks of Zapatista support bases grew steeply in the 2000s, such that they could carry out the largest march in the history of Chiapas on December 21, 2012 by mobilizing 45,000 people (Reyes, 2015, p. 408). Moreover, autonomous resistance improved the standard of living of Zapatista families such that they have surpassed their non-Zapatista neighbours who accept state welfare (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 2012). And, since Zapatista autonomous justice, education, and healthcare are all open to non-members, the standard of living of these neighbours is higher too.

This refusal to accept aid from the Mexican state is fundamental to resistance because, as explored in the previous chapter, material exchange shapes social relations. The refusal to accept welfare is therefore a refusal to be digested into capitalist relations. Marxists are familiar with how the dispossession of land forces people who could formerly reproduce themselves autonomously to seek a wage, causing their political, ideological, and cultural relationships to be progressively subsumed within capitalist ones. Resistance highlights a modified process wherein peasants in contemporary Chiapas do have land, but only enough to reproduce themselves with great difficulty. Government welfare programs purport to lessen this difficulty with things like "sheet metal, a bag of cement, a kilo of nails" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, p. 39).

[40] Vergara-Camus is one researcher to report this (2014, p. 127), and he does not mention elsewhere whether or not he sought consent from the Zapatistas to conduct fieldwork in one of their communities. Barmeyer also writes about supposed defections and also openly admits to using research methods that brazenly flaunt widely-recognized protocols for doing research with indigenous peoples, as he admits to lying to the good government authorities by misrepresenting himself as a volunteer for a water project instead of a researcher (2009, Chapter 8). His findings are suspicious, given his highly unethical research practices. Some amount of departure is to be expected from an organization of hundreds of thousands of people, and good government authorities are openly self-critical about the difficulties that cause it (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, pp. 40–43). Yet given the official disinformation campaign arguing this policy of resistance has irreparably diminished the EZLN, culminating in the Commissioner for the Development of Indigenous Peoples publishing a celebratory book declaring them defunct (Álvarez, 2013), I am wary of those who emphasize defections.

With programs like Oportunidades we see how this digestion is carried out. The program offers monthly cash payments, but in return recipients are subjected to all sorts of surveillance, including mandatory medical exams for women that subject them to racist standards of supposed "hygiene" and enrolling their children in government schools where they are taught little more than obedience and that Indigenous language and culture are backwards (Mora, 2017, pp. 171–185). These programs are not meant to "incorporate the marginalized population into civilization" but instead to "convert the population into a salaried workforce," "optimize their poverty" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018a) and, above all, to tie this optimization to votes for a particular political party. Mora sums up the purpose of the Oportunidades welfare program, writing "State mechanisms operating in spheres of social and biological reproduction simultaneously regulate and fragment, discipline and mutilate, interrupt and reconfigure" (2017, p. 184; see also Forbis, 2011, p. 377). Reproductive use values are used to articulate particular social relations, as they are only available in exchange for discipline. The Zapatistas understand this to be a tool for once again trapping them within the mozo relation, and their resistance is the refusal to allow deprivation to pull them back into such oppression.

Furthermore, welfare is used to dispossess land, as peasants cannot access the public subsidies of the Procampo program unless they first convert their share of the ejido to private property (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, p. 74). While the classic Marxist case studies begin with the enforced dispossession of the land (E. M. Wood, 1998), counterinsurgency-oriented welfare programs use reproductive supports to achieve this enclosure. In both cases, the state operates as a "means of dispossession" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 289), in one case via its army and in the other through its social programs.

The refusal in Zapatista resistance is therefore a refusal to be driven by hardship into reverting to capitalist relations, as well as a refusal to give up their land.[41] The flipside is the positive assertion of resistance: to

[41] Reyes (2016, pp. 152–154) describes how the Zapatistas draw on a long historical memory in asserting this refusal. In 1988 President Salinas introduced his National Solidarity Program (Pronasol). "Anticipating mass resistance to … the end of land redistribution," he introduced "the largest program in poverty alleviation that the region [of Latin America] had ever seen" and drew on his deep involvement in Mexico's Maoist left to fill out with former radicals both his cadre and many of the 140,000 "solidarity committees" that coordinated the program locally. This enormous effort allowed

confront these hardships by relentlessly collectivizing their reproductive labour, by instead strengthening subjectivities of militancy. This organizing is what differentiates resistance from the tragedy of "organized abandonment" mentioned in chapter 1 (Blakely, n.d.). Instead of accepting bags of cement or racist treatment by doctors and teachers, they have spent decades developing cooperatives, clinics, and bilingual education, all the while resisting the government's attempts to tax the cooperatives into oblivion and annul their schools (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, pp. 23–25; Gutiérrez Narváez, 2011, pp. 239–245). This continual push towards collectivity is the heart of Zapatista autonomy. While autonomy's critics caricature it as either a stubborn refusal or leap into utopia, it is necessarily a progressive process of finding ways to meet reproductive needs less through enforced exploitation and more through self-determined labour.

Shaping relations with non-profits

Yet resistance is not limited to refusing the state's social programs. The Zapatistas also recognize that even organizations that are not profit-seeking or state-affiliated can serve to strengthen capitalist social relations. This is why the formation of the caracoles in 2003 was also aimed at changing collaboration between the Zapatistas and the non-profits, solidarity groups, and "Zapa-tourists" who wish to support them.

Marcos relates that, because the EZLN began as a clandestine organization, they were not prepared to relate to this amalgamation they called "civil society" throughout the 1990s. He says that in April 1994 an EZLN soldier "came to report to me about the arrival of a caravan from civil society. I asked him how many there were … and who they were …. After considering, the compañero said: 'They're a chingo [a fuckload], and they're absolute chaos'" (2003b, pt. 2). This collaboration was enormously generative, but it also had its downsides. Marcos writes that

him to end the revolutionary legacy of land redistribution by successfully reforming Article 27 of the constitution, thanks to the way Pronasol channeled social movement into a struggle for state subsidies. In this sense Pronasol was a tool of passive revolution, pushing through a massive change in classed property relations. Meanwhile, the Zapatistas "had from the beginning denounced [Pronasol] as an attempt to redirect popular attention away from redistributive demands" and were thereby not fooled into supporting any of the "Pink Tide" governments that later instituted similar programs across Latin America.

> We also expected them to learn. The Zapatista movement arose, among other things, in demand of respect. And it so happened that we didn't always receive respect. And it's not that they insulted us. Or at least not intentionally. But, for us, pity is an affront, and charity is a slap in the face. (ibid 2003b, pt. 2)

He calls this the "Cinderella Syndrome," exemplified by a single pink stiletto among a pile of donations (junk) they received from supporters. By and large these donations sustained rebellion by helping the Zapatistas survive the brutal repression of Zedillo's presidency. The international observers coordinated by the Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre helped prevent the Mexican military from following their Guatemalan counterparts (as well as nearly every other state confronted with an insurgency) in embarking on a campaign of scorched earth and genocide (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 50, 97, 114).[42] International solidarity groups and non-profits also supported resistance by financing the construction of many schools, hospitals, and productive projects in the communities.

Nonetheless, at times these groups articulated a flow of labour which also risked digesting Zapatistas to relations of dependency. Then it all dried up once they broke with all political parties, declared themselves anticapitalist, and were no longer the darlings of international human rights organizations (Moisés, 2015a, p. 93). Organizations like the Red Cross had used their aid to bypass good government and create charitable relations directly with support bases, and when the aid stopped, these bases grew angry with those in good government (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, pp. 27–28). Furthermore, non-profits often offered their projects on take-it-or-leave-it terms, wherein the organization determined what sort of support they believed the Zapatistas needed and in what specific community this support would be provided, according to their own criteria (including consideration of what will likely attract further donations).

[42] This was also the most pressing concern of the Latin American solidarity groups who founded the Mexico Solidarity Network in 1998 (Mott & Mott, 1998c; Ortiz, 1998)

All this perpetuated a clientelist flow of health and wealth.[43] Unaccountable organizations were determining autonomous projects rather than the communities, and the strengthened labour power that comes with coordinating such projects – including finance, design, communication, and logistics – was accruing with non-profit staff and not to those in Zapatista good government (Moisés, 2015d, p. 172). Finally, when they looked into the financing of these projects, they found that often most of the money was dedicated to reproducing the staff through "operating costs" rather than providing reproductive use values to the communities (Moisés, 2015b, p. 104).

This illustrates how international aid is a potent stream within capitalism's flow of labour, enticing people to adopt the ways of being-with that will allow them to accommodate to it. Endowments are amassed in exchange for tax write-offs, interest accrues on this tax-free savings, funding grants that pay the wages of staff who labour within a certain, bureaucratic subjectivity, coordinating the provision of use values to people who demonstrate they are "the sort of people" (practice the sort of subjectivity) that funders aim to support. From top to bottom, the flow functions to reproduce the liberal variety of capitalist social relations.

This is not to say that I consider all non-profits to be evil, nor do the Zapatistas reject them *en masse*. Flows of life and labour are *moved*, not conjured from nothing. Rather than flatly rejecting the support of non-profits and international solidarity groups, as they did with government programs, Zapatista resistance has meant structuring their collaboration via protocols that promote capacity-building and self-determination. The Zapatistas still warmly welcome these groups (even making their own donations to them!),[44] yet they do so through more-intentional social relations. Again, they thereby strengthen militant ways of being-with instead

[43] For this reason, the first regulation of the caracoles is that "Donations and help from national and international civil society will no longer be allowed to be earmarked to anyone in particular or to a specific community or Autonomous Municipality. The Good Government Junta shall decide, after evaluating the circumstances of the communities, where that help most needs to be directed …. The objective is to balance somewhat the economic development of the communities in resistance. Leftovers, charity and the imposition of projects shall, of course, not be accepted" (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 6).

[44] In July 2022 the Zapatistas sold artwork they brought with them on their European delegation, including a hand-carved and ornately decorated canoe, to the Reina Sofia museum. They donated all the proceeds to the non-profit Open Arms, which rescues migrants stranded in the Mediterranean. (Open Arms, 2022)

of dependent ones. It is an example of how working through problems continues to strengthen Zapatista resistance.

Rebellion continues

Lest we assume that "rebellion" ended along with the 1994 uprising, the Subcomandantes remind us that "We continue to walk with two feet: rebellion and resistance, the 'no' and the 'yes', 'no' to the system and 'yes' to our autonomy" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b). The confrontational aspect of rebellion continued as chains of Zapatista women prevented soldiers from establishing new encampments after the 1997 Acteal massacre. It continues as communities contend with paramilitary attacks, such as the murder of the teacher Galeano in 2014 (Marcos, 2014), the burning a cooperative warehouse and kidnapping of a member in 2020 (Good Government Council, 2020), and another kidnapping by a paramilitary organization in 2021 (S. Galeano, 2021b), after which the EZLN has entered into a new period of silence that continues today.

To defend against these attacks members must be "strong," "solid," and "fierce" in their rebellion (Moisés, 2015d, p. 138). Or, as one of their most common slogans goes, "don't give up, don't sell out, don't give in." In this sense rebellion signals how Zapatistas are still willing to die for their cause. The Zapatista Women (a commission of Comandantas and coordinators within the EZLN) stated this bluntly when they said the Mayan Train will only be built "upon the blood of Zapatista women" (2019b).

Resistance is not far removed from this strident rebellion. A former Good Government Council member named Victor says, "The bad government couldn't do away with our comrades by killing them with its military, so it had to find another way to do away with them, through the economy … The comrades looked for other ways to resist these attacks, through the projects" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, p. 30). While rebellion continues an insurgency that began with colonization, resistance stretches toward the future. As the teacher Jacinto says, "The phrase 'everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves' is part of the ideology we have as Zapatistas …. Even if we give our lives, even if we fall along the path, …

even if we don't see the fruit, we're struggling so our children have a better life" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, p. 74).

To resist while building everything for everyone, the Zapatistas have to use organization like a poet uses words, like a singer uses sound, like an artist uses images (Moisés, 2015d, p. 170). That is, they must practice this subjectivity of militancy using an array of organizational forms. Only through such creativity can they confront all the problems that arise. Resistance and rebellion thereby unite in a project that extends over generations, that collectivizes in every sense possible, that expands into a project of life itself (Moisés, 2020b). The "no" of rebellion courageously reclaims colonized space, and the "yes" of resistance is the grueling-yet-beautiful process of nurturing life in that space. By lengthening the horizon of struggle and the depth of its collectivity, resistance reaches beyond electoral cycles, conjunctural crises, or even the century-long cycle of accumulation of grievances, uprising, passive revolution, and renewed grievance.[45] It is a process of confronting the capitalist death machine while slowly strengthening non-capitalist flows of health and wealth, otherwise known as "life."

Deepening social relations of freedom

On December 21, 2012 – the day many frightened settlers said the Mayan calendar predicted the end of the world – the Zapatistas emerged from their longest period of silence to declare their world was just beginning (Marcos, 2012). They did so with a mass mobilization: with a total of 45,000 participating across the state, it was the largest and certainly the best organized in the history of Chiapas (Reyes, 2015, p. 408). These unarmed support bases arrived by the thousands at the outskirts of five of the cities the Zapatista Army had taken during their 1994 uprising, marched in perfect columns into the city's central plaza, each individual

[45] Subcomandante Moisés points out how those on top used the bloodshed of the Mexican Revolution to create a new regime for the accumulation of wealth, coordinated by the new elites of the state-party emerging from the conflict. He says "In our resistance and rebellion … we struggle so that what happened in 1910 doesn't happen again, because many of our Mexican compatriots died, and who benefitted? … It was the Carranzists, the Obregonists, and the Maderists, landowners who benefitted by governing, by being in power" (2015d, p. 163).

mounted and descended from a platform with their fist in the air, and then they all marched out – all in complete silence (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 2012). The message was in the youth of the participants, the majority presence of women, their sheer numbers, and their simultaneous occupation of five of the cities they had taken during the 1994 uprising. It all announced that the Zapatistas, armed with resistance and rebellion, were bigger and stronger than ever. In the years since, they have coordinated a flurry of encounters, seminaries, festivals, the Little School, and a super-delegation of 177 former good government authorities and Comandantes visiting Europe in 2021 (Moisés, 2020a). Throughout this contemporary period, the Zapatistas have consistently emphasized four ways they are deepening their autonomy: intergenerationally, by broadening their leadership, through women's struggle for full participation, and as they confront the global crisis of capitalism.

The colours of a world they know is coming

By 2012 there were already people being chosen to serve as good government authorities who were born after the uprising, educated entirely in Zapatista schools, farming only on recuperated land, and engaging in community assemblies for as long as they can remember. Granted, at first all these aspects of Zapatista resistance were limited by the military and paramilitary repression of Zedillo's presidency. Yet with each passing year the Zapatista project is more a construction of people whose entire lived experience has been immersed in an ever-deepening autonomy, a generation reaping the fruits of their grandparents' resistance and rebellion, a generation thoroughly socialized into the relations known as freedom.

This generational flourishing was beautifully displayed by the testimonies of five Zapatista women at the seminar held to discuss the capitalist Hydra (Miriam et al., 2015). Comandanta Miriam spoke first about mozo life on the fincas, followed by Comandanta Rosalinda speaking about the difficult work of clandestine organizing, then Comandanta Dalia shared how women have advanced their struggle since the uprising, followed by the youth Lisbeth and Selena speaking about their work since the unilateral implementation of the San Andrés accords. Each corresponds to one of the periods of transformation outlined here, to a

deepening of the Zapatista struggle. Each generation has advanced the grueling work that was necessary for Lisbeth to say "As young Zapatistas we no longer know what an overseer or a plantation owner or a boss is …. Because, thanks to the organization of the EZLN, we have our authorities in every village … We now have freedom and the right as women to take positions, discuss, and analyze" (ibid 2015, p. 122).

Galeano went on to say there is an even younger generation in this chain, represented in his accounts of a young girl called Defensa Zapatista (2015b, p. 127). Speaking about this precocious child who one day decided to speak only using colours, he says,

> In Defensa Zapatista we find not a new world, that's true, but perhaps something even more terrible and marvelous: its possibility. And when she talks in colors, perhaps she is trying out new forms of communication for that world that we can't even imagine, but that she already accepts as coming — not without the necessary and urgent struggle to bring it into being, from wherever it can be found, here into this reality that we are suffering through now. I can think of nothing more Zapatista than what this little girl's efforts symbolize. (S. Galeano, 2017d)

As I will elaborate below, as each generation works to deepen autonomy they make it into an ever-stronger subjectivity, ever-more into a project of *life*. It is the collective freedom that is so difficult to encapsulate in theory yet so refreshingly immediate when experienced, like the crisp taste of a fresh breeze. It is surely not utopia, yet recuperated land and effective self-government for coordinating collective work on it mean that – instead of freedom dreams being dashed by the full weight of capitalist property relations and their institutional enforcers – only consensus separates inspiration from action. These are the social relations that Zapatista elders have bequeathed their youth.

Building toward mass leadership

The second, related aspect of translation is the massification of Zapatista leadership. Critics often ridicule what they perceive as a blanket rejection of organization by autonomists (C. Barker et al., 2014b, pp. 20–21; D. Harvey, 2013b, p. 125, 2014, pp. xii–xiii), creating a strawman argument through the premise that the only way to practice horizontalism against the oppressor's verticality is to create no structure whatsoever. Yet the Zapatista experience shows that practically achieving the horizontalism of mass self-government – what the

Zapatistas prefer to call "governing by obeying" – takes at least an entire generation-worth of laborious effort.

There are a litany of complaints by good government authorities in the testimonies compiled by Fernández (2014, sec. 4.2) and in the textbooks accompanying the Little School (2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d): people selected for cargos who desert because they cannot handle the workload, authorities who desert without training their replacements, failure to keep adequate accounts or report them to the community's liking, people who do not want to participate in collective work because they are already supporting an education or health promoter (who is unpaid and also not working on the family farm), not to mention the aggressions and encroachments of non-Zapatista neighbours supported by the political parties. As I will explain below, issues resulting from sexism are the most common problems mentioned.

All this is to say that functioning autonomy – collective decision-making about collective projects on collective land – is a long, difficult process. There is a generative-yet-exhausting tension between a "government that obeys" and a "people who lead" (Baschet, 2018, pp. 77–80). This is precisely why it is so important to resist and keep up its marathon effort. Yet as we approach forty years since the FLN entered the jungle and thirty years since the uprising, through their resistance the Zapatistas have integrated the great majority of their hundreds of thousands of support bases into the labours of both autonomous re/production and its coordination.

An example of this collective leadership occurred in an event in July 2013, when the thousands Zapatista support bases who would each soon guide a student of the Little School for a week were acclaimed as official spokespeople for the EZLN (Marcos, 2013e).[46] Beginning with the Little School there have been a

[46] Long gone are the days when Marcos was the organization's exclusive voice, and this transition was further concretized when Subcomandante Marcos was officially laid to rest on May 24, 2014 and the teacher Galeano – a soldier in the uprising turned good government authority and educator who had been murdered by a paramilitary group just weeks earlier – was revived through the individual formerly known as Marcos and also collectively in the Zapatistas at large (S. Galeano, 2014). By all embodying the teacher Galeano, all Zapatistas would take up the word and educate

proliferation of events and publications where support bases directly describe the lessons of their experience.[47] Their testimony shows how autonomy has qualitatively transformed social relations on the everyday level.[48] It has also quantitatively expanded, with seven new caracoles and four new autonomous municipalities declared in 2019 (Moisés, 2019).

Women's project of life

The third aspect concerns women's participation, showing how social movement is an intentional process of deepening certain relations and counter-acting others. In this case, the struggle against patriarchy has been a constant over the decades, exemplified by the "uprising before the uprising" (Marcos, 1994) when the Women's Revolutionary Law was proposed, consulted, and declared by the Comandantas prior to the declaration of war (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1993d, see also 2013c, pp. 24–31; Klein, 2015, pp. 80–85). The law sets out the reproductive, political, and productive relations necessary for women's full participation in the Zapatista project, including the rights to decide whether to have children, to be authorities in the Zapatista military and in good government, to fully enjoy the rights enshrined in all the other revolutionary laws (including the agrarian law on collective land ownership), and to be free of domestic violence, which is closely tied to the prohibition of alcohol in all Zapatista communities.

The Kilombo Women's Delegation sums it up, writing "In effect, Zapatista women went from practical slavery under the control of colonial and domestic masters and into the rule of their own Women's Revolutionary Law and positions within the highest bodies of collective autonomous authority in a matter of

comrades about their movement. Another major transition is the deepening of Indigenous leadership in the EZLN, as the Tseltal Lieutenant Colonel Moisés was elevated to the rank of Subcomandante alongside Galeano (Marcos, 2013c).

[47] For a complete list see the footnote in this chapter's introduction.

[48] In doing so, today's Zapatistas have overcome the critical weakness of the original Zapatistas who briefly controlled Mexico City and the federal government in December 1914. Gilly writes that "there was the state apparatus, without an apparent head but with all its ministries, functionaries, and bureaucrats. Not knowing what to do with it, the peasant leaders [Villa and Zapata] entrusted the government to … 'the educated people'" (2005, pp. 154, 155; see also Guzmán, 2002). While exceedingly capable of coordinating a peasants' army and the Morelos Commune (see Gilly, 2005, Chapter 8), they could not or would not coordinate government outside of their home territories. Their enemy Carranza would, and he used this state power to later defeat Zapata and Villa's armies. By integrating the majority of their membership into good government, today's Zapatistas have a capacity for political coordination that the original Zapatistas did not.

decades" (2018). Over the course of this generational project, Zapatista women have often exercised their rights unilaterally, just as with the San Andrés accords, "without asking for permission" from men (Zapatista Women, 2020).

Their struggle is all the longer because their grandmothers grew up in a context where, as Insurgent Captain of Infantry Erika puts it, women died "because of a lack of medical attention, good nutrition, and education. But we also died, and more of us, because we were women" (Zapatista Women, 2018). Prior to the uprising women's education was unheard of; on the fincas they were raped and treated like chattel, forced to make food for the finquero and grind salt for his cows all day before returning home to do the same for their families, leaving just four or five hours for sleep; many spent twenty years having a child every eighteen months; women never had any money of their own to manage; they were frequently beaten, especially since the finqueros perpetuated alcoholism as a means of social control; and men shamed them for speaking up, much less asserting leadership.[49]

Since the uprising, their obstacles are less severe but just as pernicious. The testimonies related in the Little School textbook on women's participation mention problems such as husbands pressuring their wives to remain home rather than taking on good government cargos, husbands refusing to do reproductive labour while their wives are away, community members gossiping about women whose participation takes them outside the village, women resisting being delegated to cargos and then abandoning them due to lack of education or because of apprehension of speaking before groups, and male authorities ignoring them when they do speak up (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013c, pp. 52–60). The differences are clear between the list of their grandmothers' struggles and the list of patriarchy's current obstacles. Whereas the gendered terrorism of femicide continues unabated in Mexico and the so-called "developed" world, the

[49] These examples come from the testimonies of Zapatista women in the caracol of Morelia, compiled by Klein (2015, Chapter 1) as well as Comandanta Miriam's testimony (2015).

Zapatista Women reported in 2019 that "in Zapatista territory, not a single woman has been murdered for many years" (The Zapatsita Women, 2019).

Yet they also emphasize that living is much more than simply not dying (Zapatista Women, 2020). It means building a self-determined *project* of life. Women work to strengthen the material basis of this project through participation in cooperatives where they learn to design proposals, carry them through consultation, manage finances, send digital and radio communications, survey land, coordinate agroecology, teach, and bolster the autonomous health system as doctors, nurses, herbalists, bonesetters, and midwives (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013c, pp. 20–23). In preparation for the Second International Encounter of Women who Struggle, they also organized to not only teach themselves how to drive, but – true to the struggle for autonomous reproduction – all the mechanics needed to maintain the six-ton trucks used to move attendees and the goods of production cooperatives (S. Galeano, 2019a).

The Zapatista Women emphatically assert that they have built this life through their own sweat, that "Not god, not man, not a political party, not a savior, not a leader, not a female leader, and not a female boss" has granted it to them (Zapatista Women, 2018). Or, as Galeano put it "I should be clear that they also struggled against us [Zapatista men], and they defeated us" (2015b, p. 128). This defeat is crucial to the development of Zapatista autonomy, as any claim to "self-determination" is farcical while the agency of half of those who labour is stifled through patriarchy. Indeed, while relations of violence are perpetuated through the dispossession of land, this works alongside a slew of other forms of difference, such as patriarchy and racism. Changing these relations demands rebellion, as well as working through the interpersonal "mess." Zapatista women have thereby strengthened the social relations of autonomy both through their increased involvement in cooperative production[50] and more generally by creating a fuller self-government, one that can conceive and coordinate the production of whatever wellbeing it chooses all the more abundantly.

[50] Klein, who spent several years supporting Zapatista women's cooperatives and whose book is primarily composed of the testimonies of their members, relates that women have cooperative pharmacies, general stores, bakeries, vegetable production, and mills (2015, pp. 150–162). Testimony in the Little School textbook adds pork and chicken cooperatives

The commission of Zapatista Women can then project this strength outward, into broader social movement, by building broader organization. As the two international gatherings coordinated by the Zapatista Women and protected exclusively by women insurgents of the Zapatista Army have shown, their leadership has both broad convocational power and a radical analysis.[51] When they called for a second gathering, the Zapatista Women reflected on the deepening femicide crisis and wrote,

> In order to live we have to kill [the system] off — not fix it up a little, or give it a new face, or ask that it be a little more considerate and not so mean. No. We have to destroy it, disappear it, kill it until there is nothing left, not even ashes …. We're not going to wait for [men] to understand or to behave or to stop fucking up. We're going to organize to defend ourselves first, and then we're going to change everything. And we mean *everything*. (2019a)

Women's struggle illuminates the breadth of this "everything": rebellion prepared to die for life and the resistance projects through which life flourishes. The Combahee River Collective writes that "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (1978, sec. 3).[52] Zapatista women's struggle illustrates a process of such destruction and construction, showing that it is indeed possible for organizations to abolish relations like colonization and patriarchy over the course of generations. They show that we can create new worlds.

Capitalism is war

In each of the three previous aspects, the Zapatistas have turned their problems into a guide for growth. "Success" in the fourth aspect is infinitely more difficult, as it relies on collaboration that – far beyond

(Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013c, p. 65), and the "Zapatourists" who visit Chiapas are well-aware of the weaving cooperatives (Nachman, 2014). Klein observes that these cooperatives are important political spaces where women build the confidence and collective capacity (subjectivity and labour-power) for deeper participation in autonomy, while also operating as productive spaces that create the use values that are the material basis for women's empowerment. Women's cooperatives are therefore an exemplary motor of social movement.

[51] Eight thousand visitors and two thousand Zapatistas attended the First International Gathering of Women who Struggle in 2018. See the Kilombo delegation's report on their experience and offering a critique of the individualized feminism of some participants, which tends to prioritize "self-care" over the organizing work of caring for society (2018).

[52] Speaking of rebellion, the collective is named after Harriet Tubman's raid along the Combahee River during the US Civil War in 1863, in which she led 150 Black Union soldiers, freed 750 slaves, and burned the plantations they were held on (Grigg, 2014).

Chiapas – can create a new planetary flow of life and labour. This is the existential challenge presented by what the Zapatistas call "a gathering storm," "the capitalist Hydra," and "a world war, everywhere, in all forms, all the time" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015), or what Gramsci would call an "organic crisis" (Thomas, 2009, Chapter 4).

Subcomandantes Galeano and Moisés lay out an extensive political-economic analysis of this crisis in the first volume of *El Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Capitalista* (Critical thought in the face of the capitalist Hydra) (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015), which I can only outline here.[53] To better understand their analysis, we should contrast it to the by-gone "golden days" when some governments worked to articulate the relations of expanded reproduction: a cycle of production, consumption, profit, and reinvestment creating ever-greater production and consumption, especially as the state raised productivity through selective investment in reproduction via public health, education, and housing (D. Harvey, 2007, pp. 166–176). This was the result of social movements (in the traditional sense), which elites could only restrain through a class compromise in which corporations paid higher taxes and accepted unions, workers compliantly increased their productivity, and the state managed projects to maintain effective demand and support workers' reproduction.

This is the postwar flow of labour established in the world system's core countries, one that semi-peripheral countries like Mexico tried to emulate through land redistribution and import-substitution industrialization. Tronti concluded that the compromise effectively sought to turn all of society into a factory (2019, pp. 12–64), where urban planning, gendered reproduction, health and education, hopes and dreams were all to be redirected to support production, creating immense wealth for the few in exchange for meager and uneven increases in acquisitive power and public services for the many. Tronti proposed that workers instead refuse the compromise and take over the factory (2019, pp. 241–262). This refusal culminated in the late 60s and

[53] In chapter 1 I summarized Gilmore's telling of a similar story set in California, which she labels "the Keynesian welfare-warfare state" (2007, pp. 24–26, 37–40). Here I summarize the Zapatistas' telling. In particular, see the sections "El método, la bibliografía y un *Drone* en las profundidades de las montanas del Sureste Mexicano," "La genealogía del crimen," and "Una guerra mundial." Reyes also describes collapse through an excellent synthesis of these texts (2015, pp. 416–419, 2016, pp. 156–159).

early 70s, but by the 1980s this highwater mark seemed ever more distant as the wealthy ended up being the ones to coordinate their own collective refusal called "neoliberalism."

Capitalists refused to support the public services that comprised the "social factory," along with the associated labour unions, taxes, and state regulation. This rebellion from above did not begin at the behest of Milton Friedman (Reyes, 2016, p. 156), but because various forces converged to upset the flow of labour through the circuit of expanded reproduction. First was the resistance of workers, women, Indigenous peoples, domestically-colonized peoples, and the colonies of the "Third World" whose dispossession was the foundation for the celebrated growth of the "middle class" (Wallerstein, 1995, p. 14; see also Moore, 2015, Chapter 2). Second, the rising organic composition of capital during the Keynesian era led to a falling rate of profit (Carchedi & Roberts, 2018). Neoliberalism is therefore a reaction to a crisis confronting the reproduction of capitalist self-valorization (Reyes, 2016, pp. 154–159), and its predatory solution is to profit from debt-fueled speculation, intensified resource extraction through dispossession of territory, and liquidating the reproductive resources previously built under expanded reproduction (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015; Marcos, 2007a; Moisés & Galeano, 2018a).

The Zapatista Women highlight that these are social relations of violence, relations in which violence is *productive*, saying "We are attacked so consistently that it would seem to be good business for the system: the more women murdered, raped, beaten, or disappeared, the more profit produced" (2019a). Marcos equates capitalism with war because this liquidation is most profitable when territory is destroyed and then rebuilt under social relations of greater violence (2007b, 2011b). It is therefore no surprise that narco cartels have become the errand boys of such a regime of accumulation in Mexico (Muñoz Martínez, 2021; Paley, 2014; Reyes, 2015, pp. 414–416). Within it, much of the world's population is relegated to an under- and unemployed reserve army of labour (at best) or simply surplus population (M. Davis, 2006; Gilmore, 2007, pp. 70–78). Instead of coordinating a flow of labour that optimizes productivity, the state's role is merely to use its judicial and repressive forces to manage the consequences unleashed by predatory accumulation

(Marcos, 2007a). This is why Galeano and the National Indigenous Congress characterize the contemporary state as principally a "means of dispossession" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 289).[54]

As a means of dispossession, the state coordinates and enforces a flow of labour that is more amenable to capital. Galeano is careful to clarify that the decisions about how to coordinate this dispossession are not made at the level of the state, which he likens to "a hologram, an image of what once was, a cardboard cut-out where various personages take turns putting their face while they take a photo" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 309). Capital uses the state to impose what are increasingly relations of naked force, of total war:

> Capitalism produces through and for war. Its advance, its development depend on war. That is what articulates its genealogy, the fault-line of its tension, its spinal column …. And one thing we detect in this new stage of capitalist war, which we call world war, is that it now seeks to destroy territory to reconstruct it. More clearly: disorder it to re-order it. Yes, capitalism provokes chaos and is nourished by it. (ibid 2015, pp. 314–315)

Seen this way, war is not a consequence of capitalism, but the functioning of the system itself, its means of making social movement.

Yet capitalist world war confronts two enormous obstacles: Marxism's "first contradiction" is that exploitation causes a lack of people with sufficient wages to purchase commodities and thereby realize surplus value. This is the problem of overproduction and under-consumption (D. Harvey, 2014, pp. 62–69). The "second contradiction" is that capitalist appropriation and dispossession undermine the conditions of its own reproduction (Moore, 2015, pp. 26–27), most notably through the ecological crisis (J. B. Foster, 1999; D. Harvey, 2014, pp. 182–198, 246–263) and also by undermining the social reproduction of its labour power (Fortunati, 1995, Chapter 13).

[54] The Mayan Train project is exemplary, as the courts, National Guard, and a host of ministries are marshalled to articulate relations of violence by displacing people from the land seized for the project, logging it (S. Galeano, 2019b), proletarianizing the displaced indigenous people within the tourism industry (Zapatista Women, 2019b), and using the railway to move ahead a larger project for a trans-isthmus corridor to bypass the Panama Canal and allow sweatshop production in free trade zones along the route (National Indigenous Congress, 2019a).

Galeano explains that capital seeks to paper over the first contradiction "using fictitious capital without any backing [in labour], seeking profit … from the appropriation of future labour that is owed to the bank [as debts]" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 322). He predicts this tsunami of household, corporate, and state indebtedness will lead to an intensification in the longstanding practice of financiers using this debt to dispossess countries and their people, concluding that "an economic crisis like never before [is coming] …. And not only an economic crisis, but multiplied by non-natural catastrophes [caused by] the transformation of everything … into commodities" (ibid 2015, p. 215). As for the second contradiction, we are confronted each month with a new report on the immanence of runaway climate change, the implications of each more dire than the last. The planet is undergoing a sixth mass extinction event (Ripple et al., 2017), and it is no longer hyperbolic to wonder whether humans will be among its casualties. Some cavalierly call the convergence of these crises a "terminal crisis," but Galeano affirms that unless we kill the Hydra its heads only grow back more ferociously (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2015, p. 298).

In sum, capitalism's current flow of labour strains to cross widening chasms, contradictions that it seeks to overcome through greater dispossession, predation, and exploitation. This political economy is the "no" that the Zapatistas and their comrades rebel against and build alternatives to. Its violence is unmistakable in the horrific disappearance of the 43 Ayotzinapa teachers' college students (Moisés, 2014), ever-more femicide and violence against women (Zapatista Women, 2018), the increasing use of narco cartels as the shock troops of extraction (Paley, 2014), the militarized borders of a growing climate nationalism (Malm & The Zetkin Collective, 2021; Walia, 2021), and in the morbid subordination of human life to the priority of "opening the economy" during the pandemic (Glasbeek, 2020). Sadly, we are all too familiar with dire lists such as this. Our generalized anxiety reveals the strain of being caught in a collective action dilemma: we are disgusted by the social relations we are obligated to participate in, yet we feel powerless to change them. So what is to be done? How to take the initiative and abolish this deadly flow of labour?

In search of an appropriate organizing form

The ultimatum of "socialism or barbarism" captures this urgency. Unless those struggling from below and to the left find ways to coordinate their rebellions and mutually aid their resistances, the violence of the organic crisis of capitalism will continue growing. As Galeano says, "The issue is that the storm is coming …. The worst is yet to come. And the individualities, as brilliant and capable as they may be, will not be able to survive except with others" (2017a). How exactly to organize these efforts? As we have seen, it is not as easy as having everyone replicate whatever the most inspiring group is doing. As the Zapatistas say,

> [Resistance and rebellion] are our way, but we think that for other histories and identities, it may be different. That is why we say that Zapatismo can't be exported, not even throughout the state of Chiapas. Rather, each calendar and geography must follow its own logic. (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b)

Earlier we saw how, instead of importing the Cuban Revolution of 1959 into the Chiapas of 1983, the Zapatistas learned to appreciate people's already-existing forms of collaboration, within their own location and process, strengthening relations that can become resistance and rebellion while counteracting others like patriarchy. Therefore, the Zapatistas cannot be anyone's vanguard. They do not call on their supporters to translate the battle plans of the January 1 uprising, written in Mayan, into their own languages. Instead, time and time again, they urge everyone to organize themselves according to their own calendars and geographies, in their own ways (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional et al., 2021). Sometimes Moisés is poetic when discussing organization[55] and sometimes he is exasperated: "Let us construct the world where there will be life. But for that, it is necessary to be organized. We need to organize ourselves, we're not going to get tired of saying it because that's all we have left — organizing ourselves is all we have left" (2017c). This begs the question of what it means to "get organized," especially without anyone issuing marching orders. Hence the goal of this dissertation: to consider organizing experiences as diverse as those of the Zapatistas, AUSM and its alumni, elaborate concepts to elucidate what is common to their labours, and to distil this understanding into lessons for what is to be done.

[55] "What does this word — organize — imply? What does it contain? Maybe it has garlic, maybe oil, maybe condiments …. That's up to each of us" (Moisés, 2017b).

While critics of autonomy deride it as insular (Almeyra, 2014; Mondonesi, 2014; Wilson, 2014), the Zapatistas have consistently attempted to organize across difference, to develop collaborative arrangements that are both productive and decentralized. Their proposals over the past thirty years to encourage organization from below and to the left began with the organizing around the San Andrés negotiations. Then in 2006 Marcos visited every state in Mexico on the Other Campaign where, instead of making the empty promises that characterized the concurrent presidential campaigns, he came to listen, convoking local organizations to share their experiences of struggle (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 1). The "Otra" was first proposed in the Sixth Declaration, as a decentralized network that any organization agreeing to the baseline criteria of struggling "below and to the left" (that is, through non-electoral base building and against capitalism) was invited to join (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005, pt. 5). Marcos' listening tour across Mexico was a impetus for drawing these groups together, and during each stop he documented the struggles that the groups shared with each other.[56]

Then, the Zapatistas supported the National Indigenous Congress as they carried out a similar campaign in 2018, only this time the Congress's 93 regions (comprised of 523 communities from 43 nations) each selected a male and female representative to run for president (as an entire council!), and this Indigenous Council of Government selected the Nahuatl healer María de Jesús Patricio Martínez as their spokesperson (National Indigenous Congress, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Under the pretext of running a presidential campaign, the Council again convoked struggles all over Mexico in an effort to build the National Indigenous Congress.[57] As with the referenda of the 1990s, the practical challenge of adding María de Jesús to the presidential ballot was a "structure test" (McAlevey, 2019) used to organize society. The Zapatista Women have also coordinated two women's encounters, each with thousands of participants from scores of countries, and the delegation of 177 Zapatistas and National Indigenous Congress members to Europe was yet another initiative in this vein.

[56] See the entries assembled here: https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/category/primer-recorrido/
[57] See the widely-distributed documentary film *La Vocera [The Spokeswoman]* (Kaplan, 2020) for a chronicle of the campaign.

Nonetheless, the social movement intended by these initiatives remain to be seen, especially given what is required to confront the capitalist Hydra. What lessons might guide solidarity-building going forward?

Collective listening, trial and error

Throughout these campaigns, the Zapatistas have emphasized listening as the means for building unity within difference. Beyond passively receiving information, "listening" is the collective labour of understanding the flow of life and labour within which others live, the relations that comprise their calendar, geography. Locally, such listening means studying the forms of collaboration a group practices, the needs this collaboration seeks to satisfy, the labour powers it mobilizes, the obstacles it confronts, and the ways it seeks to make social movement. Indeed, it is the sort of listening I sought to replicate in my own interviews and analysis.

Collectively listening to the social allows organizations to be more intentional in shaping their collaborative arrangements. The Zapatistas do this in their assemblies and when they make spaces of domestic reproduction into political spaces. Their various listening campaigns also demonstrate a broader practice of collective listening, one where solidarity is not a question of cadre making strategic alliances but is instead built between "bases," between memberships collectively listening to each other recount their calendar, geography, and mode of organizing, its challenges and its lessons. Solidarity – and perhaps, eventually federation – must stem from a deep appreciation of difference, instead of reacting to it by hegemonizing and homogenizing (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional et al., 2021). The Zapatistas practiced this solidarity in response to the Atenco attack,[58] with the families of the disappeared Ayotzinapa students (Moisés, 2014), and the National Indigenous Congress is the strongest example of the sort of federated organization that can emerge from it (National Indigenous Congress, 2018).

[58] The three political parties (a PRD municipal government, PRI governor Peña Nieto, and PAN federal government) collaborated to carry out a police riot, ostensibly against flower vendors fighting for access to the public plaza, and in fact to strike back against the Other Campaign that they were part of. On May 3, 2006 the municipal, state, and federal police indiscriminately smashed through homes, killed two people, publicly raped dozens, arrested hundreds, and held twelve as political prisoners until the Supreme Court ordered their release in 2010 (Hernández Castillo, 2007; see also Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, sec. 2.5).

Yet collective listening, much less organizing while respecting difference, is exceedingly difficult. The Zapatistas have stubbornly continued their attempts to organize from below and to the left over the decades, and each attempt has exposed limitations. Marcos offers a frank self-criticism of the Other Campaign in "The pedestrians of history" (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 2). The Zapatistas convoked assemblies of the many groups that joined the Other Campaign, hoping they could eventually elaborate a National Program of Struggle. Yet, in retrospect, Marcos recognizes this form of collaboration failed, specifically in its ability to define the spaces and mechanisms for decision-making. As a result, "assembly professionals" quickly attempted to use the forum to elevate themselves within "the social movement market" (ibid 2006), alienating participants who spoke Spanish as a second language and had often made the effort to travel to Mexico City from afar yet were only afforded a few minutes to speak. Many of these disregarded participants represented organizations of thousands, yet they had the same single vote as a collective or individual.

Recognizing this mistake, the EZLN's Sixth Commission proposed that member organizations first regroup by having internal discussions about who they would like to convoke to the Campaign and what its structure and work should be, that they then have a general assembly to debate these internally-consulted decisions, and finally that each organization return to their membership to re-consult the decisions of the Campaign's assembly (ibid 2006, pt. 4). This proposal is similar to the Zapatista process of consensus decisions flowing upwards from village assemblies to the municipal and regional assemblies, and then back downwards to the village level for ratification. Yet because there was no common labour unifying collaboration within the Other Campaign (such as collective work on recuperated land), it was ultimately laid to rest in 2013 (Marcos, 2013b), as the Zapatistas announced they would continue their national and international organizing efforts under the banner of the Sixth Declaration and via the Little School.

With this next initiative, they welcomed over five thousands participants (myself included) into a sort of study abroad program, where each person was individually assigned a Zapatista guide and spent a week in a village

participating in the day-to-day work of autonomous resistance by day and studying the school's textbooks by night. Despite being enormously educational for the thousands of participants, this initiative also did not result in an organization of organizations.

The most successful process of listening building organization is the National Indigenous Congress, which should come as no surprise. The Zapatistas are not merely being poetic when they state "We are a product of 500 years of struggle" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1993a), nor are the other nations in the Congress. They persist thanks to five hundred years spent creating organizing forms strong enough to survive genocide. It is five hundred years of overcoming collapse through resistance and rebellion. As Galeano says, "We have seen how collective work has not only made it possible for the originary peoples to survive several terminal storms, but also to advance when they are in community" (2017a).[59] Despite the continual assassination of their leaders, the destruction of their territories by extractive projects, and the ongoing annihilation of peoples and cultures (National Indigenous Congress, 2016), the Congress greatly increased their level of organization in 2017 when they decided to form the Indigenous Council of Government.

Conclusion

Hundreds of years of experience separate these nations from the young organizations that study abroad alumni return to, yet the deepening crisis joins all their fates together. It is a struggle of life versus death, where the ongoing sixth mass extinction and the femicide crisis go hand in hand. Capitalist accumulation is only possible through the destruction of longstanding metabolic and ecological relations and the destruction of a social fabric woven together by the labour of mothering. With every passing year this destruction is more apparent. "The chickens come home to roost" (X, 1987), the violence of "destroying to rebuild" deepens (S. Galeano, 2019b, 2015c; Marcos, 2011b), and non-Indigenous peoples higher on the social pyramid find

[59] Compare this to non-Indigenous political organizations, of which a handful date more than fifty years and a precious few persist since the Second International. It is no wonder the Zapatistas have had so much difficulty compelling organization from below and to the left.

themselves subjected to the Hydra's brutality. There is an urgent need for them to join the struggle for life. In *Our History Is the Future* Lakota scholar Nick Estes writes

> How can settler society, which possesses no fundamental ethical relationship to the land or its original people, imagine a future premised on justice? …. Indigenous peoples must lead the way. Our history and long traditions of Indigenous resistance provide possibilities for futures premised on justice. After all, Indigenous resistance is animated by our ancestors' refusal to be forgotten, and it is our resolute refusal to forget our ancestors and our history that animates our visions for liberation. Indigenous revolutionaries are the ancestors from the before and before and the already forthcoming. (Estes, 2019, p. 255)

Justice is foreclosed inasmuch as settler society is thoroughly shaped through social relations of private property. Justice "from above" is simply the enforcement of property relations. To survive the violence wrought by a social system of enclosure, extraction, and exploitation, it is imperative for settlers to practice fundamentally different social relations, and the peoples who have struggled against colonization from the onset chart paths in this direction of life. Those who successfully reproduce life despite the imposition of relations of death show the way forward for the rest of us.

Framed as a struggle of life against death, this path is daunting. Yet the Zapatistas boldly assert it time and again, always with their typical dialectical complexity. Galeano writes, "we said from the beginning of the uprising that 'we would die in order to live.' After all, if we do not hand down life — that is, a path — to the next generations, then what did we live for?" (2020). Despite enormous levels of oppression and dispossession, when the former mozos rose up on January 1st they could at the very least "choose whether to die like animals or die like human beings who struggle for their lives" (Moisés, 2020b).[60] Again, this dialectic of soldiers ready to die for life and support bases commanded to stay alive was the seed of autonomous resistance and rebellion.

[60] This is similar to the words of Janet McCloud, co-founder of Women of All Red Nations, who said in 1976, "We knew we were dying anyway, so at least we were going to choose the way we were going to die. If we were going to die, we may as well have a choice in the matter" (The Red Nation, 2021).

Instead of romanticizing death, this through-line of Zapatista organizing charts the organic contours of a "project for life," a project that seeks to give a worthy inheritance to future generations, a project for nothing less than a new world. As such, we see that, as they confront the capitalist death machine, the Zapatistas are creating life itself (Moisés, 2020b). They are in the long, spiralling process of extending relations of care, of strengthening right relation.

I often emphasize the labours that comprise this project: land recuperation, cooperative production, reconciliation through justice, self-defence, good government, coordination with other Indigenous nations and the left. Yet taken as a whole, the "accumulation of autonomy" (Reyes, 2016, p. 164) produced across all this labour constitutes a project of life. It is a process of confronting endless problems and, in each of them, finding signals for how to strengthen their organizing forms and more effectively produce material wellbeing. For the FLN, this meant finding a way to support their clandestine members without relying on the peasantry or resorting to robbery. The EZLN then changed the FLN's solitary vanguardism into a "war economy" in the Lacandón jungle's Indigenous communities. Through the San Andrés process, they then attempted to channel support for their uprising into a broad campaign for renewed land reform, and afterwards they have used good government to coordinate their labours of re/production. Walking by asking questions, their current struggle is animated by the problem of how to collaborate even more broadly.

Here I return to the question: What is to be done by the rest of us, who have not inherited five hundred years of struggle and cannot work on land rid of capitalist property relations? This is what makes the experiences of AUSM's study abroad alumni so important, because their attempts to "do organizing" in such different context illustrate the labour of organizing from quite a different perspective, illuminating what is nonetheless common. The organizing process begins with inspiration sparked into action, as organizers to jump into the mess and test out organizational forms, seeing which they can use to successfully produce material wellbeing and, as their collaboration strengthens, expand into caring even more broadly.

Once again, this is a painstakingly ambiguous process that can only be navigated by "trying again, failing again, and failing better" (West, 2019). Hence the emphasis on "resistance," on using problems as textbook exercises guiding growth. Militant resistance is the Zapatistas' through-line, what remains since the first FLN members set out to replicate a Cuban Revolution in Mexico. It is the commitment of "the Che who keeps fighting, who chooses to keep being a rebel, who decides to abandon everything and begin anew, in another place, with all the difficulties this implies and the failures and errors they committed" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 113). Only a militant commitment can sustain such a process. Indeed, without it all the convocation, listening, and urgency amount to nothing.

For this reason, yet another Zapatista refrain is to ask "And what about you?"[61] After once again affirming the EZLN's commitment to die to defend their territory and the life in it from extraction, Moisés then challenges his listeners, asking us what we are willing to do "to stop the war on humanity" (2020b). Armed with that resolve, the challenge is then to "never give up, sell out, or give in." This is the provocation squarely levelled at study abroad alumni and all other supporters. No life is too sacred for capitalist accumulation. The Hydra devours ecosystems, ways of being, the inheritance of future generations. It is war everywhere, in all forms, and it can only be defeated by resistance and rebellion that is also everywhere, taking all forms. The Zapatistas will not demand we organize resistance in a certain way, but will only share their understanding of the problem, its stakes, and the humble lessons from their long process. Organization is clearly needed, but how will the inspired organizers carry it out?

In this chapter I have attempted to tell the history of Zapatista struggle as one of collective work on recuperated land strengthening self-determined social relations. As this is quite a lot to explain, I have woven together various strands throughout the chapter.

[61] For example, "They [the clues we offer] are not only so that you find a mirror, but rather for you to go about building an answer, your answer, to the apocalyptic question that will slap you across the face, irrespective of your color, gender or transgender, your belief or disbelief, your political and ideological philias and phobias, your customs, your time, your geography. The question that announces the most terrible and marvelous apocalypse: And what about you?" (2017c).

First there are the five transformations over the Zapatistas' history. They began as a small group of guerrilleros who, spurned by the Cubans and the rest of Latin America's armed revolutionaries, learned how to be "digested" into the forms of collaboration of the Indigenous communities in the Lacandón jungle. Only then could they begin to build a people's army. The next transformation came after the uprising, when the Zapatistas dispossessed the landowners and thereby threw off the mozo relation that had defined Indigenous oppression for hundreds of years, only to confront a new, amorphous actor they called "civil society." They were forced to find ways to collaborate – and possibly achieve nationwide land redistribution – with this diversity of social forces that had obligated the Mexican military to refrain from annihilating them. After all the electoral parties colluded to prevent this revolutionary reform, the Zapatistas have worked to transform their resistance and rebellion into deeper forms of autonomy. Finally, there is the pressing need to find an organizational form that coordinates all those "below and to the left" so that they can confront the crisis of capitalism. They have moved through these organizing forms by listening and by working through "the mess" to find the appropriate collaborative forms to go about strengthening.

Alongside this history of transformations, I have also explored various aspects of Zapatista autonomy, repeating that autonomy is the reproductive process of creating self-determined use values through resistance and rebellion. By centring labour, I hope to distinguish my description of autonomy from others that define it primarily in the negative, as abandoning state-oriented struggle. It is founded on the massive land recuperation that ended the mozo relation and is elaborated through the various cooperative projects carried out on this decolonized land. Beginning in the 1980s, these projects were coordinated as a war economy, but since 2003 they are completely separate from the EZLN's chain of command and are coordinated through the expansive system of cargos known as good government. Autonomy is also a rejection of the relations of dependency that would renew the mozo relation, strengthened as poverty pushes people into seeking use values via flows determined by the state and non-profit charity. Finally, autonomy is an unfolding project of justice, taking up all the everyday limitations people confront as to elaborate more effective collaborative

arrangements producing greater care and right relation. Patriarchy is a particularly important knot of problems through which Zapatista women have deepened their communities' autonomy. The sense of justice that spreads across all these problems is so expansive that it shows autonomy to be a project of building life itself.

After having shared their problems, methods of working through them, and the principles that sustain their resistance, the Zapatistas turn to their listeners and ask, "And what about you?" The Autonomous University of Social movements has taken up this question quite rigorously, elaborating an immersive three-month political education program to explore it. As such, AUSM's study abroad program has asked over five hundred student-activists, "And what about you?" In doing so, AUSM urges them to translate the inspiration the Zapatistas have kindled within them into action once they return home. In the next chapter I will continue to investigate this common action called "organizing" by exploring the non-profit posing this question, searching for further lessons about what is to be done.

Chapter 3 – The Autonomous University of Social Movements

We turn now from the Zapatistas' inspiring autonomy to the organization that has presented hundreds of student-activists to them, the Autonomous University of Social Movements (AUSM). Founded in the US in 1998 as the Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN, which transitioned into AUSM in the 2010's), it is much less celebrated, yet it has outlived most Latin American solidarity organizations – and most of the groups that founded it – thanks to its ability to transform. This change runs parallel to those of the Zapatistas outlined previously: away from organizing directed "above" at electoral parties, instead directed "below" toward anticapitalist community building.

Therefore, in exploring AUSM's history we can deepen our understanding of the reproductive labour of organizing, comparing the Zapatistas' practice with an organization that is quite distinct and much more humble: It is not an heir to five hundred years of struggle or the Mexican Revolution, without a people's army, and without recuperated land. Yet certain commonalities remain: given its surrounding flow of life and labour, AUSM's members collaborate to create forms of wellbeing, struggle to expand these use values into an expansive practice of justice by working through the many problems that arise, and work to find organizing forms through which they can better care for society. These commonalities speak to the fundamental aspects of organizing, and the distinctions (like being a non-profit) further enrich our understanding.

AUSM's history also allows me to reflect on the Zapatista initiative of the Sixth Declaration (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005) since AUSM has also adopted "La Sexta" as their own guiding programme. As such, AUSM has brought more than five hundred students and their respective collectives, organizations, and movements in contact with the Zapatistas and Sexta-aligned movements across Mexico, while also doing base building with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of undocumented immigrants living in the

Chicago neighbourhood of Albany Park. It is therefore one of the largest, most consistent engagements with the Sexta that I know of, especially among groups outside of Mexico.

Plan of the chapter

Seen in this way, the organization called AUSM is also a convocation, an impulse toward greater organization, just as the Sexta seeks to be. How have they gone about this labour of expanding and radicalizing collaboration? In outlining the practices that comprise AUSM's organizing efforts, I explore 1) its transformations as it moved from a typical solidarity strategy to one pursuing anticapitalist base building, 2) the study abroad program that has emerged from this process, 3) the eventual limitations of their strategy of bringing university-educated activists under the leadership of undocumented workers, and in conclusion 4) what this means for projects like the Sexta that seek to organize across broad swaths of society.

I present these themes through a history of MSN/AUSM, beginning with the issue-oriented Latin American solidarity organizing from which it emerged. MSN quickly became critical of aspects of this organizing form, especially its similarity to the "career-based modes of organizing" (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007, p. 3) practiced by non-profit organizations and their tendency to manage exploitation rather than struggle for emancipation. Conflicts between local day-labourers in Chicago and their erstwhile allies lent immediacy to the issue. The Zapatistas' critique of non-profits discussed previously is thereby complemented with a self-critique by AUSM, one that highlights the tension as staff members struggle to secure their own reproduction without it limiting their political strategy to fighting for "socialism, starting with me."

The arrival of the Sexta then presented an alternative orientation: organizing "below and to the left" through an ethic of militancy. This combined "no" and "yes" led to a period of great innovation for the rechristened AUSM, as they began base building work at the Centro Autónomo and also launched a study abroad program. This constituted a new organizing form – somewhere between a non-profit and a base building group – engaging in a new flow of labour (through university tuition and also community members' efforts),

coordinated through a novel theory of allied struggle between university-educated activists and undocumented workers.

This brings us to the program in Chiapas and students' encounter with the Zapatistas. It became quite an effective political education tool over the years and left hundreds of students feeling quite inspired by the Zapatistas. I outline how students and staff built this education program-qua-organizing form by constructively engaging the various obstacles to care that they encountered during everyday life in Chiapas.

Finally, despite the program's success, it has not fulfilled the revolutionary aspirations for which it was conceived. Inspiration is one thing, and transforming this inspiration into sustained action is quite another. Novel as AUSM's strategy is, it has not allowed for the labouring capacity required to accompany alumni as they transition into organizing back home, or to foment leadership by undocumented workers at the Centro Autónomo that university-educated activists can be digested into. Thankfully, many alumni are more than able to initiate their own organizing projects.

I end the chapter by reflecting on how AUSM can move further below and to the left and what this means for the disparate organizations of the Sexta that are also looking to join forces across difference. This leads us back to militancy, to the lesson that pursuing "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" requires putting more effort into base building and less into integrating university-educated activists into it. This is the basis for pursuing allyship among mass organizations. However, because the pandemic interrupted AUSM's study abroad programs (they resumed in 2023, but only partially) forced staff to become volunteers and find other jobs, and shuttered the Centro Autónomo organizing space, it is currently not clear whether AUSM itself will live on to enact these lessons, or if that work will be left for other comrades learning from their experience.

One last introductory note. I have an active role in this history, as I was on AUSM's staff between 2009 and 2015. In addition to doing the promotional, institutional, logistical, and pedagogical work of running the study abroad program in Chiapas, I also shared an apartment with the organization's founder, Tom Hansen, his partner and our co-organizer Elisa Benavides, and most of the rest of the staff. Teaching in Mexico for four months a year, travelling through the US with Sexta-affiliated organizers during another two months, and spending the rest of my time working out of AUSM's community centre in the immigrant Chicago neighbourhood of Albany Park all meant I was thoroughly immersed in the universe of Zapatista-inspired solidarity activists and the undocumented immigrants that AUSM seeks to integrate into the Sexta. It goes without saying that I draw on this personal experience in writing this chapter, as well as the organization's internal documents and correspondence.

More than providing anecdotes and primary source material, those six years did more to shape my identity and worldview than anything before or since. AUSM has been greatly influential in assembling the relations that make me who I am. Moreover, the research culminating in this dissertation has been a collaborative project of AUSM ever since we first mused about the need to evaluate the impact of the study abroad program in 2012. As such, I aspire to uphold accountability to the organization's revolutionary values through my writing. Yet I also recognize that I no longer participate in AUSM's day-to-day work, and the demands of that work mean that I have been left to my own devices (and to make my own mistakes) in elaborating this dissertation. So – as much as I continue to identify with AUSM – I will refer here to its members as "they" instead of "we."

The Mexico Solidarity Network

The origins of the Mexico Solidarity Network were typical of Latin American solidarity organizations. Indeed, Tom Hansen, who was MSN's first staff member and then worked as Director until 2020, coordinated the New York-Nicaragua Construction Brigade in support of the Sandinistas in 1982, led a Veterans Peace Convoy to Nicaragua in 1987, and was then Director of Pastors for Peace between 1988 and 1996,

coordinating twenty-five caravans bringing material aid from the US and Canada to people in Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador.[1] Cuba was their most common destination, and members of the first "Friendshipment" that Hansen coordinated had to go on hunger strike to force US authorities to allow the goods across the border.[2] It was the first successful attempt to break the US blockade on the socialist nation, coming at the height of the post-Soviet "Special Period."

Like these predecessors, the first iteration of the Mexico Solidarity Network contained many nonviolent Christians of various denominations, as well as policy-oriented human rights advocates, supporters of national liberation movements, academics, and students. It was an issue-based organization, bringing together people across a wide variety of ideologies for the task of "becoming one voice on the crisis in Chiapas" (Mott & Mott, 1998a, p. 7).

There was a dire need for their support. As we have seen in the previous chapter, after twice attempting to annihilate the Zapatistas through the same genocidal warfare seen in Central America, the Mexican government was twice halted by outpourings of popular support for the rebels. Its third attempt was more sophisticated, aiming to reduce the popular outcry by using the ruling party's clientelism networks to recruit and train Indigenous paramilitary organizations (Galindo de Pablo, 2015). As Bishop Samuel Ruíz explained it, their plan was to cast this as an unfortunate intra-Indigenous conflict, thereby justifying the further militarization of the state (1998). The strategy resulted in the gruesome massacre of forty-five people in a church in Acteal, Chiapas on December 22, 1997 while police stood idly by.

In the aftermath, the government tried to better control the narrative by expelling nearly two hundred human rights observers from Chiapas (Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, 1998, p. 40), and Tom Hansen was one of the first to be deported. He was in Chiapas on February 18, 1998 when armed men

[1] Hansen always notes here that, while he was indeed a construction worker, he is neither a veteran nor a pastor.
[2] The hunger strike is documented in the short film "Who's Afraid of the Little Yellow School Bus?" (Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, n.d.).

in street clothes forced him into an unmarked car, jailed him, and kept him incommunicado during his entire deportation through Mexico City and to Miami (Petrich, 1998).

The Mexican government moved to institutionalize this blackout by imposing onerous, extra-legal visa requirements on foreigners wishing to visit Chiapas (Global Exchange, 1999, p. 22). Meanwhile, they also further militarized the state, increasing the number of soldiers from 17,000 in 1994 to 74,000 in 1998 (Ruíz, 1998). This occupying force terrorized communities and displaced tens of thousands using sexual assault, forced disappearance and murder, scorching villages and crops, looting homes, and keeping those not directly attacked in a state of fear by driving armoured-vehicle patrols through remote communities, buzzing homes with helicopters, and flash-incursions of combat-ready soldiers. These are all tactics that members of the newly-formed Mexico Solidarity Network documented during their first major action: a tri-national delegation of 86 human rights observers to Chiapas (Mexico Solidarity Network, 1998). Their report illustrates the dread that prevailed at the time, as many feared the genocidal consequences of "the commonalities [between] the current war in Mexico and the recent wars in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador" (Mott & Mott, 1998c).

Looking to coordinate US organizations' response to the Acteal massacre and expulsions of human rights observers, 250 met in Washington, DC on April 25, 1998 for an "emergency planning caucus on the war in Chiapas."[3] The conference was coordinated by organizations such as Global Exchange, Cloudforest Initiatives, the Alliance for Global Justice/Nicaragua Network, School of the Americas Watch, and the couple who published the Interconnect newsletter in Rochester, NY. It was attended by representatives from Christian solidarity groups from a dozen different denominations, local Zapatista solidarity groups throughout the US and Canada, and a panorama of social justice organizations. It was quite a feat of convocation.

[3] This quote and the rest of the information in these two paragraphs, unless otherwise noted, are from Peter and Gail Mott's report on the conference (1998a).

They were broadly united in their concern for the Zapatistas, and this focus also diffused into concern over free trade, militarism, "the people of Mexico," and for "a prophetic vision." MSN would later write that their discussions "covered a veritable smorgasbord of ideas with little internal consistency or long term strategic orientation" (2009a, pt. 1). Nonetheless, participants agreed to immediately coordinate "a high-level delegation to Chiapas" and "to educate ourselves, the US public, and the government," noting as an afterthought that "In the long run we need to organize the public to resist the powers." The conference struck a temporary council, and on May 7 this council decided to form the Mexico Solidarity Network, with Hansen as the Interim Coordinator (Mott & Mott, 1998b). His salary would be $400 per month, paid from donations raised at the conference.

After coordinating a successful tri-national delegation in July 1998, MSN settled into the work that would characterize its first five years. Its focus was "issue-oriented rather than community based" (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 1), and the prevailing issues were human rights in Chiapas and their connection to the US via military assistance and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Its organizing form was to invite documentary filmmakers, Mexican human rights defenders, and labour organizers to give speaking tours across the US, calling on member organizations to organize events in their respective cities. They recruited delegation participants through these tours, and these delegates would self-finance one-week trips to Chiapas or Mexico City to meet with non-profit staff, academics, and journalists while also visiting Indigenous communities and possibly delivering donations.

MSN's implicit theory of change was that this exposure would alter social relations by inspiring delegation participants to educate their communities and pressure local representatives. Change ultimately rested on these elected officials, and the organization was able to organize three delegations of congressional staffers and secure "Dear Colleague" letters and two Sense of the Congress resolutions, regarding both the expulsion of foreign observers and the conflict in Chiapas (H.Con.Res.350 - 106th Congress (1999-2000), 2000; S.Con.Res.76 - 106th Congress (1999-2000), 1999). As specific issues arose – such as the expansion of

NAFTA into the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the neoliberal development project dubbed Plan Puebla Panama, increasing femicides in Ciudad Juárez, the assassination of human rights lawyer Digna Ochoa, or attempts to displace Zapatista communities by establishing a Montes Azules bioreserve in the Lacandón jungle – the network would focus their speaking tours, delegations, educational material, and grassroots lobbying onto that specific topic, happy to collaborate with whoever else considered the issue important. In campaigning around these issues, the network saw itself creating "an organized and educated civil society" capable of waging a "struggle for alternatives to elite-centered globalization" that would prevent the sweatshops and militarization being developed by the US-Mexico "laboratory" from coming to "define relations between the First and Third world" (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2000).

They had many successes, including a second conference with over three hundred participants in 1999, featuring eighteen invited guests from Mexico,[4] a delegation to Chiapas of twenty-five human rights observers from seven countries in 2002, coordinating national opposition to free trade agreements through the hemispheric Alliance for Responsible Trade, using free trade as a frame to successfully link struggles in the US and far-removed Chiapas, working with the mothers of women murdered in Ciudad Juárez to greatly increase awareness of femicides, and generally attempting to coordinate the work of the 2,500 people the network's member organizations brought together.

Running into obstacles

Despite these strides, by the mid-2000s staff had developed a strong critique of the organization's original theory and practice. The first problem was that a disconnect between MSN's formal structure and everyday operation caused a tension at the heart of their organizing form. Formally, the network was constituted by its member organizations – there were 62 in 1998 and around ninety in the early 2000s (J. Marques, personal

[4] Ten tears later, MSN reflected that "A review of our Mexican guests demonstrates how much the political orientation of the MSN has changed over the years. They were almost all NGO representatives or intellectuals. There was not a single representative from an active social movement, and none of the groups we relate to in Mexico today were present at the conference" (2009a, pt. 1).

communication, 2004) – and these groups were coordinated by a Steering Committee that directed staff. In practice, former staff member Jessica Marques said that only a third of the groups actively participated (personal communication, 2004), and Hansen was more severe, telling me that member organizations quickly fell away, either because they were "large groups that had their own agenda, [or] very small, local groups [who] really had a hard time figuring out how to fit into a national network." Moreover, he said that "the Steering Committee was never a group that took an active role in trying to build the Mexico Solidarity Network." This meant that "it was largely rhetorical" for MSN to call itself a network, and staff could independently drive the organization's activity, yet lacked a mandate to do so (personal communication, June 24, 2021). Such difficulties regarding accountability are typical of many non-profits.

Staff also found these freely determined activities to be lacking, making a wide-ranging set of complaints (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 1): The first is that their campaigns amounted to an "activist agenda without solid grounding in effective, long term strategies for social change." In this sense MSN took action without theory and practiced tactics without strategy. Instead of building power, the organization reacted to state-sanctioned political and economic violence by raising awareness, in hopes that this awareness would somehow curtail it.

This is another way MSN was typical of many non-profits, in that "they deal with the issues that are on the government's agenda, trying to influence the decisions that the State takes" (ibid 2009a, pt. 2). Obviously, states are incredibly powerful political actors, but this reactive approach to influencing them is prone to failure when the given issue does not generate sufficient outrage, when drawn-out legal and judicial processes cause attrition, or as the former activist base drifts towards new issues. This strategy therefore often leads to weak collaboration, as it relies mostly on ideological commitment instead of attending to participants' material needs. The Zapatistas confronted similar problems when their public support fell away after the massive push to integrate the San Andrés accords into the Mexican constitution. Likewise, as the 2000s progressed MSN had more trouble recruiting participants to its delegations to Chiapas. Moreover, most delegation participants

did not stay involved after returning home, and these "efforts to 'educate' [lacked] a clear idea of how education could lead to social change" (ibid 2009a, pt. 1). Beyond an ambiguous "awareness," it was unclear what sorts of wellbeing their collaboration was producing.

At its best, this strategy helped make material change by putting significant pressure on the Mexican government to halt the militarization of Chiapas after the Acteal massacre, reactively evidenced by the state's campaign to expel human rights observers and impose illegal visa requirements on them. In this sense, "political pressure" was the use value they laboured to produce. Yet the delegation model was limited by the weak collaborative ties of participants (most would never see each other again and often did not represent an organized community back home), the delegations' focus on limiting state violence against an implicitly victimized populace instead of actively supporting alternative social relations, and – as Hansen reflected – because "The educational experience on delegations was ... a series of decontextualized meetings. There was almost nothing in terms of theoretical work" (personal communication, June 24, 2021). MSN was confronting the limits of its strategy, yet as a network-without-members it had no solid community to turn to for answers.

MSN's second self-critique concerns this lack of a social basis. While the organization formally united a network of over 2,500 activists, the two hundred who actively participated via delegations laboured independently to raise the necessary funds, each individual speaking tour was similarly isolated, and the only common labour was to raise awareness and generate political pressure (again, each within their own locality). Tighter, everyday collaboration was limited to just a few staff and Steering Committee members. So when MSN laments this lack of a "community" base (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 1), I read it as a critique of their overly decentralized collaborative arrangement, especially how the outcomes of their labour remained limited to reproducing participants' issue-based subjectivity as a community of activists fighting for social justice.

Make no mistake, this subjectivity is incredibly important. It reproduces the spark of initiative, overcoming inertia and stimulating the labour of organizing when it is hardest to do so, when this is just one more task on top of all the other work of surviving under capitalism. In this sense initiative is the *sine qua non* of social movement. Yet a seed must relate to a great deal of soil, water, and light if it is to bear fruit. Instead, MSN found that many members' ambitions were limited to maintaining their sense of belonging to a community of activists, something they mostly pursued through participation in internet listservs (Stephen, 2002, pp. 322–325).

MSN found itself locked into the sort of political activity that McAlevey classifies as "mobilizing": professional staff turning out "the same dedicated activists who show up over and over," but "with no base of actual, measurable supporters [and] prioritizing frames and messaging over base power" (2016, pp. 10, 11). Their mobilizing approach produced some early successes but appeared increasingly limited. In posing this self-critical question of how to strengthen their collaborative efforts, MSN was "accepting defeat" and recognizing the need to listen and reflect on how to better pursue social movement.

Zapatista resistance revisited

MSN only moved from the "no" of self-criticism to the "yes" of proposal after the Zapatsitas forced their reckoning. As mentioned in chapter 2, the Zapatistas strengthened their autonomous project in 2003 with the creation of the Good Government Councils, and in doing so they sought to ensure they would not collaborate with their supporters through relations of dependency. Instead of allowing these supporters to design and implement whatever projects they had received funding for, now all projects had to first be approved by the Council and would also be coordinated by them. In this way, the Zapatistas could develop the labour power of their good government authorities instead of all the skill development taking place among non-profit staff. This was also a move to prevent the more insidious problem of non-profits appealing to the international popularity of the Zapatistas to win grants and then dedicating most of this funding to staff salaries (a practice we will later see repeated in Chicago). They did so knowing full-well that rejecting

"leftovers and the imposition of projects" would anger many organizations and reduce the flow of funding (Marcos, 2003b, pt. 2), but that strengthening their labour power and increasing their capacity for self-determination were more important.

Internally, this change meant that – while non-profits working through the Good Government Councils were welcomed – Zapatistas who insisted on receiving aid from non-profits *refusing* to coordinate through the Councils would be asked to leave the organization. This impacted MSN, as they had developed a relationship with a "mixed" women's weaving cooperative containing both Zapatistas and non-Zapatistas, and whose relationships with non-profits and state programs were therefore not accountable to the decisions made at Zapatista assemblies. Hansen related that the Zapatistas told these cooperatives to "make a decision, one way or the other," and likewise

> The Zapatistas went to civil society and said, 'You're either with us or you're not, but none of this identifying halfway with Zapatismo and then – when it's not convenient for you – not identifying with Zapatismo .... None of this using our name to get money from foundations and then abandoning us when times get tough.' (personal communication, June 24, 2021)

After six months of internal debate, an expedition by Steering Committee members to Chiapas, and one staff member resigning in protest, MSN decided to end its relationship with the weaving cooperative and reassert its accountability to the Zapatistas. It was the organization's most fractious internal conflict to date, and Benavides recalls that in the aftermath "they began distancing themselves from behaviours associated with NGOs" that were at the root of the problem (personal communication, August 23, 2021). More broadly, because staff were also confronting the limits of their collaborative arrangement and its strategy, it led them to critique the non-profit form in general. The issue of accountability caused MSN to turn away from an issue-based, state-oriented strategy and toward something new, yet still undefined.

Toward a new sort of organization

Militant critique of the non-profit

MSN came to understand "non-profit" as more than a politically neutral tax status designation. Their appraisal is similar to that of INCITE!, which writes that "capitalist interests and the state use non-profits to ... redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society" (2007, p. 3). This is a difference in the social relations shaping collaborating, between relations tending to seek accommodation with capitalism and relations that are more explicitly oriented against them. Benavides provides everyday examples: an individualist, careerist mentality, staff zealously restricting their efforts to the letter of their job descriptions, only participating "because it's a job," and most importantly, prioritizing these concerns over a general commitment to "provoking social organization" (personal communication, August 23, 2021). Furthermore, many non-profits "call for internal social modeling and accompanying economic and labour benefits for staff first, even while the rest of the world lives with injustice and exploitation."[5] Or, as Benavides succinctly put it, "Let's build socialism, starting with me."

On the other hand, there is no organizing without "domestic" reproduction, and for those of us without access to cooperative production of collective land or means of production, this requires wages. And, if we can earn these wages for the organizing labour itself and thereby dedicate forty-plus hours a week to it, all the better. Furthermore, even those among us with the best of intentions are thoroughly socialized into capitalist relations, and it is difficult to move away from them. I experienced these difficulties as a member of the staff collective, as we discussed problems such as the around-the-clock hours on the study abroad program spent attending to students, accommodating each other's disabilities, cancelling vacation plans to coordinate against a sudden eviction threat, whether to increase our salaries to match inflation, or what to do when individuals on staff were not a good fit for the collective. These are the everyday junctures that comprise an organizing

[5] The quote is from an internal MSN document orienting new staff members, written in 2014.

process, incidents in the "mess" of figuring out how to move social relations below and to the left. Heated as they were, the conflicting positions shared the premise that it was possible to pro-actively shape our collaboration through a militant ethic of responsibility toward anticapitalist social movement.

Their experience led MSN to make three critiques of the non-profit organizing form. First, we saw how they criticized non-profit staff for prioritizing their "rights" to a comfortable salary, a limited work-week, and paid vacations ("socialism, starting with me") over their *responsibility* to struggle for revolutionary social change (2009a, pt. 2). Second, while many non-profits dwell on their commitment to "the community," the lack of mechanisms for accountably determining non-profits' campaigns, budgets, or strategic orientation hollows out these appeals. Third, Hansen stated that "The NGOs that seem to capture much of what passes for organizing merely represent another layer of intervention between community and governance" (2017). Elsewhere MSN writes that non-profit staff "disempower directly-affected communities by 'representing' those communities rather than offering their skills and knowledge to develop local leadership" (2009b). Piven and Cloward (1979, Chapter 1) and Zibechi (2012, Chapter 16) observe that these tendencies cause staff to become progressively separate from the community they claim to represent, increasingly *managing* them rather than coordinating collective self-determination.

In terms of the theory I am developing here, this "separation" means that the collaboration within many non-profits is labour to plug into a tax-break-driven, foundation-oriented flow of labour, distinct from the flow the community's labours engage in. Labouring within this flow leads non-profits perpetuate its social relations, specifically those of an internally-divided working class, one whose more credentialed members are enlisted in managing those positioned below them. As I will explore further below, this is the work of breaking the working class into a weakened, internally conflicted array of class *fractions*. MSN's self-criticism initiated movement away from the non-profit forms of collaboration, and as we will see that this movement is still ongoing.

MSN looked to Zapatista principles to orient this movement, to understand how organizers' relations to the oppressed can be structured in a more liberatory way. I call this orientation "militancy," and the Zapatistas synthesize it into a generative dialectic, using the slogan "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994c). MSN explains their understanding of the slogan:

> The first part of the phrase refers to an equitable distribution of wealth and power in society such that exploitation and domination are abolished. This is a fairly straightforward proposal, if difficult to achieve in practice. The second part of the phrase, "nothing for ourselves," refers to an ethical demand placed on movement leaders (and in the sense that autonomous projects have many, many leaders, this ethical demand refers to the movement in general) ... meaning that we always work selflessly for the collective, never for personal gain. (2009a, pt. 2)

I would like to highlight four ways the ethic of militancy runs counter to non-profit organizing forms. The first is that "everything for everyone" is an affirmation that we should all be cared for, we should enjoy right relation to the fullest extent possible, and we should give to the movement according to our abilities while being supported according to our needs. Given that capitalism is predicated on dispossession and scarcity, "everything for everyone" calls for life beyond it.

Second, "nothing for ourselves" counters with a commitment to militancy: organizing will not bring fame, nor will care and right relation allow leisurely comfort. It will only bring a hard struggle that will surely last longer than their lifetime. As a Zapatista good government authority explained, those who successfully carry out their work are rewarded by receiving even more work (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2015), meaning that "Our destiny is not happiness. Our destiny is to struggle always" (S. Galeano, 2015a, p. 196). Benavides expresses a similar sentiment, saying "I've never thought we should do [this work] because we're going to win …. I think we should do things because they're correct, and that's it" (personal communication, August 23, 2021).

Third, MSN extends this to the relation between rights and responsibilities, writing

> In political projects, responsibilities always come before and supersede rights. Rights are earned through hard work and demonstration of political commitment, and are never a priori. Responsibilities arise directly from our commitment to a political project to build radical social change. (2009a, pt. 2)

The foremost of these responsibilities is to remain *inside* the movement. Benavides explains this, saying that militants prioritize creating popular organization, regardless of whether it happens to be mentioned in their job description. Trepidatious institutional actors and burdensome legal protocols "impose restrictions" that make the most needed forms of organization the most difficult, but militancy is a commitment to press on. Furthermore, beyond the caretaking effort needed to maintain "the physical and emotional health" of themselves and their families, militants are committed to organizing self-determination whether or not "they earn well, get vacation time, et cetera" (personal communication, August 23, 2021). In other words, there is a responsibility to prioritize the class struggle for reproduction from below on par with the demands of domestic reproduction. This all mounts to a lifelong effort to, in the words of the Oventic Language School, "transcend individualism" through a commitment to "confront power through organization" (personal communication, 2011).

Finally, The Zapatista slogan of "governing by obeying" is pertinent here since militants certainly exert leadership through their initiative to organize, yet they must do the troublesome work of subjecting this leadership to both theoretically informed critique and the collective will of those *with whom* they are organizing. It is an ever-present tension. For this reason Hansen highlights entrepreneurship (organizational ingenuity), ideological work, and commitment as three key aspects of militancy (personal communication, June 24, 2021; see also Hardt & Negri, 2017, pp. 143–146). This entrepreneurship is the creative pursuit of organizing forms allowing self-determination to flow from the base instead of "leaders" becoming managers.

This is the splendid ideal of militancy. Yet practice is quite different, which is why I consider militancy to be an ethic. Reference to Zapatista conceptions of militancy is also tricky because recuperated land provides the reproductive use values allowing their tens of thousands of militants to dedicate their efforts to good government without remuneration. Meanwhile members of MSN must find money to purchase commodities if they are to reproduce themselves, and this money is provided through salaries. Benavides and Hansen have

demonstrated their militancy in this regard by forfeiting their salaries when the organization was low on funds or when they received stipends for graduate study. With study abroad programs suspended due to the pandemic and only slowly returning, all staff are organizing without pay while also moonlighting at temporary jobs. Even under better circumstances, MSN seeks to ameliorate this tension by keeping salaries low (2009a, pt. 2). Moreover, because MSN has never received foundation funding and since its staff all receive the same salary for their labour of producing a study abroad program, Benavides considers it to be more of "a sort of workers' cooperative" than a non-profit (personal communication, August 23, 2021).

Nonetheless, labour is coordinated via "staffing," which is the heart of MSN's self-critique of the non-profit form. Hansen reflects that, "If I had to do it all over again, I would have started the Mexico Solidarity Network as an all-volunteer organization with no budget and no paid staff" (personal communication, June 24, 2021). MSN's collaborative strength has been quite volatile over the years, dependant on the assortment of staff present at any given time, with constant turnover exposing the difficulty of "hiring militants." This is especially so when the new hire is urgently needed to avoid program disruptions, making it more difficult to verify their self-assessment during interviews, much less to offer them a ladder of engagement whereby they can gradually take on responsibilities while practically demonstrating commitment.

For these reasons, Hansen recently characterized MSN's hiring logic as "completely backward," saying, "I think we made huge mistakes" (ibid personal communication, June 24, 2021). Offering a salary naturally attracts people pursuing the "career-based modes of organizing" critiqued above (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007, p. 3), and capitalism's ultimatum of "work or starve" is a powerful incentive for applicants to say what the interviewer wants to hear, including voicing a revolutionary commitment to abolish work. I surely over-represented my militant credentials when interviewing with MSN, yet the bright side is that revolutionary subjectivity is forged in struggle, and mine grew (I hope!) by organizing for housing through the Centro Autónomo and immersion in the radical movements of the Sexta. On the other hand, my resignation from the staff obligated yet another hiring process that stressed the organization's work.

Given these problems, what is the alternative for organizers without access to the means of production? If they elect to find apolitical day jobs, how to organize on the few shreds of energy left after rush hour? This is the meager flow of labour within which MSN attempted to move its collaborative arrangements away from those of the non-profit and towards "something else." But, beyond "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves," what would the practical political relationships of this "something else" be? How exactly would these novel forms of collaboration support a broader strategy for social change? Fourteen years later, the issue of staff salaries remains unresolved. Other practical questions include how the organization was going to de-prioritize work with issue-oriented groups and activists, how to become a community-based organization, and to what end? MSN was clear about the organizing forms they wanted to move away from, but not what they wanted to move toward. The EZLN's Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle, also known as the Sexta (2005), was invaluable in asserting a programme to guide MSN through this stormy process.

The Sexta comes to Albany Park

The Sexta is the Zapatistas' most concise and radical statement of their history, political analysis, and ongoing strategy, and it continues to serve as their guiding manifesto. It also contains an expansive proposal for those like MSN who seek to be in solidarity with them. Their call begins with clear, direct language:

> This is our simple word which seeks to touch the hearts of humble and simple people like ourselves, but people who are also, like ourselves, dignified and rebel. This is our simple word … to invite other persons to walk with us in something very great which is called Mexico and something greater which is called the world. (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005, pt. 1)

They go on to tell the history recounted in chapter 2, including the uprising, the San Andrés accords, their betrayal by all three political parties, and the shift to unilaterally building autonomy. Significantly, the Sexta frames this history through a critique of capitalism and how it is manifest in Mexico, marking the Zapatistas'

"coming out" as anticapitalist and moving beyond their previous discourse of democracy, neoliberalism, and civil society.[6]

The Sexta then ends with proposals for how the Zapatistas intend to pursue anticapitalist strategy, especially regarding those in solidarity with them:

> We are also letting you know that the EZLN will establish a policy of alliances with non-electoral organizations and movements which define themselves, in theory and practice, as being of the left, in accordance with the following conditions: Not to make agreements from above to be imposed below, but to make accords to go together to listen and to organize outrage. Not to raise movements which are later negotiated behind the backs of those who made them, but to always take into account the opinions of those participating. Not to seek gifts, positions, advantages, public positions, from the Power or those who aspire to it, but to go beyond the election calendar. Not to try to resolve from above the problems of our Nation, but to build FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW an alternative to neoliberal destruction, an alternative of the left for Mexico. (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005, pt. 6, emphasis in the original)

This orientation was synthesized into the slogan "from below and to the left." It stipulates that political work should be popular, building power *with* those most marginalized in society, instead of allying with class enemies, prioritizing their favoured terrain of electoral politics, or managing the oppressed and "optimizing their poverty" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018a).

As a formal "adherent" to the Sexta, MSN became accountable to this ethic and the strategy of convoking an organization of organizations capable of changing capitalist social relations. The Sexta lent a pro-active proposal to MSN's critique of non-profits, especially as they committed themselves to pursuing base building. MSN writes, "We need to begin with the construction of community …. a social foundation that can begin to offer alternatives to capitalist exploitation and the individualism inherent in capitalist social relations …. [through the creation of] concrete alternatives based on non-capitalist social relations" (2009a, pt. 2).

[6] Likewise, MSN's analysis and discourse also became much more explicitly Marxist during this time, as we can see in comparing their earlier appeal for fair trade with their later proposal for an "alternative economy," based on a critical analysis of accumulation (2003, 2005).

This process had to begin with the social relations already existing in MSN's context, instead of an attempt to import Zapatismo from Chiapas. MSN clearly elaborates this sentiment, writing that

> It is not possible, nor would it be advisable, to try to reconstruct a set of ethical and political principles developed in Chiapas Indigenous communities in the context of Albany Park [in Chicago]. The historical and cultural contexts are very different, and hence the way we understand social change and the tools and resources available to us are necessarily different. The Zapatistas would be the first to argue that they don't want to be – nor can they be – an example for anyone to follow like a recipe. Rather, the Zapatista movement has served as an inspiration, and the ethical and political principles upon which the movement is constructed should be interpreted in each particular historical and cultural context. (ibid 2009a, pt. 2)

This is a recognition that, instead of considering itself a geographically vacuous "national network," MSN should identify with the Chicago neighbourhood of Albany Park where its offices were located. This is the space of social relations in which it would labour to do base building. Or, in the language of Marcos, it is the community they would aim to be "digested" into (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 62).

Located along the north branch of the Chicago River, at the terminus of the metro's Brown Line, Albany Park has long been a "gateway" neighbourhood: for Jews fleeing persecution in Europe, Koreans fleeing war, and later Central Americans expelled by Dirty Wars and free trade agreements. By the early 2000s, Albany Park was among the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in all Chicago, and its Latin American residents were primarily from Mexico, along with Ecuador and the Central American triangle of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. A gentrification process began in the early 2000s. While Albany Park had suffered from high crime in decades past, the neighbourhood's working class families did the hard work of making it a safe place to live, only to find that their spacious housing and proximity to downtown was now attractive to wealthier, whiter people. (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2013)

Because MSN's "office" had always been Tom Hansen's flat in the neighbourhood, and he had previously been a construction worker himself, MSN's community organizing work emerged from class conflict resulting from this gentrification process: Wealthier residents felt threatened by the presence of the undocumented Latino construction workers who had created an informal labour market along Pulaski Avenue and allied with

local small businesses, the city councillor, and police to expel them. As Hansen described in his doctoral dissertation on the subject, work as a day-labourer ("jornalero" in Spanish) was attractive because the informal minimum wage of ten dollars an hour that jornaleros succeeded in establishing for themselves was nearly twice the five-dollar minimum wage (further reduced by payroll taxes for programs like Social Security that are denied to undocumented immigrants) (Hansen, 2007, p. 112). Furthermore, jornaleros with skills in the trades and those who developed relationships with contractors could sometimes earn fifteen or even twenty dollars an hour. This made them willing to shoulder the burden of days without work, persistent wage theft by contractors, and – most importantly – antagonistic reactions to their visibility as undocumented workers participating in a street-corner labour market.

When the forces of this reaction attempted to expel these workers in 2001, the jornaleros organized to defend themselves, and Tom Hansen was part of an informal coalition that came together to support them. The jornaleros' immediate goal was to stop the police from scaring away contractors, and more generally to gain more stability through things like restroom facilities, a roof to shield them from inclement weather, greater English fluency to aid in labour negotiations, protection from wage theft, and most importantly more work in general. The support group dubbed themselves Friends of the Albany Park Day Laborers, and it brought MSN together with a set of actors similar to those who had previously created the Network: four other non-profits, a liberation theologian, and a number of volunteers from local universities (Hansen, 2007, p. 147). The difference was that this time they were working to support – and ostensibly take leadership from – their neighbours instead of a faraway community.

Their efforts eventually congealed into a campaign first to pass a law limiting exploitation by "temp agencies," then to establish a safe street-side space for workers to engage contractors, and finally (when a provisional space was demolished by police) to found a workers' centre in a local storefront. They began as a group of unpaid volunteers led by a liberation theologian from El Salvador, transitioned into a foundation-funded non-

profit led by university graduates, and these staff ultimately managed the workers' centre that opened in 2004.[7]

Differing orientations toward organizing

The growing tensions between jornaleros and staff posed a question that MSN has worked to resolve ever since: how to successfully integrate highly exploited undocumented workers and relatively more privileged, university-educated activists together into a united struggle? Given the differences between them, how to coordinate their political labour and what strategy for social movement would this labour pursue? Hansen used his doctoral dissertation to reflect on the shortcomings of a local workers' centre in Chicago, once again posing the question finding an appropriate organizing form. How should a Zapatista-inspired organization in far-off Chicago move "below and to the left"? In a word, how should MSN bring Zapatismo home?

Once again, it was clear this organizing form should *not* involve managing the oppressed. In this case, Hansen's dissertation provides a material analysis of why worker's centres easily fall into this relation. Those using this organizing form seek to produce the use value of labour provision: supplying contractors with the low-cost labour of undocumented workers, only at a slightly higher wage, with more guarantees against wage theft, and without having to haggle over all this outdoors. Yet the workers' centre can only succeed in becoming the new hiring hall if all the jornaleros commit to using it exclusively (if no one chooses to undercut the others by returning to the street corner) or if police enforcement obliges all contractors to use it. Whether the workers' centre staff chooses to organize through collaboration with local government and police or through appeals to jornaleros (usually enriched using "add-ons" like free coffee and donuts, English and computer classes, and tool libraries), their basic social relation is still that of a labour supplier within an exploitative capitalist system (Hansen, 2007, Chapter 3; Camou, 2009). These staff might have more success if they are familiar with the bidding and licensing practices of residential construction, but instead most are not

[7] Tom Hansen recounts this history, along with the growing conflict between jornaleros and staff at the workers' centre, in chapter 6 of his dissertation (2007).

familiar with the construction industry, coming instead from other activist projects (ibid 2007, p. 109). This is so often the case because, while staff produce the use value of labour provision, the exchange values that pays their wages comes from the foundation funding that many activists are familiar with.

Hansen concludes that "This fundamental contradiction could be addressed though the formation of worker *cooperatives* or other, as yet undefined strategies, but this requires a markedly different relationship between the worker centre and the jornalero" (2007, p. 114, my emphasis). Instead of plugging into the flow of labour in this way, by creating cooperatives that would allow jornaleros to practice more self-determination over their work, the workers' centre plugged into the typical non-profit flow, with most staff energy going into securing the foundation funding that paid salaries and rent. Reflecting on his interviews with jornaleros involved in the struggle, Hansen writes that "Often jornaleros are involved in establishing relationships with foundations that grant money to the worker's center, legitimizing the work by their presence at site visits. Yet the jornaleros do not have control over, or even knowledge of, the funds once they arrive in the worker's centre account" (2007, p. 294).

As we saw with the Zapatistas' critique of non-profits, here the flow of funding strengthens upwardly-oriented social relations of accountability *to* foundations, whereas downward relations are those of management. As Camou writes, staff tend to serve as "watchdogs over the labor distribution system" (2002, p. 20). These are social relations of difference, in which non-profit staff become a separate class fraction. They too are workers, but their responsibility is to manage other, more highly-exploited workers. MSN and most of the jornaleros who had been active in earlier stages of the struggle came to recognize this and distanced themselves from the workers' centre (Hansen, 2007, pp. 294–307).

Make no mistake, establishing a worker's centre was an achievement that improved members' pay and working conditions. Those labouring full-time to sustain it could only do so by receiving wages, so also labouring to win grants provided for staff reproduction while allowing them to dedicate significant effort to

the day-to-day labour of the worker's centre. Sure, it would have been nice to create a cooperative instead, but how were people to labour to coordinate this and also pay the rent? Rather than denouncing staff as "class traitors," my intention here (as well as Hansen's) is to acknowledge the flow of labour they were working within, as it indicates the ultimate limitations of this strategy.

Therefore, one way to understand the allure of a grant-funded worker's centre is that it allows for the reproduction of staff's labour power and also offers needed use values to undocumented workers. Another way to understand the difficulties leading staff to end up managing workers is to appreciate the sort of labour power ("expertise") that university-educated staff offer. For example, prior to opening the workers' centre, those involved led a successful campaign to reform Chicago labour law so that the temp agencies paying undocumented immigrants minimum wage could no longer further exploit them by docking their pay for the cost of transportation, uniforms, cheque cashing, and safety equipment (Hansen, 2007, Chapter 6). University-educated activists "understand the dynamics of institutional social change and often have existing relationships with government officials" (ibid 2007, pp. 233–234). In particular, they are often better versed in English-language media work, the tactics of pressuring elected officials, and liaising with police at civil disobedience actions than legally precarious jornaleros who speak English as a second language.

Hansen observes that this uneven distribution of labour power capacity goes on to shape power dynamics within the movement, as strategies for legal reform "encourage talented actors to assume strategically important positions, because the movement must make concrete progress in order to obtain/protect funding sources and convince new adherents" This in turn "increasingly isolates [directly-affected communities] from strategic direction" (ibid 2007, p. 239). The jornaleros have certainly also cultivated expertise within their labor powers, but there is a disconnect between the skills valued for construction work and those valued for political work.

From these distinct capacities grow distinctions in leadership: understood materially as the ability to determine the division of labour within the organization, the use values it will produce, and how the group will connect to and seek to influence the dominant flow of life and labour. Within the coalition, the class fraction who had honed their labour power at university was the one who determined these orientations. The resulting collaborative arrangement offered the more privileged fraction a stable source of income while the more exploited ones remain precarious. The point is to recognize the continuity between strategic orientation, flows of resources, collaborative arrangements of political labour, and forms of difference within them when considering how one group ends up managing the other. We tend to take all this for granted when considering capitalists and labourers, but it is important to tease out the intricacies of these relations when considering non-profits and community organizations.

Adding yet another element, Hansen observed the unspoken importance of identity formation in the broader organizing effort. He characterized those supporting the jornaleros in the following terms:

> Almost all of the allies are young and college educated …. They are generally motivated by an ethical commitment to help resolve an unjust situation, and many of them commit substantial amounts of time to meetings, fundraising, demonstrations and petitioning. The collective identity that develops from these activities is one of social activists directly involved in an important struggle, and the resulting feelings of value and self-esteem are central to their identity formations. Only a few of the allies have paid positions in organizations, and generally they could find work that paid more for less hours in the private sector; however, they accept these positions because of ethical/political commitments and/or self-esteem …. In general, the allies have formed a social grouping that enjoys spending time together. For example, it is not uncommon for the worker's centre to organize a fundraiser at a local bar and most of the allies will attend (though generally none or only a few jornaleros will attend). The social friendships created as part of their participation in the struggle are important motivating factors that keep them involved. However, it can be safely predicted that the vast majority of the allies will move on to other jobs and/or social struggles in coming years. (2007, p. 148)

This passage excellently illustrates many aspects of the activist subjectivity. It is important to recognize that belonging is also a use value, a form of wellbeing. As we will explore further in chapter 4, it is nearly always the first form of wellbeing produced when organizers begin acting on their inspiration together. Belonging is therefore the first "foothold" allowing them to reproduce their organizing labour, the basis for further development providing them with greater reproductive support. Yet here again we see the importance of

pushing outward to create relations of generosity across difference. The powerful sense of belonging among fellow activists did not extend to the jornaleros. While the FLN underwent process of being "digested" into the social relations of the surrounding Mayan communities, here university-educated activists developed a subjectivity that allowed them to identify with each other more deeply, often at the exclusion of their more exploited allies.[8]

Hansen draws the theoretical conclusion that, while both groups share a common struggle, they each come to it for different reasons. For university-educated activists "The movement *per se* constructs and validates their personal and collective identities as they search for meaning in post-industrial society. For jornaleros, the movement is defined by definite grievances and goals in addition to the values associated with participating in the movement, such as solidarity" (2007, p. 200). One group combats the needs stemming from *alienation* by producing *belonging* through political struggle, while the other combats the needs stemming from *exploitation* by producing political supports that *then* allow them to sell their *labour power* at a higher price. For one the struggle itself provides the intended wellbeing, while for the other it is a means to an end. There are obviously many nuances and exceptions to this broad dynamic, yet conflicts within the workers' centre project speak to the importance of the social relations strengthened through a given orientation toward the flow of labour (in this case management and accountability to funders), differences in labour power and leadership, and the various forms of wellbeing that participants prioritize.

An AUSM arrival

El Centro Autónomo de Albany Park

Having developed a self-critique of the non-profit form, getting inspired by the Sexta's call to organize "from below and to the left," and recognizing the limitations of the worker's centre strategy, MSN finally turned the

[8] I can apply this critique to my own time living in Albany Park. For example, on several occasions I was tasked with child care or clean-up at a community dance at the Centro Autónomo, but instead I found someone to relieve me of these responsibilities so I could bike across Chicago and spend my Saturday night at a house party with other twenty-something leftists.

corner. It would take another few years for them to consummate this conversion with a name change to AUSM, but this period of rebirth began in Albany Park, as they used popular education to develop an alternative project. For their "allies" to play a supporting role and for the jornaleros to drive the strategic orientation shaping the organizing work, Hansen decided they first need "political spaces" to create the collective leadership that will allow this. These are the "spaces in which demands for social change are generated, incubated, developed, promoted, and, occasionally, realized" (2007, pp. 5–6). The seed of such a space germinated when Hansen and other volunteers began giving English classes to jornaleros, using the kitchen as one classroom and MSN's office in the living room as another. The classes were immediately useful to the jornaleros, as they could more confidently negotiate the terms of their employment and better defend themselves against wage theft and other deceptions by the bosses.

The idea was for this pedagogical collaboration to dovetail into broader organizing toward social movement. As MSN explains it, the transformation happens "by examining the real life situations in which people live, and building a critique of the causes of the problems that people face on a daily basis."[9] Classroom conversations could then be expanded into broader, community-level "decision-making processes [that result in] workable conclusions" for resolving community members' everyday problems of exploitation, discrimination, and the repression of law enforcement. This would all culminate in "democratic political projects that empower people to envision a different future and build the social relationships that make a different future possible." Instead of a worker's centre model where staff markets members' labour power, the idea was to build a politicized collectivity through popular education and then, crucially, to accompany this collective as they created self-managed projects for meeting their material needs. Examples include "labor cooperatives to create jobs, expansion of the alternative health program to include weekly office hours with trained professionals, and development of a cooperative housing project."

[9] All quotations in this paragraph come from the "Foundational Principles of the Mexico Solidarity Network" (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009, pt. 2).

Finally, after nearly ten years of bristling against non-profit organizing forms, MSN opened the Centro Autónomo de Albany Park (Albany Park Autonomous Centre) in 2005 as the space for practicing this strategy.[10] English classes remained the mainstay of the Centro's programming, with many hundreds of neighbourhood residents studying there over the years and teaching in them becoming something of a right of passage for Chicago's young popular educators. In its early years, these classes were mostly accompanied by whatever programming volunteers (who usually had a normalized immigration status and a university education) were willing to provide. These included health and art workshops, presentations by artists and activists, and martial arts classes. There were monthly assemblies to determine programming, norms for the space, and (ideally) for political discussion.

By the early 2010s this work had matured into more consistent projects providing community members with greater support for their domestic reproduction. Community members formed a childcare committee to watch over children while their parents were in class, and another group of women formed a housecleaning cooperative. The events committee held monthly dances and made the space available for community members to have birthday parties there. Thanks to homeschooling laws in Illinois, staff and allies created an adult high school granting valid diplomas. It was a more rigorous and consistent course of study than the English classes, with the intention of practicing popular education more deeply and better developing students into community leaders.

Centro staff began connecting with neighbourhood residents facing eviction and foreclosure after the 2008 financial crash, forming a mutual aid group that successfully forced banks to renegotiate a number of mortgages and that launched an (ultimately unsuccessful) community land trust (Casas del Pueblo Community Land Trust, 2013, pp. 33–37).[11] Meanwhile, the pace of impromptu events quickened, including

[10] The Centro Autónomo remained open for thirteen years, until 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic suspended both in-person programming and the study abroad programs that made it possible. Staff, volunteers, and community members continued to coordinate adult high school classes online for two years, and a mutual aid project distributing food is ongoing. As of 2023, only short-term study abroad programs have resumed and the Centro remains closed.
[11] Their struggle was memorialized in the Albany Park Theater Project's production "I Will Kiss These Walls" (2013).

hosting conferences for socialist organizations, international delegations against the Drug War in Mexico, artwork by the Cuban 5 political prisoners, and countless community health workshops, information sessions on immigration and social services, movie nights, zumba workouts, and political presentations by Mexican activists passing through town on MSN's speaking tours. Albany Park residents even gave speaking tours at universities across the US to showcase their community organizing at the Centro.

How did this growth compare with organizers' original vision, to create a political space that would cultivate the leadership of undocumented workers? The organizing process remained focused on enticing neighbours' participation through free, accessible educational programming, steering these forums towards political discussions of the social relations shaping their lives in Albany Park, and then collaborating to address this material flow, thereby enticing even more residents to participate. In this way, the *intended* strategy was to collectively provide reproductive use values like education, childcare, recreation, and housing support, for these reproductive supports to allow participants to dedicate even more effort to organizing and also draw in new members, producing even more reproductive use values.

The Centro surely functioned as a "politicized space" where these use values could be debated, produced, and enjoyed, but the question of developing "leadership" there was trickier. Under this new arrangement, Centro members' leadership was not limited by staff prioritizing their own sense of belonging or the funding that would allow their own reproduction, so much as by the *needs* the Centro addressed. The jornaleros were confronting police and gentrifiers while struggling to collect wages – they had clear enemies for leaders to unite them in overcoming. Yet neighbourhood residents entered the Centro not to "fight the power," but to get an education and hopefully access better wages. Members' collective work expanded from this basis in education to include coordinating other sort of reproduction within the space through cooking, cleaning, celebrations, scheduling, and managing small monthly donations.

There is much to praise here, but the organizing was mostly limited to shaping social relations *within* the centre's four walls. For this reason, while MSN staff consistently attempted to initiate political conversations during monthly community assemblies – in an attempt to make the assemblies into a space where collective leadership could emerge – they were instead usually poorly attended, with discussion limited to programming within the space.

True, it takes long, hard work to build toward radical struggles. Yet the particular needs that brought people to the Centro were immediately addressed in its classes; resolution did not require confronting an oppressive enemy, as in the case of immigration enforcement or foreclosures and evictions. To obtain educational use values, students just had to show up to learn and facilitators had to show up to teach. They were not pursuing forms of wellbeing whose production required painstaking collaboration to overcome imposed social relations of exploitation or repression. This is not to gainsay political education, just to recognize that education alone does not require as much collaborative effort as changing the material flow of labour. Furthermore, education-intensive projects risk stagnating and imploding absent the intention to "push outward," transform reflection into practice, and confront class enemies as part of a broader struggle to care for society. As typically happens, MSN originally confronted one set of obstacles, reoriented itself, and strengthened, only to come up against a new set of obstacles.

Despite these limitations the Centro was an exhilarating space, with hundreds of community members buzzing through its hallways and provocative conversations echoing in its classrooms. It was not as radical as it could have been, but it certainly had the necessary foundations for a strong base building project. Relative to where they began, MSN had indeed moved their organizing efforts further below and to the left. Crucially, this meant orienting toward an entirely new flow of labour that passed through the novel study abroad program and into its base building work. Practically, this change meant that MSN's labour was no longer to sound the alarm about human rights violations in Chiapas and the perils of free trade, await a response from activists with similar concerns, and then collaborate to sound the alarm even more loudly (hopefully eliciting a

response from officials). They were now working to organize the unorganized in a specific location and creating politicized projects to directly meet their reproductive needs and – hopefully – change the flow of life and labour in a specific location, addressing specific social relations. Instead of working to reproduce participants' subjectivity as a community of activists fighting for social justice, they began producing the use values of language fluency, educational credentials, and housing, along with the subjectivity of a community of neighbours. Instead of referring to an ambiguous treaty such as NAFTA to explain the US-Mexico connection (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2000), the Sexta now offered a programme that could unite specific people into a project with an explicitly popular and anticapitalist orientation. As with any organizing project, this new set of collaborative arrangements entailed a new set of problems, which I explore further below. Yet we should appreciate that MSN now had a concrete strategy for engaging in militant organizing below and to the left.

The study abroad program

Alongside the Centro, the study abroad program was a partner project, aimed at engaging with adherents to the Sexta and promoting collaboration between them. The organization consummated its turn to community organizing and political education by taking on a new name, the Autonomous University of Social Movements. AUSM's intention was to pair these two projects to articulate two social groups:

> The Autonomous University will educate directly affected communities and college-educated activists in the theory, strategy and practice of social movements, with a strong emphasis on the practical construction of community-based activism leading to effective social change .... The Autonomous University will bring these groups together in popular education processes that combine theoretical formation with practical strategies and tactics. By bridging the social gaps between these two groups, the University will combine the best of both in effective community-based social movements in which leadership is clearly defined as facilitation rather than control. By combining the practical knowledge of directly affected communities with the skills of college-educated youth, the University will be the center of knowledge production that will form the basis of community-based political activism and ideological formation. (Hansen, 2007, p. 313)

Before delving into this analysis of "college-educated activists" and "directly affected communities," I will first describe its study abroad program "on the theory and practice of Mexican social movements" (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2021). In one sense, the study abroad program is an

outgrowth of the delegations that were the mainstay of MSN's earlier organizing. Staff were already adept at organizing travel, accommodations and ensuring participant safety, and – most importantly – they had developed consistent working relationships with the Mexican groups whose meetings were the substance of each delegation. The Sexta led AUSM to stop meeting primarily with Mexican non-profits and instead to do the political work of building this network. Specifically, they coordinated exchanges between students and members of mass, non-electoral, anticapitalist organizations.

The Chiapas connection was the Oventic Language School (Fitzwater, 2019, pp. 53–55; Oventic Language School, n.d.) (formally known as the Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Spanish and Mayan Languages Centre, a mouthful abbreviated as CELMRAZ in Spanish). As part of the Zapatistas' broader autonomous education system (Baronnet, 2008), the Language School facilitates exchanges between Zapatista education promoters, study abroad students, the youth at the region's secondary school, and the rest of the cooperatives, clinics, and autonomous authorities located in the Good Government centre of Oventic. Its facilitators use language instruction as a point of departure into learning about Zapatista autonomy, its political and ethical principles, and Mayan culture and philosophy.[12]

Students also travel outside of Chiapas to live in homestays with families in other organizations that collaborate within the Sexta, including in the state of Tlaxcala with peasants fighting to defend their communal ejidos and former agricultural guest-workers to the US (Marcos, 2003a), in Mexico City with organizations building autonomous housing on squatted land (Neuhausen, 2020; Zibechi, 2014), and in Ciudad Juárez with the families of femicide victims (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2004). It is quite a whirlwind, but the amount of travel was reduced when the Drug War forced the study abroad program to cease visiting Ciudad Juárez in 2009 (Lacey, 2010).

[12] Fitzwater's *Autonomy Is in Our Hearts* is an excellent synthesis of various lessons taught at the Oventic Language School (2019), and as such offers an exploration of Zapatista philosophy quite unlike most other literature on the subject, which tends to be based exclusively on the writings of Subcomandante Marcos.

In another sense, the study abroad program is quite unlike an "extended delegation." As Hansen describes them, "The educational experience on delegations was … a series of decontextualized meetings. There was almost nothing in terms of theoretical work" (personal communication, June 24, 2021). In contrast, the duration and structure of a study abroad program allows for a great deal of political education. Program coordinators rigorously couch students' interactions with mass organizations in a theoretical and historical context, always concluding these discussions by reflecting on their lessons for students' organizing work back home. In this sense, the study abroad program is dedicated to teaching organizing, to preparing students to take the leap from inspiration into action once they return home.

This political project is synthesized into a formal course of study and syllabus (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2018). The thirteen-week, sixteen-credit program includes a sociology course on social movement theory, an economics course on Marxist political economy, a political science course on the history of Mexican politics dating from the Revolution (these three are taught by AUSM staff, formerly including myself), along with an anthropology course on Mexican culture and Spanish language course taught by the Oventic Language School and then the organizations in Mexico City and Tlaxcala. In teaching this syllabus, AUSM's teachers focus on dialectics – understanding life as process and contradiction (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 2) – and praxis – ensuring that theory emerges from concrete reality and is elaborated as a tool to change it (ibid 2009a, pt. 2). Courses also address the political economy, cultural, and historical context in which spaces like Oventic were built.

By studying social movement theory, dialectics, praxis, Marxism, and Mexican history, students learn the ways that the social moves – once again providing theoretical tools to aid them as they move from inspiration into action. Students learn how people like the original Zapatistas in Morelos and the later ones in Chiapas have collaborated to re-orient social relations away from private property and towards collectivity, moving them below and to the left (Gilly, 2005, Chapter 8; Holloway, 2002). They learn to see power from a materialist, action-oriented perspective (Long, 2001; Sewell, 1992). They learn how subjects create identity through

collective struggle, by building class for itself (Alcoff, 2006; Aronowitz, 2003). They learn to situate these changes within the long sweep of history (Aubry, 2005; Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Wallerstein, 1995). Reflexively, they learn that successful social movement involves the "digestion" of more privileged radicals by communities of the dispossessed and exploited. Beginning with Illich's "To Hell with Good Intentions" speech (1968) and followed by texts such as *What Is To Be Done?* (Lenin, 1969), "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" (J. Freeman, 1972) and Marcos' critiques of the FLN (2003b, pt. 2), students frequently discuss questions of leadership and how self-identified militants orient their accountability downwards.

The final difference from delegations is that AUSM now plugs into the flow of university funding. To achieve this, there was a series of bureaucratic norms AUSM had to meet if US (and the occasional Canadian) universities were to credit participation toward students' courses of study and allow them to use their financial aid to pay tuition. Chief among these was formal accreditation in both the US and Mexico. Hansen related that, when he pitched the idea to AUSM's Steering Committee, they responded saying, "You guys are never going to be able to make this happen." Although the bureaucratic wrangling took a full year, he says he was able to secure it with the help of the relationships he developed during his doctoral studies at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Xochimilco, Mexico City (personal communication, June 24, 2021). In the US, Hampshire College became the program's school of record.

While it may seem mundane, this was quite a feat for a barebones organization that was otherwise isolated from academia and with unabashedly anticapitalist politics. Apart from AUSM's, the only other program that immerses students in the everyday life of social movements is coordinated by staff at Earlham College (Center for Global and Career Education, n.d.). Despite all my critiques of non-profits, this experience shows the importance of institutional prowess in shifting flows of labour managed by the state toward anticapitalist organizations.

Having secured accreditation, AUSM was now organizing within a much different flow of labour. Before, delegation participants had used their wages to pay travel costs, plus an additional amount to cover the meagre salaries of MSN's staff. Apart from occasional donations of medical supplies, few resources were transferred to Mexico. The hope was that consciousness-raising work would inspire delegates to engage in unwaged, activist collaboration upon their return, obliging lawmakers to make more substantial changes to material flows between the US and Mexico and thereby making social movement. With its study abroad program, AUSM could now tap into the large flow of labour passing through the university system to a much greater extent. Students' tuition – coming from their own waged labour, from debt, and from the state's redistribution of its tax income – was significant enough to allow for a new flow of labour into Albany Park via rent for the community centre, additional staff there, and the collaboration of staff, community members, and volunteers. It also allows AUSM to consistently direct resources towards the Zapatista autonomous education system via the Oventic Language School, as well as the other Sexta-affiliated groups that students live with in Tlaxcala and Mexico City. In the state of Tlaxcala these include the National Urban and Peasant Council (CNUC in Spanish), the Democratic Independent Apizaco Popular Union (UPADI), and former US guestworkers through the Bracero program. In Mexico City they have coordinated with the Independent Francisco Villa Popular Front (FPFVI), Tlanezi Calli, the Mexican chapter of children of the disappeared (HIJOS- Mexico), and the Rincón Zapatista café.

While their strategy still rests on the hope that inspired alumni will take action back home, the study abroad program also allows AUSM to provide immediate material support to allied organizations. They can do this more consistently and to a greater extent than what such collaborative arrangemetns as delegations, fundraising, or fair trade could ever achieve. Although universities' expectations of "professionalism" surely discipline AUSM's organizing, they remain free from the strictures of foundations' flow of labour that prevent organizing "from below and to the left." Likewise, they are unique in publicizing staff salaries and the use of tuition income (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2017).

AUSM continued its institutional innovations after the study abroad program was firmly established. In 2010 they launched a master's program in popular education and community organizing in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and based in the Centro Autónomo in Chicago, allowing students to learn the theory of organizing while consistently engaging in its practice (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Education, 2010). In 2011 AUSM launched a study abroad program in Havana, Cuba focused on the revolutionary history and everyday practice of Cuban socialism (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2015). That same year they also added a re-entry program onto the study abroad semester. It is a key link between AUSM's two primary projects, as students spend two weeks at the Centro, living with its members, and exploring what organizing "from below and to the left" means in an urban, immigrant neighbourhood in the US (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2012). As such, the re-entry program concretizes the project of turning inspiration into action.

To sum up, the period between 2005 and 2011 was one of great innovation for AUSM. The organization's self-critique, followed by their taking up the proposals of the Sexta, resulted in a transformation of AUSM's collaborative arrangements and the strategy they pursued. Theoretically, AUSM developed an analysis explicitly rooted in the ideas of the Zapatistas and Marx. Successive syllabi show how this process was at first quite scattered (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2005) and later more succinct (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2018). Practically, AUSM had transitioned from a strategy of demanding the state respond to human rights concerns, to finding a way to both tap into the flows of tuition passing through universities and also engage in anticapitalist political education and organizing practice. Their political labour transitioned from coordinating with issue-oriented, English-speaking, university-educated activists and non-profits, towards engaging mass movements in Mexico and undocumented immigrants in Chicago. This reorientation was linked to a broader effort to strengthen the subjectivity of militancy, of "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves," guiding AUSM's collaborative efforts.

Following this flurry of innovation, AUSM spent the period between 2012 and 2019 gaining consistency. This was a difficult process of dropping some organizing efforts while strengthening others: The Centro Autónomo's housing work ceased after Roberto de la Riva (featured in chapter 4) moved to Minneapolis to found Inquilinxs Unidxs, while the adult high school continued to flourish. Similarly, AUSM staff were unable to sufficiently accompany master's students during their foray into community organizing, eventually ending the partnership with the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee. On the other hand, AUSM's study abroad programs became more stable as AUSM created a new division of labour wherein Astrid Diego (also featured in chapter 4) coordinates outreach and registration from the US while Cuba and Mexico-based staff teach and coordinate on-site logistics (instead of relying on US-based staff like myself).

Yet as I write, the pandemic has upended this consistency, shuttering the Centro Autónomo, suspending study abroad programs, and ceasing staff paycheques. Furthermore, while he remains active with the organization, after twenty-two years as Director, Tom Hansen has passed this responsibility to a new generation of organizers. A year into the pandemic, Benavides reflected on the situation, saying "We don't know where we're headed. As a political collective, we have to re-evaluate what we're going to do and how. Because, as an economic collective, we don't know what is going to happen" (personal communication, August 23, 2021). MSN entered into a rocky period of transition after its first five years, then found its footing as AUSM, and now the pandemic has thrown the organization into the throes of change once again.

Theory for renewed practice

At such a juncture it is important to evaluate AUSM's programme of supporting the Sexta by inspiring students to organize below and to the left after they return home. What theory motivates this pursuit and how do practical lessons modify that theory? I will spend the rest of the chapter critically elaborating the theory of new social actors and directly affected communities that orients AUSM's labour of organizing. I will highlight the lessons emerging from this practice, as well as the question of organizers' reproduction. AUSM

has overcome some of the obstacles confronting MSN and the worker's centre, but there are still tradeoffs between the labour of base building and generating wages for paid staff.

The impetus for the original theory was Hansen's organizing with jornaleros and activists to create a workers' centre, which he synthesized into a theory of change in his dissertation (2007). The theory guided AUSM's process of transformation as they engaged the Sexta, orienting both their community organizing in Chicago and study abroad program in Mexico and – importantly – providing a theory of how to bring the two together. Thus, they have practiced this theory of change with thousands of people over nearly fifteen years. This amounts to quite a rigorous pursuit of praxis, offering critical lessons on the difficulty of building what Hansen calls "cross-class alliances."

As proven by the jornaleros' struggle in Albany Park, it is no easy task to prioritize the immigrant community over privileged, university-educated activists. Their privileges of "citizenship rights, mobility (both social and physical), and expanded personal choices" correlate with "skills and resources that are important to community-based organizing work" (Mexico Solidarity Network, 2009a, pt. 2). Movements struggling from below and to the left are starved of resources by definition, so these skills are much needed. But not at any cost. As described above, the same capitalist relations that afford this privilege generate a social layer to manage the potentially rebellious. AUSM therefore saw its strategic role as doing the tedious work of "more effectively build[ing] cross-class alliances" (Autonomous University of Social Movements, 2017) by bringing the more privileged group under the leadership of the more oppressed one. Specifically, AUSM's plan was to use popular education to incubate political spaces among exploited workers, generate militant commitment to base building among university-educated activists, and then bring the two together.

More than just political education

The practice of teaching in the study abroad program, which was my primary responsibility with AUSM for six years, sheds new light on this theory. First of all, it shows the everyday forms of collaboration that are

necessary to conduct effective political education with university-educated activists. As they participate in song and movie nights with Zapatista youth studying at Oventic's secondary school, clean the corn patch with them, enjoy meals prepared by the education promoters, sleep in the bunk house, and occasionally participate in an international encounter, students at the Language School can feel with all five senses the reality of such liberated spaces. Meanwhile face-to-face discussions with Zapatista youth, education promoters, artisans, and good government authorities teach them about the everyday collaboration that constitutes these spaces. They can understand in a way no text can communicate that, if a small bit of freedom can be achieved here, we can also build it elsewhere. Maybe we can win. Through their coursework reflecting on radical texts, students learn about the social relations that explain such spaces. Finally, in studying the Sixth Declaration (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005) and living with some of its adherents, they learn what it means to struggle alongside the oppressed instead of directing them.

The midterm assignment then tasks students with using the concepts they have learned to critically evaluate an organization or social movement they are familiar with, ideally concluding with constructive lessons. The final project is even more pro-active, tasking students with developing an organizing tool they can put to use upon their return. Students have written zines collecting experiences organizing with prisoners, developed frameworks for responding to sexual assault, written outreach material for conferences, and assembled collections of revolutionary poetry. This demonstrates yet another way the organizing form of the study abroad program improves upon the delegation, by pairing much more rigorous and prolonged theoretical work with a more formalized commitment to continue organizing after the program ends.

On the other hand, the strategy still rests on the hope that participants will act on their inspiration, a limitation I will discuss further below. Because the three-month semester is so much longer than the one-week delegation, the impact of students' lived experience and theoretical development is much greater. When I spoke with 104 alumni in 2016, a large majority summed up their experience with statements like, "I see my life as before and after the trip," "I use it as a compass to judge my political values," "It clarified my life," and

"It's one of the most formative things I've ever done."[13] By this measure the study abroad program is quite effective, as it both motivates them and provides the ideological foundation needed to constructively engage with the social "belows" they encounter back home.

Furthermore, through their meetings with participants in good government in Chiapas and homestays with organized community members in Tlaxcala and Mexico City, students experience the everyday difficulties of enacting these political principles. They hear stories of how homestay families confronted police to hold onto a piece of recuperated land, and they must also sometimes engage with xenophobic opinions, members' complaints about leadership, or musings about whether to accept patronage from a local electoral party. These are all aspects of the slow, difficult process of being "digested."

The lesson here is that teaching organizing involves much more than attending meetings and discussing texts. This is the easiest part for educators to coordinate. As an entire life experience, the program involves all the care work that comprises everyday, "domestic" reproduction. If this variety of reproduction traditionally entails everything necessary for labour to show up to work in the morning, on the study abroad program it is everything that allows students to show up to their political education sessions.

AUSM only came to engage this breadth slowly, through critiques from both students and fellow adherents to the Sexta. For example, as a cis-gendered man not subjected to cat-calling and groping, I neglected to orient students on the prevalence of these forms of harassment and assault in Mexico City. Students critiqued this omission as sexism, and AUSM staff later began a living document that is successively composed by each semester's cohort to educate each other on gender, sexuality, harassment, and the forms of mutual support group members do and do not wish to be offered. Another aspect of everyday reproduction includes norm-setting, coordination, and insistence on cleanliness in the Oventic bunk houses and in AUSM's house in the

[13] Quotes from personal communications with anonymous interviewees conducted on February 28, April 2, March 12, and April 9, 2016, respectively.

city of San Cristóbal. (Some students still assume their reproductive needs will be catered to by others.) It includes explaining to students that they will most likely have a gastro-intestinal illness at some point and coordinating mutual aid during those noxious days. It includes proactively coordinating routines as to allow for study time amidst all the exploring, meetings, and socialization that an experiential program features.

Engaging so deeply with such radical (and radically different) movements is quite emotional, especially as this experience calls into question accepted notions of building a career, alleviating poverty, and Mexican identity. Moreover, because popular education interrogates accepted notions of schooling, students' displeasure with certain texts, with graded assignments, and with coursework in general all come to the fore. Reproductive collaboration therefore includes making sense of this turmoil, as well as processing intra-group dynamics between students who are sharing space continuously during their time in Chiapas, fostering a dynamic of constructive critique instead of venting. Yet another layer includes inter-cultural misunderstandings and the anxieties of living with the rebellious poor while students are in Tlaxcala and Mexico City. The "life-changing" experience many students mention can also be painful, and it was only through the difficult process of accompanying these transformations that AUSM staff learned how to constructively engage the affective side of reproduction. It all adds up to lots of meetings.

The lesson is that, without reproductive use values, it is impossible to learn about organizing to create the use values that might make social movement. Education is labour for all involved, and it is impossible to show up to work if participants are sick and exhausted, if people are treating others in dehumanizing ways, or if they lack daily routines and spaces for spontaneity and joy, meaning they ultimately lack the peace of a supportive normalcy. Therefore, learning to nurture intra-group dynamics was yet another form of labour to be learned, that of shaping group collaboration instead of allowing aspects of it to remain obstacles to collectivity. My co-coordinator Tony Nelson was especially adept at this.

Moreover, the difficulty of coordinating reproductive labour also offers a lesson to students, as these difficulties are a large part of the same "mess" they will have to engage back home if they are to successfully do community organizing and avoid burning each other out. Care and violence are the tracks along which the social moves toward right and wrong relation. Care is the progressive collectivization of feelings of trust and practices of reproduction. AUSM students and staff have been very successful in building strong reproductive practices, thereby energizing students' participation in political education and making for a study abroad program that offers undergraduates a level of academic rigor and accompaniment typically only available to graduate students (E. Benavides Guevara, personal communication, August 23, 2021). Moreover, this array of reproductive and pedagogical practices builds subjectivity: ways of being in relation as caring people.

A deeper lesson for working with university-educated activists, and much more difficult one, is regarding everything else necessary to steward the transformation of a consumerist (capitalist) subjectivity to a militant subjectivity. If a lot of reproductive work must be done for students to show up to their political education discussions, even more goes into students becoming militants. This is because – more than simply renewing vitality – reproducing subjectivity means forming a general disposition toward relating. Students arrive on the study abroad program bearing their entire lifetime of subjectification, and it requires equally-broad, equally-intensive efforts to build militant subjectivity.

Some students are "red diaper babies" familiar with mass organizations, while most are involved in campus-based organizing around issues such as sexual assault, environmentalism, and solidarity with food service and sweatshop workers. Often a large minority are the children of immigrants, interested in connecting with their Mexican roots. Thankfully, only a few ever seem surprised by the political content of the program, having assumed they would be "studying Indigenous people" or just going somewhere exotic. By and large, the students I had the privilege of teaching through AUSM are undoubtedly the most studious, committed, and pro-active I have ever encountered. They have taught me much about my own practices of capitalist subjectivity and how to discuss such sensitive topics in a gracious manner.

Nonetheless, all of us are highly subjectified by capitalism, and the resulting behaviours are all the more apparent within an autonomous, decolonized space like Oventic. Facilitators at the Language School have pointed out to AUSM various examples: relating to space by "occupying" it with belongings, seeking to be agreeable rather than authentic, demonstrating guilt instead of solidarity, projecting professional standards onto the school's unpaid, non-certified facilitators, holding on to routines of everyday life back at home, expecting the needs of students to be prioritized over facilitators' other responsibilities as Zapatistas in resistance and rebellion (Oventic Language School, personal communication, 2011).

These behaviours speak to just how deeply we (myself surely included) are subjectified into capitalism generally and through the neoliberal university in particular. The latter instils consumerist relations wherein students accept being saddled with debt in exchange for an array of services, such as health and recreation facilities, travel opportunities, organic food, career coaching, foundation-esque funding for campus organizing and cultural programming, and an array of campus staff who ensure that "the customer is always right." Indeed, many universities explicitly market their subjectification services by inviting students to "discover yourself here." Because students are used to being their hosts' highest priority, and also because rationalized pedagogy always begins with a syllabus, orientation, and enumerated agenda, this all means they are easily unsettled in their interactions with organizations whose first commitment is to their political struggle and who must sometimes unexpectedly alter meeting plans.

Finally, students sometimes advocate for a more democratically planned course structure, proposing changes to the syllabus and assignments without demonstrating the commitment to implement these changes, especially after the semester ends. Notice the similarity with the earlier critiques of non-profits, including the general bureaucratization of the organizing form and the tendency of staff to assert individual rights to decision-making over their responsibility to participate in a collective project. This should come as no surprise, as faculties of social sciences and humanities are often training labour-power for the non-profit

sector. AUSM alumni are no exception: when I spoke with 104 alumni in 2016, about 60% worked at non-profits, labour unions, or in education and the public sector (Schussler, 2017, p. 2). All that said, while I experienced the consumerist subjectivity illustrated above during my first few years of teaching, my fellow AUSM staff and I learned to predict and constructively engage these dynamics, as part of a process of slowly moving the program's collaborative forms.

The point is that each organizing form, each way of engaging the flow of labour comes with its own mess to work through. By creating a radical study abroad program, AUSM was able to avoid the problems workers' centres confront as staff are primarily accountable to funders and work to market the labour power they have on offer. On the other hand, launching a study abroad program was a choice to instead spend a good deal of effort wrestling within this consumer-militant contradiction. The material reality of this new flow of labour is that students are indebting themselves to pay tuition toward a degree that will certify them as higher-quality labour power, in a bid to obtain higher wages after graduation. Under these circumstances, it is all the more laudable that students such as those profiled in chapter 4 do indeed become militants, yet it should also be no surprise when the expectation to receive a return on investment leads to consumerist behaviour.

This flow of labour also subjectifies those coordinating it. Whereas AUSM staff are not subjectified into managing others' labour or maintaining accountability to funders, they are selling an educational service. Furthermore, the proceeds from this service supply the money that allows for their reproduction. As discussed above regarding accreditation, this arrangement demands bureaucratic organizing forms. It also requires flashy promotional materials and the promise to "discover yourself here," inviting the very consumerism critiqued above. All this creates a tendency for staff organizers to become risk adverse, as they coordinate educational exposure to seductively radical organizations yet remain wary of that same radicalism leading to anxious calls from parents, cagey emails from university staff, or even full-on interruptions in the steady stream of study abroad programs – thereby putting their jobs at risk. It can also lead to conflict

aversion during the program, if staff prioritize keeping everyone happy over leaning into tension and treating problems as a guide for growth.

Again, the point is not to discover the perfect strategy or organizing form, but to acknowledge the difficulties that will surely accompany each and every one. AUSM prioritizes directing material aid to allied organizations in the Sexta and conducting radical political education, and by all measures the study abroad program has been successful in these regards, despite the inevitable drawbacks. What remains an open question is how to more successfully integrate it into the larger strategy of base building with undocumented workers.

Working to forge the missing link

I will now move from the lessons of working with university-educated activists to the lessons from the next step in AUSM's strategy: integrating them into base building work. A first lesson here is to be realistic about how much an educational program will end up feeding community organizing. As Benavides says,

> I wasn't awaiting immediate, tangible results. At the end of the day, the idea was for it to be useful for both those directly affected [the Mexican organizations receiving students] and the indirectly-affected, which is the rest of us … And if the students end up learning something, and if they're honest with themselves, then maybe they'll end up having a social commitment. But that's a decision for each person to make, and we can't expect there to be an immediate result. (personal communication, August 23, 2021)

Hansen expressed a similar sentiment. When he first pitched the study abroad program the "Panchos," a Sexta-affiliated squatters' movement in Mexico City, he told them that hopefully half the students would go on to become militant organizers. The Panchos responded that "It's not going to be fifty percent, it's going to be one in a hundred" (personal communication, June 24, 2021). This is because militancy is quite a high bar, while capitalist relations weigh heavily against it. As Benavides says, "We're swimming against the current, against an ideology that individualizes you, that separates you, that constantly forces you to only worry about yourself" (personal communication, August 23, 2021). In other words, from enclosure onwards the entire edifice of capitalist social relations systematically steers people away from liberatory pursuits and towards activities that make the rich richer. There are precious few people who, like two AUSM alumni featured in

chapter 4, forgo the more lucrative employment their university education makes available and instead find jobs in fast food so that they can build unions there. An array of criteria must align for activists to become militants, and these constantly verge upon falling back into disarray. Hence the importance of dealing with the "mess."

For this reason, building militant subjectivity largely remains outside AUSM's capacity. Activists can be *taught* the importance of being digested below and to the left and *prepared* for its difficulties, but they will only develop a material, lived militancy through sustained participation in a collective effort, by navigating all the practical problems that arise. If they are not continuously building counter-hegemonic subjectivity as organizers, they will be reduced to passivity, to the task of adjusting to capitalism to survive it. AUSM's strategy is therefore caught in a dilemma: their political education work will only be concretized into militancy if students make long-term commitments to organizing once they return home, yet without militancy students will tend to forgo such commitment. It is a question of nurturing virtuous cycles instead of allowing vicious ones – nurturing through the everyday practice of organizing.

All this leads to the question of how many university-educated activists AUSM was hoping to steward into community organizing, and – if the work required to accompany alumni through this process means the number is sure to be low – how much effort it is worth. This greatly complicates AUSM's strategy of integrating the two groups into a "political space" (Hansen, 2007, pp. 5–8). As Benavides says, "We never made a clear or concrete proposal" to alumni after they finished the program (personal communication, August 23, 2021). Students come from universities across the US and (sometimes) Canada, and while many participate in AUSM's innovative re-entry program and experience base building north of the border for two weeks at the Centro, they then return to their respective cities. After making quite an effort to dedicate a semester to studying in a foreign country, now their everyday life, degree requirements, work, friends, and family all come rushing back in, testing the longevity of the inspiration they lapped up in Chiapas.

AUSM created an even more innovative master's program in community organizing to promote longer term engagement in the Centro. Yet this particular flow of labour lacked all the financial support that universities provide for study abroad and instead was paid exclusively through student loans (and for "certification" in a field whose pay is frighteningly low). Moreover, overburdened staff often lacked the capacity to adequately accompany master's students during their first forays into community organizing. Instead, they often felt they were left "to sink or swim." Building militancy requires that AUSM give students the opportunity to plug into a concrete organizing project, as well as the support to make this participation fruitful. Yet this requires that – in addition to coordinating the study abroad program and Centro – AUSM also have the capacity to adequately accompany novice community organizers. This is simply more than their collaborative efforts have been able to muster.

Apart from considering AUSM's strategy from the students' perspective, we can also reflect on it from the perspective of community organizing at the Centro Autónomo. While the strategy called for undocumented workers to build self-determination through this political space, the Centro seldom made the leap from popular education to community organizing. At its height in 2013, the community centre was bustling with English classes, an adult high school, child care, events regarding health, arts, and politics, and an anti-eviction group seeking to establish a community land trust (Casas del Pueblo Community Land Trust, 2013). Yet, as mentioned earlier, this organizing mostly remained limited to creating forms of wellbeing to be immediately enjoyed within the Centro, instead of struggling to change social relations outside it. The Centro's housing organizing was the exception that proved this rule, a promising route that the organization could not pursue for lack of people able to dedicate their time to coordinating it.

Ideally, popular education was meant to open dialogue about the liberatory social relations to be strengthened, and then community assemblies would be a space for turning these discussions into projects for greater self-determination. Yet the major obstacle is that migrants' exposure to economic downturns and the threat of displacement by gentrification makes for a paucity of such relations of struggle. The social fabric

of Albany Park, Chicago is woven by capitalism much more than in the villages of the Lacandón jungle, where autonomous ways of being offer seeds for life beyond capitalism. Indeed, the border is quite an effective mechanism for articulating capitalist subjectivity by rendering migrants thoroughly precarious (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Walia, 2021). Debt from travel expenses, lack of inter-generational community in the city of arrival, the pressure to support family members in areas of the world systematically abandoned by capitalism, the mortal threat of immigration enforcement and deportation, and politicians' hollow promises of regularization are just a few of the outcomes of this variety of reproduction from above, of class struggle via the perpetuation of difference. The result was that many participants in the Centro, even the most politicized ones, prioritized working as many hours as possible over participating in the community space. Furthermore, experience at the Centro and with No One Is Illegal teaches me that people are much more likely to identify with their home communities or dreams of a stable family life north of the border than as rebellious "migrants."

Many organizations within the migrant justice movement have overcome these obstacles, yet the Centro has not (yet). The theoretical reflection that happened in its popular education classes is important, but social movement requires putting these reflections into practice. This is why the housing organizing was briefly so successful, because participants were fighting for their homes and because their struggle showed the deeper solution – beyond stopping an eviction – was to remove use values from the market and put them under collective control. In other words, the struggle for housing is a struggle promising to immediately strengthen reproduction, whereas popular education often remains limited to an extra effort that just makes one's day job more exhausting. Yes, education is also reproductive, but the material impact is less immediate.

On the other hand, the fact that people pursue education despite this exhaustion shows the seeds of inspired initiative that can indeed grow into a stronger organizing effort. Ideally, leaders – those who are both willing and able to take the most initiative – would have coordinated responses to the material, reproductive grievances raised during classroom discussions, but this required more organizing capacity than was available.

Likewise, the housing organizing and community land trust campaign also ceased due to lack of capacity, just as the master's program did. Swimming against the stream of the capitalist flow of labour requires constant effort, and "leaders" are those willing to put in this work. This leads to organizing's million-dollar question: Despite all our limitations, how do we coordinate our efforts so we can do *more*?

In chapter 4 I look to AUSM's alumni to understand how organizers can create such virtuous cycles. For now, it will suffice to say that AUSM's strategy required more labour that its few full-time staff were able to muster. AUSM was always at great pains to find people with organizing experience, the willingness to accept low wages, and the master's degrees required for universities to accept the study abroad program as credit-worthy. Finding committed volunteers is even harder. When they happened to assemble such a team the organizing flourished, and after team members moved on and replacements were lacking, it retracted. AUSM has usually had enough organizational capacity to produce the study abroad program and coordinate popular education in the Centro, but not enough to coordinate broader *community organizing* through the Centro or to ensure students connect with base building projects after they return from Mexico.

The facile conclusion is that those involved simply have to want it more, to "do the same things we have always done – only more so, harder, with more 'conviction'" (Hall, 1988, p. 11). Yes, in one sense all political problems are indeed issues of organization, of lacking the labour power to produce the sort of wellbeing that is needed. However, barrelling ahead with the same organizing forms, the same old strategy – and with the messes corresponding to these orientations – and simply resolving to work harder only leads to burnout. The tuition-based flow that AUSM assembled led to a successful study abroad program and a thriving community space, but the funds supporting this staff-based organizing form did not allow for enough hires to do the work of base building or integrating students into it. Achieving this will require a different flow of labour – possibly a departure from staffing – and not just more effort within the current one.

As we have seen, MSN was able to make this sort of radical change. During its first years, the organization gained morale (an often-overlooked aspect of reproduction) from helping prevent genocide in Chiapas, yet as the years went on their delegations were less effective at sustaining staff, let alone materially supporting the Zapatistas, and their campaigns found less resonance and generated less collaboration. Instead of fading away, MSN put an extraordinary amount of effort and ingenuity into creating the study abroad program and its unique flow of labour, supporting both a community centre and allies in the Sexta. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this achievement in materially supporting the Sexta, radicalizing hundreds of students, and creating a vibrant community space, all with six staff. Yet the strategic limitations of this project are now clear: this flow has not resulted in adequate community organizing capacity, leaving the working class community without a strong political space and the university-educated activists without an organized community with whom they can accountably put their inspiration into practice.

To move its project forward, AUSM must transform once again. To do so, they must coordinate a flow of labour that overcomes the limitations of staffing, tuition, and the border. They must find a way to increase their organizing capacity, including both the reproductive supports that allow people to dedicate their efforts to such a project and the militancy that keeps these efforts directed at strengthening self-determination. Otherwise, they can accept their present difficulties and keep a good thing going by continuing the study abroad program and leaving alumni to decide whether or not to act on their inspiration and, if so, how. As we will see, some of these alumni go on to collaborate in projects that are quite inspiring. Their experience may even provide some clues for AUSM about what is to be done.

Solidarity across difference

Turning to my final theme, AUSM's obstacles are similar to those faced by the adherents to the Sexta, especially regarding the difficulty of building "cross-class alliances" between university-educated activists and undocumented workers. As mentioned in chapter 2, the Other Campaign – the Sexta's initial project – suffered from small, urban collectives (again, often comprised of university-educated activists) pushing their

agenda with disregard for the Indigenous, peasant, and urban squatter organizations that also participate in the network (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pt. 2). It echoes the lament of The Situationists during May 1968, that university occupations led by "PhDs in revolution" remained disconnected from factory occupations (2006, p. 232). This recurring problem suggests a strategic dilemma: How to encourage the self-determination of broad-based community organizations, of those further "below," rather than expecting leadership to come from the more privileged activists who tend to study abroad and to form the small, issue-based groups called "collectives"? How to instead create organizations where, to use a Zapatista slogan, the leaders "lead by obeying"?

We can begin by clarifying what exactly differentiates university-educated activists and undocumented workers. Hansen's dissertation implies they are separate *classes*, yet it does not include a theoretical justification for this. Nor does it explain why a "cross-class alliance" between the two is necessary for success,[14] instead of working exclusively with the more exploited grouping. His definition of the two groups refers to their everyday experiences of oppression as well as differences in education, skills, and social mobility (2007, p. 10). This resonates with Bourdieu's conception, where class is a question of cultural, social, and symbolic capital as much as a relation to surplus value production (1987).

In keeping with my reasoning in chapter 1, I instead believe that conceptions of class should be rooted in flows of labour.[15] The question then becomes whether university-educated activists participate in capitalism's

[14] Wright's argument in favour of cross-class alliances begins with his rejection of the labour theory of value (1989, pp. 9, 18). This position puts him at odds with traditional Marxist analysis, which asserts that – because labour power is the source of value – workers can thrive without owners, while owners would perish without workers. The revolutionary task is therefore for workers to organize on the basis of their antagonistic relation to capital and shed their chains (Marx & Engels, 2017, sec. III.3; Tronti, 2019, pp. 272–275). Yet for Wright, workers are thoroughly disempowered, and their only hope is to ally with those above them occupying "contradictory class locations" – those assumed to have greater power because of their organizational and skill assets (1989, pp. 29–31). But it is unclear why such organizational skills are sufficient to overcome those who own the means of production.

[15] As discussed in chapter 1, "flows of labour" is related to Marx's explanation of capital as a "self-valorization process" flowing through labour and production, commodities, exchange, and investment in greater accumulation (1976). Because this flow is predicated on the theft and reinvestment of workers' surplus value, this process is fundamentally antagonistic. Marx uses the concept of class to differentiate between these opposing groups' material relations to the self-valorization process, their positions within relationships of exploitation. The "cultural terms" through which groups understand and practically engage with this exploitation are central in determining how this antagonism plays out

flow of labour from a fundamentally different position than "directly-affected" undocumented workers. Because most of those participating in AUSM's study abroad program also work part-time while studying, the immediate answer is "no." Student loan debt and parental support afford many students a higher level of consumption than the average undocumented worker, yet their location within capitalism's flows is clearly among the workers and not those accumulating the fruits of their labour.

The more substantive difference between university-educated activists and undocumented workers emerges if we consider where these students are headed in their career trajectories. Poulantzas highlights this as a political difference (1978, pp. 224–250), pointing out that a university degree is a prerequisite for becoming a white-collar, "mental" worker. Because office workers doing "bullshit jobs" (Graeber, 2018) engage in far less intellectual activity than many so-called "manual" workers, this is a somewhat arbitrary categorization. Yet the distinction is of great political importance, as mental work is defined in opposition to manual work, as superior to the shameful toil of the "hands" and therefore deserving of knowledge and authority the blue-collar workers cannot be trusted with (Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 258–259).[16]

Poulantzas concludes that the mental/manual distinction is not a merely technical one made to favour those who are more qualified, but instead done to impose ever-more relations of division and domination within society, breaking the working class into competing "fractions" as to further isolate them (ibid 1978, pp. 21–23, 300–327). He thereby makes a similar argument to Braverman (1974, Chapter 4), Tronti (2019, Chapter 14), and Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, Chapter 3), who show that capital must continually multiply the

(Webber, 2011, pp. 16–19; see also Camfield, 2004; Thompson, 1980), what form the class's "process of self-making" will take (Thompson, 1978, p. 106). And yet the working class is wonderfully diverse, with distinct "cultural terms" amidst common productive relations. Again, in the first instance class is a question of what people materially *do* with their collaborative efforts and not the symbolic or cultural meaning this effort has for them.

[16] Poulantzas argues that, by dint of this political role, mental workers constitute a separate class (1978, pp. 251–270). He differentiates between "productive labour" that is waged, paid out of capital, and creates exchange and surplus value and "unproductive labour" that is often also waged but is paid out of revenue and creates only use value. Because a primary use value of their unproductive labour is to reproduce class division, he disqualifies all non-productive workers from membership in the working class, even cashiers and truck drivers (ibid 1978, pp. 209–223). While I find the rest of his analysis compelling, I side with Huws (2014) in demarcating the class boundaries elsewhere. She considers unproductive labourers – including those doing the important work of social reproduction – to belong to the working class, specifying that they are nonetheless "outside the knot" where workers have the most power to challenge capital.

division of labour as a disciplinary tool against the working class. This is the work of reproduction from above. In order to reproduce the conditions of accumulation, to reproduce itself as a relation of domination, capitalism must continually divide-and-conquer. It must *fracture* the working class as to set it against itself. Robinson makes the important observation that creating difference is a fundamental prerogative for capitalism: all capitalism is "racial" capitalism precisely because it must always perpetuate difference within the working class (2000).

This work of division (elsewhere referred to as "reproduction from above") is so important that it warrants sizeable flows of labour through "unproductive" institutions, including the university. Study abroad students are therefore immersed in an "apparatus" that serves as a filter for this division, separating privileged, upwardly-mobile mental workers away from subordinated manual workers (Poulantzas, 1978, pp. 265–269). It should come as no surprise that university-educated activists often end up managing the more-exploited people they are ostensibly allying with, since the university is designed to instil this white-collar subjectivity of "expertise" and "leadership," orienting its graduates to climb for-profit and non-profit ladders toward management.

Such fractures are created in many more ways than using the university to divide "mental" from "manual" workers. Racial difference is the basis for an entire edifice of property relations (Harris, 1993), legislation and enforcement (Gilmore, 2007), white supremacist culture (Thobani, 2007), and colonization (Fanon, 1963, Chapter 1). The resulting institutions perpetuating racial difference ensure that most people within racialized fractures remain dispossessed and vulnerable to exploitation. Likewise, gendered difference is used to perpetuate the wage gap at work (Federici, 2012, p. 109), as well to prevent the care work essential for the reproduction of labour power from being understood as its own form of labour (Bhattacharya, 2017c). Differences in corporal (including mental) ability are likewise the basis for normalizing certain capacities as "dignified" work and relegating those without them to "disability," assuming them to be shamefully dependent (Taylor, 2004). National difference and its institutionalization through borders and immigration

status fracture the working class into countless varieties of il/legality and contingency, as the border functions as a sieve separating workers according to who is and is not allowed to work, in what sector, for how long, and with what degree of assigned "skill" (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Walia, 2021).

Together, these fractures amount to a vast array of privileges and oppressions, and the concept of intersectionality has become a popular way to understand individuals' locations within them (Crenshaw, 1993; see also McNally, 2017). They shape the flow of labour across society, which is why Hall famously affirms that "race … is the modality through which class is lived" (1980, p. 341). This means that no one is "quintessentially" oppressed. Instead, a multitude of people are rendered exploitable and dependent in a multiplicity of ways, ways that are experienced directly, day-in and day-out, as hardship or enjoyment.

This is why flows of labour are so conjunctural, as they are shaped by a complex set of social relations that transform across space and time. However, each fracture is not hopelessly isolated from the rest. Yes, these flows redistribute the life and labour to each fracture unevenly, but common struggles can improve life for everyone. This is why Gilmore takes pains to emphasize connections between the urban, racialized communities whose children are whisked away and the rural, white-and-racialized communities where they are warehoused – communities that never saw the growth promised by prison construction and now suffering from the violence its enforcers bring to their neighbourhoods (2007, Chapter 4). The struggle for prison abolition illustrates how solidarity across fractures is built conjuncturally, by organizing around immediate issues and tracing their flows of life and labour to map their trails of oppression.

Likewise, the strategy of AUSM and the Sexta is to forge solidarity across fractures within the working class (and not alliances between distinct classes). This is not only difficult because of epistemic difference – because people oppressed in one way do not automatically understand oppression stemming from another sort of difference – but because these differences form an array of both oppressions *and* privileges. In the case of race, this incentivizes favoured fractures to go on collecting the meager "wages of whiteness"

(Roediger, 2022), instead of struggling to abolish the racial relation that seeks to conscript them into dehumanizing violence and the capital relation through which they continue to be exploited. Understandably, people tend to begin organizing in response to the various obstacles they face in their own calendar and geography (and within their fracture), preventing one group from considering another's cause to be worthy of allyship.

As in the case of university-educated activists and undocumented workers, when alliance does happen it is often motivated by benefits for those with more privilege: a sense of purpose, belonging within an activist community, and sometimes even a salary. The immediate response is that organizing and allyship should be more principled, more committed, more militant. Certainly, but how to foster such militancy within social relations that relentlessly incentivize the opposite?

AUSM's pursuit of a cross-class alliance strategy offers hard-won wisdom in this regard. First, they underestimated the power differences between the two fractions and the difficulties of forging a responsible working relationship between them. Hansen said as much when he recently reflected that "I don't think that cross-class alliances make sense. I think that, if we've learned anything, it's that in cross-class alliances, the upper class always determined the agenda. So I would say that [strategy] was a mistake" (personal communication, June 24, 2021). As I will discuss further in chapter 4, this is a key insight for any collaborative arrangement: understanding that, in choosing to organize in a certain way, you are choosing your "mess," the bundle of problems the collective will have to work through and, hopefully, transform into a better bundle of problems. AUSM assumed that acknowledging the problematic relationship between the two fractions would be sufficient to bring them into a more politically rigorous relationship. Yet we see that the mess remained, showing that – beyond giving the issue more attention and effort – a qualitatively different collaborative arrangement is needed. As the Zapatistas would say, "What's missing is yet to come" (S. Galeano, 2014) – there is still no recipe for success – but the nature of the problem is clearer.

Second, we return to the question of militancy. Instead of building a "cross-class alliance" assumed to be horizontal, AUSM's task is to counteract capitalism's divide-and-conquer strategy by bringing the more privileged fraction *under* the leadership of those who are more exploited. This requires militancy, a commitment to taking the *initiative* to do base building work with people further "below" and also submitting this initiative to the *leadership* of the collectivity-in-formation. This is what "leading by obeying" and "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" mean in practice. To organize in this way is to sustain a generative-yet-difficult contradiction, one that organizers navigate through an endless succession of concrete obstacles, the "fires" that flare up throughout everyday work.

As AUSM has learned through their long history of political education, "one in a hundred" participants may develop such a practice. Therefore, instead of trying to integrate entire cohorts of university-educated activists into organizing work – instead of attempting to systematically subvert an entire fraction to the leadership of another fraction, as AUSM attempted via their master's program – this should be a process in which a *few* activists' engagement is strengthened slowly and carefully (climbing a "ladder of engagement"), while they are closely accompanied by more experienced organizers.

This is in contrast to what commonly happens, as over-worked organizers seek to onboard as many activists as quickly as possible, delegating outsized projects to new volunteers who are left to either sink or swim. Most end up quickly burning out and often burning bridges as well. Because accompaniment requires extra work, fewer volunteers should be invited onto the ladder of engagement. The point of this process is for university-educated activists to go beyond discussing their political principles in a classroom and to demonstrate militancy through their actions, especially their willingness to be "digested" into an *organ*-ization. In the spirit of "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves," this means offering up the energies the collective needs most, instead of those that garner the activist a comfortable salary, "likes" and prestige, or are deemed commensurate with one's credentials.

Most importantly, there must be an organized community to digest the militants, so that leadership is generated from within, not imported from the outside. Instead of a cross-class alliance, the task is to organize the working class (to engage in "class composition," as the Operaistas would say). A few individuals from more-privileged fractions of the working class may integrate into the project, if they demonstrate their willingness to be digested rather than an aspiration to manage. More importantly, there should also be a ladder of engagement for those "further below."

Because the study abroad program is central to AUSM's flow of labour, accompanying students has always been a higher priority than developing leadership among the more highly exploited participants at the Centro. This means turning the relationship between AUSM's study abroad program and the Centro Autónomo on its head, which is much easier said than done. Again, the solutions are unclear, but experience clarifies the path forward, suggesting practical ways that "leading by obeying" can be built into everyday collaborative relationships.

Finally, returning to the challenges the Sexta has faced in building a coalition "below and to the left," the lesson is that each of these organizations must engage in militant base building internally if they are to form an inter-organizational coalition that is both popular and anticapitalist. Thankfully, the organizing experiences of study abroad alumni provide further insights into ways this base building work can flourish. They show us that building militancy is a thoroughly materialist process, not a supernatural blessing bestowed on Che and his disciples. Militancy is a subjectivity produced by building out collaborative arrangements, the labours through which organizers both reproduce each other and reproduce an emancipated society. As they attempt this, AUSM's alumni provide useful lessons for those groups within Sexta that are similarly inspired by the Zapatistas; that are also looking to turn this inspiration into action within an urban, thoroughly colonized, wage-earning context that is quite distinct from Chiapas; and that are struggling to organize large numbers of people and effectively build power.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed AUSM's history, highlighting the transformations that have allowed it to thrive over the past decades. These transformations include coming to terms with the limitations of non-profit forms of collaboration; their turn to militancy as an ethic to guide them away from such practices and toward new ways of collaborating; how the Zapatistas' Sixth Declaration complemented AUSM's self-critique with a pro-active strategy; and creating a new organizing form that engages a new flow of labour. This process culminated in the Centro Autónomo as a space for community organizing and the study abroad program as a political education project – a project to teach organizing – that would hopefully feed into such base building projects.

My second purpose was to give special attention to the study abroad program, as it is the moment of encounter between Zapatistas and the alumni whose attempts to turn inspiration into action I will analyze in the next chapter. Coordinating the program has taught AUSM about the everyday work of building militancy, especially its messiness and the reproductive aspects of this endeavour. As such, the study abroad program is a novel organizing form, the outgrowth of a process of Zapatista-inspired transformation, and (in some cases) it leads to alumni engaging in their own processes of change.

I have also highlighted the strategic limitations of AUSM's innovation, especially the ongoing tensions between staffing and militancy, popular education and community organizing, credentials and leadership, and university-educated activists and exploited workers. These tensions show that each organizing form and strategy for change comes with its own messes to work through. One of the biggest among them is "reproduction from above," the perpetuation of forms of difference that make for a more exploitable working class where some fractures are enlisted in managing others. Another is the question of "domestic" reproduction. Having taken back the land, the Zapatistas can reproduce themselves without as much need for exchange value, freeing up time for the work of self-government. AUSM's staff, on the other hand, are quite dependent on their salaries and thereby prioritize the flows of tuition that provide them. Base building work

inspired by the Sexta remains relegated. My analysis does not resolve this conundrum, but it does show that – whether we consider a mass organization like the Zapatistas or a non-profit like AUSM – both are engaged in a common labour of organizing.

Chapter 4 – Alumni organizing and the labour of turning problems into a textbook

We now turn to the alumni of AUSM's study abroad program in Chiapas. This experience connects them to AUSM and the Zapatistas, but there is no direct line of inspiration running through them all, resulting in "North American Zapatismo." Indeed, only one of the alumni organizations included below replicates Zapatista organizing structures and references Zapatista slogans. Instead of tracing a line of causality from the Zapatistas to AUSM, the deeper continuity lies in their common practice of organizing, the reproductive labour of moving toward social relations of generosity. What unites the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni is that all labour to change the same social relations, despite the diverse flows of life and labour these relations shape in each context.

The 19 alumni I interviewed are spread from coast to coast; organizing around issues from incarceration and homelessness, housing and healthcare, to fast food work and petroleum projects; and they collaborate via collectives with a handful of comrades, staffed non-profits, and base building groups with memberships in the hundreds. Their candid reflections – and complaints – allow me to explore their organizing work from a more lived, everyday perspective than the other two cases. This everyday perspective, spread across such varied contexts, allows for more insightful exploration of the reproductive labour that unites alumni, AUSM, and the Zapatistas.

Emphasizing this commonality has its drawbacks. As I will explain below, the foremost is that my voice and the commonalities I highlight predominates over the voices of the interviewees who provided these understandings. Yet I insist that prioritizing this commonality is necessary to unpack what "organizing" really means. We on the left are constantly told to "get organized," and we acutely feel this imperative each time a new crisis strikes. Yet how is a person who is currently not organizing to begin? What does this activity of building power by building community look like on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday? What are common

problems people encounter when organizing, and what are some ways to overcome them? Within the space of this single chapter, I found it impossible to honour the uniqueness of each organizations' activities within their respective contexts, while also highlighting the common problems and solutions that connect alumni to the Zapatistas and AUSM.

Centring common problems is important because we mostly encounter social movements through media celebrating their victories or documenting their most public activities, while the difficulties of everyday organizing remain hidden. Not knowing what to expect, novice organizers get dismayed by the first setback and often drop out. Familiarity with everyday organizing is therefore important for "keeping the faith" by strengthening the reproductive supports that allow inspiration to consistently become initiative. No matter how exciting our political theory is, it is only a strong as its everyday practice, as its success in building real, exercisable power with real, "organized" people.[1] The experiences of AUSM alumni offer invaluable lessons about the practice of organizing.

Plan of the chapter

More than any other chapter, here I focus on "reproduction from below," on the labour of creating a society of care. I argue that – just as we saw with the Zapatistas and AUSM – alumni also show organizing to be a collaborative effort aspiring to convert difficulties into a generative force by treating problems as exercises within a "textbook" for further growth (Moisés, 2015d, p. 176), turning vicious cycles into virtuous ones. I further describe the labour of organizing that is common to the Zapatistas, AUSM and its alumni by elaborating five key aspects of organizing.[2] The five aspects of turning problems into a textbook are concepts

[1] I embrace an inclusive definition of the "organizer" that does not assume them to be an active cadre elevated above a passive general membership being organi*zed*. Because group members are breaking with the everyday, exploited labour that capitalism makes obligatory and instead self-determining their collaborative relationships, they are all organizers. This is similar to Gramsci's expansive notion of the "organic intellectual" (1971, p. 97; Sassoon, 1980, p. 136). As such, I refer to "group members" and "organizers" interchangeably.

[2] As in the previous two chapters, my concepts emerge from the ways the actors in question describe their everyday activity. This epistemological approach led me to prioritize the writings of the Zapatistas in chapter 2 and those of MSN/AUSM in chapter 3. Likewise, here my understanding of everyday organizing activity comes from my interviews with alumni, and throughout the chapter I elaborate grounded theory based on their political practice (Frampton et al.,

I have gestured towards previously while recounting the history of the Zapatistas and AUSM and can now develop more fully through the everyday organizing experiences of alumni.

First, there is the gamble of what sort of "work" to take up, what bundle of problems a group of motivated people chooses to shape their collaboration around and, hopefully, to create use values to improve. This gamble is also a "gambit," since the decision on what bundle of problems to take up has ongoing implications for a group's strategic orientation: their organizing form, the flows of labour they will seek to engage in and alter, the reproductive supports they will and won't be able to generate, and the sorts of difficulties that will grind them down. All this is called "the work" because it is an embodied, subjective process.

Secondly, and to deepen the first point, organizing means jumping into a "mess" of problems. These problems are many, as the reproduction of capitalism requires the reproduction of relations of violence and exhaustion. Rather than seeing organizing as a glorious march toward freedom, in everyday practice organizers are often attending to one crisis after another, always feeling like collaboration is on the verge of imploding, barely able to hold the group's most basic activities together while staving off burnout. Dysfunction is ever-present. Above all, groups are always cognizant that they *could* do more, that they *should* do more, but they lack the capacity to create these additional use values. They cannot "fire on all cylinders." The mess is therefore the experience of a lacking reproduction, of lack collective vitality the endless problems that result. This is why it is called "the struggle," and the prominence of messes in interviewees' reflections leads me to centre that tension in my understanding of organizing.

Third, in the instances where they have some success, organizers wade through the mess by elaborating relations of care, or what the Zapatistas call "justice" (Fernández Christlieb, 2014). They practice care by creating the material, reproductive supports (also known as use values or wellbeing) that, in turn, allow

2006). This makes for few references to academic literatures throughout the chapter. Instead, see chapter 1 for such connections.

organizers to continue showing up and dedicating their effort to "the work." Care is what heals people within a system designed to exhaust them into resignation. It is a practice that strengthens the group's connective tissue: relations of accountability and trust. And care is the lived experience of collectivity.

This final point is especially important since organizing means caring for the collective, which is distinct from – and sometimes at odds with – caring for the individuals within in. Caring for fellow organizers is the labour of "domestic" reproduction, while caring for the collective extends toward the labour of "reproduction from below," the labour of creating a society of generosity instead of one of violence. Ideally, care work within the group strengthens its capacity to care for society, but the latter is another layer of struggle, often further exhausting the former.

Fourth, and again deepening the prior point, organizers strengthen relations of care by forging them into a subjectivity, a way-of-being-with guiding collaboration across a range of contexts. In prior chapters I have discussed the subjectivity of militancy and how it involves both being "digested" into the social relations of a given community and working to strengthen its most emancipatory relations. Here we will see the everyday ways militant subjectivity is built through skills training, socialization, and ultimately cultivating the sorts of people who can collaborate in many ways, allowing the group to "fire on all cylinders" (or at least a few more).

Finally, if all this is successful, if the group can engage in the jiu jitsu of turning problems into the pathways of care and subjectivity, they can alter flows of labour in some way. In so doing, they make social movement. They nudge social relations away from perpetuating capitalist oppression and toward freedom. In this sense "strategy" means an orientation toward altering these flows. I group alumni organizing projects into categories of non-profits, survival projects, collectives, and base builders, with each working through a slightly different strategy for pushing toward right relation.

Throughout the chapter, I tend to focus on base building work more than other types of organizations. Base builders coordinate the collaboration of as many members as possible, as to create use values that first reproduce the group and then, as they continue to strengthen, push for social movement that changes how resources are distributed throughout society. This growing membership base drives their work, instead of the grant funding that drives non-profits.

There are also collectives, which are also volunteer-driven, tend to be smaller, and which focus on providing a specific service to the movement, for example as street medics or by redistributing elites' wealth. Finally, there are "survival projects": a subset of groups that are similar to both base builders and collectives and focusing on collectivizing access to state and non-profit social services, as to make these resources more accessible, with less disciplinary strings attached. Five of the nineteen interviewees' organizations are base builders, four are non-profits, six are collectives, and four are survival projects.

The main aspects of organizing I will describe below are present to some extent across all these categories. I find that base building work tends to practice these five aspects most fully, so we hear from those interviewees the most. It is both most subject to the difficulties of building collaborative arrangements without relying on wages and most illustrative of how people can create virtuous cycles of wellbeing capable of moving social relations.

On the flipside, non-profits receive the least attention precisely because they can rely on wages to provide for reproductive needs, to minimize the mess, and to structure the organization's ways of being-with. We end up hearing from interviewees working at non-profits the least, yet these groups continue to be a common trajectory for alumni, informing my conception of organizing. This is especially true because base building as a general concept is not base building in practice, and for this reason it would be foolish to assert a hierarchy of organizing forms with it on top and non-profits on the bottom. Base building is difficult work, and some interviewees aspiring to do it burned out, or their entire groups fell apart. As the collectives show us, people

are often better able to support the struggle in specific ways, rather than trying to build a mass organization. And to make social movement we need many groups participating in the ways they are able, not a single "correct" approach. Like the Subcomandantes say, we should "neither hegemonize nor homogenize" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018c).

Finally, there are five interviews that I refer to less because they were either in decline when I interviewed alumni about them, or the interviewee was seriously considering leaving. Their difficulties greatly influenced my understanding, which is why any explanation of organizing must centre "the mess."

In explaining all this, I recognize my voice predominates at the behest of narration by the alumni who led me to these understandings. As explained in the introductory chapter, this is an outcome of my decision to focus on the question of "what is to be done?," on distilling organizing lessons rather than celebrating select groups. The interviewees certainly have much to be proud of, but they have not been miraculously blessed by the Zapatistas, returning home to lead the revolution. They are not disciples whose testament I simply transcribe, but thoroughly-relatable activists with many hardships and some hard-won successes that I then synthesize into general lessons for how to go about organizing. Their honesty in sharing these hardships is probably why a majority requested anonymity, and instead of complicating matters by treating most anonymously and identifying the others, I chose to refer to them all principally in terms of the *type* of organizing they do. All this makes concrete, narrative writing even more difficult.

Secondly, their muted voice is also an outcome of my epistemological decision to look beneath people's appraisals of their organizing and focus on the practical reality of their everyday activity. Instead of asking what high-level concepts they use to explain their entire political project, I asked about the everyday efforts that comprise it, using this material to construct concepts that encapsulate parallels *across* experiences. This sort of questioning makes for more widely applicable lessons, but it also makes for less quotable interviews. Many interviewees did in fact use beautiful language to encapsulate common practices, and I am grateful to

quote these passages. Yet more often the commonalities that ultimately became concepts were mentioned more briefly and implicitly by numerous interviewees. Or they were mentioned with a bewildered frustration that only made sense when compared with similar remarks from others.

Finally, it then required a great deal of work to synthesize commonalities between these practices, as to arrive at lessons for all those asking What is to be done? to move toward the utopian horizon. The downside of all this work of coding and comparing is that I lose the narrative aspect. In striving to synthesize lessons, I apologize if I have reached too far. To better understand the diverse, often delightful, and sometimes difficult projects they participate in, please see the Appendix.

Getting to know the alumni

Since its creation in 2005, nearly five hundred students from 140 universities have participated in AUSM's study abroad program in Mexico. They are a unique group by self-selection: often these alumni must put extra effort into convincing their universities to recognize AUSM's program, given the novelty of a small, anticapitalist non-profit offering a single program amidst a study abroad industry dominated by large providers offering programs at world-renowned universities in scores of countries. While there is usually a streamlined process to apply to these large programs, pay their tuition costs using existing financial aid, and transfer the credits earned back to their course of study, many aspiring participants with AUSM must put in extra legwork to secure these necessary conditions. Despite these obstacles, students seek out AUSM's program because they are already involved in political organizing and motivated to learn more about radical social movements.

Once in Chiapas, Mexico, students spend four-to-eight weeks at the bottom of a precipitous, fog-soaked hill, at the Oventic Language School. In the previous chapter I explained the program's academic structure, how accreditation allowed AUSM to redirect flows of university funding toward radical organizations and its community centre, and its objective of both inspiring students and making plans for action once they return

home. This inspiration grows in many ways. It is rather ambiguous at first, as Oventic is a good government centre and not a community with full-time residents, much less homestay families to acculturate them. On Monday mornings students leave the city of San Cristóbal, twist through mountain roads and over provisional speed bumps for ninety minutes, and then wait in the van as the members of the Zapatistas' Vigilance Commission check their identification before letting them through the gate.

Students then puzzle to understand their surroundings as Zapatistas speak to each other in Tzotzil and move between the autonomous hospital, the vast assembly hall, the good government councils, and the commissary. During the week there are a few hundred teenagers at the autonomous secondary school next to theirs at the foot of the hill, but they are often quite shy. Thankfully basketball games and weekly sessions singing Zapatista folk songs are good ways to break the ice. It is quite an otherly space – decolonized, with only cooperatively-made commodities for sale, every exterior surface emblazoned with a mural, with walls and bunks made of simple planks of wood – but only through conversations in the Language School do they learn why or how.

The school exemplifies popular education (Freire, 2000), using language instruction as a vehicle for consciousness raising. Students learn grammar and vocabulary by studying the slogans that encapsulate Zapatista principles, leading to conversations about how things such as "Everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves," "Leading by obeying," "Walking by asking questions," and "A world where many worlds fit" resonate with their lived experience and freedom dreams. They also learn about the genealogy of Oventic in the centuries-long struggle against colonization, the Zapatista uprising, and the struggle to build autonomy despite the state's sometimes-explicit, sometimes-subversive war against them. Finally, students – and especially those who are fluent in Spanish and can take Tzotzil classes – learn about the Mayan ontology

shaping Zapatismo, its liberatory grammar, and the way political principles seemingly synthesized through Zapatista slogans are actually baked into the language itself.[3]

After a month or two weathering the nights' humid chill, foggy mornings, and radiant afternoons, students end their immersion into Zapatista autonomy with a great appreciation for the radically different social relations shaping life in Oventic. This appreciation is often life-changing. When I surveyed 152 alumni in 2015 and conducted a first round of interviews with 104 of them in 2016, the great majority expressed sentiments such as "It gave my life meaning. I don't know what I'd be doing otherwise" (personal communication, April 23, 2016) and "it radicalized me and made me realize I want to dedicate myself to building community" (personal communication, April 10, 2016). This sense of dedication was widespread, with many saying they emerged "more committed" (personal communication, April 23, 2016), with a "commitment to revolutionary politics" (personal communication, February 28, 2016), "committed to revolutionary spaces" (personal communication, April 23, 1026). This commitment was strengthened by the living example of Oventic, proof that such revolutionary spaces are not a utopian dream, that they already exist. This experience of "the Zapatista movement making these ideas real" (personal communication, February 28, 2016) "expanded my sense of what's possible" (personal communication, May 15, 2016).

Furthermore, students were left with a common political orientation, an understanding that realizing this enthralling sense of possibility requires community building. Yet many were confused about how to act on this imperative. Some referred to community mainly through its absence, saying things like "The movements in Mexico had a sense of community that I don't have here" (personal communication, April 9, 2016) and asking "How do we build these communities outside hippy communes, within the reality that capitalism will continue existing and we have to live within it and also dismantle it?" (personal communication, April 16,

[3] An example of this grammar is its lack of direct objects, meaning that instead of remaining passive, these non-objectified objects actively, intersubjectively receive the action of others (Lenkersdorf, 2002, Chapters 6–7). One of the principles alluded to is "leading by obeying," where obeying the collective is intrinsic to the formulation of the Mayan word for leading (ibid 2002, Chapter 4). Fitzwater, a student of the Oventic Language School, shares many of these teachings (2019; see also Aubry, 2003; Lenkersdorf, 2008, 2013; Méndez Torres et al., 2013).

2016). Others were more optimistic, saying "It's about organizing from below and to the left, from the base and from communities, and we have to see where it goes from there" (personal communication, April 23, 2016).

This political orientation included a sense that realizing these inspiring, community-based alternatives would require an effort called "organizing." Some alumni spoke to this more concretely, saying the program "gave me essential tools and a framework to be a lifelong organizer, and to be emotionally strong to do that … It taught me my personal experiences, feelings, and intuitions are relevant and are part of organizing … It taught me basic principles- like 'we organize together'" (personal communication, May 15, 2016). Yet most alumni only referred to organizing as a generally important practice that "must be from below and to the left" (personal communication, August 12, 2016).

Finally, and most importantly, sometimes this general orientation resonated clearly with their political activity back home, especially those doing base building work with low-wage workers (personal communication, April 23, 1026), truckers (personal communication, February 28, 2016), and tenants (personal communication, April 23, 2016, August 12, 2016) or survival projects with the incarcerated (personal communication, April 16, 2016, October 27, 2016). Yet much more commonly, when reflecting on Zapatista autonomy, alumni said things like "Autonomy isn't a language we use" (personal communication, February 21, 2016), "other than [a fellow alumnus] and me, no one talks about autonomy" (personal communication, March 12, 2016), and "It's not really part of the discussion" (personal communication, March 13, 2016). One alumni spoke to this point quite compellingly, saying

> Autonomy gets oversimplified or idealized … It has been applied in a cookie-cutter sort of way. In Chiapas it means insurrection and land occupation. So I thought we should take over abandoned lots and buildings and grow vegetables, but failure taught me that this was an impoverished conception. You can't just take a tactic from one context to another … In Chiapas there were many conditions that made insurrection possible. And the [Good Government Councils] come out of the Mayan tradition. The idea of self-government wasn't foreign. So the context is totally different. Here we have the same principles, but my neighbor could be my boss. So if we try and translate autonomy to an urban neighborhood, maybe the landlord will be in the assembly too. (personal communication, February 28, 2016)

Here we arrive at the dilemma: Their experience with the Zapatistas is incredibly inspiring, strengthening students' commitment and shaping their orientation in favour of community building. But once students become alumni and return to contexts radically distinct from Oventic, their time with the Zapatistas leaves them with few practical indications for how to "do Zapatismo" or "get organized." There is no direct line running from Chiapas, through AUSM, and into one spectacular translation of Zapatismo in North America. What began as a strong inspiration becomes a general orientation toward initiative and then puzzled action. As mentioned earlier, when I interviewed these same alumni three years later in 2018, only one of their organizations was using Zapatista organizing structures and references Zapatista slogans.

Make no mistake: this is not a failure. The great majority of alumni do in fact remain politically active,[4] yet this activity cannot simply be to replicate Zapatismo. Instead, they must work within the flow of health and wealth in their pocket of society, its specific relations of violence, and the forms of wellbeing people there need to be able to dedicate effort to changing it. Alumni testimony highlights the need for a more practicable understanding of this action known as "organizing." And, rather than depending on the store of inspiration gathered in an increasingly-distant Oventic, it demands that organizers coordinate ways to reproduce inspiration within their own context.

This troublesome gap between inspiration and action became increasingly clear to me as I prepared a report on this first round of interviews (Schussler, 2017). I also came to understand how my epistemological approach to the interviews had exacerbated this, as I emphasized concepts like Zapatismo and autonomy over concrete practices, deepening this emphasis on inspiration over action. When the conversation did turn

[4] Ninety-five percent of the 104 alumni I interviewed in 2016 were actively involved in some sort of political work, whether it was on a volunteer basis through a collective or affinity group, at the university where they were pursuing graduate education, or through paid work with a state social service, labour union, or non-profit (Schussler, 2017, p. 3). For about two-thirds of the alumni interviewed, their political engagement was also their job, and the political limitations of such work were a common lament during interviews. Just under a third were involved in unwaged organizing projects (ibid 2017, p. 3). All said, there is a great diversity within the political trajectories of these university-educated activists. It is a diversity of focus across social issues; a diversity of intensity including alumni with activist jobs, after-hours volunteers, and militants finding paid work on the side; as well as a diversity of organizing forms including non-profits, collectives, unions, socialist parties, and base organizations.

to political activity, for most alumni this was through their paid work, and their reflections centred on how this activity was limited by their boss, job description, and funding requirements.

Therefore, when I set out in 2019 to coordinate the 19 interviews that inform this chapter, I sought out alumni who were either engaged in base building work or whose organizing pursued some other concrete strategy to alter flows of labour.[5] That is to say, I tried to avoid discussing the same sorts of projects that AUSM sought to distance itself from: work that is limited to education, without action outside the classroom; work to pressure the state into enacting legislation, without building the popular power compel such reforms; work to provide a social service, without a strategy to influence the broader conditions that deprive people of their basic needs.

This is a shift in focus away from evaluating the alumni as a whole, towards an investigation of their organizing activity. Instead of merely describing study abroad alumni, my purpose here is to glean lessons from them for how we might make social movement. I then used the methodology of institutional ethnography (D. E. Smith, 1987a; G. W. Smith, 1990) to first investigate the facts of their labouring activity and then construct concepts synthesizing various aspects of this practice. I did this by asking interviewees to "walk me through" their everyday organizing practices, their coordination, and their outcomes.

Table 1 lists the sixteen organizing projects I will consider, corresponding to the nineteen alumni with whom I spoke in 2019. (I spoke with two alumni in the Burgerville Workers' Union, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, and Inquilinxs Unidxs.) Because over half of interviewees requested anonymity, and because my focus is on collective projects rather than individuals, I will refer to interviewees here either by their organization, its focus, or the Personal Communication letters listed below and further enumerated in the

[5] Nonetheless, those I reached out to were often engaged in different pursuits than when we had previously spoken in 2016. Their experiences still inform my analysis, even if some trajectories led away from base building work. All those I spoke with have rich experiences that can help us decide "What is to be done?," regardless of the category of organization in which these experiences happen.

Appendix. The Appendix also includes more detail about each organization's work. Also note that I will elaborate the significance of the various organizing "forms" in this chapter's fifth section.

Table 1: Alumni organizing projects

Group	Letter	Location	Focus	Form
Put People First	B	Pennsylvania	winning healthcare as a human right	base building – statewide membership organization / survival project
student organizing	C	New York City	political education and community organizing	collective
Mosquito Fleet	D	Seattle	stopping extractive infrastructure projects	collective
Burgerville Workers Union	E, K	Portland, OR	Fast food workers' union	base building- union
Inquilinxs Unidxs	F, R	Minneapolis	housing	base building- housing cooperative
civic education	G	Maryland	university education on civic engagement	non-profit- university
abortion rights	H	across Africa	expanding access to abortion services	non-profit- international
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia	I	Bogota	funding and accompanying community peacebuilding projects	non-profit- religious
street medics	J	New York City	medical support during protests	collective
wealth redistribution	L	Washington, DC	organizing the wealthy to support social justice movements	collective
homelessness	M	Oakland	supporting the homeless and veterans as they access social services	one-on-one support / survival project
California Coalition for Women Prisoners	N, S	Los Angeles, San Francisco	prison abolition and support for those currently and formerly incarcerated	collective / survival project
Autonomous University of Social Movements	O	Havana	political education	non-profit- academic
retreats	V	New York state	holistic healing retreats	collective
wealth redistribution	X	North Carolina	transferring capital to oppressed communities	collective
tenants organizing	Z	Chicago	housing	base building- tenants' rights

The work

We begin with "the work," the everyday experience of organizing. Problems are unmet needs and organizing is collaboration to meet them. The work, then, is collaborative activity to create wellbeing that capitalism does not readily offer or outright denies. Organizing work begins with inspiration, the "radical imagination" of freedom and love that Kelley so stirringly writes about (2002). This is the collective hope that it is indeed possible to break from the exhausting, self-defeating activities of everyday life under capitalism, to make life better in some way. Initiative is the spark converting inspiring intentions into action, into the work. Faced with innumerable problems, the group takes a gamble – their first bold step into the unknown – by deciding where they will focus their efforts and what sorts of wellbeing might be helpful. They can then structure this intention into collaborative arrangements, the ways they collectively go about the work. If they can constructively attend to problems and remain attentive to unexpected "whatevers" and inflection points that deepen collaboration, then the group can create wellbeing, thereby adding collaborative capacity so it can create even more wellbeing.

A spark, and also a gamble

What does this mean in practice? For many alumni, a note within this chord of inspiration resonates from the experience of living in liberated Zapatista territory. Typically, people assume they are powerless to make change and that they can only act individually, "Just trying to live a better life, trying not to be a shitty person" (Personal communication O). Another interviewee lamented how her colleagues were disgruntled with management at her apolitical day-job but unwilling to act on it. "People totally sit in meetings all the time, and yet somehow nobody has any meeting skills. Or maybe it's different, right? It's organizing skills" (Personal communication E). In a way that only lived experience can, spending time in Chiapas helps to convince alumni that it is indeed possible to swim against the stream of dominant relations, to successfully, *collectively* create a better life. Experiences like this nourish inspiration, the decisive seed for any organizing project.

Instead of assuming organizing to be worthless and risky, organizers come to see the opposite. When I asked an interviewee in New York what gives her joy, she replied "The struggle gives me joy, knowing that we can come together and fight against it … Nothing else is like fighting for our people's liberation" (Personal communication C). Arriving at such hope is no small task. To hold even an inkling of optimism requires overcoming the cynical gravity of an entire system that relentlessly convinces people that resistance is futile, that there is no alternative, that barbarism is sure to win out. This then sparks the initiative to act, the *sine qua non* of any organizing project. As we will see later, maintaining initiative by sustaining inspiration and "keeping the faith" is a difficult, never-ending pursuit for many organizers.

Yet the kindling beginning nearly all the projects interviewees described was amassed when just two or three people, each with a great deal of initiative, found each other. Inquilinxs Unidxs began when two people began canvassing to learn about the problems facing slum tenants in Minneapolis, and the Burgerville Workers Union began when two people decided to get jobs at the fast-food chain and explore the possibility of unionizing it. Despite the long road ahead – one that will eat into their leisure time, energy, mental health, and possibly their income – the immediate payoff is to be doing something rich with meaning and purpose in an otherwise alienating world.

This sense of belonging is the first use value of collaboration. Yet it is a use value that many are fearful to pursue at first. While people are apt to join an effort that is already bearing fruit, those willing to start one from scratch are exceedingly rare. As we will see below, without further reproductive supports, this sense of meaning alone is insufficient. If this use value remains the only thing fueling an organizing project, its participants will inevitably burn out. Like any sort of labour, organizing is exhausting, and its process only survives by creating additional use values capable of reproducing its members.

In these early moments, the practices of reading, reflection, and debate that we call "political education" are especially important in reproducing inspiration, making it more intentional, and building consensus about

what is to be done. For this reason, political education is *the* most common practice across the various organizing projects alumni spoke to me about. As their groups develop, organizers can later point to their victories to "build the faith that this can be possible … that it can work" (Personal communication R). But initially they must look to the experiences of others. Beyond just learning about revolutionary concepts or major historical events, political education can deepen members' awakening about the power of everyday collective action. Taking Cuba as an example, students can learn how normal people came together to advance projects such as the literacy campaign, medical brigades, and housing construction that make up the Cuban Revolution, yet are often overlooked in favour of its battles and leaders.[6] This creates optimism that we too can radically improve our lives.

Another form of political education is called "exposure," wherein the group keeps itself rooted in the struggles of everyday people through consistent points of contact with them. For the organizer working with the homeless (Personal communication M), this means taking people on frequent trips to encampments, and for Inquilinxs Unidxs it means consistently canvassing their neighbourhood (Personal communication F). Such education-through-exposure helps ensure that organizers' collective intention does not become hollow "good intentions" (Illich, 1968) and is instead focused on producing forms of wellbeing that are both immediate and oriented toward transforming the specific, local social relations that create such need in the first place.

Organizing's seed of inspiration germinates when this intention is made into action. Beautiful as it may sound, this is no easy task. Some alumni participated in exciting political education projects whose members resolved to "go out and organize," only to find there was no agreement about what exactly to do or follow-through by

[6] The interviewee now coordinating AUSM's study abroad program in Cuba reflected on the ways political education exposes the agency of everyday people. "How did you get to having houses for everybody? What was that process like? … When they look at the literacy campaign, students start to say, 'Oh, a lot of young people were part of it.' … Yeah, that was *all* of the revolution. Nothing was just handed down … It was a really democratic process, in which most people participated … It helps in terms of thinking about 'How do we build together a different world or even community? What does that look like?'" (Personal communication O)

those who committed to do it (Personal communication C). It is not surprising that many attempts to create non-capitalist collaborative arrangements fail. The entire edifice of capitalist relations is dedicated to forcing people to meet their needs by collaborating under the dictates of a boss, as to earn money and buy whatever product meets the need, however poorly. When people do collaborate independently of waged work, and especially when this collaboration is antagonistic to it, it is often reactive and easily dismantled, reinforcing the antipathy that prevents people from organizing in the first place. As an organizer with the Burgerville Workers Union reflected,

> What could workers do if the Burgerville Union didn't exist, if there wasn't this group of committed activists who were holding down this organization? … I think the idea to do shit does exist, the idea to confront your boss together … try to get shit changed, advocate for things on the day-to-day: all of that totally exists. But I think being able to sustain, being able to have those larger dreams of "Well what if we did this?" and then being able to have the confidence that you can follow through, and even be able to conceptualize how to follow through- I feel like that's a piece that we have as an organization, as part of our skillset, of knowing how to follow through and actually following through. (Personal communication E)

Action is therefore a question of successfully shaping collaboration, and the Burgerville organizer shows this to involve dreaming, confidence, planning and – most importantly – follow-through. In these ways organizing is a gamble. Each need organizers choose to meet comes with its own risks, requirements and stakes. In taking on a problem, organizers choose to bear a burden.[7] A lot of collaborative effort is necessary to meet a need like "housing" or "power at the workplace," and the difficulties of bringing this collaboration together under always-adverse circumstances creates many more needs. Organizers are therefore gambling on either building the collaborative capacity to meet enough of those needs to keep the project moving, or else burning themselves out in the attempt and carrying the shame that "Maybe we'd all be better off if we'd never even tried." An organizer with Inquilinxs Unidxs carried this stress when we spoke:

> We've been on rent strike for 10 months.[8] And the buildings need repair, so there's a lot of tenants that have to make their own repairs … and that just makes it really intense. And there's also personal crises and people who are living in really intense situations and can't get out of inter-generational poverty … It's 39 units – 36 children and a hundred people – out of 69 units. During the really intense stages that we organized, so many people decided they wanted to stay and fight, with such an intense risk … because we didn't know if eviction was coming in a week or not … [Meanwhile] we're

[7] This is why the Zapatistas call the various organizing positions of their good government "cargos," meaning both a "role" and a "burden."
[8] They would continue for fourteen more.

> doing all these really intense escalations that require you to move through a lot of risk and fear. But then it also unifies us as a movement. But I think you can only sustain the war for so long … You don't know when it's going to end … and it takes a toll on the tenants. (Personal communication R)

The striking tenants were ultimately able to "evict their landlord" (Desmond, 2020) and become cooperative owners of their apartment buildings, but during the campaign it seemed just as likely that they would all be violently evicted, left traumatized and homeless. In addition to conducting a rent strike, members had to resolve many additional problems that risk being forgotten after their victory, including fear, conflicts stemming from inter-generational poverty, and building repairs. This example obviously comes from a developed process, and the stakes were much lower at the outset. Nonetheless, any attempt at organizing is a foray into an unknown barrage of problems. It risks ending in further exhaustion, while participants could have instead remained focused on individual self-care and showing up to work in the morning.

Setting the stakes of struggle

Next, in taking a "gamble" by jumping into the work, organizers also launch a "gambit": they resolve to engage in certain collaborative efforts instead of others and thereby plunge into their corresponding messes. Having built up hope about the "why" of organizing, the collective must now cast their lot by deciding on a specific "what," a first problem to pursue amidst the endless list capitalism has to offer. This "what" is the use value – the aspect of wellbeing – they intend to create. For Put People First- Pennsylvania this use value is universal healthcare across the state; for the street medics it is physical and emotional health for protestors threatened with police terror; for the Mosquito Fleet it is an ecology that can continue reproducing life without the added burden new oil rigs and pipelines would place on it. Each of these use values is a gamble because, in committing to creating it, organizers obligate themselves to work on a certain scale ("how much") and with certain people ("who"). Again, success is not guaranteed. To win statewide universal healthcare, the scope of Put People First's organizing aims to integrate local struggles across Pennsylvania; the medics must be able to arrive on short notice and thereby limit their scope to New York City; and the expansive reach of extractive infrastructure demands that Mosquito Fleet coordinate across the Pacific Northwest.

These various scales are not just lines on a map. They are the distribution of the sorts of people organizers are committing themselves to collectivize with, the expanse of the flow of life and labour they wish to influence. As we saw in chapter 2, when the Zapatistas insisted that each project must follow its own "calendar and geography" (Moisés & Galeano, 2018b), organizers are pressed to find a "way in," a need specific to people in that particular place. The need has to be one they have the capacity to meet at this early stage, and it must also be significant enough to touch off a deeper process of collectivization. Inquilinxs Unidxs began by pressuring the local slumlord to make overdue repairs to apartments (Personal communication F). Likewise, a member of the Mosquito Fleet remarked that

> I've always had this creeping feeling that this kayaktivism thing [maritime blockades against extractive industry] is just really kitschy … It's a bunch of white liberals in their REI gear and their kayaks … But the thing is that it's a way in. Time after time it gets people out. And tactically, a lot of the fossil fuel infrastructure in this region is on the water. And the threats are on the water. And it's been a big bridge with Indigenous communities, because Indigenous people in the Coast Salish territory are all about getting out on the water. (Personal communication D)

The crux of the movement from inspiration to action is elaborating the initial "way in" into structured collaboration, so that members can consistently meet the needs they seek to address and possibly even build towards meeting greater needs. In Marxist terms, the group needs a division of labour to consistently create use values. This is the "how" of organizing: How members will organize the committees, processes, and responsibilities needed to integrate people suffering a healthcare crisis into local struggles that, in turn, come together as a statewide campaign; how medics will gain the necessary training and wherewithal to support protestors, how they will maintain security within a context of surveillance, and how they will dispatch members when groups request support; how "kayaktivists" will decide which extractive projects to oppose, how they will train collectives in waterborne direct action, and how they will wrangle all their gear.

Elaborating the "how" is also a gamble, since it takes years of struggle to achieve use values like universal healthcare or the cancellation of extractive projects, while members must struggle all the while to pay rent, support loved ones, and heal their bodies and minds. Life would surely be much better with universal healthcare, but it would immediately be a little better if members stopped attending meetings and study

circles, earning more money from gig work instead. People readily collaborate in reaction to a crisis, or when a major victory seems imminent. Yet it requires much more inspiration to start small and slowly, to constructively build through trial and error towards a goal that remains far in the horizon.

Yet organizers jump into the fray, murky as it may be. I say "murky" because, when describing their everyday organizing activity, interviewees' language often became abstract in fascinating ways. A member of the Burgerville Workers Union illustrated this beautifully (Personal communication K, emphasis mine). Reflecting on their feelings of accountability to their comrades, they said "I can't fucking drop the ball. I don't want this thing to fail. I don't think... *Whatever*, right? I think that's a real part of the orientation towards the work." They went on to recognize that members have both strong affinities and "deep political differences and strategic uh... *whatevers*. I also think the 'whatever' is the nature of the project … and opened up space for us to really see our political affinity more so than anything else." Later, they spoke of the "*unrecognized-whatever*, the outside-of-meeting-space work of keeping the informal relationship structure of the organization coherent and doing a lot of fucking support work." They then called this "the literal 'whatever' of our organizing work. The literal beating-fucking-heart of our organization." Other interviewees abstractly referred to "the work" in similar ways.

The point here is that "the beating heart" of the organization is also a "whatever," that for organizers in the murky middle of a process, the way forward is exceedingly unclear. The muck is dredged up by the difficulty of collaborating in non-capitalist ways. Youth receive decades of training on how to plug into capitalist labour relationships, and there is an entire electoral industry that has standardized the playbook for running a middle-of-the-road campaign. There is no Business School for organizers. Some of the more traditional labour activities can easily be transferred into more radical organizing, especially the skills activists tend to pick up in university, such as communications, logistics, research, educational programming, and legal accompaniment. Yet there is precious little training on how to rehumanize someone from the trauma of incarceration or stop a pipeline. There is a similar lack of guidance for everyday collaborative work such as

maintaining accountability, cultivating militancy, building out committees or working in coalition.[9] Apart from lacking clear models for how to organize these efforts, there is no guarantee this collaboration will actually end up producing the use values it is intended to.

Unexpected breakthroughs

Instead, alumni are only guided by a vague sense of whether or not the work seems to be moving in a good or bad direction. Interviewees often mentioned a creeping sense that their organizing was beginning to have "this little toxicity" (Personal communication X) or that it felt "politically and existentially nourishing," (Personal communication K); that it "started to feel like it was just work" (Personal communication X) or was proving to be "the work itself: building power, community power, whatever you want to call it" (Personal communication D).

Importantly, there were often unexpected inflection points in everyday organizing that signaled a successful collaborative arrangement. For example, the tenants on rent strike with Inquilinxs Unidxs had to continue paying water bills while withholding their rent, a seemingly routine task that ended up building collaborative capacity within the organization:

> I think the water [bill collection] has been really fascinating: We've collected in some instances $6800 in the course of two weeks, and it hasn't been staff-heavy. Rather it's been all from the tenants who have collected, made receipts, and then brought it to us [staff] … Initially they're going to rely on the [staff] organizer to knock on doors or to push people through fear or whatever. Then, once tenants start doing that and also see that they can be successful and that they can move their neighbors, I think they began to see the cooperative is theirs … So once we win the cooperative, we will have people who are now the money collectors and the receipt-makers; we will have people who have worked on conflict; we will have people who have spoken at an event in the press; we will have people who have been the spearhead at different spaces. So now we have these necessary skills that we can run a community with. (Personal communication R)

More than a simple accounting exercise, when tenants handed money over to a "cooperative" that at the time was purely a collective intention without legal standing, it brought out their fears that this entire process of

[9] Notable exceptions are Inhabit (2022), Kaba and Hassan (2019), McAlevey and Lawlor (2021), and Youth United for Change (2019).

fighting their slumlord and going on rent strike would end in failure. Collecting the water bill was an unexpected opportunity for tenants to learn how to accompany their comrades through fear. Collecting water payments was both a "whatever" and "the beating heart" (or at least a heartbeat) of an invigorating process.

These sorts of unexpected breakthroughs happen because radical organizations are laboratories of labour arrangements, continually testing new forms of collaboration, creating new forms of wellbeing, in response to the variety of everyday needs people confront in a give space. As mentioned in chapter 2, when organizers have been "digested" into the specific social relations that make up a local context, they are keen to such openings that others might dismiss as insignificant. When groups happen upon a successful form of collaboration, it then becomes the seed for stronger forms of collaboration, such as later forming a housing cooperative and "running a community."

Sometimes these collaborative breakthroughs are more intentional, as when the founders of the Burgerville Workers Union decided to "salt" the chain of restaurants, getting entry-level jobs there with the intention of mapping the workplace relations that could be mobilized for a unionization drive (Personal communication K). Or the California Coalition for Women Prisoners could get inside the walls and coordinate with incarcerated women by offering legal services (Personal communication N). In each case, and often through trial and error, the organization comes upon a novel collaborative arrangement that serves as a "foothold" driving stronger collaboration.

In this way, what began as a gamble can grow into a robust organizing project. We can identify three stages in this process of creating stronger use values. In the first instance, participation is only fuelled by members' initiative and the sense of purpose this generates. Later, participation provides more of the substantial reproductive supports that stave off burnout and allow a growing membership to keep "showing up." For example, there is childcare for tenants' kids during Inquilinxs Unidxs meetings, and parents will not have to cook dinner that night. Before they won legal recognition, the Burgerville Workers Union was already

distributing food boxes and bus passes through their Union Benefits program. The California Coalition for Women Prisoners connects its members with social services while eliminating the discipline that many institutional providers impose, and members of Put People First support each other through health crises. Having added another layer of wellbeing onto the sense of belonging that initiated the process, the group is able to deepen members' participation and attract new recruits. In this sense, more substantial reproduction is a foothold for further growth.

Third, some organizations are successful enough to touch off a virtuous cycle and make social *movement*. Reproductive supports draw in members, which strengthens the organization, which alters the flow of labour within society by distributing more downwards, drawing in even more members. This cascading strength allows the group to alter social relations, such as the landlord-tenant relation – as with Inquilinxs Unidxs evicting their landlord and forming a cooperative – or the owner-worker relation – as with the Burgerville Workers Union winning a legal union that can collectively bargain.

The lesson here is that – just like capitalism – radical organizing projects are either growing or dying. They either dovetail inspiration into increasingly collaborative arrangements producing increasingly greater forms of wellbeing, or the gamble of attempting to do so exhausts them, triggers internal conflict, and burns people out. Organizing either strengthens non-capitalist social relations, or dominant relations win out. The latter was the case for alumni doing student organizing and wealth redistribution work, as well as for certain individuals in organizations celebrated as "successful" above.

Rather than implying that organizers either do everything right or fail, I want to emphasize the often indeterminate *process* by which organizers pull together virtuous cycles or fall into vicious ones. Whereas the term "organization" implies a neatly structured organogram and a smooth flowchart of decision-making, all interviewees considered such structures as largely aspirational. Instead, the everyday experience of organizing is collectively moving from one set of problems to another, "better" set of problems. "Organizing" is

therefore above all about moving through a morass of "whatevers" toward broader and deeper collaboration, toward more substantial forms of reproduction.

Mess

Despite the initial hope that collaborative effort can indeed resolve the aching needs capitalism leaves unmet, the everyday experience of organizing is beset with peril. At the risk of seeming cynical, I emphasize this mess because it figured so prominently in alumni reflections. It is the "dirty laundry" that is hidden away in celebratory accounts of social movements (which is why many interviewees requested anonymity), yet organizers often put more energy into resolving these internal conflicts than into winning their public campaigns. Indeed, they cannot achieve the one without the other. As Crass writes, "If you don't want messy, you don't want mass; there's no two ways about it" (2013, p. 278).

Because the mess remains hidden, new members are often unprepared for it, bewildered by the contrast between internal disarray and a bold external image, and quickly drop out. Yet the mess is dialectic tension, possibly a transformative contradiction through which the group, the movement, and even society can strengthen its collaborative ability to create wellbeing. As a journey toward right relation, organizing means moving from one bundle of problems to another, stumbling through various "wrong" relations. As Cornell West often says, "Try again, fail again, fail better" (2019).

To understand how organizers can sometimes harness this potential and make problems into exercises within a textbook for further growth, we must first dig deeper into the mess. This mess represents the general difficulty of struggling "within and against" the systemic violence of capitalism (Tronti, 2019, pp. 241–262), the everyday ways it constantly pulls organization into disarray, and the exhaustion of carrying this burden. And yet, the mess is also a chaotic guide for the sorts of wellbeing that organizing can achieve.

In this section I first step back from the everyday work of organizing and reflect on how capitalist social relations systematically make a mess of the lives of those on the bottom. I will then explore how this mess manifests within groups' interpersonal relations, their ability to successfully create forms of wellbeing, and their campaigns. Finally, I will discuss "burnout," the lived experience of organizing within the mess.

Social relations of violence

As discussed in chapter 1 through Gilmore's mapping of the prison-industrial complex (2007) and then reiterated by the Zapatista Women in chapter 2 (2019a), violence is *productive* for capitalism. Gilmore showed how the work of tearing people from their communities, warehousing and traumatizing them, and exhausting their family members reasserts class difference and produces a flow of life and labour allowing those on top to accumulate wealth. In this case, the flow provided lucrative investments for finance capital, productive use of previously idle land, the reorientation of governmental capacity, and the prosecution of class warfare against surplus population.

For those on the receiving end of this productive violence – those condemned to feed more into the flow of life and labour than they receive from it – everyday life is a struggle to avoid the constant threat of calamity. An interviewee who organizes with veterans and the homeless described how difficult it is to organize in such a context, saying

> Trying to get the participation of homeless people to join committees or groups is very problematic. Because … they have lunch at twelve, they have dinner at such-and-such a time, they have a health appointment such-and-such a time, they have to be in their places of bed - if they're sleeping outside - someplace that's safe and sound, or someplace where they're not going to see me enter and then I have to stay there and not come out, even to pee or shit, for fear that the police or somebody else is going to find my secret location … If you [want to] get them early in the morning, have they been just been moved by the police department? It's a heavy lift. (Personal communication M)

An organizer with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners pointed out how "the state uses health care as a repressive tool," recounting a litany of abuses against prisoners including "gross medical neglect," a prisoner leased out for work whose leg was crushed on the job, and pervasive sexual assault by guards (Personal communication S). An organizer accompanying communities displaced by state violence in

Bogotá's suburbs mentioned that day-to-day meetings were often cancelled on account of new death threats by paramilitary groups (Personal communication I). For those working low-wage jobs, this mess is more of

> a sense that there's absolutely no semblance of security or stability in the job, and at any time you could be fired or suspended or have your hours cut … Getting fired can mean a bump in short term instability in their lives, maybe even losing housing, but ultimately winding back up in the shit revolving door of the low-wage service economy. (Personal communication K)

Taken altogether, these are the everyday experiences through which class society is reproduced. The most common outcome of such experiences is a working class with enough people with enough training and just enough energy to do their jobs, but rendered too scared and exhausted to resist. For those on top, the ideal is for everyone to "know their place" and give their all to toiling within it.

Many of those on the bottom are outraged by this unjust arrangement, yet their everyday activities are limited to bad and less-bad options. The only way to obtain the use values needed for immediate survival is to participate in the very social relations that make survival so difficult to begin with. In terms of the examples above, people living on the streets can only access a place to rest by violating private property or city ordinances, exposing them to debilitating police violence that makes securing stable housing even more difficult. Poor women must resort to criminalized activities to survive, and then incarceration disables them and further threatens their survival.[10] The same paramilitary groups that displace communities both disrupt their stability in the new location and are the only source of income there. Low-wage workers can briefly resist by walking out, but within a de-industrialized economy they are quickly pushed into yet another "McJob."

Reproduction from above – the separation of society into those who "can't get a break" and those who "fail upwards" – requires a lot of coordination. This is because the flow of life and labour between these two poles

[10] An organizer with the California Coalition for Women Prisoners said "the organization centres around helping people survive the ordeal of being punished for crimes of survival," such as when women are prosecuted for physically defending themselves from abusers (Personal communication N). Sudbury also includes "sex work, drug couriering, or welfare fraud" as common crimes of survival (2005, p. xv).

is comprised by many different forms of wellbeing whose production, circulation and consumption must be regulated; many of those producing this wellbeing practice "weapons of the weak" by subverting these oppressive social relations whenever they find it reasonably safe to do so (Scott, 1987; see also Braverman, 1974, Chapter 4); and because class difference cannot only be asserted in the workplace, but must be coordinated across all of society.[11] Institutions, which Dorothy Smith defines as "nodes or knots in the relations of the ruling apparatus to class, coordinating multiple strands of action into a functional complex" (D. E. Smith, 1987a, p. 160), do this work of asserting class difference. We might also speak of "complexes" of institutions, such as the non-profit industrial complex coordinating charitable relations of dependence, the prison-industrial complex coordinating relations of enclosure, and similarly, the border-industrial complex ensuring the world's poor can only reproduce themselves in the Global North if they are rendered deportable, terrorized, and highly-exploitable (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013).

The experience of an alumnus who accompanies homeless veterans as they attempt to access Veterans Affairs services illustrates how institutions do the everyday work of reasserting oppressive relations. Many homeless veterans' survival depends on accessing the use values gatekept by the VA. The interviewee refers to accessing the VA as "going back to the yard where the dog bit us," giving the example of a friend who was "treated like a slut because she was homeless" (Personal communication M). The intense scrutiny, verbal abuse, and general indignity the homeless are subject to – not to mention the existential threat of being denied services – all play a disciplinary role in reproducing a certain type of person, in this case someone without the energy required to mount any resistance, whose indigence is put on display as a threat to the rest of the working class. The organizer's accompaniment helps people survive, but they emphasize that any further political organizing is "always a freakin heavy lift."

[11] The Operaistas use the concept of the "social factory" to explore this wide-ranging work of reproducing class difference (Aureli, 2008, p. 34; Cleaver, 2000, pp. 64–77; Federici, 2012, p. 7; Tronti, 2019, Chapter ii)

The VA example shows another way in which institutions set the parameters of reproduction: by ratcheting up or dialing down the "general level of exhaustion" across society. This is the calibration between the reproduction of labour-power and the flourishing of potentially-antagonistic life. "If the pandemic relief cheque is too big, people will spend all their time at Black Lives Matter protests!" There must be just enough health to hold the contradiction together, without it feeding self-determination. This calibration is a political question, cast in terms of "laziness," the deserving and undeserving poor, self-help, means testing, and ultimately which groups should receive reproductive supports and which should remain "vulnerable to premature death" (Gilmore, 2007, p.28). For those who are rendered superfluous, capitalist social relations are reproduced through visiting harm, disability, and trauma upon them, making mere survival an exhausting endeavour. This is the carceral work of de-composing a potentially rebellious class by tearing apart its social fabric.

Institutions are the gatekeepers to flows of labour that could reduce people's exhaustion through housing, foodbanks, healthcare, legal support, and even entertainment. They are legally sanctioned to monopolize the "means of reproduction" that hold this balance, ensuring that people can only reproduce themselves at the cost of being subjectified in hegemonic ways. The lower you are on the social pyramid, the more you can only meet your immediate needs at the cost of perpetuating your exploitation. Institutions also play a key hegemonic role by giving some wiggle room to the general level of exhaustion. They have some leeway in their application of the law, and the law itself can be reformed, which all lend flexibility to the system and allow it to absorb attempts at social movement.

Swimming against the stream

Returning to organizing, the first impact of all this work of foreclosing alternative social relations is to lock people into subjectivities of disempowerment. In the absence of alternatives, it is rational for people to avoid

cognitive dissonance and go on believing that "working for the weekend" is desirable and that the activists are either naïve or unhinged.[12] This makes it more difficult for organizers to spread hope and recruit comrades.

When people do begin showing up, organizing with people living within violent relations tends to be quite difficult. Being "led by those most directly affected" earns breezy praise, but it is no easy task to collaborate with people whose physical safety is constantly under attack or people whose meager wages confine them to insecurity. True, survivors of the system's violence are able to understand it with the wisdom only lived experience can provide, yet the scars of this brutality also often make it more difficult to be in relation with others (Táíwò, 2020).

Those above the basement and ground floor of the working class still face other forms of violence. One interviewee commented on "the level of mental illness and suicide and depression and anxiety … and addiction" that they see in their work with students and neighbours (Personal communication C). Another said, "It often feels like we're putting out fires left and right, and it's just all these crises that come up. I think with that comes a lot of conflict and tension [from] working in community where there's a lot of trauma" (Personal communication F).

The difficulties that people bring with them to the organizing space are often ambiguous "whatevers," and when winning a public campaign is the only priority, these whatevers become inconvenient distractions. The organization ends up composed of people from more privileged class fractions, less exposed to such problems. Organizing – understood as people in all their messiness moving toward right relation together, instead of the healthy treating the sick – embraces the problems caused by this violence, leading to a lot more work than simply "winning the campaign." As we will explore in the next section, engaging this mess while

[12] This is why early commentators on social movements such as Hoffer (1966) and Smelser (1963) saw them as collective derangement and deviance.

pushing against the system that produces it is the "beating heart" of the work, the process whereby people come into fuller collaborative relation.

Second, even when organizing work does happen, capitalist relations put stress on it. Organizing is collaborative labour creating certain use values, yet the "realization" of these use values is much more difficult than the typical realization of capitalist commodities that Marx describes (1993, pt. 3; D. Harvey, 2013a, Chapters 10, 11; Kenway, 1990). I would go so far as to call realization the foremost everyday challenge of organizing.

Simply put, capitalist relations make it much more convenient to obtain our use values on the market than through anticapitalist organizing (if you can afford it). As entrenched relations of dependency, capitalism ensures that the boss is free to selectively hire only the most able workers – those with labour power of a sufficient quality to produce within the dictates of socially-necessary labour time (Taylor, 2004, pp. 36–37) – and to order them into whatever division of labour they find most efficient. The entire process is dedicated to churning out commodities *that sell,* whose value is realized. The workers, obligated to collaborate in whatever arrangement and at whatever intensity the boss demands, are left exhausted. Yet they clock out and are beseeched to spend their hard-earned wages on neatly packaged and readily accessible use values – the food, housing, hygiene, and leisure required so they can continue showing up to work. This is all to say that capitalist social relations are structured to ensure the realization of value through the sale of commodities.

Joining a radical organization, on the other hand, is an extra effort that people must recover from if they are to continue showing up to work in the morning. It is an extra stress on "domestic" reproduction. Moreover, no one is obligated to join such an organization, and there is no boss obligating members to produce the use values of belonging, meals during meetings, or lower carbon emissions as efficiently as possible. Organizers are therefore in a double bind: they are exerting an extra effort that requires additional reproductive support,

and their collaboration faces more challenges, straining their ability to reproduce each other, much less achieve broader impacts.

The lesson is that, if members are to continue showing up, and if they choose not to rely on paying people to show up or only relying on people with privilege (who do not need much reproductive support to begin with), members must receive reproductive support from the organizing itself. In other words, for organizing projects to be successful they must provide participants with reproductive use values. Organizing work has to include care work.

And yet there is a chicken and egg problem here, because few will show up without reproductive use values, yet without participation there is no one to create them in the first place. This points to why "making problems into a textbook" – turning vicious cycles into virtuous ones – is so important, and as noted before, why inspired initiative is needed to spark virtuous cycles. However, in practice – even if they are finding care in organizing – members often only partially "show up," without fulfilling all their commitments and thereby only partially producing the use values that sustain the organization. This causes many groups to hang on by a thread.

Such "flakiness" was a common lament in interviews, also described as "inconsistency" (Personal communication B) and "developing[ing] protocols that we just didn't really follow" (Personal communication X). An alumnus organizing with tenants said that

> Kwame Touré said, 'There's internal motivation, and there's external motivation.' Really all we've been doing is the external motivation of getting someone else get on your ass about stuff. But the best motivation comes from the inside. I don't know what kind of ideological work we have to do, what practices that we need to have in the core group to maintain some sense of dedication and commitment. And even I falter in that because I'm tired. I'm tired when people commit to something and they don't do it, and I'm just like 'Goddammit, I don't have the time to get on your case right now,' you know? (Personal communication Z)

Even when members do follow through on their commitments, it is difficult to measure whether this resulted in a genuine fulfillment of their goals, since "care" is often an intangible, exceedingly ambiguous use value.

When coding my 19 interviews, I found 43 different types of use values and applied these codes in 1,022 instances. These use values were sometimes embodied in physical objects such as a food box, repaired apartment, kayak, or manual vacuum aspirator. Yet the use values of everyday organizing were more often embodied in successful collaborations, such as convoking an assembly or study session, accessibly connecting a member with a social service, structuring a decision-making process, or agreeing on a campaign and members' responsibilities within it. Returning to the realization problem, it is often unclear whether such collaborations have their intended effect: Was there enough turnout at the assembly? We reached some agreements, but will people be turned off because of that annoying person who kept interrupting? Headline-grabbing victories such as Inquilinxs Unidxs' housing cooperative make it clear that the use values produced over years of such collaboration were realized, yet when groups are amidst the mess there is no such certainty.

Third, capitalist social relations prevent the changes organizers are pursuing, steering relations back towards capital accumulation. This is most apparent in the ways the state protects private property, despite the illegality of its owners. For example, the slumlord Inquilinxs Unidxs was organizing against repeatedly perjured himself in court, failed to appear, violated the terms of his rental licenses, created shell companies, and was even dropped by four lawyers who did not want to be associated with his rampant criminality (Personal communication R). Yet judges resisted holding him accountable, and Inquilinxs Unidxs was only able to secure a legal victory by calling a jury trial. Another housing organizer in Chicago commented that

> On the south and west sides there's a ton of vacant land. And … a lawyer was saying [to me], "Well, we know one lady that has … hundreds of parcels. And she just hires a lawyer, gets fined every week or something and just pays it off." And the vacant lots- they're not maintained. They cause a lot of safety anxiety for the residents elsewhere … How many thousands of dollars is the city gonna [spend on the costs of this vacant land] before it just decides, "Hey, why don't we just take it over for public housing?" … It's just ridiculous! … They can say "Fuck you" to everyone else in the neighborhood, and it will remain their vacant land. That's how fucking sacrosanct private property is. (Personal communication Z)

The alumnus organizing with Mosquito Fleet against the Trans Mountain Pipeline lamented that, after putting overwhelming pressure on the company Kinder Morgan to abandon the project, the Canadian government bought it as to more easily steamroll opposition (Personal communication D).

For those on the bottom, surviving within capitalism means living in the thick of the mess. It is perpetual scarcity, as continuous exhaustion and lacking rejuvenation cause the difficulties to pile up. As one interviewee succinctly put it, "How do we exist in a world that's so full of violence and be in right relationship with one another?" (Personal communication S).

With one problem stacked atop another, the day-to-day experience of the mess is a litany of impediments to collaboration, working to grind down organizers and drive them apart. A housing organizer spoke about a "patriarchal attitude" causing husbands to be "jealous and mad" of their wives' participation in the group and forcing them to withdraw (Personal communication X). Another lamented the tendency of people to look to organizing as a source of the value they are being robbed of under capitalism, pushing various "side-hustles" on their fellow members (Personal communication O). Or organizers instrumentalize each other by pressuring people to continue "the work" despite doubts or ailments (Personal communication L). Across my interviews I heard complaints of men in the group pushing care work and clerical tasks onto women; personal and family emergencies either preventing members from following through on tasks or pulling the whole group into crisis response; political disagreement being voiced as a personal rebuke or understood to be in bad faith; and disagreements about how the use of funds, especially if some members are salaried. This is all to say nothing of disputes with other activists in the city's organizing scene.

Such problems are the lived reality of swimming against the stream by organizing in non-capitalist ways, for non-capitalist ends. Moreover, even when conflicts are not springing up, organizers carry the weight of not doing more, understanding that their collaboration could always be stronger than it is, that the group is never quite "firing on all cylinders."

Renewing accountability or burning out

Strengthening collaboration within the mess requires that organizers constantly reassert accountability. If organizing begins with a common idea, a hope that needs can be met (theory), which is mobilized into collaboration despite a mess of problems (practice), then accountability is the new, adapted understanding of what is to be done that results from this praxis. It is a reassertion of the ways the group agrees to labour together in producing the use values that are both "the beating heart" of the project and ambiguous "whatevers." This is important because there is no boss threatening to fire people if they do not produce. Yet we are so accustomed to vertical accountability that it remains difficult to practice it horizontally. An organizer with Put People First said that

> Folks say they're going to move on whatever they're gonna move on, and when it doesn't get done [we need to] figure out how we're holding each other accountable [so that we're] not just waiting … I think that we just haven't fully gotten to the point where we're all comfortable with holding each other accountable. (Personal communication B)

Because the tendency is often for people to disagree about what to do, to not carry out their commitments, and for conflicts to erupt, the delicate structures that constitute the "organization" constantly risk collapsing. This weighs heavily on organizers. As a housing organizer in Chicago related, "I'm tired … I have an intuition deep down that it could implode at any moment" (Personal communication Z). For an organizer with the Burgerville Workers Union, it was staff turnover in fast-food that caused workplace committee structures to fall apart:

> You build a committee over the course of six months and then it's gone and you have to start over. And there's only so many times you can start over … It's a ton of work once, and when it's constantly turning over … it's brutal … Not only do you put a lot of time and energy into building those relationships and building trust and supporting people's leadership, but you also depend on those people in real ways, to keep you steady on the day-to-day … And when those people leave, it's fucking hard. (Personal communication E)

This all amounts to a common concern expressed in interviews: that the group lacks direction, that it is beset by problems for which it has no proposals, much less solutions. Faced with such difficulties, accountability is the process of reasserting the intention that sparked the work in the first place. What changes to social relations do we seek to make, through what strategy will be pursue them, and how to organize that work so

that it gets done? Whereas, at first, the inspiration motivating all this may have seemed to be miraculous, pure, transcendental, now the drab everyday slog sets in. As a theory guiding collective effort, this inspiration must be painstakingly reproduced through praxis: by continuously reasserting accountability to the plan, and by readjusting the plan so that it is a better vision to remain accountable to. Keeping the sparks firing takes work, and sustaining this labour requires militancy.

The labour of accountability includes insisting that people put in the labour they have promised, that collaborative arrangements be adapted to better facilitate follow-through, and that the group reconsider the various forms of wellbeing it creates. Moving within the mess means constantly recalibrating these intentions, asking if the group is failing to meet the needs of tenants or workers because people are not working hard enough (a question of labour power), are not organized effectively (requiring changes in the division of labour), or because the goal is simply unrealistic (meaning they must work toward producing a different use value). I offer a mapping exercise in the concluding chapter to aid such discussions.

Without accountability, the group risks falling into a vicious cycle of producing weaker use values instead of stronger ones. This is to say that, instead of moving from producing a sense of belonging into producing immediate reproductive supports that facilitate group members' participation, these accomplishments fall away (members are evicted, ground down by work, overwhelmed by medical bills or their apartment's disrepair) and only common inspiration remains. With their reproduction stressed and their resolve faltering, organizers are then subject to the most prevalent mess: burnout.

Burnout is a process the great majority of interviewees had experienced at one point or another, highlighting how important it is to understanding organizing. Indeed, burnout illuminates organizing from the perspective of its breakdown. Instead of nurturing hope, organizers fall into cynicism; instead of building collectivity, they feel isolated from their comrades; instead of engaging in a constructive project, it feels reactive, like "bouncing off the wall like a ping-pong ball" (Personal communication D) and "putting out fires left and

right" (Personal communication F);[13] instead of labouring together from "a heart-centred place," organizing "feels like work" (Personal communication X); instead of problems serving as a guide for growth, they pull things apart. If organizing is a process of broadening and deepening collectivity as to produce ever-stronger wellbeing, burnout is the feeling of moving in reverse – the feeling of accumulating exhaustion as the extra effort of organizing is not offset by additional reproductive support.

Burnout is often the toll of sexism, as the women members expected to bridge this gap through "naturalized" (Federici, 2012, pp. 8–9), unrecognized-yet-obligatory care work are further exhausted in "a slow, nasty, agonizing process" (Personal communication K). In terms of commitment, organizers struggle to "keep the faith" (Personal communication R), to continue exerting the energy required to uphold group members' optimism that this long process is worth the risk (Personal communication E).

Sometimes organizers are able to soldier through, and victories or new ways of collaborating alleviate burnout by bumping up their sense of hope or by collectivizing care work. Yet at other times the stress of feeling that their inspiration is naïve leads to alienation, leading people to step away from the effort. Instead of collaborating to create wellbeing, unmet needs feel all the more weighty. Everyday life under capitalism is already exhausting, and the attempt to change it has become a further drain. As each of these difficulties is the flipside of what organizers are vying to create, burnout is the penalty of a failed gamble.

Yet "failure" is too strong of a word. Sometimes burnout is terminal, but it is also a smouldering tension within all organizing processes, the ever-present strain of tugging at contradictions. Conflict, problems, and

[13] The passage where this second quote was mentioned further illustrates the challenges groups face when they decide to embrace a certain need, such as resolving conflicts cooperatively instead of through the state. Namely, instead of remaining individualized, all the pain and suffering caused by that need are now the group's active, explicit responsibility. This is quite a heavy burden. As an organizer with Inquilinxs Unidxs related, "The biggest [obstacle] that comes to my mind … is that it often feels like we're putting out fires left and right, and it's just all these crises that come up. With that comes a lot of conflict and tension, and I think working in community where there's a lot of trauma is- We started doing more work towards paying attention to trauma, and trauma healing. And working in crisis just feels like sometimes it's just so much trauma and trauma stewardship. And there's never enough time to really work through it" (Personal communication F).

stress are all to be assumed, not treated as failures. In this sense, organizing means jumping into the fray, struggling to tip the balance of power away from the burnout and wrong relation that are pervasive under capitalism, toward care and right relation.

The Zapatistas also inhabit this tension, especially women who continuously confront obstacles to their full participation in autonomy (Baschet, 2018, pp. 62–66, 81–82; Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013c; Fernández Christlieb, 2014, sec. 4.2; Klein, 2015, Chapter 8). Their strength is in channeling these difficulties by turning problems into a guide for how to move forward. George Smith advocated a similar approach, emphasizing how confrontation opens a privileged perspective from which to understand and change social organization (1990). Whereas he learned this by confronting homophobic state institutions, the same can be said for conflicts within a group and within its members' sense of wellbeing.

Creating wellbeing in non-capitalist ways is beset with challenges, and the only way to elaborate effective forms of collaboration is by confronting this mess. "David sometimes wins" against Goliath (Ganz, 2009), and the interviewees teach us that this success is built on a strong reproductive foundation, or what the Zapatistas call "justice" (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, Chapter 4) and others call "care."

Care

If the task of organizing is to forge a virtuous cycle by making problems into exercises within a textbook for growth, then care is the wellbeing that this growth allows. It is the means and end of right relation. Care came up just as often as the mess and burnout in my interviews with AUSM alumni, and the two are a dialectical pair: wellbeing and need, self-determination and alienation. Because it was such a common theme, I see care as a fundamental aspect of organizing.

Care is central because it is associated with reproduction – the material supports that allow for both "domestic" renewal and the flourishing of life beyond capitalism. Care is the process by which groups build

the collective capacity to pursue social movement. Given this importance, it is no surprise that capitalism itself is so fundamentally predicated on spreading the mess by denying care. Feeling vulnerable, hurt, and exhausted is the lived experience of enclosure, dispossession, and exploitation. While living within capitalist social relations tends to overburden people's reproductive capacities, it does not have to be this way. The alumni's experiences show that, beyond caring for each other interpersonally, care is also the practice of building a *society* of right relation. Indeed, without strengthening right relation across society, interpersonal care will remain precarious and provisional.

In this section I will first discuss care in general and what it means on an interpersonal, collective, and social level.[14] These are the progressively broader scales on which groups work to create wellbeing and, ultimately, to reshape social relations. I will then share common ways alumni go about creating relations of care within their organizations.

Caring to show up

First, nearly every AUSM alumnus discussed some aspect of care when explaining their organizing work. Groups like Inquilinxs Unidxs, the Burgerville Workers Union, and Put People First pursue this both by struggling for the housing, wages, and healthcare that are so material to regenerating ourselves within capitalism, as well as through the everyday care work of "trauma stewardship" (Personal communication F), "keeping [people] steady on the day-to-day" (Personal communication E), and generally "showing up for each other" (Personal communication B). The California Coalition for Women Prisoners works intensively on this latter, interpersonal aspect. An organizer explains what it means for its members to relate as a "chosen family":

> You're helping figure out each other's lives together. And what that means is just going out to eat with people and helping people grocery shop and just living life with people. And it's not anything that's very concrete, but it's a lot of time and energy … For a lot of the formerly-incarcerated people that we work with, meeting people where they're at just means devoting a lot of time to listening and

[14] This understanding is inspired by Zandt's poster relating self-soothing, self-care, community care, and structural care (2019).

> being with them. It's just such a lonely place to be, to be back in the world and figuring absolutely everything out. Some of the CCWP connections are the strongest connections people have in their lives. (Personal communication N)

This beautifully illustrates the everyday work of building collectivity by collaborating to care in all the ways it is needed. It also illustrates how – even when it is not messy – this approach has the ambiguity typical of domestic reproduction work in that "it's not anything that's very concrete, but it's a lot of time and energy."

Branching out further, some groups support people's immediate reproduction in quite specific ways, such as the street medics who attend to those harmed by police violence, the terror caused by their brutality, as well as often overlooked aspects of protestors' wellbeing like warmth and water (Personal communication J). Others provide support when reproduction is threatened by eviction or an unwanted pregnancy. Education is another common form of care work, as with the alumnus on staff with AUSM and another doing student organizing. Others carry it out in looser collaborative arrangements, like the alumnus supporting the homeless and another coordinating rural healing retreats. Other groups place more of an emphasis on "reproduction from below" than the immediate, interpersonal work of domestic reproduction. For example, in blocking extractive industry, Mosquito Fleet fights to reproduce a healthier ecology. Others work to reproduce social movements by redistributing wealth toward them. Amidst their diversity, reproduction is central to all these pursuits, showing how "organizing" is collaborative effort to create, recreate, and expand wellbeing.

Importantly, these alumni enrich our understanding of care by exposing the labour that produces it. We began with the seed of inspiration that life can indeed be better and the wellbeing this collective intention provides. A precondition for acting on it is to first get people into the same room, to continue "showing up" and remain in relation, as well as *acting* to meet the responsibilities that sustain the relation.[15] Despite being a "precondition," this too requires labour.

[15] The term "showing up" was surprisingly common across all my interviews. The interviewee who spoke to it most directly began by rejecting "disposability politics and this idea that people, if they're not able to show up in particular political ways, are not useful to the movement." Instead, we should appreciate "the ways in which people show up for one another - in creative and collaborative and comradely ways." They went on to explain "showing up" by asking,

People need certain use values to be able to act on their individual intention and attend a meeting.[16] Doing so demands care, as everyone needs a full stomach, parents need childcare, some need subway fare, and all need a space quiet enough to give each other attention, without freezing or baking. This is why organizing with the homeless is such a "heavy lift" (Personal communication M). Moreover, people are alienated enough at as it is, so they will not last long in an extracurricular group that fails to recognize their humanity. This is why a student organizer spoke about the importance of a "welcoming" and "social atmosphere" where "people were excited" (Personal communication C) and a housing organizer emphasized "just being together [during] rituals or parties or gatherings … That is how we get to know each other and shift from [being] neighbours to family" (Personal communication F). These are some of the more fundamental use values organizing must satisfy, and through a process of collectivization it can then produce even greater use values. As reproductive work, it conditions and thereby strengthens further collaboration.

Conceptualizing collective care

Once members can consistently show up, they can begin practicing care for the group as a whole. This collective care is distinct from care in the interpersonal sense. Just as individualized care makes for a healthier, more-able person, collective care makes for a more capable group through accountability, functional decision-making processes, dreaming, and planning. Another use value of a functional group is a sense of meaning, as members have reason to believe they are doing their part to "take care of the future" (Gago, 2020).

"What are the ways that we show up in relationship with one another? What are the ways that we are accountable in our daily lives? What are the ways that we offer feedback, in these ways that we are just not socialized to do? … What are the relationships in my life that actually feel worth investing in? And how can I show up in those?" (Personal communication S). As we will explore below, showing up in this sense means caring for the collective.

[16] I argued in chapters 1 and 2 that so-called "domestic," immediately reproductive care work does not only happen within the household, nor does it only renew energies that will later be expended on waged work. Whereas discussion of "social reproduction" is usually limited to the "processes [that] enable the worker to *arrive at the doors of her place of work* every day so that she can produce the wealth of society" (Bhattacharya, 2017b, p. 1, emphasis mine), we should extend this concept beyond commodity production to include everything necessary for people to show up to organizing work – indeed, to show up to any collaborative arrangement, to "socialize" (in the materialist sense).

Collectively caring for the group is the precondition for winning material wellbeing through things like housing, healthcare and wages, all of which increase the group's capacity to care for society.

Members need certain forms of care and wellbeing to show up; the group must practice collective care to be functional; and campaigns seek to institutionalize care across society. Yet discussions of organizing too often jump to the campaign level without recognizing the personal and organizational levels, those that explain why members continue showing up in the first place. The point here is that organizing is a process of unfurling activity into broader levels of society, and this is a process of one set of conditions building toward another. Organizing strong reproductive collaboration on one level allows the group to then collaborate on a broader level. This is why I argue that reproduction charts the way of social movement, why I understand organizing as "reproduction from below" – because care is the foundation of solid organizing, the heartbeat of a virtuous cycle. In this way it is a measure of accountability, in forcing organizers to evaluate whether the wellbeing they intend to produce is actually being created, embodied, and making for effective practice. If so, individual organizers no longer have to shoulder the burnout-prone burden of "keeping the faith," as the group is successfully reproducing inspiration.

Lest this all sound too easy, life-giving care is locked into a dialectical battle with capitalism's lethal exhaustion. The mess sows doubt, while care collectivizes optimism; boundless obstacles leave groups feeling aimless, while care reasserts collective intention; dysfunctionality saps energy, while caring for the group means working out its kinks. Yet groups cannot simply choose one side over the other. Care is movement towards right relation, swimming against the stream of capitalist relations, flailing and grasping for support. This messy situation often results in reactive behaviour that falls into commodification or individualism. *Upping the Anti* laments how care is commonly cast as *self*-care, understood as a "time out" that – while necessary "to cope with the draining effects of crisis-mode organizing, increasingly precarious work lives, or patterns of discrimination in certain organizing spaces" – ultimately "withdraws collective responsibility and disavows interdependence" (2016).

Another response is to pursue restricted forms of care through staff benefits that are inaccessible to the base, the "Let's build socialism, starting with me" approach critiqued in chapter 3. Indeed, this is a fundamental problem with the wage relation that non-profits must wrestle with. As compared to feudalism or slavery, capitalism is fundamentally predicated on using the wage to externalize reproduction, to divest the boss of this responsibility and make it the wage-earner's burden, thereby fragmenting the labour of life-making. This is true for non-profit staff as well. Their wages and benefits make for a higher standard of living and more stable reproduction, and they also allow staff to dedicate significant effort to their organizing labour. These are significant strengths. And yet the trade-off is that the collective is also poorer for it, as members do not have to labour together to mutually reproduce each other. Instead of developing a subjectivity wherein members can labour together to create any and all forms of wellbeing the struggle calls for, each is restricted to their job description and bureaucratic collaborative practices. "Caring for the organization" is often reduced to petitioning senior staff to modify the division of labour or enforce accountability to job descriptions.

Another mistaken route is New Age care, which gestures toward Indigenous practices of right relation, yet tokenizes people, commodifies culture, and fails to materially support struggles for the return of stolen land. Finally, groups can pursue care as an internally-oriented (and ultimately individualist) end in itself, rather than caring for the collective's collaborative ability or for social emancipation.[17]

Instead of considering it a pre-figurative pursuit, I would call care "figurative": if organizing is collaboration to produce use values, then to care is to intentionally *shape* this collaboration in favour of greater wellbeing, ultimately with enough strength to shape the nature of relations across society.[18] Yet this reproductive work

[17] Cornell's account of the highly-functional (and later defunct) autonomist group Movement for a New Society recounts their experience of this tension between inwardly-oriented prefiguration and outwardly-oriented social struggle (2011).
[18] For example, through their medical internationalism, members of the Cuban medical and pharmaceutical system practice care on a sufficiently broad and institutionalized level to bring health care to millions around the world, counteract global vaccine apartheid, and affect the course of the pandemic (Beaubien, 2022). This is a major intervention

of shaping plods along against capitalism's destructive winds, and if the effort does not continue pushing onward to re-cast dominant social relations, then they will cause the effort to collapse.

The labour of caring for the collective

Despite great difficulty, AUSM alumni engage in the co-labour of care on ever-broader levels. The first step in creating wellbeing is listening, comprehending what specific needs within the group must be met. Too often, members' problems are treated as "fires" to be put out or as a deluge of laments that will overwhelm others trying to do "the real work." One interviewee summarized the typical response as essentially saying, "No, this is our [campaign] goal. This [problem] is a distraction, and we're not gonna invest in that right now" (Personal communication S). Holding space for pain and bearing witness are difficult, and doing this collectively is even more so. As an organizer with Inquilinxs Unidxs said,

> Each situation is different and confronting each problem [is different], and you can't foresee what the problems are going to be. You can't know. … I've been reflecting a lot on the urgency to problem-solve right away, the impulse of "Oh, we have this problem, here's how we're gonna fix it." [I remember] the lesson that [the Zapatistas] were talking about, of stepping back and just listening and, in community, trying to think of solutions to each problem. It definitely exercises those autonomy muscles. (Personal communication F)

An alumnus doing housing organizing in Chicago spoke about the importance of being "attentive to the emotional aspect of being uprooted" during discussions about tenants' legal rights during the eviction process. "You've got to stop whatever you're talking about [and instead] talk about what they're going through, what their feelings are. Because nothing else you're saying is going to get through to them" (Personal communication Z).

An organizer with Put People First said that, prior to ticking off agenda items, they spend the first portion of their meetings checking in and "making folks feel more fully seen. [I'll say], 'You had a rough day? Yo, go on.

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into the social relations of exhaustion/life across society. The seeds of this accomplishment germinated with the grouplets that initiated the revolution and then grew into a mass project for national self-determination. For example, consider the momentous literacy campaign as a national mobilization of care (Moody, 2019). Only a society with such deep structures of collective wellbeing can then export use values of care around the world.

What was it?' And then moving from there." Because of this space for listening, "folks are ready to throw down for each other" (Personal communication B). Prior to actively caring, this is the everyday work of creating space so that people can make known the forms of care they need. Following our metaphor, listening is akin to the study that allows problems to become a "textbook" for growth. Lest we assume it is easy work, Bayard reminds us that "It took years of study and hard work to develop your political analysis. Why do you think emotional understanding should just come to you? It requires work as well" (quoted in Crass, 2013, p. 110).

The second step is collaborative effort to respond to these problems, to offer immediate forms of wellbeing. Many alumni groups practice this sort of internal mutual aid: organizers with both Put People First and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners described their groups as "families" who support each other through medical crises, carceral abuse, and rebuilding their lives after release (Personal communications B, N). An organizer with the Burgerville Workers Union spoke about "the unrecognized-whatever, outside-of-meeting-space work" of "literally holding particular people together," "of keeping relationships and the informal relationship structure of the organization coherent and doing a lot of fucking support work" (Personal communication K). Because it was unrecognized, this care work burnt out organizers – especially the women assumed to be "naturally" inclined to shoulder this burden – and the Union responded by formalizing mutual aid into a Union Benefits program including food and transportation support. Inquilinxs Unidxs also puts effort into mutual support among cooperative members, especially since immigration enforcement actively persecutes many of them. Furthermore, their organizing drive began by responding to the crisis of slum conditions by pushing for material care in the form of pest control and repairs.

These first two steps lay the foundation for individual members to collaborate more vigorously in the group's organizing work, and the third step collectivizes this process. Here, group members theorize the needs that demand care and the wellbeing that provides it. This is a process of collectively recognizing social relations or, in Freirean language, exploring the "limit situations" that chart the course to freedom (2000, pp. 31, 99–109).

In addition to traditional popular education, this meaning-making can take the form of ritual. An organizer recounted when Inquilinxs Unidxs collectively resolved to defy a mass eviction order from the slumlord:

> I always feel like ritual sounds like such a wild, cultish word [laughs] … We had this gathering right after everyone got notices to vacate … We formed a circle of the tenants, and then community members were surrounding them. And we gave everyone a key … that they painted, and then each person went around and said a reason why they were fighting for their home and then dropped the key in a bucket, symbolizing "I'm committing to fight this eviction." And then all the community members would respond with "No estás solo- You're not alone." … I think it's grounding for all of us, and grounding in the struggle, and a way of visualizing how we're showing up in community with each other. (Personal communication F)

This illustrates the movement from care for individuals in crisis to care for the collective as such, for the ways of relating it seeks to strengthen. Whereas legal support and food boxes are the currency of the former, the ritual described above did this by strengthening trust between tenants opposing eviction and their community supporters.

The fourth step is to further organize the labour of care. One example of how to go about this – taken from work around intimate partner violence – is "relationship mapping," including "community relationships and interfamily relationships and then whatever kind of movement relationships." An interviewee spelled out this process:

> For whatever subset of people you're looking at, what are the actual interpersonal relationships between people, that would allow for a process to move forward [for] supporting someone who has been harmed and around supporting the person who has done that harm in taking accountability in an effective and caring way? [This requires] really relying on the idea that it's easier to build political alliance than it is to build relationship in many ways. And really working with the folks who are in our communities, in our lives, to build out some of the skills and alignment to be able to respond to harm collectively, within the intimate relationships that we hold. (Personal communication S)

Whether it is called "relationship mapping" for wellbeing or a "division of labour" for use value, whether it is oriented toward repairing intimate harm or fighting an eviction, the relations of care work must be actively shaped. As the quotation shows, collective care is indeed difficult, gruelling *work*. It is well and good to be supportive, but those accompanying individuals through crisis and those building out new group structures also face exhaustion. The caregivers must be cared for as well – through an organization that cares *with*.

Therefore, new forms of collaboration are required to facilitate this expanded practice, and *consistently* engaging in these practices ultimately requires subjectivity, new ways of being-with.

None of this is easy. Many interviewees spoke about the difficulty of giving or receiving "pushes": appeals to redouble their efforts for collective care despite the individual difficulties it caused.[19] An organizer with the Burgerville Workers Union recalled that "I was repeatedly organized into the work and held in all of my fucked-up complexity and messiness … I remember having a conversation four and a half years ago, and [my comrade] being like, 'You can't go to grad school yet. Just don't fucking do it [laughs].'" For him, this was illustrative of an "openness to continuing to *be organized by* people that we were building trust with" (Personal communication K, emphasis mine). This shows how accountability to a collective project – actively and repeatedly organizing each other *into* it – is a key aspect of care. Indeed, accountability is care for the collective itself.

In conclusion, there is a dialectical tension between the mess and care, between exhaustion and life, extraction and reproduction, need and use value. In terms of everyday organizing, we saw earlier that there is a prevalence of burnout and doubt among interviewees, and care is the opposite of these problems. Instead of being disabled by messes, organizers coordinate reproductive supports for each other. Instead of lamenting the decision to take a gamble on organizing, care assures members that they are among a family who will support them. Instead of feeling like the group is falling apart, structuring the organization shows their movement is towards better-relation. Instead of feeling like problems are evidence of failure, they become opportunities to reassert the accountability to care, making these problems into exercises within a textbook

[19] The practice of "pushes" and the confidence/humility to give and receive them is a skill directly linked to the labour movement, especially the subset of unions that are actively organizing non-union workers in the service industry. This is part of a genealogy of organizing practices that dates back to the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s (McAlevey, 2016, pp. 30–37). Three of the alumni interviewed were formerly employed by unions as staff organizers and had extensive training giving pushes, both through roleplays and practically in their organizing conversations with workers. Another three interviewees learned these skills directly from comrades of theirs who had worked at these same unions. While these interviewees were overwhelmingly appreciative to have learned this crucial organizing skill, many also warned that the tool is sometimes abused and contributes to the burnout of staff organizers.

for growth. Instead of falling into burnout, recrimination, and alienation, members are able to reproduce inspiration, strengthening it into trust. This trust is a mutual commitment to care, the connective tissue of the group's collectivity, the "beating heart" of organizing.

As always, this is easier said than done. We have seen some of the concrete activities that interviewees coordinate in this pursuit, such as listening, crisis response, meaning-making, and structuring the group. No matter the details, the point is that they are developing collaborative capacity to produce use values. For this reason, the same collaborations that allow people to survive – and sometimes even thrive – within capitalism are also the seeds for building life beyond it.[20]

Ways of being-with

To turn problems into a textbook for growth, organizers use care to navigate the mess, and – even more constructively – they work to become the "sort of people" who collaborate in this way, those with the cultivated "good sense" to do so (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, pp. 31–36; Gramsci, 1971; Sassoon, 1980, pp. 134–150; Wainwright, 1994). In Marxist terms, to organize is to coordinate divisions of labour producing use values such as hope or a dry living space, and this requires training labour power capable of collaborating in whatever ways are necessary. Beyond immediate care work, organizing demands subjectivity work: collaborative practices that are strongly rooted and can be applied across a range of circumstances, no matter what messes get thrown at the group. The fully-fledged "organizers" can organize in any weather. This is dialectics: creating changes in the world requires people *collectively* change themselves.

[20] As Zibechi writes about the urban indigenous communities of El Alto, Bolivia that toppled the neoliberal government in October 2003, "The same 'organization' that oversees daily work or the fiesta, also oversees the street mobilization and the armed uprising" (2010, p. 54). He points to the continuity between the communal organization of everyday life and that of supposedly "extraordinary" social movement as evidence of what Marx wrote about the Parisian Communards, that they "set free elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society is itself pregnant" (Marx, 2010, p. 27), cited in (Zibechi, 2010, p. 3).

Again, such subjectivity work was a common theme across many interviews, exposing the everyday ways alumni organizations build ways of being-with through skills training, accompaniment, and political education. The popularity of these practices shows just how central subjectivity work is to organizing in general. As usual, the weight of capitalist relations causes it to be a fraught, messy process. Nonetheless, in many ways the strengths and challenges of subjectivity reflect those of engaging in social movement as a whole.

Subjectivity and militancy revisited

I will begin by describing radical subjectivity as a general ideal, before moving into practice. The conceptual foundations for understanding subjectivity were laid in chapter 2, where I discussed the militancy of guerrilleros from the Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional who allowed themselves to be "digested" into the social relations of indigenous Chiapas. In chapter 3, I continued this discussion by comparing the militancy of "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" with the approach of "socialism, starting with me." Here, I will round out the topic by discussing subjectivity via accountability, identity, feeling, and activity.

First, subjectivity is an orientation toward social relations, an approach to collaboration within these relations. As we see with the subjectivities of communist, white supremacist, et cetera, each is an accountability to strengthening certain social relations and weakening others, to shaping the flow of health and wealth in certain ways. I use "militancy" to connote a more specific subjectivity or way of collaborating. The militant is accountable to the work of reproduction from below instead of reproduction from above, to the hard work of strengthening self-determination among the oppressed instead of the easier work of accommodating to forms of agency shaped by the oppressors. They therefore unite ends with means by collaborating in ways that organize the organization and thereby perpetuate these emancipatory goals.[21] Ideally, one is designated a

[21] The Zapatistas' seven good government principles are good examples of such forms of collaboration: obey, not command; represent, not supplant; go further below, not above; serve others, not yourself; convince, not conquer; build, not destroy; and propose, not impose (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013d, pp. 73–74).

militant by interpolation rather than self-proclamation, because their fellow militants trust they will act in militant ways. It is an identity that anyone can access, as long as they struggle alongside others and gain their respect.

Subjectivity is also an affective concept, shaped by the lived experience of "doing collectivity." When their subjectivity was strongest, interviewees said their organizing work deeply resonated with their "heart-centred selves" (Personal communication X), that it brought "moments when you can actually feel it in your body [that] 'This is us'" (Personal communication M), moments when they felt like "the struggle gives me joy" (Personal communication C). In this sense radical subjectivity, like burnout, is the *feeling* of a collaborative process.

Whereas burnout is the experience of collectivity breaking down into isolation, militant subjectivity is shaped through the experience of inspiration transforming into collective intention, intention into organizing, and organizing into the continuous reproduction of wellbeing. In this way, militant subjectivity is the culmination of a virtuous cycle wherein members identify more with the collective project, investing more hope in it, which allows them to put more effort into its collaborations, creating more care and further strengthening identification. Subjective identification and objective collaboration feed each other. This makes for a culture of self-determination, one in which members have the hope, shared understandings, skills, and collaborative arrangements necessary to invent solutions to whatever problem may arise. Having become the sort of people who self-determine in these ways, the group can create solutions to whatever needs arise.[22] This is historicity (Touraine, 1981, pp. 31, 77).

[22] The Zapatistas are fond of saying that groups must respect each other's "modes" (as well as their "calendars and geographies") (Marcos, 2007b), and I take these "modes" to be the unique (and even seemingly idiosyncratic) ways groups go about practicing their self-determination. Importantly, such modes are the culmination of a collective process of wading through the mess, elaborating practices of care, and fashioning these into an organizational structure and subjectivity. Respecting diverse modes means valuing the unique processes of struggle that created them.

This sort of smooth continuum is obviously seldom the case. However – returning to sensations – the understandings *guiding and motivating* such a virtuous collaborative cycle are synthesized into the *feeling* evoked above. This synthesis is the work of the heart, and it is also felt in the gut. If they are able to hold on to that feeling, it can continue to guide organizers as they wade through a mess of conflict, doubt, and breakdown. Moreover, the general, synthesized feeling can guide them as they navigate uncharted waters, using their subjectivity to collaborate in new ways and address unforeseen needs.

Third, inspiration feeding collaboration shows the materiality of subjectivity. In Marxist terminology, we see that disalienated people labour together more productively. This is morale: comrades who identify with each other gel into a more generative division of labour and exert stronger labour power. In building a subjectivity, the group practically establishes how they "do care," how they do "the struggle for housing," and they train each other in the skills necessary to collaborate in these ways. All this amounts to a process for collectively becoming "the sort of people" who collaborate in these ways and, moreover, can flexibly apply that orientation across a range of situations.

Crucially, the feelings of resonance mentioned above are realized when the group successfully creates the sorts of wellbeing it set out to produce. Subjectivity is therefore built through the collective excitement of having overcome "the realization crisis" mentioned earlier. These everyday successes are the moments when organizers breathe a sigh of relief, rejoice in knowing that – at least for now – the gamble was worth it, and feel the power of "us." This is the feeling of collective wellbeing in action. Members arrive at this wellbeing through militancy, by being the sort of people who "keep the faith" and persist alongside their comrades through all the hardships hegemony imposes.

The work of creating *compas*

Overcoming flakiness and its "realization crisis" requires strengthening members' labour power and coordinating it into divisions of labour. Interviewees spoke extensively about the work of elaborating

effective and fulfilling ways of being-with. They referred to it in terms of skills training through group workshops; the more sustained, interpersonal training of "accompaniment;" and the more general theoretical training known as political education. The tables below contain examples of how interviewees' groups work to strengthen members' capacity in each of these three areas. These are not the most emblematic aspects of each group's work, but instead they show how important the everyday (and sometimes mundane) work of strengthening labour power is to organizing in general.

Table 2: Skills training in alumni organizing projects

Group	Letter	examples of skills training
student organizing	C	How to create lesson plans and facilitate political education sessions
Mosquito Fleet	D	Direct action training on how to conduct kayak blockades
Inquilinxs Unidxs	F, R	Learning door-to-door canvassing, how to collect and account for utility payments, how to lead meetings, how to negotiate with landlords
abortion rights	H	Training nurses to provide abortions
street medics	J	Protest health and safety practices, emergency bystander training, triage, response to chemical weapons, bridge training for healthcare professionals
retreats	V	Herbal medicine

Table 3: Accompaniment in alumni organizing projects

Group	Letter	examples of accompaniment
student organizing	C	Training members to do tenant organizing
Burgerville Workers Union	E, K	Daily debriefs and "shop talk" on the work of union organizing, keeping comrades "steady on the day-to-day"
Inquilinxs Unidxs	F, R	Training members to serve on the Board of Directors
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia	I	Coordinating non-violent community self-defence
wealth redistribution	L	Relationship mapping, training on how to have one-on-one conversations with family members about wealth redistribution
homelessness	M	Guiding organizers through homeless encampments, introducing them to the residents, building trust and familiarity
California Coalition for Women Prisoners	N, S	Supporting members as they reintegrate into the social fabric after incarceration
retreats	V	Spiritual mentorship
tenants organizing	Z	Guiding tenants through the legal process of resisting eviction

Table 4: Political education in alumni organizing projects

Group	Letter	examples of political education
Put People First	B	Discussion of articles at regular meetings, statewide training and education institutes
student organizing	C	Reading groups and political discussions
Mosquito Fleet	D	Decolonial education through participation in Indigenous cultural events
Inquilinxs Unidxs	F, R	Political discussions at regular meetings, intensive institutes
civic education	G	Coursework, retreats, and conference participation regarding democratic engagement
abortion rights	H	Workshops on values and attitude transformation regarding abortion
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia	I	Meetings with ministers to discuss liberation theology, school of non-violent action
street medics	J	Workshops on medical ethics in the context of antifascist struggle
California Coalition for Women Prisoners	N, S	Workshops on the state's use of healthcare as a repressive tool
Autonomous University of Social Movements	O	Study abroad programs on Mexican social movements and Cuban socialism, political conversations with homestay families, academic assignments to create organizing and educational tools
retreats	V	Workshops on relating to Indigenous practices of herbal medicine
wealth redistribution	X	Participation in conferences on wealth redistribution
tenants organizing	Z	Political discussions at regular assembly meetings

This plethora of examples shows that a great deal of everyday organizing is dedicated to the labour of strengthening labour power. This goes to show why organizing is a reproductive endeavour. Just as the work of teaching and caring enables workers to do their jobs more productively, the reproductive tasks listed above strengthen the group's capacity to do their *organizing* jobs, to create the use values that will allow them to change social relations. By gaining new skills, the group can create new forms of wellbeing and possibly even change the flow of life and labour. For example, denying women the tools of family planning locks many into poverty, while "task shifting" with nurses and midwives so they can provide highly accessible abortion services allows women to dedicate more energy to enlivening their families and communities (Personal communication H).

The importance of subjectivity work therefore teaches us about the nature of organizing. Whereas capitalist reproduction is meant to create dutiful workers, anticapitalist organizing requires we learn how to collaborate otherwise, as to create wellbeing instead of profit. Waged collaboration is often limited to a mind-numbingly

small range of activities, whereas the variety needed to make social movement is as broad as life itself. This jumble makes for its own problems, as there are always too many needs demanding immediate attention.

The point here is that groups navigate this mess using subjectivity, creating a general understanding of "how we go about organizing" that can be flexibly applied to create many forms of wellbeing, according to many needs. In this sense, subjectivity is similar to ideology, but with an emphasis on the resulting collaborative practices. Such ways of being-with are the culmination of countless trainings, workshops, and political discussions. In the words of one interviewee, the most important question in organizing is "How do we create compas?[23] How do we create relationships to one another?" (Personal communication R).

Most groups have their version of the "compa" subjectivity they seek to build toward, including moving from middle-of-the-road progressivism to militantly holding the "thin green line" against extraction (Personal communication D), from being students to "organizers" (Personal communication C), or from being disposable workers to unionists (Personal communications E, K). In this sense the subjectivity exemplifies their entire organizing project. It is "the beating heart," yet once again also a vague "whatever."

This "whatever" was an underlying anxiety across most of my interviews. It surfaced during discussion about how the organization could better succeed at becoming a certain sort of people and avoid being "flakes," "burnouts," or just "well-intentioned." This transformation is more than the sum of the thousand-and-one skills trainings, accompaniment steps, and political education sessions that go into it, as well as the outward-facing actions, campaigns, and struggles that they strengthen. Indeed, it is the elusive "fundamental question," tied up with that of "How do we make revolution?" (T. Hansen, personal communication, June 24, 2021), since a magically failsafe method of creating militant subjectivity would guarantee victory.

[23] "Compa" is short for the Spanish *compañera, compañero* or *compañeroa*, which is a Zapatista way of saying "comrade."

There are no easy answers, only the commitment to continue on with the thousand-and-one steps that will hopefully add up to something much greater. My hope is that greater intentionality can strengthen the process. As we saw with MSN's self-critique in the previous chapter, it is easy to fall into an "issues-based approach," where organizing activity is done to achieve specific outcomes (like getting a representative to sign on to a letter) without integrating this outcome into a larger strategy for social movement, and without pursuing it in a way that strengthens collaborative capacity. In intentionally building new ways of being-with, we commit to revolutionary change, to creating a society whose relations perpetuate emancipatory capacity. We commit to sharpening our theory of what such a society would look like and to strengthening our collective practice of pursuing it.

This revolutionary promise is why even the most modest successes feel so marvelous, as they are steps in that direction. Yet its elusiveness makes subjectivity-building into a queer endeavour. This is the queerness of casting off normative, dominant ways of being-with and instead self-determining non-normative subjectivities (E. Freeman, 2010; Winant, 2015). It is the work of building "the conditions of the reconstruction of life" (Berlant, 2010, p. 3) by creating forms of organization that are "both durable and intimate enough to sustain processes of personal transformation" (Winant, 2015). Or, to change the world we must change ourselves.

It sounds wonderful, but Winant returns us to the mess by noting that creating ways of being-with is often fraught. After all, a subjectivity is not some individual's ethical proclamation, but a form of acting together, especially with people who have no prior political experience. This requires "becoming connected to the people who can't see past their confusion or fear and building solidarity where there is none by insisting on a form of relationship to which few are accustomed and that the mainstream neoliberal subject sees as genuinely queer: camaraderie" (ibid 2015). It requires a tolerance for discomfort, or at least ambiguity, as many a door is slammed in your face. Yet each slammed door offers a clue for how to find the resolve to knock on yet another and, possibly, how to keep it open a few moments longer. Each knock is a movement from being a "tenant" to a "base builder," or maybe to a sort of collective member that has yet to be named.

This is the grueling, everyday process of making problems into exercises within a textbook for growth – by becoming a group of *problem-solvers*, a group of people who build a more liberatory "yes" by refusing to take "no" for an answer. Elaborating such ways of being-with is therefore a culmination of organizing. These "ways of being-with" are orientations to social relations, and if members can effectively strengthen alternative relations within their group, they have a foundation for strengthening right relation in society, for engaging in social movement. In terms of our metaphor, a person who has completed all their physics problems and mastered the textbook is a step closer to becoming a physicist and engineering change in the physical world. Likewise, a group that has made the mess into its textbook can grow their base of militant compas and change the shape of society.

Strategies for social movement

By forming radical, caring ways of being-with, organizers can turn a mess of problems into a textbook for growth. It is not a sure-fire four step plan for success, but an ideal that sometimes, at great pains is borne out in practice. The alumni I interviewed were just as likely to face burnout as flashes of success. The mess is never-ending, and "successful" organizing moves from one set of messes to another, slightly better one. Yet the ideal is important: Organizing begins with the inspired hope that needs can indeed be met, and this hope only stays alive if the collective keeps sight of their shared horizon of struggle as they navigate a litany of everyday problems.[24]

This goal is to engage in social *movement*, to alter the flow of labour so that more of it supports the reproduction of life instead of the accumulation of profit. Moving the flow of labour is self-determination:

[24] Thus the Zapatista Army of National Liberation's anthem begins, "Now we see the horizon / Zapatista fighter…" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 1993b). Or, as Eduardo Galeano wrote (citing Fernando Birri, although the quote is nearly always attributed to Galeano), "Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking" (E. Galeano, 2003, p. 330).

the ultimate form of wellbeing, the greatest use value, the success of class struggle. Groups achieve this (always in more humble ways than outright winning the class war) by forming *virtuous cycles* wherein they create the sorts of wellbeing that allow members to continue showing up; this energizes their collaboration, allowing them to produce further wellbeing and actively grow the group; and this energy can then be put towards changing the extent to which wellbeing and exhaustion are doled out in society at large.

Inquilinxs Unidxs is an example: the group started by successfully coordinating housing repairs and having food and childcare at meetings; this laid the foundation for the more strenuous push to coordinate a rent strike for two years against their slumlord, who they successfully dispossessed to form their housing cooperative; and this victory is their material platform in a struggle to increase the power of renters against landlords throughout Minneapolis. Prior to their struggle, the "flow" was for community members to dedicate their life's efforts to earning wages, which paid rent, which allowed their reproduction – to the limited extent that a person can be rejuvenated while worrying about bedbugs and mould – yet mostly allowed the slumlord to accumulate more capital. The social *movement* here is to alter the reproductive flow of labour, so that less of people's effort and wages flow into the reproduction of the landlord class, so that more of this effort can instead reproduce their community, so that they are collectively a little less exhausted and a little more alive.

Strategy is an *orientation* toward social movement, toward the work of altering the flow of labor. Whereas I have largely focused on everyday organizing within groups thus far in the chapter, as to explain how members can touch off a virtuous cycle, strategy returns us to the wider world. Like inspired initiative, it too is a *sine qua non*, as organizing that is only inwardly focused ultimately implodes. Strategy is the shape in which a virtuous cycle spirals outward, as to remake flows of life. Surveying the work of interviewees' various organizations, I group them into four strategic categories: non-profits, survival projects, collectives, and base builders. (The categorization for each of the interviewees' groups is listed in the "Form" column of Table 1.)

The non-profit strategy is one of diversion. They meet the bureaucratic requirements for accessing institutional flows of labour, and they seek to alter these flows by nudging them in a more radical direction. Second, the survival project strategy is a more combative approach against gatekeepers. They do not conform to the legal dictates required to administer sizeable flows of resources, and instead fight to access them on their own terms, without being subjected to the discipline usually demanded of individualized service recipients. By surviving a bit more securely, their members have more energy to struggle for social movement. While I make survival projects their own category, they are quite similar to base builders.

Third, the strategy of collectives is oriented toward "the movement," understood in the traditional sense as a diffuse social struggle. Collectives offer resources to the various groups participating in these struggles, such as keeping protestors healthy or training them in direct action tactics, each playing a unique role in supporting broad movements to alter flows of labour.

Finally, whereas survival projects tend to focus more on prising resources from gatekeepers, base builders actively recruit so that this growing membership can better collaborate to create the wellbeing they need, without depending on institutions as much (they still do to some extent) or waiting for a cycle of struggle to bear fruit.

Another way to distinguish these strategies is by their forms of collaboration, both within the group and externally as the way the group plugs into broader flows of labour. As described in chapter 3, members of non-profits coordinate via a staffing model, with its job descriptions, managers, and state-sanctioned non-profit status, allowing them to access use values by tapping into the flows of grant funding shaped by tax law. The strategy of left non-profits is therefore to secure funding and "divert" it toward the most radical uses the law will allow.

Collectives are quite the opposite, as members are all volunteers coordinating by consensus. They seek to influence broad flows of labour such as energy extraction and philanthropy, yet the collective does this by offering its humble use value to the wider struggle, in hopes that this struggle will grow strong enough to win more substantial forms of wellbeing. Making the best offering possible requires group cohesion, skills training, and political clarity.

Base builders bring in new members more aggressively than the collectives, and as they grow this requires more complex forms of collaboration such as a mix of working groups, general assemblies, steering committees, and sometimes paid staff. Their strategy is to organize this collaboration as to make direct, immediate interventions into the flow of labour, strengthening their reproduction by doing things like winning a housing cooperative or controlling more of their surplus value by winning a union.

Finally, the survival projects are the haziest category. Sometimes they are organized as small collectives and sometimes they are complex base organizations, yet the strategic orientation of all is to influence the flow of labour that passes through institutional gatekeepers and collectively access its use values on better terms.

Like all categorizations, this list of strategic orientations has its strengths and limitations. The reality of each group is more complex than any classificatory scheme suggests. Yet it shows that there are important differences in the ways organizations seek to engage in social movement, which can teach us something about what it takes to win. Whatever the organizational form, I urge organizers to reflect on the flows of labour they are participating in, the use values they are creating, and how exactly these efforts can change social relations.

Non-profit diversion

I have critically reflected on non-profits throughout this dissertation, yet I also wish for this critique to be constructive. Interviewees working with AUSM, the Lutheran Church of Colombia, a public university, and

for international abortion rights were clear about the limitations of their respective organizations and also careful to highlight their strengths. AUSM gives material support to base builders and introduces hundreds of students to organizing; the Lutherans use liberation theology to politicize weekly sermons and support cooperative production and housing; the abortion organization makes this crucial service available to many thousands of people. This support matters, which is why – once again – it would be naïve to simply write off non-profits.

Interviews with non-profit staff were unique in that they hardly remarked on the sorts of messes commonly lamented by others, such as interpersonal conflict and flakiness. This is because most of us have spent a lifetime being socialized into the subjectivity of the employee, acquiescing to check our personal problems at the office door, accept the boss's direction, and comply with labour responsibilities or risk being fired. This is precisely why such relations are dominant: you can avoid everyday difficulties by "going along to get along," but this comes with political limitations. For example, the interviewee working on abortion rights across Africa wished they were "advocating for a radical change, [to] end the economic system that allows the countries that I work in to be so thoroughly financially-dependent on the work that we do." Instead they found themselves "making alliances for the wrong reasons" and working to expand individuals' access to abortions, but without "popular movements" or "social demands" that would politicize and radicalize this service (Personal communication H). The alumnus working for the Lutheran Church of Colombia felt better about their work supporting peacebuilding in Bogotá, including with FARC ex-combatants who demobilized after the 2016 peace accords. One problem occurred when they had the idea to "start this school of nonviolent action and develop other methods of struggle [with the ex-combatants]. That was the original idea, but unfortunately it got taken over and turned into a more academic thing … mostly for university students" (Personal communication K).

Overall, non-profits' strengths and limitations are shaped by how they plug into flows of labour. To receive accreditation and tuition for a study abroad program, maintain funding from Lutheran churches in the US,

carve out institutional space at a public university, or receive grants from pro-abortion philanthropists, non-profit staff must collaborate in "respectable" ways, producing the use values expected by funders, such as supporting women's entrance into the waged workforce or training labour power through university education. The organizations where interviewees work obviously push the bounds of these norms, as compared to more traditional non-profits in the form of university business schools or paternalist charities. Nonetheless, a radical non-profit like AUSM would still lose its much-needed accreditation if it disregarded academic standards (that is, refused to subjectify students into dominant ways of being-with) and gave everyone A's regardless of their participation.

Compliance with these core criteria allows non-profits to administer larger flows of money than any of the other sorts of organizations interviewees discussed, allowing them to create a large quantity of use values. Their strategic orientation is to gain access to the flow of exchange value (funding) that non-profit status enables and to convert it into more-radical use values, in the form of accessible abortions, cooperative projects, or a revolutionary education.

Yet the quality of these use values is limited, as staff are prevented from diverting this flow toward pursuits that more directly challenge dominant relations. The pro-abortion group can train nurses but not organize against patriarchy. The Lutherans can support peacebuilding but not land redistribution. AUSM's teachers can mark essays on revolution but cannot grade revolutionary activity. Moreover, even when it is possible to organize for more fundamental social movement, staff have trouble pursuing this because most of their energy is dedicated to simply administering the flow of resources. As the interviewee working with AUSM said, "I'm not doing organizing work … in terms of a day-to-day [practice] of the principles of Zapatismo," noting that instead "There are days that I'm just doing very robotic work: sending acceptance letters or creating a map … It just feels like office work" (Personal communication O). Likewise, the interviewee working at a pro-abortion non-profit said "it's still taking me a while to figure out how to do this job [while] also having a more radical engagement with the world" (Personal communication H).

This is the mess organizers step into when they adopt the non-profit organizing form: wages make it easier to achieve stable collaborative arrangements and access use values, but pursuing social movement is harder since it would challenge the flows of labour the organization relies on. Like collectives, non-profit strategy supports the broader struggle, in hopes that it will eventually make social movement, yet they have less ability than the other sorts of groups to self-determine how this support happens.

Surviving the gatekeepers

Survival projects avoid this compromise by using a different strategic orientation. They leave the work of complying with legislative criteria to the non-profits and state social services and instead collectivize access to the use values those institutions offer, as to minimize the institutions' ability to discipline individualized recipients. They interface with the healthcare system, the prison system, and social services for the poor and homeless – non-profit and state institutions that do the work of "reproduction from above" to a much greater extent than those lefty outliers staffed by the interviewees mentioned above. They work for "survival pending revolution" (Bloom & Martin, 2013; Newton, 1972, p. 104) because, to make the revolution, people must first survive. They are subjected to violence by medical negligence inside prison, for-profit medical neglect while on the streets, denial of food and shelter, and by other traumatized people in their communities, and then they are subjected to further violence by police and prison guards who criminalize their "acts of survival" (Personal communication N). All this weakens their social fabric of reproductive relations (Gilmore, 2007, pp. 16–17) and capacity for self-determination. It is the foundation of violence the rest of the class pyramid is built upon. Capitalism is predicated on the enclosure, dispossession, and extraction of wellbeing – all of which subject people to premature death (Gilmore, 2007, p. 28) – and only a revolution will end it.

The strategy of survival projects is therefore to pry open the gates of subsistence. For the alumnus organizing with the homeless, this means connecting people with meals, bottled water, clothing, camping materials, food stamps, food pantry access, housing vouchers, furniture, and medical services – ideally without having to sit

through a sermon or get harassed by staff, which feels like "going back to the yard where the dog bit us" (Personal communication M). While Put People First primarily does base building to win the human right to healthcare, they also do survival work through their Community Care teams that support members in crisis, as well as participating in a network called the Modern Underground Railroad, including organizations that support working mothers, incarcerated people, and members needing legal services (Personal communication B). The California Coalition for Women Prisoners "centers around helping people survive this ordeal of being punished for crimes of survival" (Personal communication N). In addition to the base building work of creating a family to fight for abolition, it pries open the institutional gates by pressuring authorities to give prisoners adequate medical attention while incarcerated, supporting their petitions for commutation, helping them access social services when their imprisonment transfers to a "transition home," and getting parole officers to allow people to attend meetings and connect with their community (Personal communications N, S).

These are the ways survival projects begin to institutionalize care. Their tactics comprise a strategy wherein people first fight to survive within capitalism, without being forced to further perpetuate its violent relations, so that they can then fight to strengthen right relation. In this sense "survival pending revolution" is common to most of interviewees' groups, challenging my assertion that it is a distinct organizing form. I mentioned that Put People First is very much a base building group, and the work of the other base builders also has survival aspects: Inquilinxs Unidxs began by fighting to bring slum housing to a minimum level of decency, the Chicago housing organizing connects tenants with legal resources as to prevent the violence of eviction, and the Burgerville Workers Union has its internal Union Benefits program. As I have argued throughout the chapter, no organizing project can grow unless its members have enough reproductive stability to continue showing up and putting in their collaborative efforts.

I include survival projects as a distinct category to highlight this step in the struggle for self-determination, moving from accessing flows of labour according to the criteria of the state and funders toward asserting

collective agency regarding access. In this way survival projects take a step toward social movement, toward shaping the power relations that allow and deny life.

Collectives strengthen social movements

Collectives represent a third strategic orientation, one that strengthens the broader struggle for social movement, instead of prying open the gates around specific services. University organizing in New York sought to strengthen the student movement through political education, and in doing so defend the flow of labour redistributed through public institutions; the Mosquito Fleet trains and coordinates direct actions at sea against the oil industry, and in doing so strengthens the struggle to stop fossilized life from being metabolized into ecologically-destructive profits; the medics strengthen left struggles conducting street demonstrations by caring for the health of participants, thereby lowering the costs of demanding changes to the flow of labour; the collectives engaged in wealth redistribution support struggles such as the Movement for Black Lives by convincing elites and their families to donate to radical causes without strings attached, thereby redistributing the flow of capital downward; and the alumnus coordinating retreats worked to reproduce struggle by rejuvenating organizers (Personal communications C, D, J, L, X, and V, respectively).

Each has its specific way of supporting a movement to alter the flow of labour. This orientation toward the general "movement" distinguishes collectives from survival projects, and they are distinct from base builders in that they recruit for specific capacities instead of from the community at-large.

The medic collective of an alumnus in New York exemplifies this work of (literally) strengthening the movement. This begins with a need, in this case to counteract the police's use of violence and terror to disable the movement. The interviewee encapsulated their collective's response to this, saying "Bad things are going to happen, and you can't always control for it. But are we fucking prepared for it?" Their work of preparation represents the movement's ability to care for itself as it does the difficult work of fighting for care for society. They went on to say:

> We're not doctors, and we are also qualified to take care of people here. We are able to acknowledge when something exceeds our level of training and ask for help, right? … But I think so much of medicine has been mystified to keep people away from taking care of their own health … If someone breaks their arm, do they ultimately need to see a doctor? Yes. Am I also capable of stabilizing them until they can see a doctor? Yes! … [We're] helping to build this *community-reliance* [where] we can build each other's knowledge and this infrastructure to be able to know when we need to take someone to a hospital, but also be able to take care of each other when that's not the case. (Personal communication J, my emphasis)

This illustrates how organizing can create wellbeing on ever-broader levels, as collective members care for each other so that the group can function, the collective cares for the movement, and the movement struggles for social change – to "take care of the future" (Gago, 2020). Successful collaboration to create wellbeing at one level allows for wider-ranging wellbeing at the next.

As always, success in realizing these use values is never guaranteed. The collective strategy comes with its own set of messes, many of which are similar to those of survival projects and base builders, and counter to those of non-profits. First, they cannot rely on wages to structure their division of labour or to guarantee members a modicum of reproductive support. Instead, they must coordinate collaboration through often-arduous consensus processes and seek accountability to it among members who frequently have trouble showing up and following through, since they are organizing in addition to the work that pays their rent.

Second, even though many interviewees working at non-profits expressed feelings of alienation, workers are compelled to suffer through this so they can keep their jobs. Collective members, on the other hand, can only rely on hope and commitment when the going gets tough. Because their small groups support a large movement in specific – and, when people are feeling cynical, seemingly miniscule – ways, "keeping the faith" is difficult.

Third, whereas non-profit labour involves a significant amount of administration, drawing on the professional skills staff are trained in at university, there is little training for the skills these other organizing forms rely on. Outside of the workshops and "institutes" that groups coordinate to train their own members, there are no

classes on coordinating a functional committee, holding fellow organizers accountable without alienating them, or fashioning a consensus proposal. To support the broader movement, members also need further skills, as exemplified by the medics' training in things like triage and treating the various injuries caused by each weapon in the vast police arsenal (Personal communication J). Organizers must learn these skills through many trials and errors, meaning often they can only inconsistently create the use values by which they support the movement, and the precarity of this realization crisis causes burnout.

Moreover, because non-profits can tap into flows of exchange value and convert this to various use values, they face less of a "realization crisis" than collectives. AUSM can easily continue creating study abroad programs as long as it maintains its accreditation and recruits students. Collectives, on the other hand, are not plugged into flows of funding and must directly produce use values like healthcare, blockades, or instruments for redistributing wealth through their own collaboration, efforts to train labour power, and specialized skills – while also supporting each other's reproduction. This all makes for a lot to be decided and, once decided, many responsibilities that may or may not be carried out. Reflecting on how their wealth redistribution collective fell apart, one interviewee commented,

> We developed protocols that we just didn't follow … It felt reactive, in that when things didn't work we would try to create some sort of policy or protocol … [In our beginning stages] we were focused on trying to figure out how to move money in ways that were effective and legal. And it was only towards the end that we started really trying to focus inward and trying to address lot of fractures that were created within the collective. And there was the Catch-22 of, as long as those fractures exist and there is this little toxicity within our relationships, that it felt really hard and unsupportive to do the work effectively … And at the same time [it] really diverted a lot of our focus away from doing the work that we set out to do. (Personal communication X)

These complexities make collectives' work of producing use values for the movement precarious, amounting to many ways the gamble can go awry and end the project. Therefore, despite other limitations, collaborative relations within non-profits tend to be more stable and the flow of resources more consistent, which is why collectives are not simply a "better" organizing form.

Because they must navigate so many "whatevers," it is all the more important that collectives centre care, making it into a subjectivity that guides their collaboration. Yet, as the interviewee quoted above emphasizes, care for each other must be complemented by care for the movement, for the larger struggle for social change that collectives exist to strengthen. Organizing either builds toward a socially-oriented virtuous cycle, or an inward focus touches off a vicious cycle of implosion.

On the other hand, when collectives navigate these messes and each strengthens the movement in its own way, it makes for a rich ecology of wellbeing, for the sort of struggles that detached commentators are apt to say "came from nowhere." This strategic orientation seems spontaneous because many groups are lending their particular abilities without a central committee coordinating them (Guha, 2010), making for a movement with a generalized capacity for mutual aid through things like legal support, catering, healing, and fundraising. This allows for the offensive capacities of mobilization, direct action, tactical innovation, and political education of the public.

Therefore, when considering the diffuse "movement" as a whole, we should not overlook the constituent collectives that provide vital capacities for the movement's overall reproduction. In other words, collectives do the work of "reproduction from below." Their reproductive supports strengthen the movement's vitality and capacity, allowing for strategic action on a collective level (Hardt & Negri, 2017, pp. 18–22). While the moments of greatest coordination are always decried as "chaotic," "lacking clear demands," and ultimately "a flash in the pan," this is the rhythm and messy power of society-in-movement. It is the culmination of many groups and grouplets, each trying to be "digested" into the struggle, to be useful in their specific ways.[25]

[25] It is no coincidence that its strength is rooted in "domestic" reproduction: As Zibechi learns from Indigenous movements in El Alto, Bolivia, "The same 'organization' that oversees daily work or the fiesta, also oversees street mobilization and the armed uprising" (2010, p. 54). The phenomenon is commonly analyzed in terms of "networks" (Bennett, 2005; Castells, 2010; Juris, 2008; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; McAdam & Snow, 1997; Melucci, 1989; Tarrow, 2005; L. J. Wood, 2012) and my addition is that movement capacity is also a question of division of labour, of groups collaborating to offer an array of use values and thereby reproducing a stronger movement.

Building the base

The strategy of base builders is to coordinate the collaboration of as many members as possible, as to create use values that first reproduce the group and then, as they continue to strengthen, challenge the conditions that create such needs in the first place. They engage in social movement by altering the relations that dictate whose effort and exhaustion reproduces whose life and capital.

For the Burgerville Workers Union this means workers supporting each other through the daily hardships of fast-food labour, building enough group cohesion to challenge the boss, and eventually establishing a union and more control over their pay and working conditions. For Put People First this means building local committees to defend life-saving access to public healthcare, the committees' cohesion into a statewide organization, and hopefully a poor-led movement strong enough to win universal healthcare in Pennsylvania. For the tenants' rights organization in Chicago this means accompanying tenants as they fight evictions, training them to accompany other tenants, and building a struggle for power against their landlords. For Inquilinxs Unidxs it led to cooperative control over housing. In each case, the group works to create a virtuous cycle through nested efforts on the individual, collective, and movement levels: to support members' reproduction, formalize the group's methods of collaboration, and make interventions into power relations in society.

Relating base building with the other strategic orientations, its focus on reproductive support is similar to that of the survival projects (which is why I mention Put People First again here), yet base builders put more effort into expanding the membership base as to build the power-with needed for social movement. This is not because base builders just "try harder." Instead, the enormous violence inflicted on prisoners and the homeless means simply surviving requires all the more effort, making broader organizing "a freakin heavy lift" (Personal communication M). Nonetheless, base builders also commonly collectivize access to social services, such as legal support in the two tenants' rights groups.

Like the collectives, base builders put considerable effort into structuring their division of labour and training labour power. Collectives have a limited membership, frequently recruited from people with prior experience in the collaborative activities they will offer to the movement (eg kayaking, first aid, popular education, restorative ceremony, talking to rich people about investments). The recruits into base organizations are different. Whereas some have organizing experience through places of worship or inter-generational political cultures of assembly (for example, Mexicans whose families belong to the local ejido), most do not identify as activists and have never participated in a political organization. Most importantly, members of base organizations are also often members of the most heavily-exploited class fractions. Their lower wages, heavier reproductive demands, and more exhausting work mean they are left with less energy than most (though by no means all!) collective members to dedicate their so-called "free time" to meetings and trainings.

All this means that the challenges collectives face in coordinating their collaboration are amplified for base builders. While collectives must do some work to reproduce each other, they mostly work to coordinate their service to the movement. Meanwhile, base builders must provide extensive reproductive support, coordinate the many assemblies, committees, and responsibilities of a mass organization, while also building the campaign for social movement. As an organizer with the Burgerville Workers Union said, "Balancing those pieces is a real art – driving those trucks at the same speed" (Personal communication E). It is especially difficult since the reproductive "truck" is so often relegated to a "whatever" for femme members to coordinate without recognition.

Apart from reproductive work, the interviewees in base building groups spent most of their time describing the litany of everyday efforts that go into "organizing the organization": convoking an array of encounters for planning, trust-building, training, study, conflict resolution, and all the follow-up required for accountability to these processes. One interviewee summed it up saying, "It's a lot of meetings! Being on the same page is a lot of meetings" (Personal communication F). It is all especially taxing because the exhaustion of life at the bottom means groups face constant turnover: tenants are frightened by the landlord into complying with

eviction, they are shuffled through the revolving door of low-wage jobs, and unmet healthcare needs impede their participation. As compared to non-profits, base builders respond to these needs by directly creating use values and antagonistically pursuing a flow of labour more amenable to their wellbeing, whereas non-profits tap into flows of exchange value and nudge its use in more radical directions.

Yet, to complicate things further (and to show once again why all categorizations are provisional), base building organizations sometimes obtain non-profit tax status and/or hire staff. Put People First and the Burgerville Workers Union pay one or two people from dues paid by the members to work as part-time staff, whereas Inquilinxs Unidxs has over a dozen full-time staff funded by grants. Paying for administrative support eases some of the difficulties of coordinating such complex organizations. Nonetheless, each base building group ensures that primary decision-making power remains with the membership, while non-profits are directed by staff without formal accountability their "community."

There is always the risk of a drift from a base building strategy to a non-profit one. This is precisely why base builders put so much effort into organizing the organization, so that collaboration is as strong as possible across the base. Otherwise, exhaustion will eat away at organizing so that coordination happens through more "traditional" relations of "professionalism," verticality, and exclusion. The tendency is for the minority of active members to become a cadre, the cadre to become staff, and for staff effort to mainly reproduce their own employment, even if the group's participation in social movement is stagnant. Yet again, if organizers do not actively create collectivity it will whither away.

Base building is hard work, which is why this was the rarest strategy among the 104 alumni I interviewed in 2016. It requires collaboration on many different levels, making it all the more difficult to synchronize it all into a virtuous cycle rather than a vicious one. Its gamble is a longshot, which is why most interviewees – and organizers in general – opt for safer strategies. Who am I to blame them? Yet when it all works, when problems become exercises within a textbook for growth, the base builders are capable of spectacular feats of

self-determination, creating wellbeing for their own community and, in doing so, strengthening their struggle for a society with more life and less exhaustion.

Strategy is an approach to changing flows

This is a novel understanding of strategy, emerging from the everyday organizing activity of AUSM alumni. "Strategy" is typically understood either by the end goal its adherents wish to achieve – autonomy, hegemony, or reform – or according the historical figure whose revolutionary leadership most inspires them (Leninism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Guevarism, or even Zapatism) (Burns, 2018). Even less constructively, strategic debates often collapse into facile mudslinging between those accused of being state-oriented and "selling out" by participating in elections and those accused of naivete for ignoring the state.

The problem here is beginning with ideals instead of material practice. Instead of leading with the ultimate question of "reform or revolution?" (Luxemburg, 2008), my analysis is built on the everyday collaborative activity of organizers, the sorts of wellbeing this collaboration creates, and how it relates to broader flows of labour. Importantly, it shows that no one is simply "ignoring" the state, including the groups that are explicitly anticapitalist or abolitionist. The Burgerville Workers Union filed for and won a state-sanctioned vote to collectively bargain; the California Coalition for Women Prisoners helps its members file petitions for commutation of their sentences; Inquilinxs Unidxs sued their slumlord and supports rent control legislation; and the street medics stay apprised of police weaponry and tactics. The more useful question is "what shapes the flow of labour we want to influence?" (in the examples above these are flows of surplus value extraction at work, the extraction of rent, and systemic exhaustion and premature death), leading to questions of "who shapes this flow?", and "what can we do to change this flow, to shape this social relation differently?". The state surely factors into this strategic orientation, in a more complicated way than simply deciding whether to "beat 'em or join 'em." The mapping exercise in the next chapter assists in thinking through these questions.

It certainly is important for groups to decide whether they want to pursue an autonomist strategy of producing wellbeing for themselves, a hegemonic strategy of using the state to redistribute flows of labour, or a reformist strategy to make existing flows less onerous. Such decisions have immediate implications for everyday collaboration. Yet a further insight from my analysis is that groups must begin from the "mushy middle" of reform and build their way to more radical practice. An organizer with Mosquito Fleet explained this, recounting a conversation where they were asked their opinion on the Green New Deal:

> Well the big question is what led to the first New Deal? There were mass strike waves and occupations and the whole system was crumbling. And they had to save capitalism by dramatically reforming it in ways that actually went against the most powerful interests in the country. And that's not about political will. It's not because some guy named FDR had a good idea … But who's doing all that other work? Where's the strike waves that are bringing the financial interests to their knees? That's what it's gonna take … What was threatening capitalism, and how are we going to do it again? That's the question. It's not like, "Oh, it's reformism." It's like, "*Yeah, everything is reformism until it's not*." (Personal communication D, my emphasis).

Across the broad sweep of history, the state only acquiesces to reforms as a defensive measure to prevent more radical revolution. Likewise, on the level of everyday organizing, groups must painstakingly build up their capacity to "threaten capitalism," which is why the interviewee focuses their attention on *how* to do that again.

This is all to say that no group is born immediately able to assert its autonomy from capitalist flows of labour, able to assert dual power capable of challenging state hegemony, or even able to make significant electoral gains. Each is the fruit of a long process. Groups begin with the mess of building their collaborative capacity, as to build their ability to influence society. Crucially, the dominant flow of labour is a given for all nascent organizations, shaped as it is by bosses, landlords, settlers, patriarchs, the prison-industrial complex, the non-profit industrial complex, and the like. Within this constellation of bad and less-bad options, groups search for "footholds": modest forms of wellbeing that allow for a bit of stability so the group can create stronger, more radical forms. Without the resources to create wellbeing autonomously, this often requires *provisional* relationships with agents of the state such as prison wardens, or of the expanded state such as social service providers. Organizers are mostly unhappy with this relationship, yet it is a first, messy step in a more radical

direction, the basis for movement away from the mushy middle. "Strategy" is the way the group coordinates itself as to do this walking.

Conclusion

Having recounted the histories of the Zapatistas and AUSM, in this chapter I highlighted commonalities among the organizing practices of a diverse group of alumni. This allowed me to draw out five aspects of organizing broadly shared among them, aspects that also illuminate the practices of the Zapatistas and AUSM. They are central to their common labour of organizing, to the action emerging from inspiration. To wit, I have shown here how organizers are sometimes able to make a mess of problems into cues for growth: by taking a gamble and turning their collective inspiration into the work they will pursue; by using problems as cues for how to better care for each other and for the collective; by becoming the sort of people who engage with problems in this way; and ultimately by working to change the flows that create such problems in the first place. Turning problems into a textbook is therefore the jiu-jitsu of turning a vicious cycle into a virtuous one, flipping capitalist relations – wherein survival requires we perpetuate our own oppression – so that self-determination may flourish. "Organizing" is this movement from the vicious to the virtuous.

In describing how organizations move from vicious to virtuous cycles, I have emphasized it is a slow, messy process. As such, groups can only advance by strengthening their reproduction, by enlivening right relation within the group so that they can struggle for right relation in society. Centering reproduction means we are not simply judging groups as either successes or failures in reaching their ideals, but by their material practice – *how* they go about coordinating movement. Many of the organizations where AUSM alumni participate do this by building relations of care, so that they may be able to care for their collective and care for society. This is how organizers build *power*, understood as the capacity of their everyday collaborative activity. Interviewees show that this work of building power is not a direct line from point A to B, but a spiral of multi-faceted wellbeing, extending toward broader reaches of society. It is a social movement akin to the spiral of the snail or conch, beloved symbols of the Zapatistas.

Organizing is a dialectical form of movement. Vicious and virtuous tendencies are always pulling at each other, and the everyday work of organizing is to wrangle within these tensions. Despite often being mistakenly equated with its specific tactics, organizing is this *process* of wrangling so that virtue may gain the upper hand.[26] For example, is there a ladder of engagement whereby recruits with varying levels of capacity and skill can begin collaborating in simple ways and progressively build up their leadership (labour power)? Or, instead of climbing the ladder, are members often announcing they are "stepping back" from the work? Is the group establishing "footholds" that allow progressively more members to consistently show up, or are messes in one area of the work cascading into others?[27] Ultimately, is the group able to "fire on all cylinders" by bringing together interpersonal care, care for the collective's structure and processes, and care for society via campaigns, or does its lack in one area cause the implosion of the rest? These are all jolts in social movement, upticks in vicious and virtuous cycles, ways that collaboration is either strengthened or weakened.

When collaboration deepens into a virtuous cycle, organizations are able to influence the broader flow of labour. There are various strategies for making an impact. Using Inquilinxs Unidxs as an example once again, organizing may nudge the flow of labour by allowing a few more individuals to access a bit more wellbeing, as in the group's early stage when they supported particular tenants requesting repairs from the slumlord. Or, the strategy of non-profits and unions was divert more of their flow of funding toward more-radical groups like Inquilinxs Unidxs. The "survival project" strategy is to prevent powerful institutions from funnelling so

[26] The organizer with Mosquito Fleet remarked, "I think some people … see [organizing] just as 'We're developing an infoshop!'; or 'We're doing squats!'; or 'We're planting community gardens!' And that's all really cool, but to me the biggest lesson from Zapatismo was that this is mass-scale revolutionary movement. And it happened in a context that is completely different from the one in which I live in so many important ways. But that happened through years and years of on-the-ground organizing, and relationship-building, and politicization, and radicalizing mass numbers of people, and getting communities organized – before they could have anything like an insurrection and declare territory autonomous. And so I think sometimes people try a shortcut towards the end … And so that's where [we get] the community gardens and the squats and whatever … Sometimes I think it loses sight of the nuance about *building* power in a different context." (Personal communication D, emphasis mine)

[27] For example, the student organizer in New York spoke about members' family and work obligations preventing meeting attendance, which prevented political training, which led to the group feeling ill-equipped to "go out and organize your people," which led to them falling apart (Personal communication C).

much wealth to elites and to instead redistribute more resources downward, as Inquilinxs did by suing the slumlord. Or, groups may turn away from these institutions and put their efforts into strengthening social struggles antagonistic to them, as Inquilinxs has done by supporting the housing rights movements in Minneapolis and Minnesota. Winning legislation to freeze rent increases and limit evictions could alter the balance of power in the tenant-landlord relation and affect the general flow of labour through rent. Finally, groups can pursue the strategy of directly collaborating to provide fundamental aspects of their wellbeing, as Inquilinxs Unidxs members do now that they cooperatively own, maintain, and self-govern their housing. Their Sky Without Limits cooperative may help spread such self-determined power throughout the city. As an AUSM alumni with the organization said,

> And the whole vision of organization … is that we're going to bifurcate into two. And essentially there's going to be a *defensores* [defenders] campaign, which is going to be training all our 200 members to organize in slum conditions against their landlords. And there's going to be a battle of territory, which will be the people who are organizing in the cooperatives. But eventually defensores will un-thrust territory from landlords and back into a tenant cooperative … And so now we're clear: We fucking *can* organize against any landlord, we can do it well, and we can do it in an advanced format … And we're already winning territory … We've got to keep fighting and moving toward it and building towards that dream. (Personal communication R)

We return to the dream that started it all, now linked to a grand vision of the social movement "battling for territory." Strategy guides the collaborative process of connecting the dream with the battle. And, as antagonistic as it may be, this process is also reproductive.[28] Care was fundamental for understanding the everyday organizing work interviewees described and the process of creating a group strong enough to engage in such grand battles. To exert enough power to win them, organizations need the inspiration, care, and collaborative capacity to move through a mess of problems – so that they may take aim at the allotment of life and death across society.

[28] This is not to discount more conventional understandings of strategy, as the culmination of tactics to modify the conjuncture's correlation of forces and wage a war of maneuver or position (Gramsci, 1971, pts. 1, chapter 3; Marx, 2009; Moody, 2017; Sassoon, 1980, pp. 180–218). They are indeed important, and most leftist discussions of strategy engage it using these military terms.

Conclusion

In many ways the Zapatistas, the Autonomous University of Social Movements (AUSM), and the political projects of its alumni are worlds apart. There are indigenous peoples taking back the land and settlers struggling in the belly of the beast; people in the countryside and the cities; a celebrated organization with a people's army, territory, cooperatives, and mass self-government and, on the other hand, thankless non-profits and small collectives struggling to make quorum at their weekly meetings. Despite their differences, they are all engaged in a common practice called organizing. No matter what pocket of society they find themselves in, it is people's labour that makes this world turn round, and it is the labour of change-making that will transform it. For that reason, the simplest answer to "What is to be done?" is "Get organized." To organize is to coordinate the daily labour of reproducing life more intentionally, among more people, to greater effect, hopefully with enough strength to change the relations that comprise this world, to make social movement.

It sounds enticing, but where to begin? If the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni are all "organizing," which of these diverse activities should novice organizers emulate on their first day and the next? What practices allow the veteran organizers to sometimes succeed? Those who are inspired by the Zapatistas cannot find easy answers to these questions by simply recreating Zapatismo somewhere else. Inspiration comes from without, but action has to develop from within. This is to say that, given the unique flow of health and wealth (or, more often, exhaustion and scarcity) that people in a certain place must plug into to survive, organizers have to turn inspiration into action to using the effort and resources they can access *from within* their flow, initiating a struggle to nudge it in a different direction. The process depends on the calendar, geography, and ways of being-with of each place. So we cannot cut and paste, but we can appreciate basic forms of movement within the labour of organizing, the ways they are strengthened, and shape our practices accordingly.

In this conclusion, I take a more practical approach to helping organizers think about what is to be done. I will first review the theoretical foundations for these assertions (as elaborated in chapter 1), and then I will synthesize them into an exercise that organizers can use to map their collaborative activity and strategy for making social movement. After explaining this mapping exercise, I will quickly highlight practical organizing lessons from my discussion of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni in chapter 2 through 4.

Theory

Building upon the assertion that organizing is a form of labour, in this dissertation I have sought to better understand what exactly this mode of "doing" entails, beginning with its everyday practices. Marxism and social reproduction theory give us many perspectives from which to survey these practices, including their division of labour, the quality of their labour power, the use values their labour seeks to produce, whether those outcomes are successfully realized, the reproduction of the collective, and their impacts on social relations. More colloquially, I often refer to these concepts as collaborative arrangements, ways of being-with, wellbeing, virtuous cycles, life, social movement, and right relation.

The proof of the path is in the walking, so during the core of the dissertation we travel from south to north, from Chiapas to Chicago and then across North America. Along the way, we learn how these various groups go about organizing in their diverse calendars and geographies, each in their own ways. I synthesize the concepts listed above from these concrete, collaborative experiences, instead of presuming concepts and then searching out instances to validate them. This is especially true in chapter 4, as alumni's candid reflections on their organizing led me to centre the mess, care, and ways of being-with.

Apart from helping people better understand the labour of organizing, this journey also recounts important histories. There are the Zapatistas, once the among most-studied social movements, but whose origins, massive land reclamation, and recent strengthening of their commune are all largely ignored. Next comes AUSM, among the most longstanding and wide-ranging of all the groups in solidarity with the Zapatistas, but

whose story has never been written. We end with the projects of some of AUSM's alumni, who give us insight into the trajectories of the university-educated activists currently in the trenches of North America's social movements.

This journey leaves us with the further question of what is to be done *next*. In the thirty years since their uprising, the Zapatistas have launched one initiative after another to organize the diverse organizations across Mexico, and possibly the world, who struggle from below and to the left – and to do so without hegemonizing or homogenizing (Moisés & Galeano, 2018c). After the release of the Sixth Declaration (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2005), AUSM has endeavoured to do the same through its alumni network and community organizing in Chicago. However, whereas many of the groups these alumni collaborate in coalitions, these remain largely issue-based groupings focusing on housing, unionization, prison abolition, impeding extraction, redistributing wealth, or health. Apart from the National Indigenous Congress, among the broadest and most radical alliances of Indigenous nations in the world today, the Zapatistas have not had great success in convoking an organization of organizations. Despite flashes of hope during the crest of protest cycles, there is still no decentralized alternative to the classical vanguardist party, one capable of coordinating a unified calendar of *anticapitalist* struggle across issues, organizing forms, and geographies.[1] As the Zapatistas often say, "What's missing is yet to come" (S. Galeano, 2014): the solution remains unknown, but at least the nature of the problem is clearer.

My modest proposal is that we be more materialist in reckoning with our collaborative activity. Instead of getting caught up in enthralling theories and good intentions, what reproductive labours allow (or prevent)

[1] I recognize this is a contentious claim, as many would point to "movement parties" such as the Workers' Party in Brazil and the Movement Towards Socialism in Bolivia as precisely this sort of alternative. As elaborated in a footnote in chapter 2, the EZLN's searing, longstanding critiques of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and his Movement for National Regeneration party explain why – instead of coordinating anticapitalist struggle – such formations have proven themselves to be better managers of capitalism, as they dampen the violence of its contradictions and subdue radical social movements. AUSM summarizes how AMLO's presidency has borne out these critiques (2022), which the EZLN has levelled against him for nearly twenty years (Comisión Sexta del EZLN, 2006, pts. 1, 2, 4), and Zibechi (2012, Chapter 16, 2018) and Reyes (2016) extend this critique to the broader Pink Tide.

people from showing up to organize, what is the day-to-day labour of the organization, what specific forms of wellbeing does it produce, and how does (or doesn't) this activity affect the flow of health and wealth throughout their pocket of society? Importantly, how can the reproductive labour of rejuvenating those nearest to us strengthen efforts to care for society more broadly? Swimming against the stream, organizers already have a hard enough time pursuing their goals. My aim is to facilitate these efforts by more intentionally acknowledging organizing as reproductive labour. In doing so, I have shown the base building strategy to be one of the most difficult but also most promising. I hope an honest understanding of the strengths and obstacles of this strategy lead more people to take it up, and that we can build organizations of *base building* organizations.

Reproductive labour

The good news I've come to share is that, because organizing is labour, we can draw from the rich body of Marxist thought in seeking to understand it. Furthermore, because it is socially reproductive labour, we also benefit from the work of Marxist feminists. This means that, just as labour plays a key role in the capitalist production process, the labour of organizing is central to the process of reproducing society differently. The two processes are similar in that their respective managers want the labourers to be as productive as possible – meaning they want labour power that is highly-trained, organized into an optimal arrangement, utilizing the best means of production, all to produce quality use values. Yet the similarities end here. Dominant social relations favour the capitalist manager, as the constant threat of unemployment, scarcity, and suffering does the manager's disciplinary work for them, ensuring that workers exhaust themselves in the pursuit of productivity.

Organizing is quite the opposite. Yes, non-profit staff may face similar pressures (although they could often find higher wages with less responsibilities in the private, or even public, sectors), but most people doing the labour of organizing are unpaid. For them, this is an effort they take on in addition to the exhausting labour that pays the bills. Furthermore, spending their evenings and weekends in meetings leaves them with even

less time to recover from the stresses of waged work. This crunch means that, when they are organizing, there is never enough time for the training and education that would improve their labour power, for re-jigging the division of labour within the group, for cultivating organizing tools (means of production), all leading to deficient outcomes, burnout, and abandonment. Lacking "capital investment" – or often any budget whatsoever – organizing largely consists in the interpersonal work of making the most out of this paltry situation. Instead of the threat of scarcity obliging them to show up, organizers are only compelled by the flame of inspiration in their hearts and the initiative they foster in each other. This initiative to action is the basis of organizing, but alone it is insufficient.

The labour of organizing raises many reproduction-related questions, each corresponding to a different understanding of "reproduction." Together, they show how organizing is able to enrich social reproduction theory in general. First, how do organizers manage to reproduce themselves, to keep showing up, despite this labour being an extra burden? How does the process manage to repeat itself, and sometimes grow? This is the analytical sense of reproduction, a dialectical perspective that, understanding things as processes, asks how they continue to flow.

Second, this is within a context where dominant social relations all facilitate the reproduction of capital, forcing most people to dedicate most of their lives' efforts to the work of enriching the few. How to combat these social relations of violent compulsion and reproduce relations of self-determined generosity? This is especially difficult because, when we are not working to enrich others, most of our efforts go toward recovering from work and raising the next generation of workers. I call this "domestic" reproduction – the third sense of the term – because of the constant pressure to isolate and hide away those who are doubly exploited by being forced to shoulder this burden. Their reproductive efforts are largely, but not completely, appropriated under capitalist social relations, and in the wiggle room between "largely" and "completely" we find a sliver of self-determination, the opportunity to move beyond subsistence and reproduce life differently.

Fighting within this wiggle room is difficult because capitalist relations are not just those that shape its production process, but all the forms of difference that impose scarcity and thereby render people subject to exploitation, dispossession, dehumanization, and repression. So, in fourth place, maintaining capitalist social relations requires "reproduction from above": reinforcing these forms of difference through laws, institutions, ideologies, and lines of work that ensure that health and wealth are systematically extracted from some and flow toward others. This is the work of reproducing class difference.

Fifth, we return to our erstwhile organizers, labouring together to create many different forms of wellbeing so that – beyond reproducing each other's vitality – they can reproduce a society of greater generosity and less violence. Yet, given all these obstacles, how do they manage to even reproduce the process of working together as a group? And does this small victory illuminate how groups sometimes grow big and strong enough to succeed in making social movement?

Organizers will only find answers to these questions through labour itself. As the Zapatistas say, we can only answer our questions by walking, and the questions are what animate the walk (Marcos, 2011a, Chapter 9). Yet social movement is grueling work, and the questions that move it are asked through trial and error, not simple enunciation. It is hard because we are caught in a profound contradiction: We hate the way things are, yet the dominant relations shaping this world manage to enlist us into labouring day-in and day-out at activities that perpetuate the power of the few who benefit from this ridiculous arrangement. Our daily work recreates our social world, yet changing it is much harder than choosing to behave differently. Class struggle is therefore a struggle over the sticky social relations that comprise this world, between relations of violence and relations of generosity. Instead of living through relations of forced collaboration, how can the many self-determine our activity? Instead of being forced to empower the oppressors, how can we collaborate in the ways we see fit, creating the use values we desire, thereby strengthening the ways of relating we agree constitute the good life?

This is the utopian horizon that social movement presses toward, and the path there is through a mess of contradictions. Consider them "messes for the masses."[2] This mess is fundamental: we deal with its various instances, but the contradiction isn't going away any time soon. This is why successful organizations treat problems like exercises in a textbook, as a guide for growth. Each problem is also a signal, revealing a challenge to collaboration, a way it is lacking, and each problem is thereby a provocation for organizers to strengthen it. Furthermore, each problem is an obstacle in the day-to-day reproduction of the group, which is why reproduction too is a guide for growth. This is the contradiction through which life moves, encountering obstacles to reproduction and creating new arrangements to overcome them. By overcoming problems and successfully collaborating differently within their groups, organizers lay the foundations for collaborating differently across society, for overcoming broader social problems, for strengthening the class struggle for self-determination. The challenge is to link the everyday labours of organizing with the struggle for social movement.

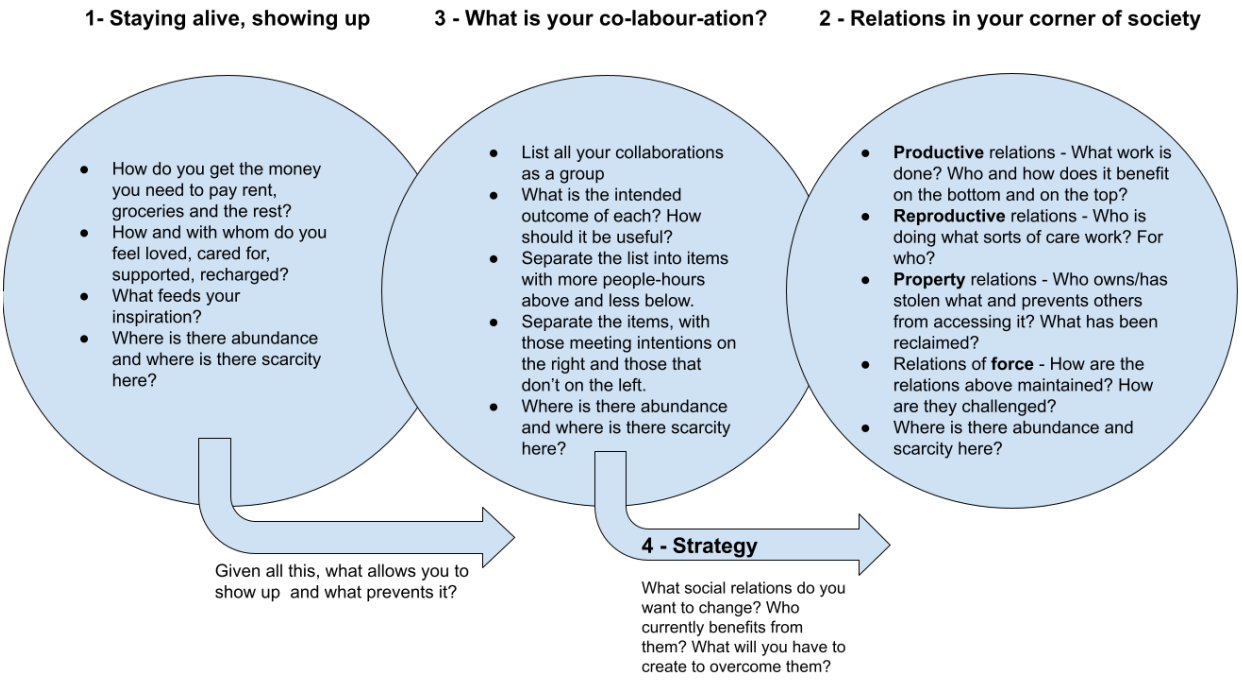
Practice

In this spirit I offer the following mapping exercise, as a tool for connecting everyday tasks with the struggle for social transformation.[3] I first developed it for use at weekend-long workshops I conducted in Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon with AUSM alumni in 2018. Thanks to those trial runs, I can offer a revised version here.

[2] Kudos to Dr Lesley Wood for this turn of phrase.

[3] There are many other works that seek to aid organizers in the practical task of determining what is to be done, emerging from the traditions of communism (Lenin, 1969; Martov & Kremer, 1983), anarchism (Inhabit, 2022, 2018; Louzao, 2014), autonomous Marxism (Ovetz, 2021; Woodcock, 2014), labour organizing (W. Z. Foster, 1936; McAlevey, 2020), popular education (Barndt, 1989; Coover et al., 1977), abolition (Kaba, 2020; Kaba & Hassan, 2019), and the experience of base building organizations (Harnecker, 2003; LeftRoots, 2020; Movement Generation Justice and Ecology Project, 2016).

Figure 3: Strategic mapping exercise (elaborated by the author)



The mapping exercise is separated into five steps. Instead of working linearly from small to large, the process begins with the personal, jumps to social relations, and then builds out the middle, the area where we collectively determine what is to be done. Within each step, the idea is to map *collaborative efforts* and the *flows* of energy and exhaustion resulting from them. Considering the range of collaborations people engage in, at each step we ask where there is abundance and where is there scarcity.

Throughout, it is important to remain as materialist as possible. Often our concrete activity is at odds with our appraisal of it, so it is important to differentiate between good intentions ("What are we doing? We're fighting for justice!") and actual collaborative efforts ("I spend most of my time responding to emails and processing disagreements between members"). It is also important to unpack general concepts ("Most people here work in the service sector") and explore the substance they refer to ("A lot of folks have back-of-the-house jobs in restaurants"). Remaining materialist therefore means avoiding the shorthand we use to wrap

complexity into neat, one-word conceptions. It can make for tedious conversations, but it also makes for stronger understandings, rooted in people's physical activity and the resulting flows of health and wealth. When it comes time to strategize action, these tedious discussions allow us to better understand what exactly the group is trying to change, the forces they can marshal to do it, and the obstacles they can expect to encounter.

Step one: Showing up

Jumping in, we begin with members' reproduction, the ways each person is able to stay alive and show up to the organizing space. Showing up is no easy feat, as it is additional effort beyond what is already required to pay the bills, recover from work, and keep our loved ones healthy. So each member should map these relationships individually.

Thinking across full days, weeks, and months, what do you spend your time doing? For many, most time is spent doing waged work and sleeping, and there is also commuting, cooking and cleaning, caring for others, caring for self, managing applications, registrations, and accounts, screen time, and time spent connecting with family and friends – plus the political stuff. Looking over all of it, which activities never get enough time? Circle these in red. And use green to circle the activities that sometimes provide an abundance of joy, love, care, and support, leaving you rejuvenated. Most importantly, which activities feed your inspiration, renewing your initiative to show up in organizing spaces?

Step two: Social relations

Now map the relations in your pocket of society, in what the Zapatistas would call your calendar and geography. Here it is important to avoid falling overboard by grasping for too broad of an analysis. It would take months or even years to complete a full conjunctural analysis of a country within the capitalist world system, and the point here is to maintain momentum as to move from mapping to practice. On the other

hand, the point is also to map *social relations*, avoiding conspiracy thinking where an overly specific cabal of individuals and organizations is seen to manipulate all of society.

To find a sweet spot between the two, begin by focusing on your *local* context and the particular *issue* you are looking to organize around. Instead of mapping all social relations, you will focus on the relations shaping this specific place and topic. And instead of a "cast of characters," here the task is to make a cast of roles, a role call of sorts. Instead of listing specific employers, what are the different *sorts* of businesses and institutions that people work for? Instead of listing "enforcement" in general, what are the different sorts of police, security guards, immigration officers, or white nationalist groups that carry out the work of repression? Importantly, because this is local and regarding a topic that group members have some familiarity with, brainstorm the roles instead of spending weeks doing research.

Also remember to consider relations from both above and below. By definition the powerful have an outsized role in shaping social relations, but the rest of us have agency too. Our daily labour creates social wealth; for generation after generation we do the work of raising empowered people; we create cultural understandings with material effects; and people resist in both organized and more informal ways.

With all this in mind, members should talk through the four sets of relations – production, reproduction, property, and force – and discuss the major roles and institutions through which people engage in these relations. Write each on a card, arrange them, and draw green and red arrows between them. Green is for self-determined flows that strengthen health, and red is for compelled flows that amass wealth. Some may be a mix of both. They all amount to the flow of life and labour in your corner of society.

Step three: Co-labour-ation

Now we arrive at the messy middle. Much like the personal time survey from step one, here the task is to survey organizing activity. What are members' collaborative efforts – both inside and outside of scheduled

events, formally and informally, across the communicative, caretaking, educational, norm-setting, planning, and confrontational work of the group? This is beyond what pretentiously gets called "the real work," the bold, public actions that people usually envision when they pull together the gumption to join an organization.

Each activity is an aspect of the group's labour of organizing, and you should write each on its own card. To what end is each one undertaken? What is its intended use value, its benefit to the organizing process? Without getting too obsessive about it, arrange these activities so that those comprising more people-hours are above and those taking up less are below, and then put the activities that tend to produce their desired effect toward the right and those more prone to failure or (more often) ambiguity toward the left. Use green to highlight those with abundant participation and red for those where it tends to lack.

Step four: Flows and strategy

Here ends the properly "mapping" phase of the exercise, the part concerned with the context as it is. The fourth step is to discuss how we wish it to be. This begins with setting intentions for social movement. Take a hard look at the social relations map from step two. What conclusions can you draw about the flow of health and wealth through your corner of society? Are there bottlenecks that stand out, where those creating the wealth have greater opportunities for disruption? Are there wellsprings of generosity that can be radicalized?

Most importantly, how would you like to *change* this flow, to make social movement? We all want to dispossess the dispossessors and erase the red lines, as of yesterday, but aim for a good mix of pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will (Gramsci, 1920). Focusing in on a few specific changes to the flow of life and labour you would like to achieve, make note of the people you will have to overcome to do so. What roles and institutions are your enemies in this struggle? They are the measure of your audacity, the amount of collaboration you will need to muster to make social movement.

Now we consider what is to be done to achieve these intentions. This is a question of organizing our collaboration, and it can take many forms. Each of these forms is a strategy, an *orientation* toward strengthening labour power and changing its flow through society. Often collaboration is tangible, face-to-face, growing as more people join. Money (representing past labour) also facilitates collaboration, especially by allowing the purchase of equipment. Reproductive labour rejuvenates the collaborators, as does building out alliances (the labour of expanding our division of labour).

These each correspond to a common strategic orientation: base building, pursuing grant or dues funding, survival projects, and supporting the movement. Think of each as a pathway, as a green arrow in the flow of life and labour. The group will work to thicken the arrow through greater collaboration with greater material effect, overcoming the flows accumulated by our enemies. Which orientation will you emphasize? Obviously groups can pursue numerous strategies at once, but each also takes up limited energy.

Step five: The collective vehicle

The final task is to home in on what is to be done within the group to pursue this strategy. Understanding that the ultimate goal is to care for society, members' most immediate project is to strengthen the collective, the *vehicle* for caring for society. Think of the vehicle like a multi-person bike. Its tires may be flat and the chain broken, but organizing is fundamentally a commitment to repairing the vehicle and keeping it moving, rather than everyone abandoning it at the side of the road and going their separate ways.

There are a few different aspects to this conversation of how to strengthen the collective, beginning with how members care for each other. Looking back to the mapping from step one, review how people are able to show up. What sorts of collaboration will allow people to show up more and will feed their initiative when they do so? Where is there abundance that you can draw on to address scarcity?

Next, look back to the mapping from step three, on the range of collaborative efforts within the group. You should already have an idea of what activities are over- and under-emphasized, given what occupies a lot of effort but tends to not produce its desired effect, what activities are more successful but that you don't get around to enough; what easily elicits participation, and what people only do begrudgingly.

Now, with an eye towards your strategy for social movement, it's also time to reflect on how you can strengthen the specific sorts of collaboration needed to pursue this strategy. Base builders will need practice in recruiting and training new members, and collectives lending a service the broader movement will need to practice their unique skills (such as first aid for street medics and maritime mobility for kayaktivists). Or you might decide that you need greater unity of purpose, requiring political education, accountability/trust, and meaning-making. Or you might need to better "organize the organization" through modified structures and processes.

This is often overwhelming, as everything is lacking and everything needs to be done now. This is why the work of prioritizing and *de*-prioritizing is so difficult-yet-important. Set your collective intentions, recognizing that each needs consistent, collective attention if it is to be made real. Make sure that, given everyone's limited energy, this is possible.

Finally, there are a couple more ways to strengthen your collaboration. The questions above are meant to strengthen it among those already present, allowing them to pedal the bike harder. When this is ticking along well, the work is further strengthened by bringing more people onto the vehicle. Recruitment and accompaniment of new members is a labour unto itself, and it often requires more effort be put into accountability work and organizing the organization too. Despite these difficulties, the best way to make social movement is to integrate as many people as possible into its labour. Furthermore, this collaboration is multiplied when groups team up, forming a fleet of sorts. Collective listening exercises, inter-group political education, and small, initial solidarity-building activities are all things to consider.

Some additional considerations

I hope organizers find this mapping exercise helpful, and that they take the liberty to modify it so that it may be even more so. Before moving along to organizing lessons from the Zapatistas, AUSM, and its alumni, here are a few further notes and suggestions. One is that people looking to *begin* organizing can also use this exercise to collectively set intentions. Rather than evaluating which organizing activities do and don't produce their intended effects, people can discuss their "way in," the initial collaborations through which they hope to touch off a virtuous cycle and how they hope to build a ladder of engagement from there.

Second, the mapping is structured as to highlight such virtuous cycles. It moves from the ways members individually rejuvenate each other and feed their inspiration, to the ways the group works to strengthen its collective labour of organizing, to the strategic orientation with which this collaboration seeks to change the flow of health and wealth through society. The point is that people can only push for large-scale self-determination using a series of ever-sturdier "footholds": from the supports allowing everyday abundance to those allowing for a strong collective, to those that make for social movement.

Thirdly, footholds are for moving. This is to say that, switching metaphors, organizations should be wary of remaining "roots-bound." Yes, the initiative nurtured by personal wellness is the basis of organizing, the root. Yet a plant must venture up and out from the safety of its roots and risk getting trampled so that it may interact with the wider ecosystem, bear fruit, and aid in strengthening relations more amenable to life. The point of organizing is to care for society, not to only accommodate members by advocating "socialism, starting with me."

Fourth, and continuing the melee of metaphors, this is all easier when organizers are "digested" into the social relations of those they seek to recruit. Given that the labour of organizing is an exertion of energy, to be digested is to render this energy more amenable to the social body it seeks to animate. This requires

organizers to take up with ways of being-with common to those they seek to coordinate with, seeking out the most radical aspects of this subjectivity and working to further strengthen them. For example, after AUSM tried and mostly failed to recruit people into coordinating committees at its Chicago community centre, they found that the committee in charge of planning monthly dance parties was the only one with eager participation, the only activity that effortlessly attracted crowds. This was collaborative energy that the wider community was ready to metabolize, a "way in," the starting point for further collaboration.

Fifth, the exercise is but one moment within a process of praxis. This means that the mapping exercise (theory) culminates in proposals, and the actions (practice) they inform will initially lead to more questions than answers. Initial actions will feel sketchy, half-baked. But nothing better exposes the relations that shape our world than confronting oppressors, so practice will do more than months of research to clarify these uncertainties. Members can then add these revelations into their mapping, further strengthening their understanding, and thereby strengthening their practice. Finally, none of this provides a roadmap for creating an indomitable organization of organizations. I merely seek to clarify the reproductive labour that makes for strong groups and the organizational labour through which they pursue specific, material *strategies* for changing the flow of wealth through society. Hopefully attention to such strategies and the labour of pursuing them can make for more purposeful alliances.

Lessons

The Zapatistas

We now turn to the lessons emerging from the experiences of the Zapatistas, AUSM, and their alumni. While we know less about the everyday labours of Zapatista organizing, they clearly state that its foundation is militancy, the commitment to make the slogan "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves" into a reality (Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena, 1994c). This is the inspiration they seek to nurture and expand through their organizing work.

Importantly, their organizing process cannot simply be replicated between one context and another. The EZLN was started by members of the National Liberation Forces, a guerrilla organization founded in faraway Monterrey, Mexico, and it was only after five failed attempts that they began to successfully build relations with the Indigenous communities surrounding Chiapas' Lacandón jungle. They were ultimately successful because, rather than winning over converts by preaching the revolutionary gospel, they allowed themselves to be "disconfigured" (Moisés, 2015d, p. 179), "digested" (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, p. 62) into the most radical ways of being-together already prevalent in these communities. The first Zapatistas did this by learning to listen (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, pp. 60–65), especially to those who were both widely-respected and willing to patiently explain to the eager newcomers the communities' centuries-long struggle against colonization, their strategy for social change, the roles and responsibilities through this work was organized into everyday life, and the concepts through which it was understood. Marcos calls them "translators" and a "political elite," whereas others might identify them as "organic leaders" (McAlevey, 2016, pp. 12–14, 30–37). They taught the first Zapatistas how to be digested, in terms of rendering their energetic initiative into a form more appropriate to their social context.

It is important for organizers to seek to be digested (icky as this sounds), to recognize the need to engage the unique subjectivities of those they seek to collaborate with. Many organizers have a wealth of previous experience that they have synthesized into lessons, and furthermore they are often steeped in the revolutionary theory resulting from struggles in other times and places. This is incredibly important for strengthening our ability to recognize pitfalls and maintain a militant commitment to struggling for everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves. Yet this is only one half of praxis, and alone it is woefully insufficient. The other half is practice, specifically the ways of being-with through which people reproduce each other within the specific social relations that constitute a specific place. These cannot be learned from a book, and blabbering on about all the books people should read discourages them from inviting organizers into their practice. The organizers must be organized.[4]

[4] This is a variation on Marx's assertion that "the educator must himself [sic] be educated" (2002, sec. 3).

These first Zapatistas then grew the organization by both strengthening their reproductive capacities and fostering militancy. They recruited people who appeared to be respected in their communities and gave them the task of coordinating small-scale mutual aid projects. If they were successful, these recruits were tasked with coordinating reproductive work on ever-larger scales and thereby climbed up the organizational ladder of engagement. Good work was rewarded with more work (López y Rivas, 2018), integrating entire communities and providing the material basis for the growth of their army. The lesson here is that, because organizing is reproductive labour, you can only build a strong organization by making the coordination of reproductive *projects* into a fundamental way members are expected to participate and the way they gain respect.

This clandestine organizing culminated in the January 1, 1994 uprising. On this day and during the months that followed, the Zapatistas recuperated hundreds of square miles of land, consummating a revolutionary, decolonial social movement. Instead of enriching the plantation-owning class, the health and wealth flowing from this land would be channelled through cooperative labour, managed through collective self-government. Their land recuperation thereby touched off the virtuous cycle that has made the Zapatistas into such an inspirational example of emancipation: the agriculture, healthcare and education projects developed on this land allow more people to dedicate more time to Zapatista good government, which further strengthens their organization, allowing them to push for social change beyond Chiapas.

The point here is that, while discourse, popular opinion, and political positions surely matter, the struggle is fundamentally a material one. All too often, we get caught up in disagreements over discourse, at the behest of labouring for material change. Quality of life is a question of how we collaborate and the forms of wellbeing we create. As with the mapping exercise above, I strongly suggest organizers resist fetishes and keep their attention on material practice. As we see with the Zapatistas, a courageous push for material resources can radically improve people's lives and lay the foundation for revolutionary social movement. And

yet, instead of seeking to replicate Zapatismo by occupying stolen land, leftist settlers should struggle for its unsettling (Fortier, 2017). This can and should include struggles to assert collective ownership of things like housing, healthcare, and means of production. Re-socializing such wealth is essential for creating the mass organizations that can both enrich the lives of their members and more powerfully struggle for a decolonized society.

Lest we idealize them as a model organization, the Zapatistas emphasize that they are beset by difficulties, forcing them to treat these problems as their textbook for growth (Moisés, 2015d, p. 176). In this sense each difficulty, each mess, signals where organizers should direct their efforts. For example, the refusal of all three major political parties to implement the San Andrés Accords taught the Zapatistas they would have to develop the organizational capacity to practice Indigenous rights unilaterally. Zapatista women's assertion of self-determination, without asking for permission (Zapatista Women, 2020), taught men in the organization to accept defeat (S. Galeano, 2015b) and allow women to strengthen the material basis of autonomy through full participation in self-government and cooperatives (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2013c, pp. 20–23).

Organizers should take heed of the Zapatistas' willingness to upend their organizational structures. This has allowed them to create whatever form of wellbeing a novel problem calls for and integrate an ever-larger majority of their base into active coordinating roles. Importantly, they call the orientation that guides this struggle "resistance," which I read as a resistance against being *shaped by* existing flows of labour. For example, they created the Good Government Councils in part to resist charitable flows reducing them to a relationship of dependency. In this sense, militancy is a commitment to tirelessly working to shape relations instead of allowing them to shape us, our aspirations, our ways of being together.[5] This is how the Zapatistas widening the scope of their self-determination, allowing their struggle to bloom into a project for life.

[5] Furthermore, note that resistance, militancy, digestion, and the like are all collective practices, not individual ones. The point is not for individuals to performatively demonstrate the most radical political position, the greatest commitment,

AUSM

This brings us to chapter 3 on the Autonomous University of Social Movements, whose organizing strategy has also radically changed over the years. It was founded as the Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN) in 1998 to coordinate human rights delegations in response to the Acteal massacre, yet recruitment dwindled as the Zapatistas faded from the headlines (and especially after they rejected all three major political parties), and the sporadic consciousness raising and grassroots lobbying efforts of returned delegates were failing to have material effects. MSN became critical of this organizing form and its implicit theory of change, and they found an alternative programme when the EZLN released the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle (2005). The Zapatistas urged those wishing to struggle alongside them to organize "from below and to the left," leading MSN (soon to become AUSM) to adopt a Marxist analysis and search for non-electoral base building work.

They found their "way in" for practicing these politics through a struggle by day labourers in Albany Park, Chicago resisting displacement from their street-corner labour market. The loose coalition supporting the day labourers eventually coalesced into a worker's centre, but MSN distanced itself from this project as day labourers began to critique staff for being more accountable to their funders than to supporting the workers' struggle for self-determination over their labour power. Instead, AUSM's response was to create a novel organizing structure in pursuit of a novel strategy (Hansen, 2007, Chapter 7). They created their own community space – the Centro Autónomo – where university-educated activists could *support* organizing *led* by undocumented workers. Alongside this popular education and community organizing project, AUSM created a study abroad program in Chiapas, providing material support to the Zapatistas while also allowing political education with activist university students.

being the most down to earth. These practices are only consequential if they are undertaken collectively, which requires a great deal of listening, intention-setting, coordination, and accountability.

Yet pursuing this novel strategy exposed new obstacles. First, AUSM does not have the capacity to patiently and consistently guide students' translation of theory into practice once they return home, to ensure they dedicate their efforts to strengthening the self-determination of local community members rather than supplanting it. The lesson here is that this accompaniment work can only happen once a strong community organizing project is already established. Otherwise, the strain of simultaneously organizing both university-educated activists and highly exploited workers easily gives way to the former being prioritized over the latter, especially because the study abroad program pays the bills.

On the other hand, AUSM's organizational form and the flow that it participates in only allow for so much effort. No one organization can do everything. Furthermore, in choosing what they *will* do, each organization chooses its mess. In this case, the study abroad program's political education and material support are well worth the effort, radicalizing hundreds of students and providing consistent flows of material support to the Zapatistas and allied groups in the Sexta. And yet there is always more to be done. The task is not to find the perfect model, but to constructively build from one set of problems to another, better set of problems.

Within the Centro Autónomo, AUSM also found that popular education-based English classes did not readily segue into efforts to change conditions outside the classroom space. The lesson here is that only practice – everyday efforts to build out collaborative structures, create forms of wellbeing, and, crucially, to resist the oppressors – builds militancy, and political education is more theory than practice. Again, AUSM does not have enough labour power to pursue both popular education and community organizing, so it prioritized its less antagonistic (and more popular) education work.

This points toward the strategic lesson that the institutions that perpetuate capitalist relations do so by creating forms of difference. In this case, the university functions to segregate the working class into mental and manual workers so that the former may be enlisted in managing the latter. Creating a community space was a good first step in subverting this process, and AUSM's obstacles show that the path forward involves

dedicating more effort to base building around material concerns such as housing while also integrating fewer university-educated activists into this organizing, assuring that those involved consistently demonstrate militancy and that the organization can consistently accompany them in their day-to-day work.

Furthermore, there needs to be a stronger reproductive base for all this. Highly exploited workers are usually too exhausted to participate without robust reproductive supports, such as food, childcare, and recreation, and AUSM's staffing model means that its organizing capacity is limited by the number of study abroad applications it receives. Again, the point is not that non-profits are bad, but that they have unique limitations. People considering whether to organize themselves in this way should be explicit about what they expect to gain from this organizing form, what they will use it to pursue, and under what conditions they will abandon it. Militants prioritize making social movement over maintaining a specific organizing form. Considered over its 25 years, AUSM has demonstrated this militant flexibility, recognizing one set of problems preventing social change, reorienting and reorganizing, and confronting a new, better set of problems. It remains to be seen whether it can reorganize once again.

Alumni

In chapter 4, I consider organizing more generally, across the diverse projects of its alumni. One of the most common topics of these organizers' reflections was the litany of messes they confront in their everyday collaboration, and if novice organizers do not begin this work *expecting* it to be a slog, they will quickly get scared off.

Yet those who remain need not resign themselves to stoicism: if they are able to create "footholds," then they can touch off a virtuous cycle instead of getting burnt out trying to prevent a vicious one. Footholds begin with consistent sources of inspiration, cradling organizers' push for the reproductive supports that then help more people to more consistently show up, thereby allowing them to push for a stronger collective that more consistently creates the sorts of wellbeing it sets out to, allowing them to push for social movement. The

lesson here is to try and create a virtuous cycle, where by caring for each other, organizers are able to care for their collective endeavour, so that it may care for society.

Often the initiative to embark on this journey is sparked by the inspiration of life in liberated territory, moments of abundant collective power, hatred of oppression, or political education. The shared inspiration of just a couple people is enough to spark an organizing project. But the first moments are full of trepidation, as organizing is a gamble, in that organizers choose a social relation – a way that health and wealth are made to unjustly flow through society – and they search for a "way in" catalyzing collaboration to reshape this relation. This all takes a lot of effort, initially without any reproductive supports to make it more sustainable, and with no guarantee that those efforts will produce their intended result.

This is why, along with pushing toward successive reproductive footholds, organizers must "keep the faith" by reproducing inspiration. The steadfast belief that life can indeed be better is the basis of all organizing. Dominant social relations are a people-grinder, pulverising this hope. Militancy is exceedingly rare, as the tendency is toward exhaustion, disarray, and depression. This is why organizing is fundamentally reproductive, because – if they are to "make love powerful" (J. Jordan, 2016, p. 12) – organizers must recreate the material and spiritual conditions sustaining hope.

Unexpected successes, surprising instances when things are easier than expected, signal opportunities for strengthening collaboration by addressing a widely-felt need. Veteran organizers are always on the lookout for them. Yet more often problems are the textbook for growth, which is to say that the signals are found in obstacles – obstacles that signal where care can be strengthened. Care may mean keeping the faith and kindling inspiration; it may be caring for members' rejuvenation so they can better show up; it may be caring for the collective through more unity of purpose and a ladder of engagement that better strengthens labour power; or it may be a reorientation of strategy, allowing the group to better care for society.

Furthermore, for as contradictory as it sounds, care is one of the greatest contradictions within organizing. There is an ever-present tension between labouring *within* the group to recreate the conditions sustaining hope and labouring to care for society. The demands of the former never leave enough energy for the prerogative of the latter. This is why the Zapatistas counter with "everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves." This is a revolutionary ethical imperative, and it is also functional. As my partner is fond of saying, "We either fight the boss or we fight each other," meaning that groups that cease struggling for social movement from below either stagnate or implode. On the other hand, we need to find a sweet spot between the two, because groups with martyrdom complexes, those who neglect both "domestic" reproduction and that of their collective, also implode. Achieving everything for everyone requires flourishing groups, incorporating the labour of ever-more participants.

Care is also a subjectivity, a way of being-with in which people become adept at collaborating to create whatever sort of wellbeing is needed. Do we need better political education, healthcare practices to mend our aching muscles, ways to discuss distress and re-assert accountability, a resonant public message, to stop a deportation, unionize a workplace, or evict a landlord? The organizers' many-splendored labours are capable of creating all these forms of wellbeing, and many more. Theirs is liberated labour, and instead of accumulating value they accumulate the capacity to create (Reyes, 2016, p. 164), the seed of a flourishing self-determination. If they can collaborate with enough strength, they can reshape the flow of life and labour through society, so that those below are less exhausted and more able to wrest control from the expropriators. And in creating new relations, they create new ways of being human within them. Beyond creating services or campaigns, what is most important is that we create each other, as comrades.

Finally, each attempt at making social movement needs a strategic "way in," a flow of life and labour *internal* to the group, pushing to reshape flows *beyond* the group. The non-profit strategy is to tap into flows of taxation-donation and orient them towards people doing more radical work. The strategy of survival projects is to lighten the exhausting, disciplinary demands on members by organizing to collectively access

reproductive supports, averting the gatekeepers. The strategy of collectives is to offer a service to the broader movement. Base building strategy is to recruit as many people as possible into an organization capable of creating whatever form of wellbeing members deem most necessary, struggling to abolish the oppressive relation that creates such a need in the first place.

Each strategy comes with its own messes: non-profits are disciplined through competition for funding; survival projects are never able to attend to all the suffering doled out under capitalist relations; collectives support a diffuse "movement" whose success relies on many other groups they are disconnected with; and base builders are often overwhelmed with immediate needs, preventing struggle to change the relations that create them. Groups should be explicit about what strategy they are adopting, what exactly they are looking to achieve through it, how they plan to respond to its obstacles, and under what circumstances they will reconsider or abandon it. Then, most importantly, the only way forward is to get to work and reorient theory and practice with each problem that arises.

Onward

These are our lessons, a few humble indications for deciding what is to be done in the often-dreary and sometimes-exhilarating day-to-day struggle. Throughout, I have sought to emphasize the materiality of it all, the collaborative, reproductive activities through which we attempt to move our social relations. Most of the time, the woeful relations that constitute us remain beyond our control, despite the peculiar fact that they are the culmination everyone's actions, actions that we could all hypothetically refuse to go on repeating. We cringe as "all that is solid melts into air" (Marx & Engels, 2017, pt. 1), as "monuments [become] ruins even before they have crumbled" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 13), as the latest innovation that promised a bit of relief becomes another crap product, as the relationships that rejuvenated us get ground down by exhaustion and despair. The cringe sometimes grows into a scream and then refusal to go on participating (Holloway, 2002, Chapter 1). But mostly there is no alternative to the hamster wheel and the relations hardened into its cage.

Organizing is therefore an attempt at self-determination, at *producing* history instead of being rendered "the product of a history over which [we] have no control" (Debord, 2006, p. 71). It begins with inspiration – the belief that, despite all the pain, right relation still exists and could be greater, that we can indeed "raise the pleasure of living" (Vaneigem, 2006, p. 285). And this inspiration touches off action – a splendid sort of action called self-determined labour, where people come together to decide what sort of wellbeing to create for each other, rather than scrounging to buy it (if such a thing is even for sale). And this self-determined labour blossoms into class struggle, the fight to strengthen the relations of generosity that would allow such wellbeing to flourish (Brown, 2016, p. 105), and to abolish the relations of violence that resign us to scarcity.

Yes, it sounds utopian. But if you've glimpsed that feeling, you know the dream is real. How to explain it? It's a whisp of grace, the throb of heartening, the exhilaration when many people – with one voice – tell the boss to fuck off, the justice of re-opening the door of a recently-evicted home, the click when the meeting suddenly congeals into a "Yes, we will." Eyes look up from paper plates full of food and hearts say, "This is us, here we are." Together, we are the seeds. We can grow through this concrete and turn it back into a forest. Let's get to work.

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Appendix

Table 5: Interview details

Group	Letter	Alumnus	Interview date
Put People First	B	Jamie Blair	June 26, 2019
student organizing	C	Anonymous	June 6, 2019
Mosquito Fleet	D	Kurtis Dengler	June 18, 2019
Burgerville Workers Union	E K	Anonymous	July 20, 2019 June 18, 2019
Inquilinxs Unidxs	F R	Anonymous Roberto de la Riva	March 30, 2020 June 4, 2019
civic education	G	Anonymous	June 19, 2019
abortion rights	H	Anonymous	June 10, 2019
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia	I	Curtis Kline	June 4, 2019
street medics	J	Anonymous	July 10, 2019
wealth redistribution	L	Anonymous	July 19, 2019
homelessness	M	Maurice Martin	May 30, 2019
California Coalition for Women Prisoners	N S	Eva Nagao Eliza Sherpa	July 8, 2019 May 28, 2019
Autonomous University of Social Movements	O	Astrid Diego	May 22, 2019
retreats	V	Anonymous	July 8, 2019
wealth redistribution	X	Anonymous	June 14, 2019
tenants organizing	Z	Anonymous	July 24, 2019

Below are descriptions of each of these organizations, but *please note that they are by no means comprehensive*. Each organization listed by name explains their work in their own words on their respective website. Instead, the descriptions below are rather limited: Each is a perspective on the organization as communicated to me by one or two members of the group, during a single interview, as I asked them questions specifically about their collaborative practices, reproductive supports, obstacles, the ways this collaboration has changed, and – finally – how all this does or does not lead to broader social change. They are specific members' views from within, and I offer them here so that – in contrast to the synthetic understanding that I elaborate in chapter 4 – the reader may gain a more detailed understanding of each group's practice. I wrote these descriptions in early 2020, as I was moving from coding interview transcripts to analyzing them, and before I had developed the conceptual framework used throughout the dissertation. Their purpose was to verify with each interviewee that I had understood what they shared with me, particular as it may have been.

B - Put People First, putpeoplefirstpa.org

Put People First is a statewide base building organization, working to win healthcare as a human right. It is building a movement led by poor people by integrating political education into all levels of its work. The means and end of this work is to create "families" of mutual aid, as an alternative to this capitalist for-profit healthcare system. It is a struggle for universal healthcare, and in the meantime, it is also about building up the networks – like their "modern underground railroad," a "project for survival" – that show collectivity is the only way out of this never-ending crisis. They prioritize building up this political family in every level of their work, just as they prioritize political education at all levels. The practical realities of doing this organizing with working class people who are so severely beaten down by capitalism can be challenging, but beyond the important work of responding to individual crises, this sort of organizing is how we create a society that centres healing.

Put People First brings people into the organization by focusing on the widespread issue of the lack of healthcare, then it connects them with the services that partner organizations provide (meanwhile hopefully maintaining their involvement in the local chapter), and they ultimately build leadership within the broader movement as folks represent their local chapters regionally and statewide. This is a ladder of engagement that seeks to help members identify with the organization and the movement.

Day-to-day there is a lot of accompaniment work that goes along with the process described above, and there is also the coordination work that goes into running the organization. Members are canvassing, running local chapters that are fighting for local issues, coordinating regionally, and also setting priorities through the statewide assembly. On top of all that, the various committees provide specific capacities to the organization. This requires effort to systematize how people are working together, maintain accountability to the responsibilities people and committees take on, and to generally collectivize the work instead of leaving it to the individuals who have the most expertise.

C - Student organizing

This interviewee discussed an anticapitalist collective in New York City that had recently discontinued and had focused on political education with university students and community organizing work. There were many different pieces to this work: political education within the group, weekly sessions at the local public university to help recruit folks to the group, and a youth after-school program in a nearby working-class neighbourhood. The internal political education worked to make the group stronger by getting new members up to speed with older ones who have received more training; getting more people comfortable being educators; helping people develop their analysis and allowing the group to formulate demands for resources *plus* community control over those resources; and generally increasing the group's ability to think critically, which is important for sustaining our movements when there is not an immediate crisis.

Day-to-day, they used many political education tools. One was to create a welcoming, social environment so that people would be excited to attend. Then there were the various tools of popular education: connecting the dots between different areas of people's lives (housing, health care, race, gender), learning about the history of the struggle, always making sure to reflect on both a theoretical and practical level, and using lots of activities and roleplays. When this work was going well, it did a lot to move the group's work forward. Political education brought the group closer together, in part because people saw the connections between their lives and the collective struggle, and in part because it created a sense of shared responsibility. Political education was also a way to promote deeper engagement, since folks could drop in for a session at the university and then begin collaborating more closely, by joining a flyering run for example.

Despite all these strengths, the interviewee was open about the difficulties that led the group to disband. They highlighted obstacles such as the generational gap within the group (which was also an experience gap), a high turnover rate, and how many folks in the group were transitioning from being students to being workers, yet lacked the skills to organize in this new post-university context. In their external organizing work, it was

always hard to get people to take the step from reacting to immediate problems (like a hurricane or deaths in the neighbourhood) to engaging in a more protracted struggle for structural change.

D - Mosquito Fleet, mosquitofleet.us

Mosquito Fleet is a Seattle-based collective working to block the expansion of extractive industry through the Pacific Northwest. Internally, the collective does campaign planning that is both realistic and strategic, using their skills and gear to carry out escalating, water-based direct actions ("kayaktivism") against the spread of extractive industry. Externally, it teaches the practical skills of doing water-based actions to other groups of people, as an initial step towards these folks formalizing themselves as autonomous groups within the broader network that is holding the "thin green line." In this way Mosquito Fleet is a "force multiplier" for the movement-at-large, helping to pull off mass mobilizations involving a more diverse constituency than middle-income, white environmentalists. The mobilizations are also deeper, in that they support indigenous struggles for self-determination.

On a day-to-day level, coordinating these direct actions involves relationship building, campaign planning, and gear wrangling. They teach the hard skills of getting out on the water to other groups and also promote self-organization by giving people the context to work together, gel as an affinity group, and hopefully add to the broader movement. In their trust-building with Indigenous nations, they do the slow work of demonstrating dependability and an understanding of cultural protocols.

Theirs is a stark, material confrontation between colonial capitalism and those promoting the commons and practicing mutual aid. It makes for difficulties since it can fuel a martyrdom complex that causes burnout. It can also fall into defensive struggles instead of the pro-active work of building power. Furthermore, creating broad coalitions is messy, especially when liberal folks and large non-profits are involved.

E, K - Burgerville Workers Union, bvwu.iww.org

The Burgerville Workers Union is a legally recognized labour union across the eponymous fast food chain in Portland, Oregon. This began with people gaining employment there and secretly organizing their fellow workers. This organizing work involves "three trucks" that all have to move at the same speed. First, there is shop floor work, including mapping out the workplace, recruiting people, coordinating various structure tests with them as everyone builds power and confronts the boss, and generally supporting coworkers backs amidst all the instability in the high-turnover service sector. When this is going well, it helps folks identify with the union by feeling like it is their organization, like they are powerful. Again, this is very difficult. There is lots of turnover, so the leadership development and trust-building necessary for people to feel like "the union is us" is never-ending as new people cycle through. Mapping, formalizing, and building out relationships also takes a lot of work: lead organizers and committees have to do this at the workplace, it takes a lot of pushes to maintain accountability, and doing so much interpersonal organizing work requires formal support structures, so that emotional and reproductive labour is not all being pushed onto femme folks.

That brings us to the second, all-important (and often-overlooked) aspect of support work, which involves checking in with folks, "keeping them steady," supporting them as they come into their leadership, building trust with them, and also giving the nutritional, healing, and monetary support that allow folks to keep fighting. This is "the literal beating-fucking-heart of this organization": building trust and making sure people feel "held" within the group. In the day-to-day this requires constantly checking in with people, talking through the difficult things going on in their lives, helping them get the support and resources they need to not feel burnt out, and doing all this consistently. It also involves the tougher side of making pushes, "being organized" by others, working through things like fear and patriarchy, and holding people accountable to their responsibilities.

Third is the external work of coordinating solidarity with other organizations, pulling together resources, and getting media attention. All three areas have to be coordinated and supported through work back in the office, including the hum-drum administrative work of managing money, legal requirements, and coordinating reproductive supports.

F, R - Inquilinxs Unidxs, inquilinxsunidxs.org

Inquilinxs Unidxs (IX, "tenants united" in Spanish) is a base building organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After a two-year rent strike against their slumlord, tenants won cooperative control over 69 apartment units. IX seeks to "build the territory" in a similar way to how the Zapatistas revitalized the *ejido* by struggling for collectively-held land. Internally, this means creating assembly spaces for people to make decisions together, acculturating them into this way of working collectively, and then training and accompanying people as they collectively carry out the decisions made in assembly. Externally, building the territory means taking housing off the market and into cooperative control via direct action campaigns against slumlords and legal fights. Additionally, there is the work of building solidarity with the wider neighbourhood, allied collectives and non-profits, and with the labour movement.

Getting deeper into how this work is done, there is the process of "building compas" (a Zapatista word for comrades). In addition to becoming comfortable sitting in a circle and coming to collective decisions, people learn the hard skills of door knocking, accounting, conflict resolution, and events planning for community celebrations. Building compas involves continuous work to "keep the faith" by working through fear and strengthening the belief that winning is indeed possible. Building compas (and building the territory) also requires collective day-to-day work: community safety, repairs, cleaning out apartments, collecting funds, arranging celebrations, rituals to keep the faith, childcare. This is only the internal work. There are many more external tasks required to maintain a rent strike and carry out escalation steps against landlords and the city government.

The process requires relentlessly collectivizing the work. People must collectively affirm they are going to stay and fight. They must collectively carry out administrative, planning, and campaign tasks. They must develop collective norms and collectively intervene when people violate them by being macho or acting like landlords. And the collective spaces that organically spring up have to be formalized into their own groups (like the way the Coordination Committee became a Zapatista-inspired Good Government council). To keep this collectivization going, organizers keep an eye out for the strategic "democratic points" that people are interested in collaborating on – like collecting the water payments – and support this momentum.

There are many obstacles in doing this. The primary one is how overwhelming the work is. Keeping the faith against all odds is exhausting. Putting practice first (as in the "housing cooperative" acting like a full-fledged cooperative even while it still lacked legal recognition as such) leaves a lot of uncertainty. When there are finally structures for people to resolve their problems in community (instead of via police and courts), suddenly there is an avalanche of trauma to deal with. And while the organization is "building compas," people still have to work through aspects of the private property or sexist mindset they hold on to. Finally, the external campaign against the city and landlords dragged on for years, while those carrying the struggle were just trying to last one more day.

G - Civic education

This interviewee works at a public university in Maryland, conducting civic education with students. Our conversation centred on the work of carving out a new space to try new things within an institution. This requires engaging students on multiple levels, discussing their theory of change, and getting the word out on the benefits of civic engagement. This all comes together as students gain new skills by planning and carrying out projects to change things at the university, such as its equity policies and use of campus space, thereby making the university attractive to the sorts of students who aspire to transform institutions.

There are three major areas of this work. One is the aforementioned institutional work of carving out space for this civic education. Creating a new box within the university organogram and new budget lines and faculty positions is no easy task. Second is the work of developing curriculum, the theory behind it, and the ways to teach it. Early on, this theoretical and communicative work was done in preparation for national conferences, which then made it easier to get people at the university on board. Then, as the Movement for Black Lives grew, people at the civic education centre were prepared to offer a reasoned analysis of what the university's role should be within this dynamic context. Third is the day-to-day work of engaging students. This involves a comprehensive ladder of engagement, wherein staff first connect with students via orientation sessions, then invite them to more intensive workshops and institutes, and then maintain engagement via course offerings and more informal events like the journaling project.

H - Abortion rights

This interviewee works with an international non-profit seeking to expand access to abortions, and their job is specifically focused on the non-profit's activities across the African continent. They also participate in work to shape reproductive policy within international organizations, countering an expansive and well-financed anti-abortion movement. One aspect of expanding abortion access concerns on-the-ground services and "task shifting," and a second is the institutional work of "holding the line" via opposition research for use in these policy-making spaces. The task shifting work is to train lower-level (and more accessible) healthcare workers in how to provide abortions while also convincing the heads of public institutions to provide legislative and funding support for expanded services. All this is advanced through workshops addressing people's beliefs about women's value and reproductive rights. This requires connections with local organizations that can convoke these sorts of political-and-personal discussions.

We also spoke about obstacles: how government officials are unaccountable, as well as private funders. The discourse is limited, since it is framed in terms of lowering the birth rate and counteracting rape and incest instead of an empowerment and rights-based discourse. Yet the work also strengthens the conviction that

women's lives matter, that their pleasure matters, and that a woman's right to choose is a fundamental condition for creating a strong, inter-generational social fabric.

I - Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia, ielco.org

Curtis is staff within the international network of Lutheran churches and is based in Bogotá. His work is to fund and accompany community peacebuilding projects across Colombia. This peacebuilding focuses on building community after all the organized violence that has happened over generations in Colombia. This is a wide-ranging endeavour, involving a considerable amount of liberation theology-informed reflection with church congregations on what sort of society people want to build, on the everyday practices that make neighborhoods safe places in which to be building community, and the material resources that community-building depends on (such as food production and a cooperative fund helping people buy homes). There is also the national-level work of getting the government on-board with the various aspects of peacebuilding, from demobilizing armed groups to ending austerity.

Accompaniment is key to the day-to-day work of peacebuilding. It includes convoking a lot of meeting spaces, with the agenda geared towards allowing people to gain a greater understanding of what they want to collaborate on and why they think it is a good idea. Curtis also convokes a theological discussion group for pastors, and the more detailed work happens in community meetings to do things like map safety protocols and coordinate their various cooperative enterprises. Accompaniment is about convoking and facilitating discussion - especially discussion that helps people to formalize organic relationships that are already present in their community - rather than leading folks to a pre-determined conclusion. It also builds on already-existing social hubs like the churches and local “collective action” councils.

There is also the run-of-the-mill work of funding and evaluating projects, as well as the national-level work of joining coalitions to pressure the government. Curtis was also trying to pivot from the standard, grant-oriented work of a foundation towards work that strengthens community-level mutual aid. Of course, this is

all done in an extremely difficult context of ongoing persecution of movement leaders and the alluring pro-capitalist ideology that "God helps those who help themselves." Despite all these obstacles, the collective projects of the ex-combatants are the best example of collective empowerment, creating new ways of living amidst so much adversity.

J - Street medics

This interviewee belongs to a New York City collective providing medical support during protests. Their work is both simple and critical to the health of movements. Instead of getting bogged down with the demands of never-ending outreach, recruitment, reaction to crisis, and egotism that tend to burn people out from other forms of activism, this work is about "doing this one thing well." Day-to-day, this involves some dispatch work, showing up to actions, and skills training. This requires hardly any monetary resources and very little equipment - just the group's collective effort.

Beyond their immediate care work, it provides a general sense of wellbeing for trained people to be present, simply watching out for folks at street protests. Then, on the wider level, training others to be medics raises the general capacity of the movement to stay healthy. This teaching makes for more people in more collectives who can confidently respond to a range of different health-related situations that might arise, whether they be in everyday life in the neighbourhood, at work, or in political spaces. On the broadest level, this all contributes to creating a social fabric where communities are able to heal themselves instead of resorting to for-profit healthcare institutions and spaces that expose people to policing and its violence. These are the practical skills that are the foundation of community-reliance and community care.

L - Wealth redistribution

This interviewee belongs to a nationwide collective working to support social justice movements by convincing wealthy people to donate their money to them. Yet this conversation was more varied most other interviews, also touching on organizing work with an international labour union. At the latter they learned

how to organize non-union workers through one-on-one meetings and various techniques for collectively overcoming the fear of confronting the boss. Learning these techniques required many roleplays on how to make "pushes." Yet organizers were expected to practice this in a cold, instrumentalizing way, burning out many of them to the detriment of the broader movement.

The wealth redistribution work seeks to divert money away from exploitative investment and towards organizations led by marginalized people. Day-to-day this work involves relationship-building and accompaniment with rich folks, so that they give more and organize the rest of their families to do the same, as well as discussions within the collective on how to restructure power relations, beyond just diverting money.

M - Homelessness

Maurice supports veterans, people with disabilities, and the homeless as they attempt to access their basic needs and social services. He pursues this without belonging to any particular organization, working directly with folks in need and building up a network of fellow supporters. The direct support work is a slow process of building trust by demonstrating consistency and also by creating a "safe space and place" for engagement, so that people are comfortable opening up about their needs. The next step is to accompany people as they visit social service providers, ensuring they receive care and are not shamed or verbally abused by staff. The work of building a team of fellow supporters begins with an appraisal of each person's capacity and political motivations, followed by inviting them to visit homeless camps and disabled folks to deliver material support, so that the issue has a human face. The next steps on the ladder of engagement are activities such as contacting their representatives, distributing goods on a regular basis, or getting their classmates involved.

Maurice also accompanies people who need to access social services, such as their veterans' benefits to healthcare and housing. This requires overcoming the gatekeeping of government agencies and big churches and non-profits. Going to the Veterans Affairs office can feel like "returning to where the dog bit us," and

non-profits sometimes only care about increasing their client numbers instead of solving the problem. The task is to get their resources into the hands of the people who need them, while minimizing the damage these organizations can do in the process. The best situation is when people can share resources horizontally, without having to jump through any organization's hoops. He also builds connections with more supportive churches, non-profits, and high schools, speaking to groups so that he can find new volunteers, bringing them out to visit folks, and generally try to get everyone to take the next step and be a little bit more engaged than they already are.

The biggest obstacle is the sheer level of violence, trauma, and instability that folks are facing. Police kill disabled people with impunity and many veterans die by suicide. Homeless folks do not even know what the next few hours of their lives are going to look like, so "organizing" with them is nearly impossible. It is hard enough for them to coordinate showing up at the soup kitchen and clothing centre before they have to be in their hiding spot for the night. On the other hand, homeless folks and folks with disabilities watch out for each other on a community level. The work is to raise awareness of the problem, expose people to the everyday realities of these problems, and find people who want to help bring resources into already-existing mutual aid networks.

N, S - California Coalition for Women Prisoners, womenprisoners.org

CCWP is a statewide collective pursuing prison abolition and supporting those currently and formerly incarcerated. They do this through building up relations of care while also working towards abolition and decarceration. CCWP's work of building a "chosen family" begins with their "in" at the women's prisons, which allows them to get to know people and support them in their immediate struggles for legal support, medical attention, accountability for harm, and freedom. Having built these relationships, once folks are released, they continue supporting them as they navigate living in an isolated transition house, parole, getting around town, accessing food, and everything else. Once folks' day-to-day gets more stable, they can begin

helping others who are being released. It requires a lot of time doing the practical, material support that builds trust and slowly bringing more and more people into this community of care.

Prisons systematically destroy the social fabric and tear people down by isolating them, making them ill in all sorts of ways, and then depriving them of the resources needed to heal these wounds during and after release. CCWP turns this system upside down through mutual aid that supports healing in all aspects of people's lives, from their access to food to their integration into a caring social fabric. Collective members also read, research, and develop mutual aid models together, guiding the group's activity and its practical ends. Members can then use some of the energy built up by this mutual aid to pressure the government to divert its budget away from this carceral system, but without neglecting the base-level work that is the top priority.

O - Autonomous University of Social Movements, ausm.community

Astrid is a staff member at the non-profit, coordinating their study abroad program in Cuba. One aspect of this work is to counter-act its tendency to become siloed by strengthening collaboration among the team in Havana (for example by coordinating a cooperative among the homestay families) as well as their collaboration with the rest of the team in the US and Mexico. This is the basis for the organization's ability to teach students that there are alternatives to capitalism that can be won through struggle and to motivate them to participate in it.

On a day-to-day level, this is sometimes monotonous work. Administering the study abroad program does not feel like "organizing." Yet it is also the day-to-day work of modelling how to maintain revolutionary commitment while working a service-provision job, of modelling to homestay families how to distribute resources in an egalitarian way. The ongoing headaches of writing memoranda, dealing with problematic students, finding chicken, and buying bedding are annoying, but they are the thousand-and-one individual steps that together comprise a path towards stronger collaboration. Furthermore, the study abroad program taps into the capitalist, consumer-oriented study abroad market and re-directs its money towards socialism

and autonomy. Yet the alternative to capitalism can also seem a long way off, since the hardship caused by the US blockade makes Cuban socialism seem less appealing, since the gains of the popular uprising of the Cuban Revolution can seem like "stuff the state gives us," and since the day-to-day work of creating programs to expose students to the Cuban reality can be so tedious.

Nonetheless, students on the study abroad program emotionally and tangibly feel how living in socialism is simply more enjoyable. Their homestay families are gateways into a society that feels more caring and less anxiety-producing than in the US. This points to how the study abroad program is more than just an academic curriculum to improve students' analysis: it's an experience of *life*. This is why the work of creating a housing cooperative and lining up to get rationed food are just as important as the educational component.

V - Retreats

This alumnus is a member of a collective offering holistic healing services and retreat space in rural New York state. Day-to-day, this work requires building up different healing skills, including capacities to stretch muscles, calm minds, work with plants, and listen to the land. Building up these skills is part of a larger process of building the lasting relationships of mentorship necessary to learn them. Collective spiritual reflection allows the team to coordinate their day-to-day tasks. Yet we did not discuss these tasks in detail, leaving me with questions about how the mundane work of outreach, logistics, and payment happens, how the norms guiding healing work are agreed upon, and the accountabilities guiding ritual.

X - Wealth redistribution

This alumnus was part of a collective working to transfer capital from wealthy donors to oppressed communities in North Carolina. When we spoke, the collective had recently disbanded, as their work began to feel emotionally draining to all involved. This work was based on a comprehensive theory of change seeking to make reparations by redirecting wealth away from extractive uses and towards dispossessed communities participating in a just transition. The day-to-day work had three levels. First, there was the

internal discussion and research necessary to figure out how to move wealth, why such an endeavour is important, and from and to whom. Then there was coordination within the movement of people working on similar redistributive projects, to share ideas and develop the specific tools needed to "operate on the scale of finance." This allowed the collective to develop the legal and financial framework of a “pass-through loan.” Third was the more external work of finding donors, organizing them to accept that "you're not going to miss this money," and building the relationship with the people creating the cooperative enterprise it would fund in North Carolina.

There were a lot of different moving parts. While these gears were churning well, people felt like friends and like the work was hopeful and energizing. It took emotional labour to maintain this, especially since any project as ambitious as this is going to be exhausting at times, and there was also the emotional labour of convincing donors to relate to their money and the sense of security they glean from it in new ways. Once things began to break down within the collective - the emotional work was too much and unequally divided, paid work was messy, virtual meetings alienated people from each other, accountability and trust evaporated - then the feedback loop became more negative. It "felt like work," and suddenly the project of moving wealth from extraction to reparations began to feel extractive in its own right. Nonetheless, it was innovative and instructive in how to divert wealth from the dispossessors to the dispossessed in tangible ways.

Z - Tenant organizing

This alumnus belongs to a base building organization seeking to empower Chicago tenants. The ladder of engagement structuring this work begins with the crisis of people facing eviction. Folks are scared, and those accompanying them have to first address this fear before they can move on to any campaign planning or political education. Once they gain confidence that they can fight for their homes, they move into the heart of the campaign, which includes making demands on the landlord, coordinating escalating actions, and court support. All the while, tenants are getting political education via workshops and assemblies, in the hope that they then grow the capacity of the organization by becoming members of the core group, accompanying

others, and bringing more people into the fold. Ultimately, the goal of all of this is for tenants to take power away from landlords (from capital) and gain self-determination over their living spaces and neighbourhoods.

Day-to-day, the organizing work is comprised of the many tasks, responsibilities, meetings, and collaborations that make up "accompaniment." Yet despite all the effort this requires, the organization has not had much success in getting tenants fighting eviction to become organizers accompanying other tenants. Too often, tenants are only able to win a couple extra months before they are evicted and displaced from the neighbourhood. There is not a latent "organic structure" in buildings for organizers to tap into, which would allow them to find the natural leaders who can easily organize their neighbours. On the broadest level, the legal and financial power of private property is just so immense that it gives landlords overwhelming resources and great leeway in breaking the law with impunity. Instead of creating a snowballing movement that is "getting to scale," it sometimes feels stagnant, like any movement requires a lot of effort to hassle people into following through. Yet this is the hard, important work of figuring out how to create a mass organization, and hopefully these hard-won lessons will pay off.