# Working Through Political Organization: Current Results of the Subset of Theoretical Practice (2021–2022)[1]

# Subset of Theoretical Practice[2]

**Abstract:** The present essay begins by offering six propositions about the current conjuncture that frame our approach to the contemporary challenges of the radical Left. We then move on to sketch, in some detail, the three main ideas that condense the accumulated results of our current research project and picture our overall strategy for tackling this historical predicament.

*"The place we commonly call the real world is surrounded by vast and possibly infinite landscape which is invisible to these eyes (points to eyes) but which I am able to apprehend by other means. The more I tell you about this landscape, the more inclined you might be to call it my mind. I myself often call it my mind for the sake of convenience. For me, however, it is not just my mind but the only mind "*
(Gerald Murnane, Invisible Yet Enduring Lilacs)

## 1. Introduction

The present essay is an attempt to share with a wider network of comrades some of the results of the ongoing research carried out by the Subset of Theoretical Practice (STP)[1], both in hope that they might find it useful in their own political struggles and that it might spark the interest of others to join us in further developing these insights.

We begin by offering six propositions about the current conjuncture that frame our approach to the contemporary challenges of the radical Left, these are the theses of *peripherization*, *vulgarization*, *saturation*, *endogenous reproduction*, *multiplicity* and *organizational standpoint* - all of which are presented in the next section. We then move on to sketch, in some detail, some ideas that condense the accumulated results of our current research project and picture our overall strategy for tackling this historical predicament.

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1 The STP was created inside the Circle of Studies of Idea and Ideology, in 2015, with the original focus of developing conceptual tools to account for CSII's own practice and its particular reading of the political conjuncture. And even though the Circle dissolved in January 2021 - in a collective decision based on the analysis that the collective no longer was capable of effectively intervening in the Brazilian political context - the Subset of Theoretical Practice continued to work within those same original directives, now filtered and transformed by the political experiences of many of its new members. The histories of CSII and STP are discussed in *Contribution to the Critique of Political Organization* and *Atlas of Experimental Politics*, both published in Crisis and Critique. You can learn more about the STP at www.theoreticalpractice.com

The first of these ideas is the concept of *socially-mediated perspectives*, namely, a theory of how political organizations can function as non-trivial perspectives on the social world, helping us to see, interact and constrain social reality in ways otherwise inaccessible to individuals. The second idea - which we only develop briefly in this text - develops this initial point into what we call *organizational trinitarianism*, a basic theoretical grammar which spells out the interdependence between (1) how organizations are *composed*, (2) how they get to *interact* with the world and (3) what is rendered *intelligible* through these interactions. The last idea applies this general grammar to what we call *multi-layered social worlds*, a model of social formations which combines the social logics of reciprocity, contract and value, allowing to recuperate insights from diverse critical traditions into a common conceptual framework and render a discussion of large-scale social transformation more commensurate with the concrete problems of political organizing. We conclude with some remarks on how these ideas contribute to a rethinking of the communist hypothesis, the difference between emancipatory and reactionary politics and the socialist transition*.*

## 2. Six theses on the new conjuncture
Before we move on to present the current results of our collective research, it is important to clarify how these otherwise abstract constructions are actually motivated by quite concrete and historically situated political challenges. The six theses we will introduce now - framing our diagnosis of the Brazilian conjuncture and its embedding in a larger historical process - should also help to establish a certain proportionality between the depth we ascribe to our current political crisis and the level of theoretical backtracking we deem necessary if a more robust reconstruction of political thinking, up to the tasks of our times, is to be possible.

### 2.1 Peripherization thesis
The first component of our diagnostic is called the *peripherization thesis*. Originally developed by Brazilian critical theorists such as Francisco de Oliveira in the 90s and early 2000s[2], but expanded and popularized by the philosopher Paulo Arantes[3]*,* it proposes an immanent revision of the relation between center and peripheries in dependence theory.

Dependence theory pictured the capitalist geopolitical machinery in terms of a power struggle through which the development of advanced capitalist countries relied on the maintenance of underdevelopment in

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2 Oliveira, 2003

3 Arantes, 2014 - see also de Oliveira, 2018

peripheral ones. Authors such as Ruy Mauro Marini[4], Vânia Bambirra[5], Immanuel Wallerstein[6], amongst others, helped to clarify that the "backward" elements in these peripheral social formations were not accidental or contingent remnants of their past: when seen from the standpoint of "world-systems" and the international system of power relations connecting first- and third-world countries, traits such as explicit apartheid structures, hybrid regimes of slavery and wage-labour, the systematic overexploitation of workforce, all appeared as functional parts of capitalism itself, playing a crucial role in the maintenance of imperialist domination. What the peripherization thesis does is to add another twist to dependence theory: it claims that these heterogeneous aspects of peripheric social formations are not only functional parts of their integration into the global capitalist dynamics, but rather constitute *the most fertile ground* for the new forms of capitalist accumulation today[7]. Rather than just being locally underdeveloped and globally integrated into the dynamics of social development, countries like Brazil, South Africa and Mexico have become perfect laboratories for new forms of capitalist exploitation, integrating authoritarian control of surplus populations, the management of unresolvable social conflicts and a new police state compatible with parliamentary democracy. As a consequence, rather than the slow expansion of welfare-statism, liberal ideology and low-intensity democracy, bringing characteristics of advanced capitalist countries to peripheral ones, it is the social hybridism, the conflictual heterogeneity and the typology of informal labor that was "bred" in these these peripheric formations which now expands itself *towards the center*[8].

In short, the peripherization thesis states that *there is no necessary connection between capitalist development and the creation of a socially and politically cohesive space* - the alignment between these dimensions was local and circumstantial, and conditioned on the deepening of social and natural destruction everywhere else. Not only this, but the hybrid forms of domination nurtured in countries, neighborhoods and favelas where this alignment was never in place now emerge as the most adaptable and applicable set of social technologies for control and production. For us, this thesis indicates the need to abandon both political theories that rely on capitalist development to produce the conditions for its own systemic overcoming as well as those that rely on

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4 Marini, 2022

5 Bambirra, 2019

6 Wallerstein, 2004

7 Oliveira, 2003; Arantes, 2014

8 Comaroff, 2015; Beck, 2010; Hochuli, 2021

spontaneous social unrest to disturb the stability of capitalist forms. The process of peripherization indicates, instead, that the more the social space becomes fractured, hybrid and heterogeneous, the more capital is allowed to circulate without the hindrances of human inertia.

### 2.2 Vulgarization thesis

A crucial consequence of the peripherization process, one which directly affects the tasks and conditions of political practice, is what we call the *vulgarization* of social space[9]. The simplest way to define this process is to consider the usual meaning of the term, as when we oppose the "popularization" and the "vulgarization" of a given idea: while the former operation implies that the core components of an idea are *preserved* as it spreads around, the latter describes the case when the more an idea circulates, the more it gets corrupted, to the point of becoming unrecognizable. The *vulgarization thesis* claims that one of the main consequences of the renewed capitalist decoupling between the social organization of *workers* and the productive organization of *work*[10], brought about by the disconnection between social homogeneity and capitalist development, is ultimately an intense disconnection between class *experience* - conditioned by the different concrete social networks we must rely on to survive and understand our place in the world[11] - and class *structure* - conditioned by the place we occupy in the large-scale economic dynamic of surplus-value production and exploitation.

The most superficial version of the vulgarization thesis - usually developed by American or European authors - claims that contemporary capitalism simply pushes people away from collective life and towards individualistic, more atomized existences. Not only is this diagnosis not applicable outside very specific social contexts, but it also misses the crucial political consequence of a socially fractured space, which is the lack of any necessary *transitivity* between local and global solutions[12]. Those that denounce the increased individualism of contemporary capitalism disregard the plurality of social experiences that make up a peripheral social formation, while those who treat this heterogeneity as a superficial effect, championing a straightforward return to the political idea of universality, do not consider that, as the very social terrain erodes, it is *the referent* and not the *signifiers* that people do not spontaneously share anymore[13]. A more situated description of the diagnosis of

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9 Tupinambá, 2021

10 Abilio, 2015, p.131-170; Jones, 2021

11 Cicerchia, 2021

12 Nunes, 2021, p.92

13 Badiou, 2019

vulgarization might be that, once social referents themselves do not add up, a veritable *social perspectivism* becomes effective, in the sense that the totality of the social world appears differently from different social standpoints.

The vulgarization process implies, thus, that there is *a political-economic thrust towards social refraction* - it supplements the *temporal* crisis of peripherization with a *spatial* crisis that increasingly separates the homogeneous abstract space of capital from the fractured social terrain which supports it[14], like a perfectly smooth highway cutting across a ruinous landscape. For us, the vulgarization thesis implies, first of all, a step back from both political theories that still rely on an underlying common social experience supposedly promoted by capitalist exploitation and its accompanying social institutions, as well as from those that treat this process of heterogenization as a purely ideological one - as if these differences did not respond to actual, concrete transformations to the social bedrock itself. Instead, this thesis claims that we must treat social life under peripheric capitalist forms as composed of a patchwork of truly distinct social fragments, each potentially organized around different normative conflicts that people need to mediate and navigate[15], and each faced with different types of distortions when one tries to generalize their local properties to social experience at large.

### 2.3 Political saturation thesis

Our third thesis concerns the effect of these temporal and spatial tendencies on political upheavals and revolts. The thesis of *political saturation* claims that *the tension between popular and vulgar political forms precedes the tension between their Leftist and Rightist inclinations*. In other words, it maintains that political sequences like the 2013 June Journeys in Brazil were conditioned, first of all, by a clash between a political system built under modernizing, homogenizing social premises and a political force already shaped by the heterogeneous experience of social conflicts. We call "saturation" the process through which a complex system of political organizations - composed by moderate and radical parties, autonomous collectives, social movements, etc - can no longer incorporate and be incorporated by the political energy present in contemporary revolts and popular forces[16].

In a book published one year after the June Journeys, titled *The new World-Time*[17], Paulo Arantes proposed an interpretation of the protests claiming that these revolts pointed to *the end of a social pact* that in fact

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14 Canettieri, 2020

15 Feltran, 2014

16 Lazarus, 2015

17 Arantes, 2014

unified both the Left and the Right at least since the dictatorship in Brazil - a basic agreement that economic development and social democracy constituted a historical tendency that would either naturally lead us from a situation of extreme social conflict towards a more "civilized" social space or at least point the way for progressive political strategy. For the philosopher, one of the crucial effects of the largest set of political demonstrations in Brazilian history was bringing to view the exhaustion of the political system informed by this modernizing social pact, which now showed itself incapable of producing political forms, programs and worldviews compatible with the emerging popular unrest and its particular dynamics.

From the point of view of the saturation thesis, the continuity between mass protests and the rise of the extreme Right in the last decade can thus be challenged and recontextualized as the contingent effect of a more structural inversion: as the ground shifts beneath our feet, the progressive outlook of the Left becomes the very index of a more underlying conservatism, a reluctance to recognize its anachronism, while the outright reactionary pleas of the Right acquire a new legitimacy for at least acknowledging that something is wrong with our progressive optimism[18]. Furthermore, the common tendency to describe our time as the age of "amorphous" political unrest[19] - usually correlating the crisis of formal labor with the crisis of political forms - can now be placed in perspective: it is from the standpoint of Leftist modernist progressivism - be this of a more moderate or radical flavor - that contemporary revolts cannot but look without form, since they are shaped by a vulgar social terrain, with its own complex normative and organizational commitments, that look nothing like the converging, homogenized "people" we hoped to encounter.

The thesis of political saturation, therefore, states that *there is a structural mismatch between political forms produced under assumptions of temporal and spatial social convergence and the political forces that emerge within peripheric and vulgarized social conditions*. Adopting this thesis implies, for us, rejecting both political theories that ultimately read the new popular revolts as inherently reactionary outbursts of political energy as well as those that associate their political potential to the formlessness of new political forces, displacing the saturation of our political language onto a mystified image of the revolts. Rather than lose ourselves in fear and fascination with the efficacy of the new extreme-Right and their capacity to tame this popular force, the thesis of political saturation invites us to focus on the elaboration of a new political grammar based on the new social forms that already shape the complex reality of peripheric social life.

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18 Group of militants, 2019

19 Endnotes, 2020, Group of militants in the fog, 2022, Giully, 2018

*2.4 Endogeneous reproduction thesis*

In the context of political saturation, what happens with the already established political ecosystem of the Left? Here, the June Journeys can also help us frame the *endogenous reproduction thesis*. Put simply, this thesis states that *in the absence of a synergy between political forms and their social landscape the political ecosystem regulates itself via its own internal consistency.* We take "landscape" here to mean that region of the social space which, while not directly part of a recognizable political group, nevertheless actively indicate relevant constraints for a given political organization - for example, by considering what it learns from its social landscape, a party might be able to better select between appropriate and inappropriate political slogans for a given electoral campaign, or an autonomous collective might understand if it should invest its scarce militant resources into building this or that community or workplace initiative. Unlike "the people" or "the working class", which refer to more abstract social entities, a landscape forms a concrete network of people that mediate the contact between political organizations and its broader social environment[20]: the larger and more heterogeneous the landscape, the more it is able to help regulate political organizations, in a sort of social reality-testing process. The endogenous reproduction thesis claims, then, that the more a political ecosystem loses its social traction - as it follows in the case of political saturation - the more it tends to rely on its own internal conflicts for regulating itself.

In her ethnographic study of the fragmented state of the Brazilian Left after 2013[21], the ecosocialist militant Sabrina Fernandes came to a similar conclusion. While tensions between autonomists and party militants, reformists and revolutionaries, anarchists and communists, etc, have always existed, it seemed that one of the effects of the missed encounter between the radical Left and the June Journeys in Brazil was the establishment, or at least the intensification, of a truly unproductive cycle binding together the different sectors of the Left. The Workers' Party accused the smaller radical Leftist parties and the autonomist movement of boycotting their institutional project and of helping the inherently reactionary popular movement to gain traction. The socialist and communist parties, on the other hand, accused the institutional Left of capitulating before the economic pressures of capital and the autonomists of capitulating before the ideological pressures of "postmodern" relativism, thus facilitating the extreme-Right's co-optation of the protesting working class's indignation. Finally, the autonomist collectives and social movements denounced both the Workers' Party and the radical communist parties for their desire to

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20 Nunes, 2021, p.171-172

21 Fernandes, 2019

control and direct the popular energy of the protests, while impotently witnessing this very force get either dispersed or re-organized into more conservative ends. Despite appearing to go their separate ways, in truth these different fragments of the Left had become more entangled than ever[22], forming a system in which - in the absence of any continuous and effective synergy with a social landscape composed of the emerging social forces - the only trustworthy signals of how to make political decisions came from the recognition of the political failures of the other sectors of the Left.

As Fernandes notes, as the internal conflicts between Leftist tendencies and projects become the most relevant regulators of political action, two worrying symptoms emerge. On the one hand, since every political current wants to distinguish itself as much as possible from the others, this feedback structure acts as a centrifuge that separates political mixtures into more and more *idealized* "political substances", each highly averse to compromise and impurities and therefore unlikely to be able to produce real political effects - a process the author calls the emergence of *ultrapolitics*. On the other hand, when seen from the outside, the exact same dynamics that confirms every political position at the expense of the defeats of others simply signals to by-standers that *the whole Leftist field* is in error - leading to a extreme process of *depolitization*: a total disenchantment with the Left, which appears as an enclosed and privileged space of highly codified behaviors and self-referential discourses, in favor of managerial and entrepreneurial approaches to politics that seem to at least resonate with the realities of everyday life. Unable to establish an intercourse with the new social forces that took to the streets, the Brazilian Left entered a vicious cycle: the more it oscillated between ultrapolitization of each of its fragments and the depolitization of non-militants, the more it closed itself off to any social landscape, and therefore to any indicators of how to develop any meaningful synergy with the new social terrain it inhabited. To make matters worse, in the absence of social traction, a dangerous alternative solution always insinuates itself: to turn the Right into a coordinating force for the Left, which then unites in reaction to the advance of its enemies. The problem here is evident: not only it is impossible to stop the growth of a political force without actually offering people an alternative,

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22 One may remember here the way different areas of the Left antagonized each other over how to act or comprehend the June journeys, and yet all came to entertain – at some point or place – a *negative* relation to the people that took the streets during those days. Be it by downplaying the force, doubting the organicity or straight up repressing the protests in the case of the Worker's Party government; be it by being expelled from the marches in some cities for hoisting their flags in the case of the radical Left parties; be it by voluntarily leaving the mobilizations after the demand of suspending the fare rise was attended in the case of the Movimento Passe Livre, the main autonomist group organizing the protests, thus questioning the widely circulating watchword that the mobilizations "weren't just for the 20 cents". In all cases, a common experience of estrangement to the masses cut across all sectors of the Left, and yet passed terribly unrecognized.

but it is also impossible to fight an enemy if you have a veiled interest in making it seem more powerful than it is - since the greater the threat from the Right, the greater the reason to overcome the conflicts on the Left.

The endogenous reproduction thesis thus claims that one of the effects of intense political saturation is *the increasing separation of the reproductive dynamics of the Left ecosystem from the logic of social reproduction of its own social terrain.* For us, such a thesis implies that we should reject both political theories that directly attach themselves to any of these already established political standpoints within the Leftist spectrum, to the detriment of the others, as well as those which are incapable of recognizing the legitimate rationality of all of these political positions. Instead, we are required to take a step back from identifying relevant political actors through their own political emblems: the more these insignias refer only to tensions *within* Leftist organizations and discourses, the less they shine a light on the actual political forces at play in peripheric social formations. By separating the forms of social reproduction of the Left from its immediate claims to political relevance, we are also freed to recognize the political import of social phenomena which might, until now, pass by us unnoticed.

### 2.5 Political multiplicity thesis

The peripherization thesis points to a temporal impasse, the vulgarization thesis to a spatialized one. The political saturation thesis points to the mismatch between old political forms and new political forces and the endogenous reproduction thesis to the effects of this mismatch on the old political system itself. Our first proposition of how to respond to these new social and political conditions is called the *political multiplicity thesis*.

As we have seen, the peripherization thesis does not state that contemporary capitalism has arrived at a new world stage, but rather that the truth of capitalist sociality has *always* been in the periphery of the world -system - which is why while advanced capitalist countries face today a destruction of their progressive social conquests, peripheric countries are not essentially transforming their social structures, but rather losing their political reference point in developed capitalist societies. This "uneven and combined apocalypse" suggests that just as the tendency towards social homogeneity revealed itself to be an illusion produced by an exceptional moment in capitalist history, so is the idea that there is a natural tendency towards convergence between different Leftist political processes an effect of the same historical juncture. If there truly is a saturation of the political model built upon modernizing premises, then the first step to develop a political grammar that is native to peripheric conditions is *to drop the belief in any underlying common essence to the Left itself*[23].

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23 Tupinambá & Paraná, 2022

The political multiplicity thesis might be a polemic idea, but one of its main consequences is to embed the political field back into contemporary social reality. What we have called the vulgarization of the social space implies, after all, that in the absence of an overarching homogenous social structure people are tasked with navigating sometimes incommensurate normative commitments in order to organize their daily lives, go to work, deal with the police, etc. To suppose that there is no necessary unity or convergence between Leftist projects is simply to extend that same task to political life itself - with two useful corollaries: firstly, *that our political challenges now potentially resonate with the organizational challenges faced by people everywhere* and, secondly, *that local political solutions to these challenges might function as models of solutions to structural problems elsewhere.*

At the same time, once we assume that the consolidation of common objectives, useful ecosystems or even a recognizable Leftist field are all contingent and therefore require additional compositional work, we can also look at the history of the social conditions that facilitate or render this effort impossible to achieve. In fact, the very limit between what are social and what are political organizations, what are practices of social reproduction and what are practices that produce new social forms, becomes less defined. It has become a common trope amongst Marxists to recognize that the move away from the emblematic factory work paradigm also affected the ways the Left can politicize workers - it is one thing to strategically count on capital's own drive to dress everyone in the same uniform and expose them to similar experiences of suffering and indignation, another is to be required to provide this homogeneity ourselves. Suddenly, "pre-political" tasks - an almost therapeutic effort of producing mutual recognition amongst people, the logistical work of creating networks and protocols for sharing information and resources, and the means for guaranteeing the financial subsistence of militants and workers during a struggle - become central components of any collective politics. For us, the thesis of political multiplicity also works as a prudent generalization of this principle: the need to frame our political theory in such a way that we never assume that there is some necessary social tendency that will, by itself, produce a common basis for the multitude of political forces operating within divergent social landscapes.

### 2.6 Organizational standpoint thesis
This brings us to a last crucial thesis, which helps to provide a general framework for combining the previous five propositions. The thesis of the *organizational standpoint* was actually introduced by Alexander Bogdanov in his writings on "tektology" or the "universal science of organization"[24] in early soviet Russia. In its original form, it might be stated as the claim

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24 Bogdanov, 1980

that *there is no such thing as total disorganization*. It follows from such a statement that we cannot use the concept of organization to oppose social life and political activity - as if only the latter was organized - nor can we think of political organization as a particular strategy, opposed to "spontaneous" or "disorganized" politics. In fact, Bogdanov went as far as saying that we also cannot oppose the creation of things to their organization, since to work or produce is already to re-organize some material into a new form. For him, tektology was therefore not the study of a type of thing called "organization", but the study of any thing from the standpoint of its organization.

For us, the organizational standpoint thesis is, above all, the claim that the best way to avoid treating novel social and political forces as formless irruptions or ineffable potentialities is to develop *a theoretical grammar that can remain continuous while thematizing radically discontinuous forms*: continuities and discontinuities between modernizing and peripheric social forms (2.1), between popular and vulgar social spaces (2.2), between old and new political forms (2.3), between fragments of the Left (2.4), between everyday social composition and strict political composition (2.5), etc.

In his recent book *Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A theory of political organization*[25]*,* Rodrigo Nunes takes on this Bogdanovian principle and develops it in two complementary axes. On the one hand, Nunes adopts network theory as a common language that allows us to treat all sorts of human aggregates as organized systems, embedding social and political forms into one common theoretical frame. This first conceptual movement already gives us better resources to think about how social transformations affect the conditions for political practice, since the same set of conceptual tools we would use to describe changes to the social terrain also apply to how we might describe the problems faced by organization of militants, its limitations and cost-structures. On the other hand, since this common theoretical framework blurs the line between what is political and what is not - given that every social entity can be thought as a particular type of organized network - we are suddenly obliged to *identify politics by its effects rather than by its actors*[26]*.* Again, this gives us a way out of the self-containment of the Left's endogenous reproduction and new resources to explore the reaches of the multiplicity thesis, since we are freed to consider certain political actors as composing inconsequential dynamics while recognizing that otherwise apolitical practices might play crucial roles in advancing a political cause or in creating conditions for further political composition of forces.

Finally, a crucial consequence of adopting the organizational standpoint - brilliantly argued by Nunes - is that it not only intrinsically connects the social and the political, but it also turns the problem of how different political organizations relate into a political issue of strategic dignity. This is what Nunes calls the point of view of the *political ecology* - the network of connections between political aggregates and between these groups and their shared social environment[27]. The concept of political ecologies is a possible answer, from the organizational standpoint, to the impasse of endogenous reproduction and the general principle of political multiplicity: given that we are using the same tools to think different political forms and to think the different ways they might interact with each other, it becomes easier to mix together "first" and "second-order" political tasks, anticipating questions about the effects of certain tactical choices on the ecology of organizations. In other words, the organizational standpoints "flattens" *both* the infra-political and the political - by treating social life as already being organized life - *and* the political and the meta-political - by treating the composition of organizations itself as an organizational problem.

### 3. From the organizational standpoint to the standpoint of organizations

Motivated by our six theses, our theoretical approach takes seriously the plurality of veracious, but partial perspectives that make up an ecosystem of the Left, considering how different ways to antagonize a complex social system can lead to effective *yet* possibly incompatible mappings of social reality, points of view which we cannot be composed in arbitrary ways, based on some predetermined absolute common ground. There is truth to the picture of the social world that appears to autonomist radical movements, just as there is truth to the point of view of the Workers' Party government and to the point of view of radical Leftist parties - but there is also a profound truth in the fact that these perspectives neither naturally cohere, nor seem on their own sufficient to encompass the full extent of our common social and historical predicament. Today, a working theory of proletarian struggle capable of producing synoptic views of social totality, must allow for a certain *indifference* to the commitments of the different historical traditions in the Left, precisely in order to recognize where each of them lays hold to something real today[28]. As such, we need

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27 Nunes, 2015, p.171

28 Compare this to a similar problematic in feminist movements, as Donna Haraway elucidates in the Cyborg Manifesto, it is through the common opposition to patriarchal forms of domination, and not the cementation of identities, that feminisms come together. She already proposes a multi-perspective approach, in which apparently incompatible viewpoints can be composed and co-navigate subversion by malleating rigid boundaries. See Haraway, 1990

to think about the interface between the critique of political economy and the construction of political organizations in a way that accounts for the plurality of effective political standpoints that a fractured social space allows for, while being able to navigate between different scales of analysis and action: from the interconnections between concrete forms of social reproduction and the demands of militant life, to the relations between organizations and their ecosystems and, finally, interactions between the space of Leftist organizations to the social world at large.

It is crucial to reiterate that such scale-relative grammar emerges not from a sociological demand, but from a political one, as a response to the organizational challenges faced by radical politics in the context of peripherization, and not as a merely theoretical expansion of social sciences - even if, as a side-effect, social theory might benefit from its development. Rather than deducing what radical politics must look like given that the social world appears in this or that way, our approach allows us to invert the universal and particular terms in this equation. From the standpoint of our guiding theses, the ecosystem of the Left can be viewed as a possible model of the world it is embedded in - in fact, in line with this intuition, *we maintain that to organize a view of the political movement as a whole is, ultimately, to gather the resources to picture the social world in which these multiple struggles take place*. Accordingly, such theory must also invert the usual precedence of structural analysis of the economy over the questions of concrete organization: rather than expanding the structural analysis of critical sociology and economy onto political organizations, it is the organizational standpoint that must become the general theoretical framework which encompasses social and economic systems.
This is where we believe the Subset of Theoretical Practice might add its first contribution, with our theory of *socially-mediated perspectives*.

The main objective of this theory is to adopt what we have called the organizational standpoint and work out, within this framework, what it then means to "organize" ourselves collectively, in the usual sense we ascribe to the term. In other words, if we are, in some way, ourselves organized, and in constant exchange with our natural and social environments, how do we distinguish *political organization* from any other individual and social organized situation*?* What type of changes does this bring about? The general answer we seek to provide, through the idea of socially-mediated perspectives, is that different political organizations provide different ways to interact with the social world, and as such, to discover elements of this world otherwise inaccessible to us.

### 3.1 Collective organization and social mediations

The relevance of those *mediated interactions* becomes apparent when we consider the gap between the global social structures that shape our lives and our lived but local experience of this structured social reality[29]. As our capacity to map our place in the world diminishes - for example, once induction from particular experiences to global properties is hindered by vulgarization - so does the possibility of envisioning anti-systemic socialist strategies that could help us steer the many forms of contemporary struggle into one same direction. Likewise, instead of gaining a sense for a larger political movement we are part of, individuals and political organizations are left at the mercy of either fragmented points of view or fantasy-like constructions that are meant to idealistically explain away everything, such as conspiracy theories and abstract theorizations with no strategic or programmatic counterpart.

Collective organizational practices - arranging and negotiating meetings with people, producing protocols to coordinate distant actions, deciding on certain markers to assess the success or failure of our actions, taking on new responsibilities, etc - are constantly making individuals confront their imaginary embedding in the world with new situations and normative schemas, facing us with a set of forms and forces that shape how the world appears to us. These determinations are sustained and concretized in the *social relations* between people that make up a certain organizational space: the constraints and costs of our actions, the scarcity of resources and libidinal motivations - for every increase in our collective power to act, there is also a set of new constraints and social resistances we now need to deal with. In politics, we organize the world by acting collectively, but our "social senses" are themselves re-organized by this collective activity, as they are subjected to new social constraints that require us to broaden or transform our ways of experiencing otherwise ordinary situations.

These epistemic capacities provided by social mediators resemble the ethological notion of an *umwelt*[30]. The umwelt is understood for biologists as the *environment* insofar as it presents itself to particular organisms through its specific sensory organs. That is to say, the same flower will appear different to a bat using echolocation, a bird detecting ultraviolet light, and an insect following chemical signatures. In this manner, a larger world is accessible through the physical restrictions imposed by systems of sensation, each of which exhibits a different strength and interacts with a different aspect of the world (electromagnetic radiation, molecular compositions, actively probing

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29 Fredric Jameson already mentions this epistemic reduction in his text *Cognitive Mapping*, although for him it is art that serves as the prime mediator between individuals and social totality. See Jameson, 1990 and Toscano & Kinkle, 2015.

30 Üexkull, 2010

through touch, etc.). In a parallel way, we can think of mediating organizations as organs, each with varied mechanisms, engaging with different aspects of the social world through the particulars of their structure. At any given time individuals will have access to many mediating organs with different compositional makeups: community-based organizations[31], the variety of state apparatuses[32], different types of workplaces[33] - from factory floors to postmodern "collaborative" spaces, etc - each interacting with the social world in a particular way, and hence constituting its environment in equally diverse forms.

Consider the way school occupations *disturb* the social world by enabling the extraction of information otherwise unavailable without the political action of the students[34]. The composition of the movement - mainly students - enables a certain form of action - interventions on the school system, the student's families, the neighborhood, the state - which in turn yields information about how schools are normally organized - their true budgetary constraints, the effective authoritarian structure hidden behind its pedagogical board. Hence, social forms that make themselves manifest through the disturbance and reaction provoked by political action. In the sense that student occupations as a political practice make available a *perspective* on the world that was not previously available, we are dealing with an *epistemic mediation* operated through collective organization itself.

Of course, in order for the epistemic mediation to effectively occur we must take into account that this particular organizational form *makes available* the perspective to the individual *cognitive* agents that participate in it[35]. As we will argue later on, political organizing is more akin to a certain form of *experimentation* with the social world and the possible kinds of transitivity between the sensitivity of social and political organizations to their respective environments. From this follows that the composition of individual cognitive agents are a crucial component in determining political experiments *as experiments* – in the sense of verifying the consequences of adopting specific organizational hypotheses.

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31 Viveiros de Castro, 2016

32 Scott, 2020

33 Perec, 2017

34 See the video for the STP presentation for *Elements for a Logic of Struggle*, available on our website.

35 This problem was explored in the *Atlas of Experimental Politics*, by exploring Sohn-Rethel's concept of real abstraction, its relation to social synthesis, and to cognitive agents. See STP, 2021, section XII

### 3.2 Constraints, action spaces and reductions

Nevertheless, the idea that social mediations can be conceptualized as alternative perspectives on the social world does not in itself help us distinguish whether they are political mediations or not. In short, how do we distinguish between the occupied school, organized by its students, and the regular school in its everyday existence? What part of the social world is accessible through one and not the other? In other words, how might we formalize the gap between a typical space of capitalism and one that has been politicized, one in which *something else* is possible? To answer such questions we need conceptual tools that provide our theory with a kind of socio-political semantics.

In general, we will define social mediations as *social organs that are sensitive to social phenomena*. We will then distinguish between conservative and political mediations in terms of whether the picture of the world they produce is consistent with the current presentation of the social world or if it contains new information about it. It is important to note that we have been emphasizing the informative or epistemic dimension of political organization simply because this is usually taken to be the main feature of what a "perspective" is. But politics is not just a matter of knowledge, or better: in politics, *knowledge* is strictly connected to our capacity to *act* given how we are internally *composed*, to effect change and to recognize and respond to how the world *resists* our own advances[36].

This is why our basic theoretical schema does not only include individual agents, social mediations and the social world at large, but also three distinct types of relations between them:

*1. Constraints:* the structures defining the costs of our actions, the effort that it takes to go "against the grain" in a given situation.
*2. Action spaces*: the possible paths we can take when interacting in a given context.
*3. Reductions*: the relevant information about the world needed to adjust future our actions and evaluate previous ones[37], a useful picture of the world.

For example, a political party that is participating in an election is constrained by the rules of parliamentary democracy, partially shaping its possible courses of action and also reducing the party's picture of

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36 Here we draw on existing research programs to schematize social mediations, including theories of surrogate reasoning and extended cognition. We rely on category theory as a privileged formal tool for modeling the relational-compositional properties of social phenomena.

37 Though we do not explore this here, reductions can be directly defined on the actions and constraints, as a sort of coefficient or differential between the former and the latter. Following an old intuition by Bogdanov himself, I learn about the world insofar as it resists my own actions: knowledge is the product of the world's resistance to labor. See Bogdanov, 1990 and Wark, 2015

the world to some relevant features - captured by the types of social entities the party effectively recognizes as existing, like other parties, candidates, "the people", its "voters", etc - but the party itself then constrains its militants, who get to participate in the electoral process in different capacities, while also seeing the social world through the lenses of the party structure. Finally, our disposition to work for the party is also constrained by our other professional, affective and personal determinations, by what action spaces are available to us and how these condition our own individual pictures of the social world.

      With all of this in mind, we propose the following schema, where the bold arrows stand for *action spaces*, the dotted ones for *constraints* and *reductions* are in gray:
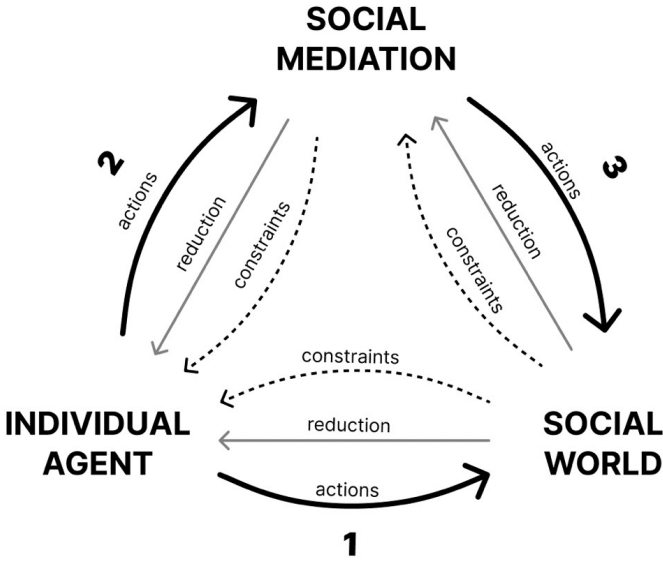
A first global feature of this diagram is that its arrows are asymmetric, as they should be: after all, both individuals and social mediations are parts of the social world. It follows, then, that constraints should flow from the world to its parts, just as partial pictures or "reductions" should ultimately compress the same highly complex social object, the social world itself. A second feature, possibly counterintuitive, is that political engagement - the individual's action space in a social mediation - is correlated with the assumption of *additional* social constraints, not their loosening up. Of course, by collectively organizing, individuals might change their social circumstances, acquiring more freedom to act, but our diagram articulates this as a *composite* process, going full circle from action space **2** to **3**, and then to the constraint arrow **1**. Political

participation itself, from the perspective of an individual, appears as the meeting point of constraint arrow **1** and the composition of constraint arrows **3** and **2.** We could say that political engagement produces a *new problem* - that of compatibilizing these two arriving arrows - before it might offer solutions to old ones - through the completion of a circular determination.

If we go back to the epistemic aspect of our theory, we can see that the present schema divides the problem of mapping the social world into *four* different paths. We can distinguish between:

1. the way the world appears to individuals (reduction **1**),
2. the way the world appears to social mediations (reduction **3**),
3. the way mediations themselves appear to individuals (reduction **2**)
4. the way the world appears to individuals *through* mediations (composite of **3** and **2**).

The difference between the last two maps is quite easy to consider: as militants, we can tell apart the norms and values a collective holds as part of its political strategy and its theoretical worldview and those constraints that originate in the clash between a collective project and the social world - laws we now need to consider, new personal and financial relations we enter into because of how organizations are materially embedded in social life, etc. Even though, ultimately, these two arrows compose into a certain filtering of how individuals get to act as part of the organization, the fact this is a composite points to the capacity of collective life to elicit social determinations that our direct individual embedding in social life would not confront us with.

Action spaces, on the other hand, flow from individuals through social mediations to the social world - and we can think of them as establishing a certain range of possible ways to re-organize some situation, acting against its "ortogradient" tendencies, i.e. the paths that "follow the grain" of already established constraints. While individuals surely display different acting capacities, the diversity of action spaces is much clearer at the mediated level, where the action space of a student is different from a teacher, of a 'model' student as opposed to a 'delinquent' student, and so on.

*3.3 Equivalent and diverging paths in the diagram*
Having presented the different terms and relations that actually compose the schema, let us now focus on the two paths connecting the social world and individuals, the direct path - composed of the set of arrows **1** - and the composite path, with arrows **2** and **3,** which we notate as **3** ∘ **2**, as in "path **3** after path **2"**. For the sake of visual simplicity, we are not presenting the reduction arrows in this diagram:
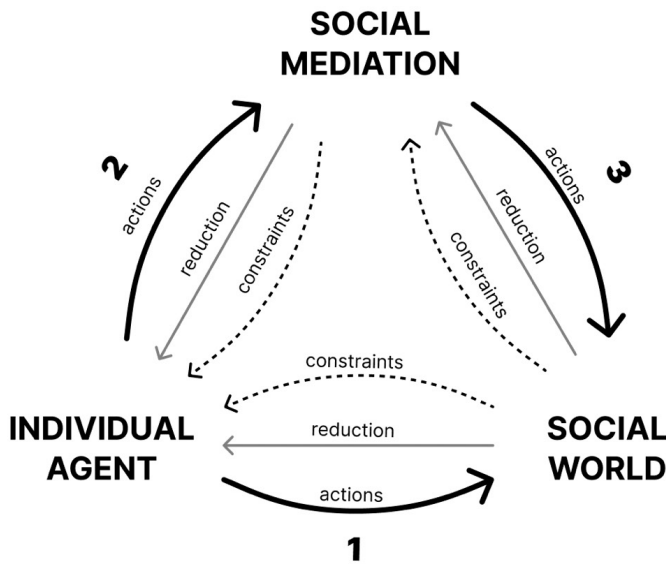
As we already anticipated, the difference between conservative and political social mediations hinge, for us, on the difference between paths **1** and **3 ∘ 2**. But before we examine the cases where the two differ, let us first consider the cases where **1 = 3 ∘ 2**. These are the situations where the way we are engaged with particular social mediators - it might be our family, an institution or an arbitrary collective group or activity - does not lead to any new information, action or constraint that was not already available in our regular dealings with the world. That is to say, the direct mapping from the social world to an individual agent is the same as the composite facilitated through social mediations. In mathematical terms we would say the diagram *commutes*. Later on, it will become important to identify cases when a diagram does or does not commute - as well as what other relations must be added to a non-commutative diagram so that it commutes again.

For example, a school can be seen as a social mediation - individuals are constrained by the school rules, they act in particular ways while there and they learn all sort of things about the world that they did not know before - but this mediated path is shaped in such a way as to better integrate the individual in the social world that awaits them as independent adults: the forms of authority and freedom they experienced, the new capacities and the picture of the world they acquired are all later reproduced in one way or another in their experience of the social world[38].

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38 It is important - though we will not pursue this here - to also consider the two extreme cases where **1 = 3 ∘ 2**, that is, those where social mediations are indistinguishable from one of the two other focal points. These are particularly useful cases to consider because, conceptually, they help to confirm that our approach is first and foremost organizational - meaning, that despite the initial impression, *it is the intermediate term that has existential precedence over the other two*. At the same time, the very

We have seen that there are two paths between the social world and the individual - either directly through the arrows **1** or indirectly via social mediations and the composition of **2** and **3** - and, in fact, the crucial function of the diagram is to explore the *difference* between cases where these two paths lead to the same result and those where they do not. This is such a central property of the schema that we believe it can function as the basis for distinguishing political inside social practices - a distinction which, living up to our initial theses, does not require any previous commitment to particular strategies, programs or particular actors.

What matters to a collective organization can be different than what matters to us individually. For example, someone might say that their life was left unchanged by the election of an authoritarian government, but if by chance they start organizing, for whatever reason, with people for whom the new governmental politics make a strong difference, the mediating collective now confronts them with a new relevant feature of the world that also influences, through the organization, their own constraints and action space. We do not need to know beforehand which type of organization this is, what it says about itself or its explicit political banner, the very logic of constraint-passing, schematized in our diagram, helps us discern a more functional or intrinsic political dimension to this process.

From this perspective we are able to differentiate between what we will call a *conservative* and a *political* practice. We will call *conservative practices* all those cases where **1 = 3 ○ 2**, that is, where the reductions, constraints and actions made possible by a given social mediation *remain consistent with the world* when an individual interacts with it outside of that particular institution or collective. To go back to our main example, a school is a subset of the social world, and a student is someone that is constrained by the school *and thereby by the social world*.

On the other hand, a school occupied by students protesting against a government reform becomes an organization whose constraints *cannot be accounted for* by mere reference to the rules of the social world they are in. If parents or journalists ask the students "why are you doing this, disrupting classes, compromising your future?" the answer will most likely mobilize certain constraints ("we cannot let the government cut the education budget"), capacities ("the school is ours and cannot be closed down while we occupy it") and worldviews ("being a student is *more* than being educated to integrate the workforce") that are not immediately available as part of the "**1**-arrows" situating individuals in their social world - in short, this is a case where the direct and the indirect paths are *not* equivalent, that is, where **1 ≠ 3 ○ 2.**

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possibility of accounting for these cases strongly suggests a deeper resonance between our organizational approach and an area of mathematics called category theory, in which objects are ultimately reducible to their relations. To explore these cases, we would need to add a new type of arrows to our diagram, called identity arrows, but these constructions are - as they say - "left as exercises to the reader".
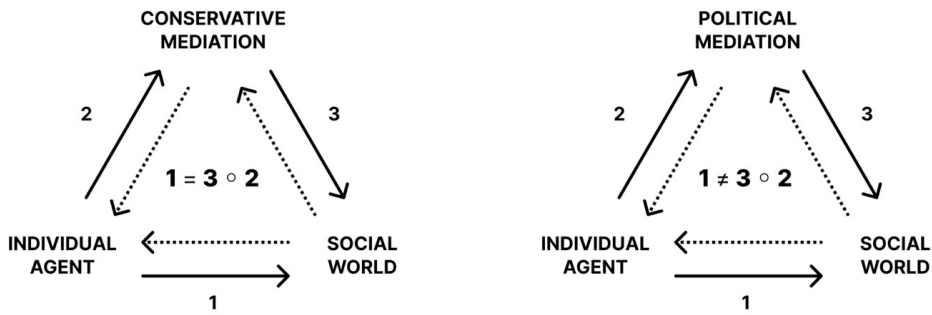
If we consider the three types of arrows in our fully fleshed diagram for a moment, we can now name the difference between **1** and **3 ∘ 2** for each of them:

1. We call political *discipline* the case the constraints we admit by engaging in collective projects do not coincide with the constraints that the world directly imposes on us;
2. We call political *power* if the space of possible actions mediated by organizations does not coincide with our direct power as individuals in the social world;
3. We call political *knowledge* if the reduction of the world mediated by a collective organization is different than the way the world appears to our individual selves.

We are left, then, with a potentially infinite set of conservative social practices, going from social individuality all the way to large-scale social structures such as international markets, conditioned by two properties:

1. They are part of the social world, and
2a. Participating in these social mediations and directly participating in the social world are ultimately synonymous - just as "going to school" and "being a good citizen" are related as if the former was a particular case of the latter's general social imperative.

On the other side, we have the more elusive set of organizational forms - again, of whatever scale these might be, from experimental forms of individuality all the way to large national and international associations, defined by:

1. Being part of the social world, and
2b. Being formed in such a way that the power, discipline and knowledge of the world available through them is ultimately *distinct* from how these dimensions shape our individual social lives and regulate the workings of the social world.
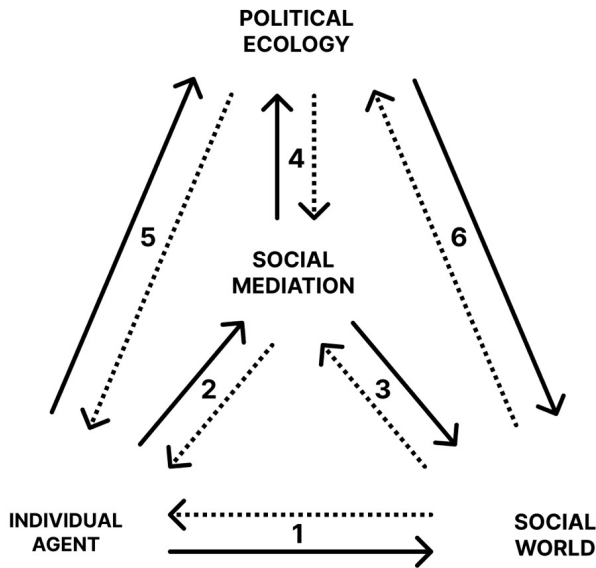
In our diagram, the first set corresponds to the cases where **1** **= 3 ○ 2** and the second to those where **1 ≠ 3 ○ 2**. But this brings us to a fundamental issue: what are the *conditions* for divergence?

### 3.4 Political ecology

In our example of the occupied school, we mentioned that, when confronted by other social institutions, the organized students might sound unreasonable: in the "game of giving and asking for reasons", students mobilize a series of normative commitments that are tied to the perspective opened by their embedding in the world mediated by the political occupation. From the perspective of parents, journalists, policemen - that is, institutions whose perspectives on the world are trivially embedded in its space - these are not acceptable motivations, their practices are indistinguishable from vandalism, idealist dreams and their goals ultimately appear as untenable or unrealistic. But if the occupied school, with its particular form of organization, offers a new perspective on the world, where do its own alternative characteristics come from?

Until now, we managed to construct a primarily organizational distinction between conservative and political practices and we have also indicated that, in the cases where **1 ≠ 3 ○ 2**, political organizations offer non-trivial perspectives on the world. The question of where the difference between these two paths might come from brings us to the third problem we sought to address, namely, the role of the practical construction of a point of view of the political movement itself, through the composition of different political processes. The need to treat the problem of *political ecology*[39] with the same theoretical tools employed to understand social and political organizations was already anticipated in our last theses, after all. So let us then introduce a fourth term to our diagram, provisionally called the "political ecology", to stand in for the larger ecosystem of different political organizations and their actual composition:

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39 Again, here we follow Nunes, 2021

POLITICAL
ECOLOGY

4

5          SOCIAL
MEDIATION          6

2          3

INDIVIDUAL ........ 1 ........ SOCIAL
AGENT                          WORLD

The introduction of this new term complicates our diagram quite a bit, since we must now consider the arrows that connect it to individuals (**5**), social mediations (**4**) and the social world (**6**). For now, we will only concentrate on the connection between social mediations and the political ecology - that is, the arrows labeled **4** - and assume that if a political organization is part of a political movement, that is, if it acts on the movement, is constrained by it and has a picture of this "political body", then the set of arrows **5** and **6**, binding the ecology to the world, commute with **4.** In fact, though we will only return to it in section 5, it is easy to realize that in order for this new diagram to commute - that is, for the relations between individuals and the movement and the movement and the world to be consistent with the relations mediated by **3** ∘ **2**, both the individual and the world *would have to also appear differently* than how they appear to the conservative point of view. We will return to this point later on, as an even richer structure is needed to account for it.

But let us go back to the case of our militant students, as this new diagram helps us see that the additional constraints they are subjected to do not come from their personal eccentricities or from purely abstract principles, but are concretely passed along by the history of previous struggles in education in many other places and times, by the existence of other schools being occupied and, in all those cases, by the necessity to connect their own organizational means to a larger field of political practices. In other words, these new characteristics ultimately come from the political ecology that the occupation is actively making itself a part of. In our new expanded diagram, we can redefine the conservative and political structures in terms of their different relations to the new set of arrows we have introduced. We can now say that conservative mediations are trivially included in the social world insofar as these organizations

remain unconnected to larger political compositional spaces - that is, cases where $1 = 3 \circ 2 = 4$ - while political organizations are those mediations that are subjected both to the constraints of the world and to the constraints of trying to compose together with other political practices - that is, cases where $1 = 3 \circ 2$ *only if* $5 = 4 \circ 2$ *and* $6 = 3 \circ 4$.

From the point of view of this expanded diagram, we are able to situate the apparently exceptional or "irrational" character of the students' justifications, decisions and concerns in terms of the concrete challenges of rendering their own practice of occupying their school compatible with those of other organizations in the same political ecology (other schools - occupied or yet to be occupied -, official and unofficial student entities, mobilized parents and teachers, autonomous groups and political parties, etc). What this entails may vary radically: from the mere evocation of past revolts and revolutions as inspiration - nonetheless implying some level of submission to the task of continuing in their wake - to attempts of producing strong connections with a community of supporters, to large-scale strategic needs of the students' movement across the nation. These connections might be more or less stable, they might entail the transmission of methods, particular resources or specific problems, but they nonetheless help us situate and contextualize the *common* dimension of the otherwise exceptional divergence of politics from conservative or orthogradient social life.

The expanded diagram affirms, then, that a political organization is capable of producing new points of view on the social world - through political discipline, political power and political knowledge - in direct proportion to this organization's connection to a political ecology or a larger political movement. The less a political process is dependent on others, the more its own constraints, action space and reductions of the social world tend to be indistinguishable from those that already subsume individuals - in other words, the more these alternative constraints and capacities exist only as representational contents, idealizations or personal preferences. And this is quite reasonable: a supposedly Leftist political party which is incapable of connecting and reshaping itself through its relations to any other political processes is pretty much indistinguishable from any other social institution in the world, regardless of its professed political leanings.

With the theory of socially-mediated perspectives we have developed a first schema to approach the main problems we originally diagnosed in our six theses: we can now situate the effect of complex worlds on their social mediations, as per the peripherization thesis; we can use our theory of political ecologies and political organizations to discuss the thesis of the systematic fragmentation of the Left, taking seriously how different forms of political organization might lead to potentially incompatible reductions of social reality; and we can use the thesis of political multiplicity and the organizational standpoint to explore

what it might mean to navigate a highly heterogeneous ecosystem of Leftist organizations, developing better conceptual and practical tools that take these compositional challenges into consideration. Returning to the parallel with the concept of "umwelt" in biology, the fragmentation of the Left must not be a reason for despair, indeed, the plethora of social experimentation allows to reconstruct a larger, multi-perspective signal because each organizing form serves as a different sensory organ, capturing distinct dimensions of the world. Carrying out this task is not particularly trivial, but we now understand it is less about finding our way out of some scorched land, and more of a task of pruning, sowing and grafting.

### 3.5 Organizational trinitarianism

Fasciously borrowing an expression employed by computer theorists, we call *organizational trinitarianism* the set of basic conditions for considering any social phenomena from the organizational point of view. For us, to adopt the organizational perspective means to admit a fundamental equivalence between the question of how organizations are *composed*, of what they manage to *interact* with and of what is *intelligible* to them. To approach a social phenomena organizationally is, for us, to frame it from the perspective of this triad, exploring each of its separate aspects while maintaining that they are ultimately expressing the same thing[40].

A nice way to understand the distinction between these three aspects is to think of composition as the logic of *how differences make up other differences* - of how small parts can make up larger structures with similar or emergent properties, for example - to think of interaction as the logic of *what differences can be made different* - of how a given object is able to affect itself and others in particular ways - and intelligibility as the logic of *which differences make a difference* - that is, of which features are relevant and irrelevant in a given context.

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40 A longer account of our theory of organizational trinitarianism can be found in STP, 2021, section IV

## COMPOSITION

how differences make
up other differences

## INTELLIGIBILITY

what differences make
a difference

## INTERACTION

what differences can
be made different
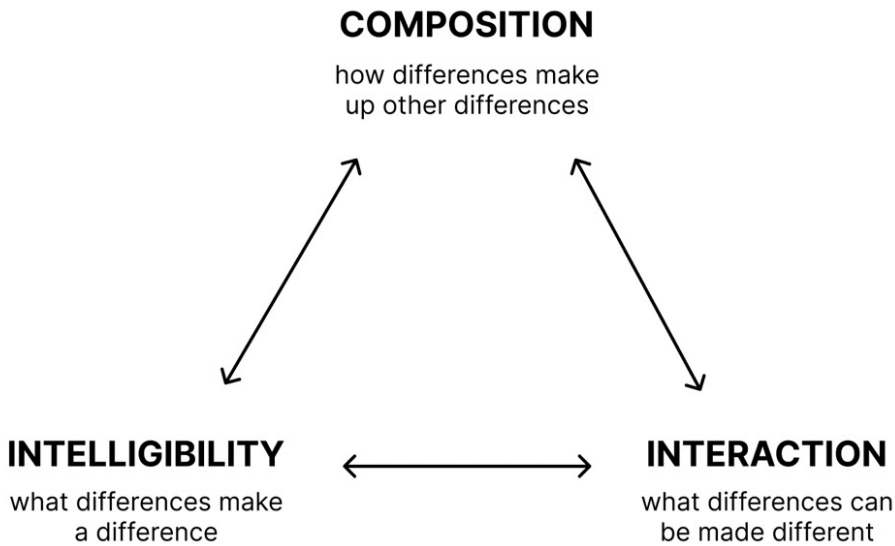
The profound connection between these three poles can be intuited
by considering, for example, that depending on how the occupation of
the school is organized - forms of hierarchy, deliberation, the social
composition of students, etc - it will meet different resistances from the
world, constituting different environments with alternative mappings of
social reality. A school occupation composed of poor black students in a
peripheral neighborhood will, by virtue of its composition and the forces
it interacts with, serve as a much better "social sensor" to the presence
or absence of police cars, than the occupation of middle class white
students who tacitly count with their parents social influence to protect
them from certain forms of violence. Similarly, an occupation composed
of the same people, but organized in two different ways - one that directly
follows orientations from an anarchist political group, and another that
regulates its strategies through assemblies with other nearby schools
- will equally constitute different interactional spaces, with possibly
heterogeneous pictures of the political world.

 Social mediations can be generalized to organizations of non-
human entities working as social agents in their causal capacities.
Consider the case of technology, in which everyday life is organized and
mediated through electronic gadgets, industrial and military machines,
social media apps and surveillance and advertisement software,
as well as technological extraction and distribution of energy and
natural resources. Under the facade of neutral and mathematical form,
algorithmic society organizes and controls human life through logical
flows, automated protocols and ostensibly unambiguous directives. Take
as a specific example the case of automation in the judicial system, in
which algorithms are used to predict recidivism, influencing a judge's
decision and endowing technology with the power of social organization:

a material rearranging of bodies determining which individuals are able to freely navigate the infrastructural, economic and social world, and which are to be caged for uncommitted but possible crimes. This specific directive works in conjunction with the larger system of technological objects mediating social life, by interacting for example with economic and resource algorithmic guardogs, like mortgage algorithms through which the possibility of a house is realized. Having been favored by these algorithms, an individual is located in a specific neighborhood in which geographically specific goods like educational, health, political and infrastructural benefits are abundant. In this way the technological system of classifiers, predictors, recommenders, and automated protocols organizes everyday life, interpersonal connectivity networks, and relations between individuals and institutions.

## 4. Social complexity and multilayered social worlds

Section 2 presented six theses that characterize our approach to the challenges of thinking political organization today. Section 3 offered a diagrammatic account of social and political mediations that tries to live up to the stakes and restrictions we identify in our new conjuncture. But the picture provided by this construction remained a bit "flat", since it only approached the difference between social and political effects in terms of the equivalent or divergent paths between individuals and the social world. This is why, in section 3.5, we took a step back to the more speculative idea of "organizational trinitarianism", which helped us to introduce a more complex and rich take on the mediations presented in the previous section. In this last discussion, the questions of composition, interaction and intelligibility were not treated merely in schematic terms - do paths commute or not? - but presented a qualitative dimension, correlating different types of organizations to different accesses to the world.

This intermediate theoretical step was a necessary detour before the present section, which seeks to address more concretely the currently underdetermined nature of what we have thus far called "social worlds". We know that social mediations and individuals are, ultimately, parts of a larger social system, but if we have no way of making our theory of social reality more precise, then the theory of organization that follows from analyzing the interaction between parts of this reality will also be underdetermined and vague. Luckily, we found the means to formally and conceptually flesh out our theory of historically specific social spaces in the work of Japanese Marxist thinker Kojin Karatani.

Karatani's project[41] combines two propositions, both of great interest to us. The first could be understood as a mixture of the

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41 Karatani, 2014

Working Through Political Organization...

peripherization, vulgarization and multiplicity theses: rather than grounding historical materialism on the concept of "mode of production", Karatani takes a step back and defines three different modes of intercourse which are combined, in singular ways, to form a system of social production[42]. These three modes are defined by different social logics: mode **A** concerns communities, the logic of reciprocity and gift-economy, mode **B** the logic of property, contracts and state power and mode **C** the logic of value and the dynamic of capital[43]. The second proposition of Karatani's theory is that concrete social phenomena are best conceived as a particular mixture of these logics, so that by analyzing them and their interactions, we are actually providing a "transcendental analysis" of world history[44] - an analysis of the historically-specific constitution of social objects. The combination of these two proposals - brought together in his magnum opus, *The Structure of World History* - deeply resonate with our own organizational point of view: depending on how these logics are composed together, different concepts of production emerge, and hence different properties for what counts as social phenomena in a given historical context. Not only this, but given a certain complex mixture of these logics, different ways of composing social mediations - parts of this world - will "slice" this world in distinct ways, interacting, seeing and being constrained in qualitatively different manners.

The question then becomes if we can construct a version of Karatani's theory within our own conceptual grammar, in view of rendering the theory of social worlds more concrete and, through it, further specifying the distinctions between conservative social mediations, political organizations and political ecologies. This leads us to another fundamental result of the STP's current research, which we call the theory of *multilayered social worlds*. A lot of our collective efforts have gone in showing the consistency of this idea, which in fact opens up to a very ambitious project. Given the constraints of this essay we will only sketch the basic tenets of the theory here[45].

We begin by defining each of Karatani's modes of intercourse as a different "transcendental" social logic. We preserve this philosophical term simply because it implies the logical analysis of determinations that *precede* the constitution of objects and phenomena. So for each of the different modes, we distinguish a transcendental labeled $T_A$, $T_B$

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42 To avoid confusion with the usual meaning of "exchange" in Social Sciences and Marxism - which have "circulationist" connotations - we prefer to alter the english translation of Karatani's theory to "modes of intercourse".
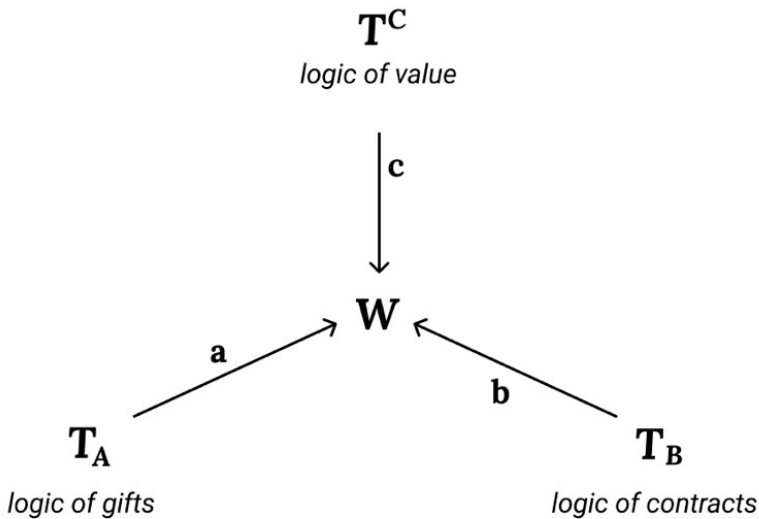
43 STP, 2021, section II

44 Karatani, 2014

45 See STP, 2021 for a longer engagement with this theory.

and $\mathbf{T_C}$, respectively. The fact that these logics are "transcendental"[46] does not mean they are ahistorical or subjective: the reason why they precede consistent social reality is rather because they are inconsistent on their own, incapable of fully accounting for the organizational forms of any given social formation. The logic of reciprocity, $\mathbf{T_A}$, can lead to wars and to paradoxical forms of sacrifice. The logic of property, $\mathbf{T_B}$, is continuous with the logic of revolutions and paradoxes of sovereignty. Finally, the logic of value, $\mathbf{T_C}$, includes the logic of crisis, and cannot avoid the paradox of unemployment. Together, however, they can "suture" their own inconsistencies via the others, expanding their reach and acquiring a logical closure and consistency.

We call $\mathbf{W}$ a social formation formed by the mixture and interdependence of these three social logics and specify a superscript $\mathbf{W^x}$ to determine which of the three logics is the dominant one in that social formation - that is, the logic which is the most responsible for the intelligibility of that social world. A capitalist world, where the logic of value has this dominant role, is therefore written as $\mathbf{W^C}$.

$$\mathbf{T^C}$$
*logic of value*

$$\downarrow c$$

$$\mathbf{W}$$

$$a \nearrow \qquad \nwarrow b$$

$$\mathbf{T_A} \qquad\qquad\qquad \mathbf{T_B}$$

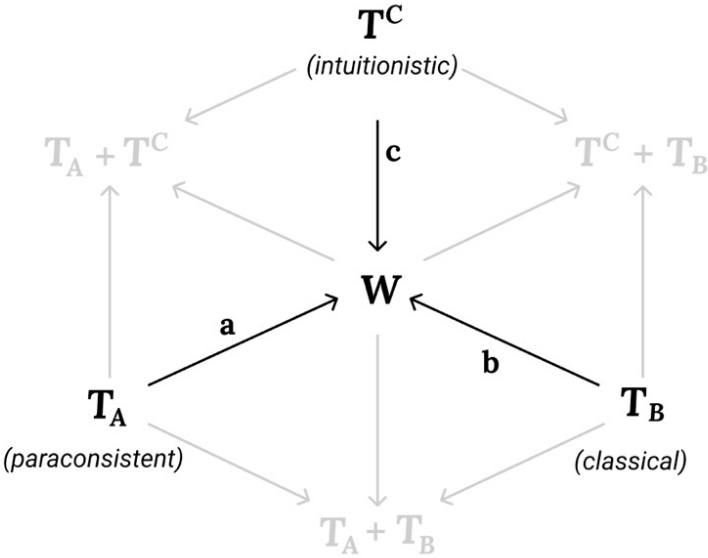*logic of gifts*             *logic of contracts*

However, if we are to provide a consistent account of multilayered social worlds, the crucial step would be to distinguish these different social logics *in purely organizational terms,* that is, without taking as a given substantial distinctions between value, properties and gifts - instead, these different objects or forms of social exchange must be derivable from a homogeneous background, made up of organizations and organizations between organizations, etc. Our own approach to

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46 Our theory of "transcendentals" is very much indebted to Alain Badiou's work *Logics of Worlds.* See Badiou, 2009

this has been to show that, even without any reference to sociological data, we can already derive some of their well-known properties simply by distinguishing between different organizational *logics* - interactions which, at first, are only locally valid and then, through certain common stabilizing conditions, acquire further reach and universality, becoming increasingly distinct from one another as large social structuring principles. Our starting hypothesis, then, is that the logic of reciprocity is essentially *paraconsistent* - since the reciprocation of a gift is only ever appropriate if the counter-gift is not appropriate - while the logic of contracts would be *classical* - in that an agreement between two parties either holds or not, with no intermediate term - and the logic of value essentially *intuitionistic* - with any two given commodities being "more or less" equivalent.

Furthermore, developing Karatani's own insights, we have found a diagram in the work of mathematician René Guitart which consistently models the relations between these different logics into what he calls a "borromean object"[47]. Here, **W** is determined by $\mathbf{T_A}$, $\mathbf{T_B}$ and $\mathbf{T_C}$, but, once this mixture is produced, we can also define different ways of "slicing" this complex world into partial composites: $\mathbf{T_A}+\mathbf{T_B}$, $\mathbf{T_B}+\mathbf{T_C}$ and $\mathbf{T_C}+\mathbf{T_A}$:

$$T^C$$
*(intuitionistic)*

$$T_A + T^C \qquad\qquad c \qquad\qquad T^C + T_B$$

$$\mathbf{W}$$

$$a \qquad\qquad\qquad b$$

$$\mathbf{T_A} \qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad \mathbf{T_B}$$
*(paraconsistent)*          *(classical)*

$$T_A + T_B$$

Ultimately, our aim is to replace the vague term "social world" in our initial diagram - originally defined in a very weak and vague way - for the complex structure of $\mathbf{W^C}$ - a social formation whose social objects are constituted by a multilayered complex structure, dominated by the logic of value. By doing this, the theory of social mediations becomes much more robust: we can now more concretely ask about the particular social

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47 Guitart, 2011

composition of a given mediation - the way it brings together the logics of $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ - and investigate how this particular social structure might condition what such an organization is able to interact with and how other parts of the social world appears to this specific social object itself.

All of our previous examples can be understood as different assessments of how certain organizations, composed as singular mixtures of communitarian, contractual and value logic, get to interact and "see" the social world. Of course, we have already indicated that, for us, the political quality of organizations is formally captured by the idea that they are parts of the world which are *not* reducible to its composite social logic - which is why their normative structure cannot be made explicit under regular social conditions and why, ultimately, political organizations can offer new perspectives on social reality. In order to reintroduce this difference between conservative and political practices, another clause will be added to the borromean social diagram in the next section. But before we do so, let us once more explore the theory of conservative organizational mediations that remain fully caught up in the structure of the social world.

In our work of reconstruction of Marx's *Capital* from the organizational point of view[48], we realized that the theory of value-form can be perfectly conceptualized as a particular type of organizational form, the basic form of mediation in the layer $T_C$. In fact, the famous passage from the simple form of value to the expanded and then universal equivalent-form can be seen as the step by step construction of a social sensor - money - whose material composition, which Marx calls its "formal use value", allows it to express, in terms of parts of itself, differential relations it establishes with other commodities[49]. And just as money is a social object that is able to interact with commodities in terms of their particular prices, capital - composed of money that becomes more money - is able to interact with commodities in terms of their particular capacities to generate more value - seeing commodities under the light of variable and constant capital. In other words, the same principle that applies to collective organization - that their composition affects what they get to sense and interact with in the social world - also applies to economic categories, a crucial feature we were looking for in our theoretical programme.

Though we cannot go into this here, similar constructions are possible for mediations at the layer $T_B$ - for example, a sovereign can

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48 The formal treatment of these ideas can be found in STP, 2021b. For a less technical description, see STP, 2021, section XI.

49 In particular, we can describe production and exchange in terms of commodity-preserving operations. The total space of such operations is the setting for an objective commodity logic, from which we can recover Marx's categories. More details can be found in our recorded meetings in which we discuss STP, 2021b.

also be understood as a social sensor through which relations between subjects are established - and $T_A$ - as a shaman is also constituted as an object that sees relations between natural and supernatural composites[50]. The underlying theory is the same, a general organizational approach, but the specific logic, consequences and operations for each of these layers are all very distinct from one another, with no direct analogies being possible. Finally, we can use our new diagram for complex worlds **W** and consider the composition of these layers into equally complex social objects - complex normative structures for social behavior that constraint, shape the affordances of different social practices and the way this polymorphous social structure appears to a given social object.

With the help of Karatani's theory of the modes of intercourse, we are then able to enrich our theory of social mediations, showing that there is absolutely no need to consider that just because the direct and indirect paths in our initial diagram are equivalent that then these two different institutions or social practices will be commensurate with one another. Highly complex worlds, such as the ones posited by the peripherization and vulgarization theses, in which layers $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ *do not form a homogeneous "tessellation" of social space*, can include properly incommensurate social institutions, practices and constraints, each with its own situated validity and reach, while not implying the sort of divergence between individual social embedding and collective social engagement that qualifies political organizations in our schema.

## 5. Communist hypothesis, political antagonism, socialist transition

*5.1 Political organizing as social investigation*
The theory of multilayered social logics allows us to add crucial and complex determinations to our understanding of social worlds and social practices - but we still need to understand how our initial distinction between conservative and political practices fits into this expanded framework. In fact, now that we have proposed a richer conception of social worlds, a new problem imposes itself, a possible contradiction: if we maintain that our access to social reality is mediated by the construction of social organizations that interact with this world, then how is it possible that we ascribe some basic characteristics to our picture of complex social reality as such? Is there not a circularity at play when we define the social terrain of political organization while claiming that it is collective organization itself which is capable of mapping this social reality? This is where we must introduce a crucial distinction between our project and Karatani's transcendental theory of social formations.

We maintain that the true origin of the accumulated knowledge we have about different modes of intercourse is in fact the long history of political struggles themselves, the collective history of how, in trying to organize otherwise, we have slowly learned what are the social constraints that resist us and thus define different aspects of historical worlds. This approach is not only consistent with our theory of socially-mediated perspectives, but it actually follows from the thesis on political multiplicity: it is precisely *because* there are multiple Leftist orientations - some which compose their collectives with emphasis on the communitarian dimension, others on the anti-state struggles, other mobilized primarily against capital - that there are multiple forms of thinking about the social world, each capable of theorizing the immanent logic of a given social logic better than the others. The naming of these ideas and their reduction into text and motifs often falls into the hands of the academic elite, yet their true elaboration lies within the historical struggle of diverse political movements, whose interactions with the world force these social structures to appear. Without this socially enacted thinking, there would be nothing to write *about*.

It is worth repeating that these three social logics $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ never appear separately, which also means that political struggles against them, even if focused on one of them, are also organizational composites and mixtures. So when we discern the history of the Lefts in terms of three strands, we are also proposing a sort of transcendental analysis of political strategies which could never appear in such pure form - at least not without running into some inconsistencies. So let us return now to our diagram **W** and add three different forms of *resistance*, one for each social layer:
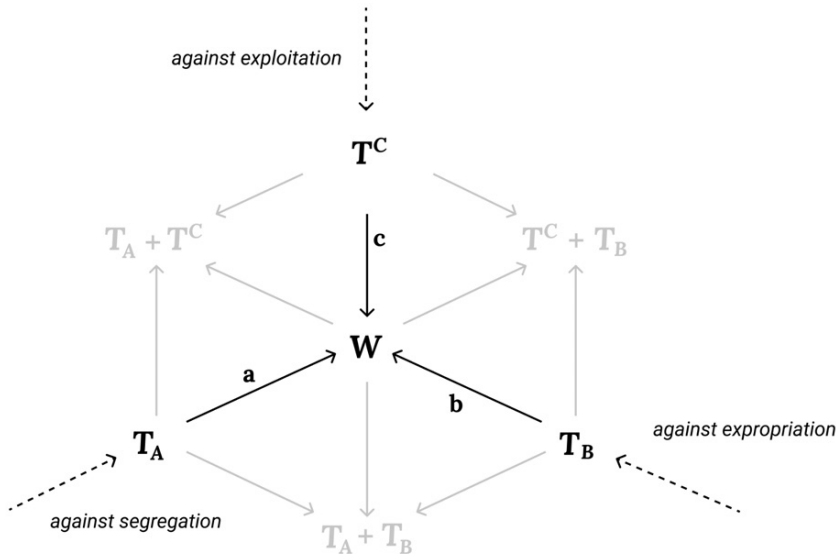
In this way, different political struggles, as they interact with the social world and meet some resistance - a process that is conditioned by their particular social compositions - also make the social constraints of a social world intelligible to us. The theory of political mediations *historically and logically* precedes the theory of the multilayering of social worlds - which is, in fact, an attempt to systematize what we have learned about our social reality through the heterogenous history of collective political experimentation[51].
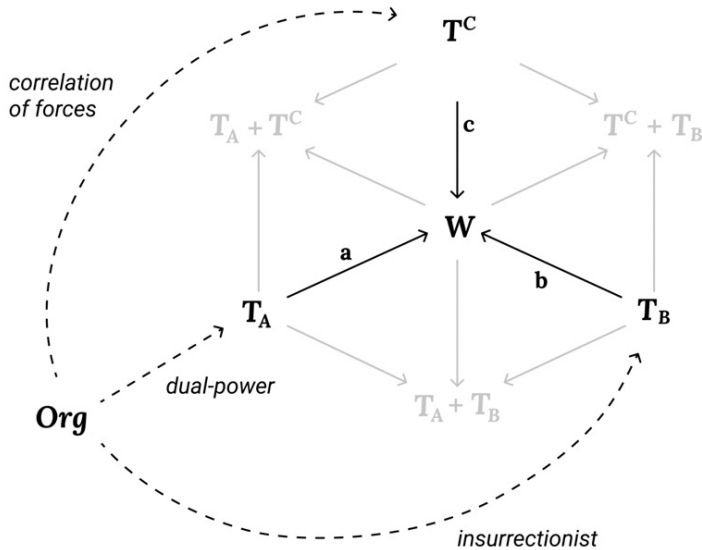
### 5.2 Communist hypothesis

We added to our diagram of **W** three forms of resisting against $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ respectively. We can now add a fourth term to it, which we call **Org** - and which we define as the organizational point of view itself. This corresponds to our own standpoint throughout this whole process: it is the point of view which, conditioned by different political processes, finds the means to name and interrelate the different logics that compose **W**.
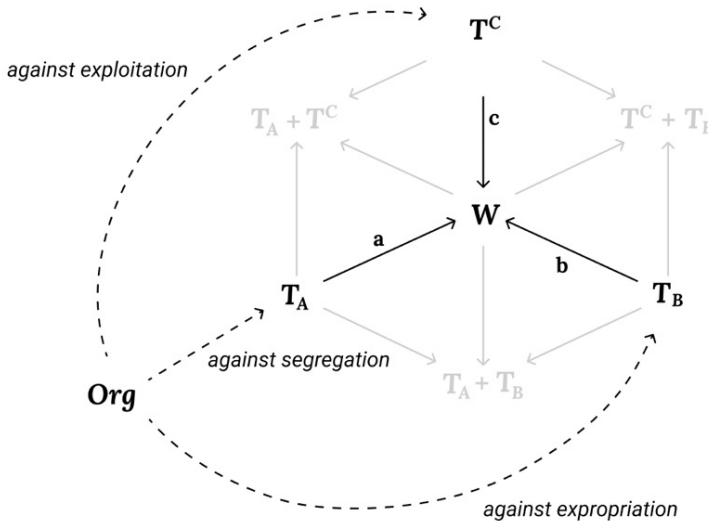


51 The reader might be wondering if the three identified logics fully span the space of social possibilities. To avoid dogmatism and self-grandeur, we shall say no. It is true other transcendentals may not be accessible to us because they do not exist yet or anymore, or because of our own analytic limitations, however, we believe them to be powerful in their explanatory capacity, especially when different degrees of mixtures and superpositions are considered. Relatedly, we may ask what lies beyond all possible logics, that is, that which is "illogical" and nevertheless real in the configuration of the social. We limit ourselves to the logical world.

Again, it is quite surprising to realize that the three arrows leaving from **Org** to **W** - which correspond to the three negations or forms of resistance to the particular layer of $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ in a social formation - actually correspond to the three basic types of radical political strategy we know of[52]. We mentioned that the logic of $T_A$, for us, is essentially paraconsistent - and the logic of *dual-power*, which also privileges the strategic focus on community-forming, shares this same logic, producing a new social space that is both inside and outside a given communitarian world. The logic of $T_B$ is classical, and strategies which focus on the state, like the *insurrectionist* one, tend to also be binary, relying on some idea of a clear cut between the before and the after of the taking of power. Finally, we maintain that $T_C$ is intuitionistic, and, once more, the logic of the *correlation of forces*, at stake in strikes and other forms of assault against capital, also works with a sliding scale of victories, negotiations and defeats. Evidently, in actual political reality, these political forms of resistance are always mixed together in different ways - but it is quite telling that this correspondence is possible in principle:



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52 Nunes, 2021, p.223 splits different types of socialist strategy in similar ways to us.

Now, we call the *communist hypothesis*[53] the claim - which is ultimately only provable through concrete political practice - that **Org** *is larger than W*, in other words, that the world seen from the standpoint of the composition of political processes - that is, from the standpoint of a concrete political ecology - can appear *larger* than the world seen from its dominant logic[54]. The communist hypothesis is precisely the proposition that the concrete social object made up of the composite of as many political organizations as possible "sees" more of a given social world than that world itself. It is a veritable *embedding* of a given social formation $W^x$ into a new one, $W^+$, where the plus-sign stands for the inclusion into the world, in a dominant form, of the logical constraints first experimented with within the political movement that tarried with **W**.

We now have the means to return to our initial diagram and - using **Org** and the theory of the three forms of political negation - enrich our understanding of the formula for political organization, based on the divergence of paths, presented in section 3.3. It should now be clear that, for us, a political organization is:

1. Composed of a particular mixture of the logics $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$ that make up **W**,
2. Composed in such a way that *at least one* of these logics is negated - which already leads to a complex typology of political practices,
3. Composed in such a way that the consistency of these negations rely to some degree on the constraints imposed by the political ecology[55].

It is crucial to note, for the sake of clarity, that **Org** does *not* correspond to what we called a political ecology in section 3.4: the latter is best understood as the concrete existence of a political ecosystem - a real and shared space of resources, methods and constraints that political processes participate in. The former remains a broader heuristic point of view, which, on the one hand, guarantees that all the terms in our concrete analysis are conceived only as organizational systems and, on the other, that under the communist hypothesis there are more organizational forms and arrangements to invent and explore than those that compose our known social world. An ecology rather forms the conditions for politics to experiment with unknown determinations in **Org**.

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53 Badiou, 2015

54 A useful discussion of this point regarding Org and our view on the scalar paradigm can be found in our meeting entitled *Open Discussion: Real Abstraction and the Communist Hypothesis*, starting at 36:35.

55 These three conditions match up nicely with Aurora Apolito's theory of instruments of complexity and instruments of connectivity - see Apolito, 2021

*5.3 Emancipatory, conservative and reactionary politics*
If we now return to the diagram we constructed by the end of section 3, adding to it our expanded conception of complex social worlds, their parts and possible relations, several interesting remarks become possible - especially those concerning a more robust characterization of what *emancipatory*, *conservative* and *reactionary* politics might be. But in order to introduce these ideas, we must first take up a passing remark made in section 3.3, when we claimed that if we were to propose a diagram for political organizations that captured its commutative properties, we would have to not only consider the arrows connecting organizational mediations to a political ecology, but also find a way to differentiate between individual agents and social worlds which make the conservative structure commute and new individual and social worlds that commute with the field of political struggle itself - written here as *individual agent*[+], naming a different *type* of social individuality, and **W**[+], for an expanded or enriched social world. Such an expanded diagram might look something like this:
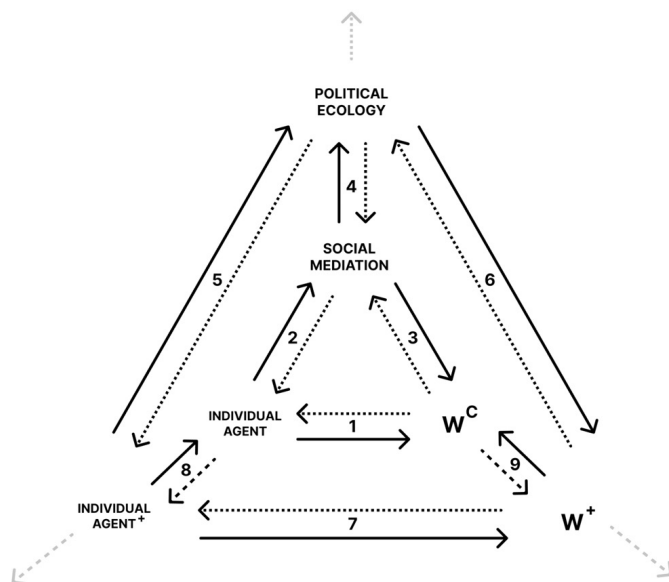


We have here some recognizable paths, which we previously introduced, such as **1**, between individuals and the social world, **2** and **3**, indirect paths mediated by organizations, **4**, which accounts for how organizations make up and are constrained by political ecologies. And we have some new arrows: paths **5** and **6** account for how political ecologies act and are constrained by *new social forms of individuality* and *new social worlds* in such a way that these individual forms also relate to these expanded social realities themselves - that is arrow **7**. We also introduce arrows **8** and **9** to account for the transformation of one individual form into another and one world into another, respectively. Finally, the gray dotted arrows

coming out of each pole of the diagram indicate that every one of these terms is ultimately a part of **Org** - which helps to give a more concrete meaning to the communist hypothesis: the larger the space of what is possible in a social world, the more **W** explores what exists within **Org**.

The reason for constructing this expanded diagram, however, is that it allows us to propose an interesting account of the difference between emancipatory, conservative and reactionary politics. First, let us note that our current definition of emancipatory political organizations states that it is a social mediation which challenges the composite logic of the social world in at least one of its logical layers. This means we can already distinguish between emancipatory processes that involve the negation of only one logic, the negation of two or the negation of three at the same time. Collective organizations that are perfectly ordinary when it comes to economic and legal status might still produce political effects if they interact with the communitarian layer in new ways, challenging segregational constraints, for example. We can then have political processes that involve the negation of two logics - and those which negate all three, challenging both communitarian, state and capital logics all at once, something we find in many examples of communes throughout the world. It is quite understandable - as we already established early on - that the more a political process resists integration into $T_A$, $T_B$ and $T_C$, the more it relies on the composition of a common political ecology to spell out its own normative and structural commitments and to be able to expand its own reach beyond a limited situation. Political processes that resist on a particular logical front, on the other hand, can extract their consistency from those logics it did not put into question - like a Left-wing government that may implement public policies and laws that combat forms of segregation and discrimination, while also curbing the power of corporations and promoting wealth distribution, this at the expense of expanding the bureaucratic, judicial and repressive apparatus of the state in a conservative or reactionary manner.

This characterization combines the diagrammatic approach of divergent and equivalent paths between **1**, **2** and **3**, introduced in section 3.3, with our organizational take of multilayered complex worlds, from section 4. It contains as a sub-case of itself the conservative political dynamic, which we can define, diagrammatically, as the case where direct and indirect paths between individuals and social worlds are equivalent and, compositionally, where no social logics are effectively put into question. Conservative processes, for example, might be composed of organizations that lean on the consistent or proper functioning of at least one of the logics in order to reconstruct the instabilities in the others - as when patriotic values are called upon as a means to tame the wild dynamics of State and Capital - with the utmost conservatism corresponding to the full adhesion to the particular entanglement of the three logics in a particular social formation.

Using these theoretical resources, we can already distinguish emancipatory and conservative politics in terms of processes that *expand* the size of the world - that is, that produce a series of worlds $\mathbf{W}$, $\mathbf{W^+}$, $\mathbf{W^{++}}$.. that tend towards **Org -** and those that *preserve* it - that ultimately maintain the identity arrow of $\mathbf{W} \rightarrow \mathbf{W}$. But we still lack the resources to discuss *reactionary* politics - which, we anticipate, concerns the cases where the size of the social world is effectively reduced.

We cannot develop here a full theory of right-wing and reactionary politics, but a few indications might be enough to demonstrate that such a theory would be consistent with our framework. We can define a reduction of the social world as a process that takes us from a world $\mathbf{W}$ *to a smaller region of that same world* - that is, $\mathbf{W^-}$ such that $\mathbf{W^-} \subset \mathbf{W}$. The remaining terms and arrows must also be defined in such a way that the new terms - new individual forms, the social mediations, the political ecology, etc - are all subsets of the previous social world.

Since we now have a theory of multilayered social logics, we can also analyze this reduction in a multidimensional way: a complex world can be reduced to a part of itself that is composed of similar arrangements of $\mathbf{T_A}$, $\mathbf{T_B}$ and $\mathbf{T_C}$, but it can also privilege some of these logics in favor of others. It might seek to reduce the capitalist world to a part of itself while preserving value-structure to the most, or compromising value and property in favor of preserving a particular community structure, or segregating entire communities for the sake of preserving a nucleus of state power, and so on. A complex typology of forms of reactionary politics could be produced here. In fact, more than a typology, it might be interesting to explore the hypothesis that the proper diagram for a reactionary reduction of the world is actually the "dual" diagram to the one for emancipatory politics[56]. We arrive at the dual diagram by inverting all arrows of a given categorical construction - in this case, inverting all the "actions" (bold arrows) and "constraints" (dotted arrows), like this:



EMANCIPATORY POLITICS    REACTIONARY POLITICS
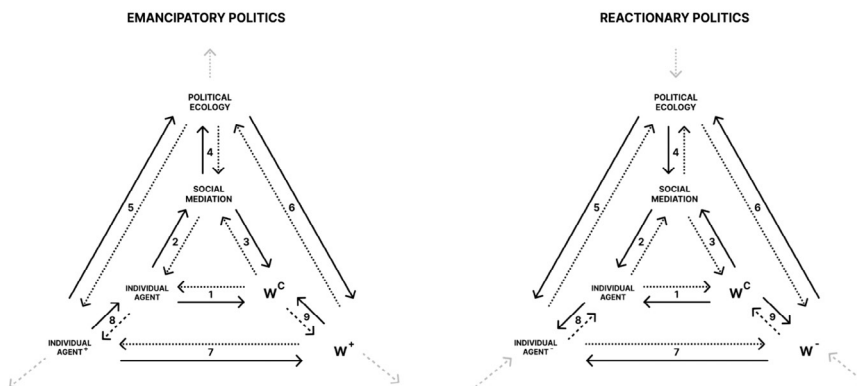
...............................
56 This use of categorical duality is still quite tentative - any ideas on how to improve it are very welcome!

Here, the social world $\mathbf{W}^-$ is dominated by a political ecology which already belonged to $\mathbf{W}$ - white suprematists, fascists, neofeudal elites, neoliberal cliques, etc - and every element in the diagram is moving from a larger and more complex form towards a subset of itself. Reactionary politics, ultimately, shies away from exploring the space of possible forms of organization - which is also why it organizes itself as if the *world was the agent of actions and existing individuals the ones positing constraints*.[57]

### 5.4 Socialist transition

Before we conclude, however, let us go back to the expanded diagram for emancipatory political organization one more time, and consider the movement from the inner triangle **1, 2, 3** to the outer one, composed of paths **5, 6, 7** - the passage between them takes place through the set of paths **4, 8** and **9**. What are we looking at when we split it in this way? In a very coarse-grained manner, we are thinking about the *socialist transition problem:* the movement from a certain way of splitting the world, in which our political values and commitments are divergent from the already existing social structures of value, property and reciprocity - as discussed in our section 3 - to a new way of parsing out social reality where the constraints by which political organizations abide *commute* with the constraints that individuals abide to, just as the action space guaranteed by political power is now accessible *beyond* political struggle.

What is interesting about this logical account of emancipatory political transition is that, on the one hand, it clarifies the structural stakes of such a process, allowing us to separate the organizational transformation itself from the particular composition of strategies that might take us there, while, on the other, it also highlights why the problem of transition is so easily confused with the establishment of conservative or even reactionary politics. Socialist transition implies a simultaneous expansion of the social world *and* a consolidation of these new social practices into new constraints - but conservative politics offers us the shortest path to reasonable accounts of our actions (since mediations commute with individual inclusions in the world), while reactionary politics offers us the shortest path to treating actions as already established constraints (since it implies the inversion of the direction of arrows in the diagram).

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57 A lot more could be explored here, but - as so many insights in this research - a lot of work must be done before we can present these ideas in more rigorous fashion.

## 6. Conclusion

We began this long essay with a presentation of six theses which orient our understanding of the current challenges faced by political thinking today: our belief that the heterogeneous and fractured forms of capitalist sociality in peripheral countries points to the future of advanced capitalist countries themselves (2.1), our diagnosis of how the diverse and conflicting material conditions of these social formations lead to an intense decoupling of class structure and class experience (2.2), our reading of the last sequence of political protests as a missed encounter between new social forces, shaped by this predicament, and old political forms, shaped under "modernizing" premises (2.3), our account of the conflicted and impotent state of the Left in this scenario (2.4), our belief that we must then drop some illusions about the nature of Leftist politics (2.5) and that we must adopt a theoretical point of view that facilitates reconstructing, under these new conditions, equally new conceptions of what organized social life looks like, what are political effects and how political composition can come about (2.6).

We decided to begin this text with these propositions because we knew that, without some historical and political context, the level of abstraction and generality of the work currently carried out by the *Subset of Theoretical Practice* could just seem unmotivated or unjustifiable to a regular reader or political militant. And this is a real concern for us, because we are publishing this essay not only to inform others about the research that the STP has been developing, but also to invite more people to actively engage with this project.

This is why not only the political motivations behind these ideas had to be made explicit - as they also serve as good standards to evaluate if our research is moving in an appropriate direction - but also our huge ambitions. As we said in our introductory remarks, the extent of the conceptual backtracking we propose here, reconstructing a lot of well-established ideas in a new theoretical environment, is proportional to our assessment of the depth of our current political crisis. But there is no way we can actually live up to such ambitions - and so another reason for trying to be as didactic as possible with the presentation of our ideas, while not hiding some of the technical machinery we base it on, is to make it easier for others to recognize the current limitations of our work and find a place for their own contributions, if they so desire.

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