Chapter 8
Social Movements Prefiguring Political Theory

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Abstract Adding to the growing literature on social movements as knowledge and theory creators, this chapter wants more social movement research to focus on the content of the *political theories created by social movements*, as an outcome of their morality. This chapter argues that prefigurative social movements create political theory through the interplay of their internal and external communication, their organization, and in their discussions of how and why to change the world: They are prefiguring political theory through their cognitive praxis. The chapter demonstrates how the literature on prefigurative social movements and Ron Jamison and Andrew Eyerman's concept of cognitive praxis, combined with a decolonial feminist approach to knowledge and theory, provides space for the political theory of social movements within social movement literature. This theory is inherently political as it is aimed to be a (temporary) guide toward the kind of world the movements want to see and argues why the world should look like that.

The chapter briefly outlines how a Cartesian approach to science prevents us from viewing theory based on lived experience as theory, even though all theory is based on lived experience, and thereby explains why we have not taken the knowledge and theory created by social movements seriously for so long. To recognize social movements as political actors, we need to engage with the concepts, policy proposals, critiques, or new institutions that they are creating, and not only the mechanics around creating them. Consequently, we need to recognize social movements as the authors of the knowledge and theory they create and not take credit for "discovering" it. Lastly, from a decolonial approach, we should recognize that social movement research is relational and that the research process should involve the social movements themselves to make sure they also benefit from it, and view them as colleagues who are sharing their knowledge with us. Moving away from the more Cartesian view of science requires a decolonization of the entire research process, and in particular rethinking what this means in terms of authorship, ownership, and credit.

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> "We have to go back to the original meaning of theory in Greek, theoria, meaning a view and a contemplation. View assumes a viewer, a ground on which to stand, and what is viewed from that standpoint. A view is also a framework for organizing what is seen and a thinking about the viewed."
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> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing."

Introduction

As many in this volume will point to, it is about high time that we engage with social movements as moral actors, as this is what social movements are at their core: Social movements are either trying to create change or prevent change from happening, based on a shared *normative*, or moral, perspective on these changes (della Porta, 2013; della Porta & Diani, 2006, pp. 240–241). In social movements, both actions and discussions of how and why to act are integral to their existence, and this metacritique of society, that we see within both their discourses and their actions,*is* theory, *political theory*. They are not only analyzing their societal context; they are also proposing how it should change or avoid change, redefining concepts and creating new knowledge (Casas-Cortés et al., 2008, p. 22; Cox, 2019, pp. 6–7; della Porta & Diani, 2006; della Porta & Pavan, 2017; Hall, 2009, p. 67; Hardt & Negri, 2017, pp. 20–21; Arribas Lozano, 2018, pp. 452, 454–455; Milan, 2014, p. 448; Niesz et al., 2018, pp. 2–4; Wright, 2010, pp. 26–29). This political theory is their practical moral compass. However, the research into the concepts, proposals, or knowledge of social movements often focus on the how, when, and who of knowledge and theory diffusion, and rarely do we as social movements scholars focus on the content of that knowledge and theory.

While we of course need to understand the mechanics of social movements to understand the theories, to truly take social movements seriously as moral actors, we need to also engage with their values, with their ideas, and with their strategy: We need to recognize their political theory as valuable contributions. I will show that theory and knowledge creation is part of the strategy for prefigurative movements—movements whose strategy is to live the future they want, today—as they are creating political theory through their practices which aim at prefiguring the kind of society they want to create or preserve. In this chapter, I will outline why I think movements' morality in the shape of political theory has not been focused on in social movement research and sketch out one possible way to rectify it—it all boils down to creating epistemic justice for social movements by recognizing them as knowledge and theory creators in their own right.

In order to recognize social movements as the authors of their own political theory—not simply objects to be studied and the muses of academics, the "true"

creators of theory—we need to reorient our notions of who creates knowledge away from a classic Cartesian approach to science that is based in a dichotomy of mind and body. We need to consider the collective cognitive praxis of social movements as political theory and that this political theory can and should be treated equally and be in critical dialogue with academic political theory (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, pp. 189–190; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010, pp. 2–6; Foley, 1999, pp. 1–5; hooks, 1991, p. 3; Todd, 2015, pp. 249–250; Val et al., 2019). Theory creation is a fundamental human praxis, not a practice limited to academics, and theory, as all other knowledge creation, is shaped by the context in which it is created. Social movements are thereby not the only ways people create knowledge or theory collectively, but social movements are the focus of this chapter as knowledge and theory creation is inherent to their praxis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 55–56; Foley, 1999, pp. 1–3; hooks, 1991; Santos, 2016, pp. 188–189).

In order to make room for the political theory of social movements, we, therefore, need to do as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o asks and bring theory back down to earth where it all started – we need to contextualize it, provincialize it, and challenge the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy (Thiong'o, 2012, pp. 14–16; Vincent, 2004, pp. 8–9). Fortunately, there is a growing literature within social movement scholarship focusing on social movements as knowledge and theory creators in their own right, and this chapter aims to add to this growing literature (Casas-Cortés et al., 2008; Choudry, 2009; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Cox, 2019; Cox & Fominaya, 2009; Daro, 2009; Della Porta & Pavan, 2017; Hall, 2009; Arribas Lozano, 2018; Lysack, 2009; Niesz, 2019; Niesz et al., 2018; Teasley & Butler, 2020). However, literature on social movements and knowledge creation has existed even longer within the literature on adult, or popular, education and, both directly and indirectly, in the literature on decolonial critiques of westernized[1] epistemologies (Foley, 1999; Hall, 2009; Niesz et al., 2018; Santos, 2016; Teasley & Butler, 2020). Often this work ends up falling between the cracks of disciplines and not sticking in the mainstream social movement discussions. I also take a decolonial feminist approach to research, and, consequently, this chapter is inherently critical of the inheritance of the enlightenment and the notion of modernity and science that sprang from it (Grosfoguel, 2013; Mbembe, 2015; Mignolo, 2011; Santos, 2016; Shiva, 2005, 2016).

Decolonial thought is not one streamlined field or literature, but to simplify it, I am basing my understanding on the following strands: The modernity/coloniality approach that came out of interdisciplinary work in Latin America (Escobar & Pardo, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2018; Maldonado-Torres et al., 2018; Mignolo, 2011, 2017; Quijano, 2000; Santos et al., 2008), literature of indigenous scholars (Smith, 2012; Tallbear, 2014; Todd, 2015; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2012), feminist and ecofeminist thinkers (Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1992; hooks, 1991, 2010; Mies &

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[1] Westernized is used instead of "Global North" or "Western" to highlight that this is a practice rather than tied to one place. Moreover, westernized academia not only ignores the vast history of the global south but also the indigenous and subaltern groups using prefigurative strategies within the global north.

Shiva, 2014; Shiva, 2016), and decolonial scholars from Africa or in the African diaspora (Mbembe, 2015; Mkabela, 2005; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013; Thiong'o, 2012; White, 2018). Of course, these distinctions are mainly heuristic as many of these scholars fall into more than one category, and these categories are informed by my PhD project which is a Participatory Action Research project with the Kenyan Peasants League. To further situate my thinking, I was born and raised in Denmark with roots in Tanzania, and inhabiting the double consciousness of the African diaspora in Europe motivates me to highlight the knowledge and theory that is often undervalued and unrecognized within westernized academia. However, as a light-skinned, sometimes white passing, academic trained in Europe, I have been part of this erasure, and I am constantly striving to be reflexive about how I from my immensely privileged position risk perpetuating this erasure. This chapter is also a way for me as a researcher to rethink and unlearn what it means to do social movement research, as I have made many of the mistakes I outline in this chapter.

Lastly, the decolonial approach to theory in turn necessitates a decolonization of the role of the scholar, and I suggest we go from expert discoverers to colleagues. Sometimes we forget that researchers are students first and foremost, and our teachers are the people we engage with through our research, just as our academic colleagues teach us about their work (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, pp. 2–3; Tallbear, 2014, p. 2). This reorientation of the scholar-movement dynamic aims to give credit where credit is due and counteract the erasure and epistemicide of oral and communal knowledge in general and indigenous and other marginalized knowledges in particular (Morell, 2009, p. 30; Santos, 2008, pp. 24–29; Tallbear, 2014, p. 2). I will start by showing how already existing theories within social movement scholarship can accommodate a different view of theory and knowledge, specifically, theories on prefigurative social movements and cognitive praxis within social movements.

Prefigurative Social Movements

Prefiguring, at its most basic, means to live the future in the present, living as if the world had already changed. Thereby, *every* action counts within social movements that use prefiguration as a strategy, as they all need to align with the future they seek. Prefiguration is here understood exactly as a strategic choice certain social movements make: They believe it is both the morally right way to act and the best way to achieve their goals (Maeckelbergh, 2011, pp. 13–15). Consequently, most of the literature on prefigurative social movements have focused either on how the movements remain "pure" by equating means and goals or on their experimentation of how they can build a new world within the old, or simply *living the future* (Boggs, 1977, p. 100; Day, 2005, pp. 34–36, 126; Leach, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2011, p. 4; Wright, 2010, pp. 6–7; Yates, 2015, pp. 3–4).

Prefiguring Theory

At the heart of the literature on prefigurative social movements is a belief that it is valuable to experiment with and build alternative social structures—whether those are to be expanded after a revolution or through a long-term reform process (Boggs, 1977, p. 104; Wright, 2010, pp. 5–6). When Carl Boggs originally coined the term, he positioned *the prefigurative tradition*, inspired by anarchist practices, against the Leninist approach to social change and revolution (Boggs, 1977, pp. 100, 103–105). According to Boggs, the problem with the Leninist approach is its elitist vanguard-ism, its reliance on existing state structures, and its lack of blueprint for after the revolution, which leads to the new regime being too tied to the institutions of the old regime (Boggs, 1977, pp. 102–103, 108–109). So, for example, even if we can find evidence that Lenin himself would not have approved of the bureaucratization that escalated after his death, the movement had no other blueprint to follow. On the other hand, for Boggs, the strength of prefiguration is its trust in the grassroots, which leads to many locally based experiments that might start sketching a blue-print for a different society and rally support among people for these new structures (Boggs, 1977, pp. 103–104). However, the advantages of prefiguration are also seen as its downfall: According to Boggs, most local movements fail to spread as they are too rooted in their own context, and the prefigurative attempt of equating goals and means often results in inaction and a lack of leadership (Boggs, 1977, pp. 113–114; Wright, 2010, pp. 334–336, 370–371). The current critique of prefigurative strate-gies mirrors Boggs critique: That prefiguration is often hard to scale up and that its emphasis on doing everything "correctly" can leave it defenseless by not being stra-tegic enough (focusing on spontaneity) or result in nothing getting done (Yates, 2015, pp. 8–9). However, Marianne Maeckelbergh challenges this notion that pre-figuration and strategy are mutually exclusive, rather she argues that prefiguration *is* a conscious strategy and that social movements who use prefiguration as a strategy do get stuff done. The social movements using prefiguration as a strategy believe that it is impossible to reach one's goals with means that are not compatible with the end goal: We might change the people sitting in the institutions but not the institu-tions themselves, which is exactly Boggs critique of Lenin (Maeckelbergh, 2011, pp. 13–14; Yates, 2015, pp. 7–11). Boggs original argument is that the Leninist movements are prefiguring the wrong kind of future by associating too closely with existing state structures that do not align with their values (Boggs, 1977, pp. 102–104, 107–109). Moreover, if we look beyond the discussion of vanguards vs. prefigura-tion and focus more on what the different prefigurative movements actually are creating or trying to create, we will not only be able to chronicle many creative ways of changing the world, but we are also able to support or criticize the movements on their own terms.

At its core, the prefigurative argument is a constructivist argument, based on the assumption that in all political action, we are producing or reproducing certain power relations, values, and forms of organizing (Foley, 1999, pp. 3–5). Theory creation and prefiguration are inescapable human activities that we perform both

consciously and unconsciously, and the *cognitive* space that prefigurative social movements create facilitate these processes (hooks, 1991, pp. 1–3, 8; Wright, 2010, pp. 26–28, 274–279). To some degree, all social movements prefigure a different society, while prefigurative movements are actively aiming for it. Whether the world they are aiming for looks a lot like what we already have, or a far cry from it does not change that. It is important to note that there of course is a large difference among the social movements that use prefiguration as a strategy—they have different historical circumstances, different goals, different participants, and different takes on what a prefiguration strategy looks like. However, the overarching point is that their prefigurative praxis *is* their theory. They are basing their activities on morals and values, and letting their experiences and experiments inform their morals and values—it is a continual, iterative, theory-making process. Theory is here defined as a more or less abstract, and purposeful, explanation of the connection of concepts, while practice is defined as both speech acts and physical acts, or discourses and actions, and it is *political* theory, due to its orientation toward shaping society. The concept of theory here leans on more classical conceptions of theory, quite literally, in terms of the original Greek meaning of theory as observation, which connects theory to lived experience.

Bell hooks elegantly describes the kind of communal deliberations that take place in, for example, social movements as theory making:

> "When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two-that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other" (hooks, 1991, p. 2).

However, as academics we often ignore the theorizing that takes place outside academia. Since the enlightenment, westernized science has been based on an assumed dichotomy between mind and matter, which has resulted in a divide between theory and practice.

Mind and Body: A Colonial Legacy

This Cartesian separation of mind and body still lingers in most of westernized science, especially in the positivist understanding of science where distance between the researcher and the subject is seen as necessary to create *objective* knowledge (Berger & Kellner, 1981, pp. 25–26; Mies, 2014, pp. 38–40; Steager, 2013, p. 174). When physical activity is so starkly separated from mental activity, practice and theory are also seen as dichotomous—it prioritizes *knowing-that*, analytical knowledge, over *knowing-how*, or practical knowledge (Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1992, p. 221, 1992, pp. 220–221; Grosfoguel, 2013, pp. 75–77; Shiva, 2014, pp. 24–25). This suggests that the more abstract a theory is, the more *objective* it potentially is, as it rises above the particularities of subjectivity.

This divide has been the raison-dêtre of academia for a long time, as it assumes that academics are the only ones capable of creating (true) objective knowledge, as we are (supposedly) only engaging our minds, rising above our bodily experiences (Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1992, pp. 217–221; Grosfoguel, 2013, pp. 74–78; hooks, 1994, pp. 137–139; Mignolo, 1999, p. 237). Even in post-foundational and critical theories, it is hard to escape this dichotomy as academic theorists still attempt to "rise above" their context (Allen, 2017, pp. 12–19, 77–78, 204–206). Any project that attempts to go against this, and situate the knowledge created, will be viewed as partial in the double sense: both as incomplete and non-neutral. However, *all* theory is based on lived experience. The difference is that a lot of academic theory is based on the distanced observations of *others*' lived experience, as this is seen to be appropriately objective, while theory that is based on observations of one's *own* lived experience is dismissed as too *partial* (Anderson, 2004, pp. 4–6; hooks, 1991, p. 4, hooks, 2015, pp. 44–45). This is still present in the, often unspoken, division of labor between academic theorists and activists, each encouraged to stick to what they know best, completely obfuscating the fact that activists create theory of their own and that academics can be activists (Bevington & Dixon, 2005; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010, pp. 3–6; Morell, 2009, pp. 25, 27–28, 35–37). Most importantly, this rejection of the partial, the lived, and the experienced also denies authorship to the very people who created the knowledge that scholars learned from them—instead of acknowledging movements for creating certain terms, we credit scholars with "discovering" them (Cahil, Based on work with the Fed up Honeys, 2010, p. 182; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Santos et al., 2008, pp. xxxviii–xxxix; Tallbear, 2014, pp. 1–3; Todd, 2015, pp. 245–246, Todd, 2016, pp. 17–18). I will return to this briefly in the final part of this chapter.

The main problem with this epistemological dichotomy is exactly its colonial underpinnings, as it denies the validity of non-westernized forms of knowledge and results in epistemic injustice or epistemicide, by undervaluing, appropriating, silencing, or eradicating certain kinds of knowledge (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016, p. 297; Grosfoguel, 2013, pp. 76–78, 84–85; Santos, 2016, pp. 152–153, 251). Consequently, this dichotomy upholds the myth that westernized academia is both value free and ahistorical and that any serious theory is the same – universal. This epistemic injustice, is often used to justify dehumanization or marginalization of the groups holding this knowledge, which in turn leads to discrimination, violence, and oppression (Grosfoguel, 2013, pp. 84–85).

Feminist and decolonial scholarship and research has shown that epistemic practices are always both historically situated and value based, and not being explicit about this is in fact the real problem (Anderson, 2004, pp. 19–21; Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1992, pp. 238–239; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 56–57; Mies, 2014, p. 38; Wylie, 2003, p. 341). The decolonial critique of the universalistic Cartesian view of science, which intersects with and is informed by feminist scholarship, outlines an alternative pluriverse approach to knowledge and the university. Knowledge is seen as relational and communal, moving away from a notion that it comes from the isolated minds of individual geniuses (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2006; Mbembe, 2015; Niesz, 2019; Santos et al., 2008; Shiva,

2016). It is about challenging whose knowledge creation we value and moving away from a Cartesian *gods eye view* of knowledge as something "[…]monological, unsaturated and asocial[…]" (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 76) to an understanding that there exists *ecologies of knowledges* (Santos, 2016, pp. 111–112, 115–116, 188–190, 206–211; Santos et al., 2008, pp. xlvii–xlix) that are always already partial, relational, and situated. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, westernized science has *only* valued and universalized what he calls the epistemology of the North, so, creating epistemic justice requires us to strengthen and bring to light the epistemologies of the South, through a sociology of absences and a sociology of emergences (Santos, 2016, pp. 45–46, 145–147, 164–165, 171–173,184–189), as I return to below.

At this point, it is important to note that contextualizing theory does not mean that it cannot travel outside its context. Frantz Fanon's exploration of the particular colonial situation of Algeria in *Wretched of the Earth* has resonated with people in similar, but distinct situations across the globe. Not in spite of its closeness to its context, but because of it, as it allows the reader to easily identify what is familiar and what needs to be translated (Thiong'o, 2012, pp. 23–25, 57–58). Moreover, when trying to understand the world, we cannot solely rely on theories created in one part of the world. We need to provincialize westernized knowledges and recognize that the world is made up of an *ecology of knowledges* (Santos et al., 2008, pp. xlvii–xlix). An ecology of knowledges does not lead to moral relativism, rather it leads to an acknowledgment that no knowledge is complete and to approach the world from this humbling starting point (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 88; Santos, 2016, pp. 189–191).

Both theory and knowledge creation are fundamental human acts for which a space is created within not just academia and social movements, but throughout our lives (della Porta, 2013, pp. 5–6; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 55–57; Foley, 1999; hooks, 1991, p. 8). The point of this chapter is not to flip the hierarchy and place practice on the top. As bell hooks eloquently explains, it is the dichotomy that is the problem; we need both theory *and* practice. Moreover, it is important for hooks to underscore that theory is not a luxury item; it is crucial to our very existence (hooks, 1991, pp. 7–8). Instead of a dichotomy, practice and theory are in an iterative relationship, either informing or being informed by one another (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 49–50; hooks, 1991, pp. 5–6; Thiong'o, 2012, pp. 15, 19–21; Vincent, 2004, pp. 8–9). This mirrors Santos' notions of *sociology of absences* and *sociology of emergences*: The sociology of absences aims at highlighting the alternative ways of living or knowledge that are being practiced but has been hidden or overlooked by westernized science, while the sociology of emergences is about looking to expand what we deem possible for the future, that seems impossible to westernized science (Santos, 2008, pp. 45–46, 171–176, 184–189). Both are meant as ways of creating epistemic, or cognitive, justice by taking up space for the epistemologies of the South, as there will be no social justice without epistemic justice (Santos, 2016, p. 233). While Santos highlights that social movements naturally practice a sociology of absences, by bringing new present alternatives forward (Santos, 2016, p. 175), I would say they also practice the sociology of emergences

by highlighting different possibilities of how to walk into the future (Santos, 2016, p. 186). So, when social movements prefigure their own political theory, they exactly walk this line of what is already created and what these creations hold in store for the future. The epistemological deconstruction of the Cartesian worldview is therefore crucial to my argument but will not be elaborated further here, and it has been presented thoroughly elsewhere (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Dalmiya & Alcoff, 1992; Dalmiya, 2016; Esteves, 2008; Grosfoguel, 2013; Harding, 2008; Maldonado-Torres, 2006; Santos, 2016; Santos et al., 2008; Shiva, 2014, 2016).

There is already a concept in social movement literature that encompasses this prefigurative view of theory making and highlights the iterative relationship between practice and theory: *cognitive praxis* (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). While the cognitive approach, as the prefigurative approach, focuses on all the different aspects of a movement, it specifically focuses on what cognitive praxis is created through it all. And this is exactly where these two literatures complement each other well and make room for political theory created by social movements within social movement literature.

Cognitive Praxis

Cognitive praxis is the practice of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, teaching, and experimentation, and Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison argue that all social movements create a space that facilitates such cognitive praxis within the movement and in interaction with both allies and enemies. This is in itself not new as many social movement scholars have shown that social movements are great places for, especially democratic, experimentation (Dalmiya, 2016, p. 262; della Porta, 2013; della Porta & Diani, 2006; della Porta & Pavan, 2017; Smith, 2012, pp. 150–151, 159–161; Wright, 2010, pp. 26–29). What is different from other approaches is that the focus is on what knowledge and theory is being created, and how it affects society, and not *only* the mechanics of how it is being created, again, in order to move focus from being solely on the mechanics to the content. It is often hard, if not impossible, to measure the exact effect of the movement, but it is possible to see how a movement has been part of opening certain cognitive space or introduce certain concepts (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 64). While the literature on diffusion between social movements and within transnational movements has broached this from the perspective of how far these ideas travel, again I suggest we also focus on the ideas themselves (Tarrow & McAdam, 2004).

Cognitive praxis is constantly in flux within social movement spaces (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 55–58). Cognitive spaces exist in all different contexts, not only in social movements, but Eyerman and Jamison underline that the cognitive space within social movements is often more open to experimentation than other cognitive spaces, and it often leads to new knowledge, both formal and informal (Choudry, 2009, p. 8; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010, p. 2; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 66–68). Cognitive praxis is of course only *one* aspect of social movements;

however, it is what makes them unique according to Eyerman and Jamison, and an important feature that should be recognized. Moreover, focusing on cognitive praxis does not mean leaving organization or mobilization behind, as all the practices of social movements are informed by and inform their cognitive praxis, through an iterative relationship – the how is still important, it is simply not the focus of the analysis (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 55). This is evident in the three dimensions that cognitive praxis consists of according to Eyerman and Jamison cosmology, organization, and technology (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 66–68).

Cosmology, Organization, and Technology

Inspired by Habermas, Eyerman and Jamison outline three dimensions of social movements cognitive praxis, the cosmological dimension, the technological dimension, and the organizational dimension (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 68–69). At the basis of any movement is the cosmological dimension—this is the movements ontology, its values and its goals—which can be "read" from the movements own texts, and this is where the normative aspirations of the movement can be found (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 70). The technological and organizational dimensions revolve around which technologies and organizational structures the movements use, but also which they distance themselves from. The organizational dimension includes both internal organization and external communication and alliances, while both the technological and organizational dimensions relate to dissemination of knowledge (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 68–69, 75–76).

It is mainly within the technological and organizational dimension that there is space for practical experimentation with new ways of being. This knowledge creation happens internally in the movements, when movements interact with other movements, or governments, or the public at large—it is in their strategy, in their internal practices, their values, their goals, their identities, their protests, their projects, their conflicts, and their alliances (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 57–59). The technological and organizational dimensions both inform and are informed by the cosmological dimension. Therefore, to understand a social movement's political theory, we must investigate all three and how they interact (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 71–74). Additionally, the notion of different *cosmologies* being present in the world also fits well with the decolonial outset of this chapter, which is at its core an attempt to provincialize the knowledge production of westernized science (Mbembe, 2015, pp. 9–10, 13–14; Santos et al., 2008, pp. xx–xxi). Moreover, Eyerman and Jamison want to present the cognitive praxis of the movements, on its own terms, rather than trying to "prove" they are part of a certain ideology (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 46–47). Such an approach, which I myself have been guilty of doing, not only assumes there to be a limited number of acceptable ideas in the world, it also undermines the agency of the activists by assuming that it is up to the academic expert, or a vanguard, to "diagnose" their ideas for them. Therefore,

focusing on the political theory created by social movements cannot be solely focused on any kind of vanguard whether inside or outside the movement.

Movement Intellectuals

Eyerman and Jamison distinguish between intellectual-in-movement and movement intellectuals—the first is often the classic *partisan intellectual*, with a vanguardist approach to the movement, while the latter are intellectuals whose intellectual practice is born within the movement (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 108–109, 113–119). They make it clear that cognitive practice is not something left to the so-called organic intellectuals or the (un)official leaders of a movement. Moreover, they insist that intellectuals of all kinds grow from the movement and are continually shaped by the movement (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 94–95, 110–113):

> "Movement intellectuals draw on established intellectual contexts, but the established tradition must always be reinterpreted and adapted to the needs of the movement. It is not, as Lenin insisted, the intellectual who brings consciousness to the movement: that was the central fallacy of Stalinism. It is rather the case, as the young Lukács insisted, that intellectuals become conscious within the context of a social movement" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 166).

This is crucial, as the notion of the philosopher kings—however watered down it may be—goes against the ontological belief that knowledge is co-created, as it is then up to these special individuals to discover nuggets of golden philosophical insight and then pass it on to the rest of us (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 57; Vincent, 2004, p. 27). For Gramsci, the organic intellectual is defined by their *functional* role, and while it is very interesting and important to look into the power dynamics and different functions within social movements, of (un)official leaders and organic intellectuals, talking about the elites is not automatically the same as talking about the ideas (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 5–13; Rodriguez & Smith, 2013, p. 70). Moreover, focusing only on the so-called organic intellectuals within movements—who often are the ones doing work that would be recognized by academia—erases the *intellectual* aspects of the technical and organizational work: We need to look at the whole picture and broaden our notion of valuable knowledge and theory (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 113). We need to recognize social movements as knowledge and theory creators in their own right. Casas-Cortés et al. highlight that studying what they call *knowledge-practices*, within social movements, means not always focusing on the spectacle of the protest or the external discourses, but looking at the mundane everyday activities of movements—the meetings, the day-to-day organizing, planning, banner making, etc. (Casas-Cortés et al., 2008, pp. 44–45).

The Political Theory of Social Movements

When social movement activists are evaluating their experiences based on their shared—or negotiated—value system, they are making political theory (Anderson, 2004, p. 5; Vincent, 2004, p. 9). When social movements are building alternative infrastructure, e.g., in agriculture, care work, or markets, they are creating political theory. Sometimes movements create new concepts—like the international peasants' movement La Vía Campesina (LVC) who coined the now widely used term food sovereignty, based on both the practices and the aspirations of their members. However, most of the time social movements, like academic theorists, redefine or repurpose already existing concepts or theories (Brones, 2018; della Porta, 2013, pp. 6–9; Desmarais, 2007, pp. 100–101; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 71–72; LVC, 2018, p. 16). And there can of course be more than one theory within a movement. These political theories are created through the discussions, the activism, the alliances, the campaigns, and the organization of a social movement, or their *cognitive praxis* (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991), which prefigure a different world. Some movements explicitly share the political theory they create, while others only share it internally through their praxis. The leaders presenting the theory to the public, of course, influence how it is framed, but they are not the creators—the movements are. The point of research into the political theory of social movements is both to critically engage with it and mobilize it to new contexts by documenting it. Santos highlights how what he calls *intercultural translation*—translating knowledge into different contexts—is a crucial part of the epistemologies of the south, as it allows ideas to travel further. Intercultural translation can be done by either activists or academics, but it requires a closeness with the context you are translating from (Santos, 2016, pp. 223–225, 231–232).

At the time of writing, I am halfway through my PhD program at the faculty of Political Science and Sociology at Scuola Normale Superiore, and for my PhD, I am collaborating with the Kenyan Peasants League (KPL) through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007, pp. 39–40; Redman-MacLaren & Mills, 2015, pp. 5–6; Wakeford & Rodriguez, 2018, pp. 23–25). KPL, a member of LVC, mentioned above, was formed in 2016 after mobilizations, around the WTO's tenth Ministerial Conference in Nairobi in 2015. KPL, as LVC, advocates for food sovereignty, agroecology,[2] peasant feminism, and climate justice while fighting industrial factory farming and institutions such as the WTO and the IMF (Kenyan Peasants League, 2018). Since its inception, the KPL has been quite active within the movement and has, for example, completed a summer school on agroecology for local farmers in 2019 (LVC, 2019). So, the concept of theory

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[2] Agroecology is in itself a contested concept. In its thinnest definition is a set of principles for ecological and sustainable farming that places farmers in the center as it is meant to be adapted differently in different environmental settings (Bruil et al., 2019, p. 3). However, for LVC and other movements, using agroecology also has a political dimension: it signifies a democratization of knowledge and ownership, and a post-Cartesian approach to the world (Val et al., 2019, pp. 7–8).

created by social movements is a thought that has taken shape before and during this collaboration. Unfortunately, this specific work is not ready to be presented just yet, so instead, I want to highlight an older example even closer to home, Steven Feierman's book *Peasant Intellectual* based on his field work in the Shamba province of Tanzania between 1966 and 1988 (Feierman, 1990, p. xi). This example highlights that such work has been conducted for a long time, often in different fields, and that there is a lot to learn from communally made theory in general.

Indigenous Political Theory: Tanzania

In his book *Peasant Intellectual*, Feierman analyzes the discourses and actions of the peasant community in Shamba province in Tanzania as an *indigenous political theory* that is multifaceted (Feierman, 1990, p. 21). The traditional notions of *harming the land* (*kubana shi*) and *healing the land* (*kuzifya shi*) were tied to the concept of power, and the notion of *power against power* (*nguvu kwa nguvu*): A centralized power (*nuguvu*) was seen as healing the land, as it could prevent conflict and secure peace. On the other hand, having more than one locus of power (*nuguvu kwa nuguvu*) was seen as inevitably leading to conflict and, thereby, harming the land (Feierman, 1990, pp. 6–8, 87–92). This indigenous political theory is both challenging and agreeing with different westernized versions of sovereignty while also including the impact of human activity on more-than-human life[3] (Feierman, 1990, pp. 91–92, 232–241). This highlights how much we will miss when we disregard the rich tapestry of the ecology of knowledge, in favor of using the same westernized theories, on, for example, sovereignty, for all contexts (Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, pp. 1–3).

Most of the data are oral histories, or concepts passed down orally, which is why field work was crucial to documenting this indigenous political theory (Feierman, 1990, p. 21). Feierman's book thereby underscores the need for scholars to be open to use different methods and open to different processes and presentations of theory (Feierman, 1990, pp. 7, 20–21, 70–87, 128; hooks, 1991, p. 4; Simpson, 2014, pp. 99–100; Thiong'o, 2012, pp. 72–81). Lastly, Feierman avoids appropriating this theory, by claiming that he discovered it, rather he is explicit about it being *taught* to him (Feierman, 1990, pp. 3–4). This is perhaps the most important takeaway, as I will show in the next and final part of the chapter. I believe that if we accept that social movements create both knowledge and theories, then this should also affect how we as scholars interact with this knowledge and these theories, as to avoid appropriating indigenous and locally held knowledge (Shiva, 2008, pp. 280–281).

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[3] More-than-human life, a term borrowed from Zoe Todd (Todd, 2017), is a more specific term for "nature." The way "nature" is frequently used separates humans and nature, as mind and body, and challenging this distinction requires placing humans within the concept of nature, which means it no longer exclusively refers to plants or animals, which is usually what is meant by the vaguer term nature.

Standing with Social Movements

As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write in their seminal text "Decolonization is not a metaphor," colonization is a material process, and therefore, decolonization requires a redistribution of power and resources, not only changing the way we talk (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 19). The decolonization of the research process of social movements therefore requires a participatory approach to the entire research process, to ensure that the project not only benefits the researcher, and to co-create stronger data that will benefit all the involved parties (Alonso, 2008, pp. 260–263; Arribas Lozano, 2018, pp. 455–458, 461; Manzo & Brightbill, 2007, p. 34; Mkabela, 2005, p. 184; Owusu-Ansah & Mji, 2013, p. 4; Smith, 2012, pp. 10–11, 187–189; Tallbear, 2014, pp. 3–6). As Kim Tallbear phrases it, we should not *give back*, as that connotes a strong separation but instead *stand with* the movements, or communities, we are working with (Tallbear, 2014, pp. 4–5). Moreover, we need to recognize the collaborative and relational process that research into social movements inherently is – we need people to consent to be interviewed, meetings to be open to observers, internal documents shared, etc. (Cox & Fominaya, 2009, p. 6). And without this collaboration, we could not do our job, so we need to make sure that we are not the only ones benefitting from this inherently unequal power dynamic. Part of taking a decolonial or participatory approach is building relationships that go beyond transparency, creating processes that are open and listening to the input of co-researchers and participants, both before and after we start co-creating data (Levkoe et al., 2018, pp. 8–11; Arribas Lozano, 2018, pp. 456–458; Martens, 2017, pp. 5–6; Mkabela, 2005, pp. 183–186; Morell, 2009, pp. 21–22; Tallbear, 2014, pp. 2–4). Recognizing that social movements create theory and knowledge is not enough – this should also affect the way we give credit to the movements; we cannot view ourselves as the discoverers of the knowledge we learn from social movements. We can mobilize this knowledge, chronicle this knowledge, and critically engage with it (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Santos, 2016, pp. 219–220, 227–233, 245–246), which are important tasks, but we did not *discover* this knowledge the same way that Columbus did not *discover* the Americas. I will briefly demonstrate why the notion of *discovery* is problematic.

First, when knowledge is always co-created, it is not something that is just waiting to be unearthed by a researcher—it can be new to us and recreated with us, but it will always already be known to the people we are interviewing, observing, or participating with (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, pp. 58–59, 62–63). Second, the notion of discovery is intensely linked with colonialism, and the notion that mountains, rivers, lakes, and certain species did not exist until a white person *discovered* them and wrote it down (Shiva, 2008, pp. 272–274). This goes back to the dichotomy of mind over matter, where women in general and the colonized in particular are seen as being too much in their body to truly have control over their mind and are often described in animalistic terms as people with no history (Fanon, 2004, p. 7; Mbembe, 2015, p. 13; Santos et al., 2008, pp. xxxv–xxxvi; Smith, 2012, p. 9), which in turn brings us back to the unspoken, division of labor between academics

and activists, where activists are all action and academics all thought. Consequently, moving away from the dichotomy and the notion of the scholar as a discoverer means moving away from a notion that we as researchers are a necessary component for knowledge or theory creation to happen within social movements. We can facilitate knowledge or theory creation processes, as we often have more time and resources to devote than the activists in the movement, but this can easily happen without us (Morell, 2009). Social movements do not always *need* or *want* researchers to carry out this work, and it is important to respect that as well (Tuck, 2009, p. 423). Instead, we should view social movement activists as colleagues that have a lot to teach us about the work that they do.

Of course, not all researchers view themselves as discoverers, but the colonial mindset of westernized research still encourages us to go out and plant our flag in social movements and claim our scientific discovery. We might use participatory methods or ascribe to constructivist epistemologies, but if we at the end of the day go home to our universities and claim to have discovered what social movement activists have taught us about and practiced for years, then it is still appropriation and erases the intellectual work of those activists. It is the difference between writing a book discussing the ideas of Karl Marx and writing a book claiming credit for discovering the concepts of economic base and superstructure. Discovery is closely linked to both patenting and property rights, of both land and knowledge, and questioning this logic of course means taking a completely different approach to authorship and ownership of knowledge, which leads to some very hard discussions with no easy answers (Alonso, 2008, pp. 257–259; Shiva, 2008, pp. 273–275).

To truly think of our work as collaborations, should then imply that we credit movements with some kind of co-authorship as the texts created are shaped by both scholar and movement (Anderson, 2020, pp. 283–285; Mkabela, 2005, pp. 185–187). There are of course institutional limitations to work around, in terms of what institutions, journals, or publishers will allow (Anderson, 2020, pp. 275–277, 289–291), and I am not claiming that this is easy to do or that I am doing it perfectly in my own work, but there are plenty of examples of scholars doing it. Either by explicitly co-authoring books or articles with activists, and the anthology 'Everyday Experts: How people's knowledge can transform the food system' (Anderson et al., 2017), with chapters written by academics and activists, is a great example. In general, within participatory research on agroecology, this is not an anomaly, probably due to the fact that agroecology is in itself a practice aimed at challenging hierarchal knowledge creation (Anderson et al., 2014; Ferrando et al., 2019; Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2014; Val et al., 2019, pp. 7–8). Another way is by crediting the movement itself as Caitlin Cahil does in her chapter "Participatory Data Analysis," where on the first page, next to her name, it reads "based on work with the Fed up Honeys" (Cahil, Based on work with the Fed up Honeys, 2010, p. 181). Discussing the pros and cons of these approaches would require a new chapter, so this is solely meant as inspiration.

Another aspect is access, and using open-source or creative commons publishing methods helps; the journal *Interface* is an example of being both open source and open to articles from activists (Interface, 2009). Widening access can also be done

through rethinking the forms of presentation, where it is both easier to share author-ship and easier to share it widely (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016, p. 308), for example, through podcasts, newspaper articles, photo-exhibitions, pamphlets, posters, videos, graphics, and the list goes on. The choice of which should not only be up to the academic researcher. Political theory takes many forms and so should its presentation. While such work often goes unrecognized within academia, in terms of career advancement, I do believe that we owe it to the activists that teach us about their work, to make sure that the research process is somehow useful in their work and give them credit for that work.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has aimed at showing that prefigurative social movements prefigure their own political theory through their cognitive practice, which is acted out through their cosmology, organization, and technology. Moreover, it has been shown that the westernized Cartesian approach to science, with its dichotomy between mind and matter, has hidden the ecology of knowledge that exists outside academia. The point of the chapter is to insist that we expand our notion of who creates political theory and what form such theories can take. Consequently, if we are truly to take social movements seriously as moral actors, we need to understand all the moral aspects of social movements, not only the mechanics. Lastly, it is crucial that we approach research into social movements as a collaboration with colleagues, rather than subjects to be studied whose knowledge we can "discover" and put our name on. We can act as translators and mobilize knowledge without appropriating that knowledge. Moving forward, we should definitely rethink authorship, ownership, and credit, particularly when we conduct (participatory) research into social movement knowledge. Lastly, I want to address two points: Does this require us to always support movements? And why *political theory*, and not ideology, frames, or plain old theory?

It is very relevant to point out that it can be hard to use a participatory methodology and actively work to create knowledge beneficial to social movements whose goals we do not support (Tallbear, 2014, p. 5). It can be argued that this is an inherent shortcoming of participatory research; however, within a decolonial and feminist research paradigm, there are no other ethical ways of co-creating knowledge than through closeness and mutual respect (della Porta & Rucht, 2013, pp. 11–13; Wakeford & Rodriguez, 2018, pp. 40–41). Regardless of how we feel about their beliefs or their actions, research participants deserve basic human respect and our appreciation for enabling our research. But does that limit us to researching movements we disagree with from afar? Personally, I have taken the easy way out by collaborating with a movement whose ideals I share, but I think this is a rich area to explore that I hope braver scholars will delve into.

So, why *political theory*? First, classic social movement concepts such as frames or discourse capture some of what political theory does, but not all of it. Frames are

a communicative expression of that political theory, while the movement's discourses make up part of the movement's political theory (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 68–69). Using frame or discourse would therefore only be telling part of the story leaving out the technological and organizational dimensions. Second, political theory is chosen rather than ideology, as ideology comes plagued with misconceptions and prejudices, and has often been seen as an object of study rather than thought to be engaged in dialogue (Vincent, 2004, pp. 66–67, 71; Walder, 2009, p. 406). Using political theory instead is thereby a way of rehabilitating the cognitive praxis of social movements within academia, as something that is both normative and to be taken seriously. To be clear, choosing political theory over ideology does not mean moving away from normativity, quite the opposite. I assume that all theory is normative and that creating theory is a universal human practice, but unlike classical western normative theory, I do not assume that reality can be explained *as a whole* (Grosfoguel, 2013, pp. 76–77, 88; hooks, 1991, pp. 7–8; Vincent, 2004, pp. 3, 19–21). Third, *political* theory rather than the broader *theory* or *philosophy* underscores that these theories are grounded in the political, in actively thinking about how we can shape our world to our ideals. Political theory is thereby somewhere between the completely abstract theory and the strict confines and expectations associated with ideology. Of course, political theory is not an unproblematic term. Many will associate it with ivory tower-esque academia and with more sinister ways of controlling human life. However, by challenging the classic westernized Cartesian notion of (political) theory, hopefully this concept can be opened up and expanded. As Andrew Vincent argues, not only the "object" of theory but also the *process* of theorization should be opened up to critical scrutiny (Vincent, 2004, p. 2). However, this begs the central and final question: Does this knowledge need to be "rehabilitated" in the eyes of academia in the first place?

First, I believe that we have an ethical responsibility to create space for indigenous and other marginalized knowledge within academia: When we take the theories and scholarship of indigenous, racialized, and other marginalized people seriously, it counteracts the dehumanization and epistemic injustice that western science has helped justify for centuries (Mbembe, 2015, pp. 13–17; Santos, 2016, pp. 233–235; Smith, 2012, pp. 214–215, 222–223; Todd, 2015, p. 251, Todd, 2016, pp. 9–10). Second, I do not believe that such a translation process is necessary for the movements to exist, thrive, or even for movements to conduct and disseminate their own research, but I do believe it is necessary for academia to continue to be relevant. In a time where we are frantically searching for solutions and answers to global crises and dilemmas, it is especially harmful to continue erasing, ignoring, or distorting the voices that are trying to show us the way forward. For example, while much of western academia is struggling with the concept of the Anthropocene and the ontological turn, the knowledge that life—both human and more-than-human life—is interconnected has been held by indigenous and racialized peoples and discussed with great nuance for a long time (Alonso, 2008, pp. 264–265; Smith, 2012, pp. 16–17; Todd, 2015, pp. 244–249, Todd, 2016, pp. 7–8). It is important that we not "give" a voice to the voiceless and instead start listening to what they have been saying all along and go from a westernized monoculture of knowledge to an

ecology of knowledge, where different knowledges interact and enrich each other (Santos, 2016, pp. 223–225; Santos et al., 2008, pp. xlvii–xlix). Moreover, the point of engaging with social movement theory is not to assimilate it with academic theory nor to hold it to the same standards (Maldonado-Torres et al., 2018, pp. 81–82; Wright, 2010, pp. 20–21). Classical theoretical coherence is to some degree necessary to understand the argument a theory is making; however, it is not everything as wa Thiong'o reminds us: "Poor theory may simply remind us that density of words is not the same thing as complexity of thought; that such density sometimes, can obscure clarity of thought"(Thiong'o, 2012, p. 3). This does not mean that we cannot critique such movements; quite the contrary critique is what keeps the iterative process going. Critique based in care, with the collaborative purpose of strengthening the movements, will bring academics, and perhaps academic theory out of the ivory tower and closer to the ground (Tallbear, 2014, p. 3; Thiong'o, 2012, p. 13).

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