The (Im)mobilities of Mutual Aid: Occupy Sandy, Racial Liberalism, Insurgent Infrastructure

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Abstract

This article provides an analysis of Occupy Sandy – a New York-based activist organization that was formed in response to superstorm Sandy in October 2012 – in order to demonstrate what we might learn from its emergency (im)mobilities. Specifically, it suggests that the praxis of Occupy Sandy draws attention to the notion that American racial liberalism is best understood not through the binary language of personal mobility and immobility – or motility – but rather through an infrastructural grammar. That is, American racial liberalism is best understood as a mode of governance that enables and obscures radically unequal relations to infrastructures of production and consumption – and circuitries of resources and investment – under racial capitalism. Finally, this article argues that Occupy Sandy, and its myriad forms of movement and emplacement, can help us find a way toward an insurgent infrastructure beyond racial liberalism, one predicated on and productive of a radical re-conceptualization of the city and urban citizenship itself.

Introduction

> The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned…
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> –Walter Benjamin (1940)

On November 7, 2012, the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) closed the doors of its superstorm Sandy recovery centers in some of the most storm-ravaged sections of New York City due to fears of an incoming nor'easter (Feuer, 2012). At the same time, local activists under the moniker of Occupy Sandy continued to operate, as they repurposed public and private spaces as "autonomous organizing centers" (Wakefield and Braun, 2014). Occupy Sandy had begun as a small operation, consisting of a half dozen Occupy Wall Street alumni providing "laterally organized" and de-commodified services just hours after the storm subsided on October 29th (Feuer, 2012). However, by November 7th the group had grown into the hundreds, and was effectively leading the city's response to the storm – which caused at least 147 direct deaths, and wrought $65 billion in damage (Blake et al., 2013, Rice and Dastagir, 2013) – while remaining committed to its founding principles of mutual aid and solidarity with the oppressed.[1] In many cases, Occupy activists were playing the role of first responder – particularly to those residents living in public housing and racialized enclaves in Queens and Brooklyn, which were effectively off the map of state-led recovery efforts.

Of course, one would presume that the literature on emergency (im)mobilities provides the analytical resources necessary to make sense of Occupy Sandy, and its constituent practices of movement and emplacement. After all, this literature has taken up the broad task of articulating the ways in which urban climate-induced disasters "are governed, freighted with meaning and significance, and lived and experienced" through the dialectics of mobility and mooring, deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Adey, 2016, p. 33). However, upon closer scrutiny, it seems as if scholarship in this field has largely focused on the question of evacuation – particularly in the context of studies located in the Global North. And, in doing so, it has overwhelmingly focused its attention on how disaster mobilities are enabled by "complex and multi-scalar systems" of authority, which often disadvantage and immobilize the poor and racially marginalized (Adey, 2015). As such, this work has generally failed to attend closely to those forms of mutual aid that emerge in the interstitial spaces of climate-induced disaster (Solnit, 2009) – and their logics of (im)mobility.

This is not to deride the existing literature on climate-induced emergency (im)mobilities. In fact, this omission makes sense when one considers the archetypal role that Hurricane Katrina plays in much of this literature (see Cresswell, 2008). During that crisis, city and state officials adopted a deeply individualistic evacuation response – based on the presumption of widespread automobility and a racialized image of "the evacuee" – which quite literally left thousands of Black residents for dead. Scholars, thereafter, were left to "abide by the events of Katrina" (Braun and McCarthy, 2005, p. 802); they were left with the task of demonstrating how Katrina was indicative of broader trends in the context of climate-induced disaster. In doing so, they often stressed that in the United States the prevailing "ontology of actuality" (Foucault, 1997) renders some legible in the eyes of the racial state during moments of urban crisis, while others are subjected to the racialization of the "sovereign ban" (Braun and McCarthy, 2005). Subsequent studies have re-articulated, in numerous contexts, this notion that one's emergency mobility is either enabled by their relation to elite archipelagic spatialities, or restricted due to their embeddedness in racialized spaces that are both "bereft *of* the law" and "turned

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[1] The phrase "mutual aid" is used here – and throughout this text – to describe the work of Occupy Sandy, largely because that is the phrase that the movement itself used. As Jaleel (2013) notes, "Occupy enact[ed] an ethics and practice of mutual aid: a bi-directional exchange of knowledge, skill sets, and resources," which functioned as an "alternative to state neglect and impositions of austerity." This political praxis entailed "the binding together of people and organizations in emotional networks of care and accountability that extend[ed] the prefigurative politics of the [Occupy movement's] encampments into the world at large." Therefore, in using this language, my intention is not to enter into emerging debates in geography (and beyond) regarding mutual aid (see Ince and Bryant, 2018; Springer, 2013). Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, the infrastructural politics of Occupy Sandy may speak to this literature's concern with the "the *generalised* relations of mutuality which societies inherit and reproduce" (Ince and Bryant, 2018, p. 4, emphasis original).

over *to* the law" in the context of disaster (Braun and McCarthy, 2005, p. 803, emphasis original; cf. Duffield, 2010; Sheller, 2012).

Therefore, the practices of Occupy Sandy seem to demand new modes of theorization. At the very least, they demand we recognize that climate-induced disasters can provoke (im)mobilities that are effectively "weapons of the weak" (cf. Scott, 1987) – representing neither elite forms of "cocoon-like capsular" mobility (Adey, 2016, p. 39) nor the immobility of "bare life." And yet, this article also suggests that abiding by such mutual aid (im)mobilities leads to a more substantial insight. That is, it aims to demonstrate that following Occupy Sandy allows us to transcend analyses that (both implicitly and explicitly) situate American racial liberalism according to the binary of personal mobility and immobility (cf. Nicholson and Sheller, 2016). It suggests that Occupy Sandy's praxis makes racial liberalism visible as an *infrastructural* mode of governance, that perpetuates and obscures a range of contradictory (dis)connections between people and the circuitries of "materials, resources…[and] information" under racial capitalism (Tonkiss, 2015, p. 384; cf. Cowen, 2014; Pasternak and Dafnos, 2017). Going further, this article will suggest that Occupy Sandy demonstrates how any move beyond this mode of governance must be by way of insurgent infrastructures that combine heterogeneous practices of movement and emplacement. And, in the process, it will underscore how Occupy Sandy also points toward of a re-conceptualization of the city and urban citizenship itself.

Racial liberalism and the politics of movement

As is clear, this article is primarily interested in demonstrating how following the disaster-induced praxis of Occupy Sandy might allow us to speak to debates on racial liberalism in the United States – its constituent modes of (im)mobility, and how we might develop a politics that transcends its dictates. Thus, we must begin by outlining the contours of work on racial liberalism – and its relation to the question of movement and emplacement.

Scholars of racial liberalism have set out to demonstrate that the dominant mode of social contract liberalism articulated by Locke and Kant – which remains hegemonic in American political discourse – is predicated on the idea of "pre-social individual entitlements" (Mills, 2017, p. 28). However, they argue that this "individualist social ontology" (Mills, 2008), and its categories of pre-social individuality and personhood, have historically been deeply racialized, with people of color relegated to the "boundaries of non-humanity" through a chain of dehumanizing "biopolitical caesuras" (cf. Chari, 2008, p. 1915); historically, only "those who conform" to the racialized (and gendered) "norms of the bourgeois individual" have been "entitled to liberal freedoms" (Ranganathan, 2018, p. 4). For many scholars, this has significant implications for *contemporary* governance in the United States – despite claims to institutional "racelessness" (Mills, 2017). This is because the prevailing practices that organize social and political life are understood as accretions that have "formed slowly over time…grafted onto an already-existing world" (Anand, 2015; cf. Ranganathan, 2018). That is to say, the existing literature on American racial liberalism has pointed out that despite the formal inclusion of people of color into mainstream political life in the mid-twentieth century, the racialized "social credentials and preconditions" that have historically denied some access to liberal subjectivity (Ranganathan, 2016, quoted in Jampel, 2018, p. 129) remain largely intact. And, liberalism's image of the "atomic," ahistoric individual serves only to disavow these enduring legacies (Mills, 2017).

Further still, many theorists attempt to think this mode of governance and racial capitalism together (cf. Kurtz, 2009; Parenti, 2016; Ranganathan, 2016). They understand the historic exclusion of people of color from liberal subjectivity as linked to racial capitalism's necessary "ontological devaluations," which enable surplus profit to be realized through both capitalization and "extra-economic" means, outside of the cash nexus (cf. Moore, 2017, p. 328). With this lens, the egalitarian claims – and "real abstractions" – of contemporary liberalism are interpreted as simply enabling the

perpetuation of this world-ecology, built on both the appropriation of non-human nature (cf. Kay and Kenney-Lazar, 2017) and on the appropriation and "superexploitation" of racialized and gendered (re)productive labor (Dawson, 2016). Contemporary liberalism is understood to obfuscate those forms of racism that are not "primarily predicated on juridical subjects" – such as those that were instantiated through colonialism and slavery, and which were "reorganized as the very basis" for our current global political economy (Tadiar, 2015, p. 140).

Still, this highly productive theorizing has not led to a coherent articulation of racial liberalism's relationship to (im)mobility, despite the fact that this broad literature makes frequent reference to practices of displacement, constraint, and myriad other forms of (im)mobilization. In fact, the existing scholarship that attempts to directly confront this relationship is characterized by a range of ostensibly contradictory observations, which generally situate racial liberalism – even if that exact term is not used – in relation to the binary of personal mobility and immobility. Some have suggested that American racial liberalism maintains a "non-sedentary metaphysics," arguing that the immobilization and exclusion of people of color from full liberal personhood is linked in various ways to the mobility of whites (cf. Hague, 2010; Sager, 2006). The restriction of mobility is seen here as a crucial site at which racial liberalism "touches down into lives in racialized ways with material consequences" (Derickson, 2017, p. 234; Stuesse and Coleman, 2014). Therefore, it is claimed that resistance to racial liberalism often consists of subaltern "countermobilities" that contest the "spatial frictions" obscured through liberalism's claims to equal treatment under the law (Alderman and Inwood, 2016, p. 602-603).

However, other scholars have argued what is effectively the negative image of this point, stressing that the mobilities of people of color are directly linked to racial liberalism's restrictive conception of personhood. This work has observed that throughout much of the twentieth century African Americans were hyper-mobile due largely to racialized labor and housing markets, which were justified through liberalism's language of choice and market individualism (Parks, 2016). This work challenges the notion that mobility and liberal metaphors of "autonomy [and] individualism" should be read together (Rajan, 2006, p. 122); and, it decouples the relationship between horizontal mobility and the possibility of vertical – economic and social – mobility (Salazar and Smart, 2011). This work has also encouraged the notion that emplacement and strategic immobility can function as forms of resistance to American racial liberalism, in that these practices can stop the flow of the city and make collective life "in a different register" (Derickson, 2017, p. 235).

It is with an understanding of the relatively contradictory character of work on racial liberalism and (im)mobility that we can turn to Occupy Sandy. And, to do so is to take a cue from recent critical writing on climate resilience and climate adaptation. Of course, to raise the specter of climate resilience is not uncontroversial – and my intention here is not to enter into the complex set of debates surrounding that literature; as many have noted, the "jargon of resilience" (Dawson, 2017) – and its image of the "zone of stability" (Cretney, 2014, p. 628) – has been widely used by conservative theorists to justify the "permanentization" of socio-ecological crisis (Walker and Cooper, 2011; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2015). Nevertheless, the critical literature on resilience and adaptation is simply useful here in that it draws attention to the fact that moments of climate crisis can reveal the foundational logics – such as the logics of racial liberalism – that define the present landscape and its relation to "past projects" and "past struggles" (Robbins, 2007, p. 32).[2] Further still, critical resilience

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[2] While it is difficult to make the case that a specific storm was "caused" by climate change, we can follow Trenberth et al. (2015, p. 725) in making the claim that Sandy – which made landfall in the Caribbean as a hurricane before being

scholars have productively gestured toward the notion that climate crises can potentially aid in the unlearning of dominant practices, so as to propel new modes of prefigurative socio-ecological change (cf. Berlant, 2016; Braun, 2014).

The (im)mobilities of Occupy Sandy

With this literature on racial liberalism, mobility, and the relationship between crisis and the foundational logics of the present conjuncture in mind, we can finally ask: what do Occupy Sandy's disaster-induced practices of movement and emplacement demonstrate about racial liberalism in the United States, and its existential logics? To answer that question, we can follow Dawson's (2017) account of Occupy Sandy – pairing it with a close reading of both the archive of academic and media coverage on the storm, and the activist interviews made public by the Superstorm Research Lab (superstormresearchlab.org). Through such a process – and the categorization of these qualitative sources according to this article's primary research concerns (cf. Cope, 2010)[3] – it becomes clear that Occupy Sandy's mutual aid (im)mobilities unsettle the central tenets of debate on racial liberalism's relationship to the dialectic of mobility and mooring. In fact, Occupy Sandy responded to conditions of systemic immobility *and* hyper-mobility – serving, in both cases, communities of color that have been ontologically devalued under racial capitalism and historically excluded from racial liberalism's conception of personhood.

For instance, immediately following the storm, Occupy activists set out to serve those that were immobilized in public and subsidized housing throughout the city's outer boroughs. In racialized enclaves like Bay Towers – a low-income development located in Rockaway, Queens – many were immobilized in high-rise buildings without any means of escape (Pinto, 2012a). Not only were these residents left without electrical power (and so, elevator access), running water, and critical medical care due to the state's meager emergency response efforts, but they were also excluded from state-based emergency mobilities. The city deployed "warming buses" to Rockaway one week after the storm, and "designated two sites where emergency buses would pick up residents and take them to a shelter." However, "[n]one of this infrastructure was located on the eastern half of the peninsula" – where Bay Towers, along with most of the Rockaway's racialized "public-housing projects and single-room-occupancy apartment buildings" were located (Pinto, 2012b).

Importantly, Occupy Sandy activists were well aware that residents living in these contexts would be subject to abandonment and immobilization (see Kilkenny, 2012). Many implicitly understood, for instance, eastern Rockaway's contemporary roots in state-aided racialized urban accumulation. Therefore, they were broadly aware – if lacking the specific details – that beginning in the 1950s, the Rockaway coastline was targeted as a site for "Le-Corbusier-inspired" public housing "with no organic links to the surrounding community or the rest of the city" (Dawson, 2017, p. 89); and, that the area was targeted given that it was home to "plenty of land that the city could buy cheaply, or simply seize under its newly increased powers of eminent domain" – quickly becoming an "outpost" for those that were inhibiting circuits of accumulation in more "desirable" locales (Mahler, 2012). Further still, Occupy Sandy activists generally understood that such neighborhoods continued to

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downgraded to a hybrid storm – was "influenced by high sea surface temperatures that had a discernible human component."

[3] These primary research concerns emerged both through a review of the theoretical literature on racial liberalism and mobility, and through a process of empirical "descriptive coding" (Cope, 2010). Of course, it is also important to note the limitations of this methodology. As an empirical base, this study was forced to rely exclusively on the somewhat limited online archive that has preserved the praxis of Occupy Sandy – which in many cases bears the mark of the journalists and academics responsible for it.

function as a material representation of this history of racialized accumulation and abandonment. Despite contemporary anti-discrimination laws in housing, they understood that liberal claims to equal access only obscured the enduring legacy of these practices – and contemporary strategies of racialized disconnection – for those that do not meet the social preconditions for liberal subjectivity (Ranganathan, 2016).

With this broad understanding, Occupy Sandy immediately responded with its own counter-mobilities, throughout racialized enclaves like eastern Rockaway. Initially, this work was quite modest. The organization, for example, sent out "corps" of first responders to canvass public housing tenants, "delivering flashlights and trays of hot lasagna to residents neglected by the government" (Feuer, 2012). However, these mobile efforts quickly grew, through "motor pools" of construction personnel that collectively mobilized personal cars, and through the distribution of critical medical aid. At times, entire organizations like Times Up! – a New York-based cycling and low-carbon activist network – partnered with Occupy Sandy to move resources to vulnerable residents (Shepard, 2013). With such modes of mobile work, "volunteers went as far into devastated areas as they could travel" before returning "to their hubs with lists of willing volunteers, and lists of needs" (Watters, 2013, p. 84). Meanwhile, mobile food preparation and distribution expanded; in neighboring New Jersey, a donated U-Haul truck "delivered over 300 hot meals a day" for four months following the storm (Watters, 2014, p. 19).

Put abstractly, this mobile work sought to "re-imagine what [the] city could look like, the way it could function" and "the way [we] could transport [ourselves], and share what [we] have" (Shepard, 2013, p. 44-48); it was done to transcend what one commentator referred to as the "'individualistic creed' embodied in capital relations" (Watters, 2014, p. 26). Put differently, Occupy Sandy and its partners began to instantiate a mutual aid mobility that involved producing connections and networks of unmediated support (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2015, p. 608). The routes and rhythms of this mobile praxis are clear in Shepard's (2013) Sandy "postscript" – his "New York diary" on the mobile recovery effort. In passages that touch on the deeply affective experience of disaster relief – and the "relational atmosphere" that it produced (Shepard, 2013, p. 57) – Shepard outlines how Occupy and its partners used collective mobilities to "deliver food, blankets, bike-powered charging stations, and mobile bike repair units to neighborhoods devastated" by the storm (Shepard, 2013, p. 45). He describes the "pulsing" cadence of the organization's makeshift distribution hubs, at which "volunteers point[ed] people to drop-off areas for new supplies, coordinat[ed] supplies for those going out to the Rockaways, and orient[ed] new volunteers" (Shepard, 2013, p. 48). In short, he identifies the centrality of mobility to what one commentator has referred to as the organization's "science of social physiology," which sought to provide "the sense of security that familiar faces and the constancy of community provide, [and which] the commodity form precludes" (Watters, 2014, p. 17).

And yet, in other facets of its work, Occupy Sandy highlighted the chronic forms of *hyper-mobility* that are perpetuated under racial liberalism – demonstrating the complex (im)mobilities that this mode of governance both engenders and obscures. Not only were the city's racialized poor more likely to be displaced following the storm, given New York's exorbitant housing prices – and their lack of access to capital – but they were also encouraged to forgo disaster relief that could have enabled future resettlement (Dawson, 2017). This was due to a combination of factors, including the specter of future debt, given that federal disaster aid programs required applicants to first apply for loans "before they could qualify for FEMA aid" (Dawson, 2017, p. 249-255). This effectively distributed "the costs of [the] disaster to individual victims based on and through their ability to take on debt, rather than distributing the costs across the public" (Strike Debt, 2012); and, people of color were disproportionately marginalized by this condition, despite its "liberal symbolic framework" of "abstract equality" and "inclusive civic nationalism" (Melamed, 2006, p. 2). This is to say nothing of the slow

racialized mobilities (cf. Nixon, 2011) of gentrification and eviction that were (re)produced by Sandy – justified under the rubric of market individualism – in neighborhoods like Brooklyn's Red Hook. In that rapidly gentrifying context, many alleged that disaster relief was focused on producing a new "fortified enclave" for the wealthy (cf. Dawson, 2013). This is despite the fact that at the time 8,000 of the neighborhood's 11,000 residents lived in some of the city's most storm-ravaged public housing (Gluck, 2013).

Occupy Sandy responded to these racialized mobilities in various ways (see Rugh, 2012), initiating what can be understood as practices of strategic immobility (Watters, 2014, p. 15). Such forms of immobility included establishing recovery centers that provided a range of sedentary services, including "meals, medical treatment, legal counseling, and housing advocacy" (Department of Homeland Security, 2013, p. 37). As many observers have noted, Occupy Sandy's non-hierarchical organizational structure enabled these creative practices of mooring to be "set up wherever and whenever someone identified a need and took the initiative" (Dawson, 2017, p. 242). And yet, in the process, activists remained crucially aware of the relational nature of urban space; most understood that the establishment of these immobile centers was a collective effort that depended on their relation to local actors, and the fabric of the community they were entering. Thus, they unsettled the urban spatiality of liberalism (cf. Roy, 2017), wherein the carving of space into "isolated segments by the system of private property…abstracts the land from its role in the web of urban social connections" (Purcell, 2013, p. 149).

A close attendance to these mutual aid (im)mobilities seems to underscore the notion that racial liberalism, in its "material and metaphysical domains" (cf. Adey, 2006, p. 77), is not aptly understood through the binary language of personal mobility and immobility, or even differential mobility or motility. If Occupy Sandy highlighted any existential condition, it was that those that have historically been denied access to liberal subjectivity maintain a shared positionality in relation to liberalism's *infrastructures* of (dis)connection. What Occupy Sandy's praxis seems to demonstrate is that regardless of whether racialized storm affected residents were rendered hyper-mobile or immobile, they were stratified in ways that are often obscured by liberalism's egalitarian discourse. Their precariousness under racial liberalism had an infrastructural quality, in that it hinged on their "relation *to* the flows" of resources allocated by racial capitalism (Massey, 1994, quoted in McKittrick, 2011, p. 949) – to its "densities and speeds" and (at times) "weakly controlled reverberations" (Simone, 2011, p. 356). Of course, to make this argument is to suggest a very particular understanding of infrastructure. Infrastructures here are those artifacts which align the "space-times of knowledge, ideas, materials, resources, and people," organizing (dis)connection in the city (cf. McFarlane and Vasudevan, 2014, p. 257). They are also – potentially – that which enables "non-capitalist" and "solidaristic" forms of social organization (McFarlane et al., 2017; Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006, p. 730; Trovalla and Trovalla, 2015).

Interestingly, some within (and responding to) Occupy Sandy explicitly took up the language of infrastructure in discussing aspects of their work, expressing that they saw themselves as establishing insurgent "*infrastructural* and community relationships [to] heal more than storm damage" (Jaleel, 2013, emphasis added). For these activists (and their commentators), they were variously producing new modes of connection where "the *infrastructure* wasn't there in the first place" (Anonymous and Liboiron, 2013, emphasis added); they were mobilizing "existing community *infrastructure* to address needs, establish trust relationships, and build local capacity" (Department of Homeland Security, 2013, p. 3, emphasis added); and they were building "a distributed network of community relations" (Watters, 2013, p. 77). In fact, what distinguished Occupy Sandy's praxis of mutual aid from traditional disaster relief, at least for some, was this infrastructural quality. They did not provide airdrop aid to communities but rather emerged from within them through a "porous, distributed

leadership network" able to move "resources from one place to another according to shifting needs" (Manski, 2013); they built "a bridge of solidarity across the differentially affected '99%'"(Ogman, 2013, p. 25). In doing so, these activists specifically sought to produce those infrastructural connections that are denied under racial capitalism, and obscured by the apparatus of racial liberalism (see Bauer and Ralph, 2012; Watters, 2014).

Of course, there is no shortage of recent work on infrastructure that addresses the topic in this register. This scholarship tends to understand infrastructure doubly, recognizing it as entailing diverse material *and* social "configurations" (Desai et al., 2015, p. 100). Still, to my knowledge, there has yet to be much of an exploration into the *infrastructural character of racial liberalism* – so as to move beyond conversations regarding personal mobility and immobility in that context. This is exactly what abiding by Occupy Sandy's praxis seems to provide. Through an attendance to their work, the city's "day-to-day (mal)functioning" becomes visible as a mode of (dis)connection (Rodgers and O'Neill, 2012, p. 402-403) that betrays the "universalist impulse behind the modern [post]industrial city" (Gandy, 2006, p. 377). Infrastructure becomes central to an understanding of the micro-political and multi-temporal practice of racialized urban exclusion (Rodgers and O'Neill, 2012, p. 407).

Nevertheless, we must press further on the ways in which Occupy Sandy mobilized (both implicitly and explicitly) the notion of infrastructure in their work. To do so, the remainder of this article will take on a much more speculative tone, arguing that Occupy Sandy maintained a (largely latent) understanding that a collectively produced *infrastructural commons* undergirds everyday urban life (Desai et al., 2015, p. 100) – despite the fact that the infrastructures of racial liberalism function as "technologies…of social segregation and distinction" for communities of color (Tonkiss, 2015, p. 386).

Seeing like a city?

It should be clear that Occupy Sandy maintained an infrastructural praxis that sought to foster a politics of connectivity beyond those (dis)connections that are prescribed and obscured under racial capitalism and racial liberalism (cf. Amin, 2004; Holston, 2008). However, as noted, it is important to also recognize that Occupy Sandy's praxis did not begin and end with an acknowledgment that the prevailing modes of infrastructural violence and (dis)connection that define racial liberalism are precarious achievements vulnerable to disruption (cf. Appel et al., 2015; Silver, 2014). Occupy Sandy's work can also be read as predicated on and productive of a reconceptualization of the *city itself* as constituted by an infrastructural commons – even if this understanding was not explicitly articulated (cf. Amin and Thrift, 2017). That is, Occupy Sandy's praxis arguably hinged upon the idea that – despite its splinters (McFarlane et al., 2017, p. 1411) – the city is held together by "systems of sociation," and as such must be distributed equally (see Milstein, 2012; Tonkiss, 2015, p. 385).

For instance, in thinking about how to construct "infrastructure[s]…that did not replicate or entrench social and economic divisions" (Jaleel, 2013), many activists demonstrated an underlying understanding that the city is already reliant on a collectively produced (and in a sense, prefigurative) connective tissue. As Fox (2012) illuminates in his documentary on the Sandy recovery, those standing in the "gap between the haves and have-nots, between the resources and services" (quoted in Fox, 2012), exhibited an understanding of the city that de-centered the "agency of [individual] human subjects" (Amin, 2014, p. 156), making visible its constitutive relational dependencies. Moreover, some activists that worked with and alongside Occupy Sandy articulated the necessity of a preexisting urban commons, of "undifferentiated public space," for "*social* resiliency" in the face of urban crisis (Cowan and Liboiron, 2013, emphasis original). Other commentators made more direct claims, identifying the seeming ontological necessity of "community infrastructure[s]" (cf. Watters, 2014, p. 3) and "convivial social ties" for the maintenance of the city (Shepard, 2013, p. 62). With such gestures, these activists and commentators seemed to re-articulate what prominent theorists of Occupy – more

broadly – have suggested: the city (despite its fractures) is a co-produced "architecture of circulation," which depends on a collective "general intellect," and a range of inter-subjective affective attachments (cf. Casarino and Negri, 2008; Knight, 2014; Tonkiss, 2015).

According to these theorists, Occupy encouraged the notion that the entirety of urban space is both contingent upon and productive of "expansive," socio-material circuits of collective encounter (Hardt and Negri, 2017; cf. Stavrides, n.d.) – rather than merely "provisional" instances of convergence among "people, practices, spaces, and beliefs" (Silver, 2014, p. 800; cf. Simone, 2004). Most obviously, this conception is present in Occupy Sandy's insistence on describing their "infrastructure[s] of solidarity" (Ogman, 2013, p. 30) through the lexicon of mutual aid. Put briefly, mutual aid conveys a relation of "acting-with" the other, and points to the "*generalised* relations of mutuality which societies *inherit and reproduce*" (Ince and Bryant, 2018, p. 4, emphasis added). Therefore, in adopting this language and logic, Occupy Sandy emphasized the notion that "a person is a person because of other people" (Marcuse, 2012) – and that the city exists because of its collectively produced networks. They drew attention to the relational nature of urban space and its constitutive socio-material infrastructures, "prefiguring [how] actions and relationships *that exist today*" might "become dominant in a better world tomorrow" (Marcuse, 2012, emphasis added).

This sense of the city as an already-existing infrastructural commons is also apparent in the claim, suggested by some Occupy Sandy activists and commentators, that any collective encounter in urban space is an exchange that can "support *the existing network* [or] open…other networks" (Watters, 2014, p. 24, emphasis added) – other post-capitalist infrastructures more deliberately "concerned with how resources are cultivated and shared" (cf. Bauer and Ralph, 2012). Against such writing, it is possible to claim that (at least) some Occupy Sandy activists were driven by an underlying concern for how to open the city, as an existing infrastructural commons, to more equitable networks of interaction and organization (see, for instance, Nathanson, 2016); by a desire to extend "the best infrastructure that exists in the city" – "the commons in the city" – in order to produce new forms of "communalism" (see Wedes and Crowley, 2013). Put differently, it is possible to read in such articulations an attempt to transform the collective "social infrastructure" of the city, so as to "allow individuals autonomy in the way they relate to others and pursue their wellbeing" (Watters, 2014, p. 8) – giving "an equal voice to all" in the production and management of urban life (Ciannavei and Liboiron, 2013).

With this reading in mind, we gain a sense of how Occupy Sandy's (at times latent) infrastructural praxis also gestures toward a radically counter-hegemonic notion of urban citizenship – again, even if most activists did not explicitly articulate citizenship claims. These claims are implicit in the general conceptualization that the city is constituted by an infrastructural commons that comes into being through collective participation (cf. Anand, 2011; Lawhon et al., 2018, p. 724). In that context, urban citizenship is no longer intelligible within the liberal discourse of individual entitlement. Rather, a claim to urban citizenship becomes a relational claim to participate not only in the production, but also in the management of the city – a relational claim to "true democracy" (cf. Wedes and Crowley, 2013). Such a conceptualization flies in the face of liberalism's logic of "intersubjective severalty," which attempts to establish "boundaries between people…as a way of delimiting citizenship" (Safransky, 2016, p. 8).

This alternate reading of urban citizenship is suggested, further still, in the ways in which Occupy Sandy extended its infrastructures of mutual aid – its "flow of people, material, information, and other resources" (Greenfield, 2013) – to undocumented immigrants. Occupy Sandy and its partners eagerly served those that lacked a Social Security Number, not only because they could not "get a FEMA number" and access state-based services (Malave et al., 2013), but also (arguably) because they were understood as participants in the production of the city's infrastructural commons, and as subject

to capital's "unjust appropriations" (cf. Greenberg and Lewis, 2017).[4] With this work, Occupy activists gestured toward an insurgent notion of citizenship that challenged, as one commentator put it, the "nationalization of spatial boundaries" (Dawson, 2013). They suggested an understanding of the right to the city that contested the exclusions instantiated under the "entrenched" national regime (cf. Holston, 2011, p. 336); and, they prefigured a "livable city" defined by its porosity – by the opportunities it provides for *diverse* "people to meet, talk, [and] share" freely in the urban commons (Shepard, 2013, p. 62).

Conclusion

As should be clear, closely (and at times speculatively) reading the archive of material on Occupy Sandy – and moving beyond analyses of urban climate-induced disaster that focus solely on the (il)legibility of certain subjects – leads to several productive insights regarding the relationship between climate change, mobility, and racial liberalism's "biopolitics of disposability" (Giroux, 2006). Doing so lays bare the infrastructural quality of American racial liberalism – suggesting that the transcendence of this complex architecture requires new modes of (im)mobility, and new insurgent infrastructures. Further still, it leads us to new conceptualizations of the city and urban citizenship itself, emerging from the notion that urban space is forged "through collective decisions and collective work" (Stavrides, n.d.).

Of course, to make these arguments is not to romanticize Occupy Sandy. The organization functioned largely as a stopgap for a city on the bleeding edge of planetary climate crisis and neoliberal austerity (Aslam, 2017); and it was defined by logistical hiccups, and inclusive of many volunteers (understandably) that did not share its foundational counter-hegemonic logics. Moreover, as is clear above, the radical *infrastructural* politics of the organization are largely recognizable only through a speculative theoretical reading – demonstrating both the limitations of this article and of the use of Occupy Sandy itself as a model for a future emancipatory politics. Nevertheless, it still remains that following Occupy Sandy's praxis allows us to recognize how the (im)mobilities of mutual aid can open up the city itself, in the wake of climate-induced disaster. The storms of the Capitalocene, with this view, become opportunities to "repurpose" the city and "its components to new ends"; they become moments to move away from "the endless valorisation of capital" and toward "an ecological satisfaction of human needs" (Out of the Woods, 2014).

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[4] Of course, lest we think that such a logic only perpetuates a localist understanding of citizenship – restricting citizenship solely to the figure of the inhabitant, or local urban producer (cf. Purcell, 2002) – we must recall that contemporary modes of urban production, and *the constitutive infrastructures of the city*, stretch the "recurrent binaries" of local and global (Brenner and Schmid, 2013; Tonkiss, 2015, p. 384). Therefore, the praxis of Occupy Sandy could point toward an understanding of citizenship that is attentive to one's situatedness in a network of "geographically spread socio-technological configurations" (Lawhon et al., 2018, p. 720), rather than one solely concerned with their fixity on a Cartesian grid.

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