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Autonomous Tokyo: Geographies of Dissent and Desire

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Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

by

Catherine Tsukasa Bender

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Catherine Tsukasa Bender

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

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Professor Helga M. Leitner, Committee Co-Chair

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Autonomous Tokyo is an assemblage of locally embedded activists and spaces that is credited with starting the anti-nuclear movement in Japan after the triple disaster of 3.11. Since then, their work has focused on building transnational connections and solidarity. Given that we inhabit a dominant geopolitical and ecological landscape that promotes individualist and ethnic nationalist understandings of security and scarcity, there is an urgency to understanding how social movements cultivate political will, particularly across national boundaries. The literature on social movements is dominated by largely instrumentalist, state-centric perspectives. These center a limiting view of politics that make some movements, like the post-3.11 anti-nuclear movement, appear to arise out of nowhere. It also devalues the significance of the majority of social movements because according to a metric of state policy transformation, they could be classified as failures. This dissertation, based on an ethnographic study of a radical movement geography based mainly in Japan, contributes to this literature in three ways. In the first chapter, I highlight the importance of alternative place-based politics that seek to primarily subvert, rather than confront, the state, and show how grappling with the contradictions of

autonomous/anarchist praxis is a political process that enlivens radical possibilities. The second chapter unpacks the gendered dynamics of their radical politics by interrogating the role of emotion and affect in digital spaces. The third chapter analyzes how the dominant global racial regime of whiteness is intertwined with Japanese supremacy to consider how an activist vision of "Asian" political subjectivity suggests some possibilities of transnational solidarity and the impossibilities of color-blind anti-capitalism.

The dissertation of Catherine Tsukasa Bender is approved.

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INTRODUCTION

Public demonstrations in contemporary Japan are highly policed— literally, with a large police presence, legally, with required and restricted permits, and socially, with pressure to follow established hierarchies rather than disrupt them. If you engage in a public protest in Japan without a permit, you can be arrested and held indefinitely without charge (Repeta, 2012). When protests do take place, such as against recent legislative and policy changes to restart nuclear power plants after 3.11.2011, the passing of a State Secrecy bill akin to the U.S. Patriot Act (2014), and reinterpretation of the "Peace Clause" of the constitution to extend the global presence of the Japanese military, they are rarely effective. Such policy shifts are presented by the central government and mass media as necessary and pragmatic efforts to revive the Japanese economy and to create future opportunities for its dwindling population. All in all, this resembles what radical democratic theorists call the post-political, or post-democracy: Rather than democratic political systems operating by responding to opposition, an increasingly global hegemonic socio-economic order erases opposition and manages difference through its bureaucratic and technological systems (Mouffe, 2005; Rancière, 2006). It thus seems likely that dissent will continue to be restricted and ignored by the state whenever possible, putting into question the nature and practice of contemporary democracy.

The apparent futility of dissent makes for a decidedly depressing state of affairs. Anthropologist Anne Allison describes the affective landscape of urban life around and after 3.11--the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Fukushima--as *Precarious Japan*, the title of her book describing a place dominated by unsettling insecurity in the face of neoliberal austerity politics and more-than-human material devastation. Despair,

social withdrawal, and suicide or death from overwork are common themes in the media. In life and in politics, undoing "the emotional sense of hardship" is the starting point to changing the emptiness, negation, and alienation of the dominant political economy (Amamiya Karin, cited in Allison, 2013).[1] Given that we inhabit a dominant geopolitical and ecological landscape that promotes individualist and ethnic nationalist understandings of security and scarcity, there is an urgency to understanding how social movements cultivate solidarity and political will, particularly across national boundaries.

This dissertation project, Autonomous Tokyo: Geographies of Dissent and Desire, is a study of a social movement and associated urban cultural geography that has been doing precisely this, expanding social and cultural connections between differently situated autonomous communities in and beyond Japan. Members of Autonomous Tokyo[1] have been active participants in the anti-precarity and anti-war movements since the first decade of the 2000s, but are known for being especially influential after 3.11. Tactics they developed to get around strict regulations on protest in Japan include creative uses of sound and music in public space, such as performative local elections. They also operate a network of locally embedded shops in their respective neighborhoods that cater to anti-capitalist culture. While many of the

[1] The network I refer to as Autonomous Tokyo is an assemblage of different people, spaces, and organizations. I use this name instead of their own name for their network, Tokyo Nantoka, in part because my research only refers to a subset of this network, which was originally developed as a collective of local shops that advertised in their self-published free paper. The word *nantoka*, also the name of a cooperatively run bar that is one of the important nodes of the network, can be literally translated as "something" or "whatever-you-call-it." In addition to signaling the question of what the "thing" of the collaboration might be, *nantoka* also means "somehow," that the community would manage to do something with or without substantial finances or other resources beyond what they could gather as mutual aid, alluding again to their collective autonomous sensibility. I translate *nantoka* as "autonomous" to signal my focus on the ways that this network engages with understandings and practices of autonomy as their spatial practices shifted after 3.11.

people who operate and frequent these spaces are involved in more legible social movements and protests, they stress the importance also of cultivating dissent through everyday life, creating and maintaining this network of shops and event spaces despite the economic difficulty of maintaining them on extremely limited incomes. After 3.11 underscored the fragility of material structures, this network expanded more explicitly beyond Japan, connecting activists in the broader region who share anti-capitalist, anti-state values and creative practices. They seek to create an alternative translocal "Asia" on their own terms, as a way to live beyond local and national constraints and sustain themselves after the surge of social movement activity has waned.

Background

While there are limits to protest in Japan today, as elsewhere, people have always found ways to dissent. The main reference point in terms of scholarship on postwar social movements in Japan is the global 1960s, another historical moment when transnational networks were influential in grassroots political formations (Schieder, 2017). The US Occupation, which officially ended in 1952, oversaw the passage of a revised constitution that retained the symbolic power of the emperor and imperial system to limit political realignments while the postwar Japanese state closely followed US military and state engagements in Asia and around the world (Marotti, 2009). The year 1968 marked a particularly vibrant moment of global street politics also around Japan, with anti-war protesters inspired by both local conditions and examples of uprisings in other nations. This also was the centennial anniversary of the establishment of a modern, centralized nation-state of Japan at the beginning of Meiji, an era named after the emperor whose reign began in October 1868, highlighting the complex historical relations

connecting empire, nation, and transnational geopolitics to shifting conceptions of political possibilities.

Sociologist Carl Cassegård associates what he calls the "widespread social malaise" and relative lack of political activity in Japan in the 1990s and early 2000s with a collective trauma arising from the image of the New Left protests of the global 1960s as being "overly dogmatic, ideological, hierarchical, and closed" (2014, p.5). While this moment opened up space for "non-political" actors to take highly active roles in various movement spaces (Marotti, 2009), Cassegård argues that the dominance of a particular narrative of this history discredits this activism by associating the image of an "activist" with an irrational figure entrenched in factional strife and violence (2014). In this telling of history, the loosely organized group Beheiren, or the Citizen's Alliance for Peace in Vietnam, is often described as its well-behaved counterpoint because they did not collect dues or make ideological declarations, emphasizing instead their stance as ordinary citizens, not "activists," while calling for the end of Japan's complicity in war and peace and self-determination for Vietnam. With respect to the 19760s, activists in Autonomous Tokyo might be seen to be more aligned with the politics of Beheiren in terms of their loose organization and emphasis on themselves as "ordinary" or even "fools." While they reject the ideological rigidity of other New Left groups at the time, they distinguish themselves by pointing to other cultural precursors outside of that particular cultural moment and rejecting the norms of citizenship in favor of subverting and making fun of that political formation.

One precursor that still is an active presence in Autonomous Tokyo spaces is the group Dameren, or the league of good-for-nothings, formed in 1992 as a rejection of the social norms of consumer capitalism and the patriarchal nuclear family structure that became especially normalized under the bubble economy of the 1980s. They advocated for a new politics by

intentionally "dropping out" of society, meeting in public plazas in Kōenji and other neighborhoods to create opportunities for social inclusion of people who would not or could not conform to dominant norms. Their work demonstrated the importance of praxis and social transformation through self-organization, choosing to live according to one's own values.

Autonomous Tokyo respond to contemporary capitalism and governance through their activism, but also draw from a longer genealogy of communal spaces and practices across urban and rural Japan. One such example is the history of *ikki*, or self-organized peasant uprisings during Edo period (from 1603 until the start of Meiji in 1868). Matsumoto Hajime, owner of the Amateur Riot Recycle Shop in Kōenji and a key activist in the Autonomous Tokyo network, is particularly fond of this reference, which he sees as evidence of existing practices of rebellion stretching back to the socio-historical and geographical space of premodern Japan, not simply a result of more contemporary transnational wars and other encounters. Practices of communalism inspired specifically by transnational anarchism were first rooted in agricultural villages in Japan, spread by Kotoku Shusui in the early 1900s after his encounters with Kropotkin's writings and organizing work with Japanese emigrants and the IWW in Oakland, California (Notehelfer, 2011). Uprisings in Japan of the 1960s and 70s included students developing communes in more specifically urban contexts such as universities and other sites of protest. The women's liberation movement in the 1970s used women-only communes as spaces of experimentation for alternative social norms in Shinjuku, Tokyo, and other parts of Japan (Shigematsu, 2012), and communes have also formed an important part of the disability rights movement (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2010). These all exemplify how people with low social and economic standing have historically created autonomous forms of governance in Japan to take charge of their lives, irrespective of social strictures to obey their lords, refusing to work or working only for their own ends, getting

drunk, and taking over urban spaces. Autonomous Tokyo emulates these practices by targeting the limitations on life under contemporary global capitalism and state control of urban spaces.

Contributions to Scholarship

The chapters that follow analyze Autonomous Tokyo not just as a social movement, but as a geography of dissent that is always incomplete, flexible, iterative, and often illegible as politics. Analyzing their work as a social movement challenges the dominant narrative of scholarship on political contestation in the social sciences, which is still typically embedded in a state-centric framework. These works understand social movements as primarily seeking to engage with the state, and evaluate them based on state responses to their demands (Leitner et al., 2008). These draw on the framework of resource mobilization theory, according to which a shared grievance need not necessarily engender dissent; rather it is the availability of resources and organizational opportunity structures that is key to the success of a social movement. This is a metric defined by achievement of policy objectives, by eliciting a response by the state. This perspective is illustrated by sociologist Oguma Eiji's documentary about Japan's recent anti-nuclear movement. He credits Amateur Riot, one of the collectives within Autonomous Tokyo, with starting the movement, centering his account on how it worked to "Tell the Prime Minister" (or as the more geographic Japanese title states, in front of the Prime Minister's Official Residence). Yet Amateur Riot's initial protest that brought together an estimated 15,000 people one month after 3.11 was not in the large, spotless boulevards in front of the Prime Minister's Residence, but rather in the plazas and small streets of Koenji, a small neighborhood in western Tokyo where Amateur Riot makes its base. Further, Autonomous Tokyo's activism focuses less on structures of participatory democracy and citizenship, and more on creating subcultural spaces that support alternative ways of life.

The cultural practices of Autonomous Tokyo do resemble some of the characteristics of what scholars refer to as "new social movements." This scholarship references movements in a "postindustrial" society whose driving social identities exceed the central Marxist conflict of labor-capital (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). These identities (feminist, environmental, etc.) describe shared grievances shaping the formation of social movements through "struggles over symbolic, informational, and cultural resources and rights to specificity and difference," instead of seizing the means of production (Edelman, 2001, p. 289). By associating themselves with practices of *ikki*, however, activists in Autonomous Tokyo make it clear that they do not see themselves as "new" actors in "new" social movements, and rather position themselves as part of long-existing traditions of dissent, including histories of transnational anarchism and the anarchic politics of the poor in Japan.

The recent resurgence of literature on anarchist geographies, however, tends toward the theoretical and leans on articulating its distinctions from other political traditions, especially Marxism (e.g. Springer et al., 2012). In contrast, while these activists are specifically inclusive of anarchist subjectivities, such as that of the subversive fool, or anti-capitalist, anti-state activists from other countries, they also emphasize the importance of creating community across diverse identities, including people who don't identify with any particular political ideology. To this end, Fraser's framework of subaltern counterpublics has been used to analyze the anti-precarity movement in Japan, including some of the work of Autonomous Tokyo (Cassegård, 2014). Extending Habermas's (1981) concept of the public sphere— an arena of participation and discourse that is distinct from the state and from the formal economy— to nonliberal, non-bourgeois masculinist, competing public spheres, Fraser (1990) describes the work of subaltern counterpublics as creating "spaces of withdrawal and regroupment" shaping these identities, and

as “bases and training grounds for agitational activities” (p. 68; see also Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto, 2008; Sziarto and Leitner, 2010). Yet such an account of the spaces of Autonomous Tokyo does not take into account how global/transnational connections have shaped these local communities, or how these activists negotiate issues of identity and difference, such as of gender and race, in their spaces.

Scholarship from the global south and work centering feminist, queer, and anti-racist perspectives on social movements stress the importance of rethinking these dominant paradigms. Insurgent movements, such as those behind the so-called Arab Spring, may be far more rooted in the large number of people exercising their agency through nonmovements: the fragmented, “passive networks” and ordinary practices of neighborhood life that are not recognizable as the collective action of social movements (Bayat, 2010). Feminist and queer perspectives highlight the role of emotion, affect, relationality, and how these shape political subjectivities. While there is no single affective or emotional register for the so-called neoliberal subject (Anderson, 2016) just as there is no single neoliberalism (Larner, 2003; Leitner et al. 2007), Autonomous Tokyo activists stress the importance of creating oppositional spaces that are fun for a precariat who, according to dominant social norms, should be looked down upon for being poor or for not working a full time, salaried position. Some feminist, queer, and anti-racist scholars argue, however, that fun has its limits as a political tool, and that it is necessary also to retain space for unhappiness and failure (Ahmed 2010, Berlant 2011, Halberstam 2011). This dissertation draws on these critiques to make sense of a male-dominated movement geography firmly situated in the heart of a global north megacity, albeit part of the global north that is rarely written about in the literature on political contestation.

Methods

My fieldwork was informed by a lifetime of navigating my experiences as a mixed-race woman in Japan. While I am a Japanese national in terms of legal citizenship, I am racialized as a "hafu" who could never completely belong to the polity of *jun-Nihonjin,* or (racially) pure Japanese. In addition, as a researcher whose schooling has taken place almost entirely in the US, I am what Abu-Lughod refers to as a "halfie," whose work is neither situated wholly "here" nor "there" but is theorized through my experiences of moving between these places (1990). Prior to starting this project, I was living just south of Tokyo in Yokohama during 3.11.2011. In addition to shifting the earth and the sea, 3.11 created emotional geographies that exposed the limits of rational knowing for many people, including myself. The increased visibility of oppositional social movements led by Autonomous Tokyo in the following months showed me examples of people creatively and passionately critiquing dominant power relations and social norms, and creating new worlds. This reaction was a stark contrast to the fear and helplessness about the unknown effects of spreading radiation. This new awareness of these opposition movements in Japan, along with a radical movement against an 81% tuition hike at UCLA during my first year of graduate school, made clear my ethico-political commitment to learn from and join people engaged in these movements.

Feminist critiques of traditional extractive research paradigms call for a consistent questioning of the conventional structures of knowledge production, particularly by scholars situated in universities in the west. Benson and Nagar (2006) write of the potential of collaboration as a complex and powerful tool that can be used to forge alliances and reconstitute the content of feminist knowledge in anti-hierarchical ways. To do this, they propose three premises for collaborative research: "(a) authority does not remain exclusively in the hands of

the researcher; (b) neither the interpreter nor the narrator's perspective is necessarily privileged; and (c) the meaning forged through dialogue is not necessarily arrived at through agreement and shared perspective but can evolve from constructive disagreements" (2006, p. 583). As a researcher, I aimed not to infiltrate and expose the movement, nor to hold these activists up on a pedestal, but to learn with and alongside them. In particular, my commitment to an explicitly feminist politics as part of this approach would sometimes lead to disagreements or sometimes even arguments—the conflict I analyze in chapter 2 is an extension of some such tensions that came to a head after I physically left the field.

Following calls for scholarship developing relational understandings of social movement spatialities, and attention to emotion/affect and everyday life, I spent the bulk of my nineteen months of fieldwork (over a period of five years) in Kōenji, one of the neighborhoods central to the work of Autonomous Tokyo, in order to situate myself in this field of relations in what I hoped would be a useful way. During two summers of preliminary fieldwork in the summers of 2012 and 2013, I was one of tens of thousands of people, many first-time dissidents, who came out in weekly demonstrations in front of the National Diet building in Tokyo, joined by anti-nuclear protesters in other places in Japan and the world. This was a testament to the feeling of an opening of political possibility in that moment, which was not in small part due to the influence of over a decade of Autonomous Tokyo's experimentations with creative street politics. Following the advice of Narita Keisuke, owner of Irregular Rhythm Asylum (an anarchist infoshop in Shinjuku), that I should also join protests organized by Amateur Riot in Kōenji, and actions organized by activists in Kunitachi, in western Tokyo, I spent time with activists in all these neighborhoods as well as visiting other activist shops and spaces across Japan, including in Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka. When I returned to Tokyo from August

2015 to September 2016, much of the excitement about the movement's mass mobilizations around nuclear power had waned, and the activists I hoped to center in my inquiries had stepped back from a central organizing role in that movement.

For the purposes of my research focus on the everyday life of this activist geography, the timing of my long-term fieldwork was appropriate. I was able to begin my ethnographic engagements, or what Renato Resaldo called "deep hanging out", relatively quickly (Clifford, 1997) due in part to connections I had made on previous trips, as well as my participation with protest actions in Tokyo and in Los Angeles. I introduced myself as a graduate student and researcher, but also as an activist who respected their work. I hoped to work with them and to bring whatever resources I could and produce something that might be useful to the movement as well. I was far from the first or only researcher who was interested in writing about their work, but I became more embedded than most. I was invited to work at the guesthouse recently started by Amateur Riot to host international guests and found a place to live in Kōenji. I worked at the guesthouse two days a week, ran the collectively operated bar several times over the year, helped run another affiliated event space in the same building as the guesthouse, and organized and assisted with various events. During this time, I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews to go into more depth with variously situated activists. I left Tokyo in the fall of 2016, but my connections to the field continued through ongoing interactions, mainly on digital social media platforms.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation consists of five chapters: this introduction, three empirical chapters, and the conclusion. This first, introductory chapter provides a broad overview of the context,

rationale, and methods, and objectives of this research. The second chapter, The Local/Global Spaces of Autonomous Tokyo, analyzes the spaces of the loose network of activism that I call Autonomous Tokyo. I consider how activists not only construct these as sites of local/global relations, but also how these spaces inform their practices and desires to build alternative worlds. Through placemaking, the network prioritizes pursuing face-to-face interactions to develop solidarities and redefine dissident culture. I highlight the neighborhood of Koenji, and particular nodes of the network, including Nantoka Bar and Manuke Guesthouse, teasing out how these autonomous community spaces are sites where people work not solely against the state but also grapple with the contradictions of living according to revolutionary ideals in urban capitalist settings. While sharing some characteristics and goals with better documented autonomous centers in Europe, North, and Central America, they are also shaped by the specificities of place. The network draws on the historical legacy of social movements in Japan, the growing global network of anarchist and autonomous activists, and the socio-ecological context of 3.11 in their attempts to develop and maintain alternative spaces. The ongoing production of the network across Tokyo thus goes beyond resistance to build alternative spaces of autonomous praxis.

In the third chapter, Between Killjoys and Diverse Economies, I consider the tendency for radical movements to privilege masculine identities and ignore intersectional oppressions, especially in regard to gender and sexual violence. This is an important consideration anywhere, not least in Japan which is ranked as one of the least gender-equal countries in the world (dropping to 114th place in the World Economic Forum's global gender equality rankings for 2017).[2] The figure of the subversive, fun fool has been pivotal in Autonomous Tokyo's engagement with autonomous politics and expanding its networked connections to other places in eastern Asia. In order to interrogate the ways that the activist-fool has been both elevated as a

collective subjectivity and criticized as a way of avoiding serious questions about Autonomous Tokyo's practices, I use two overlapping but distinct interventions, Sara Ahmed's feminist killjoy and J. K. Gibson-Graham's hopeful participant in diverse economies. A particular encounter highlights the limitations of autonomous politics that pay insufficient attention to how power relations are embedded in gender and colonial relations. The transnational spatiality of these conversations highlights the importance of extending Gibson-Graham's insights about diverse economies to the realm of affect and emotion, reminding us of the heterogeneity and uneven landscapes of power within local autonomous geographies.

In the fourth chapter, Race and the Regional Geography of Alternative Asia, I argue that studies of transnational grassroots networks can also benefit from prioritizing race as a way to focus on uneven power relations within and across difference—not just in terms of majority-minority relations, but the racial formations within minoritarian politics. Given the region's colonial history and uneven geographies of racialized difference, anti-war sentiments based on anti-capitalist horizons do not suffice to build a sustained movement for alternative futures. I argue, however, that Autonomous Tokyo's transnational work demonstrates how race as a concept can be denaturalized through creative politics and participation in resistance movements. This network of activists subverts and sometimes resists dominant racial regimes of white and Japanese supremacy by pushing for the creation of locally and regionally connected alternative spaces that reject a subordinate position within a western racial hierarchy. By identifying shared anti-war, anticapitalist values from the political margins across "Asia" as a loosely defined region, and by putting into practice alternative linguistic strategies and anti-military resistance, Autonomous Tokyo activists suggest ways to actively reorder the dominant racial regimes of

whiteness and Japanese supremacy. In short, these activists demonstrate the need to actively cultivate explicitly anti-racist practices of solidarity.

The fifth and final chapter discusses the main arguments presented in this dissertation, their limitations, and further questions for future research.

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[1] Karin is an activist who frequents spaces in the Autonomous Tokyo network. She is known in part for her shift in thinking, from early right-wing nationalist writings to leftist anti-precarity activism.

[2] This report benchmarks 144 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

Chapter 1: The Local/Global Spaces of Autonomous Tokyo

Abstract:

Temporary autonomous zones and "free spaces" are important sites of dissident action that disrupt dominant cultural landscapes and make material and cognitive maps of alternative worlds. This paper examines the spaces of a loose network of activism that I call Autonomous Tokyo to consider how activists not only construct these as sites of local/global relations, but also how these spaces inform their practices and desires to build alternative worlds. Through placemaking, the network prioritizes face-to-face interactions to develop solidarities and redefine dissident culture. I highlight the loose network of Autonomous Tokyo, the neighborhood of Koenji, and particular locations in the network, including Nantoka Bar and Manuke Guesthouse, to argue that these autonomous community spaces are sites where people work not solely against the state but also grapple with the contradictions of living according to revolutionary ideals in urban capitalist settings. While they share some common characteristics and goals with other, better documented autonomous centers in Europe, North, and Central America, they are also shaped by specificities of place. The network draws on the historical legacy of social movements in Japan, the growing global network of anarchist and autonomous activists, and the socio-ecological context of 3.11 in their attempts to develop and maintain alternative spaces. The ongoing production of the network across Tokyo goes beyond resistance to build alternative spaces of autonomous praxis.

Figure 1: Drawing by Malaysian artist Soon in the stairwell of Manuke Guesthouse. Photo by author, 2015.

Less than a ten-minute walk from the Koenji train station on the Chuo line that crosses east-west across Tokyo, down the North Central shopping arcade, past lots of little shops, eateries, acupuncturists and a daycare, a hand-painted sign points to Manuke Guesthouse, located on the fourth floor of a run-down building. In many ways it appears as simply a cheap place to spend the night, but indications here and there— a poster of an overturned car from the Koza riots in Okinawa[2], Korean punk rockers eating lunch in the lounge, fanciful drawings on the wall

[2] A large uprising against the US military in Okinawa in December 1970

(Fig. 1) and zines in the bookcase, and the name, meaning, roughly, the fool's guesthouse—make it feel a bit different than most other hostels. Despite charging for overnight stays, paying rent to the landlord, and paying staff an hourly wage like many ordinary businesses, it is run by a collective of activists as part of their larger network of autonomous spaces, and is conceived of as an anticapitalist action. It is a temporary home for ordinary tourists as well as travelling musicians, artists and activists connected to this network, which I call Autonomous Tokyo, and sometimes people displaced from their own homes for a variety of reasons. Though the guesthouse is not always directly involved in immediately legible social movements, it is a site situated in the everyday lives of activists in the megacity and is part of their experiment in materializing their desires for a collectively organized, non-hierarchical world.

Beyond whatever policy changes or lack thereof of that radical projects might leave behind, their visions and practices of alternative and autonomous ways of living are maps of political possibilities. If we take the project of advancing alternative social norms and autonomous politics as one that stands in conflict with the project of advancing capitalist, colonial violence against people and places, the guesthouse is a convergence space where "…grassroots globalization networks forge an associational politics that constitute a diverse, contested coalition of place-specific social movements, which prosecute conflict on a variety of multi-scalar terrains that include both material places and virtual spaces" (Routeledge, 2003, p 334). In addition to the written works and memories of people involved in these diverse radical movements, one way to access these maps is by looking at their alternative convergence spaces where people come together to collaborate, rest, assert alternative values, and simply live their lives. Whether well-established or fleeting, these spaces are important sites of dissident culture in action where the "poetry of social movements… the poetry that dreams of a new world" (Kelley

2002) takes shape notwithstanding the limitations of the already existing political landscape. These are the living sites of radical movements that both shape and are shaped by their alternative political values, even when the movement seems to be mostly sitting still or perhaps not taking the work seriously.

The value of these spaces as alternative experiments and nodes of mobility for these activists in Tokyo became especially clear in the aftermath of 3.11, when the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown revealed that sitting still can mean being swept away or irradiated with false promises of a clean, capitalist nuclear future. Scholars, including philosopher and literary critic Karatani Kojin (2011, 2017) and sociologist Oguma Eiji (2015), credit the activists that gathered in these spaces with the striking increase in street protest since 2011. Their previous experiments with creative protest actions and early calls for people to join their anti-nuclear demonstrations laid the ground for subsequent student movements like Students Against Secret Protection Law (SASPL, from 2014) and Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs, from 2015-2016) and other pro-democracy protest movements against censorship and militarization in the name of national security. These demonstrations not only targeted the headline issue about the pervasive use of nuclear energy, but also the consolidation of power by a small group of elite actors passing through the revolving doors between positions in government and the boards of monopoly energy companies.

In order to make sense of the fool's guesthouse and its contradictions as an enactment of an alternative way of living and working, in this paper I first introduce the scholarship on autonomous geographies alongside a brief historical overview of the emergence of the activist network I call Autonomous Tokyo. Existing work on the history of this network focuses on its development out of past radical movements such as the student movement of the 1960s and 70s

(Cassegard 2014), an explanation that needs to be supplemented by the spatial context of growing global anarchist/autonomous networks (Egami 2018). The global and local dynamics are impossible to separate from one another, and activating this spatial praxis of connecting across scales is a common strategy of autonomous activism (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). A close examination of the guesthouse further illustrates how activists manage this strategy and the ways it highlights the contradictions of anarchist movements. Working toward their goals of autonomous, egalitarian ways of being, rooted in the intimate space of face-to-face interactions, means navigating the challenges of living in their own "anarchy city" within the global capitalist city of Tokyo that necessitates the paying of rent and wages. While the guesthouse shares some common characteristics and goals with other autonomous centers in Europe, North, and Central America that have been highlighted in the literature on autonomous geographies (some examples include: Atton, 1999; Brown, 2007; Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010; Goyens, 2009; Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006; Jeppesen, Kruzynski, Sarrasin, & Breton, 2014; Owens & Palmer, 2003; Pickerill & Chatterton, 2006; Pusey, 2010; Routledge, 2012), it also highlights the specificities of place in the process of navigating paradoxes of anarchic social spaces.

More Than Social Movements

Autonomous perspectives, mobilized by classical anarchist geographers Kropotkin and Reclus, were foundational to the establishment of the discipline of geography, but these fell largely out of favor until the social movements of the global 1960s pushed radical perspectives to become more prevalent in the academy. Still, these radical critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and other systems of domination only became established in mainstream geography in the late 1990s (Peake and Sheppard 2014). Even with the contemporary resurgence of radical scholarship, one issue with the dominant work on social movements and political contestation in

the social sciences, also informing debates in geography, is that it is typically embedded in a state-centric framework (Leitner et al. 2008). This model does not fit all kinds of dissent and reinforces a narrow definition of what kinds of movements might be successful or effective—a shortcoming especially in light of the fact that movements are rarely so discrete, and often draw from a much wider range of imaginaries and tactics than any single campaign or organization.

Failing to look beyond state-centric, instrumentalist understandings of movements can obscure other important ways that dissent might be imagined, articulated, and ultimately brought to life (Kelley 2002). Legible social movements or public uprisings against the state also are only one small aspect of dissident movements or culture (Blunt and Willis, 2016). A close look at the actors and spaces involved show that the power of these movements is sometimes deeply rooted in the far less politically legible spaces of ordinary, day-to day life (Bayat 2010, Gibson-Graham, 2006). Expanding the scope of what counts as a political movement also means looking at individual and collective transformation as valuable contributions to political culture and change (Fujino 2008). This would require a retelling of familiar stories, for example, remembering that the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was only one aspect of the much broader landscape of intersecting freedom movements that looked beyond a domestic, liberal democratic framework for expanded rights within the nation-state, including autonomous projects like the American Indian Movement and the transnational solidarity of Third Worldism (Pulido, 2006).

One way that a more instrumentalist view of social movements, one that views their work as primarily one of resistance, has been established in geography is through the strong influence of Marxism over other radical traditions. This focus elevates questions about the political economy and its spatialities, and thus how social movements might subvert or reclaim the production of these economic spatialities, such as the city and the workplace, from circuits of

capital. Still, as David Harvey notes, in "the traditional left," and within the Marxist tradition in particular, "…urban struggles tend to be either ignored or dismissed as devoid of revolutionary potential or significance" because they are seen as ancillary to core concerns about class-based exploitation within explicit sites of capitalist production (2012, 120). In addition, the focus on the workplace as a site of contention can reify the idea of who counts as a properly political subject and paradigmatic worker—Japanese, male, and with fulltime employment in the case of Japan—diminishing the importance of politics coming from people positioned on the margins of the dominant political economy. For example, despite the ways that some people are racialized, criminalized, and poor, movements lead by people in these positions often strive to imagine and realize the possibility of radical change (Davis, 2016, Gilmore, 2006, Pulido, 2017). Their examples highlight how people marginalized because of their position in a colonial, racial hierarchy and others seen unproductive or useless in a capitalist system often pursue political projects of autonomy, envisioning a world where people would identify with these alternative political identities and "eventually be able to mobilize on their own behalf and meet their own needs" (Pulido, 2006, p. 146).

Feminist economic geographers such as J. K. Gibson-Graham have also stressed the importance of recognizing a diversity of actually existing economic and social practices that exceed capitalism. Breaking away from the totalizing discourse of global capitalism is as a way to affirm and create the material conditions of commoning (Gibson-Graham 2008), their approach sees the commons not as a primarily material or immaterial thing, or share ontology, but rather the *processes* creating alternative worlds. By taking the power of community economies, collectives, and other practices of mutual aid seriously, Gibson-Graham have similarly argued against prescriptive, institution-based understandings of political organizing and

toward ones where participation in collective projects, but also shared emotions, produces solidarity (2002). This attention to emotion and affect as a field of contestation, landscape of solidarity, fuel for new imaginaries, and subverting dominant culture has been another point of emphasis of critical geographers and other scholars looking at contemporary dissident action (Clough 2012, Graeber 2007, Routledge 2012).

Still others have called for a revival of an explicitly anarchist geography to go alongside the resurgence of anarchist movements on the ground (Ferretti 2016, Springer et al. 2012, Springer 2014). However, this work has skewed toward the theoretical rather than analyzing grounded practices, and has been criticized for attempting to draw hardline divisions from other perspectives (especially Marxism) that do not fit the messy interconnections of actually existing movements (Gibson 2014, Harvey 2015, Ince 2014, Mann 2014). Many activists in Autonomous Tokyo do call themselves anarchists, and it is a useful term to distinguish their creative participation in legible social movements in Japan from other organizations. It also serves as an English language keyword that enables people from other places to find information about them on the internet. Some of the activists are also avid readers of anarchic intellectuals, including Kropotkin, Reclus, and classical Japanese anarchists, such as Osugi Sakae and anarcho-feminist Ito Noe, or read the work of contemporary western anarchist academics like David Graeber. However, Graeber's comment in his essay about the direct action networks and revolutionary coalitions involved in contemporary alter-globalization protests, that "counting how many people involved in the movement actually call themselves 'anarchists', and in what contexts, is a bit beside the point" (2002, p 63), holds true for the people involved with Autonomous Tokyo. Many avoid the term for its mainstream associations with chaos and violence, or because of their

interest in decentering English terminology, but are no less involved in the shared political processes of commoning and creating alternative political spaces.

Rather than specifying a need to look outside of or beyond capitalism or the use of a specific label for the right kind of radical political practice, Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) propose the term "autonomous geographies" to think about commonalities in emergent practices that bridge these differently situated approaches, including feminist, autonomous Marxist, anarcho-syndicalist, Zapatismo, and ecologist traditions.[3] They note that these are part of a loose, networked movement of movements that are involved in anticapitalism as a praxis, interested in collectivity and mutuality, and desirous of direct democracy and horizontality. Autonomous geographies are incomplete and ongoing, and their peak moments of visibility, such as in large protest actions, "rest upon the often hidden but vital support structures where resistance is defined and planned, and alternatives put into practice" (p 737). Like commoning, practices of autonomy necessarily occur in localities, but as the global connections of various autonomous movements show, these are not an inherently local practice, and often explicitly seek to develop translocal solidarity across national borders. Beyond simply acknowledging the diversity of spatialities and practices of these movements, scholars argue that it is necessary to look at the specificities of the spatial practices of contentious politics to better understand the relational practices of actually existing movements (Martin and Miller 2003; Nicholls et al, 2013). Looking

[3] They define autonomy "…in five main ways: as a concept comprising different tendencies and trajectories; as a temporal-spatial strategy between and beyond the 'global versus local' axis; as a form of interstitial politics; as a process of resistance and creation; and as a coherent attempt at praxis with its strong sense of prefigurative politics and commitment to the revolution of the everyday" (732) In contrast to Gibson-Graham's argument to explicitly look beyond capitalism, they see it as "necessarily an emergent, and in many cases residual, property within – and often against – a dominant order, a desire rather than an existing state of being. Thus there is no 'out there' external to capital relations from which to build an autonomous politics" (p 737).

at specific cases of autonomous geographies at work seeks to redress the issue that "few workable examples exist to be inspired by, an absence that weakens their appeal compared to the relative security of an adaptable capitalist system" (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006, p 743). While imperfect, the many spaces in Autonomous Tokyo and the core network have grown and sustained themselves for over a decade, have inspired similar projects in other places in Japan and other countries, and provide some sense of the possibilities of autonomous life.

Emergence of Autonomous Tokyo

Borrowing the language from some of the activists and their publications, I have described Autonomous Tokyo as a network. However, in discussing the term to describe the object of my research, the activist "Lucky" told me early on in my fieldwork[4] that the word "network" may be too concrete to describe the decidedly loose relationships of the spaces and people involved. Their name in Japanese, Tokyo Nantoka, also reflects their commitment to loose connections, a common feature of autonomous geographies that insulate them from institutionalization. The word *nantoka* can be literally translated as "something" or "whatever-you-call-it." It is also the name of a cooperatively run bar that is one of the important nodes of the network, and the name can lead to confusion when visitors looking for the bar ask for directions on the street. Its location off the narrow North Central Shopping Arcade on an even narrower side street contributes to its status as a hole-in-the-wall, comfortable for those who know what it is, but potentially intimidating for those who do not. In addition to signaling the question of what the "thing" of the collaboration might be, *nantoka* also means "somehow," again gesturing at the

[4] I conducted over nineteen months of fieldwork on the ground in Japan over a period of five years alongside an autonomous activist network in Tokyo and other places in Asia, starting in the summers of 2012 and 2013, with the bulk of this time concentrated in 2015-16.

desire and emergent attempt at praxis rather than ontological state of being that holds them together. The name indicates their collective autonomous sensibility and the notion that the community would manage to do something with or without substantial finances beyond what they could assemble as mutual aid.

In his book titled *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan* (2014), Carl Cassegård traces the origins of alternative spaces in contemporary anti-precarity movements in Japan, including some of Autonomous Tokyo activism, to a social movement landscape dominated by two traumas: the failure of 1960s student movements in Japan compounded by economic exclusion in the aftermath of the 1980's bubble economy. He argues that the contemporary rise of what he calls "alternative spaces" and autonomous street politics can be seen as political spaces of retreat from which to negotiate with and heal from these historical traumas. He draws on Nancy Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics (1990) to show how these spaces are not only about retreat, but create the conditions for a re-engagement with the public sphere. This is an extension of her feminist critique of Habermas's conception of the public sphere as a singular space. Autonomous Tokyo's spaces like their guesthouse and Nantoka Bar would certainly fit this definition of other non-liberal, nonbourgeois public spheres that do not fit a model that only distinguishes between publics based in the state and private citizens, or situates them as either distinctly apart from, or wholly embedded in, the dominant public sphere.

However, Cassegard's account overlooks how these spatial practices were not only shaped by these histories, but also have been heavily influenced by both the transnational connections of global autonomous and anarchist organizing as well as the complex local relations of the neighborhood and city (Brown, 2018, Egami, 2019). The radical movements of the 60s and 70s

in Japan were also highly influenced by movements elsewhere (Schieder, 2017). The different projects of Autonomous Tokyo officially came together as a loose collective after the G8 summit at Lake Toya in Hokkaido in 2008, which brought alterglobalization activists from overseas to Japan to intervene in a direct action against the official economic summit. Most Autonomous Tokyo activists were not directly involved in these protests, but the convergence space of the Hokkaido protests extended to autonomous spaces in Tokyo, where alterglobalization activists gathered and stayed both before and afterwards. These encounters led activists in Japan to be invited to visit some of the squat communities and social centers in Germany. Impressed with the size and capacity of these spaces, not only as brick and mortar structures but also as a networked community, autonomous activists in Tokyo sought to more explicitly attempt to develop their connections as a network in the city.

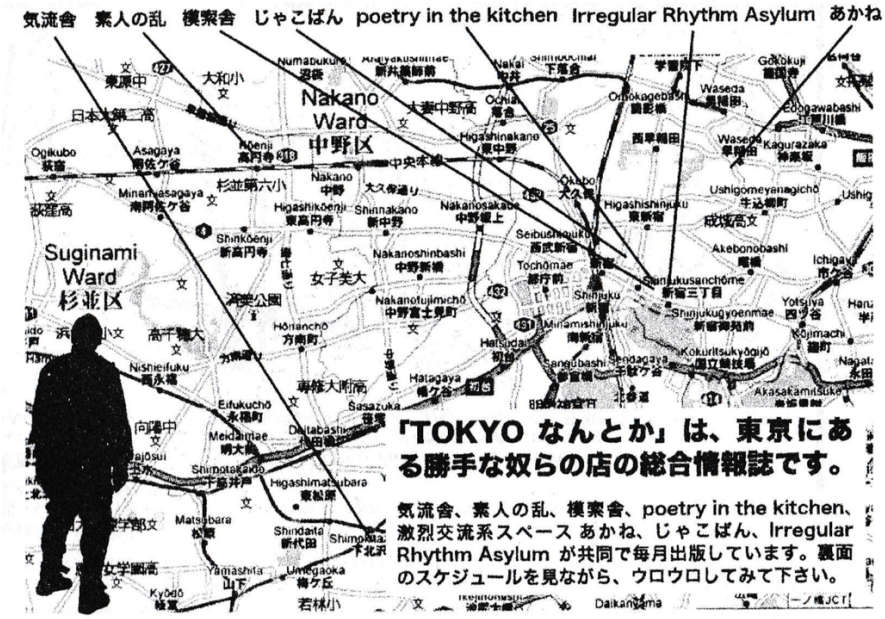

Figure 2 : a map of Autonomous Tokyo spaces reproduced in the photocopied free paper, Tokyo Nantoka. The names of the spaces are listed along the top of the map, and are mostly along the Chuo train line (Tokyo Nantoka, May 2009)

Whatever the "thing" they are, Autonomous Tokyo has always been a project of collective mapping as a form of knowledge production and relationship-building (See Figure 1). Their

collaborative work under that name started as a self-published, free monthly paper with a few short pieces of writing, illustrations and photos, a calendar of events for the month, and advertisements for and a map of the shops that were part of the network. In their first issue in March 2009, the group RLL (an ambivalent acronym referencing Radical Left Laughter, Riot Love Letter and Reading Leaf Lounge, depending on the situation) presents the spaces as alternatives within the dense consumerist landscape, "…the place of brightly illuminated entertainment that never sleeps and keeps expanding without rest. It is the hotbed of the vices of the ripoff capitalist system that targets your heart with streets turned into Tsukai Ukiuki Dori," (Tokyo Nantoka 2009, p2). This introduction to the first issue ends with a reference to an upbeat, chart-topping song by Ozawa Kenji that was released in 1995, a few years into what is now called the Lost 20 Years of stagnant economic growth after the collapse of the economic bubble. Challenging the song's narrative of an average Tokyo man's flaneur-like quest to buy Prada shoes for a companion he desires but does not actually have, they suggest that their DIY ways can provide a better sense of fulfillment. Rather than getting caught up in aspirations for connection and fulfillment from advertisements in publications like Hot Pepper, a free restaurant directory published by the multi-billion dollar staffing firm Recruit Holdings, readers should pick up their "Hot Paper, *Tokyo Nantoka*" that introduces "spots in this Babylon where people who like to play and do as they please like to hang out" (Tokyo Nantoka 2009, p2).

Different projects highlighted in the paper were already producing their own free papers and circulating underground literature and media such as zines, self-published magazines with limited circulation. This media is present in every Autonomous Tokyo space, but is perhaps most concentrated in the cluster of spaces in Shinjuku, which today is also the center of a major business district in Tokyo and home to the busiest commuter hub in the world and (Figure 3).

The oldest shop in the network, the bookstore Mosakusha, was established there in 1970 as a hangout of the New Left in the 1970s. Also in Shinjuku is the anarchist infoshop Irregular Rhythm Asylum (IRA), started in 2003 by designer and activist Narita Keisuke as a distribution center for zines. He started IRA in the corner of a shared office occupied by a leftist publisher before gradually expanding into the entire third floor of the small building, filled not only with zines from Japan and around the world, but also as a venue for workshops and other types of media, exhibitions, and other goods. Visitors to Tokyo often stop by IRA because it is relatively easy to find information about it in English online and appears on lists like in the Slingshot Organizer, produced by the Slingshot collective in Berkeley, California and sold at IRA and similar shops around the world. Café Lavandería is also close by, a café and event space located in what is now the LGBT district of Nichome, formerly a red light district. It is home to a wall of bookshelves filled with radical literature as well as four brother cats, adopted as strays, and derives its name from the space's former function as a laundromat for red light district workers. Other spaces focus on other things but also produce their own literature; for example, Amateur Riot, a collective and subgroup of Autonomous Tokyo based in Koenji, Tokyo, produced the *Pauper's Newspaper* (2002-4): three relatively hefty volumes of 60-70 photocopied pages filled with essays, poems, comics, ads, and calls to action.

Amateurs Riot

The high density of Amateur Riot shops in Koenji (Fig. 4) extends the functional convergence space of the shops into the space of the neighborhood itself. Koenji, along with the neighboring Asagaya and Nakano, is historically associated with communities of low-income

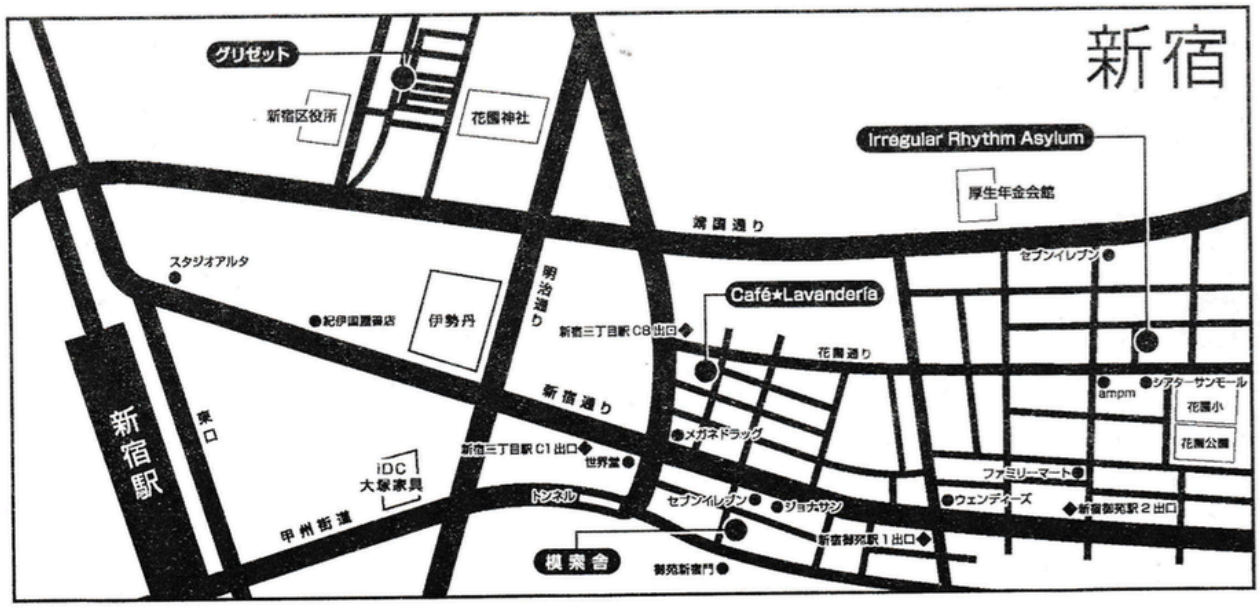

Figure 3: A map of Autonomous Tokyo spaces in proximity to Shinjuku Station, represented as the large rectangle on the left. Clockwise from the top left, listed are: [Grisette], a bar in the Golden-Gai district; Irregular Rhythm Asylum, an anarchist infoshop; [Mosakusha], radical book shop; and Café Lavandería, a radical café and event space (Tokyo Nantoka, May 2009)

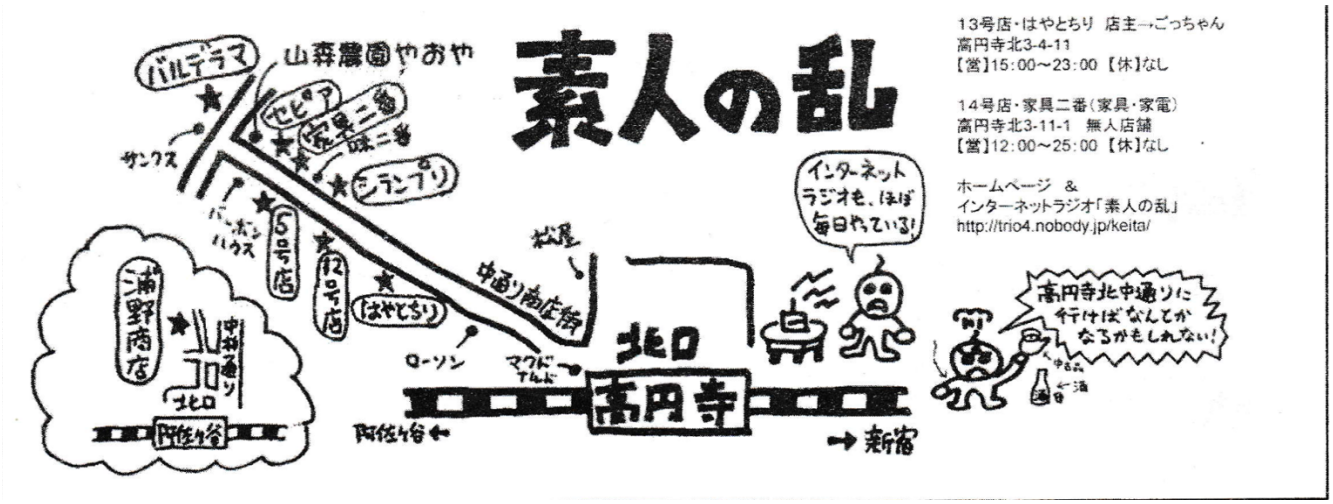

Figure 4: A map by Matsumoto Hajime of Amateur Riot spaces in proximity to Koenji station (Tokyo Nantoka, May 2009)

musicians, artists, novelists, punks, and their anarchic cultural spaces, and is featured not only as a setting, but also as a character in various works of visual media and literature.[5] Koenji is just 10 minutes away from Shinjuku Station on the Chuo train line that extends across the city from the eastern edge of Tokyo to beyond its western city limits. The Chuo line itself is noted for having a more informal or bohemian culture that matches the neighborhoods along it, and much of the Autonomous Tokyo network is situated along it in Shinjuku, Koenji, and Kunitachi (Harada, personal communication, March 15, 2017). The strong existing neighborhood identity in Koenji make it an ideal location for autonomous actors such as Amateur Riot and Dame-ren, translated as the League of Good-for-Nothings, who are involved in Autonomous Tokyo but also in many ways are their predecessors. Dame-ren started gathering in the plaza in front of Koenji station and other public spaces in the 1990s and continues to gather regularly with food and drink in public plazas in Shinjuku, Koenji, and other neighborhoods as well as hosting events and running their own radio program called "Passionate Revolution!" Theirs is a deliberate movement of opting out to create a counterpublic, a demonstration of living outside the capitalist social norms that denigrate people who are seen as unproductive.

Continuing Dame-ren's established practice of appropriating public space for their own means, Amateur Riot organized creative actions such as nabe (hotpot) parties in plazas and other open spaces around Tokyo that transformed these into temporary autonomous zones, also extending this practice of insurgent public space (Hou, 2010) into privately run shops. Amateur Riot is the name of a recycle shop opened by activist Matsumoto Hajime in 2005 as well as a loose collective of other stores in Koenji including used clothing stores and event spaces, and an

[5] Some recent examples include *IQ84* by Murakami Haruki, *Kōenji Junjō Shōtengai* by Nejime Shoichi, and the Netflix series *Hibana: Spark* based on the award-winning novel by Matayoshi Naoki.

ultra-local autonomous radio broadcast with radio waves reaching a maximum of 30 meters from an event space named Amateur Riot Shop #12. The shared naming refers to their status as amateurs rather than salaried worker-professionals, centering the status of the low-wage, freeter[6] labor produced by the contemporary global capitalist economy. The recycle shop and used clothing stores, for example, present an alternative to the disposable commodities of the fast fashion or fast furnishing industries. Activists are also neighbors who support each other's artistic, activist, and business endeavors and work together to figure out how to create opportunities for autonomous action around the city. While these are a largely geographically proximal group of spaces, the name Amateur Riot has also been taken up by other loosely affiliated autonomous spaces in other Japanese cities, including Nagoya and Kyoto. Their ability to push for new cultural, economic, and political spaces has also been contingent on developing good relationships with their neighbors, including working with the *jichikai,* the local self-governance organization that exists in every city in Japan, helping with traditional local festivals, and working with the local business association, such as when creating their own monthly Asian night market in Koenji.

The possibility of arrest and indefinite detention of protesters, even without charge, significantly dampens participation in public protest (Repeta, 2012). In this restrictive pollical climate, Amateur Riot's use of music, dancing, and sound cars to facilitate playful resistance in public space, tactics that they had developed in the early 2000s to get around strict rules about street protest in Japan, created spaces of alternative spaces of political possibility (Cassegård, 2014; Karatani, 2017). Their "riot" sometimes involves organizing actions in motion, such as the

[6] *freeter* is a Japanese term that combines the English word "free" the German "arbeiter" to indicate workers who lack full-time employment, unemployed or taking on part-time or contract-based employment.

"Three Person Demo" in 2005 that mocked existing restrictions on free speech and right to public assembly in Japan.[7] In this action, three founders of Amateur Riot, Matsumoto Hajime, Futatsugi Shin, and Yamashita Hikaru, meandered down the street, outnumbered by supervising police on foot and in cars, clearly caught off guard by their atypical demonstration, who were making comments such as "shouldn't you be chanting about what you're against?" When the three protesters decided to take a break from walking in the street to rest at a local playground, they were admonished, "how long do you plan to dawdle here? You need to take this seriously, what about this is a protest?" (2005).

Amateur Riot also organized large, festive street actions that sometimes achieved concrete policy results. One such example was the "Opposition to the Product Safety Electrical Appliance & Material (PSE) Law Demo" (2006) which resulted in the government rescinding a proposed revision of a law restricting the sale of older recycled electronics. The "Give Us Back Our Bicycles Demo" (2005) and "Make Rent Free Demo" (2006) are other actions combining a serious claim with a mocking tone. Their best-known action before 3.11 was their 2007 Koenji *ikki* election campaign, named after peasant uprisings in the Edo period. Matsumoto Hajime ran for office, but less with an intent to hold office and more to exploit a loophole about amplified sound in the streets for underground music performances and speeches. He used the guise of the campaign to take advantage of its right to free and open assembly, raucously disrupting social and political norms. Matsumoto's election platform called for 1) self-governance: we make our own city 2) recycling: for a society that doesn't throw things away, and 3) culture: a society

[7] These rules were ratified in Tokyo and many other Japanese cities in 1949 under the postwar occupation by the US as a set of public safety ordinances requiring official permission for any kind of public demonstration, with signatories held accountable for anything differed from what was specified on the application form.

where even idlers with no money can do anything. Beyond these more visible moments of protest, Amateur Riot activism is rooted in everyday relationships. As Matsumoto Hajime noted in the days after 3.11, "…the everyday relationships that bring neighbors together are maybe the most important form of disaster prevention. Hey, you administrators who are only pushing plans for gentrification that crushes local autonomy, seriously, come on!" (2011).

The explosive power of Amateur Riot's everyday associational politics and locally embedded spatiality became especially clear after 3.11. Face-to-face conversations in their alternative neighborhood spaces about their reactions to the disaster became articulated as a collective demand for a different kind of cultural response than the obedient order required by the official politics of the 3.11 fallout. With government campaigns calling for Japanese citizens to curb electricity use and purchase food grown in irradiated soil in Fukushima in order to share the burden of nuclear disaster in solemn solidarity with victims in the Tohoku region, Amateur Riot activists agitated against what they identified as a corrupt system of political and economic injustice by calling for an end to the use of nuclear power and asking people to join them. A massive amount of capital and political power had been assembled to build nuclear power plants, and the construction of these plants in rural communities was facilitated by the promise of modern, urban nuclear futures.[8] Fed up with the message of obligatory nationalist mourning, Amateur Riot activists organized donations for the displaced while calling for the end of nuclear power, as well as of collusion with monopoly energy companies led by retired government officials. Reported estimates for the turnout at their first anti-nuclear demonstration in Koenji, on

[8] The addition to the geological risk of implementing these plants on land prone to large earthquakes, the use of nuclear power in Japan required its dissociation with Japan's recent defeat in WWII and the similar Cold War, atomic bomb technology that underscored their downfall.

April 10, 2011, range from 15,000 to 40,000.[9] The diverse crowds of young and old, Japanese and non-Japanese, crossed conventional political lines to protest and physically overflowed from the open plaza in front of the train station, in numbers far exceeding expectations for a grassroots demonstration organized by a ragtag group of autonomous anti-precarity activists.

The popularity of their actions and track record of subversive actions, however, also garnered a strong response from the state and ultimately lead to a withdrawal from an increasingly mainstream social movement space. Twelve activists connected to Amateur Riot were singled out and arrested at another large anti-nuclear action in September 2011, a major blow to their sense of security in being able to subvert the rules. In addition, their initial call to action led to broader collaborations beyond Amateur Riot or even the loose Autonomous Tokyo network. This involved an increasingly formalized structure that became the Metropolitain Coaltion Against Nukes, and brought with it compromises of working with a large coalition that sought, for example, to cooperate with the police for crowd control. This led many Amateur Riot activists to criticize what they saw as becoming an increasingly narrow, "single-issue" anti-nuclear focus rather than organizing for actions facilitating a broader critique of capital and political systems. The constant calls I observed from organizers at the weekly mass demonstrations in front of the National Diet Building in the summer of 2012 asked participants to please obey police directives. These requests for order, repeated on and off megaphones, rang in stark contrast to Amateur Riot's norm of ignoring, evading, and mocking of police.

[9] The higher end of the figure is what is reported by Amateur Riot activists themselves, and memorialized in graffiti outside Matsumoto's recycle shop in Koenji. Prior demonstrations in Koenji had turnouts of around 200-500 people (Brown, 2018).

The anti-nuclear movement continued to grow through 2012, but Amateur Riot's "No Nukes No Border Riot" demonstration that November signaled a clear renewed commitment to their growing transnational network and connections developed through their own shops and neighborhood spaces. Their networking had included visits by some to autonomous spaces of the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York City in 2011, which Matsumoto described to me as mostly boring and with bad food.[10] This was followed by a visit to Occupy Central in Hong Kong, where Matsumoto and others joined other autonomous activists from Asia for a discussion of the postrevolutionary world in the HSBC bank lobby. This gathering was far more interesting and enjoyable to Matsumoto, who alongside other Autonomous Tokyo activists, has been increasingly invested building ties with autonomous geographies in the East and Southeast Asian region. The "No Nukes No Border Riot" also invoked transnational connections with other global uprisings such as those in the so-called "Arab Spring" with a banner lettering in Japanese, English, Arabic, and Chinese. In this protest, they revised their local strategy to evade police by staying in one place only long enough for one band to perform a set before moving the sound car to a different police jurisdiction. Some were local bands, but others joined from other autonomous geographies, including the Bamseom Pirates, one of the many groups who took part in a five hundred thirty-one day occupation of Duriban, a noodle shop in Hongdae, Seoul to protect it from demolition in the gentrifying neighborhood.

The nuclear meltdown and subsequent government cover-up further highlighted not only corrupt structures of power in energy and government, but the fragility of material places of every kind and need for networked mobilities. The neighborhood ties that were so valuable

[10] See chapter three for a further discussion of the racial dynamics that shaped some of this discomfort and alienation.

during the disaster were newly understood as needing to reach across local and national borders, but this also required the means of places to stay when they travelled, and places to host activists who reciprocated these visits by coming to Tokyo. Establishing Amateur Riot's Manuke Guesthouse was one concrete step in this direction.

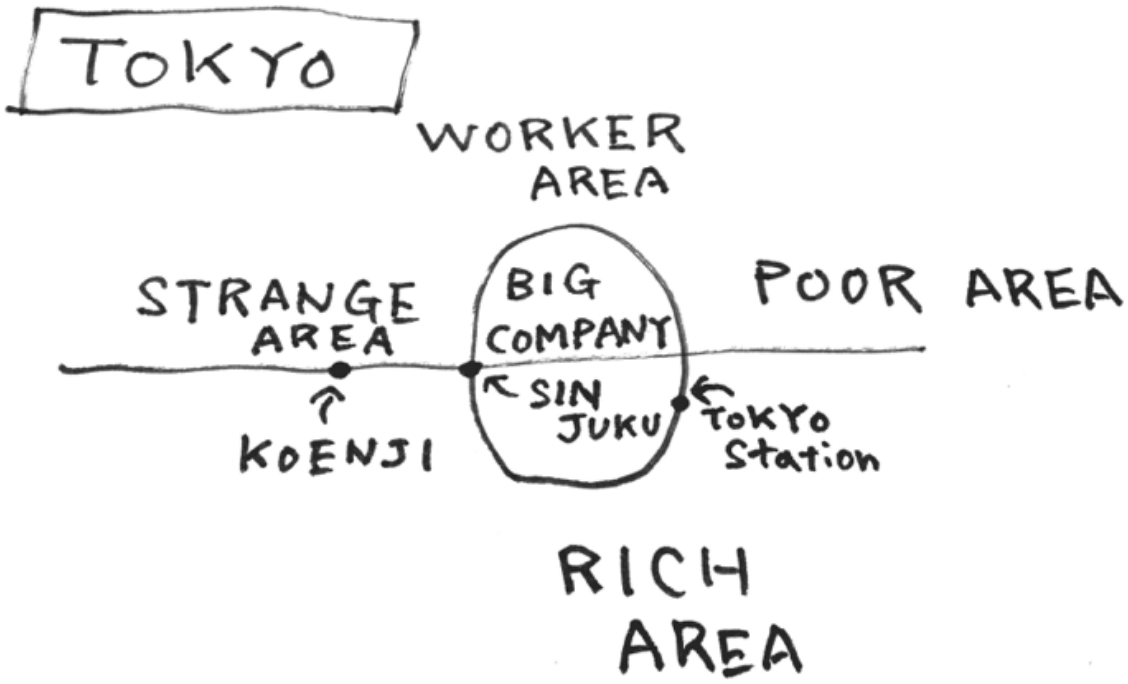

Figure 5: Map of Tokyo by Matsumoto Hajime, highlighting Koenji as a "Strange Area" (2016)

Manuke Guesthouse: Welcome to Mysterious Anarchy City

Like the name Amateur Riot, the term *manuke* only circulates around a subset of Autonomous Tokyo places and activities tied especially to Koenji (Figure 5). It plays an important role in their collective work by signaling their openness to alternative forms of politics, but also demonstrates some of the contradictions and limitations of the fool's anarchism as a political approach. Manuke means fool or idiot, but not necessarily in a derogatory way, and

is used with particular affection around Amateur Riot spaces along with their celebratory references to amateurs, paupers, idlers, drinkers and others as “dangerous people” who are particularly welcome to stay at their guesthouse. Independent scholar and movement participant Kenichiro Egami (2018) traces the figure of the manuke to a character in *rakugo* folk theater practice that embodies the disruptive power of uselessness. This translates to activist spaces as an emergent, affective praxis of both resistance and creation:

> Within the manuke community, an imaginary of different realms and a spirit of struggling against power and authority exist; but most importantly, manuke embodies a cheerful and optimistic temperament. They know too well that resisting and struggling excessively will wear them out in no time and make them no different than their adversaries. For all those manuke out there, having a humorous, playful, and optimistic personality is absolutely crucial. Thus, humor becomes a basic medium to bring individuals together, regardless of borders, languages, and cultures. Predictably, a place where everyone has a great time drinking, eating, and so on, is a must-have in the manuke community (2018).

With key actors proclaiming themselves to be fools and idlers even when they may be full-time workers or business owners, Amateur Riot and others in the broader Autonomous Tokyo network signals their inclusion of failure and rejection of the normative capitalist culture of overwork that continues to be dominant in Japan. Rather than running the guesthouse primarily to make money, it operates as part of an effort to create an urban autonomous zone facilitating mobilities between diverse places and people, to develop the conditions of a material autonomous geography. The deliberate lack of seriousness in their naming Manuke Guesthouse invites people from different backgrounds to encounter each other in these spaces while resisting the social norm of obligatory formality with strangers and elders. One day after helping a scholar

from a Japanese university check in for a night and handing them their receipt for their stay at Manuke Guesthouse, a proper document on glossy paper noting the amount and date of their payment along with some of the basic rules for guests in several languages, they shook their head, bemused. When I asked if everything was OK with the document, they commented on their wish for a more respectable secondary name for the establishment on the receipt, one that would not raise eyebrows when they submitted it for reimbursement. As much as the large, exuberant protests are seen as distinctive features of their alternative politics, these kinds of small, banal moments gesture to their goals of political and cultural intervention.

Figure 6: Neighborhood food and drink map by Matsumoto Hajime, highlighting cheap, "strange," working-class eateries in the neighborhood. These are not spaces formally affiliated with Amateur Riot or Autonomous Tokyo, but are also frequented by local activists, further extending their connections into the local neighborhood.

Rather than a primarily a network of masked anarchist activists agitating against the state, they are like an everyday network of neighbors pushing for community economies encompassing material networks of finances and mutual aid, as well as of affects of fun and optimism. Like globalizing capitalism, anticapitalist autonomous projects are resilient: always incomplete and can develop because or in spite of circumstances that may contradict their goals. While many of the increasing numbers of cash-strapped guests came to Manuke Guesthouse because of growing ties within and between autonomous networks, their arrival was also fueled by the growth of the consumer-capitalist oriented tourism industry in Asia.[11]

Amateur Riot opened Manuke Guesthouse in 2013 in what their website proclaims as Tokyo's "Mysterious anarchy city Koenji" after having relied on other autonomous spaces for accommodations in their travels, and realized the limits of their ability to reciprocate these accommodations to their expanding network of mostly cash-strapped activists, artists, and punks coming to Tokyo without places to stay. The guesthouse occupies the fourth and fifth floors of the same building as their event space, Shop Number 12, and is a short walk from the Amateur Riot recycle shop in one direction and Nantoka Bar in the other. The urban setting of this manuke community, including the proximity of Koenji to Shinjuku and the rest of central Tokyo and the guesthouse to other various Amateur Riot shops, is essential to what makes this part of their autonomous space (Fig. 5, Fig. 6). Matsumoto explains:

[11] Despite a sharp downturn of tourism in the immediate aftermath of 3.11, tourism quickly regained its place as one of the most rapidly growing sectors of Japan's capitalist economy, increasing to 13.4 million visitors in 2014 and nearly doubling again to 24 million in 2016. This growth got a significant boost from the expansion of budget airlines such as Jetstar and Peach in 2012 that led to the largest growth in domestic air travel in two decades. These and other airlines have since added many low-cost flights within the region, meaning that flights to and from Tokyo to major cities in other countries such as Beijing and Hong Kong can cost as even as little as the equivalent of $10 or $20, enabling international travel without extensive financial resources (Kyodo, 2017).

> "I had always heard about "anarchists" historically going to the countryside and trying to create self-sustaining communities, but not so much about people doing that in cities… and instead of being closed off like those communes, I think there needs to be this ability to exist in these social connections, and showing people, like "hey, this way of living is more interesting."

Yet, using the space as a guesthouse also required expensive renovations to bring it up to code for fire safety and number of available bathrooms. The high initial capital costs were met thanks to their deep local ties and own belief in the greater goal of creating this alternative geography, which had been further underscored in their experiences with the anti-nuclear movement. Amateur Riot was able to raise funds from various supporters, and Matsumoto Hajime used profits from his recycle shop to get the guesthouse into operation.

The successful establishment of the guesthouse meant that everyone in the broader Autonomous Tokyo network had increased capacity to host visiting friends, as well as the friends of these friends, and strangers. When I worked as guesthouse staff for just under a year between 2015 and 2016, there were primarily two types of people who came to stay. A small majority came because they were involved or interested in various underground scenes in art, music, or activism and had heard or read about Amateur Riot or had been referred there from other places in Autonomous Tokyo. Others were tourists who stumbled upon the sign for Manuke Guesthouse in the street advertising dorm beds for 2500 yen/night, around 25 dollars, or found it with an online searching for cheap accommodations. More rarely, people who lived in other parts of Tokyo would stay in their Anarchy City because events ran late or simply missed the last train because they were socializing.

Figure 7: Socializing at Nantoka Bar. Photo by author, 2016.

While the majority of guests stayed for only one or a handful of consecutive nights, some stayed for several months at a time. Apartments in Tokyo tend to be quite small, and the initial costs of renting spaces in Japan is often extremely high. Renters are charged numerous fees, including nonrefundable "key money," generally at least one month's rent, along with the initial deposit. Guests can get a discount of a free night's stay for staying a week or longer, and if they connected with people in the neighborhood, it was not unusual for them to be invited to take a turn hosting Nantoka Bar, potentially earning back what they paid to stay at the guesthouse. The guesthouse also became a temporary home for some people who were displaced from their homes for various reasons, such as tensions with partners or roommates and natural disasters such as the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes in western Japan, or others such as students coming to Tokyo for short winter or summer study programs.

Those involved in managing the day-to-day operations of the guesthouse do not have deep financial pockets, so it is important to generate enough income to cover the costs of rent and operations. However, the greater goal is to create opportunities for face-to-face encounters with people that Autonomous Tokyo activists might consider interesting, especially those already or potentially motivated to be involved in similar kinds of activism in other places. These goals are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but present challenges that require negotiating between

the activist network's ideals of anticapitalist, antistate action and the pressures of those needing to pay the bills.

According to Matsumoto Hajime, who also shoulders the financial burden when revenue from the guesthouse is not enough to cover expenses, he is willing to do so because their community of politically and culturally "dangerous" manuke people is more important. The consistent reliance on Mastumoto's other income streams means that while the guesthouse is ostensibly operated collectively with shared decision-making and responsibilities, in effect, it is Matsumoto's business. Steady financial losses at the guesthouse due to issues such as a broken water heater and malfunctioning elevator before the lease renewal date prompted Matsumoto to organize a fundraising event at Nantoka Bar. After the event, he wrote of his perspective on his blog:

> When you run your own business, in the end you have to take financial responsibility by yourself, so I live prepared that in the worse case scenario, I will just go die by the roadside like a dog, but when so many people come together [to express sympathy and help fundraise for new guesthouse repairs] and I'm able to really feel how we are making a place and community, and I truly feel that this work has been worth doing. Yes, in terms of a business it's a spot that I manage as an individual, but this has made me realize once again that Manuke is actually a community that is created collaboratively by everyone, including friends from all over the world. Carelessly thinking "It's in the red anyway, I quit!" is just too wasteful (2019).

Figure 8: English homepage of Manuke Guesthouse, drawings by Nico (www.manuke.asia)

Some other examples of this negotiation between the desire to offer a free space of autonomous conviviality versus the need to bring in paying guests to cover the bottom line can be seen in the decisions made around advertising and staffing. The guesthouse has a colorful website with options to make reservations and navigate information about its facilities and the neighborhood in multiple languages, including Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and German. English was a delayed addition because Matsumoto and others were primarily interested in developing connections with others in the East Asian region who mainly speak Chinese and Korean. They avoided advertising on mainstream websites for booking accommodations such as Airbnb, but the quickly changing urban context also presents challenges. Most recently, the buildup to the 2020 Olympics put pressure on the city to weaken regulations on private apartment rentals and the number of similar low-cost listings has soared. Increased competition

from these and other cheaper guesthouses has pushed them to add Manuke Guesthouse to some online databases, including Airbnb, but also WeChat, the most popular app in China that requires a Chinese business license for advertisements.

Staffing the guesthouse also proved to be a challenge requiring adjustment and experimentation. The mundane everyday work of checking people out and in, washing bedding, cleaning the bathroom, and keeping track of the accounts needs to be done daily, but the initial system relying on unpaid volunteers lead to an unsustainable level of informality about the boundaries and regulation of the guesthouse common areas, that resulted in the guesthouse becoming a free hangout spot for Autonomous Tokyo activists. In addition to drawing them away from established spaces such as Nantoka Bar where the established practice of their community economy obliged people to purchase inexpensive food or beverage instead of the even lower-cost option of bringing their own, the presence of a large group of local activists who already had strong connections with each other sometimes made the lounge an alienating space for paying guests who came from outside the network. This prompted a change to the staffing system and payment of an hourly wage of 800 yen during regular hours, the reliance on volunteer labor reduced to late night check-ins and emergencies. With more regular staffing and more rigid rules about the guesthouse space as one primarily for paying guests, some of the debt was repaid. Eventually, however, the cost of labor could not keep up with the dropoff in the number of guests, and they reverted to a hybrid volunteer system.

The financials are not the only tensions and limits to the way these alternatives play out around Manuke Guesthouse. For one, this lighthearted and irreverent sensibility has been strongly rebuked by some feminists,[12] more traditional activists, and others within and beyond

[12] See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion about feminist critiques of this sensibility.

Tokyo Nantoka. These critiques point out that bunk beds and late nights of drinking in smoky bars is far from inclusive, and that an irreverent tone can be inappropriate and even oppressive to people needing a place to rest due to other reasons. Cassegård (2014) highlights alternative spaces as having therapeutic potential for healing from political and economic trauma, and I had several conversations with guests, particularly those who were there for an extended period of time because they were estranged from family or otherwise displaced from their homes, that pointed to this truth. However, centering the figure of the fool and having deliberately open boundaries privileges the continued flow of new people to the community, also creating the structural conditions that allow people to move on to the next visitor or event rather than the slow and difficult work of holding people in the community accountable or prioritizing care and healing, both important aspects of other autonomous geographies.

In addition, difficulties with guest behavior at Manuke Guesthouse also highlighted the need for some exclusions to maintain a space of inclusion. In one instance, several guests who had developed a good rapport over several days planned a dinner party together, but one of them, a yoga practitioner from France, overcharged the others by nearly $100 for groceries before getting belligerently drunk, making a mess of the shared lounge, and leaving without a word of acknowledgement or apology. He had made an additional reservation for the following week but was not welcomed back. In another instance, a returning guest came to stay with an extended room reservation but started showing signs of a psychotic episode. Because he was talking to himself constantly for several hours through the night in the shared dormitory room, he made it impossible for the other guests to sleep, leading to calls of complaint to the late-night emergency number. A staff member arrived to situate the other guests in different rooms, but ultimately had

to call for a police escort to take the troubled guest to the hospital because he was continually posing a danger to his life by attempting to jump off the balcony. Unfortunately, this was a culmination of a longer history and he was also banned from making future reservations.

The "mysterious anarchy" of Manuke Guesthouse mostly involves an anti-capitalist approach to ordinary problems of determining workable rules, building community, and sometimes enforcing exclusions. Like many other social centers administered as part of activist communities, the guesthouse fosters alternative relationships and relies on cooperation and a shared desire to create an urban commons based on their own needs and desires. However, in contrast to the models that tend to be highlighted in the literature (Pusey, 2010, Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006), it eschews government funding, its benefactors are not generally not wealthy, it does not benefit from a particularly ethical property owner. While it does depend on the surrounding community of activists as patrons, staff, and volunteers, it is far from a horizontal operation, with one person assuming the vast majority of responsibility for the space, exemplifying the paradoxes of an anarchic society.

Conclusion

The spaces of Autonomous Tokyo span their creative street actions to the shops and spaces they operate in the city. Their local placemaking has inspired and also has been inspired by other actually existing autonomous geographies, and while their turn toward transnational connections began mainly around 2008, but their focus became distinctly global after the anti-nuclear movement in 2011-12. Following their explosive protests sparking that movement, they started Manuke Guesthouse, an empirical example of the ways that autonomous geographies do the work of imagining alternatives as well as the work of enacting them within various spatialities. Despite looking more or less like typical low-cost temporary accommodations, the guesthouse

supports Autonomous Tokyo's broader goal of creating sites of face-to-face anti-capitalist commoning. It does not stand "outside" of capitalism, but resists it while trying to create freedom and connection beyond it by asserting its own sense of values.

Together, these movement spaces exemplify the spatial praxis and strategy of connecting across local and global scales to achieve the goals of their movement while also highlighting the contradictions, particularly around managing financial obligations to the labor and other costs, that activists must negotiate in order to realize their desires. Their other online and material spaces are frequented by people in overlapping social circles and provide the means through which activists develop and put their values into practice to continually shape new urban imaginaries and political possibilities. Mapping these connections and creating spaces like the bar and guesthouse, where people can come and physically stay a while, help these activists with their goal to articulate global connections, but especially those within East Asia.

There is a long history of radical projects that explicitly espouse autonomous politics in Japan, and radical spaces continue to be important today in sparking mass resistance to the dominant political establishment as well as articulating alternatives to a framework of resistance. The spaces of Autonomous Tokyo are by no means a utopian blueprint for liberation, but are an example of an experiment in how to strive for transnationally mobile ways of relating to and working with other activists and question the capitalist norms of the city. They do this by building the capacity to accommodate alternative social relations beyond those defined by the nation-state or the dominant low-wage economy. Their spaces also highlight the incompleteness of projects of self-rule, and their ongoing engagement with local and global connections as a way to situate their dissent.

Chapter 2: Between Killjoys and Diverse Economies

Abstract:

The tendency for radical movements to privilege masculine identities and ignore intersectional oppressions, especially in regard to gender and sexual violence, is well documented. In Japan, the figure of the subversive, fun fool has been pivotal in reviving an engagement with autonomous politics and expanding networked connections to other places in the region. This paper examines the ways that differently positioned activists negotiated a conflict that juxtaposed the positive fool with the negative refusal of the feminist killjoy. This encounter highlights the limitations of autonomous politics that do not pay sufficient attention to power relations embedded in gender and colonial relations. The transnational spatiality of these conversations highlights the importance of extending Gibson-Graham's insights about diverse economies to the realm of affect and emotion, and reminds us of the heterogeneity and uneven landscapes of power within local autonomous geographies.

Daring to imagine and to put into practice the idea that another world is possible might seem to some a fool's errand. At the same time, the contrived claims of populist ethno-nationalism, draconian government restrictions on democratic dissent in the name of peace, and other conditions that limit the imagination can also seem to be firmly planted in the realm of the absurd. Political resistance in the name of respectable rationality can have limited traction under such conditions. In other words, the absurd is ingrained in existing politics and is potent with real possibilities. Recognizing this, a loose group of activists in Tokyo come together as self-proclaimed good-for-nothings, amateurs, freeters, idiots, and fools. They dare to position themselves as equals to the rich and entrenched political elites despite glaring differences. They

celebrate their socially unfavorable subjectivities as embodiments of their shared critique of the capitalist system and used them to generate social ties with other marginalized political actors.

The core group of actors in the Autonomous Tokyo activist network is small, but they are known for changing the contemporary social movement landscape in Japan. Their unruly and fun street protests have received the bulk of scholarly attention and praise, for example, for sparking the diverse and often massive anti-nuclear movement following the triple disaster of 3.11 (Karatani 2011, 2018, Oguma 2015). Their particular form of street politics is seen by some scholars as a response to the trauma of the failure of the New Left social movements in the 1960s and 70s (Cassegard 2014), and comes out of the movement landscape of anti-war protests in the early 2000s that reject imposing a particular program of organized politics in favor of opening up spaces "for individual participation and ever-changing combinations of participants" (Hayashi and McKnight, 2005, p 105). Some of the activists also invoke connections to early practices of "*ikki*," or uprisings by unruly peasants during the Edo period who created a collective identity of mutual aid and egalitarian society that was independent of the feudal system through various demonstrations of autonomy, including refusing to work for their lords, dancing in the streets, and getting drunk at festivals (Egami, 2018). Whatever the origin story, in contrast to conventional understandings of social movements that place the primary lens on state responses to organized resistance, their activism privileges the importance of autonomous subjectivities and the community of like-minded fools.

Their practices present an alternative to the doom-and-gloom dominant landscape of capitalist work and social norms that have normalized *karoshi*, or death from overwork, and *hikikomori*, or social withdrawal, both trends linked to the anxieties of economic precarity in Japan (Allison 2013). They normalize creative dissident action not only through the spectacle of

street politics, but also through the material and affective intervention of alternative transnational placemaking from below, creating spaces for collaboration and interaction among a loose and shifting group of participants. By mobilizing foolish or degenerate subjectivities as an integral part of their autonomous practice, they elevate positive and fun emotions and affect as a weapon against dominant culture. The movement is a loose assemblage of different kinds of actors and diverse perspectives, with varying degrees of engagement with feminist politics. Some prefer a more serious posture, while others are deliberately blithe. In this paper, I will focus my analysis on the gendered subjectivity of the fool as articulated and elevated by the latter: a smaller subset of the larger network, but one that holds a particular popularity and sway.

It is on this point about un-seriousness and levity that they have also received the strongest rebukes from other anti-establishment activists, particularly feminist activists. On one hand, the movement presents a consistent critique of the hegemonic male citizen-subject and valorization of his life-time employment. Celebrating idleness in the face of capitalist productivity, creating community economies as a direct action against extractive and disposable economic relations, and other aspects of the movement engage with gendered social relations and demonstrate their alignment with feminist critiques of labor and family. On the other hand, they do so in part as an argument for an alternative universal subject who is defined not by their class, education, or nationality, but by their way of living and being in the world. This also means that when people have raised concerns rooted in particular positionalities, they have sometimes been dismissed for bringing down the mood or bringing up points that are too specific and inconvenient. The more recent transnational actions of the network have also highlighted the uneven power relations that also persist in hyperlocal autonomous spaces. While the fool may cross borders and bring people together with a particular mobilization of affect and emotion, in order to succeed in their political

project of making alternative worlds, liberated from oppressive structures, they must remain open to other emotions and refusals. Without being attentive and accountable to the uneven power relations that they carry with them, the would-be jester, making clever jabs and critiques of the seat of power, is no more than a jackass.

Commoning, or the process of creating a shared system of social practices, is a relational process at the heart of many alternative social movements. This perspective, explicitly introduced by Peter Linebaugh (2008), contrasts with the way of thinking about the commons or common that focuses on it as a material or immaterial resource outside of the communities that generate these practices. It is "a relational process—or more often a struggle—of negotiating access, use, benefit, care and responsibility" (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 2016, p. 4). Defining the community that makes the decisions about the norms and protocols of alternative movements is difficult because of their often deliberately indefinite bounds. Pickerill and Chatterton describe the loose movement of movements that makes up the diverse strains of autonomous geographies, including anti-imperial, decolonial, anti-racist, feminist, and anarchist spaces where people question dominant norms and have "a creative desire to constitute non-capitalist, collective forms of politics, identity, and citizenship" (2006, p. 1). In their study of what they call "the anarchist commons" in Montreal, Jeppesen et al. describe a cartography of diverse but intersecting movements that share core commonality of a profeminist politics. They find that: "For the most part, anarchist work is grounded in a dual political strategy of confrontation and construction. Confrontation strategies aim to destabilize and delegitimize the current socio-political order, whereas construction strategies build grassroots alternatives" (2014, p. 889). In this paper, I examine a case of anarchist commoning where profeminist values are called into question. This reveals that this dual strategy of confrontation and construction exists

not just as something enacted by a coherent commons against the broader dominant culture, but also within efforts to build an alternative commons.

This chapter uses four ethnographic scenes that shift across face-to-face and digital spaces of a transnational autonomous activist movement to interrogate the ways that emotion and affect are used to advance and refuse critique in the process of defining the community. Across these scenes, I interrogate the ways that differently positioned activists in a transnational network of autonomous politics engaged different emotions to contest and construct alternative norms posed by the activist-fool. Drawing on two distinct scholarly interventions, Sara Ahmed's feminist killjoy and J. K. Gibson-Graham's hopeful participant in diverse economies, I demonstrate that autonomy is not something that can be owned or situated in any singular subjectivity or emotion. As Pickerill and Chatterton (2008, p. 737) describe it:

"If autonomy is a 'set of power relations,' a relational tendency rather than a possession, then no clear boundaries between autonomous and non-autonomous processes and space exist. Rather there is a constant *negotiation* between competing tendencies toward autonomy and non-autonomy (or heteronomy). Autonomy is necessarily an emergent, and in many cases residual, property within— and often against— a dominant social order, a desire rather than an existing state of being."

The first scene examines a moment from the beginning of my long-term fieldwork in Tokyo, showing how the fluidity between the online and material spaces of transnational autonomous activism presents creative opportunities while also carrying uneven power dynamics across them. Next, I show how face-to-face interactions highlight the importance of paying attention to difference not just at the scale of the nation, but also at subnational scales, such as the local and the body. Turning back to digital transnational interactions in the third scene, a

feminist killjoy critique illustrates the ways that marginalized perspectives might be dismissed and ultimately excluded in the pursuit of positive alternatives. The fourth and final scene concerns a pro-sex work, diverse economies stance as articulated by an activist and sex worker in Taiwan and the ways this confronts the unstable closure of the transnational autonomous activist space to yet another kind of feminist subjectivity. I argue that the diverse economies stance of the movement could be extended to the realm of affect and emotion. A diverse feelings approach can make space for the killjoy without being dominated by negative or stagnant feeling, opening up a way to keep the movement grounded in a playful, constructive struggle that is attentive to difference.

Literature Review

Attention to the realm of feeling is necessary to understand the ideologies and practices underpinning our worlds as well as attempts to change them (Pulido 1998). The recent proliferation of scholarship on emotion and affect in geography builds on humanistic, feminist, and non-representational geographies go beyond the limitations of the Cartesian dualism holding mind and body as discrete objects (Bondi 2005). Broadly speaking, scholarship on emotional geographies tends to make subjectivity, identity, meaning, and feelings that people can recognize and articulate through language, such as sadness and anger, primary objects of concern. In contrast, the literature on affect offers a framework that often holds subjectivity to be fundamentally relational, and in some ways structured by (structures of) feeling. It privileges understandings of feelings as generated in part by the continual production of the self and difference through encounters with other bodies, including non-human, or more-than-human entities. In their critical commentary on these literatures, Curti, Aitken, Bosco, and Goerisch (2011) summarize the distinction thus: "…while affectual and emotional geographies are both

about folding movements of the inside and outside as *simultaneous relationalities*, their *interests* in what potentially overflows (affect) and what is captured (emotion) lends them to a different approach to politics— and what counts as the political" (2011, p 592).

If scholars distinguish between the two to elaborate a more specific attention to what counts as political, it is an especially useful lens for looking at alternative forms of contentious politics. Much of the recent scholarship on alternative progressive and radical social movements centers emotion and affect in their analysis of alter-globalization, autonomous, anarchist, and other anti-capitalist movements that explicitly look beyond existing political frameworks to conceptualize and enact change (Brown and Pickerill, 2009, Chatterton 2010, Clough 2012, Routledge 2012). These studies reveal that making sense of affect and emotion as sites, tactics, and goals of these movements, in and of themselves, can help us understand the meaning of political work that cannot be understood within a capitalocentric framework (Gibson-Graham 2006). They also show how people who may not identify as activists engage in this work, redefining what is political (Chatterton & Pickerill 2010). Affective ties and emotions are also critical for coalition-building, enabling people with different kinds of political stakes and histories to craft collective identities or "sensuous solidarities" (Juris 2008, Klepto 2004, Routeledge 2012) and form counterpublics for learning and developing a shared political analysis (Sziarto & Leitner, 2010). These were both goals that spurred the growth of transnational connections of the autonomous network in Tokyo.

Noting that the distinction between affect and emotion often becomes reduced in the academic literature to describing emotion as intentional, cognitive feeling, and affect as unintentional and operating on people and things on its own, some feminist scholars caution against relying on an analysis that holds these as rigidly separate categories (Ahmed 2010, Bondi

2005, 2014, Ettlinger 2004). Following these scholars, in this paper I position emotions as also relational, and affect as potentially deliberate. Affect and emotion have both been integral in bolstering alternative spaces and subjectivities in the Autonomous Tokyo activist network. I refer to both make sense of the ways that activists understand themselves and each other in order to enact both solidarity and critique. Rather than emotion as coming from the interiority of the bounded, individual self as it encounters others, I refer to the ways that both emotions and affect are used in this movement to confront and construct the collective subjectivity of the fool.

Scholars examining the histories and practices of marginalized political actors often highlight the ways these actors express their agency despite overwhelming conditions of structural violence (Kelley 2002, Pulido 2006). This is often made visible through their joyful creative practices and collective actions. In their transnational work on diverse economies, feminist scholars J.K. Gibson-Graham bring attention to subjectivity and the importance of positive emotions in the construction of non-capitalist alternatives. They argue that a process of resubjectivication is necessary for the creative, generative, "admittedly hopeful vision" of diverse economies as spaces where "nonrational states can be fostered, ones that create receptivity to alternative discourses of power and economy" (2002, p. 51). The project of resubjectification through engagements with diverse economies makes explicit space to reimagine the self as a creative economic agent through collective and collaborative engagements, rather than a dreary past, present, and future as individuals helplessly struggling to survive against an all-encompassing capitalism. Gibson-Graham welcome the heterogeneity of radical experiments that engage and facilitate this process (Gibson 2014), underlining the limits of negative emotions and pessimistic critique. By highlighting the positive affect they observe in these diverse projects, such as when one focus group shared "stories of success and hope in their

regions, [and] we observed a palpable shift in mood, an acceleration of pace, and heightened excitement" (2002 p. 41), they propose that resubjectification is an effective approach to political change because it "addresses the deep affective substrate of our subjection to globalization" (2002, p. 30).

This intervention contrasts with the way that feminists "are typically represented as grumpy and humorless, often as a way of protecting the right to certain forms of social bonding or of holding onto whatever is perceived to be under threat" (Ahmed 2010, 65). However, as Ahmed argues, unhappiness and negativity is in many ways foundational to a queer, feminist, and anti-racist position, meaning that these affects cannot be ethically avoided. Turning away from these emotions can mean turning away from inconvenient criticisms of or confrontations with the dominant culture within alternative movements. The recent anti-social turn in feminist and queer studies looks to the "queer potential of negative forms of knowing, such as stupidity, forgetting, failure and illegibility" (Stephens 2015, p.). These can be seen in the figure of the amateur and happy, stupid fool, but also in the figure of the angry, unhappy killjoy (Ahmed 2010, Halberstam 2011). The negativity associated with the killjoy is not because she wants people to be unhappy or to find some kind of pleasure or joy in unhappiness, but because "other people are unhappy because of the world she wants" (Schmitz & Ahmed 2014, p. 105). The association of feminism with grumpy killjoys is common in the diverse projects of autonomous geographies described by Pickerill and Chatterton who note, "[m]aking autonomy is not easy or unproblematic. Problems within the activist community such as machismo…are difficult to shake off. There remain questions as to whether those engaged in autonomy recognize, challenge, and overcome such issues" (2006, p. 743).

These dichotomous emotions and affects can do similar kinds of work. Both the negative killjoy and positive actor do the work of confronting as well as constructing alternatives. Taking a relational approach to emotion and affect allows for the seemingly opposite interventions that Gibson-Graham and Ahmed describe to be held in the same space. It presents multiple ways of challenging norms, including overcoming the machismo in autonomous movements. The killjoy's negativity has generative potential, but holding it as a static identity, unable to shift to other emotions and approaches, is also limiting. Ahmed writes, "it's important not to think of oneself as simply as being a killjoy and always being the woeful one… we have to lose confidence in our capacity to recognize ourselves as being her, even when we take her up" (2014, p. 105). Holding onto a singular emotion and affect as an ideal politics, and conceptualizing this as the interiority of an identity such as the killjoy or the fool on the level of the individual or the community, comes with the risk of reinscribing static conceptions of feminist critique. In the work of establishing new political norms and possibilities, however, it is necessary to affirm the possibility of diverse and shifting emotional approaches.

The autonomous geography I describe in this chapter creates new political spaces in Japan precisely by challenging the dominant emotional and affective landscape. In *Precarious Japan*, anthropologist Anne Allison describes the affective landscape of urban life in post-3.11 Japan as one dominated by unsettling insecurity in the face of more-than-human material devastation and neoliberal austerity politics (2013), generating a demand for experimenting with ideas and practices of autonomy and "poetics with which to express the conditions of our lives" (Kitagawa, 2015). Despair, social withdrawal, and suicide or death from overwork have become common themes in the media. While there is no single affective or emotional register for the so-called neoliberal subject (Anderson 2016), just as there is no single neoliberalism (Larner 2003,

Leitner et al. 2007), the activists I talked to in my fieldwork in Japan stressed the importance of creating oppositional spaces that are fun for people like themselves who, according to dominant social norms, should be looked down on for being poor or for not working a full time, salaried position.

Anti-precarity activist Amamiya Karin[13] identifies "the emotional sense of hardship" as the starting point to understanding and undoing the emptiness, negation, and alienation of the dominant political economy (Allison 2013). Rather than pushing for reform, Autonomous Tokyo activists most often seek to create alternatives through an assertion of leisure, political play, and a negation of work in a country where "a strong nationalist sentiment for economic development has dominated the Japanese public and private discourse of work… a selfless and devoted attitude to work remains integral to the practice of overwork in Japan" (Nemoto 2013, p. 515). In addition to being nationalist, the discourse of overwork and social withdrawal is androcentric, centering men's experiences rather than taking a more expansive view of labor and social life. Such concerns would look very differently if the analysis of overwork was based in concerns of women who are excluded from many places of work, commonly take on the majority of household labor, and manage additional demands of the gendered nature of work in both public and private spheres (Kitagawa, 2015, Nemoto, 2013, Weeks, 2011, Wright, 2007). The public concern about the affective dimensions of overwork, social withdrawal, and suicide as social phenomena acknowledges that precarity is rooted in and shaped by the economy and dominant labor practices, but exceeding these into our existential, psychological, and social senses of self

[13] Karin, a frequent participant in Autonomous Tokyo spaces, is known for her prolific writings, her shift from right-wing to left-wing politics, and as a punk rocker. However, she is most frequently noted in domestic and international media for her presence in Tokyo street politics in frilly "Gothic Lolita" fashion, an aesthetic choice made in part as a reflection of the dismissal of feminine political subjects.

(Allison 2015). The gendered discourse around these issues reflects the reality that Japan is still one of the least gender-equal countries in the world, dropping to 114th place in the World Economic Forum's global gender equality rankings for 2017. When activists in Autonomous Tokyo confront the problems of affective attachments to practices of overwork, they are confronting the racialized and gendered national subject that is seen as duty-bound to submit to the discipline and hierarchies of the workplace. Their activism thus contributes to the hopeful feminist landscape of diverse economies and raises critiques of dominant forms of masculinity. But the killjoy sees how it reinscribes similar structures of domination.

Methods

Invoking the figure of the killjoy in my analysis has important implications for methods, perhaps especially involving ethnographic fieldwork, because of the constantly shifting relations with interlocuters. Ethnography traditionally refers to the practice of physically travelling to and observing people in a place, but more recent extension of ethnographic practices into digital geographies further complicates the bounds of these relations. I did not enter "the field" with what Brenda Parker describes as a "killjoy research agenda," that witholds disclosure of my perspectives and intentions in order to better observe and critique power relations within the social movement space (2017), but the longer I was there, the more I realized my position as a sometimes-killjoy. I completed nineteen months of fieldwork on the ground in Japan over a period of five years alongside an autonomous activist network in Tokyo and other places in Asia, with the bulk of this time concentrated in 2015-16, after much of the excitement about the movement's mass mobilizations around nuclear power had waned. My initial encounters with the movement were in the summer of 2012 when the mass protests were at their peak. Tens of thousands of people, many first-time dissidents, came out in front of the National Diet building

in Tokyo week after week, joined by anti-nuclear protesters in other places in Japan and the world. This was a testament to the feeling of an opening of political possibility in that moment, which was not in small part due to the influence of over a decade of Autonomous Tokyo's experimentations with creative street politics. I first met many of the activists at these demonstrations or at one of their many small shops. As a feminist researcher, I aimed for egalitarian relations and tried to position myself as an active contributor (Benson and Nagar, 2002, Moss and Donovan, 2017, Parker 2017). I did this, first, by simply being present and attentive, volunteering my help where I could in their organizing spaces, and eventually by contributing my labor to such everyday tasks as translation and interpretation and by working for over a year as regular managing staff for two of these spaces for over a year.

Bondi argues that emotional geographies offers a critical approach that "unsettles claims to the position of the rational knower" (p. 433). My ongoing involvement with the network allowed me to complete standard research tasks, including twenty-three semi-formal interviews with key activists, countless informal conversations, and close participant observation. Yet, however much I strive to practice a kind of scholarship that diverges from the extractive mode of traditional ethnography, the framework of emotional geographies and the figure of the killjoy are reminders that all of these encounters "overflow with the arrogance of research" (Katz 1994, p.70). In the words of Donovan and Moss, in attempting to write about some of the difficult gender dynamics in this movement, "the production of knowledge includes intimacy as a series of acts that are part of the process of becoming meaningful both individually and collectively" (2017).

From the outset, it has been clear to me that I had far more to gain from the movement than would be able to give back, in terms of understanding myself as a Japanese national and in general as a political actor. My fieldwork has been informed by a lifetime of navigating my

experiences as a mixed race, feminine gendered subject in Japan; the intersectional, co-constituting ways that difference gets constructed (Kobayashi 1994) have always been central to my experiences there. While I am a Japanese national in terms of legal citizenship, I am racialized as a "hafu." To borrow the words of Lila Abu-Lughod, as a researcher whose schooling has taken place almost entirely in the US, I am a "halfie." She writes, a "halfie" is a scholar "…who knows their selves are multiple… Their agony is not how to communicate across a divide but how to theorize that experience of moving back and forth between the many worlds they inhabit" (1990, p. 26). Prior to starting this project, I was living just south of Tokyo in Yokohama during the triple disaster in 2011. In addition to shifting the earth and the sea, it created emotional geographies that unsettled claims to rational knowing for many people, including myself. The increased visibility of oppositional social movements in the following months revealed the possibility that I might learn new ways of knowing and being in Japan from people who seemed to be creatively critiquing the social norms.

My self-identification as a feminist led to many conversations with activists on the topic of gender and power, often late at night in a smoky community-run bar often filled mostly but not exclusively by men. Many of these conversations were informative but also frustrating, "troubling for both the researcher and the researched" (Parker, 2017, p. 325). Parker describes the positioning of the feminist researcher in these moments as a "double killjoy… one who exposes sexism, racism, and homophobia [in progressive movements] and thus disturbs not only happiness but also supposed solidarity and hope" (Parker, 2017, p. 325). On the other hand, many of my interactions with other women and gender-non-conforming people in Autonomous Tokyo spaces were moments that I was able to verbalize or act on support for their marginalized opinions and complaints, and fostered feelings of solidarity, hope, and happiness.

The confrontation I focus on in this paper occurred after I "left" the field in Tokyo, through ongoing connections in digital space. Feminist approaches to space and place have long troubled the idea of a discrete space of "the Field" that the ethnographer can disengage from when returning to their academic homes and offices (Gibson-Graham 2002, Katz 1994, Massey 2004, Smith 2012). The emergence of digital social media and other online spaces has further undermined the notion of discrete spaces of "here" and "there" (Elwood and Leszcynski, 2018, Yamaguchi 2007). Yet, the blurring of these lines does not automatically qualify it as feminist research. While studies using data from online spaces have proliferated in geography, ethical considerations that question these newer methodological engagements with the work have lagged behind (Morrow, Hawkins, & Kern 2015). This is of particular concern to feminist geographers, whose "research ethics typically revolve around a relational, situated, and place-based stance that tends to assume face-to-face contact and 'field' settings" (Katz 1994, p. 527). These scholars point out that researchers often replicate the colonial dynamics of traditional ethnographies in online spaces, seeing this data to simply be free for the taking rather than as extensions of the material "fieldsite." Following Morrow et al. (2015), I refer to digital spaces as "virtual-material spaces" to highlight the material entanglements of not just the digital spaces themselves but also of the human relationships that allow situated researchers to "read" online interactions as part of face-to-face social worlds.

The following scenes refer to conversations that I was privy to due to my inclusion in an online messaging thread with around fifty people that had been used for organizing a large convergence event while I was physically in Tokyo, and had been revived the following year after I had left. Back in Los Angeles, I started to read messages from an intimate, tense back-and-forth between several activists about the following year's convergence event. I was no

longer actively participating as an organizer, but I was still looped into that space through my online entanglements, with messages appearing on the screen of the smartphone that I carried with me every day. Unsure of how to insert myself, and unable to keep up with the rapidly developing conversation in real time, I became an ethically dubious "lurker" in this space (Morrow et al., 2015). Due to the efforts of variously situated feminists to process and spread their concerns to a wider public of activists in the region, the debate moved into other more explicitly public forums in the days and weeks that followed the initial conversation in the chat, and it is these that I will reference regarding this moment of confrontation.

Between Online and In-Person Play: Operation Anti-War Asia

From the first day of my official long-term fieldwork, the importance of playful, fun engagement with virtual-material space as a tool of construction, striving for spaces of creative, egalitarian resistance and solidarity across place was underscored. The political landscape at the time seemed to underscore the futility of dissent in the face of the dogmatic exercise of state power. Multiple nuclear power plants had been restarted despite the mass protests against the restart of nuclear power plants in the preceding years. In the fall of 2015, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration was facing similarly vigorous public, academic, and official political opposition, but had already successfully overseen the passage of security bills, akin to the US Patriot Act, through the lower house of parliament.[14] Instead of simply being exhausted and opting out entirely, Autonomous Tokyo was organizing around the political figure of the fool who dared to continue to call comrades together and enact alternative ways to express dissent.

[14] The security bill that called for Japan's right to "collective self-defense" was eventually pushed through the upper house of parliament in September after physical scuffles that had lawmakers piling on top of each other, filibuster-type speeches, and symbolic censure motions, and other obstructions.

It was a typically hot and humid August afternoon when I checked in at the guesthouse run by Autonomous Tokyo activists for a two week stay. It would be enough time, I hoped, to feel out if it made sense to realize my plans to get further involved and find a more permanent place to live. I introduced myself to a tall, thin man sitting at the heavy metal desk just behind the bright green door to the lounge, reassuring him that despite my appearance marking me as other, I was in fact the Japanese person who had called earlier to confirm my reservation. I told him a bit about the Autonomous Tokyo spaces and demonstrations that I had been to in the past and that I was looking forward to spending more time with them to get to know them and their work better, this time in the capacity as a researcher for a year. He checked me into the women's dormitory, a small room with three bunk beds, and gave me the standard tour of the facilities—one that I would eventually give to many guests after I was hired as staff. I came back to the air-conditioned lounge and chatted with him about people we knew in common, and about my plan to research and write about the movement, before he said, ah, you should come to this secret action that we're planning for next week. Secret action? I was intrigued, perhaps especially because he wouldn't give me too many further details, and there were no fliers, blog posts, or other things that I usually turned to for information. They were organizing by word of mouth only, in order to keep the planning under wraps from the police. He invited me to the planning meeting in another space in the same building later that day to learn more. When I got there I saw many familiar faces, and others I had never seen, all whom I would get to know better in the months to come.

Through the discussion, I learned that the activists were planning a performative anti-war action. The goal was not to mount mass resistance as they did for huge surprise turnouts in their early anti-nuclear protests when they drew big crowds via Twitter and other digital spaces.

Rather, they were returning to the roots of some of their earlier actions that focused on finding creative ways to subvert rules about the use of public space for political expression. One was the "Three Person Demo," where three people gathered for a permitted walking demonstration and were predictably far outnumbered by their police escort. Another was a performative electoral campaign, which they ran not with the intent of actually electing someone to office, but to take advantage of regulations on campaigning that allow for amplified sound in the streets. This time, having secured a permit for a film production, they would use that authorization to create a fantastic spectacle in public space and make a digital video to share with other autonomous actors around the world. The initial unveiling of this video would take place in an online video chat immediately after the action. Autonomous Tokyo had already been experimenting for years with subversive tactics of street protest to get around harsh rules about protest in Japan, consistently attracting the attention of the police and bringing scrutiny to their requests for protest permits. Rather than fighting for the right to this specific justification for the use of public space, the activists were always looking for new strategies to disrupt the ominous air around political expression, in part because they found that the police tended to be weakest in their response when they faced an unexpected situation.

They were calling it Operation Anti-War Asia, carrying the irreverent tone from the initial call in Japanese to Chinese, Korean, and English with the translation:

> It's absurd, no matter what country you look at these days, they all have appalling governments! In Japan the runaway Abe administration is trying to recklessly pass war laws; in South Korea, President Park Geun-hye's acting like a dictator and completely ignoring the will of the people; in China too, the government is cracking down domestically as it ominously aims to ever expand its borders internationally. The

> governments of Taiwan and Hong Kong are acting dangerously too, moving to sacrifice their own regional autonomy for the sake of their economies. These leaders are all completely hopeless. …a simultaneous uprising should be our main priority…the theme is "We're not going to get involved in your stupid fucking wars with other countries," but modified locally to suit whatever issues are relevant in each place. The proposal is that then everyone can support everyone else's actions (https://antiwar-asia-2015.tumblr.com/).

This was a transnational action, but also one that situated itself in the particular local dynamics of their city, Tokyo. As a date and time for the action, the activists chose the moment when Koenji, the neighborhood where the venue of the organizing meeting, guesthouse, and other affiliated shops were located, would be hosting one of Tokyo's largest summer festivals that required additional police staffing from surrounding areas. They prepared and submitted a film script they titled *Asagaya, a Love Story*, named after the adjacent neighborhood about a ten-minute walk away where the action would be held. The story was about an unmotivated, unemployed man and his girlfriend. In the intimate opening scene, she encourages him to take a job working the night shift at a bento factory, a banal job they agree might suit him. This script, written by a man, had little to do with the action itself, but it is notable that the narrative reflects some of the dominant dynamics of economy and gender that undergird their anti-precarity politics as well as the local and transnational tensions that would follow. The action, on the other hand, was in some ways an ode to creative politics in the city, a kind of love story for the everyday rhythms of a neighborhood just adjacent to one that was attracting so much popular attention that day. The script's dialogue, of the dreary everyday life of a low-income heteronormative couple in a small suburb of Tokyo, provided a foil with which to generate

feelings of excitement and energy that could serve as the basis for a transnational uprising. In the past, the activists had always faced detailed questioning and outright permit denials, but the police granted the filming permit immediately. The activist who filed the permit and interacted with the police that day reported that some of the officers even seemed excited that their neighborhood would be featured on camera.

On the day of Operation Anti-War Asia, I joined the film crew and used my smartphone to take a video of the scene from a vantage point on the third floor of an apartment building above a small intersection at the beginning of a shopping arcade in Asagaya, across from the train and police station. An activist posed as the director behind a big, old, and inoperational film camera and yelled "Action!," leaving the actual recording of the event to others. Loud, discordant drums and guitar filled the air before the small crowd of activists began their live performance in the non-film by running up to and smashing the windows and sides of a makeshift tank, a passenger car that had been spray-painted camo-style with cardboard missiles and a blow-up pig mounted on top. Once the windows were thoroughly smashed on the vehicle, parked directly in front of both McDonalds and the police station, they rolled the car upside down onto its roof, waved anti-war signs, and made speeches in multiple languages. Only one police officer directly observed the scene, and posts on Twitter revealed that passers-by took in the spectacle as an "actual" anti-war action.

That evening, after cleaning up the debris from the shattered car windows, the activists made their way back to Koenji and gathered again in yet another event space in the same building as the guesthouse. In a packed room, they hosted a panel discussion to report back about their action, and connected online to hear reports from activists about other anti-war actions they had organized in Tainan and Taipei, Taiwan; Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan; Busan, South

Korea; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Hong Kong; Paris, France; and Cologne, Germany. The aim was to use readily available online video technology to highlight solidarities, deepen horizontal ties, and ultimately flatten geographical divides, but in many ways the often spotty internet connection highlighted frustrations about the distance and unevenness of technological access and place. Limitations of uneven internet infrastructure also made for missed calls, poor sound quality, and other delays that extended the event for more than three hours past the last train. Those planning to participate from Malaysia were also already joining a massive pro-democracy protest that brought more than 20,000 people out in the streets, calling for the resignation of their Prime Minister due to issues of corruption. They had warned the Tokyo organizers beforehand that even if they were able to secure an internet connection, the signal would not be strong enough to support a video transmission. Calls to Kuala Lumpur went unanswered, so a Malaysian photographer-farmer-activist who was physically present at the event was invited to the front of the room to explain the basics about the uprising there.

In general, the mood was casual and celebratory, but some gentle killjoy critiques also emerged, mainly about Tokyo's role as the hub for the conversation. An activist calling in from Nagasaki highlighted what could be considered a diverse economies approach when he proposed that disrupting the spatiality of a Tokyo-centric political economy, where the national government and so many resources are gathered, is a necessary part of being anti-war. He proposed that beyond simply connecting online, it was important to create viable living situations in autonomous spaces in regional cities like Nagasaki as functional economic alternatives. This was already a lived reality for him, as a person who (like many parents with small children), had relocated to Western Japan get away from the unknown, perceived, and real radioactive fallout from 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. This critique of Tokyo-centricity

was echoed in a more explicitly killjoy way by participants from Busan, who pointed out that the format of a panel in Tokyo hosting the conversation limited opportunities for their interactions with people in other places. The group in Busan chimed in from time to time, but were clearly mostly attentive to each other within the space of their in-person gathering off-screen rather than fully engaging in the online conversation via the Tokyo panel. Another concern raised by the panel was the absence of activists from China. Despite its geographical proximity, none joined the online space. They were not included due to fears that the strict state surveillance would potentially endanger those invited to participate in the transnational action.

For the organizers in Tokyo, these critiques seemed less important than the joyful feelings about overcoming geographical and technological barriers, which themselves became a site of play for this event. After the reports back from activists in other cities, we watched a quickly edited video of the Asagaya action, ending with a shot of activists sweeping up the glass from their overturned car.[15] As the organizers wrapped up the conversation, six Taiwanese activists who had just moments before been shown on the screen as calling in from the streets of Taipei strode in with the bottle of liquor that they had symbolically offered up over the digital connection, revealing that they had actually been sitting in the alley just outside the building. Both the video of the action and the appearance of the activists "from Taiwan" made for shared laughs among the participants. Those remaining on the call noted that despite the difficulties and killjoy concerns, the convergence of fools for Operation Anti-War Asia was a success. Activists took over public space in Tokyo and other cities around the world to enact a collective spectacle

[15] One (gender non-conforming) activist in attendance noted their gratitude for the inclusion of this image and shared the frustrations of a friend in Baltimore who was involved in the uprisings following the murder of Freddie Gray. They noted the widespread dominance of such imagery of property destruction in media coverage of uprisings as a failure of popular media to show the work of communities coming together in the streets to clean up and figure out next steps.

against policies of remilitarization in their respective nation-states, and circulated photos and short films capturing these actions through their growing transnational network.

Gender and Violations of Autonomy

Concluding that, whatever the advantages of convening digitally, there is no substitute for in-person interactions for building connections and solidarity, Tokyo activists decided to collaboratively host a convergence event called No Limit the following year. It would physically bring autonomous activists from around the region for a week-long series of events in September 2016 to learn from one another and get to know one another better, building the social ties necessary for a closer-knit transnational community. Promotional videos portrayed a desire for No Limit to be a time of raucous, goofy political fun. Two activists designed posters, reflecting different moods for the event. One used a modified Russian constructivist design of mirrored high-rise buildings on a dark background layer of an urban landscape, and the other featured a hand-drawn cartoon of a woman eating a rice ball in one hand and gripping a rice paddle with the other, with grains of rice on her face on a green background. The general commentary was that the former was “cool but too scary,” and that the latter better captured the lighthearted spirit of the event.

The initial calls for transnational participation in the convergence event elevated anti-war concerns posed at the scale of the nation-state, a primary frustration shared by autonomous activists across the region. The organizers argued for the need to build transnational connections to overcome official narratives of national difference that were used to justify the increasing militarization by national governments in the region. This presented a shared platform for resistance to the nation in various places, while eliding concerns about resistance to dominant power relations at other scales, including regional and local tensions. Further, there was no

explicit mention of frustrations at the level of the body, such as the role of gender, race, or ability, that could provide other points of solidarity.

While online interactions are far from benign and can inflict real harm (Morrow et al., 2005), the embodied space of face-to-face interactions carries additional physical risks and challenges. One issue in bringing together over two hundred activists was the question of where or how to provide places to sleep. By then, I was also working as a staff person in the guesthouse which would be made available for free to participants for the week. The guesthouse was usually run collectively by five paid staff members, but questions about wages or profits, significant concerns for a business that had spent many months in the red and barely broke even annually, were set aside for the week. Yet, it was clear that, even after allowing for bed sharing and converting the lounge to an open sleeping area, the guesthouse would need to be supplemented by floor space in other event spaces and in people's homes. Asking local activists to invite acquaintances, much less strangers, to stay in their homes for a week was a significant request, a significant imposition for some. In addition to the breach of social norms, the small size of most residences in Japan, and certainly for the majority of low-income activists in the network, meant that most people could host a maximum of one or two people in their apartments, sleeping sardine-style.

As guesthouse staff, it was important that we had a clear plan for how to manage issues that might arise in the guesthouse. It seemed especially necessary given that it was the main accommodations and guaranteed to be over-capacity. After we discussed how we would prevent the use of illegal drugs, manage cleaning, and other issues as volunteer guesthouse staff for the week, I raised the question of how we might proactively approach issues related to gendered difference and violence. Initially, I received some pushback to the idea that it was necessary to

actively imagine the possibility of such violations within the community of activists coming together, but we came to an agreement fairly quickly that the smaller dormitory room that was already labelled for women could and should continue to be set aside for women that week. With the accommodations at the guesthouse and other activist residences already booked far beyond capacity, I offered to reserve my own small apartment nearby as a quiet refuge apart from the chaotic space around the guesthouse in case of emergencies. Vocalizing my concern about the potential of sexual violence in a community that held creative political play as a core value, and my choice to reserve my own shareable space for this concern and other needs despite the overcrowding, positioned me less as the affirming researcher in their diverse economy and more as a burdensome killjoy who refused to participate in a joyful way.[16]

As it too often goes, a woman participant was actually assaulted that week when a man forcefully demanded she kiss him in a dark alley, leaving bruises on her neck. It did not happen in the guesthouse, and did not involve violence between activist participants. The next day, the victim identified the perpetrator as a man who owned a shop just down the street, and a large angry group of event participants pressed into his shop a day later to demand answers. This mass response came from those closest to the victim, mostly non-Japanese men, not from local activist organizers. The size and urgency of their anger was palpable as the crowd streamed out of the guesthouse and down the street to the shop. After the initial confrontation, police arrived and directed everyone to leave the store or risk arrest, a difficult threat for everyone present, but potentially severe consequence for the foreign nationals. We moved to an open plaza nearby, on

[16] In addition to my concern for visiting participants, this was also my last week in Tokyo, so I was also feeling the need to have the space as a quiet refuge for myself while I was moving out and wrapping up details for my trans-Atlantic move while also dealing with severe nerve pain.

the south side of the train station, where the victim's supporters continued to surround and question the accused perpetrator.

This passionate collective action was a very public, disruptive moment for the victim's community to embody their feelings and express their affective solidarity with her. Ultimately, however, the responsibility fell to her to come out of the guesthouse where she was recuperating: the police insisted they could not allow the group to take further action and could not detain or cite the accused unless the victim herself made a statement. Her community had taken the step to confront the perpetrator after making the plan with her approval, but in the end, their urgent expression of feeling required her to walk out past the road where she was assaulted, past the shop he owned, and go to the police station to make an official statement to the police. She had to do what she had expressly said she didn't feel comfortable doing: deal with the police and potentially see her attacker again in order to participate in a state-mediated resolution. While the victim was pressured to compromise her desires to bring closure to the lingering situation and feeling of anger in the street, local activists were also forced to step out of the dominant affective narrative of the convergence event while they supported their guests in making their demands heard.

While the victim and the activists supporting her were at the police station, the mood of the evening shifted back to the joy of fools constructing alternatives. The crowd crossed the street to another plaza on the opposite side of the station, where there were scheduled festivities called the "Farewell to Prime Minister Abe Party." The activists who had organized that event were known in the mid 1990s for their activism as "good-for-nothings," making a political choice to drop out of a culture of hyper consumerism and gather in public spaces like the plaza to assert the value of alternative social relations. They had set up a large painted sign declaring the Prime Minister's

political demise next to a small altar of remembrance for a friend and comrade who had recently passed away. They invited everyone to join them to drink and be merry in public space, in spite of and to spite the violence of dominant culture, including the violence of the recent sexual assault. In some ways, it functioned as a space for healing that was in alignment with the initial goals of the week's events.[17] In the context of the events of the day, however, it also revealed a lack of specificity as to what autonomy meant to the group as a whole. The absence of the sexual assault victim from the remaining evening events highlighted the limits of who could actually enact the subjectivity of the fool and participate in such a space. This lack of clarity, together with the persistence of occasional casual sexism, would lead to further issues that demonstrate the killjoy imperative.

Uneven Dynamics From Tokyo to Seoul

Despite the many challenges that arose that week, No Limit was deemed by the organizers and many of the participants to have been a worthwhile undertaking that succeeded in bringing people together across great distances to spend time with one another. Tokyo organizers were wary, however, of taking on the responsibilities and implications of power if they were to host the event for a second year in a row. Eventually, organizers in Seoul, South Korea decided to host the following year's gathering to try to keep the momentum and connections going. The emphasis on a norm of autonomy meant that the Seoul activists should have full control of how

[17] Among the notable participants was the leader of a small left faction in the National Diet, Yamamoto Taro, who was brought to the event by the aforementioned anti-precarity activist Amamiya Karin. Taro is a politician famous for leaving his career as an actor and television talent after 3.11 and for his (sometimes performative) acts of dissent in the streets and official halls of government. As is fitting with the autonomous political leanings of the crowd, and in part because he is not an uncommon presence at Autonomous Tokyo gatherings, he was mostly ignored by the participants rather than drawing any particular attention because of his official political standing.

their iteration of the event would look like, with the Tokyo organizers supporting the organizing mainly by fundraising. A proposal for one of these fundraising events that led to the most vocal killjoy critique of their work, deepening divides between differently situated organizers.

Tokyo is the historical center of Japanese empire, a legacy that continues to be reproduced through the transnationally networked entrenchment of comfort women denialism. Akin to Holocaust denialism, proponents of this view deny the existence of forced prostitution by the Japanese Imperial Army, actively working together to pressure news media and politicians to withdraw previous statements and refrain from making new acknowledgements of these women's stories. When a Japanese man suggested an "Asian Girls Bar" as a fundraiser in the chat group involving more than fifty participants from the previous year, he invoked this colonial relation. For some feminist organizers in Seoul, Tokyo, and other places, his proposition to raise money for an experiment in autonomous politics by commodifying Asian women's bodies and erotic labor was a glaring reminder of the uneven relations in that group. In addition to the dynamics of gender, the geography of the idea, originating in Tokyo for an experiment to be held on the ground in Seoul, overtly replicated the asymmetrical spatiality of perspectives.

One person from Seoul expressed their discomfort not only at this suggestion, but also that the overall affect of the chat space and their organizing dynamics made it difficult to express criticisms. Later, the authors of a statement composed "in anger and a small amount of love (just enough to take the time to write this statement)" wrote that while they tried to articulate their complaint, they found themselves at a loss for words at how such an erasure of ongoing colonial violence could even be uttered in a movement space—even as a joke—as some of the male activists later claimed (Untitled, 2017). The killjoys continued to press firmly and respectfully for recognition from the activists who had been entertaining the idea, stressing that under no

circumstances could this ever be an appropriate suggestion. Extending their critique beyond this specific suggestion, they questioned what considerations were being made in the space for the participation of women, sexual minorities, people with disabilities, non-smokers and non-drinkers, the presence of children, and other Others. They also questioned the use of social pressure to make people share their homes, or provide other uncompensated labor such as translation and interpretation, with only the end goal in mind. Others, mostly women, offered support in the chat group, but the killjoy organizers noted that majority of participants did not respond at all, and that several men had minimized and evaded the questions by claiming it was a misunderstanding or just a meaningless joke made while drinking together, that was unfortunately inserted into the chatroom without context.

After confirming the lack of a sufficient response, especially from several key male actors in Tokyo, some killjoys from Seoul, Tokyo, and other places declared their explicit rejection of the convergence event. To explain their reasoning, they circulated a collectively drafted anonymous statement online, stating:

> Most of us are quite leftist, progressive, and are interested in anarchistic social movements, but we couldn't readily want to join the event because we could not be confident in how we would be received in that space. Most of us are feminists, sexual minorities, and people with disabilities, meaning that we are people who may not be able to tolerate sexist language, might point out issues with seemingly minor things, and find that these minor things can be the most important things to attend to (Untitled, 2017).

They also make an observation about the figure of the fool that I had already heard from several activists I had interviewed, mainly women centrally and peripherally involved in Autonomous Tokyo activism, that it is used to avoid difficult questions. While the fool is presented as an idea

and a practice that could be inclusive of diverse social locations, it often reified social norms that centered the single, able-bodied, cisgendered man.

After those who had raised the initial killjoy critiques left the chat group, distancing themselves from the event organizers and the subjectivity of the fool that allowed them to sidestep a serious consideration of their concerns, it fell to women and other self-identified feminists who chose to continue to participate in these spaces in Tokyo, Taiwan, and elsewhere to figure out how to move back into a mode of construction. One way they did this was to proactively create spaces for people to discuss, recognize, and come to terms with the real implications of gender in their lives, and in their work of experimenting with and generating autonomous alternatives. They organized "Gender Talk" events to discuss these issues in person.[18] The proposed Asian Girls Bar event never happened, but the critique from the killjoy critique from feminist activists produced an emotional/affective change and a material shift in organizing for the convergence of autonomous activists in Seoul. This came in part with an enumerated list of rules articulating underlying expectations for their definition of an autonomous subjectivity. These "Autonomous Equality Rules" call for an active enactment of equality rather than an assumption of such. In addition to affirming a shared desire for egalitarian relations, the No Limit Seoul organizers define some unacceptable speech and behaviors. They state that equality in autonomous spaces requires creating "…a culture where we have routine discussions about and against sexual violence…" and continuously, proactively engage in unlearning assumptions about marginalized others. The organizers also appointed a "gender communication team" who were on hand for consultation during the week-long event. These

[18] Thanks to the accommodations of the organizers, I was able to call in to virtually attend one of the discussions in Tokyo.

team of appointed activists were positioned to discuss questions and concerns related to gender-related issues rather than assuming other participants could or would take on that labor on their own. They were also prepared to assist with issues related to sexual and other types of violence in various languages.

These killjoy critiques also led me to reflect on ways that I had tried but largely failed in my attempts at various interventions while physically present at my Tokyo field site. Justifications to my academic self reminded me of my position as a researcher who sought to make sense of the community on its own terms, but I know I could have done more to create explicit community with those articulating killjoy critiques, even if it meant creating further tensions with other core activists. A year after these failures in "the field," living and working side-by-side with the greater community of activists, I had felt ill-equipped to insert myself into the rapidly developing discussion that was from another continent but simultaneously in the palm of my hand. My passive consumption of their messages posed questions about ethical research practices in digital spaces that I was part of due to my existing relationships in material spaces (Morrow et al. 2015; Haraway 1984). Ultimately, I encountered the statement by Untitled through several other avenues and likely would have seen it without being directly linked to the real-time space. However, in my interest in observing more of how those that situated themselves as the fool were responding to the killjoy critiques, I missed an opportunity, or more likely obligation, to act in solidarity with marginalized feminist voices in that space.

Fighting for the Killed Joy: "Sex Work is a Fucking Work" Zine

Theorizing transnational feminism, like transnational autonomous movements, involves the ongoing contestation of the meaning of liberation and freedom and who and what defines autonomous subjectivity (Shigematsu 2012). The killjoy critics from Untitled demonstrated their

autonomy by making their point and distancing themselves from the event. Seoul organizers responded to the killjoy critique by defining some of the necessary conditions for Autonomous Equality and what makes for an autonomous person and community. However, yet another feminist critique emerged, published in the form of a digital zine titled *Sex Work is a Fucking Work*, that argues for a different practice of autonomy that is more in line with the playful role of the fool, seeking joyful alternatives instead of unhappy refusal. It was written by Blueberry, an erotic worker and "host girl" in Taipei, Taiwan. She uses the zine as a space for another emotional response to the event, expressing her disappointment not at the initial idea for the event, but that it was, in her words, "aborted." Using this additional form of alternative media, she writes and illustrates her confusion and frustration about not being able to participate in the initial conversation. She refuses to let the spatio-temporal bounds of the chat room foreclose her exploration and expression of her own understanding of autonomous feminist subjectivity.

The production and circulation of self-published pamphlets, zines, and mini-comics have a long history in feminist and other movements in Japan, as a means through which activists articulate and spread their perspectives as well as build relationships (Shigematsu 2012). Zines are a familiar form of creative expression and circulation of knowledge in DIY/punk-leaning autonomous geographies, including in Japan and Asia, that stress the importance of the material practice of production and exchange across a community of zine makers and readers. Digital zines do not carry the same material weight, but their circulation can mirror that of paper zines by mainly staying within the bounds of a limited field of social relations. Like physical zines, they are ephemeral in that if they are not specifically archived, the links to the files can quickly become defunct. I had seen this zine posted in multiple digital spaces connected to these autonomous geographies, but finally read it in full when it was sent to me by a trusted

interlocuter who I had been talking to try to get a better understanding of the situation and its aftermath. He had been involved in organizing both convergence events in Tokyo and Seoul and was one of the co-authors of the official response to Untitled from Tokyo organizers that sought to make amends by taking further action within their community.

Blueberry highlights her key frustration, the feeling of distance and the fragmentation of the community across the virtual-material space in which the conversation developed and seemed to have concluded. She uses writing and hand-drawn images to unsettle the previous closure of the possibility of an event featuring erotic labor. She argues that a particular feminist subjectivity can be valid without becoming singular, and notes that the voices of currently active sex workers had seemingly been excluded from that conversation. Her stance is that sex work is a real and legitimate form of work that cannot be simply negated and pushed out of conversations because of regional colonial histories. Her initial happiness and excitement at the idea of an event centering people like herself who earn their living from erotic labor turned to confusion and disappointment as she was reminded of the significant stigma that sex workers face in dominant society.

In an argument reminiscent of a hopeful diverse economies approach, she contends that the autonomous geography of the activist network could be a space to imagine alternative visions of erotic labor, where sex work is affirmed and workers are protected. She suggests that organizers could still decenter masculinity by having all gender hosts, providing security and training about sexual harassment, and educating participants about the laws and labor conditions of erotic workers in different places. She also argues that they might intervene in ableist conceptions of sexuality by including those who provide erotic services to people with disabilities in Taiwan.

Blueberry finds ways to incorporate considerations of these other dimensions of difference brought up by Untitled, but sets aside the core killjoy concern about colonial history. While she seeks to productively trouble the killjoy closure of transnational alliances including the possibilities for sex work in this space, Blueberry's zine also demonstrates the possible dangers of holding too closely to a certain emotion and affect in relation to her desire to celebrate her subjectivity as a host girl in that space. In contrast, in being forced to confront a direct critique of gender, violence, and social pressures in the existing dynamics and hierarchies in their space, the Seoul event organizers chose to specify that an ongoing acknowledgement of colonial dynamics would be necessary to overcome these narratives of difference based in the nation. Their Autonomous Equality Rules acknowledge historical memory as a necessary precondition of autonomous subjectivity in their space: "6. Do not forget the historical context… Do not deny the violence of colonialism and the issue of comfort women (Japanese military slavery). Do not deny genocide and sexual violence committed by ROK forces in Vietnam." Blueberry, on the other hand, writes, "historical memory and the issue of colonization is a totally different topic" than the question of sex work, and should be discussed in other ways. In doing so, she denies the entangled relationality of these issues for those who have been forced into sex work, especially under conditions of war. Her statement relegates the violence of colonialism to a static past rather than an ongoing socio-political and economic relation. In some ways similar to the subjectivity of the fool, definitions of freedom through erotic autonomy can challenge norms of gendered difference under patriarchy while also reinforcing the erasure of other autonomous subjectivities under empire. Her analysis excludes at the very least the concerns that the feminist killjoy activists raised about the erasure of the subjectivities of comfort women forced into sexual

slavery, for whom the issue of historical memory and colonization is inextricable from the issue of their erotic labor.

Conclusion

In this paper, I attempt a relational analysis of the gendered subjectivity of the fool in an autonomous geography in Asia by connecting two distinct feminist interventions, that of the killjoy and of joyful subjectivity cultivated in diverse economies approaches. I use ethnographic scenes to demonstrate how a consideration of the negative affect/emotions of the killjoy is necessary to maintain inclusive, joyful, autonomous practice, and that a diverse emotions approach could be more effective to enact this desire than the alternatives that playful fool alone could provide. In the first scene, the fool is central in creating fun connections across virtual-material space for the transnational coordination of Operation Anti-War Asia. The limits of that subjectivity are highlighted in the second scene, in which a sexual assault victim is unable to fully participate in the in-person transnational convergence event. In the third, killjoy perspectives create a space of refusal in order to acknowledge uneven power relations within a colonial geography of sexual violence. An alternative feminist perspective in the fourth scene affirms the possibilities of joy and empowerment through sex work outside of the framework of colonial relations.

Rather than celebrating any single emotion or affect as an alternative to the violence of global capitalism, nationalism, gender, and other structures of power, I argue for a diverse feelings approach that creates explicit space for moving between construction and confrontation, both against a dominant external society, and against harmful social norms within movement spaces. While elevating the feminist subjectivity of the feminist killjoy, Ahmed cautions that claiming a community of killjoys for the ways that it can make us, “in assuming we are the

killjoys, not notice how others become killjoys to us, getting in the way of our own happiness, becoming obstacles to a future we are reaching for" (2017, p. 174). A feminist analytic that finds value in both a hopeful diverse economies approach and the killjoy approach of refusal is about realizing the limits of our happiness and unhappiness, which is key to maintaining the ongoing processes of confronting and constructing autonomous geographies. With this approach we can make sense of the "geographies of responsibility" (Massey 2004) that push us to question and reformulate our own subjectivities (Gibson-Graham 2006).

Desire to overcome difference can be easily used to elide other differences and uneven relations of power, also within movements for collective autonomy. Our positive desires or intentions are not enough to prevent the reproduction of gendered, colonial, and other kinds of violence on marginalized people in these movements. Instead, centering the relationality of emotions and affect in these movements can retain an openness to other futures where equality and collectivity are actively constructed in light of historical difference, and remind us that there is always the possibility of renewing and remaking our own subjectivities.

Chapter 3: Race and the Regional Geography of Alternative Asia

Abstract:

Studies of transnational grassroots networks can benefit from an analysis of race as a way to focus on uneven power relations within and across difference—not just in terms of majority-minority relations, but the racial formations within minoritarian politics. The transnational work of a loose network of activists I call Autonomous Tokyo challenges the ways that an enduring logic of empire extends to contemporary understandings of race, and shows how the concept of race can be denaturalized through creative politics and participation in resistance movements. By pushing for the creation of locally and regionally connected alternative spaces that reject a subordinate position within a western racial hierarchy, this network of activists subvert and sometimes resist dominant racial regimes of white and Japanese supremacy. By identifying shared anti-war, anticapitalist values from the political margins across the loosely defined region of "Asia" and putting alternative linguistic strategies and anti-military resistance into practice, Autonomous Tokyo activists suggest ways to actively reorder the dominant racial regimes of whiteness and Japanese supremacy. Given the region's colonial history and uneven geographies of racialized difference, anti-war sentiments based on anti-capitalist horizons alone do not build a sustained movement for alternative futures. Instead, these activists demonstrate the need to actively cultivate explicitly anti-racist practices of solidarity.

Cardboard letters strung together between two sticks spell -A-S-I-A-N-U-N-I-T-E- at the Eternal Peace Asia Demonstration in a suburb of Tokyo in September 2016 (Figures 1-4). A crowd of activists amble and dance along the wide streets of Kunitachi following Yamagata Tweakster,

an artist "from Seoul with a proletarian beat."[19] His bright clothes and sunglasses make him clearly visible as he leads us in and out of the street, under the hot sun and cool shade of trees and around the police, who encourage us to walk a little faster and stay in a tidy line. Yamagata makes regular appearances in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and other places to perform at actions organized by grassroots autonomous activists like those gathered that day, where several banners and signs referred to "Asia" and "Asians" as a signifier of solidarity.

This label, an assertion of a regional and, I argue, racial identification, is part of a creative grassroots response to the increasing militarization and geopolitical tensions along ethno-national lines. Renewed efforts to historicize area studies point out that "Asia," like the other objects of regional or area studies disciplines, originated in European efforts to anthropologize what is "left over when the humanity of the West is strenuously extracted from the rest of the world" (Sakai 2000, p. 290). Within Japan, the association with Asia involved not only the epistemic and colonial violence of the West, but also Japan's own imperial project. Fukuzawa Yukichi's Meiji period[20] nationalist slogan to "leave Asia, enter Europe" also involved solidifying a national identity. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a concerted effort by statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, and others attempted to establish the criteria for Japaneseness, described by Michael Weiner as: "…a preoccupation which reflected a recognition that the muscular nationalism of the Western powers would have to be met by an equally assertive Japanese national identity if sovereignty were to be preserved" (p. 5). A shared national calendar, language, education system, and a shared primordial origin story were used as tools to naturalize the consolidation of disparate groups so

[19] https://yamagatatweakster.bandcamp.com/

[20] Era of governance aligning with the Meiji emperor, 1868-1912. This was a time that coincided with Western colonialist competitions in East Asia in the Pacific Basin, and is known as a period of rapid modernization.

that by the end of the Meiji "…a historical consciousness emerged that had transmuted the heterogenous communities of the archipelago into a unified nation-state, Japan" (Tanaka, 2006, p. 8).

Establishing this assertive definition of "Japaneseness" also facilitated the nation-state's expansion of territorial borders across Asia. In line with the aspirations and practices of other global empires, its colonial mission was fueled by the discourse of inferior racial others in need of civilization. Eiichiro Azuma (2005) describes this as a process of internal and external imperialism:

> During the 1880s, a new style of imperialism became the vogue as the West sought direct control of overseas territories, replacing the emphasis on hegemonic control in trade to link the metropolis and its colonies… No sooner had Emperor Meiji formed a new government in 1868 than imperial expansionism began internally and externally, resulting in the colonization of Hokkaido (1869) and Okinawa (1879); the seizures of Taiwan (1894), south Sakhalin (1905), and Kwantung Province (1905) in northern China; and then the annexation of Korea (1910) (p. 18).

Pushing for a large-scale reordering of regional subjectivity was framed as an inclusive, multicultural project, yet it involved brutal oppression of non-Japanese peoples, cultures, and lands in service of the imperial economy. The Empire of Japan eventually promulgated dual racial imaginaries that allowed for an ambivalent inclusion of racial others while maintaining its own racial purity and superiority. On one hand, they embraced the European-derived narrative of race that allowed for a vision of common destiny for the people of Asia, or "an Asia for Asians" that the government pursued through occupations and alliances under the Greater East Asian Co-

Prosperity Sphere (1930-1945).[21] On the other hand, this regionalism also supported the concept of the superiority of a naturalized, biological national identity of a uniquely Japanese people. In this view, Japanese subjects are seen as part and parcel of the national body[22] (Kawai, 2015; Winichakul, 1994) an extended family with the emperor as its semidivine father. This powerful image promotes "…the enduring purity and homogeneity of the nation, the family, and the Japanese way of life" (Weiner, 2009, p. 2) and holds loyalty and obedience to the state to be both natural and sacred.

Race is one of the most repressed dimensions of geography (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; Mahtani, 2006; Pulido, 2002, 2017) and area studies (Sakai 2000; Shih 2019). Meanwhile, scholarship on race tends toward methodological nationalism, sidestepping global dimensions of racial formation, including empire and colonialism (Go, 2013, 2018; Kelley, 2017). The transnational work of a loose network of activists I call Autonomous Tokyo provides a rich social and political landscape with which to consider the ways that an enduring logic of empire extends to contemporary understandings of race, as well as ways that the concept of race can be denaturalized through creative politics and participation in resistance movements. The concept of Japaneseness functions as an imperial, ethno-racial category that continues to conflate national cultural identity with biology. This framework effectively marks dissent as coming from outside of the cohesive racial polity that is the national body, a formulation that Autonomous Tokyo activists play with and stand against.

[21] This rhetoric was recently revived by Chinese President Xi Jinping in a May 2014 speech. His statement was seen as appealing to a Chinese domestic audience and "undoubtedly reflects his aspirational vision of a new Asian security framework" (Jakobsen, 2016. p. 222).
[22] "National body" is a literal translation of the concept of *kokutai.*

Importantly, this understanding of race in Japan developed and is enacted as a transnational formation. The development of the belief in the Japanese people as a biological race was highly influenced by theories of blood purity and scientific racism, popular in Europe and the United States, that continue to be entrenched today (Weiner, 2009).[23] In addition, the U.S., with its ongoing practices of global political intervention, with its military presence across much of the planet and Japan, facilitates racial formations under the conditions of empire. Political elites and scholars around the world, including Japan, looked to the U.S. and its practices of indigenous dispossession and racialized systems of labor as models to incorporate in their own national policies (Go, 2018; Tallbear 2013; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Weiner, 2009). The continuation of the emperor system after World War II was implemented by U.S. occupation forces, which incorporated central elements of fascist repression to better control the archipelago (Dower 2000, 2012). General Douglas MacArthur, who oversaw the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1951, warned of the need to contain uprisings that he termed "excesses by disorderly minorities," and 1968 May Day protesters were disparaged by the Allied Council as evidence of corrupt, distinctly foreign collusion: "…rather than expressions of democratic dissent, dealing with real political concerns, the protests merely revealed foreign agency at play in Japan, with protesters as its dupes or accomplices" (Marotti, 2013, p. 47).[24]

[23] In her work on Native American DNA, Kim Tallbear (2013) demonstrates the salience of these ideas in the form of contemporary genetic science that requires "…the assumption that there was a moment, a human body, a marker, a population back there in space and time that was the biogeographical point of originality" (p. 6).

[24] Zimmer argues that radical activism in the early 1900s was also racialized as biological atavism of corrupt immigrants, deemed beyond the bounds of the "American race" in the US: "…the juridical creation of statelessness and illegal aliens is part of an ongoing project to define national identity, and in the United States this process has been intimately linked to racialized notions of 'the nation'… Many American nativists attributed immigrant radicalism to the biological deficiencies of these 'communistic and revolutionary races'… [meaning that] anarchists were also often racialized *as anarchists* (2014, p. 131).

I use the frameworks of race and empire to analyze the grassroots call for peace and Asian unity in dissent by Autonomous Tokyo, in order to understand how they navigate their racialized identities as Japanese and as Asians in their desires for horizontal relations with activists in the region. As minority political actors confronting majority culture in their respective cities and countries, they, like other activists fostering transnational solidarities, articulate a shared political identity that dissociates from their national identities (Lionnet and Shih, 2005; Schieder, 2017). By identifying shared anti-war, anticapitalist values from the political margins across the loosely defined region of "Asia," Autonomous Tokyo activists suggest ways to actively reorder the dominant racial regimes of whiteness and Japanese supremacy. Given the region's colonial history and uneven geographies of racialized difference, anti-war sentiments based on anti-capitalist horizons alone do not build a sustained movement for alternative futures. Instead, these activists demonstrate the need to actively cultivate explicitly anti-racist practices of solidarity.

Literature Review

In Japan and elsewhere, race, nation, and region are inherently interconnected as social constructions. These concepts became naturalized largely due to scientific understandings of geography. According to Kobayashi and Peake, "[s]ince its earliest involvement in exploration and scientific classification of the world… [g]eographers have literally and metaphorically mapped [political and intellectual] boundaries, including physical boundaries, that separate and exclude the world of privilege from the world of the 'other' along racial lines" (1994, p. 226). Western geographers were key players in developing theories of climate and biological determinism, which supported the widespread naturalistic assumption of scientific racism

(Livingstone, 1991). These perspectives were then readily adopted by scholars in other parts of the world, including Japan, to suit their own agendas (Weiner, 2009).

Kawai (2015a, 2015b) describes the way that racism is obscured in Japan by a process of "deracializing race" as a response to changing relations with western political powers. The translation of race in Japanese is *jinshu*, a word combining the characters for 'human' and 'species.' This concept was mobilized during the nineteenth and early twentieth century to signal connections with other Asian peoples united against a common western, white enemy that characterized Japanese as subhuman, "…inherently inferior men and women who had to be understood in terms of primitivism, childishness, and collective mental and emotional deficiency" (Dower, 2012, p. 9). *Jinshu,* then, placed Japanese people as non-white in opposition to the dominant political presence of western military powers but also served to legitimize Japanese domination and its own racial destiny as a growing empire. After defeat in WWII, the preference by scholars and ruling elites in Japan for the concept of ethnic nation, or *minzoku,* based on the German concept of *Volk*, "made it possible to change this fate by leaving the Western racial order while retaining a racialised notion of the Japanese nation" (Kawai 2015b). The vast and ever-popular genre of *nihonjinron*, literally, 'theory of Japanese people' continues to propagate ideas about the inherent uniqueness of Japan and Japanese. Yet these ideas do not exist in an isolated, nationalist vacuum, but rather in relation to theories of race as biology and morality that remain popular in the west (Iida, 2013; Weiner, 2009).

Racism is further obscured in Japan by official "colorblind" policy: legally, all Japanese citizens are categorized only as Japanese, distinct from foreign nationals but with no differentiation by race or ethnicity (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2004). This means that if a Korean national were to go through the process of obtaining Japanese citizenship, officially they would

cease to be Korean in the eyes of the nation-state. As a further erasure of ethnic identity, naturalizing citizens are also compelled to select a Japanese name.[25] According to Murphy-Shigematsu, this lack of legal recognition of ethnicity produces "[r]esistance to self-identification as Japanese (Nihonjin), [which] indicates the difficulty in identifying with a word heavily associated with race" (2004, p. 52). Despite the influence of movements to recognize racial difference in Japan since the 1990s, including movements to reclaim ethnic names or to label mixed race Japanese people as "double" instead of "half," racist ethno-nationalism in the form of racist discrimination, hate speech and physical attacks, and demonstrations against racialized peoples have become increasingly prevalent in Japan in recent years (Iwabuchi and Takezawa, 2015; Park, 2017; Yamaguchi 2013).

Two groups that exemplify the varied ways that racial formation operates through empire, and are often targets of racist acts in Japan, are *zainichi* Koreans and Okinawans. Both Korea and Okinawa were colonized by Japan in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and both populations subjugated under the imposed cultural and biological superiority of Japanese people. Inoue describes the situation in the case of Okinawa: "Prewar Japan's discrimination against Okinawans was pervasive, leading to efforts by Okinawans to "…eradicate their 'backward' culture… Okinawan language, customs, food, music, hairstyles, and even the way people sneezed were seen, both in Okinawa and the mainland, as an obstacle to making Okianwans 'genuine' subjects of imperial Japan" (2004, p. 92). While the Korean peninsula eventually regained sovereignty to become home to North and South Korean citizens, Okinawa was the Kingdom of Ryūkyū until it came under Japanese control, then was ruled by

[25] This requirement is no longer enforced, or rather, is ambivalently enforced, similar to the requirement for dual nationals to choose one citizenship before the age of 22.

the U.S. after WWII until 1972, when it was officially "reverted" to Japan.[26] During this period, Okinawans were legally designated as neither Japanese nor Americans. When Okinawa became designated as a prefecture in 1972, Okinawans simply became categorized as citizens of Japan (Inoue, 2004).

In contrast, Korean residents of Japan lost Japanese nationality after WWII. Since Japanese citizenship is conferred primarily by blood lineage and not place of birth, their descendants may be born and raised in Japan, go by Japanese names and be monolingual Japanese speakers, but face structural discrimination on the basis of their 'foreign' status unless they go through the difficult process of naturalization. Kyo Nobuko writes of her struggle with a rigid either-or conception of identity imprinted on her through her language use and body:

> "My words as an ethnic Korean in Japan were those of someone who had spent her entire life confronted, from both the discrimination of Japanese society and the ideology of the Zainichi community, with only two choices: either assimilate and become Japanese, or regain your ethnic identity and become a Korean… Someone like me, whose pronunciation, intonation, and idioms when speaking Korean are inflected with the echoes of Japan, whose physical demeanor and even facial expressions are imbued with Japaneseness, is disqualified as a member of the Korean people because of those contaminating influences…" (Kyo, 2007, p. 63).

Yet, while dominant historical and contemporary conceptions of race in Japan (and Korea, etc) are rooted in the spatiality of the nation, and scholarship in race studies tends to foreground the US context, taking a broader geographical view of race should not mean asserting

[26] For a more detailed discussion of the annexation of Ryūkyū and its conversion from a sovereign government to a prefecture of Japan, see Uemura (2003).

either of these, or any single racial regime for that matter, as a homogenous global construction. As Onishi (2014) points out in his study of transpacific antiracist alliances, a desire for an internationalism from one side of a single global color line, drawn with static categories of race, led renowned anti-racist scholar Du Bois to champion the project of Japanese empire. Instead, taking a global or transnational perspective on racial dynamics should bring attention to the fact that despite the entrenched power of racial regimes in various places, they are unstable, contested, and can be remade (Onishi, 2014, Robinson, 2000; Kelley 2017).

In this paper, I use race to refer to an analysis of the ways that socially constructed, historically and spatially contingent structures of power are enacted through relations of people and place. Whereas the majority of scholarship on race tends to focus on the relationship between race and region in terms of majority-minority relations, attending to the connections between minority populations and minoritized actors might open up ways to understanding how these racial regimes might be remade. Shih and Lionnet refer to this as "minor transnationalism": a consideration of the cultural work of "minor-to-minor networks that circumvent the major altogether… produc[ing] new forms of identification that negotiate with national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, thus allowing for the emergence of the minor's inherent complexity and multiplicity" (2005, p. 8). Histories of movement and exchange across transnational space, such as diaspora and other hybrid ways of belonging (Hall, 1994), transnational solidarity movements of the 1960s and 70s (Jung, 2014; Onishi, 2013; Schieder, 2017), and contemporary global activist networks (Juris, 2008; Routledge and Cumbers, 2013), provide other ways to think about the value of horizontal relations of minority political actors on their own terms. In mobilizing the concept of race to think about a transnational activist movement, I aim to highlight the ways that Autonomous Tokyo activist network attempts to engage relationally across a loosely defined

region of Asia. In what follows I argue that their experiences with other transnational social movements, commitments to using languages other than Japanese and English, and involvement in anti-military activism demonstrate three different ways that they try to redefine what it means to be Asian.

"Global" Social Movements and Asia

Much of the recent scholarship on autonomous and anarchist activism has looked to the development of global networks as an organizing tool and valuable political goal in and of itself (Della Porta & Mosca, 2005; Juris, 2008; Routledge, 2003; Routledge and Cumbers, 2013). Yet the spatial reach of these networks has largely excluded Asian radical geographies such as those mapped by Autonomous Tokyo. As Michael Hardt noted in a message to activists in Japan in 2008,

> "…the habits, strategies, and languages of the movements communicated with relative ease among many in North America and Europe, for example, but it was much more difficult for them to form substantial links with struggles in other parts of the world" (as cited in Higuchi, 2012, p 468).

One of the ways to understand the "relative ease" of affinity between activists in North America and Europe and the difficulty of connecting with others is to foreground an analysis of the racial dynamics that map onto our understandings of regional difference. In contrast to celebrating the rise of "global" movements, attention to racialization reminds us to be wary of such reductive solidarities and be mindful of geographically specific formations of ethno-racial hierarchies.

In Japan, transnational connections among autonomous activists initially deepened around mobilizations against the G8 Summit in Hokkaido in 2008, spurred by even broader transnational organizing. In late 2007, two German activists involved in autonomous alter-

globalization activism travelled to Asia for an "info-tour" to educate and agitate people to action around different kinds of autonomous spaces. Drawing on this model, later in 2008 Japanese activists involved in the "No! G8 Action" went on their own info-tours, around North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia, conducting a total of 150 presentations and establishing connections with various movement groups (Higuchi, 2012). Coalition work during the G8 then prompted activists from Japan to travel in 2009 to five large Asian cities, Taipei, Wuhan, Seoul, Kuala Lumpur, and Jakarta, to report back on their experiences in this global movement. These travels and connections continued to unfold, as in late 2009 when several activists went on a screening tour of Yuki Nakamura's documentary film, *Amateur Riot,* in Germany, South Korea, China, and Hong Kong.

These initial connections laid groundwork for transnational connections that were eventually deepened in 2011, when, after the triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power plant on March 11, 2011, Amateur Riot and the broader network of Autonomous Tokyo sparked the anti-nuclear movement with their creative, rebellious demonstrations (Brown, 2018; Egami, 2018; Oguma, 2015). These were a direct response to events in Japan, but activists also situated their work in the larger moment of global revolutions against oppressive economic systems and governments, making direct reference to the uprisings in the Arab world in 2010 in particular (Brown and Bender, 2016). Indeed, while western movement geographies have been undoubtedly influential in the creation of Autonomous Tokyo's networks, some of its key actors such as Amateur Riot recycle-shop owner Matsumoto Hajime, prefer to celebrate and highlight affinities with autonomous projects in other parts of Asia that tend to receive less attention on the global stage. Critiquing dominant narratives that position Asia as perpetually "catching up" to the West, he and others in

Autonomous Tokyo refer to a genealogy of activism that draws from a history of peasant uprisings and other practices indigenous to Japan.

After organizing several mass anti-nuclear protests in 2011, activists from Tokyo travelled to the Occupy Wall Street encampment in New York City's Zucotti park. According to some explanations of the "global" Occupy movement, tent protests that shared the tactics, strategy, and name started as a North American concept that replicated across Europe and subsequently into other parts of the world, including Japan (Juris, 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky, 2012). This trajectory, the language of "occupying" and "occupiers," as well as the racial politics of many of the encampments, including cooperation with police and the sidelining of activists of color, have made the movement an object of critique in terms of its racial and colonial dynamics (Tuck and Yang, 2012). While camping at Occupy Wall Street for ten days, Autonomous Tokyo activists observed their non-white racial positioning. Takuro Higuchi, an independent scholar and Autonomous Tokyo activist, noted that during the first few days they seemed to be mostly ignored, simply regarded as "some Asians" (2012). This reception changed after they placed a sign in front of their tent with *hankaku*, or "anti-nuke," written in large Japanese characters, with a short English explanation below about their anti-nuclear activism since the meltdown at Fukushima. Yet, clear markers about their position as leaders of a historic social movement in Japan did not eliminate their sense of subordinate positioning. Matsumoto shared his frustrated reaction to a panel discussion at the New School for Social Research during his stay at Occupy Wall Street, which he interpreted as coming from western activists characterizing Japan as an immature democracy that was established thanks to the American occupation following defeat in World War II:

> "[t]hey said things like 'Japan will get better before long, so let's try our best.' I think they are meaning to say these things in a constructive, positive way, but on this end, it was rather exasperating. There are lots of democratic practices in Japan that predate the war… The Americans at that seminar underestimated the power of these autonomous actions" (Higuchi, 2012).

While the Autonomous Tokyo activists visiting Occupy Wall Street share a tradition of appropriating public spaces for their own political means (Brown, 2018; Cåssegard, 2014), they were not centrally involved in establishing an Occupy encampment in Japan. The encampment that came to be known as the site of Occupy Tokyo was actually established a week before the tents went up Zucotti park, on September 11, 2011, while Autonomous Tokyo activists were protesting in the busy commuter hub Shinjuku (Brown, 2018). Its large tent was erected in front of the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry building, and signaled an interest on the part of the broader anti-nuclear movement, now in the shape of a more formal coalition called Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, as an enactment of participatory democracy to appeal to official government institutions. The coalition also organized weekly actions on Friday evenings in front of the prime minister's residence and National Diet Building, nearby the tent protest. These weekly demonstrations were highly regulated, with Coalition organizers urging participants to comply with police directives. In contrast, the protests organized by Autonomous Tokyo activists were geared toward a deliberate disruption of the streets where they situated their own daily lives, in the neighborhoods of Koenji, Shinjuku, Kunitachi, and in other places in Tokyo, with a clearly anti-state, anti-nuclear message. By the summer of 2012, the anti-nuclear movement in Japan had inspired movements in solidarity against nuclear regimes in many other countries, including in the west.

Ultimately however, the shift of the broader anti-nuclear movement led activists in Autonomous Tokyo to refocus their attention on developing ties to other places in East and Southeast Asia. Instead of positioning themselves primarily as national citizens demanding action from their nation-state, they shifted their previously hyper-local focus of activism embedded in their everyday lives to expand connections with other autonomous activists, demonstrating their affinity and preference for like-minded political actors in the loose region of "Asia" over other activists in Japan with more traditional political sensibilities. By celebrating their own histories as minority political actors in Japan, and articulating similarities with other Asians who are politically and socially marginalized in the dominant racial regimes of the west and in Japan, they contest their positioning as needing to learn from and emulate their white counterparts in Occupy or their Japanese counterparts in front of government offices.

Speaking "Asia" Into the Neighborhood

The idea that Japan is a singular nation of exception, geographically proximate to Asia but culturally and biologically distinct as a Japanese people, is the backbone of a self-conception that allows Japan to sidestep the question of race and its subordinate position within a western racial hierarchy in favor of an identification with the nation. However, in recent years, the academic and popular focus on the myth of a monoethnic, homogenous Japan (Weiner, 2009) has shifted toward discourse celebrating a multicultural and global Japan (Burgess, 2008; Morris-Suzuki, 2015; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2004). Notwithstanding some recognition of other kinds of diversity, such as LGBTQ and disabled people, the main focus of this shift has been a recognition of racial difference. This largely reflects the influence of movements for the recognition of existing populations, such as the longstanding presence of *zainichi* Koreans, Okinawans, Ainu, and Burakumin within the national polity. Changes in political economy and

immigration policy have also prompted this shift. Demand for foreign workers grew in the 1980s to support explosive economic growth, reinforced by massive population decline with the downturn and decades of stagnation starting in the 1990s. Economic dependency on low-wage immigrant workers continues to intensify, with 600,000 immigrants a year needed to maintain the existing labor force (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2004). A spike in tourism in the last decade has also incentivized a shift toward a more international consumer base (UNWTO 2010, Etzo 2016). Instead of aligning themselves with an international consumer base or fighting for inclusion within the multicultural nation, Autonomous Tokyo activists articulate their desire to become part of a particular Asian geography that maps itself as exceeding the flows of the dominant political economy. They facilitate a "minor transnationalism" (Lionnet and Shih, 2005) by learning Asian languages other than Japanese.

Since English language instruction has been de facto mandatory for many years in Japan, it is not surprising that many Autonomous Tokyo activists speak some basic English. However, nearly all of the activists I met who were actively trying to learn a foreign language were studying other languages, especially those with a linguistic proximity to Japanese (including Korean, Mandarin, and Cantonese), as well as Bahasa Indonesia, Spanish, and Arabic. More often than not, they took a DIY approach of self-study rather than enrolling in a course, using books and online resources, talking and texting with activist friends in these languages or pursuing immersive learning by repeatedly visiting or living in other countries. This stands in stark contrast with official initiatives. Rather than expanding its offerings to reflect the increasing diversity of immigrants and tourists coming to Japan, official foreign language education policy has deepened its commitment to English as the global lingua franca. Following the examples set

by China and South Korea, Japan made English language instruction compulsory in elementary schools in 2011 (Hu and McKay, 2012).

The entrenchment of English in foreign language education policy is intertwined with racialized conceptions of value. A brief review of the history of this policy illustrates the ways that whiteness[27] is entwined with dominant Japanese conceptions of racialization and proximity to whiteness. The dominance of English instruction in Japan is a result of not only British and American linguistic imperialism, but also a discourse of the uniqueness of Japanese culture and identity (Kobayashi, 2011; Kubota, 2017; McVeigh, 2004; Yoshino, 2002). English became a dominant foreign language taught in schools in the nineteenth century as part of the central government's active program of westernization, and Japan's subordination to the United States was solidified under the postwar military occupation. The "miraculous" growth of the Japanese economy through the 1970s and 1980s made space for a less subordinate relation to the west because of this new economic standing. This included changes to the national education curriculum to support internationalization through English language instruction, with the goal of enabling more people to express their distinctive Japanese perspectives in western language and logic--not of identifying and assimilating with Anglophone cultures (Kubota, 2017). The emphasis on English has intensified since 2000, with a stress on curriculum that is responsive to globalization.[28] While this could ostensibly mean incorporating attention to diverse "global

[27] The unmarked category against which difference is constructed (Lipsitz, 1998)
[28] Just as capitalism developed not as a revolutionary negation of feudalism but out of its cultural order, so neoliberalism does not "hollow out" the power of nation-states (Robinson, 2000). Rather, nation-states create and enforce new regulatory regimes and cultural norms that often involve a renewed sense of national identification (Jessop, 2002; Ong, 2006; Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Englishes" alongside other second languages, instead it has entrenched a system defined in terms of English language skills development for economic competitiveness (McVeigh, 2004).

The national curriculum reveals the racial and ideological underpinnings of these practices. Critics of the language policy argue that a strong association of English with whiteness and "nativeness" ignores racial and linguistic heterogeneity and puts the emphasis on exam scores based on perfecting knowledge of obscure grammar over the ability to communicate. This prescriptive view of language competency is supported by the popular Japanese ideology of identity, or *nihonjin-ron*, and its standpoint that the Japanese language belongs to an ethno-culturally pure Japanese people—to the point that some argue that it has made the brains, or biology, of Japanese people distinct from others (McVeigh 2004). As McVeigh argues, the result is the idea that non-white people are incapable of truly speaking English, just as non-Japanese people are incapable of truly understanding and speaking Japanese. Globalization is conceptualized as being in relation to a racialized western identity with an ongoing stress on standard American English spoken by white "native speakers." Textbooks predominantly feature people with fair skin and content about the United States, and there is a hiring preference for white "native speaker" instructors (Yoshino, 2002).

Autonomous Tokyo activists reject this power dynamic by choosing to learn languages that have been further deinstitutionalized in the recent push for English instruction (Kubota 2017), with the primary goal of deepening ties with fellow activists in the region. Rather than approaching the diversity of languages as a barrier to a common regional identity, thereby signifying the need for a singular language, they consistently stress the possibility of communication across difference by taking an inclusive stance toward Asian and other non-white people, native speakers of neither Japanese nor English, who are positioned as racially and

linguistically inferior within Japan's dominant ideology. This also included welcoming activists from other places living permanently or temporarily in Tokyo to become a part of Autonomous Tokyo's everyday activities by working and socializing together, with or without translation. For example, an ethnic Chinese Malaysian artist-activist, who had recently moved to Tokyo after being involved with grassroots organizing in Malaysia, worked as temporary staff in the guesthouse and bar, eventually also working alongside other activists doing various day labor construction jobs despite limited facility with either Japanese or English.

In addition to learning other languages and welcoming immigrant activists from across Asia, Autonomous Tokyo activists sometimes simply displaced both Japanese and English in such social spaces as at activist-run Nantoka Bar. This hole-in-the-wall, a few steps from the guesthouse, recycle shop, and other spaces run by activists in the neighborhood of Koenji in central-western Tokyo, operates on a rotating system. The bar menu changes daily based on who is running it, and short-term visitors, including guests at the guesthouse, are sometimes also invited to run the bar. On several occasions, I arrived to see the menu on the chalkboard written entirely in Chinese characters because the bar was being run in tandem with a Taiwanese or other activist whose first language is Mandarin. Similar writing systems allow activists to somewhat sidestep the need for a common verbal language, also putting non-Chinese speakers in the position of needing help to communicate when it would more commonly be the opposite way around.

In addition to decentering Japanese and English in their everyday spaces, Autonomous Tokyo activists create opportunities for face-to-face interactions that increase opportunities for communication through non-verbal body language, bypassing the need for linguistic translation. In recent years, one recent intentional space for face-to-face, transnational connections has been

No Limit, an annual transnational convergence event. As I describe in the previous chapters, this event followed a previous attempt at connecting with like-minded actors across the region through online conversations. Digital communication was helpful but came to be seen as still falling far short of the desired qualities of in-person conversations. The first physical convergence event was organized in Tokyo in 2016 during my fieldwork. Local activists celebrated the presence of activists from across and beyond the region of Asia (Figure 5), noting how this brought the disruptive presence of foreign, racialized difference to the narrow streets of Koenji outside the guesthouse and to demonstrations like the Eternal Peace Asia Demonstration in Kunitachi, transforming their neighborhoods with the sounds of languages other than Japanese. Notwithstanding the many advantages to organizing annual events with the same leadership and location, it was important to the Tokyo organizers that their city not be centered in future iterations of No Limit. No Limit was held in Seoul in 2017, followed by Jakarta, both because of the need to both distribute the labor of putting the event together and to create opportunities for people to travel to other urban centers in Asia. In part, this also was an acknowledgement of Tokyo's dominant presence within the region because of its legacy as the capital of colonial empire.

In addition to seeking to decenter the dominant economic flows in Tokyo through their community economies, activists pointed out the literal location of Tokyo on the periphery of Asia rather than in its center as another way to reorient themselves. On a tour around various autonomous spaces to promote No Limit Tokyo in early 2016, I spent two days with several activists to the city of Fukuoka in western Japan. On the first day, two activists led a presentation about their work at Art Space Tetra, a radical art space; on the second, a local activist took us on a tour of small, working-class drinking establishments that ended at a Korean restaurant with

some Korean activists living in Fukuoka. The following day, we took a short ferry ride to Busan, South Korea for another presentation at a radical activist space (Figure 6). While we had crossed an international border, the activists I was with noted that the close physical proximity of Busan to Fukuoka, along with a sense of shared more rowdy and working class microregional culture, made these two cities seem much more connected to each other than to Seoul or Tokyo, the wealthier capital cities of their respective nation-states. While these actions demonstrate the activists' desire to articulate connections within the region beyond the bounds of the nation and dominant political economy, the primary focus is developing broadly defined autonomous networks. These can be read as explicitly anti-capitalist, explicitly anti-state, and implicitly anti-racist or even anti-patriarchal. As I describe in detail in Chapter Two, however, the focus on similarities and connections with people with a shared affinity to autonomous politics also glossed over gendered and racial difference.

The limits of such linguistic and social strategies in the absence of a more explicit common goal are apparent in both Autonomous Tokyo's transnational and local organizing. The lack of a clear feminist position created friction and a split between activists who were previously on good terms when No Limit was organized in Seoul. Two years after the convergence in Tokyo, the backdrop to some of the shows for No Limit Jakarta asked simply, "WHY?", laying bare the open question as to what desired goal justified the labor and resources needed to bring people together. In Tokyo, many activists are also involved on an individual level in recent movements against right-wing hate speech against ethnic Koreans, the LGBTQ movement, or continue to organize anti-nuclear demonstrations. However, other connections that would be expected if Autonomous Tokyo defined itself as specifically doing anti-racist organizing in their city, such as with the many low-wage Asian immigrant workers and language

school students, or with residents in nearby ethnic enclaves, are less prominent. It was not uncommon for Tokyo activists to invite immigrant workers at the local convenience store to come to their bar or otherwise join their spaces, but these encounters were ad hoc rather than planned or a core component of their outreach.

Zainichi: Residing in Japan from Tokyo to Takae

While the Autonomous Tokyo network's main focuses on developing and sustaining local and transnational spaces of anti-capitalist culture can be seen as exceeding frameworks of resistance, some activists within the network are more consistently involved in resistance movements that push directly back against specific policies or power structures. At times, Autonomous Tokyo has come together as a network to organize a wide variety of creative protest actions, ranging from targeting specific policies, most famously nuclear energy policy after 3.11 (Brown 2018). But a large subset of activists are also heavily involved in anti-military base activism in Okinawa and Tokyo, organizing that directly contests the state formations of dominant racial regimes that become visible through different forms of military presence on the land.

Despite ongoing sit-ins, mass protests, lawsuits, and elections showing that the majority of people in Okinawa reject the imposition of military bases, the dominant presence of both Japanese and US armed forces continues. This is justified under a racialized regional security regime that relies heavily on a US military presence to protect the Japanese nation-state as part of a globalized US military strategy. While the US military occupation officially ended in mainland Japan in 1952, they maintained direct control over Okinawa for another twenty years until transferring administrative rights to Japan in 1972 (Inoue, 2007). More than thirty US military bases continue to occupy and operate all over the Japanese archipelago, but 75% of exclusive-

use US military facilities and over 70% of US military service members, support staff, and their dependents in Japan are located in Okinawa, which accounts for 0.6 percent of Japan's total landmass. These bases occupy approximately ten percent of the total land area of Okinawa Prefecture, and about one-fifth of the main island of Okinawa (Hook and Siddle, 2003; Tanji, 2007). One base is run jointly with the Japan Self-Defense Force, which also has its own separate bases around Japan and Okinawa. In addition to the prime land area occupied by the bases, their control extends to the sea, land, and beyond official borders into schools, homes, and onto the bodies of residents, especially those of women and girls in the form of environmental hazards, sound pollution, and sexual violence. As Uenten (2007) states, the presence of the military is "magnified by the screeching jet fighters, live ammunition firings and training exercises all within crashing or striking distance of residential areas. Perhaps the most threatening of all, however, is the violence directed at women and children by US soldiers" (p. 164). Documented sexual violence committed by members of the US military has been ongoing since the official end of the war, as are accidents such as the 2017 crash of an MV-22 Osprey helicopter into an elementary school (Figure 7).

Opposing the military bases means opposing the political economy that supports their presence, and the racialized colonial history it is rooted in. According to the US Department of Defense, Japan provides around US $2 billion of direct and indirect financial support for these bases annually, or about three-quarters the operating cost of stationing US military in Japan; more recent figures from the Defense Ministry of Japan show that the 86.4% of the costs are paid by the central government in Tokyo (Mie, 2017). Some of these funds are paid as ground rent for the Okinawan land occupied by the bases, as a form of "assistance" to Okinawa for infrastructure and economic development to "catch up" to the Japanese mainland, a government project known

as *hondonami* (Inoue, 2004, 2007). The Okinawan people--or Ryukuan, Uchinaanchu, or Lewchewan people, as many prefer to refer to themselves--are not officially recognized as ethnic minority group, much less a colonized indigenous nation.[29] But the majority of Okinawans have a strong sense of their identity as distinct from mainland Japanese. Inoue (2004) argues there have been two significant consequences from the surge of money into Okinawa: 1) improved living conditions have decentered concerns from the island-wide U.S. base problem to manageable social and economic issues, and 2) the production of a middle-class, urban, and consumer-oriented "Okinawan" identity to mediate difference. These both amount to a depoliticization of identity and everyday life on the islands. Yet, this has also produced openings for an alternative conceptualization of what it means to be Okinawan "by reconstructing old unity under new historical circumstances less as a poor 'people' homogenously oppressed by the state and by global power than as confident, affluent 'citizens' of various backgrounds traversing the breadth of social consciousness from the subtleties of local life to critical national and global discourses" (Inoue 2004, p. 97).

Autonomous Tokyo activists draw inspiration from the anti-base movement's assertion of autonomy--that they neither need nor want the so-called security promised by the military presence--and are involved in varying degrees in solidarity work. More casual, symbolic indicators of support include stocking Orion, Okinawan beer, for sale at their events instead of the popular Japanese brands, and displaying in the lobby/living room of Manuke Guesthouse a poster of an overturned car during the anti-military Koza uprising in 1970. Other visual cues of solidarity with the protest sites in Okinawa include the display of a large woodblock print carved

[29] Japan only officially recognized the presence of any indigenous people in their territories very recently, in 2019, when they acknowledged the Ainu people, now mainly located in the northern island of Hokkaido.

by the Anti-Nuke, Anti-War, Art of Block Print Collective that meets in an Autonomous Tokyo shop, and stickers from various other Autonomous Tokyo stores at the sit-in sites (Figure 8).

As Tuck and Yang (2013) argue, however, decolonization is not just a metaphor, but requires more concrete, material action in solidarity. Some Autonomous Tokyo activists demonstrate their commitment by becoming deeply involved, regularly traveling to participate in ongoing sit-in protests, and organizing solidarity events in Tokyo to educate people about the situation around the bases. These activists have especially tight connections with protesters from the small village of Takae, in the Yanbaru region on the northeast part of the main island of Okinawa. The forested area around Takae has been used as a training ground for the US Marine Corps since 1957. During my visit there in late July 2016, I heard the rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat of guns shots in simulated battle, and saw and felt the thundering noise of Osprey helicopters flying overhead. During the Vietnam War, local residents were required to play the roles of Vietnamese people for training purposes in a simulated "Third World Village", further highlighting the racial implications of anti-war solidarity work with residents of Takae (Takahashi 2018).

Like Autonomous Tokyo, the protest group at Takae is highly heterogenous and complex in its social formation. I spent much of an alternately sunny and stormy day at the N1 helicopter landing zone under construction at Takae in late July 2016, under and around makeshift shelters of blue tarps observing some of the dynamics of the participants. Everyone I met there spoke Japanese, but came from a wide range of backgrounds, including socioeconomic status. They ranged in age from young children of elementary-school age to high school and college students to middle-aged and elderly activists. Some were coming for the first time from mainland Japan, others were frequent visitors who lived nearby or flew in regularly to join the protests, and still others came to the tents daily or spent the night at the encampment to ensure it was always

occupied. That day, in addition to the regulars and others dropping by, I joined along with two other activists from Autonomous Tokyo, Megumi and Harpy, who both make frequent visits to Takae.

I had driven there slowly that morning from a nearby guesthouse where I stayed with other short-term visitors; since I had a rental car, I unexpectedly joined a line of vehicles on the road, preceding dump truck after dump truck filled with gravel headed to the N1 front gate. Along the way, my car was stopped by several young Japanese policemen (Figure 9). They had been brought in from mainland Japan to manage the activist presence in Takae, and largely avoided eye contact, remaining mostly silent at our questions about their role in the construction of the US military bases and insistence that they had no right to detain us on our drive except for the occasional mumbled response, or occasional snicker. When we finally arrived at the gate, I listened to songs and speeches explaining the situation and the rules governing the sit-in, such as keeping the roadway clear when not part of a coordinated action, and joined in chants: "Send the gravel back! Don't sell Okinawa! Don't sell Yanbaru! Residents are angry!" (Figure 10). [30]

After a brief but intense squall crowded the large group of protesters under tents across the street from the front gate (Figure 11), we drove to the N1 rear gate, where a much smaller group gathered to pass the time and keep an eye on the police and construction. Okinawa is home to many endangered species, including dugongs, which are smaller and rarer relatives of manatees, and the Okinawa Rail, Yanbaru kuina, a small, flightless bird found only in the Yanbaru forests around Takae. While I was at the front gate, someone pulled me aside to show me and tell me about a local species of lizard that was sitting on a tree by the tent (Figure 12),

[30] This quote, along with all the others here, come from my fieldnotes and recordings from July 2016, and are my own translations.

and another activist pointed out the butterflies flitting around and a bright, orange-winged bird that flew by us during a short walk away from the protest. At the back gate, for the third time that day someone drew my attention to other, smaller forms of life in Takae; as a group of about ten gathered under the blue tarp, we observed a large spider that had made its web under the protection of the tent roof. Itokazu-san, the mainstay protester of the tent at the time, showed us and a young boy who had stopped by with his grandfather how the spider kept its web clean, quickly dropping an offering of a flower.

Shortly after, we were joined by several young high school students visiting from Tokyo, from a school for ethnic Koreans close to Kunitachi, the same neighborhood where the Autonomous Tokyo activists I was with lived. One of the women explained to us how she had learned about the Okinawan anti-base protests on social media and had been inspired to visit in person. She empathized with the situation of the villagers because of similarities she saw between how they and ethnic Koreans, often referred to simply as *zainichi* (meaning residing in Japan), are treated in mainstream Japanese culture and under the policies of the Japanese nation-state. Having heard that they would be welcomed by the protesters in Okinawa, she had been wanting to see the site herself for quite sometime and had not been disappointed.

Harpy, one of the Autonomous Tokyo activists, described how she came to be involved and how that has led her to center an ethics of care and solidarity across difference in her involvement with social movements:

> "When I first came, I had a feeling like 'I have to do something!' But then I realized there is something so comfortable about being here, and I learned a lot about a different way to engage in social movements. The idea that you have to use love in your actions, to respect one another in the process, is difficult, but their movement has endured because

of their ability to do this. There is so much to learn by being here, from hearing the stories of others coming to the sit-ins and of elders who experienced the war here. These are kinds of things I feel I really benefit from by participating in this movement."

The two Autonomous Tokyo activists I accompanied were intentional about maintaining good relations with the protesters in Takae. Part of this meant taking seriously the limitations and responsibilities of their positionality as mainland Japanese living in Tokyo, the center of government and policy, and as visitors to Okinawa, indigenous land. They stressed the importance of taking breaks while participating in the protest, of playing with children that came by, and centering nature and humanity in their actions (Figure 13). An elder man approached our group as we were talking, asking us where we were coming from. We all happened to be primarily located in Tokyo at the time, and Megumi described what drew her to Takae:

"The contrast of life here in Takae with life in Tokyo, that is, the people of Takae helped me to see the possibility of doing all sorts of things with your own power, that there is a different way to live. Living in Tokyo, it often feels that there is a strong set of rules dictating the kind of things you have to do, but here, you see examples of people who have chosen to live here together, finding interesting and meaningful things to do, using their own hands and living with nature rather than paving it over. I'm interested in living like this someday, and it makes me think about what happiness is, that there are so many hints here about how to live happily, according to your own values.

Going back to Tokyo and seeing and hearing about the political issues there while riding an overcrowded train, reminds me of my discomfort in living that way. But I also have people who are important to me there, and there are opportunities to do things, so in

those moments I think back to Takae and feel inspired to put some of these ideas into my political practice there."

When asked if she would feel this way simply by experiencing the forest and other natural spaces there without the draw of the protests, she highlighted the differential power relations involved:

> "Well, both the nature and the protests are factors, but rather than one or the other, I feel an affinity to the way that people are finding a way to live here that stands in contrast to the capitalist consumer society in Tokyo with all the money and all the excess of material things. And also, that the center of this structural oppression, that enables the US military bases to be forced onto the land here, is the workings of the small groups of politicians and political parties in Tokyo, so I feel a sense of responsibility as someone who lives in Tokyo."

Another protester, who like others I met had moved to Okinawa after 3.11, chimed in to stress how the contrast of life in Takae and Tokyo made the power relations more visible than in her previous life on the mainland:

> "I was thinking about your question, and it's because of the helipad issue that we came to know Takae and the beauty of nature here, and the way of life and thinking here. And also it was here that I really saw the workings of the Japanese government laid bare, that if we're going to resist, this is where we start."

While these participants at the sit-ins, including the *zainichi* Korean high school women and Autonomous Tokyo activists, saw themselves in relation to both the protesters and the problem of the military construction, those gathered there agreed that centering this relationship of responsibility was not the norm. Another elder man explained how he had come into a new way

of self-identifying by embracing a term used to delineate racialized others in order to challenge normative ideas of who is Japanese:

> "I grew up here in Okinawa but live in Nagano now, and I really understand the sense of distance that some people hold to the issues here. The people on the mainland might glance at the news coverage showing these protests in Okinawa or the forced passage of the Security Bill, but are able to feel that this has very little to do with them and continue to support the government that made these things happen. This is something we can't do in Okinawa because we know these will have direct repercussions on our lives. These mainland people don't understand, can't understand, so recently I've started to refer to myself as a *zainichi* Okinawan, and do what I can to get them to see things from a different perspective."

The group chuckled and exclaimed in appreciation of the creative label of *zainichi* Okinawan, highlighting the processes of racialization that positions Okinawans as ambiguously included into the Japanese nation. By participating in and at the Takae sit-in protests, the Tokyo activists take a stance in opposition to dominant racial regimes and reorient their own lives to stand against dominant power relations in Takae and at home in Tokyo. They develop ties within and beyond the official borders of Japan while celebrating connections between varied minority positions: in this case, as anti-capitalist activists, zainichi Koreans, and Okinawans, against dominant Japanese and U.S. powers.

Conclusion

Race is socially constructed, and can be reconstructed. Studies of transnational grassroots networks can benefit from an analysis of race as a way to focus on uneven power relations within and across difference—in this case, the nation-state is a particularly strong and persistent space

of racial formation making it also a site of necessary resistance. The Autonomous Tokyo activist network pushes for the creation of locally and regionally connected alternative spaces that reject a subordinate position within a western racial hierarchy and bypass the imperative of resistance. Their linguistic strategies, however, are limited in their ability to articulate clear alternatives. In contrast, in addition to the enactment of solidarity in articulating their identity as Asians, challenging a primary identification with their nation state and its racialized sense of belonging, some of the activists in Autonomous Tokyo were particularly attentive to the additional responsibilities and limitations of their positioning in the center of colonial empire. This allowed them to identify new ways of engaging in anti-capitalist action that they found particularly fulfilling, generating connections with other racialized peoples seeking alternative futures. Race is not an inherent category; it is a regime of power that can and should be challenged through an engaged undoing of not just static conceptions of individual identity, but also of the material conditions that prop up these conceptions. Instead of simply denying their subordination under capitalism and dominant racial regimes, they defy it, articulating new ways of talking about difference and remaking their lives on their own terms.

CHAPTER 3 APPENDIX

Figure 1: Activists hold handmade letters at the Eternal Peace Asia Demonstration, September 2016. Photo by author.

Figure 2: Banner for Eternal Peace Asia Demo in Kunitachi, Tokyo, September 2016. Photo by author.

Figure 3: Autonomous Tokyo activist, Mario, at the Eternal Peace Asia Demonstration, September 2016 , dressed as a sanshin, a traditional Okinawan instrument. Photo by author.

Figure 4: Activists from Japan, Hong Kong, China, and other places at the Eternal Peace Asia Demonstration, September 2016. Several hold a banner against the construction of helipads in Takae, Okinawa. Photo by author.

Figure 5: Map of some of the cities from which activists came to Tokyo to join No Limit 2016. Map by Yukiko Harada, from www.nolimit.tokyonantoka.xyz/graphic

Figure 6: "Big Fools of East Asia: Busan and Fukuoka," presentation by Matsumoto Hajime and other activists in Busan, South Korea, 2016. Photo by author.

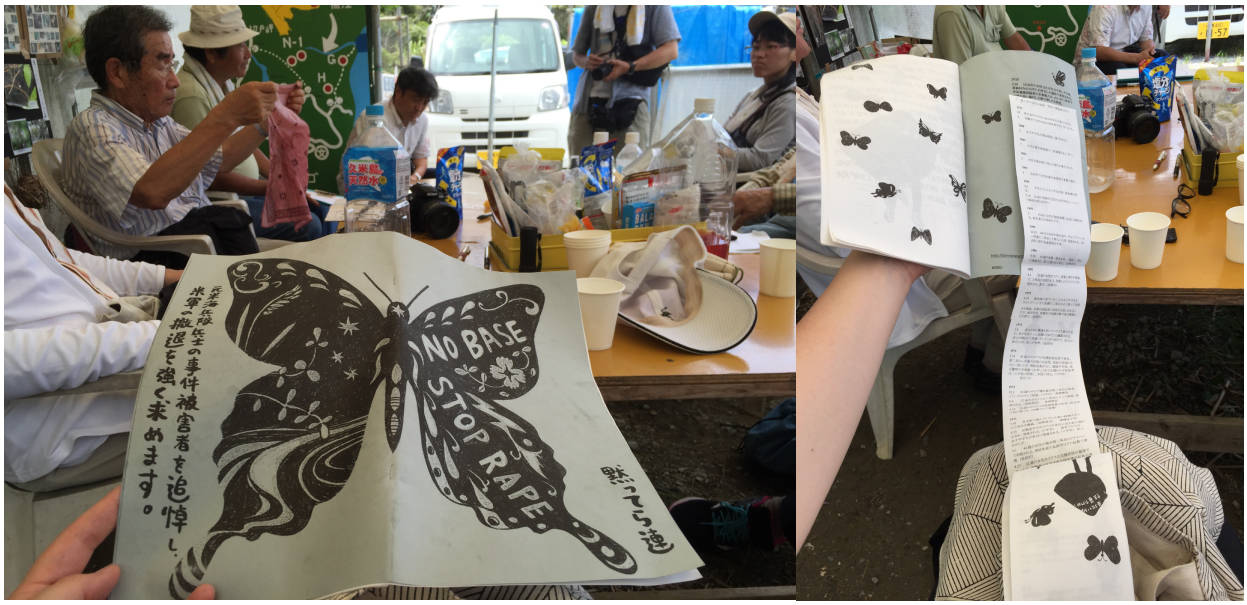

Figure 7: At the N1 rear gate in Takae, a zine by Ichimura Misako, a feminist activist in Tokyo, connecting the presence of military bases to sexual violence. The back cover features a foldout list of all documented acts of sexual violence since WWII until April 2016. Photo by author.

Figure 8: A collaboratively made woodblock print made by the Anti-War, Anti-Nuke, Art of Block Print Collective (A3BC) that meets in the Autonomous Tokyo space Irregular Rhythm Asylum, is on display at the N-1 front gate, where Japanese police stand guard to facilitate the construction of helipads for U.S. military training in Takae, in the Yambaru forest of Okinawa. Photo by author.

Figure 9: Blockaded by police from mainland Japan on a hot summer morning on the way to the N-1 gate. Autonomous Tokyo activists stand with other anti-base activists to appeal to the young officers. Photo by author, August 2016.

Figure 90: Anti-base activists of various ages and backgrounds crowd the road to demand a stop to helipad construction. Photo by author, August 2016.

Figure 11: Police stand guard in the elements during a squall while protesters retreat under the blue tarps for some rest and protection from the elements. Photo by author, August 2016.

Figure 12: A lizard clings to a tree while a local activist describes some of the features of various endangered species found in the area. Photo by author, August 2016.

Figure 13: Autonomous Tokyo activists blow bubbles with the grandson of an elder activist who brought him and his brother to see the site. Blowing bubbles, singing songs, reading poetry, and making art were some of the things they did to create an intentional contrast from the presence of police and military in the space. Photo by author, August 2016.

CONCLUSION

On May 1, 2019, Japan entered a new imperial era — Reiwa (令和). The English "interpretation" and "explanation" offered by the Foreign Ministry is "beautiful harmony," but many in Japan and abroad note that the first character, rei, more commonly connotes "command" and "order." At the same time, they note that this is not an official translation, and that since it is a new word created out of lines in the Manyoshu, the oldest existing anthology of Japanese poetry, it would be impossible to express in any singular terms in English (Osaki, 2019). The government's push to expand the military's role and state surveillance, and the strong connections between far-right wing groups and Prime Minister Abe along with other officials, makes the name of this new era more ominous than the Foreign Ministry claims. For those who reject the continuation of the emperor system, or those simply living on the margins of the dominant political economy, the pomp and circumstance of the abdication and enthronement ceremonies signal the distance between their everyday lives and the priorities of public officials. However, as distant as state power and empire might feel at times, it also looms overhead and can sometimes appear impossible to overcome. This self-perpetuating perspective prevents people from seeing themselves as political actors, and their wholesale participation in structures of violence as simply unavoidable.

In this dissertation I argue that political projects can be incomplete, illegible, iterative, and yet still map out vibrant alternatives to dominant political landscapes. Autonomous Tokyo activists insist that no matter how dire the circumstances appear to be, it is possible to change them. They do this by resisting while creating independent alternatives to dominant systems, reaching for processes and outcomes beyond frameworks of resistance. Scholarship on social

movements still tends to evaluate the worth of movements based on state responses, and while this is not an unimportant part of Autonomous Tokyo's activism, they have been able to continue their work for more than a decade precisely because they refuse to define themselves by the state response. Contrary to theories of resource mobilization on what generates mass movements, they have been able to turn out thousands of protesters seemingly "out of nowhere" and, while they stress the political agency of the precariously employed or unemployed worker, they are deliberately open on the question of identity, about who might join in their actions— rich or poor, Japanese or non-Japanese— as long as they are also open to sharing space with fools and failures.

Part of what makes this movement geography incomplete and illegible are the tensions and negotiations of political values that arise in the management of the movement's physical spaces. As I describe in Chapter 1, "The Local/Global Spaces of Autonomous Tokyo", efforts to build on local activist networks in order to connect with activists in other places, especially across national borders, have been especially important for Autonomous Tokyo in the aftermath of 3.11. Some of the important brick-and-mortar spaces run by local activists are clustered in neighborhoods, and Kōenji is one place where these local connections spurred experimentation with everyday life and protest tactics, and have more recently been used explicitly to build regional and global ties. Their transnational activism had already begun through their participation in the alterglobalization movement, but the new emphasis on mobilities and connectivities was also a clear response to the mass destruction of the triple disaster that swept away entire cities in northeast Japan.[31] The establishment of Manuke Guesthouse created a place

[31] The disaster highlighted the dangers of concentrated capital and state power, but also the more-than-human limits of the conception of security in any material structures or spaces. It also reflects their core belief that dominant systems can be dismantled, no matter how fixed they

for activists, artists, and ordinary tourists to sleep, relax, and hang out without any particular purpose. Coming after the "failure" of the anti-nuclear movement to permanently shut down all nuclear power plants in Japan, this helped reorient their energies from the intense work of organizing mass actions to the healing and empowering work of strengthening social ties--the less legible building blocks of social movements. Increased competition from a growing short-term rental market has posed additional challenges to keep the guesthouse going but, as with the decline of the anti-nuclear movement, the apparent impending closure of the guesthouse does not necessarily mean a "failure" of their project. Instead, it further highlights the importance of flexibility, mobilities, and the movement's transnational connections rather than an insistence on a static political practice.

The choices made in negotiating these values, however, also raise questions about the definition and limits of autonomous approaches to transnational solidarity politics.[32] The core

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appear to be. When the government called for somber mourning for disaster victims and the slogans to 「頑張れ、日本！頑張れ、東北！」--"Persevere, Japan! Persevere, Tohoku!," Autonomous Tokyo activists called for indignant outrage.

[32] One such line of questioning arose during an event I organized with unhoused residents of Tokyo who had been following and fighting the imposition of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which are a global megaevent held in the name of peace and harmony, but, following a well-established pattern of hosting the games, have revealed various patterns of violence, including the displacement and banishment of unhoused and low-income residents of Tokyo, At this event, these activists posed a critique of the transnational convergence event, No Limit: Tokyo Autonomous Zones and its claim to autonomy. The space of Irregular Rhythm Aslyum was packed to capacity by activists from around Japan and many other countries who had come to Tokyo to celebrate the limitless possibilities of autonomous politics as the unhoused activists explained how a certain kind of urban development imposed on the city by officials also mobilized the concept of "autonomous zones." The speakers outlined their efforts to fight increased restrictions on sleeping in various public spaces, including the eviction of unhoused residents Meiji Park, and asked the audience: what does autonomy really look like beyond the space of this fun moment of convergence? What will you do when the state comes to evict you? How can we practice autonomy when you are stripped of all your belongings and places to sleep? These questions reminded me of the small overlap of Autonomous Tokyo activists I would see at anti-Olympics actions in Tokyo, who were also fighting for a very real kind of bodily, personal and community autonomy in urban space.

issue exposed by the autonomous spaces I describe in Chapter 1 is the need to generate capital resources in order to maintain their autonomy, highlighting their inextricable entanglement with capitalist economies. To borrow again from Gibson-Graham (2006), this means these spaces require a certain degree of capitalocentric work for anti-capitalist ends. In Kōenji, the feeling of autonomy in the neighborhood comes in part from the community and the close proximity of rent-paying shops affiliated with Amateur Riot. However, the composition of that community, the neighborhood and city, is changing. Many Amateur Riot shops are no longer in operation, and Manuke Guesthouse seems possibly the next to go. The guesthouse has been operating in the red, and while it is not a business run with the goal of making significant profits, the high cost of rent and aging condition of the building create a significant expense because it is difficult to attract enough paying guests to cover the bottom line. Government subsidies, and changes in regulation of accommodations spurred by an increase in tourism and preparations for the 2020 Olympics, have also increased competition with other low-cost guesthouses opening in the neighborhood, and with expanding private lodging services like Airbnb. This has reduced the number of tourists coming to Manuke Guesthouse. The lack of revenue from these guests has

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Amateur Riot has met a redevelopment plan in Kōenji indirectly connected to the Olympics with raucous protests, but this happened years after the plans were initially proposed, making the likelyhood of actually overturning the development far less likely. In a blog post describing his opposition to the plan for construction, Matsumoto Hajime describes the Central North shopping arcade where the Amateur Riot recycle shop, Nantoka Bar, Manuke Guesthouse, and other Amateur Riot spaces are located as a place where "the night fills the streets with people drinking, but the day is extremely peaceful" (2019). The redevelopment would widen a road through one of the narrow shopping arcades in Kōenji, eliminating many of the small neighborhood shops that give it its "local" flavor, but would not directly impact the Central North shopping arcade, and not necessarily impact their small space of peaceful life. The delayed action might reflect the ways that the hyperlocal microgeographies of communities within the neighborhood have differently situated interests, underscoring the dangers of centering smaller scales as spaces of autonomy.

meant the rents need to be subsidized from the small profits of the recycle shop. In some ways this fits the model of resource sharing of community economies. At the same time, because both these businesses are managed by Matsumoto Hajime, an activist who has also been, often reluctantly, at the center of Amateur Riot actions, it calls into question the assumptions embedded in the term "community," especially one with the goal of collective, horizontal power relations of anarchist autonomy without a reliance on identification with traditional categories of identity. Rather than the "community" shouldering the financial burden, it is largely Matsumoto who takes this on as the sole proprietor.

I do not wish to downplay the significance of the diverse cast of characters and wider network of shops that make the work of Autonomous Tokyo possible, so the heavy reliance on an analysis of Matsumoto's contributions to the network, and of the dominant presence of Kōenji spaces, is also a limitation of my description of the activist network. However, I found his influence difficult to decenter during my fieldwork and in my writing. His strong presence in the network, and in Kōenji in particular, comes in part from his history of activism and primary role in managing several shops in the neighborhood. His personal connections, developed through travels to various activist spaces around the region, are an essential component of how various locally embedded autonomous communities come together in Tokyo. The circulation of his books, *The Pauper's Rebellion* and *The Global Handbook of Manuke Spaces,* and their translations, as well as his frequently updated blog, also serve to make him a minor celebrity of sorts. His reputation attracts some people to not just visit the shops and participate in Autonomous Tokyo activities in general, but to meet him and talk to him in particular. The emphasis on his presence detracts from the goal of developing non-hierarchical ties, and can also be personally burdensome for Matsumoto. Guests at the guesthouse would sometimes ask for

him to come by if he was not working that day, or visitors would simply show up at the recycle shop eager to meet him, disrupting the "ordinary" and necessary work of running his businesses. Matsumoto is particularly generous with his time after he closes his shop and seems to genuinely enjoy these opportunities to meet and learn from the wide range of people coming to Kōenji. This also pressures him to perform as the gregarious, outraged-but-happy fool, which is continually on display in his writing but is not feasible or desirable to operate in such a singular emotional register.

Play and fun are also important aspects of Autonomous Tokyo's politics, part of what makes them illegible as such. While the role of the political fool has produced new openings for political action, Chapter 2, *Between Killjoys and Diverse Economies*, complicates this narrative through an analysis of gender in the practice of this subjectivity. This chapter also highlights how emotion and affect bridge the presumed divide between mind and body, a divide that is further complicated by the virtual-material space of digital geographies. Recent scholarship in the growing subfield of digital geographies has shown how these seemingly intangible online spaces are also material, both in terms of physical infrastructure needed to maintain physical spaces, and the embedded, embodied social relations behind online interactions (Amoore, 2018; Kinsley, 2014; Morrow, Hawkins, and Kern, 2015; Rose, 2016). I contribute to this literature by highlighting ways that affect and emotion also shape participation in the virtual-material space of both an online activist group message and physical convergence spaces. I describe a conflict that arose when different emotional approaches in an online conversation failed to resolve in solidarity. This failure was embedded in contrasting understandings about the role of gendered labor in radical politics and anticapitalist spaces, which ultimately caused, or simply deepened, a rift between different groups of activists. This again highlights the challenges of writing about a

"community" of activists that is a constantly shifting scene of actors with sometimes overlapping, and sometimes wholly divergent priorities. A strong critique from South Korean feminists called attention to the issue of gender dynamics in radical politics by not only responding to the proposal or "joke" about hosting an Asian Girls' Bar as a fundraising activity, but also evoking a longer history of seeing these issues in particular as having been sidelined in Kōenji activism. Highlighting the importance of diverse emotional approaches, I introduce the ways a further critique from a pro-sex work perspective challenged the presumption that such an event could actually be an opening for liberatory gender and labor politics.

This is not to say that Autonomous Tokyo is necessarily an anti-feminist space. My commitment to feminist research practices means that I seek to bring attention to women's contributions in my research and actively bring attention to issues of gender as part of my involvement with my field site. The consistent presence of alcohol and cigarette smoke in some activist spaces could also be alienating for some, and there was a notable paucity of children at most actions and in spaces of the network. The spaces around Kunitachi and Tama in western Tokyo were often exceptional in this regard, with mothers, children, and disabled people a visible part of many of these events, which would often be smoke-free. It would also be reductive to say that Autonomous Tokyo spaces as a whole are not family-friendly, because they also present a redefinition of family, away from a patriarchal, imperial conceptualization of kinship. Despite the marginalization of some feminist perspectives in the conflict I describe in Chapter 2, the central role of feminists in creating spaces in their respective cities to advance these critiques and host events to talk about the role of gender, as well as the inclusion of new rules of equality concerning gender and colonialism for the second iteration of No Limit, also shows how feminists are an active, vital part of Autonomous Tokyo activities.

In Chapter 3, *Race and the Regional Geography of Alternative Asia*, I employ an analytic that is often deployed to deliberately flatten difference according to dominant structures of power: race. Despite the significant contributions of anti-racist scholars in geography (see, for example, Gilmore, 2002, 2006; McKittrick, 2006, 2017; Kobayashi and Peake, 1994, 2000; Pulido, 2002, 2016; Woods, 1998) explicitly anti-racist frameworks continue to be marginalized in the discipline, and these conversations are even rarer in work about inter-Asian relations. Race as a category of identity and power is clearly present within and beyond the official borders of Japan, and is particularly embedded in the spatiality of the Japanese nation, and a racial analytic helped make sense of the political significance of Autonomous Tokyo's efforts at transnational activism. The assertion of a particularly "Japanese" identity, and notions of blood purity that go along with this category, aligns with the racial politics of empire and global white supremacy, including military control of indigenous lands such as Okinawa. The activism of Autonomous Tokyo includes travel to and solidarity with places formerly colonized by Japan and learning other Asian languages for direct communication, sidestepping a reliance on English as the lingua franca. Their efforts are less about elevating categories of identity that are familiar touchstones for social movements, such as worker, woman, citizen, or even explicit notions of race. They are more about disrupting these categories in order to create community across various marginalizations. Yet, their engagement with a regional/racial subjectivity makes it clear that they are not advocating for a colorblind politics that purports to erase racial difference. Rather, I argue their engagement as "Asians" in transnational activist spaces reveals the enduring significance of racial regimes while also showing how they can be remade in solidarity as a political practice.

If the formal political system has officially entered a new imperial era that purports to signify peace and harmony, the informal political worlds of Autonomous Tokyo continue to insist that peace and harmony must be found elsewhere. The ongoing conditions of economic and ecological disaster make it clear that it is as important as ever for people to dissent, and to continue to practice creating their own alternatives to dominant structures of power. Yet this can happen in a variety of ways, and will not always take the shape of a readily visible social movement or a political proposal for something new. There is an urgent need for scholarship that actively engages with grassroots movements. Transnational practices of autonomy, whether situated at local, regional, global, or other scales, are always emergent, and solidarity requires consistent efforts to work through difference— working within limits because, like the planet, people have finite resources. Future projects that draw on feminist, queer, black and indigenous perspectives on these movements will be critical for understanding how absurdity, failure, and even pessimism can be generative of resilient communities and alternative futures.

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[1] See Brown (2018) for a more detailed look at the actors and activities involved in the anti-nuclear movement in particular.

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