
QUEERING THE REFORM/REVOLUTION DYAD: A SPATIOTEMPORAL DIALECTIC

RAIHAN SHARIF
Washington State University

Abstract

All ages deal with the debate between reform and revolution in the contexts of their distinctive challenges, problems, and prospects. While reflecting on today's socio-political realities in the U.S., this paper identifies a theoretical stagnancy in academia that deters any radical praxis for revolution. Addressing some key theoretical stances within the reform/revolution dyad, the paper argues that any criticism of "revolution in a linear future" is no easy approval for "reform in a static present" either. Also, replacing the "apocalyptic future" with the "here and now" of the progressive present is perhaps inadequate without critically reflecting on the "quality" of the "present". This paper does not recommend any specific prescriptive means but outlines a speculative prospect of "here and now" for revolution. It critiques theoretical stances of a number of postcolonial and poststructuralist thinkers and argues that these stances eventually get appropriated within the hegemonic reform-based justice underpinning neoliberalism. It argues that using the work of Henry Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Doreen Massey, a spatiotemporal dialectic for revolution can be developed which in turn also embraces revolutionary visions of Alain Badiou. The paper explains how this dialectic reveals an inadequacy in the politics of reform and adjustment within theories of James C Scott, Michel de Certeau, Homi K Bhabha, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. It shows how liberal justice discourses that routinely promote reform in an attempt to misguide revolutionary potentials manage to find a comfort zone in the politics of difference. Specifically, the paper invests in the interstice between two types of theories to queer the longstanding reform-revolution dyad..

Section I

'Change Life!' 'Change Society!' -these precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space."

~ Henry Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*

Why is it that when we get impatient with the tyranny of a socio-political system, we usually imagine revolution in a distant future? We do so because our political imagination maintains a linear spatiotemporal sequence: reform *now*, revolution *later*. Queering the reform/revolution dyad would require queering this linearity and, thereby, questioning the normalcy of our static political imagination. In this paper, I question such normalcies and argue for a spatiotemporal dialectic of reform/revolution as an alternative way of understanding the relations between them.

Such queering is required today to radicalize our political imagination. This is what Henry Lefebvre suggests when he, as in the epigraph above, argues that without production of appropriate *space*, changes to society would mean nothing. Similarly, for Alison Kafer, radicalizing political imagination means not deferring the chance of revolution endlessly, because doing so inexorably ushers in “stagnation and acquiescence, an inability to move in any direction because of a permanently forward-looking gaze.”¹ What we require instead is a dialectic between present and future, between our “now” and our “later”. This dialectic is required in order to create an ‘appropriate space’ for revolution. This paper attempts to reflect on some possible means of producing this ‘appropriate space’. It also critiques academia’s involvement in making our political imagination static.

To begin with, it is helpful to contextualize the reform/revolution dyad in our static imagination. In other words, how we have been made to pursue reform as an alternative to revolution can be tracked in understanding the operation of authoritative forces across the socio-historical formation of different forms of power: sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower, and necropower. Sovereign power is the power of the emperor. It is the absolute power having right over life and death of the subjects. It gets exerted directly on bodies through corporeal punishment. Thus, sovereign power is punitive and vengeful. The Medieval period, the age of monarchy, was the heyday of sovereign power. Later, because of gradually changing power relations in society, sovereign power started to lose its efficacy. Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish*, marks the eighteenth century as a transitional phase, a phase in which sovereignty gets overlaid with a new form of power what Foucault calls disciplinary power. This power also keeps targeting the body but through different means. As a modern form of power, it establishes control more with rational means rather than with brutal force. Within this modern form of power an individual “is [not] amputated, repressed, altered by our social order ... [but] is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of force and bodies (1991:217), as Foucault explains. Disciplinary power is productive, not punitive like sovereign power. It is productive in the sense that it produces docile subjects, not by oppressing bodies physically, but in and through establishing techniques or conditions within which subjects ‘take birth’ or come into play.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, however, this disciplinary power again gets overlain, this time with “biopower”. Foucault defines biopower as non-disciplinary technology as it gets “applied not to man-as-body but to the living man ...to man-as-species (2003:242).” Biopower starts controlling larger groups of people with regularization of “the birth rate, the mortality rate, longevity and so on (2003: 243).” Biopower controls subjects in applying particular forms of reason such as “forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures (2003: 246).”

To explain how biopower works, Achille Mbembe, in his essay “Necropolitics”, explains the relations among freedom, politics, and agency, as he argues

[I]t is on the basis of a distinction between reason and unreason (passion, fantasy) that late-modern criticism has been able to articulate a certain idea of the political, the community, the subject— or, more fundamentally, of what a good life is all about, how to achieve it, and, in the process, to become a fully moral agent (Mbembe:13).

Mbembe thus marks the technique of biopower, which, for him, is a control through interplay of reason and unreason. Later, he questions if the same technique should be referred to when we inquire the conditions within which warfare, drone attack, massive killing, and so on get performed today. Mbembe states that a choice between life and death, not the interplay of reason and unreason, is what has occupied the center stage within a new configuration of politics, communities, and subjects. It is not the promise of the good life any longer which sets terms for the exertion of power, but physical death, social death, and the threat of death on which the latest form of power operates. Mbembe calls this "necropower".

The reform/revolution dyad through the ages of sovereign power, biopower and necropower has accordingly gone through different paradigm shifts. First, let us consider what we might call reform/revolution 1.0. In this model, reform means changes within an ongoing system so that the system in question can be fixed to establish the principle of social justice. Revolution, on the other hand, is throwing away, destroying, or abolishing the system itself to replace it with a new one. What motivates revolutionary zeal is passion for social justice infused with a new vision of equality for all. This model was at work in the French Revolution, in the American Revolution, and in the decolonization of the global South after World War II.

But this understanding of the reform/revolution, especially the notion of activists' agency in the pursuit of their passion for justice and equality, needs to be contextualized within the socio-economic reconfigurations after World War II. With the onset of the neoliberal capitalist aggression, consent of the people gets increasingly "hijacked" instead of being simply "manufactured" by nation-states, which in turn start working as components of the machine called "Empire"². Later, since the 1990s, with the intensification of neoliberal manipulation through biopower, and since the 2000s, through its supplementary force, necropower, the consent of the people gets neither "manufactured" nor "hijacked" but starts being celebrated as "always already taken" or as "bankrupted."

This bankruptcy of the people's consent reconstitutes political imagination as disciplined, domesticated and non-transgressional. Individuals and groups increasingly seek justice within rights-based frames. All they seek is protection and legal fixes from states while keeping intact the core structures of injustice: racism, sexism, ableism, patriarchy, capitalism, islamophobia, trans phobia, and so on. While the Civil Rights Movement sought justice within a biopolitical conditioning, i.e. "the promise of a better life", rights-based movements in the post 9/11-world carefully follow the logic of the necropolitical, the necessity of being protected from social death and physical death. Instead of integrational movements incorporating HIV activists, prison activists, LGBT activists, trans activists, black radicals, ecojustice activists, homeless activists, and so on, all we witness is a pattern of parallel and separate movements. The necropolitical risk—police brutality, imprisonment, death and so on—in organizing radical social movements, the necessity to cash out activists' efforts in short-term goals while endlessly deferring the "non-achievable" ones, the efficacy of identity politics, a form of quick organizing among homogenous interest groups while not transcending boundaries of race, class, sex, gender, and so on, are some recent trends that blur the radical vision in the Civil Rights Movement, a vision for ceaseless united struggle until true equality gets established. Worse, the mainstream LGBT movement in the US claims affinity with the Civil Rights Movement, but the mainstream LGBT movement takes the Civil Rights Movement as an end point of the struggle for equality across racial lines. Also, those involved in the LGBT movement organize themselves while 'crowding out' black people, using the Civil Rights Movement as an analog for their own movement while

continuing to organize in and through anti-blackness. Regarding the civil rights analogy, Jared Sexton, for example, points out:

The metaphoric transfer that dismisses the legitimacy of black struggles against racial slavery (and ...its 'functional surrogates') while it appropriates black suffering as the template for nonblack grievances remain one of the defining features of contemporary political culture (Sexton: 42).

The separate and parallel movements sometimes compete against each other to get closer to the *sovereign* in an attempt to victimize others who do not belong to any given interest group. Sarah Lamble, for example, shows how a partnership between the mainstream LGBT communities and the police criminalize the immigrants and the Muslims in the UK and the US. She terms this as 'queer investments in punishment'³.

This trend of disintegration finds some comfort zone in the popular fetishizing of the politics of difference in academia. How academia, in the last four decades, has participated in this bankruptcy of consent and disintegration of social movements and how we can recover from this constitute two key concerns of this paper. The incorporation of academia within the neoliberal capitalist project is often criticized as the project of the Military-Industrial-Academic-Complex (Chomsky, 1997; Robin, 2003; Giroux 2007). What Henry Giroux wrote about his time at Penn State is still true about all universities: "[...] faculties were becoming irrelevant as an oppositional force. Many disappeared into discourses that threatened no one, some simply were too scared to raise critical issues in their classrooms for fear of being fired, and many simply no longer had the conviction to uphold the university as a democratic public sphere" (as cited in Hedges, 2009, p. 91). Giroux in the same interview was talking mainly about changes in the universities especially after the demise of the World Trade Center. However, in general, the Military-Industrial-Academic-Complex since the 1990s has gone through a paradigm shift from the Cold War economy to the neoliberal capitalist one. The shift is *not* just from one of the bipolar world politics to that of the unipolar, it is more about intensification of biopower and necropower to discipline people while managing an uninterrupted flow of capital across spaces within the global capitalist economy. Though numerous scholars, critics, and intellectuals like Henry Giroux, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and others have already marked the incorporation of academia in both phases, an inside story of the participation of academia to the increasing de-radicalization of political imagination remains long overdue.

I argue that one of the ways this de-radicalization occurs is in and through the production and dissemination of certain theories that provide frames to define, influence and shape all possible discourses, including those of activism and politics. In the era of interdisciplinarity in academia, we are going through the best of times and the worst of times: the neoliberal and biopolitical fascism in the name of "democracy" (?) have been more severe than ever but at the same time, we witness numerous uprisings and protests against this across the world. In this conjuncture, people finding new hope for revolution must reshape the role of academia so that a much required radical praxis for revolution can at last emerge.

First, it is important to understand how an increasing number of academic scholars, researchers and authors promote certain views of power and counter-power which recommend ceaseless adaptation to and compromise with the hegemonic systems in the form of micropolitics and identity politics. This is how academia deters radical politics or transformative changes. In this paper, I will present a case study to show how established concepts of power and counter-

power within academia are inadequate to bring transformative changes. Also, I will foreground spatiotemporal dialectics as one of the means towards revolution.

Section II: Influential concepts of power and counter-power in academia

In the age of post-everything theories, academia has moved from structural to poststructural discourses of power and counter-power. Instead of articulating any systematic and structured ways of mobilizing dissent, academia routinely foregrounds fragmented, partial, and sporadic attempts to combat power. Stigmatization of Marxist theories on the one hand, and the increasing fetishization of poststructuralism, on the other, has obviously inspired people to locate the operation of power and also the scope of resistance *everywhere*. I would argue that this *everywhere* eventually becomes *nowhere* since the logic of fragmented combat deprives people of any adequate forms of resistance. To offer a brief glimpse of the Foucauldian and Deleuzian concepts of power and counter-power within academia, I would state the following as established and common views:

a. In an age of the intertwined complexities that emerge within global capitalism, it is futile to single out particular persons, agents, or even multinational companies for the miseries of the common people.

b. People should locate and combat power in bits and pieces not because these would gradually constitute larger momentum but because this is the only way of combating manipulative forces, since any total resistance is conceptually futile. One way of combating power is using identity politics that demands rights within the existing system.

Overall, academia has found it convenient to replace the “totalizing” view of power and counter power of Karl Marx, for example, with the differential view of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.

Though there is a difference between their views of power, both Foucault and Deleuze believe that power is embedded in all of our practices and social relations so intertwiningly that any particular nodal point of it is as significant as any other. Foucault, therefore, foregrounds microphysics of power and Deleuze argues for molecular vestibules of desire as liberating power. Both of them, however, promote micropolitics or fragmented resistance as means of counter-power (Buchanan, 2008). Foucault emphasizes an individual’s intersubjectivity as embodied reality within conflictual operations of power, between the societal domination and the individuals’ resistance in their attempts to claim power. Foucault believes that power operates at most micro levels of social relation and he calls this the microphysics of power. Individuals can be powerful as they attempt to “transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (1988: 18).” Micropolitics of power for individuals would be gaining the upper hand in the process of intersubjectivity. Deleuze, on the other hand, considers counter-power or resistance as reactive and replaces it with affirmative configurations of desire—liberating libido, with the use of which individuals can escape fascism or repressive impulses. For Deleuze, desire itself is revolutionary in the sense the free-floating desire would transform both the molecular and the molar configurations of the society but it should always start with the molecular. Hence transformative changes at the level of the micropolitical should be given priority. James C. Scott, Michel de Certeau and Homi K Bhabha

also promote micropolitics in their respective projects. All forms of micropolitics, generally, recommend resistance in bits and pieces, a technique which does not confront larger structures of power, such as capitalism, imperialism, racism, patriarchy, et cetera. All forms of micropolitics fetishize the everyday struggle against the control of power.

Locating micropolitics or *infrapolitics* in the theoretical legacy of counter-hegemonic struggle will open up a space for us to understand the nature and objective of micropolitics and also its relative strengths and weaknesses. James C. Scott in his 1990-book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* introduced the idea of *infrapolitics*, an everyday form of resistance that falls short of openly declared contestations. Scott, attempts to foreground the superior-subordinate relations in which the subordinate appears to acquiesce willingly to the stated and unstated expectations of the dominant, and argues that the weak and oppressed of the society are not free to speak in the presence of power. These subordinate groups instead create a secret discourse, which Scott labels as “hidden script”, that represents a critique of power spoken behind the backs of the dominant. (A similar theory of everyday resistance is developed by Michel de Certeau in his 1988-book *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Certeau argues that the authority in and through some overpowering policies and actions—which he calls “strategies”—tries to control individuals, who in turn apply *tactics*, innovative actions to defy, evade, and critique, if not permanently overthrow, that authority.

In a similar vein, Homi K. Bhabha in his 1994-book *The Location of Culture* offers concepts like “sly civility” and “mimicry” as counter-colonial Certeauian *tactics* which are basically attempts to evade systemic appropriation by transgressing the colonizer/colonized binary. To define mimicry Bhabha (1994) writes:

[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (p.122).

As Bhabha argues, colonial discourse wants the colonized to be extremely like the colonizer, but by no means identical. If there were an absolute equivalence between the two, then the ideologies justifying colonial rule would be unable to operate. The colonizer assumes that there is a structural non-equivalence, a split between superior and inferior which explains why any one group of people can dominate another at all. Bhabha intends to puncture the colonizers’ claim or assumption of superiority by relying on the slippage of meaning through which the colonized achieve their agency. This sounds revolutionary only at the expense of dispossessing most of the colonized people. That is, Bhabha reduces the social to the semiotic and remains lavishly indifferent to capitalistic management of differences. He may call for constant becoming but does not consider that people do not have equal capabilities to pursue this constant becoming.

In this paper, I use *infrapolitics* and micropolitics interchangeably. But it is helpful to keep in mind that there is a difference between them. This difference is situated in the different perspectives on power and counter-power:

- a) *Infra* means below or beyond a particular limit of anything. *Infrapolitics* refer to a change in the nature of politics: in their everyday negotiations with authoritative forces, subordinate groups increasingly move away from any direct conflict with structures of

power. So, instead of appearing as directly confrontational, infrapolitics appear as evasively subversive.

b) *Micropolitics* is different from infrapolitics. Micropolitics refers to politics individuals would perform to attain power since power does not remain in any fixed center; it is embedded everywhere.

In line with the above distinction, *tactics* are practical acts which constitute the performance of infrapolitics.

Politics based on Power and Counter-Power: Micropolitics, Identity Politics and Coalitional Politics

The concepts of power and counter-power theorized by Foucault, Deleuze, Scott, Certeau, and Bhabha have gained the academic legitimacy to influence later scholars who recycle and reproduce these concepts to make the horizon of radical political imagination limited to the point of being ineffective. To exemplify the different modes of micropolitics offered by some of these later scholars, I will discuss two texts as part of a case study in order to understand concepts of power and counter-power celebrated and reinforced within academia. The texts are *Racial Imperatives: Discipline, Performativity, and Struggles against Subjection* (2012) by Nadine Ehlers and, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* (2012) by Adria L. Imada. There are other relevant texts, texts like *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (2008) by Andrea Smith, which promote coalitional politics but which,—I would argue,—should also rather embrace the dialectic between micropolitics and macropolitics.

Nadine Ehlers, in her book *Racial Imperatives* (2012), uses Michel Foucault's theory of power and Judith Butler's account of performativity to understand how individuals become 'raced' subjects. Ehlers excavates the 1925 "racial fraud" case of *Rhineland V. Rhineland*. The case takes us to New York in the early twentieth century. A man named Leonard charged his wife Alice with fraud, accusing her of having lured him to wed her by concealing her colored identity. The jury, after going through the ritual of examining her body, which was stripped naked and paraded, gave the verdict in favor of Alice: she was *unmistakably* black. Leonard, in effect, was found to be "aberrant and deserving of legal and extra-legal reprimand" (3). For the jury, Leonard defied racial expectations, especially the imperative to maintain white racial purity. For Ehlers, both Leonard and Alice appear as subversive, as none of them cared to conform to the expectations of respective racial passing. Alice took shelter in a liminal space, in ambiguity, in an indeterminacy in which she is not conforming to the either/or kind of binary positioning along the racial line. By transgressing the border, she is affirming her positioning in a third space. She thus formulates a new potential for racial agency. Ehlers celebrates it as a transformative gesture.

To make this claim convincing, Ehlers goes for a Foucauldian back up, this time in the theory of power. Foucault's phenomenal claim that power has a capillary movement, that power does not have any center, and that it is moving and relational is emphasized by Ehlers (2012) rigorously, and she follows this direction only to foreground another Foucauldian claim that power is not absolute and resistance is immanent in each relation of power:

[p]recisely because power is not owned but exercised or deployed from multiple and contesting sites, and because of its contingency (it is reliant on bodies, locations, specific institutions, discursive avenues), the very exercise of

power always (and necessarily) produces unintended effects. That subjects are immanent within power networks, and transmit power, means that they can and do effect resistances that work to reverse, displace, contest, and revise the objectives of power (p.110).

Excavating the potential for resistance from the Foucauldian archive, Ehlers (2012) connects it to Butler's notion of the subject as a site of ambivalence as Butler argued that power at once acts on the subject and is acted by the subject:

Formed in power, the subject enacts the requirement of power. It is these requirements that constitute the subject, but the reenactment of this power operates in such a way as to conceal the prior the working of power. The subject appears, then, as if they were the origin of power, for these are seen as the subject's own power (p. 111).

The next step, which is the cornerstone of the entire effort—to foreground Alice's agency as revolutionary—is Butler's claim that in the recitation or continuous repetition of the performative, the very potential of agency looms large: "[a]gency is to be found in the possibilities opened up in and by the constrained appropriation of the regulatory law, by the materialization of that law" (p.111).

Here both Ehlers and Butler are investing in the Certeauian escape route of agency—which is also argued for by James Scott and Homi K Bhabha, in their respective projects, as they suggest appropriating the fissures, gaps and inconsistencies within the strategic control of any socio-economic and political dominance called hegemony. Ehlers fails to notice that the biggest problem with Alice's agency is that it segregates itself from the social or the collective. For one thing, how Alice's agency will help people struggling against racism is missing in Ehlers' project. Ehlers would have defended that this does not help resolve the structural crisis but this is decidedly individual resistance and hence a distinctive one. In fact, the cause of Ehlers' short-sightedness is her theoretical frame of individualistic *infrapolitics* and *tactics*. The negotiation with structures of power in this case is not directly confrontational; it is indirect, hidden, implicit, and evasive. So, it is helpful to critique the realm of the undeclared form of resistance. This realm is situated in more complex social realities than what Certeau implies. What Certeau marks as *agency* in the undeclared form of resistance is mere *happenstance* within a complex web of social realities in which the dominator/dominated dichotomy is not linear or one dimensional. Gramsci would have reminded Certeau that individuals in a social context can simultaneously occupy positions of domination and dominated in their different roles as husband or wife, worker or manager, rich or poor, white or non-white, et cetera, as Mittelman (212) argues:

In this connection, Gramsci reminded us that subaltern identities are embedded in complex overlapping social networks in which individuals simultaneously assume positions of domination and subordination (perhaps as a husband or wife, an elder or junior, a manager or office clerk, and a donor or recipient of aid).

Therefore, to address multiple configurations of power within complex social realities we live in, any project of resistance must engage with larger structures of power: racism, patriarchy,

capitalism, imperialism, and so on. Otherwise, it is not possible to imagine any interventional act, be it direct or hidden.

To apply this Gramscian understanding to Ehlers' project, Alice's resistance can be interpreted in a different way from Ehlers' intended reading. Alice wants to look white, as she wants to transcend the racial binary. But her becoming white, in her own terms, can be seen as transferring herself from the realm of the oppressed to the realm of the oppressor, again following the simplistic logic of Ehlers that mere transcending suggests agency. Alice's agency in this reading, then, appears to be a betrayal. It is helpful to keep in mind that the judge did not find this brand of agency threatening at all; he rather finds that Leonard's agency may dismantle the white texture of the society. In this way, Gramsci's observation regarding the flexible, unreliable, and simultaneous positioning of the oppressor/oppressed identity sets Ehlers' project upside down.

Similarly, Certeau himself is not ambitious enough to expect that his *tactics* would one day get transformed into common sense. But followers of Certeau such as Ehlers seem to believe that the trickledown effect of *tactics* would help develop "the war of position" (Gramsci: 292) — social organization in and through cultural hegemony—as Gramsci would like to say. But they do not notice that no *war of position* is possible without any attempt to connect the individual with the social. In a sense, it can be argued that the individualistic *tactic*, in fact, derails political dissent by emptying out any potential for the war of position. Certeauvian *tactic* does so by occupying the imaginaries of the individuals with a problematic fantasy of cherishing the subversive mode as an end-in-itself.

Adria L. Imada's arguments for infrapolitics in her book *Aloha America* (2012) is not as circuitous as that of Ehlers. Imada in her book introduces us to the hula performers who, between 1890s and 1960s, travel across the U.S to perform in theaters, commercial nightclubs, military bases and various other spaces. Their performances, as Imada argues, help construct a benign and feminine image of Hawaii. This representation in turn reinforces the colonizer-colonized binary as mutually desired. In this way, Imada shows how the hula circuits help develop an "imagined fantasy", a powerful imaginary that enables Americans to possess Hawaii physically, erotically, and symbolically. Imada's second objective is showing how the touring hula performances in the US incorporate veiled critique of US expansionism into their performances. While exposing the nature of this critique performed by the hula circuit, Imada uses the *infrapolitics* of Scott and the *tactic* of Certeau as frames.

The veiled critique of US imperialism accomplished by the hula circuit appears in many forms. One of them is "kaona", a hidden meaning embedded in the poetry the hula girls recite that often serves a counter-colonial archive of collective Hawaiian memory, preserving pre-conquest histories, epistemologies, and ontologies. Imada takes this hidden meaning or 'kaona' as reproduction of Scott's "hidden scripts". But "kaona", the hidden meaning, whether in poetry or performances, remains hidden, and unintelligible to the audience. In fact, it fails to transfer much dissent, if any, from the hula circuit performers to the larger community of people, especially the people who know nothing about the historical legacy of hula. As a result, the "kaona" remains encrypted in the event, and unintelligible beyond the special performers.

In line with James Scott's concept of "public script", or Certeau's "strategy", Imada finds a number of ways of getting Hawaiian women interpellated into the structures of colonial aggression. Women's bodily movements, for example, are made to provide a scopophilic pleasure to American audiences as they go on ascribing Hawaiians to a lower order of humanity. In effect, a kind of colonial script gets written on Hawaiian women and their bodies. Against

this, as Imada argues, the hula circuit unravels the “public script” by applying the *tactics* of “hidden script” in and through a number of counter-colonial activities. (In response to the public script that shows them as inferior and sexualized objects, the Hawaiian women assert “hula as a legitimate practice, and present themselves as modern Native women and cosmopolitan tourists” (Imada, p. 63). For me, this “hidden script” seems to be a romanticized and uncritical version of the channeling of the potential of dissent. Even though the hula preserves a rich tradition, none other than the hula girls care to know it. Worse, with their reception of modern American fashion and costume to, they are conforming to the taste of the imperialist against which their other counter-colonial *tactics* are aimed. This makes their counter-colonial stance merely casual, mere happenstance.

Imada finally claims that the hula girls “appropriate technologies such as studio photography and urban fashion for their own desires” (p. 64). In an attempt to counteract the sexualized representation of hula girls, they try to look decent, and dress elegantly.. Also, they offer counter gazes in studio photographs to deny their objectification. However, what they are doing can be seen as a particular way of carrying their persona off stage. Their counter gazes may make them rational humans which in turn falsify their colonized representation as sexualized and subhuman puppets. At any rate, this way of asserting agency has its own logic and value, but a very limited one, mainly because it tells one to find a little dignified space within the ongoing *public script* or *strategy* instead of offering any *strong challenge* to it. Both Ehlers and Imada, much like so many other scholars in academia, in this way, continue to glorify *infrapolitics*. In doing so, they uncritically infatuate postmodern inclination towards fragments and micro-narratives which, in the end, serves the interest of the neoliberal capitalist (mis)management within whose ambience the *infrapolitics* originate and thrive in the first place.

Spatial Politics of Coalition Building

In contrast to fragmented resistance through either individualistic or mechanistically organized micropolitics, I also observe in strategies of resistance, attempts to form coalitions that transcend the horizontal categories: race, class, sex, gender, et cetera. Because of the urge to transcend, this, coalitional politics has radical potential. I will call it *spatial infrapolitics*, or *spatial micropolitics*. Spatial *infrapolitics* can be discussed with reference to two books: *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (2013) and *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (2008).

In *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity* (2013), Gaye Theresa Johnson shows how *infrapolitics* can go beyond the sphere of the individual and how it can be communal, social, collective and participatory. “Although racism persisted, resistance always existed”, writes Johnson, as she foregrounds anti-racist and egalitarian cultural politics between African-Americans and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. She theorizes the *infrapolitics* practiced by the Black and Brown residents of Los Angeles as “spatial entitlement” and describes it as

“... a way in which marginalized communities have created *new collectivities* based not just upon eviction and exclusion from physical places, but also new and imaginative use of technology, creativity, and spaces. In many instances overlooked by social historians, everyday reclamation of space, assertion of social

citizenship, and infrapolitical struggle have created the *conditions for future success, in organized and collective movements*" (p. x). (Italics supplied)

Noticeably, *spatial entitlement* is unique in at least two ways. It prioritizes coalitional politics over fragmented politics. It seeks for imaginative and creative ways of unlocking spaces as a critical response to multiple segregation, separation, and exclusion within physical places. In this sense, it does spatialize *infrapolitics* as it attempts to establish the tripartite dynamics of time, place, and social being, as suggested by Henry Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*. In other words, *spatial entitlement* refers to collective struggles, not to any individualistic attempt to seize upon the cracks and fissures within a hegemonic condition, which latter is promoted by Certeau, Bhabha, and Scott.

Apparently, Gaye Theresa Johnson aligns her *spatial entitlement* with the *infrapolitics* theorized by James Scott. But importantly, Scott, unlike Johnson, does not provide any futuristic possibility of *infrapolitics*. Scott simply zooms in on the sporadic attempts of counter resistance among farmers in a Malaysian village. Those attempts are inconsistent, and haphazard, though Scott would have argued that they are "spontaneous", hence, "natural" and, thereby, free from the romance of revolution, and that the authority—in the imagination of the farmers—is too powerful to fight against. I strongly criticize this approach of Scott and Certeau as they are limiting political imagination here. They accept the status quo as inevitable, intact, irreplaceable, and unchangeable. This is totally against the spirit of the material dialectic of Marx and Harvey, as I explain in the next section, and it leads us to another important difference between Scott and Johnson. Scott's *infrapolitics* is bereft of any collectivity while Theresa Johnson mobilizes collective politics as a nucleus to reclamation of shared struggle among "the Blacks and the Browns". Against housing segregation in the ghettos, *spatial entitlement* creates new modes of coalition within a shared soundscape, as Johnson argues:

"[t]hey did not have to be in each other's physical presence to enjoy the same music at the same time as it was broadcast to them on radios in living rooms, bedrooms, neighborhood hangouts, and automobiles. These strategies and affinities speak to the power of popular music and of popular culture to envision and create new political possibilities" (p. xiii).

While Certeau, Bhabha, and Scott invest in fragmented politics, Johnson relies on coalitional politics. In today's multicultural, multi ethno-racial condition of spaces across the world, *spatial entitlement* promises a futuristic politics that stands against multiple forms of manipulation. Johnson's *spatial entitlement* "connects local articulations to international movements" (xii). I found "memory" as another important component in "spatial entitlement". To show how memory helps collective organizing, Johnson emphasizes the history of African-Americans in Mexico and the common struggle of Afro-mestizos. *Infrapolitics* here wants to transcend boundaries of one's own community in order to connect other possible coalition building efforts. In this sense, *spatial entitlement* has much more potential for organizing a social movement. In brief, Scott, Certeau, Bhabha, and Johnson focus on the everyday form of resistance, but what makes Johnson stand out is her investment in the politics of space. She goes on to articulate the significance of creating everyday space by mobilizing coalition here and now and projecting spaces towards future as she argues:

Struggles for freedom and equality currently engaged by multiracial social justice movements emerge from the enduring historical relevance of Black-Brown spatial struggles and coalitional politics. It is a past whose legacy has too much power to remain unacknowledged and unexamined, particularly as evidence of what cultural workers and community activists have already accomplished on the road to a just future (xxii).

Johnson's spatial entitlement thus relies on a legacy of struggle across ethno-racial boundaries to usher in a just future.

In a similar vein, Andrea Smith, in her *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (2008) emphasizes reframing issues for coalition building in an attempt to achieve support from unlikely allies. While Johnson shows likely alliances between racial minorities of black and brown folks, Smith emphasizes unlikely alliances in a recuperative move that seeks to work upon the stagnancy of political imagination, a stagnancy that situates Native Americans and Christian evangelicals as unlikely partners in the first place. It is often thought that Native Americans and white evangelicals would likely pursue different goals in their respective and necessarily separate activism. The source of such belief resides in valuing the ease in organizing activists from the homogenous groups centering on a single vector of differences: either race or class, for example. But such ease in organizing may prevent us from achieving larger goals: instead of placing demands within rights-based frames, we must attempt the reconfiguration of structures of power that always dictate terms of rights, pacify dissent here and there, and appropriate forms of resistance that become threatening—all to maintain the status quo of any tyrannical system. Therefore, it becomes a radical move as Smith promotes coalitional politics and not identity politics. Smith shows how both the Native Americans and the Christian Right can foreground pragmatic collaboration. As an example, she explains how Native environmental activists can go beyond their own communities and find allies among white progressive ecojustice activists. Smith rightly marks the danger in such alliances, as white ecojustice activists may appropriate the agenda of the Native environmental activists. But she is also careful to debunk the myth of appropriation, a stalemate reinforcing boundary drawing activism in both communities. She does so by proving examples of an innovative tactic: re-centering Native concerns in the context of the Christian evangelicals. As a case study, Smith shows how the coalition between the Christian Right and American Indians orchestrated a successful campaign across white and non-white communities. As a result, Exxon and Rio Algom were compelled to stop mining in Wisconsin, which pollutes water bodies and forests, sources for fishing and hunting for Native Americans.

Thus, reframing separate activism while taking initiatives for coalition building is what Smith theorizes as the 'politics of articulation'. She believes that mere representation of reality to outsiders and hope for support to arrive may reinforce a hegemonic condition instead of combating it. She thus emphasizes becoming an actor of social change. Based on the observation by Laclau and Mouffe, Smith argues: "our task is not to organize the revolution but to organize ourselves for the revolution; not to make the revolution but to take advantage of it" (xvii). Smith's politics of rearticulation depends on enthusiastic organizing of coalitions. Thus, it is different from Scott's spontaneous or natural form of resistance in the Malaysian farmers. Compared with Smith's project, Scott's *infrapolitics* reinforces hegemony instead of combating it.

“Native people are thought to be hopelessly mired in identity politics, concerned only about cultural particularities (xi)”, Andrea Smith observes. She argues that going beyond the conventional and fossilized notion of allies and adversaries is important for all of us, partly because we can rightly identify ourselves as playthings in the hands of biopolitical power-blocks within the neoliberal capitalistic system of management of differences, and mainly because we want to mobilize emancipatory politics as resistance to hegemonic forces. Transcending the fixed boundaries between allies and adversaries can open up a new vista of micro-politics, as Smith emphatically reminds us: “[i]n doing so, we might open ourselves to unexpected strategic alliances with groups across the political spectrum that furthers our politically progressive goals (xi)”. Basically, Smith wants to reconceptualize identity politics as coalitional politics. Also, she wants to move towards a new politics that goes beyond the left- versus right-wing politics. Using “religious and political configurations of Christian Right and American Indian activism (xi-xii)”, Smith rethinks “the nature of political strategy and alliance building for progressive purposes” (xii).

Thus, understanding the potential of *spatial micropolitics* confirms one thing: *spatial micropolitics* and *macropolitics* are not mutually exclusive but supplementary. Binary juxtaposition of them may create a “systemic vacuum” or intellectual blockade within which any initiation of resistance will be derided as inadequate. To prevent this intellectual blockade, it is important to recognize the radical potential of Johnson’s *spatial entitlement* and Smith’s *politics of articulation* as I have explained above. I will once again state that for Scott, Certeau, and Bhabha, *infrapolitics* is basically disconnected from any vestige of collectivity. For them, attempting to avoid the grip of any manipulative system is the only option left. Transforming the system is not the objective of their project. As a result, their *infrapolitics* ignores not only Johnson’s *memory* and *spatial entitlement* but also Smith’s *politics of articulation*. Scott, Certeau, and Bhabha make *infrapolitics* solely individualistic. In a sense, their micropolitics is one step behind identity politics and two steps behind coalitional politics, vis-à-vis the emerging necessities of a new kind of *infrapolitics* in our time.

III: Understanding Problems of Micropolitics: Toward a Dialectical Praxis

The reform-revolution dyad in academia plays out in the binary formation and parallel juxtaposition of micropolitics and macropolitics. As I want to go beyond the longstanding reform-revolution dyad and argue for dialectic between micropolitics and macropolitics within all acts of resistance, it is important to locate a theoretical configuration of the proposed spatiotemporal dialectic. Also, it is important to respond to the following questions: What is spatiotemporal dialectic? How is it different from Marxian and Hegelian dialectics? How does it help to conceptualize and advance the dialectic between micropolitics and macropolitics?

Among the different developments of dialectical frameworks, I have found David Harvey’s spatiotemporal dialectic much helpful. An understanding of this particular dialectic shows why micropolitics, infrapolitics, and identity politics are inadequate to challenge the intertwined systems of injustice in a crisscrossed web of neoliberal global capitalism, biopower, racism, sexism, ableism, patriarchy, imperialism, and so on. Also, an understanding of the spatiotemporal dialectic advances the dialectic between micropolitical and macropolitical resistance.

First, I will briefly compare the Marxian dialectic with the Hegelian dialectic. Then I will explain why I believe Harvey’s spatiotemporal dialectic can help us understand the problems in

infrapolitics, micropolitics, and identity politics. Marx was careful to explain the difference between the Hegelian dialectic, which is mystifying, idealistic, and metaphysical, and his version of dialectic, which is rational, historicist, and material. In his version of the dialectic, Marx rejects Hegel's metaphysical essence of history. In the 'Afterword' to the second German edition of *Capital*, he replaces Hegel's mystified form of dialectics with his own rational form. The rational dialectic "regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary"⁴.

Marx, therefore, emphasizes the historicist and materialist character of social realities and denies their natural or absolute character. This is very significant, especially because this rational dialectic would reject the uncritical and popular acceptance of the present status quo within the neoliberal capitalist system as permanent, absolute and invincible. Also, it encourages a spatiotemporal understanding of social phenomena. Because of this historicist and materialist aspect of Marx's dialectic, however, I do not agree with David Harvey when Harvey finds an "indifference to space and time" in Marx's rational dialectic (Harvey: 98). The historicist and materialist nature of Marxian dialectic does not have any conflict with the spatiotemporal dimensions Harvey attempts to develop. David Harvey, however, finds a privilege of time over space in Marxist dialectic as he argues:

The insertion of spatial consideration into most forms of social theorizing (dialectical and nondialectical) often turns out to be profoundly disruptive of how theory can be specified and put to work. Social theories' metanarratives (such as those provided by Marx and Weber) usually concentrate on processes of temporal change, keeping spatiality constant (p. 9).

Harvey's allegation against Marx about his indifference to space does not much hold when we consider Marx's critique of 'abstract labor'⁵ in capitalist economy in which the traces of qualitatively different labor from different times and places are wiped out as part of an inevitable process of profit making. In a capitalist economy, labor is made to appear as 'abstract' in the sense that both the laborers' 'concrete' or individual labor has only one value dimension, which is 'use-value', and their relationship to the products they produce are made disremembered or totally forgotten. Without this disremembering, no product can achieve 'exchange-value' or value as a commodity. The hazardous working environment in which garment workers work in Bangladesh or Vietnam, for example, are an integral part of the laborers' 'concrete labor'. But such contextualization of space, and laborers' risky working hours must be disregarded or shunted into oblivion in the profit making conditions capitalists must rely on. Thus, Marx's distinction between 'abstract' and 'concrete labor' evidence his awareness of variables of time and space.

Nevertheless, it is true—as Harvey confesses—that "Marx chose never to write out any principles of dialectics ... the only way to understand his method is by following his practice"(p. 48). Perhaps, this makes Harvey interested to develop spatiotemporal dialectic as more like an improvement upon than a negation of Marx's dialectic though he argues that an "[e]scape from the teleologies of Hegel and Marx can ... most readily be achieved by appeal to the particularities of spatiality (network, levels, connections)" (Harvey, 1996, 109).

In an essay titled "The Dialectics of Spacetime", David Harvey proposed two dimensions of the spatiotemporal dialectic: the first one consists of three definitions of space and time:

absolute, relative and relational. The second dimension, which he borrows from Henry Lefebvre, consists of another three different definitions: experienced, conceptualized, and lived. I will briefly explain each of the definitions of space and time, first within the first dimension:

- (a) Absolute: Absolute space refers to the realm of fixed and measurable place. Absolute time is also fixed, measurable and linear. No two objects or persons can be exactly at the same space at any given time and that is how absolute space and time are “socially exclusionary” (p. 99).
- (b) Relative: Whereas absolute space and time are all about the realm of fixity, stasis, and determination, relative spacetime is “the spaces of *process and motion*” (p. 100) (emphasis original). Space, in the realm of relative, cannot be perceived in isolation from time. Harvey thus refers to this as space-time. At this level, the boundary of absolute space and time conforms to the logic of indeterminacy and relativity. The concept of absolute time and place gets replaced by the idea of relative time and space. Individualist identity becomes relative and multiple identities.
- (c) Relational: In this realm, “space and time are internalized within matter and process” (p. 101). Space and time, in this realm, are not only simply correlational or simultaneous but also integrated and fused. Harvey wants to indicate this difference when he writes of relative “space-time” and relational “spacetime” differently, with different spelling.

To focus on the second dimension, I will both explain it and examine micropolitics against the spatiotemporal dialectic developed by Harvey and Lefebvre.

It is helpful to understand the spatial construction of our everyday realities as explained by Lefebvre in his book titled *The Production of Space* (1991). It is useful to outline Lefebvre’s phenomenological accession to the three dimensions of the production of space with the concepts of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived:

- I. Perceived space: space has a perceivable aspect that can be grasped by the senses. This perception constitutes an integral component of every social practice. It comprises everything that presents itself to the senses; not only seeing but hearing, smelling, touching, tasting. This sensuously perceptible aspect of space directly relates to the materiality of the “elements” that constitute “space.”
- II. Conceived space: space cannot be perceived as such without having been conceived in thought previously. Bringing together the elements to form a “whole”, that is, Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space presumes an act of thought that is linked to the production of knowledge.
- III. Lived space: the third dimension of the production of space is the lived experience of space. This dimension denotes the world as it is experienced by human beings in the practice of their everyday life.

Interestingly, both Certeau’s *tactic* and Scott’s *infrapolitics* emerge from their attempt at theorizing everyday life. But I argue that both Certeau and Scott could have benefitted from Lefebvre’s understanding of everyday life and social realities.

Lefebvrian lived space maintains a dialectic between the realms of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. This dialectic is, in fact, one of the continual making and remaking of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. Lived space or Lefebvrian social realities must be

understood as such as individuals influence and get influenced by historical and material forces—not only by structures of power such as capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and so forth., but also by vectors of differences: race, class, sex, gender, ability, and so on. In contrast to Lefebvrian everyday realities, what Certeau and Scott provide as lived realities appear as static and exclusionary. They are static because Lefebvrian perceived space and conceived space in them are taken as non-susceptible to changes: the farmers and the poor would never conceive relative identities, and, thereby, acts of resistance beyond their secluded practices of concealed protests. Within the projects of Certeau and Scott, it is also impossible to recognize multiple roles of domination and subordination individuals carry on. They instead foreground the binary configurations of the powerful and the powerless but leave out what kind of interactions may happen within and across the marginalized. Hence, Colin Barker critiques Scott's idea of a 'hidden transcript' among the powerless as Barker argues, "Scott, in bending the theoretical stick against theories of the 'dominant ideology', risks treating the world of the hidden transcript as marked by simple unity and harmonious amity among the oppressed (17)."

The paper, at this point, undertakes a double-move: a theoretical exposure of the inefficacy of individualistic *infrapolitics*, and an attempt to spatialize *infrapolitics* to get it integrated into an emerging mode of macro- narrative as exemplified in the function of WikiLeaks and some other social movements grounded in collective *infrapolitics*.

First, I would like to show how *infrapolitics*—however self-celebratory it is—tends to be merely hurling a few stones—verbal or otherwise—of protest, gestures not even necessarily meant to elicit a direct response, over the thick wall said to separate the populace from the politicians. The proponents of such gestures seem to believe that the postmodern infatuation with mere symbolism of performance will suffice. But the politically empty nature of *infrapolitics* can be shown using the insights of the theory of space by Lefebvre. It can be argued that neither Scott's *infrapolitics* nor Certeau's *tactic* is grounded in a proper understanding of the elements of "order" and "chaos" in the spatial. What Certeau considers "chaotic" or revolutionary in *tactic* is, in fact, a mere whimsical continuation, an extension or a passive following of the same order of the spatial. To substantiate the argument, let us remind ourselves of Certeau's *tactic* again. To begin with, Certeau argues that

tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time--to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organization of a space, to the relations among successive moments in an action, to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms, etc. (p. 38)

In this definition, the transformation of a strategic arrangement into a "favorable situation" is no transformation at all, as it is too much dependent on two things: an uncertain wait for a fissure in the spatial configuration of a system and the innovative use of the imagination by an individual who would be applying the *tactic*. Furthermore, a successful application of the *tactic* may offer a temporary escape route, or a short-term relief, but one cannot expect any qualitative change in the system against which one is set to fight in the first place. The denial of this change emerges from the separation of the individual from the social construction of space and also from an inadequate understanding of the spatial construction of society.

The second allegation against *tactic* can be perceived from Massey's discussion of "chaos", and "order" in the spatial. Massey argues that

The spatial form was socially ‘planned’, in itself directly socially caused, that way. But there is also an element of ‘chaos’ which is intrinsic to the spatial. For although the location of each (or a set) of a number of phenomena may be directly caused (we know why X is here and Y is there), the spatial positioning of one in relation to the other (X’s location in relation to Y) may not be directly caused [...]. Thus, the chaos of the spatial results from dire happenstances juxtapositions, the accidental separations, the often paradoxical nature of the spatial arrangement that result from the operation of all these causalities (Massey: 303).

The operation of causalities is the process which authorities use to manufacture consent to maintain and reinforce Gramscian hegemony, a pervasive influence of structures of power within which individuals must situate themselves. While Gramsci wants individuals to form counter-power or counter-hegemony, Certeau’s *tactic* attempts to adjust itself to instead of questioning this operation of causalities or hegemony. Overall, Certeau’s *tactic* does not show any interest in the epistemology of the “chaos” (Massey), an integral constituent of hegemony which seeks to unsettle the *remainder of the hegemony*. Chaos is that potential factor of insurgency which may expose the tyrannical nature of the overpowering order, reasons, or causalities at work in an existing hegemonic formation. The function of the chaos, an exposure of the tyranny of the hegemonic logics and of the order, of the hegemonic logics (?) themselves can be conceptualized within Lefebvrian understanding of social realities, within constant making and remaking of the perceived, the conceived and the lived, as explained above. Therefore, we might conclude that the spatializing of *tactic* implies a radical reconceptualization of Certeau’s project of resistance along the line of counter-hegemonic struggles.

To elucidate the *spatialization of infrapolitics*, I would like to argue that WikiLeaks has created windows for the *surplus of the lived space* (Lefebvre) to “see” and develop a concrete understanding of the *remainder of the hegemony*, the constant renewal of the consent of the people, on which the appropriating systems, i.e., the state, the society, and so forth heavily rely.

The following diagram helps to clarify the argument:

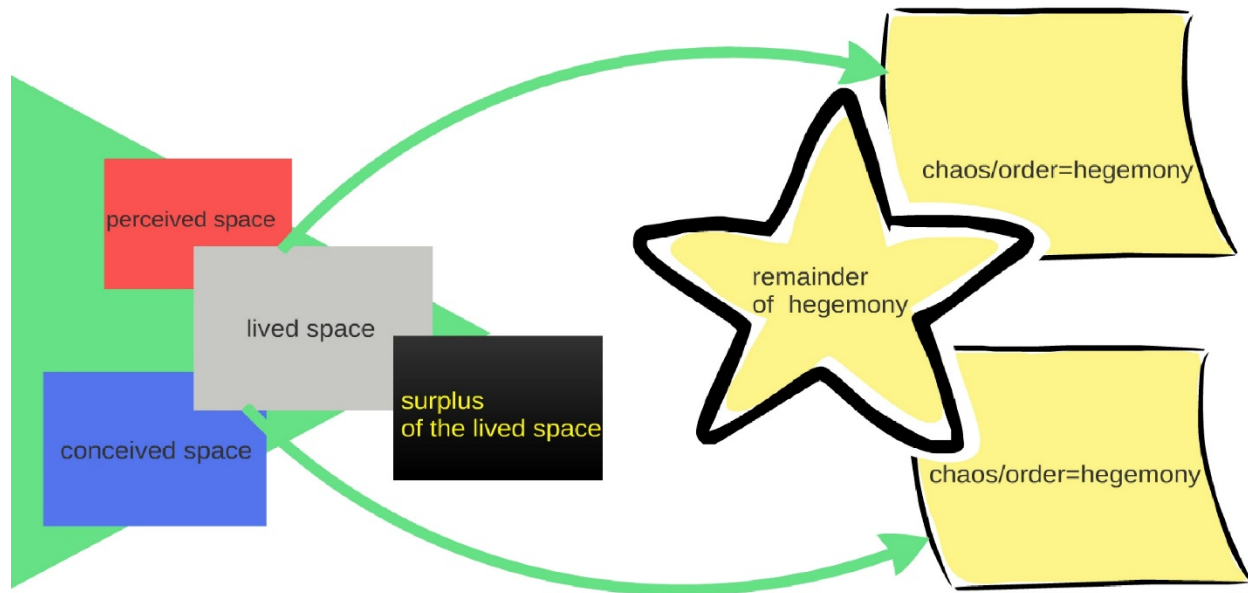


Figure1.1: The Production of Space

The concept *surplus of the lived space* is developed by Lefebvre to refer to the realm of the inexpressible, the remainder, and the which cannot be exhausted by theoretical analysis. The *surplus* has a particular spatiotemporal relationship with the dialectic of the perceived-conceived-lived space, but it is easier to identify it as a temporal sequence, a result of reflection on the dialectic,+ as if the *surplus* comes after reflection. But the *surplus* is a constant or interactive aspect of the triad. Lefebvre argues that the *surplus* can be perceived by all but can only be communicated in and through artistic expressions. This *surplus* has subversive potential, but it often gets appropriated by the hegemony. In other words, this *surplus* is a perpetual prey to the renewal of the hegemony. As Gramsci explain in his *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1917), hegemony is a pervasive ideological domination of the powerful class, domination not by force but by consent. The objective of hegemony is producing those versions of reality that people eventually accept as “common sense”, as “the general sense, feeling or judgment of mankind, more precisely, as the cluster of beliefs felt to be true by most people (Salamini: 83).”

In other words, the *surplus* is made victim to the constant attempts on the part of the hegemonic forces to renew, energize, and reinforce the manufacturing of consent. The hegemonic forces (mis)guide the *surplus* in the sense that they make sure that the *surplus* does not become threatening for, let alone antagonistic or hostile to them. In order to (mis)guide or misappropriate the *surplus*, the hegemonic forces are in a constant manufacturing of consent to the authoritative forces in the society. This particular aspect of hegemony, which attempts to achieve reproduction of renewal of consent, is what I like to call *remainder of the hegemony*.

WikiLeaks opens windows for all to *see* concretely the (mis)guidance of the *surplus* by hegemony. “They know it but they are doing it anyway” becomes undeniable to even to the hegemonic forces themselves (Žižek: 30). This new and concrete knowing destabilizes the

causalities or order within a tyrannical system. In other words, it inspires chaos or insurgence by delegitimizing consent within the hegemonic system. It may also be used for coalition building across vectors of differences: race, class, sex, gender, ability, and so on. Thus, it may lead to counter-hegemonic struggle or activism in an attempt to move from *the war of position* towards *the war of maneuver*, the war of position and the war of maneuvering being Gramscian *phases* on a continuum in which the first phase or *the war of position* refers to “a prolonged struggle for the adherence of the general population and the achievement of political power, generally without insurrection of armed struggle (Omi and Winant: 143)”. Coalition building within and across multiple vectors of difference should occur within the war of position. But this phase is not the end point since it would gradually usher in the war of maneuver, “historical stage where everything is condensed into one front in one strategic moment of struggle for the purpose of opening a single victorious breach in the enemy’s defense (Ling : 12).” It is helpful to notice that *the war of position* is a struggle across different fronts in the society so that these different fronts can gradually get organized as one front and execute *the war of maneuver*, the violent overthrow of the tyrannical system in order to construct a just one.

WikiLeaks, as Julian Assange says, cannot make the revolution for people; it can inspire one. So, the function of WikiLeaks can be shown in the following diagram:

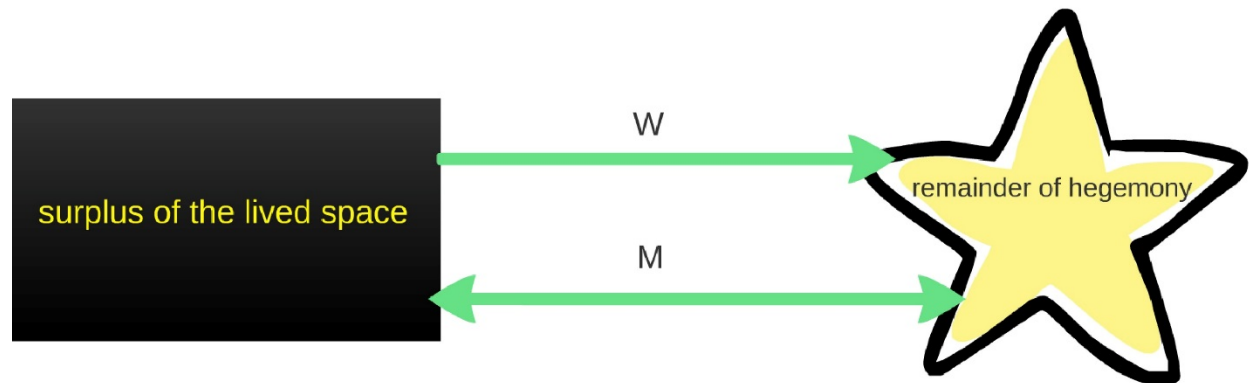


Figure 1.2 (a): The Function of WikiLeaks

The “W” stands for WikiLeaks and the upper arrow shows a one way direction from the “surplus of lived space” towards the “remainder of the hegemony”, meaning the lived space’s accommodation of a concrete understanding given by the latter. The letter “M” above the second arrow means social movement while the arrow itself indicates a two way process indicating that mere understanding will not be enough; people should initiate counter-hegemonic struggles. The world requires the involvement of the masses and spatial *infrapolitics* beautifully embraces this spirit of involvement. Assange’s interpretation of the function of WikiLeaks reflects this theoretical frame. He believes that WikiLeaks unveils the pretentious claims of the liberal ideologues by creating a situation which they are unable to deny (Brevini et.al: 66). This is what I would like to call the *movement* of the surplus of the lived space towards the *remainder of the hegemony*.

Badiou marks the uprisings in the 21st century as riots: immediate, latent, and historical. Immediate riot is immediate unrest protesting violence of the state. It is often the preliminary form of historical riot. It is participated in by a segment of the population. It is spearheaded by youth, often in clashes with the police. Immediate riot is full of tactical innovations: use of Facebook, Twitter, and other technologies for communication helps in forming quick assemblies.

Also, fire, drums, leaflets, temporary retreat through backstreets, slogans, the ringing of bells makes the assembly gradually bigger and lively. Despite use of innovative tactics, immediate riots have “inadequacies in discipline, strategic tenacity and moderation, when required, [...] (Badiou: 22-23).” The inadequate strategy is perceived when the immediate riot hardly gets extended beyond the original site of assembly. Like a blind force, it smashes things on its way and around it but cannot go beyond the level of weak localization. It fails to get people at different intersections involved. It fails to articulate any “universalizable intention” (Badiou: 23) beyond immediate rage and dissent. With strategic moderation, however, an immediate riot can pave the way for a historical riot.

Latent riots manifest quasi-riotous features: they tend to go beyond distinctive group belonging. One example of this is proxy strikes in which wage-earners go on strike, though they do not stop working. In fact, it is almost impossible for workers to stop work and go unpaid. So, people who do not work in that given factory or other establishment come up with an assembly, occupation, or strike with the agreement of the actual workers. What makes this riot unique is “a shared localization” (Badiou: 30), unlike the limited localization of the immediate riot.

A historical riot is “the transformation of an immediate riot” (Badiou: 33). Unlike the immediate riot, it does not extend by imitation but by qualitative extension. One sign of this extension is participation of people from all sectors: students, workers, intellectuals, family members, women, employees, civil servants, and even some police officers and soldiers, among others. Badiou argues: “a riot becomes historical when its localization ceases to be limited, but grounds in the occupied space the promise of a new temporality; when its composition stops being uniform, but gradually outlines a unified representation in mosaic forms of all the people; when, finally, the negative growling of pure rebellion is succeeded by the assertion of a shared demand, whose satisfaction confers an initial meaning of the word ‘victory’ (Badiou: 35).”

For Badiou, only the historical riot can end an intervallic period—a time when revolutionary ideas remain dormant—and pave the way for qualitatively different kind of organized politics. Badiou believes that Western World has not seen a historical riot in four decades. Therefore, the intervallic period of neoliberal capitalist control, the period from the 1980s to today, continues.

I would argue that Badiou’s historical riot occur within Harvey’s dialectical tension between absolute space, relative space and the relational space. Immediate riot occurs in Harvey’s absolute space:

“[...] an immediate riot is located in the territory of those who take part in it. [...] An immediate riot, stagnating in its own social space, is not a powerful subjective trajectory. [...] That is not to say that an immediate riot stops at one particular site. [...] [a]n immediate riot spreads not by displacement, but by imitation (Badiou, 23-24).

Spreading of immediate riot towards other cities, however, does not contribute to “qualitative extension” (Badiou: 34) which is required to bring forth the historical riot. Latent riot is also limited in demanding qualitative changes. Consequentially, both latent and immediate riot do not go beyond Harvey’s absolute and the relative spaces whereas historical riot can occur only within the dialectical tension between the absolute, the relative, and the relational. The entire process can be shown in a flow chart (see appendix). It is obvious that Badiou would accept the Marxian dialectic. Badiou analyses contemporary uprisings in historicist and materialist terms. He even considers these uprising as a repetition of history with a demand for more qualitative changes.

For him, the global popular rising “naturally resembles the first working class insurrections of the nineteenth century” (Badiou: 5). However, I believe that the dialectic of social movements for Badiou, as explained above, is more like the dialectic of Harvey than of Marx.

Micropolitics is *individualistic* or hyper-personalized. As individualistic, it remains trapped within the level of personal anguish of the “lived space” (Lefebvre). Though it is often argued that this personal anguish has a subversive potential, that subversive potential—within the scope of micropolitics at least—often gets appropriated by the “remainder of hegemony”. Scott and Certeau would argue for the *collective* dimension of micropolitics, offering their finding that many individuals together build a culture of resistance against systemic manipulation. For Scott, the poor peasants in Malaysia, for Chatterjee⁶, the poor slum dwellers in Kolkata, and for Certeau, the consumers as activists in the metropolis, for example, offer a collective insurrection against the manipulative systems of power: the landlords, the nation-state agencies, and the corporate capitalist forces. However, this micropolitical collective at best remains “mechanistically” collective. By mechanistically collective, I refer to Scott’s peasants, for example, who practice subterranean, collectively unconscious, and *decidedly* concealed practices of insurrection—which are identified and subsequently theorized as “hidden transcript” by James C. Scott. I have concerns regarding this “collective form of micropolitics as resistance” as it is routinely endorsed by the proponents and the followers of micropolitics. First, it remains within a kind of horizontal affinity-building effort, not ambitious enough to cross boundaries of class, group, caste, and other intersectional vectors. Consequentially, it replicates the logic and danger of the division of labor embedded in the capitalist mode of production.

But the very claims of going beyond “the realm of the personal” and “becoming collective” needs to be examined to understand the very nature and scope of the collective solidarity. To begin with, the collective in micropolitics is devoid of any organic orchestration of agency, as this sort of collective does not emerge or evolve from any urge to move towards the *dance of dialectic*⁷. I will explain the *dance of the dialectic* below, but first, I will explain *diving* and *dissent*.

It is helpful to recognize different modes of resistance within Harvey’s understanding of the dialectic between absolute space, relative space, and relational space. With the neoliberal capitalistic management of differences, individuals as “vulnerable constructs of biopower” are encouraged to compromise with all forms of systemic manipulation. This is the only mode of survival and progress offered by neoliberal capitalistic forces. We can call it “diving” into the system. Bhabha’s *mimicry* and *hybridity*, for example, are ways of making compromise through which diasporic communities in the metropolis get integrated with the manipulative system. No collective efforts are necessary. Individuals can attempt this “diving” and come out as successful.

The micropolitical collective or organizing, unless spatialized, remains at the level of “dissent” towards systemic manipulation but hesitant and incapable of radically challenging, attacking, and transforming the system itself. The urge to *transform* as opposed to the urge to *survive through compromise* can be felt only with an understanding of the *dance of the dialectic* which in turn is based on the understanding of the dialectic between *absolute space, relative space and relational space*. I will explain the dance of the dialectic at this point.

At the absolute level, we tend to think ‘present’ disconnected from past and future. Worse, we prefer to be ignorant of other aspects of space and time: the relative and the relational. But we need to recognize the dialectic between all three dimensions of space and time. Their relations are not hierarchical but they are in perpetual overlapping or in a constant tension. Spatial micropolitics (as in Johnson and Smith) have the potential to usher in the spatiotemporal

dialectic in our political imagination. Fragmented and fetishized micropolitics, however, prefers to remain in the absolute (as in Scott and Certeau) and the relative (as in Bhabha) only. A dance of the dialectic in this context would mean mobilizing resistance along the dimensions of the spatiotemporal dialectic towards revolution. In the context of our examples, it would mean mobilizing ‘spatial micropolitics’ towards Badiou’s ‘historical riot’.

The figure below gives an overview of my description of micropolitics herein.

Scott and Certeau	Foucault and Deleuze	Bhabha
Vicarious flight from Absolute to Relational	Relational can be reconfigured in the absolute	Working on the relative will reconfigure The relational.
Dissent	Dissent as Dance	Dive
Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
Collectivity is mechanistic	Collectivity is linear	Collectivity is not necessarily required

Figure 1.2 (b): An Overview of Micropolitics As Described Herein

I consider all micropolitics charted above inadequate in the sense that they are indifferent to the spatiotemporal dialectic. Scott and Certeau decidedly limit their politics within the absolute. If their infrapolitics or tactics have any sense of collectivity, it is taken as natural as alliance of the oppressed which is more of a byproduct or symptom of the systemic oppression. It is more escapist and non-resisting than dissenting or confrontational. Bhabha’s mimicry and sly civility, in contrast, are simply adaptive. They consider merging with the manipulative power structures as a mode of avoiding the manipulation itself.

Situating macropolitics and micropolitics in a binary configuration as Deleuze and Guattari do is problematic as it is argued, “politics is simultaneously macropolitics and micropolitics (1987: 213).” But, while they emphasize simultaneity, Harvey and Lefebvre see a dialectic between the micropolitical and the macropolitical.

Deleuze reads dialectic as synthesis of contradictions or differences. To him, dialectic attempts to establish higher unity among diverse forces in social realities. Deleuze hence says, “What I detested more than anything else was Hegelianism and the Dialectic (Deleuze: 112). It does not want to synthesize anything but emphasizes constant becoming or unbecoming, which is also objective of their project. Deleuze considers desire as free-floating will power seeking to establish fragmented and random connection with material realities. Spatiotemporal dialectic recognizes this fragmented and random connectivity, but only in its absolute and relative aspects, and in the relational aspect the dynamic between the absolute, the relative, and the

relational becomes obvious. So, the spatiotemporal dialectic, with all of its integral aspects, reveals a constant interplay between stasis and dynamism.

Foucault and Deleuze imagine “dive” as “dance”. Deleuze emphasizes the molecular operation of desire and will-power as revolutionary as he says: “no revolution ever takes place without the investment of desire (Holland: 103).” Thus he finds the micro or the molecular as subversive. He also subordinates the macro or the molar to the micro or the molecular. Foucault, on the other hand, promotes the technology of the self as revolutionary: “Foucault saw individuals as self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structure of domination (Besley: 21)”. Thus Deleuze and Foucault conceptualize counter-power and desire in the realms of the absolute and relative. They carry a kind of phobia about the relational as it would mean stasis and fascism for them. Hence neither Foucault nor Deleuze and Guattari can go beyond the project of personal growth and development and present any consistent politics of the social: “whereas Foucault failed to account for the legitimacy of radical politics, Deleuze and Guattari have no theory of why revolutionary desire is preferable over fascist desire (Best and Kellner:108).” Overall, it can be argued: micropolitics as proposed by Scott, Certeau, Bhabha, Foucault, and Deleuze builds on the absolute and relative spaces but carefully avoids relational space.

Notes

1. See Alison Kafer. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013:29.
2. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000).
3. See Sarah Lamble. "Queer Investments in Punitiveness". *Queer Necropolitics*. Edited by Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman and Silvia Posocco. New York: Routledge, 2014.
4. The quote in the question has been taken from the volume 1 of *Capital* by Karl Marx. See <https://www.marxists.org/subject/dialectics/marx-engels/capital-afterward.htm>
5. See Moishe Postone. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 152.
6. See Partha Chatterjee. *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004).
7. See Bertell Ollman. *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.

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Appendix

The flow chart shows how the project of *spatialized micropolitics* considers revolution as a process. It is an extension of figure 1.1 and 1.2 to and explains how the *surplus of the lived space* can follow different paths occurring as *dive*, *dissent*, and *dance*. Whereas immediate and latent riots are manifestations of *dissent*, it requires historical riot, through a *dance of the dialectic* to make radical transformation of a given system.

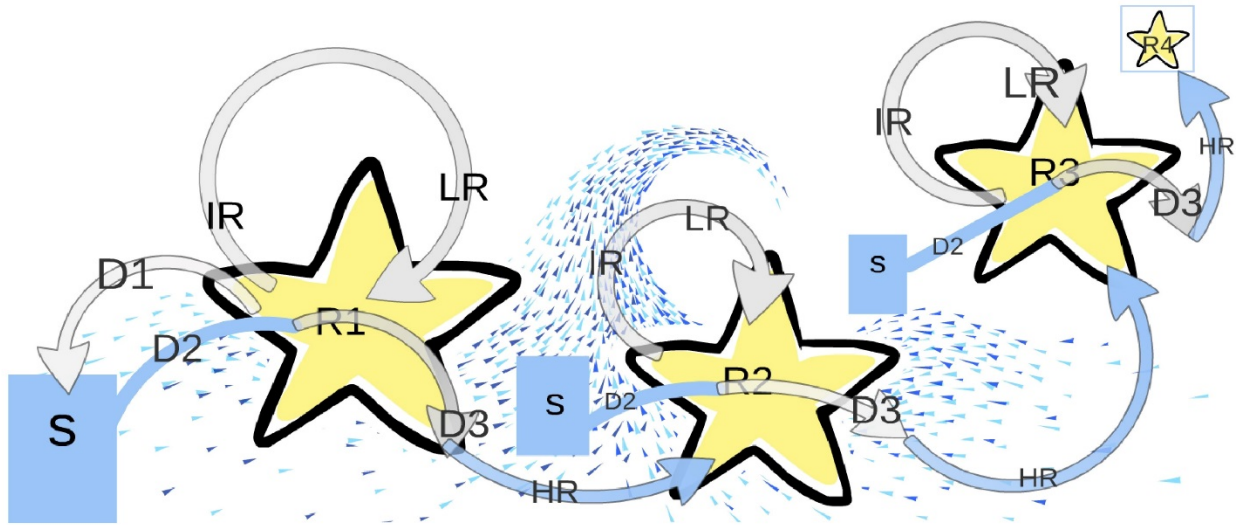


Figure 1.3: From surplus to Historical Riot

S= surplus of the Lived Space , D1= Dive, D2=Dissent, D3=Dance,
 R1, R2, and R3 stand for the remainder of hegemony in an existing system
 IR= Immediate Riot, LR= Latent Riot, HR= Historical Riot