Infrastructure and the Black Panther Party

Toward an Infrastructural Politics

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a study of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and (its) infrastructure(s). After reviewing the relevant literatures of critical, political, and media theory; infrastructure studies; and BPP scholarship, a discourse analysis of 127 issues of *The Black Panther* newspaper published between April 25, 1967 and March 6, 1971was conducted through the lens of infrastructure. What emerges from the discourse analysis is a concept of infrastructural politics.

First, infrastructural politics activates infrastructure as a site of political struggle. This describes the BPP's emergence in response to unwanted (in the form of the police) and insufficient (anti-poverty programs) infrastructure for the Black community. Second, infrastructural politics describes a mode of praxis whereby providing and becoming infrastructure to the people comprises politics as such. The BPP's Service to the People Programs exemplify this mode of political praxis. Last, infrastructural politics draws attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements. As the primary site through which the BPP mediated itself to itself, *The Black Panther* was the most important of the party's various communicational infrastructures.

Finally, the discourse analysis is placed within the wider cultural and political context of postmodernism. The thesis argues that the Black Panther Party articulated an aesthetics of cognitive mapping endemic to late capitalism by virtue of their infrastructural politics. Because infrastructure has a special relationship to cognitive mapping, it is argued that this last should be adopted as an imperative for infrastructuralism, toward an infrastructural politics.

I. Introduction

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was founded in October 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California. Disaffected with the Black nationalist student groups they had been in, Newton and Seale founded the party to combat police brutality against Black Americans through armed resistance. By 1969 the Black Panther Party (BPP) had dropped "for Self Defense" from its name to better reflect its political orientation and expanded its scale and scope to a national and international revolutionary vanguard party, attracting media attention and immense government repression. The BPP produced some of the most iconic and enduring moments of the American 1960s, both culturally and politically: in cities across the country, openly armed Black men and women, uniformed in black leather jackets and black berets, defiantly raised their fists to shouts of "Free Huey!" and "Power to the people," fed breakfast to hungry school children, and stood up to the "pigs" and the imperialist American government they represented. Before its eventual dissolution in 1982, the BPP and its members faced intra- and inter-group conflict, targeted state violence and infiltration, and political imprisonment and exile, while attaining international prominence and leaving a lasting imprint not only on Black radicalism but on American culture more broadly.

Many scholars consider the BPP to be one of the most important, if not the most important, radical political organization of the American 60s. According to Angela Davis (1993), the Panthers "radically transformed the Black liberation movement" in their time (p. 1). The BPP was the most prominent and influential Black radical group of the 60s and early 70s (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 160; Johnson, III, 1998, p. 391; Malloy, 2017, p. 1). For Jones (1998a), it was "perhaps the most visible and controversial radical organization of the Black liberation struggle" on the whole (p. 11). Katsiaficas (2001, p. vii) goes further, calling the BPP "the most

significant revolutionary organization in the United States during the latter half of the twentieth century" (p. vii). The Panthers are perhaps best known today for their unrepentant use of violence as a political tactic, Free Breakfast for School Children programs, and iconic image that endures in media representations and cultural memory. While many scholars have highlighted their leadership, origins, connections to the Black Power movement, media representations, and cultural legacy, until recently (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013; Malloy, 2017) few have focused on the BPP's politics—that is, their unity of theory and praxis—as a revolutionary party in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism.

This is a study of the BPP and (its) infrastructure(s). As commonly understood, infrastructures are large networks of durable systems that underlie and make possible everyday life while remaining mostly invisible—except when they break down. Highways, electrical grids, sewer systems, and the internet are all examples of infrastructure in this concrete sense. In another sense, born out of science and technology studies, infrastructure is less a thing and more something that happens; less concrete and discrete than conceptual and relational (Star & Ruhleder, 1996). As defined in one of the founding papers of infrastructure studies, "an infrastructure occurs when local practices are afforded by a large-scale technology, which can then be used in a natural ready-to-hand fashion. […] This is not a physical location nor a permanent one, but a working relation" (Star & Ruhleder, 1996, p. 114). Within this tradition, infrastructure is never purely technical but always sociotechnical. Well-established human practices are infrastructure in combination with the technical systems through which they might be enacted. More conceptual still—and yet more concrete as well—is a new perspective in media studies called infrastructuralism that urges us to focus on the elemental substrates that mediate between the human and non-human, nature and culture (Peters, 2015b). In this view, the earth,

the sea, and the sky are all media—and thus infrastructure. The environment, among other things, is infrastructural to our habits, organizations, and modes of being in the world. I here deploy infrastructure in all of this conceptual richness, intending each of these entangled senses in turn and often simultaneously.

The central wager of this study is that infrastructure can be a powerful organizing concept for radical politics as well as a discerning lens for analysis of the same. My aim is to formulate a concept of infrastructural politics that is useful to both communication scholars and radical politics. Like infrastructure, infrastructural politics is multivalent. My formulation of this concept is informed by the BPP's unique history, practice, and writings; Marxist political and cultural theory; and the recent infrastructural turn in communication and media studies.

In a study of the BPP through the lens of infrastructure, I articulate the concept of infrastructural politics in three different but related senses. First, infrastructural politics activates infrastructure as a site of political struggle. This describes the BPP's emergence in response to unwanted (in the form of the police) and insufficient (anti-poverty programs) infrastructure for the Black community (Bassett, 2019; Malloy, 2017; Nelson, 2011; Self, 2006; Singh, 1998a; Spencer, 2016). Second, infrastructural politics describes a mode of praxis whereby providing and becoming infrastructure to the people comprises politics as such. The BPP's well-known Service to the People Programs exemplify this mode of political praxis (Hilliard, 2008). Last, infrastructural politics draws attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements. The BPP's newspaper *The Black Panther* was the most important of the party's various communicational infrastructures (Alkebulan, 2007; Davenport, 1998; Fearnley, 2019; Heath, 1976a). Reading past issues of the paper illuminates how this communicational infrastructure sustained affective investment in political struggle by mediating the BPP to itself.

This research is socially significant because it investigates how a recent and influential political party, the BPP, opposed injustices and responded to challenges that are still faced. American imperialism, multinational capital, infrastructural decay, racism, and police brutality—the main targets of the BPP's critique and opposition—all persist today in familiar and unfamiliar forms, provoking countless resistances to the material conditions they engender. Black Americans continue to resist racism and police brutality, most visibly in the Black Lives Matter movement and most recently in a wave of uprisings sparked by the police murder of George Floyd. The neoliberal state, still taking shape in the late 60s, continues to abdicate its duty to provide and maintain basic infrastructures, increasingly subjecting what should be—and even once were—public utilities to commoditization, market logics, and the extraction of profit by private corporations. Simultaneously, it imposes infrastructures where they are unwanted: digital surveillance, facial recognition, and algorithmic policing, for example. Unsurprisingly, the poor and people of color suffer especially. Meanwhile, corporate platforms reap enormous profits and exert massive influence in the world while avoiding meaningful regulation or accountability, having privatized communication as such by attaining the status of infrastructure (Plantin et al., 2018).

Globally, conditions of precarity prevail within the dizzyingly complex supply chains of multinational capital. The capitalist mode of production has turned to forms of enclosure both old and new: indigenous lands are violently seized for commercial farming and oil extraction, and it's increasingly difficult to communicate at all without being mined for data and surplus-value. Peoples of the Global South endure brutal working conditions providing the raw materials that comprise the infrastructures of the North while bearing the unequal brunt of climate change. Forms of imperialism reinforce patterns of global exploitation through financial coercion and

technological development in addition to actual and threatened violence. What infrastructure provides is a unifying lens through which to view diverse struggles against these present conditions as connected rather than disparate (Barney, 2018; Cowen, 2017). Studying the BPP's responses to many of these same injustices through this lens is instructive for those attempting to understand and oppose them today.

In his seminal account of postmodernism, Fredric Jameson (1991) diagnoses radical politics in late capitalism with a spatial disorder: postmodern subjects are unable to locate their position within and understand their relationship to the world system of multinational capital. This forecloses radical opposition to capital. What he prescribes is an aesthetics of cognitive mapping that seeks a new mode of representing capital and our relationships to it. Infrastructure, I will argue, provides a potential fulfilment of this speculative imperative because of its unique characteristics.

Recent political movements responding to the mounting pressures of multinational capitalism and its symptoms have been innumerable, amorphous, and—often—unsuccessful. Many movements, like Occupy, fail to articulate concrete demands. Some scholars have stopped discussing collective politics at all; instead, they study "connective action" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013) and "social movements" (Castells, 2013). Repeatedly, contemporary political movements run up against issues of endurance and scale—similar to those identified by Jameson.

In response to the successes and failures of decentralized, digitally networked movements, Marxist political scientist Jodi Dean (2016) advocates a re-animation of the party form, which she theorizes as an "affective infrastructure" for collective, revolutionary politics (p. 209). The party, she argues, performs an essential affective function, channeling amorphous energies into focused and enduring political emotion—thereby producing comrades (Dean,

2019). Dean's theorization provides a framework for my analysis of *The Black Panther*, as I mine the paper's discourse for expressions of her eight characteristics of the party and the comrade.

Communication scholars are uniquely positioned to elaborate upon Dean's political-theoretical innovation because the affective infrastructures of political parties are often largely communicational. They are sustained through processes of communication in media that are the traditional purview of communication research: speech, writing, print, email, mobile phones, social media, and, in the case of the BPP, a newspaper. Moreover, new media technologies are increasingly entangled in techno-capital, geopolitics, and climate change and thus becoming the terrain of political contestation. As a result, the study of infrastructure along political, cultural, and ecological—in addition to technological—lines is a burgeoning area of research in media studies. This study therefore contributes to the growing literatures of infrastructure studies, critical theory, and, of course, the BPP.

Infrastructure as an organizing concept and critical lens responds to material conditions that obtain both locally and globally to formulate a concept, infrastructural politics, that is useful for political struggle and scholarship of this last. Activating infrastructure as a site of political struggle highlights the ways in which access to essential goods and services is increasingly a privilege reserved for the wealthy and exploited for profit, and politicizes the demand for basic necessities. It enables the Left to articulate this demand on behalf of a generic political subject, the people, and to again offer a viable alternative vision of the world by beginning to build infrastructures of its own as a mode of political praxis. Moreover, infrastructural politics responds to climate change—in which new media is implicated equally as much as any other industry except, perhaps, fossil fuels—by understanding the Earth itself as our most important

infrastructure that is increasingly ravaged by the few at the expense of the many. It highlights the communicational infrastructures necessary for sustaining political movements in space and time. And last, infrastructure enacts the aesthetics of cognitive mapping that is requisite for any radical politics in late capitalism.

II. Literature Review

My interest in the BPP and (its) infrastructure(s) emerges out of a matrix of critical, political, and media theory; infrastructure studies; and existent BPP scholarship. I review the relevant literatures to clarify this generative matrix and situate the present study. In so doing, I highlight the frequent co-occurrence of infrastructure and politics that provocatively re-surfaces in each of these discrete literatures and catalyzes my research.

First, I summarize Jameson's (1991) seminal account of postmodernism. Jameson identifies the representational challenge of a new "postmodern hyperspace" symptomatic of late capitalism and prescribes an aesthetics of cognitive mapping for radical politics to resist it (p. 44). His speculation on the role of new communication technologies in cognitive mapping is a first suggestive hint at the relevance of infrastructure to postmodern political questions. Postmodernism sets the critical theoretical backdrop for recent analyses of the current political landscape that emphasize the integral role of affect in contemporary social and political movements (Dean, 2010; Papacharissi, 2015). Responding to the successes and failures of recent political uprisings, Dean (2016) argues from a Marxist-Leninist position for a revival of the party form for radical politics. Innovatively emphasizing the psychodynamics of political struggle, she theorizes the vanguard party as an "affective infrastructure" for sustaining revolutionary feeling and political action (Dean, 2016, 2019). This formulation provides a direct opening to the infrastructure concept, upon which I elaborate in order to mobilize it in my analysis of the BPP. Moreover, Dean's eight affective concepts of the party and the comrade provide the framework for part of my analysis, which traces their appearance in the discourse of *The Black Panther* newspaper.

Next, I expand the infrastructure concept, reviewing most of the scholarship that has led to its prominence in contemporary discourse across many fields. I explore its media theoretical, sociotechnical, and concrete valences. Each of these, in turn, points to the question of politics, cementing the constitutive relationship between infrastructure and this last. My analysis of the BPP and articulation of infrastructural politics incorporates all of infrastructure's multifaceted conceptual and methodological richness.

Last, I position my own research in conversation with extant scholarship on the BPP by reviewing key work. This includes general, local, and international histories and especially relevant studies of the party's survival programs and newspaper. I conclude by grounding my infrastructural approach to *The Black Panther* newspaper in recent journalism scholarship that mobilizes the infrastructure concept as well (Ananny, 2012, 2018). As will be seen, the question and connection of infrastructure and politics return again and again throughout each of these diverse literatures. I take this as an invitation and provocation to synthesis, elaboration, and further study.

A. Postmodernism, Politics, and Affect

The BPP emerged within a historical period of national and international political unrest. In the United States, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements were in full swing alongside the antiwar movement opposing the Vietnam War. Globally, the late 1960s exploded with radical democratic and socialist protests, movements, and revolts from Brazil to Ireland—perhaps the most famous of these being the events of May 68 in France.

In the cultural sphere, this period of history is marked by the rise of what many scholars have come to call "postmodernism" (D. Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991). Infamously slippery, postmodernism indexes profound shifts not just in culture but on the terrain of political struggle

as well, symptomatic as it is of a mutation in capitalist accumulation dubbed "late" or "multinational" capitalism (Mandel, 1972). Scholars have recommended situating the BPP in wider, global, historical, political, cultural, and economic contexts to overcome the limitations of previous work that places the BPP narrowly within their immediate American Civil Rights context (Clemons & Jones, 2001; Lazerow & Williams, 2006a; Malloy, 2017; Singh, 1998a). Consequently, it is within the cultural, political, and economic foment of postmodernism that I situate my analysis of the BPP.

Many other scholars situate the BPP within this context as well, though not often explicitly. Singh (1998a), one of the few scholars to invoke postmodernism by name, suggests that the BPP's emergence is "consonant" with the "broader set of social, cultural, and political transformations" that have come to be known as postmodernism, but he argues that "the primary determinations of Panther politics actually lay elsewhere" in a "dialectical projection of local/global liberation" (p. 82). As I will show, however, the BPP's mapping of the local and global responds to a quintessentially postmodern condition. Echoing Hayes and Kiene (1998) and Malloy (2017), Narayan (2017, 2020) has recently argued that Huey Newton's thought largely anticipates later postmodern theories of empire and that the BPP's politics responded to neoliberal globalization in its embryonic form.

Jameson's (1991) account of postmodernism provides the broader theoretical grounding for my approach to the BPP first because of its canonical status and, second, because it poses questions that remain provocatively relevant today. I begin this section by summarizing his diagnosis of postmodernism with a spatial disorder. His speculative prescription for an aesthetics of cognitive mapping and related analysis of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement serve as a guide for extracting lessons from the contemporaneous experiences of the BPP.

I then shift to a more current moment, considering work on recent political movements by a politically minded communication scholar (Papacharissi, 2015) and a media-attuned political scientist (Dean, 2016, 2019). Both scholars orient our attention to the intertwined roles of infrastructure and affect in political movements. Dean poses her theorizations of the revolutionary party (2016) and the comrade (2019), in particular, as answers to the present impasses of decentralized movements. Her theory of the party as an "affective infrastructure" (Dean, 2016, p. 209) serves as an opening to my infrastructuralist approach, while Jameson's prescription for cognitive mapping provides a critical-theoretical problematic in response to which I pose my analysis of the BPP and address the concept of infrastructural politics.

1. Postmodernism and cognitive mapping

In his seminal periodizing hypothesis, Jameson (1984b, 1991) catalogues the new cultural logic of late capitalism that has come to be called postmodernism. For Jameson, it is essential that postmodernism is not just a style but a "cultural dominant" that contains "the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features" (1991, p. 4). Empirically, the movements and styles of various postmodernisms are "chaotic" and "heterogeneous," but they share "one fundamental feature:" "the effacement in them of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture" (Jameson, 1991, pp. 1–2). This feature is particularly prominent in postmodern architecture, typified by Robert Venturi's (1972) *Learning from Las Vegas*.

The example of architecture—through which Jameson initially developed many of his thoughts—illustrates most clearly the crucial defining characteristics of postmodernism. Importantly, the stakes of Jameson's argument are not purely cultural: his thesis of postmodernism as a cultural dominant depends on identifying late capitalism—in opposition to

many countervailing theories—as a global totality continuous with "classical" capitalism (Jameson, 1991, p. 3). Marxian economist Ernest Mandel (1972) provides the support for this position by showing that late capitalism not only still follows the laws of classical capitalism but actually represents an intensification of its contradictions as analyzed by Marx and Lenin. Jameson maps the cultural periods of realism, modernism, and postmodernism onto Mandel's three stages of capitalism: market capitalism, monopoly capitalism or the stage of imperialism, and late or multinational capitalism. This last is described as fulfilling the historical role which Marx set for capitalism: developing the productive forces of society and interconnecting the world (Mandel, 1972, p. 222). In response to the limit imposed by the diminishing surplus profits caused by increasing automation, one of the motor forces of late capitalism is the commodification of previously uncommodified areas (Jameson, 1991, p. 36; Mandel, 1972, p. 206). For Jameson, these are Nature (represented by the spread of capitalist agriculture to the Global South) and the Unconscious (through the rise of advertising) (1991, p. 36). Late capitalism is thus a total world system; no longer confined to producing commodities in the industrialized world, capital extends into every possible corner of the globe—and, in fact, vitally depends upon doing so.

The breakdown of high and low culture is situated within and expressive of this late capitalist world system. "What has happened," Jameson observes, "is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally" (1991, p. 4). Architecture, as the form of cultural production with the closest relationship to the economic, is then, consequently, the most paradigmatic expression of the new postmodernism. Postmodernist architecture precipitates "mutations in the lived experience of built space itself" which are related to and expressive of "the bewildering new world space of late multinational capital"

(Jameson, 1984b, p. 58). Through a study of the Bonaventura Hotel in Los Angeles, Jameson develops a concept of what he calls "postmodern hyperspace" which:

> "has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. [...] this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment [...] can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communication network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects." (Jameson, 1991, p. 44)

This spatial problem presents, according to Jameson, the most significant challenge for any radical politics in late capitalism. Because subjects are neither able to represent multinational capital nor locate their position within its world system, they are incapable of effectively opposing it.

To illustrate this challenge, Jameson briefly narrates the history of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers as studied by Georgakas and Surkin (1975). In the late 1960s, this revolutionary movement amassed substantial power in automobile factories in Detroit, elected judges, and nearly won the mayoral office. Soon, however, the movement crumbled. The problem they ran up against was a spatial one: how to build and expand a revolutionary political program based on the city to the national and international scale of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991, pp. 413–415). The problem, according to Jameson, is analogous to that of postmodern architecture's new hyperspace: the impossibility of adequately representing it and one's relation to it. In the absence of an adequate

representation, the question of how to act—simultaneously on a local, national, and global scale—is unanswerable.

In response to this unique problem, Jameson a revives the pedagogical function of art to postulate a hypothetical aesthetic for "a new radical cultural politics" in postmodernism (1984b, p. 89). This is the aesthetics of cognitive mapping. Jameson describes this speculative aesthetic as a synthesis of Althusser's theory of ideology with the work of geographer Kevin Lynch. In a landmark study, Lynch (1960) argues that people's experience of urban space is directly related to its "imageability"—that is, the extent to which, by virtue of its physical qualities, one can develop and maintain a mental representation of a city (p. 9). This mental representation is a cognitive map, and what Lynch finds is that those cities whose low imageability inhibits the formation of cognitive maps also produce alienation in their residents.

Jameson extrapolates Lynch's insight on cognitive maps of urban space to the abstract social and political space of late capitalism by positing an analogous relationship to Althusser's theory of ideology (Jameson, 1991, p. 415). Althusser's positive innovation upon the classical Marxist theory of ideology is seminal. In place of the negative "false consciousness," Althusser gives ideology a psychoanalytically inflected definition: "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1970/1971, p. 162). In other words, ideology is not simply incorrect ideas but rather a manifestation of positive belief about one's relationship to the relations of production that "has a material existence" (Althusser, 1970/1971, p. 165). Ideology is not just how one thinks, but how one acts (Žižek, 1989).

Jameson's analogy between cognitive mapping and ideology is apt. Already for Lynch, the cognitive map is "a general frame of reference within which the individual can act, or to which he can attach his knowledge" or "a body of belief, or a set of social customs: it is an

organizer of facts and possibilities" (1960, p. 126). Moreover, it's consequential: "the incapacity to map socially," Jameson contends, "is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience" (1988, p. 353). For Jameson, cognitive mapping is a positive version of ideology in a doubled sense. First, it relies on Althusser's positive redefinition, and second, opposed to the 'bad' kind of ideology, cognitive mapping is good, revolutionary: "'cognitive mapping' [is] in reality nothing but a code word for 'class consciousness'" (Jameson, 1991, pp. 417–418). In other words, an adequate representation of one's relationship to multinational capitalism is requisite for revolutionary class consciousness.

Interestingly, Jameson identifies a prefiguration of successful cognitive mapping in postmodern cyberpunk fiction's paranoid obsession with telecommunications and computational networks. Information and communications technology, he speculates, "seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp—namely the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself" (Jameson, 1984b, pp. 79–80). In a way, this is unsurprising: one of the defining characteristics of late capitalism is its dependence upon new technology (Mandel, 1972). Moreover, insofar as this is the case, it marks an early suggestion as to the importance of infrastructure for understanding late capitalism and, by extension, cognitive mapping. Because information and technologies are the infrastructure of late capitalism, they appear to have a special relationship to cognitive mapping.

By analyzing the BPP, who were contemporaries of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement—both grappling with the challenges of late capitalism and, in fact, briefly working together to do so—I hope to reinvigorate the question of cognitive mapping with the possible answer of infrastructure. In the following section I review

some contemporary studies of recent political movements that echo an interest in infrastructure through the current salience of affect, lending some initial support and analytical tools to my approach.

2. Politics and affect

Not unlike the late 1960s, the early 21st century has witnessed political upheaval across the globe. In the United States and abroad, countless people have taken to the streets to protest austerity, neoliberal globalization, and tyrannical rule, among other things. What distinguishes these movements from previous ones—or at least most frequently catches the eyes of commentators—is their use of new social networking tools to produce adhoc organizations of resistance. In their analyses, Dean (2010, 2016) and Papacharissi (2015) demonstrate the affective nature of these contemporary mass- and social-mediated political movements.

The contemporary salience of affect indexes the persistence of postmodernism today. Affect has attained notable prominence in contemporary discourse within media, literary, art, and political theory (Berlant, 2011; Clough & Hally, 2007; Grusin, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Stewart, 2007). It is most simply defined as intensity or feeling, but it's important to distinguish it from emotion.[1] Affect is physiological, tied to the body, and pre-linguistic while emotion is "qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning" (Massumi, 2002, p. 27). Clough (2007) challenges Massumi's characterization of affect as presocial, providing a more nuanced, dialectical definition of the concept: "affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a

[1] For a more complete genealogy of the concept see Papacharissi (2015), and for the most comprehensive introduction, Clough and Hally (2007).

body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect […] Affect constitutes a nonlinear complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are subtracted" (p. 2).

At first, the prominence of affect today would appear to present a serious refutation of Jameson's theory of postmodernism, which identifies the waning of affect as one of its characteristic features. Jameson's initial characterization, however, is incorrect; he "used the wrong word" (Jameson, 2016, p. 151). In reality, what he identifies is the waning of emotion (Jameson, 2016, p. 152) that results from the loss of historicity and, today, the decline of symbolic efficiency (Dean, 2010; Žižek, 1999). In postmodernism, signifiers become untethered from that which they signify, foreclosing emotion because emotion requires symbolic articulation. Moreover, "schizophrenic" postmodern subjects experience time as an endless series of presents, unable to connect the past with the future (Jameson, 1991, pp. 25–27). What results is an increase of pure feeling or intensity, devoid of symbolization. In other words, Jameson's waning of affect and its elevation in contemporary discourse index two reciprocal movements of the same symptom of late capitalism.

Recent scholarship demonstrates the constitutive affective quality of contemporary politics especially. Dean (2010) analyzes the way in which social networking sites capture subjects in a circuit of drive that feeds off the affective nuggets of enjoyment users get from clicking, liking, linking, and commenting. What results is the entrapment or subsumption of ostensibly democratic energy and values within corporate networks of profit extraction, or what Dean (2005) calls "communicative capitalism." Challenging in some ways Dean's pessimism about the democratic potential of social networking sites, Papacharissi (2015) keys in on the more instrumental use of Twitter in Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and everyday political discourse. While it would be a mistake to attribute any of these political uprisings exclusively to

new media technologies, Twitter did serve as the infrastructure for what Papacharissi (2015) calls “affective publics”—“networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment” (p. 125). As she demonstrates, social networking sites can facilitate the formation of publics around sentiment and feeling that, sometimes, achieve radical political victories.

While Papacharissi maintains a measured ambivalence, Dean (2016) adopts a much more polemical tack toward recent political movements. She writes that the short lifespan of recent political movements and protests are “forcing the Left to return again to questions of organization, endurance, and scale” (2016, p. 4). The decline of symbolic efficiency and resultant rise of affect foreclose political opposition to capitalism because, for Dean, politics necessitate antagonism and, thus, symbolization. In response, she argues from a Marxist-Leninist position for a revitalization of the party form. Innovatively, she “approache[s] the function and purpose of the communist party psycho-dynamically,” by theorizing “the affects the party generates and the unconscious processes it mobilizes” (p. 5). For Dean, the role of the vanguard party is to provide a structure for extending and maintaining the egalitarian, affective discharge of protest through the organization of political will. Integral to this process is how the party institutes the symbolization requisite for radical politics: “there is no politics until a meaning is announced and the struggle over this meaning begins” (Dean, 2016, p. 125). “The communist party provides an affective infrastructure” for conducting this struggle by molding affect into emotion and, thus, a politics that it then directs (p. 210).

Dean’s formulation of the party as an “affective infrastructure” provides a major catalyst and conceptual framework for the present study of the BPP. Recently, she has extended her psychodynamic framework to the figure of the comrade as well (Dean, 2019). While the party

facilitates “concentration, endurance, fidelity, and transference,” the comrade, as a subject-effect of the party, exhibits “discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage” (Dean, 2019, p. 91). In Dean’s psychoanalytic theory, the party “is a site of transferential relations” because its collectivity is “irreducible to its members” (2016, pp. 184, 181). The party is not a collection of individuals but a collectivity that thus “exerts a force counter to personal desire” back upon its members (Dean, 2016, p. 182). The party concentrates the energies of the crowd after the protestors have all gone home; the collective of the party places demands upon individuals to concentrate on organization and struggle. In the party, “cooperation and concentration become self-conscious and willed rather than unconscious and determined” (Dean, 2016, p. 253). This organized concentration of energies gives the party the capacity to endure. In so doing, it maintains fidelity to the event of the crowd or protest as a collective desire for collectivity—fighting to manifest this truth in the world.

As the site of the party’s subjectivization, the comrade exhibits discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage in collectivity. The party endures through comrades’ discipline: “the language through which previously inchoate and individual longing becomes collective will” (Dean, 2019, p. 85). Comrades work diligently and purposefully, subordinating their individualistic desires to the needs of the collective. Discipline produces joy: “through the intense collectivity that discipline enables, comrades can do the impossible […] Joy accompanies the sense of collective invincibility” (Dean, 2019, p. 88). This joy in collective discipline results in enthusiasm. Collectivity produces a capacity in excess of an aggregate of individuals. Last, this enables courage: “the courage of the comrade is not an individual virtue. It’s an effect of discipline, the strength that arises as a result of self-denial in the service of common struggle” (Dean, 2019, p. 89). Comrades feel, through the power of collectivity, that they can do anything.

Given its organization as a revolutionary vanguard party, the BPP can be expected to express similar affective characteristics in its discourse. These eight concepts—concentration, endurance, fidelity, and transference; discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage—serve as watchwords for my reading of *The Black Panther* newspaper. I structure my discourse analysis around tracing these eight concepts in the BPP's newspaper as the primary site through which the party mediated itself. My analysis thus also acts as a verification of Dean's psychodynamic theory. The vanguard party as an affective infrastructure provides a powerful perspective for this investigation through the rich conceptual multiplicity of infrastructure, reviewed in the following section. My study attempts to identify resonances between the discourse of the BPP and these scholarly literatures.

B. Infrastructure: Media Theoretical, Sociotechnical, and Concrete

In the introduction, I state that the ultimate goal of this study is to articulate a concept of infrastructural politics that is useful for political struggle and scholarly analysis of the same. Jameson's theory of postmodernism and prescription for cognitive mapping provide the critical theoretical backdrop to which I respond, and Dean's innovative theorization of the party as an affective infrastructure serves as an initial catalyst that I extend toward the concept of infrastructural politics. This concept operates at three interrelated levels of signification, each of which is both descriptive and prescriptive. First, it indicates and recommends the activation of infrastructure as a site of political struggle. One can look to the recent resistances to the Dakota Access Pipeline or water crisis in Flint, Michigan as examples of this; the scholarship on infrastructure provides many more. Second, it identifies providing and becoming infrastructure as a mode of political praxis. The BPP's Service to the People programs are an excellent example: the party, as an infrastructure for political struggle, provides the basic necessities of life

to the people, becoming infrastructure for its communities. Third, it draws both scholars' and activists' attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements: meetings, correspondence, conferences, publications, etc. At their edges, these three distinct meanings blend into one another: when infrastructure is activated as a site of political struggle, providing infrastructure becomes a political act; as a party or movement provides infrastructure to the people, it becomes infrastructural in a deeper sense; in order to maintain the party as an affective infrastructure, attention must be paid to the communicational infrastructure that mediates and sustains it.

Each of the three meanings of infrastructural politics corresponds loosely to and is informed by three major currents in scholarship on infrastructure. Attention to the communicational infrastructure of political movements reflects the perspective of infrastructuralism as a *media theoretical* concern for the processes and things that stand under and sustain. Sociological and anthropological scholarship on infrastructure as a *sociotechnical* system emphasizes the entanglement of social and technical practices, revealing the way in which human activity can be infrastructural. Last, much recent work in media studies identifies and activates *concrete* infrastructures as sites of political contestation and struggle. Again, these different conceptualizations of infrastructure are not entirely discrete; they overlap, bleed together, and inform one another. Many scholars interested in concrete infrastructures, for example, study the human practices that sustain them and their elemental materiality as well.

1. Media theoretical

At the highest level of conceptual abstraction is a new media theoretical approach (reluctantly) christened "infrastructuralism" by John Durham Peters (2015a, 2015b). Though infrastructuralism is the most theoretical of the perspectives considered here, it is simultaneously

concerned with the materiality of things. Peters (2015a) develops a "philosophy of elemental media"—of the elements and the environment as media that "anchor our existence and make what we are doing possible" (pp. 1–2). His concern is not for the media as conventionally understood (a particular set of institutions) but for media in general, for that which mediates. Media are metaphors and infrastructures that enable and sustain particular relations of people and things. For cetaceans and ships, the sea is a medium; for sailors and soothsayers, the stars are a medium. For Peters, "media are our environments, our infrastructures of being, the habits and materials through which we act and are" (2015a, p. 33). Infrastructuralism catalyzes attention to mediation between and behind the scenes that makes life-worlds possible. This making-possible constitutes an infrastructural relation.

Peters argues that "media" referred to elements and environments long before it came to mean human communication.[2] This conception, latent in the history of communication and media studies, should be revived in order for media studies to respond to the unavoidable contemporary entanglements of humans, nature, and technics: "a historical moment in which we cannot think of computation without thinking about carbon, or of the cloud without thinking about data" (Peters, 2015b, p. 49). Infrastructuralism as a media-theoretical perspective thus circles around to infrastructure in the ordinary sense of the word, though in an expanded way. It reorients media studies toward an investigation of the "unthought environments in which we live," toward a focus on the foundations of being and a focus on foundations that's as interested in concrete slabs as it is in first principles (2015b, p. 148). Not only are roads and plumbing infrastructures, but the Earth is (the ultimate) infrastructure as well (Edwards, 2003, p. 196; Peters, 2015b, p. 14).

[2] For a more comprehensive philological account of this historically new transhistorical term, see Guillory (2010).

Infrastructuralism is not exclusively concerned with materiality, however; social and cultural practices are also infrastructural. Borrowing from Kittler, Peters suggests that media studies is not an "object field" but rather a "way-of-seeing" field (2015b, p. 27). Infrastructuralism is thus a way of seeing things in relation and practices as sustaining structures of organization. Infrastructures are always entanglements of the human and non-human. Infrastructuralism thus resonates with sociotechnical conceptions of infrastructure as well. Infrastructures can be "hard and soft, material and cultural" (Peters, 2015a, p. 41). At one extreme, infrastructure is sometimes not a thing at all but an ensemble of "cultural techniques" like lists (Young, 2017b) or files (Vismann, 2000/2008).

The seminal communication scholarship of Harold Innis (1950/2007, 1951/2008), from whom Peters draws much inspiration, can be read as a proto-infrastructuralism because it understands communication media (clay tablets, parchment, newspapers, etc.) as infrastructures of civilization alongside economic staples (Young, 2017a). In Innis, mediated communication practices are placed alongside dirt and industry as infrastructural to civilization. This valence of infrastructuralism inspires the present study's interest in communication as the infrastructure of a political party.

Other scholars, as well, have recently explored infrastructuralist perspectives. Interested primarily in affect and politics, Berlant (2016) offers a political vision of infrastructuralism that resonates with my own adaptation of the approach. Berlant uses the concept of "glitch" to theorize present economic and environmental crises as breakdowns in the infrastructure of reproduction. Repairing these infrastructures, however, works only to maintain the status quo that they reproduce. Rather, to effect radical change we must imagine and build infrastructures that are "non-reproductive, generating a form from within brokenness beyond the exigencies of

the current crisis, and alternatively to it too" (Berlant, 2016, p. 393). From this perspective, "the question of politics becomes identical with the reinvention of infrastructures" for life (Berlant, 2016, p. 394). Echoing Berlant's concern with affect, Wilson (2016) writes about public restrooms and telephones as infrastructures for intimacy. A recent infrastructuralist intervention in political economy rethinks the economic as well in terms of the social consumption of foundational services (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018). Thus, there are strongly political and affective overtones expressed in media-theoretical infrastructuralism.

2. Sociotechnical

Infrastructure owes much of its prominence in scholarly attention to the pathbreaking work of Susan Leigh Star (1999, 2002; Star & Bowker, 2006; Star & Ruhleder, 1996). Star's scholarship is foundational to approaching infrastructure as a relational, sociotechnical assemblage. Her studies of computer and information systems emphasize that infrastructure is a relational concept that knits together social practices and technical objects. This heterogeneity of infrastructure—both social and technical at once—is integral to my own deployment of the concept.

Star's early definitional work and methodological recommendations have provided the foundation for most scholarship on infrastructure since. In a paper that marks the inauguration of infrastructure studies, Star and Ruhleder (1996) follow Jewett and Kling (1991) by defining infrastructure as "a fundamentally relational concept" (p. 113). Challenging the common notion that infrastructure is an inert substrate that pre-exists and is indifferent to what runs atop it, Star and Ruhleder argue instead that infrastructure is "something that emerges for people in practice, connected to activities and structures. […] It becomes infrastructure in relation to organized practices" (pp. 112–113). In a study of a software system produced for geneticists to

collaboratively research the *c.elegans* worm genome, Star and Ruhleder define infrastructure as possessing the following characteristics: embeddedness, transparency, reach or scope, learned as part of membership in a community, links with conventions of practice, embodiment of standards, built upon an installed base, and becomes visible upon breakdown (p. 113). On this definition, infrastructure cannot be bounded a prioi; instead, something becomes infrastructure through and in relation to social use and practice.

Because infrastructure emerges in relation to human practice, Star (1999, 2002) recommends and practices ethnographic methods for studying it. This approach is useful in two ways: first, it provides a way to talk about "the-social-and-the-technical, all in one breath" by studying infrastructure in its actual use (Law, 1991, p. 8); second, it reveals the politics embedded in infrastructural invisibility (Star, 1991, 2002; Star & Bowker, 2006). One of the most striking lessons of Star's ethnographic work is that sophisticated technical systems often fail to become infrastructure for one simple reason that has infinitely many explanations: people don't use them (Star & Bowker, 2006; Star & Ruhleder, 1996). A simplistic, purely technical view of infrastructure ignores how the design, construction, implementation, and maintenance of technical systems are all social practices. And if they don't all happen, there is no infrastructure to speak of. Edwards (2003) reiterates this position, writing that "all infrastructures (indeed, all 'technologies') are in fact sociotechnical in nature. Not only hardware but organizations, socially communicated background knowledge, general acceptance and reliance, and near-ubiquitous accessibility are required for a system to be an infrastructure" (p. 188).

Social practices are not superimposed upon or external to infrastructure. Rather, infrastructure-as-relation is comprised of the social and the technical in equal parts. Messenger boys (Downey, 2002) and cybercafé operators (Harris, 2015), for example, are active agents in

supplementing and subverting telegraph and internet systems to which they are equally as infrastructural as wires and modems. Likewise, urban infrastructures shape the social and are, in turn, reconfigured by communities of use (Amin, 2014); people act as infrastructure (Mattern, 2015b; Simone, 2004). Not only are technical objects suffused with social qualities, but social practices have technical characteristics and are enacted through technical means as well (Law, 1991). Mattern (2013, 2015b) shows how democracy in ancient Greece and Rome was as much a social question as it was a technical challenge of amplifying the human voice through built space. My own interest in infrastructure is strongly informed by this perspective that infrastructure impacts social practices which are, in turn, infrastructural as well.

Lastly, because infrastructures are equally as social as they are technical, they embed politics in their invisibility. Infrastructure is transparent—a term borrowed from computer science to describe the invisible support of a task (Star, 2002; Star & Ruhleder, 1996). For example, when you open a folder on your computer desktop by double clicking it, the computational process that translates mouse clicks into displaying the contents of the folder are invisible to you. The operating system that allows you to use this gesture to accomplish the task of opening a folder, then, is transparent; you don't think about it. As infrastructures become transparent—that is, naturalized to the point of unthinking use—the decisions and resultant consequences of their social construction become naturalized and invisible as well.

Because of this characteristic, Edwards (2003) makes a compelling argument for the usefulness of infrastructure to understanding modernity itself. Studying infrastructure at different scales (micro, meso, and macro) of force, time, and social organization effectively reveals the "co-construction of technology and modernity" because it is through its infrastructures that modernity takes shape (Edwards, 2003, p. 191). Characteristically of modern institutions,

infrastructure imposes "generalized and pragmatically unavoidable enrollment in the forms of life dictated by [it]" and in so doing has profound effects on "organizational routine, practice, capacity, and in some cases, the life chances of groups" (Edwards, 2003, p. 200; Edwards et al., 2009, p. 371). Here Edwards echoes Star's earliest writing on infrastructure, which is strongly concerned with the values, ethics, and politics that infrastructures materialize (Star, 1991, 2002).

In its material embodiment of standards, infrastructure necessarily also produces the non-standard: "part of the public stability of a standardized network often involves the private suffering of those who are not standard—who must use the standard network, but who are also non-members of the community of practice" (Star, 1991, p. 43). Infrastructure is thus profoundly political—raising questions of inclusion, (dis)ability, access, and equity, among others. At the same time, many scholars argue that infrastructure also offers compelling grounds upon which to articulate new, more inclusive, and perhaps even emancipatory politics because of its unique relational, institutional, resilient, and (re)productive qualities (Amin, 2014; Barney, 2018; Berlant, 2016; Cowen, 2017; Edwards et al., 2009; Wakefield, 2018). Infrastructural politics attempts to amplify this emancipatory potential.

3. Concrete

Theoretical and methodological innovation on the question of infrastructure has paved the way for a contemporary explosion of scholarship on a multitude of particular, concrete infrastructures. In this work, infrastructures in the common, everyday meaning of the word are studied with many of the media theoretical and sociotechnical tools discussed above. Authors' particular definitions vary slightly, but all seem to agree that infrastructures are large, material systems or networks, often centralized, used in-common by a group, community, or public. Networks of roads, sewers, and telephone lines are some of the most recognizable examples of

infrastructure. Because of its pervasiveness, Edwards (1998b) suggests infrastructure is best defined negatively: “those systems without which contemporary societies cannot function” (p.10). Recent scholarship on particular infrastructures mostly falls into two loose categories of focus: telecommunications infrastructures and urban infrastructures.

The origins of scholarly attention to ordinary infrastructures are unclear, but some canonical examples stand out. Perhaps most commonly cited as the ‘original’ study on infrastructure in the concrete sense is Hughes’(1983) seminal scholarship on the complex sociotechnical networks that made electric power possible. Young (2017a) argues that the work of Harold Innis as well, with its overarching focus on the infrastructures of civilization, anticipates contemporary infrastructuralism. Scholarship on large-scale road construction (P. Harvey & Knox, 2012), oil pipelines (Barney, 2017), and grain elevators (Barney, 2011) carries on this type of civilizational infrastructuralism and highlights how feelings, affect, and meaning-making are implicated in the construction of industrial systems. Mukherjee’s (2019) recent work on the “infrastructural imaginaries” of Indian telecommunications echoes this point as well.

a. telecommunications infrastructures

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the location of its prominence in communication and media studies, much of the recent scholarship on infrastructure focuses on telecommunications. This focus has its origin in the foundational work of Star (Star & Ruhleder, 1996) and Edwards (Edwards, 1998b, 1998a; Edwards et al., 2007; Jackson et al., 2007) on information systems and the electronic digital computer. A 2009 special issue of the *Journal of the Association for Information Systems* includes an insightful introduction (Edwards et al., 2009) and many articles on “e-Infrastructures” in organizational settings like earth and environmental sciences (Ribes & Finholt, 2009), healthcare (Sahay et al., 2009; Ure et al., 2009), an oil company (Hepsø et al.,

2009), and IT work (Pipek & Wulf, 2009). Bowker, Baker, Millerand, and Ribes (2010) explore the effects of the internet as an infrastructure for knowledge production in science, the arts and humanities, and business. Parks (2012) analyzes different modes of "infrastructural intelligibility" in the case of the satellite dish. She reads issues of class, taste, ethnicity, resistance, and cultural knowledge that are inscribed upon the surface of this rather quotidian object. Starosielski (2015) innovates new forms of narrative in her sweeping ethnography of the submarine fiber optic cable system upon which the internet relies. Their co-edited volume (Parks & Starosielski, 2015) brings together a variety of infrastructural scholarship on media systems from the consumer electronics industry (Acland, 2015) to cellular telephony in Israel-Palestine (Tawil-Souri, 2015) and "the cloud" (Holt & Vonderau, 2015).

Two small groups of telecommunications infrastructure scholarship are particularly relevant to my adoption of the framework. First, Hogan's scholarship on Facebook (Hogan, 2015b) and National Security Agency data centers (Hogan, 2015a) exemplifies the power of an infrastructural analysis to unite technical, social, political, and environmental concerns. In both, she focuses on data centers' exorbitant water and electricity use to challenge commonplace ideas about the immateriality of data storage and show how it can catalyze political resistance to surveillance. Given the accelerating tendencies of capital and environmental catastrophe, this type of unifying analysis is urgently important.

Second, some scholars have recently bridged the gap between platform studies and infrastructure studies, productively using the insights from each to understand the other. Plantin and Punathambekar (2019) summarize these developments in their introduction to a special issue of *Media, Culture, & Society* dedicated to such analysis. Based on its negative definition (Edwards, 1998b), some digital platforms like Google, Facebook, and WeChat have become

infrastructures: you can't live without them (Plantin et al., 2018). Today, becoming infrastructure is the aspiration of digital enterprises that rely on massive data collection for profits (Langlois & Elmer, 2019; Nieborg & Helmond, 2019). Moreover, when platforms become infrastructure, their in-built biases and prejudices are institutionalized as well (Noble, 2018). Conversely—and perhaps more alarmingly—infrastructures have taken on characteristics of platforms, as years of austerity leave public utilities in ruins and corporations are allowed to privatize essential systems (Plantin et al., 2018). Much like Hogan's scholarship, this work alerts us to the political-economic efficacy and urgency of infrastructural analysis.

b. urban infrastructures

The second major category of recent infrastructural scholarship is largely populated by the work of anthropologists, sociologists, and geographers interested in cities and urban infrastructures. Like the scholarship on telecommunications infrastructure, urban infrastructures point to politics. Wakefield (2018) reviews much of this scholarship, highlighting recurring questions of modernity, liberalism, and alternative political possibilities. Mattern (2015a) practices a multi-modal method of "deep mapping" for studying infrastructure that emphasizes the material imbrications of the social and technical in urban history, urging media archaeologists to be inspired by "archaeologists of the trowel-wielding variety" (p. xvi). What this reveals, she argues, is "a morphological resonance between an integral political-economic and cultural media-infrastructure and the shape of the city itself" (Mattern, 2015b, p. 102). There is a clear scholarly consensus that the built environment powerfully shapes social spaces, while social practices and communities of use reconfigure infrastructures that are never as rigid as they seem (Amin, 2014; P. Harvey et al., 2017; Simone, 2004). This work raises crucial questions of access and equity that point to the inherently political status of infrastructure.

Following Foucault (1978/1990, 2008), Easterling (2014) argues that the power of contemporary states resides in and is exercised through infrastructure. This infrastructural "extrastatecraft" is so powerful precisely because it operates through invisible and purportedly non-political technical systems. In a similar vein, Dyer-Witheford and Matviyenko (2019) study the layered infrastructural histories that have enabled contemporary cyberwar. Aouragh and Chakravartty (2016) add an essential perspective to this discourse on political power, reframing infrastructural development within histories of American imperialism and empire. They challenge the often latent assumption that infrastructure is inherently good. On the contrary, contemporary digital infrastructures ride atop and perpetuate historical patterns of colonial violence as key agents in neoliberal capitalist globalization.

At the same time, however, the evocative power of infrastructure also inspires creative resistance (Larkin, 2013; Wakefield, 2018). Today, infrastructure is a key site of political struggle and the laboratory for alternative modes of living (Barney, 2018). One of the most important features of infrastructure in this regard, as both a conceptual apparatus and material thing, is its power to connect diverse struggles that otherwise appear unrelated (Cowen, 2017). Infrastructure is thus a powerful organizing concept for both scholarship and politics.

This review of scholarship on infrastructure as a media theoretical perspective, sociotechnical assemblage, and concrete system should demonstrate its conceptual richness and critical aptitude for studying a political movement like the BPP. Media theoretical infrastructuralism expands our critical attention to all processes of mediation that undergird organizations, emphasizing the importance of these generative supports for different modes of being in the world. Media, we learn, are infrastructural. Sociological studies of infrastructure reveal the deep, constitutive entanglement of the social and the technical that comprises

infrastructure as a relation. In the infrastructural relation, social practices and technical objects are equally agential, and their institutionalization materializes an invisible politics. Last, concrete infrastructures are the sites of political power and contestation as people across the globe struggle against oppression to meet their basic needs. Infrastructure is politics by other means.

What such an analysis allows us to do, I hope to show, is glean important lessons from the theory and practice of the BPP to articulate a concept of infrastructural politics that embodies the most crucial insights and concerns of infrastructuralism in all its forms. First, we can understand the BPP's emergence as a response and resistance to both a lack of infrastructure and the imposition of unwanted infrastructure. Second, the social practices of the BPP emerge as infrastructural in their own right. The BPP satisfied people's basic needs through its Service to the People Programs, aspiring to make the party infrastructural to its communities. Last, *The Black Panther Newspaper* mediates the collectivity of the party to its individual members, comprising the BPP's most important communicational infrastructure. A review of scholarship on the BPP will situate the present study as part of and in conversation with this work.

C. The Black Panther Party and the Newspaper as Infrastructure

From primary documents, journalism, memoirs, and autobiographies to government reports, movies, and scholarly books, the body of BPP literature is enormous. Rather than attempt to review it all, I instead highlight some of the most significant scholarly histories to provide general orientation.[3] Then I briefly review particularly relevant work concerning the BPP's Service to the People programs and newspaper with which my own study is in the most direct conversation. I conclude by grounding my infrastructuralist approach to *The Black Panther* newspaper in Ananny's (2012, 2018) scholarship on the press as infrastructure. His

[3] For a more comprehensive review than is possible here, see Street (2010).

work demonstrates the generative role that journalism plays as an infrastructure for producing publics.

1. The Black Panther Party

Today, writing on the BPP abounds, but this wasn't always the case. In fact, it wasn't the case until fairly recently. Compiled and edited from a series of recorded interviews, the most significant early work is Bobby Seale's (1970/1996) *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton*, which narrates the party's early years. Seale's status as party co-founder and Chairman complicates this text from a scholarly perspective, and its early date (composed only two years after the party's founding) inherently limits its scope. Nonetheless, it continues to serve as an authoritative text on the BPP's early history (Street, 2010). The first scholarly history of the BPP is provided by Heath (1976a) in his combination history and edited collection, *Off the Pigs!*. Again, this history is limited by its scope—being published eight years before the formal dissolution of the BPP— and its reliance on government reports (p. 1) but is nonetheless invaluable as a history and collection of primary texts. Nearly 25 years later, Jones (1998a) laments the paucity of serious scholarship on the BPP in the introduction to his edited volume *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*. Responding to the stark contrast between popular and scholarly attention on the BPP, he assembles a wide-ranging volume including contributions focused on the party's history, rank-and-file members, organizational structure, gender dynamics, eventual decline, and legacy (C. E. Jones, 1998b). This text marks the beginning of a surge in scholarship on the BPP. He writes that the BPP's "historical role in Black liberation activism in particular and leftist politics in general does not receive adequate attention" (C. E. Jones, 1998a, p. 7). While this is not as true today as it was in 1998, I add my own study to

a body of scholarship that is still in the process of rectifying this gap by focusing on the BPP as a vanguard party in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism in the context of postmodernism.

Recent BPP scholarship has elaborated upon all the thematic focuses covered in Jones (1998b) as well as added new and interesting emphases. While most texts focus on a particular aspect of the party, a few general histories are available. Cleaver and Katsiaficas (2001) provide one of the first comprehensive volumes of the new surge in scholarly attention, including contributions from both scholars and former BPP members. Lazerow and Williams (2006b) unite interdisciplinary perspectives on the BPP and its legacy in another edited collection. Alkebulan (2007) narrates an insightful history from the perspective of a former party member. Bloom and Martin Jr.'s (2013) *Black Against Empire* is perhaps the most comprehensive history of the BPP available today, covering the trajectory of the party from founding to dissolution. Most recently, Spencer (2016) narrates the story of the BPP through its rank-and-file, with a particular focus on women and the party's connections to the wider Black Power movement. Malloy's (2017) comprehensive history emphasizes the BPP's internationalism through a particular focus on Cleaver and the International Section.

Of the work that focuses on the party's origin, Seale (1970/1996) remains "the most definitive treatment" (C. E. Jones, 1998a, p. 4). Major (1971/2006) provides another sympathetic early history from an insider perspective. In addition to these first-hand accounts, Murch (2010) writes a new history of the BPP's birth that situates it within the history and local politics of Oakland and focuses on the important roles of students and youth in its founding. The early overrepresentation of this period in scholarship (C. E. Jones, 1998a) seems to have been mostly corrected. Thus, my focus on the party's founding and early history certainly does not address an

outstanding gap in the literature, but it does, I hope, add an interesting new perspective on this period.

The scholarship undertaken to correct preliminary overemphasis on BPP headquarters in Oakland takes into view the local histories of numerous BPP branches across the United States through the perspectives of rank-and-file members. Jeffries' (2007, 2010, 2018) work has been instrumental in bringing these perspectives to light. Across an expansive, three-volume project, he brings together accounts of BPP chapters in 17 different American cities to correct the misconceptions that have resulted from such limited focuses on Oakland and the BPP leadership. Williams and Lazerow (2008) add another collection to this now extensive literature of local perspectives.

Given their centrality to the BPP's practice, the Service to the People programs are an important focus for scholarship to which I hope to add yet another voice. In an early account, Abron (1998) surveys the wide gambit of survival programs instituted by the BPP. She emphasizes their diversity, extension, and integrity to the BPP's theory and program. In a seminal study, Nelson (2011) focuses on the BPP's impactful work in the medical arena, providing free healthcare for the Black community and pioneering sickle cell anemia activism to combat discrimination. Basset (2019) adds to this focus as well. Others have highlighted the breakfast and food programs in particular as manifestations of the BPP's anti-hunger politics (Heynen, 2009; Potorti, 2017). I draw from these studies as well as primary documents to understand the BPP's service programs as the provision and becoming of infrastructure.

Another major category of scholarly emphasis is the BPP's international status and influence. Singh (1998b) contextualizes the BPP as part of a global anticolonial struggle that accelerated in the late 1960s. Smith (1999) provides an early account of the BPP's international

impact. Malloy's (2017) comprehensive history of the BPP elucidates its connections with revolutionary movements and governments across the world amidst the extreme repression of the Cold War. In combination with the sweeping histories and focused local narratives, this internationalist literature lends insight to the problem of cognitive mapping so provocatively posed to Jameson by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The BPP's uniquely spatial and scalar politics (Heynen, 2009; Tyner, 2006; Singh, 1998a) are promising for this direction for study. I hope to shed light on the infrastructures—specifically *The Black Panther* newspaper—that enabled the BPP's rapid expansion from local to national and international scale. Ultimately, I argue that the BPP's uniquely infrastructuralist internationalism articulated an aesthetics of cognitive mapping endemic to postmodernism.

2. The newspaper

As *The Black Panther* newspaper is the subject of primary research in this study, the existing scholarship on it is especially important to review. There is a strong consensus among scholars that the BPP were self-consciously cultivated media subjects. This of course makes the BPP equal parts tantalizing and challenging for a media scholar. Long before the party formally disbanded, Heath (1976a) dismissively characterizes the BPP as "really not much more than a media event" (p. 214). He writes that "they were blessed with a theatrical sixth sense" without which they "would have gone virtually unnoticed" (Heath, 1976a, p. 214). Minus Heath's dismissive hyperbole, this is a typical refrain throughout much BPP scholarship. Most recently, Wang (2018) argues that the BPP's theorizations of lumpenization and automation demonstrate an acute media-technical sensibility. Jones (1998a) contextualizes his edited volume against the backdrop of surging media representations of the BPP. Repeating many of the same themes as Jones, Rhodes (2007/2017) introduces the BPP by way of their pervasive media representations

as well. Her book, *Framing the Black Panthers*, is the most extended study on the BPP as media subjects. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the BPP both as self-styled media icons and (often malignantly) framed media subjects. Davenport (2009) takes a close look at this phenomenon through a content analysis of newspaper reports on the BPP, finding that their bias varies greatly depending on the orientation of the reporting paper. Vincent (2013) takes a narrow focus on the BPP's band Lumpen and the constitutive relationship between soul music and Black Power. Ultimately, it's nearly impossible to separate the BPP from its mediated representation(s) that were both cultivated from within and imposed from without the party. This epistemological thicket presents a fascinating challenge for a media-theoretical investigation like mine.

There is also consensus between the BPP and its scholars that its newspaper was vitally important to the party not just ideologically but financially as well (Davenport, 1998; Fearnley, 2019; Rhodes, 2007/2017). The first systematic studies of *The Black Panther* are by the Committee on Internal Security of the U.S. House of Representatives (Committee on Internal Security, House of Representatives, 1970, 1971). These documents are both a testament to the U.S. government's allocation of resources to monitoring and repressing the BPP and interesting, expansive compilations in their own right. Heath (1976b) compiles a similar collection of newspaper excerpts, though from a different perspective, focusing in particular on the writing of BPP leaders. Early scholarly studies include accounts of the newspaper's history and organizational dynamics (Abron, 1993/2012), the party's ideological evolution (Mori, 1977) and deradicalization (Hopkins, 1978), the BPP's rhetoric (Courtright, 1974), and the newspaper as a target of government repression (C. E. Jones, 1988). Davenport (1998) conducts a content analysis of all issues of *The Black Panther* from 1969 to 1973, finding that the content, number, and variety of articles included varied widely over time. Calloway's (1977) study of the BPP's

group cohesion, highlighting the production of the newspaper and the cartoons contained within it, is particularly instructive to my own investigation of *The Black Panther* as an infrastructure for maintaining affective ties. More recently, Rhodes (2007/2017) highlights the importance of *The Black Panther* newspaper among other media representations of the party, as mentioned above. Since then, however, only one article, which adds invaluable insight to its additional role as a financial resource for the party, has focused closely on the BPP's newspaper (Fearnley, 2019).

My treatment of *The Black Panther* newspaper as an infrastructure may appear unconventional or even eccentric, but there is scholarly precedent for such an approach. As I've shown, seminal scholarship of Harold Innis on the communication media of civilization has been considered a kind of infrastructuralism (Young, 2017a). Buxton (1998) argues that Innis's insights about the constitutive role of media in civilization resulted from his scholarship on newspapers in particular, which connects his earlier work on economic staples to his more canonical late work on communication.

The integral role assigned to the newspaper by BPP leadership, as will be studied below, attests to its infrastructural status. Though admittedly done in passing, Fearnley characterizes the BPP's publishing activities as part of an "infrastructure" for the party's financial sustenance (p. 203). Moreover, recent journalism scholarship also conceives of the press as an infrastructure, with reference to much of the scholarship I've reviewed above (Ananny, 2012, 2018). Historically, the press has acted as "a public infrastructure, creating and sustaining the conditions under which public spheres function" (Ananny, 2012, p. 626). Newspapers produce publics and "imagined communities" (B. Anderson, 1983/2006). Because of the generative political power of infrastructure, normative questions arise about the sociotechnical infrastructure of the press: what

kind of infrastructure will produce the kind of public we want? One might expect that a political party that had leaders with a distinguished media-technical sensibility and invested so much energy and importance into a newspaper as the BPP asked similar questions about its own press. Thus, I read *The Black Panther* newspaper as the key communicational infrastructure of the party, focusing on the affective investment it sustained by mediating the party to itself.

Given the BPP's unique media-technical awareness and the vital importance of its newspaper to the party's thought and practice, I hope to have shown how an investigation into its primary communicational infrastructure, *The Black Panther* newspaper, is appropriate and that an infrastructuralist approach to these questions is justified.

III. Methodology

I conduct a discourse analysis of primary and secondary literatures of the BPP in order to produce a concept of infrastructural politics from out of the party's theory and practice. I perform a close reading of BPP discourse, defined by Wood and Kroger (2000) as "all spoken and written forms of language use (talk and text) as social practice" (p. 19), as manifested in *The Black Panther* newspaper to provide a new, infrastructural perspective on the party. I uncover resonances between the discourse of the BPP and Dean's affective theorization of the party, its characteristic concepts, scholarly discourse on infrastructure, and, ultimately, the aesthetics of cognitive mapping.

Within the limited scope of this thesis, I focus particularly on the BPP's newspaper, *The Black Panther*, for my analysis. *The Black Panther* was a major organ of the party, to which they dedicated many resources and assigned much importance. Davenport (1998) writes that *The Black Panther* "performed multiple functions for the BPP that included establishing and maintaining organizational identity, recruiting members, providing information about political events, generating revenue, and most importantly, conveying the message of the organization" (p. 197). Thus, *The Black Panther* is an invaluable resource for scholars studying the BPP. According to Alkebulan (2007), it is "the most important primary source for the ideology and actions of the Black Panther Party" (p. 157). Bloom and Martin Jr. (2013) agree, writing that *The Black Panther* provides "the most comprehensive documentation of the ideas, actions, and projections of the Party day to day, week to week" (p. 10). It was "essential to the construction of the party's imaginary community" and thus reading it "discloses the perceptions of the Party and its philosophical and political orientation" (Rhodes, 2007/2017, p. 127; Davenport, 1998, p. 205). In short, the newspaper was the party's main communicational infrastructure. As an

ambient, always-on conduit for the party (Papacharissi, 2015), *The Black Panther* is a rich text for tracking the characteristic emotions of the party and the comrade identified by Dean (2016, 2019). Moreover, because the paper includes writing on the party's origins, ideology, and programs, it allows for the articulation of all three valences of infrastructural politics in one single study.

My sampling frame begins with the inaugural issue of *The Black Panther*, published April 25, 1967, and it ends with the issue published after the televised argument (and subsequent private phone call) between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver that cemented a developing split in the party on February 26, 1971. This frame coincides with the BPP's first ideological era (Alkebulan, 2007) or phase (Johnson, III, 1998) during which it was a revolutionary party advocating armed resistance, and it encompasses all four phases of Newton's rapidly developing thought, from black nationalism to intercommunalism (Jeffries, 2002). Scholars agree that by the end of this period marked by the split between Newton and Cleaver, "the Black Panther Party as it had existed since its inception in October 1966 was essentially dead," and the party was neither revolutionary nor nationally influential for much longer (Malloy, 2017, p. 187; Alkebulan, 2007; Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013; Umoja, 2001). Within a year, the BPP quickly contracted back into a community organization focused on local Oakland politics (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013; Spencer, 2016). Although the BPP continued to exist for an additional decade, by 1972 their "most important contributions to American politics, society, and culture" had already been made (Street, 2010, p. 373).

From its founding in 1966 until early 1971, the BPP "had a winning recipe" for revolutionary politics (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 365). Although this period is overrepresented in scholarship (C. E. Jones, 1998a), it is nonetheless a hugely important time in

the party's history. These "glory years" (Johnson, III, 1998, p. 392) witnessed the BPP's rise to national and international prominence, the party's peak membership, the newspaper's highest circulation, intense government repression, and most of the major events in the party's history. From 1966 to 1971, the BPP "provided a model for disrupting established relations of domination […] a replicable source of political power" (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 386). I mine the BPP's discourse to excavate this replicable model by reading the BPP's "winning recipe" as an infrastructural politics.

There were five different editors of *The Black Panther* from 1967 to 1971. Eldridge Cleaver was the editor from the paper's inception until he went into exile in late 1968. Although Cleaver remained the nominal editor, the paper was subsequently overseen by a series of different editors. Managing editor Raymond Lewis was in charge until January 4, 1969. After a brief, two-month stint with Frank Jones as managing editor, Elbert "Big Man" Howard took over beginning with the March 31, 1969 issue. At some point in 1970, Elaine Brown took over as editor (Abron, 1993/2012), although she is never listed on the paper's masthead, which was last printed in the May 21, 1970 issue.

The total number of issues of *The Black Panther* published from 1967 to March 1971 is 130. Beginning with the first, four-page mimeograph, six issues were sporadically published in 1967. A bi-weekly, and then weekly, schedule was announced in early 1968 but not consistently held until September, resulting in 15 issues for that year. 48 issues were published in 1969, 51 in 1970, and the March 6, 1971 paper, in which the BPP openly (and falsely) accused Eldridge Cleaver of holding Kathleen Cleaver (his wife) hostage in Algiers, was the tenth of that year. In order to both mitigate selection bias and approximate the experience of a regular reader, getting the best possible feel for the texture and pace of the paper, I read every one of these issues that

was available to me. Because the archive I had access to was missing three issues, the actual number of issues sampled totaled 127. Within the issues themselves, I employed purposive sampling informed by previous research to focus on articles of particular relevance and interest. These included articles on the party's ideology, service programs, letters from individual members, and major pieces by party leaders.

My sampling technique was key to ensuring that my analysis captures a variety of moments in this period of the BPP's history, including times of both immense and limited activity, to reveal how the newspaper functioned as an ambient infrastructure for the party. In doing so, I sought to identify thematic redundancy (Fairclough, 1995) within the discourse of the BPP and evaluate for potential resonance with the theoretical discourse on politics and infrastructure reviewed above. What I uncover is the newspaper's role as an infrastructure for mediating the party's affective functions during the most revolutionary period of its history.

Following Dean's theorization of the comrade, my method is speculative-compositive. That is, I speculatively adopt infrastructure as a critical lens through which to view the BPP and see what insights result. I produce a composite of their theory and practice that leads to the concept of infrastructural politics. I do not attempt to provide an exhaustive or complete account of the history and thought of the BPP. It's doubtful whether this is possible at all, let alone within the narrow scope of this project. Nor do I claim an authoritative or definitive reading of the party's practice and literature. Instead, I look to the BPP for lessons on radical politics and (its) infrastructure(s). This study is an attempt at practicing philosophy—defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) as "the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts"—by other means (p. 2). The concept I extract from the BPP's discourse is infrastructural politics.

In theory, an infrastructuralist approach could be taken to any historical or contemporary political movement or organization. That is, in fact, one of the aims of this project: to develop a conceptual framework for analyzing political movements and organizations in terms infrastructure. One could equally as insightfully analyze the Russian Revolution or the Republican Party through the lens of infrastructure; the Zapatistas, for example, would be an especially germane case study. I choose the BPP, however, for a few key reasons. First, the BPP operated within the historical period of late capitalism analyzed by Jameson, and they were contemporaries of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers he references in formulating the problem of cognitive mapping. I hope to show that the BPP enacted a rudimentary form of cognitive mapping endemic to postmodernism and that despite our historical distance from this moment and these movements, they hold valuable lessons for the present. Second, as I've shown, there is a wealth of primary and secondary BPP literature available in English, including extensive archives of *The Black Panther* newspaper. This of course presents a daunting challenge, but ultimately facilitates research. Third, the unique history, thought, and practice of the BPP exhibit each of the three valences of infrastructural politics that I describe. This enables the fullest articulation of the concept possible through a single case study. The conceptual apparatus of infrastructural politics developed here should be interesting and useful not just to communication scholars interested in political movements and organizations but also to those engaged struggles for liberation today.

An acknowledgement of my limitations is in order as well. I am neither a historian nor a political scientist; nor am I an expert in African American history or Black radicalism. I am a communication scholar with a particular interest in media theory, infrastructure, and Marxism. While it would of course be irresponsible to overlook the constitutive blackness of The Black

Panther Party, I am primarily interested in it as a revolutionary party in the tradition of Marxism-Leninism—to which it made significant original contributions in both theory and praxis. I attempt to mitigate these limitations wherever possible by deferring to scholarly authority on questions of origins, influences, and interpretation; though, none of these are my ultimate goal. Instead, what I aim to do is extract new lessons from the BPP that are generative for both scholars and activists alike.

The following section presents the main body of my discourse analysis of *The Black Panther* newspaper. In the first part, I explicate the BPP's genesis in opposition to police brutality and anti-poverty programs. I argue that, based on the discourse of *The Black Panther*, the BPP understood the police and anti-poverty programs as unwanted and insufficient infrastructures of the state, and activated them as sites of political struggle. Second, I frame the BPP's community programs as the provision of infrastructure to the people and evaluate the extent to which the party became infrastructure to its communities. Finally, I foreground *The Black Panther* newspaper itself as the primary communicational infrastructure of the party. My reading traces Dean's eight characteristics of the party and the comrade through the newspaper to analyze how *The Black Panther* mediates the party's affective infrastructure and its psychodynamic processes. The analysis is organized thematically around each of these eight concepts, plus an additional two that emerged in my reading. Taken together, these three analyses outline the concept of infrastructural politics, of which I offer a fuller articulation in the concluding section.

IV. THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND (ITS) INFRASTRUCTURE(S)

Scholars agree that the BPP has a strong legacy. Precisely what that legacy is, however, is contested. Jones and Jeffries (1998) emphasize the BPP's political legacy, but Lazerow and Williams (2006a) suggest this focus is "problematic, if only because, arguably, Panther reverberations have been greater in culture than politics" (p. 9). Newton himself, though, insisted that the BPP was a political organization—and, moreover, a model for waging revolution (C. E. Jones, 1998a, p. 12). In an interview from Alameda County Jail printed in the March 16, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther* he explains that the BPP dropped "For Self Defense" from its name because "we ran into the problem of people misinterpreting us as a political party. […] to make it clear to every one we changed the name to the Black Panther Party, to make it clear what our political stand was about" (Newton, 1968a, p. 4). Another article in the same issue places the BPP within the tradition of Marxism-Leninism: "like Lenin, Huey created a Party" ("Speeding Up Time," 1968, p. 8). In a statement at the Peace and Freedom Party Forum, Cleaver says "we are involved in trying to create models in the vanguard set so that people around the country will see how we can move" (1968a, p. 22). Thus, by analyzing the BPP as a revolutionary party within the tradition of Marxism-Leninism, I evaluate them on their own terms—albeit through my own infrastructuralist lens.

Recently, scholars have redoubled the effort at recuperating the political legacy of the BPP. Bloom and Martin, Jr. (2013) write that "what is unique and historically important about the Black Panther Party is specifically its politics" (p. 9). What distinguished the BPP from their many contemporaries was their political creativity, innovating new theory and practice (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 400). For some, the way the BPP combined a global, (post)colonial analysis with a strident critique of American capitalism is most significant (Malloy, 2017, p. 244;

Self, 2006, p. 37). One of the most enduring lessons of the BPP, though, is that they failed (Singh, 1998a, p. 81). By 1972, the BPP had been effectively destroyed as a revolutionary party. Nonetheless, from 1967 to early 1971 they offered a coherent and compelling political vision that, insulated from the violent repression and internal schism they suffered, may very well have succeeded (J. Anderson, 2012; Malloy, 2017, p. 181).

Reflecting on the history of Black radicalism, Kelley (2002) writes that "too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves" (p. ix). In this vein, I attempt to resuscitate what, from my perspective as a critical communication scholar, is most interesting, instructive, and relevant about the BPP's political vision. In the interest of exploring new strategies for recovering this vision, I offer a speculative reading of the BPP's discourse as a record of their politics (Lake, 2006). What emerges from my discourse analysis is the concept of infrastructural politics.

Infrastructural politics first activates infrastructure as a site of political struggle. This engages infrastructure in the everyday, concrete sense. Second, it identifies providing and becoming infrastructure as a mode of political praxis. Here, following the sociotechnical conception of infrastructure, social practices are infrastructural just as much as technical objects. And last, renewed attention is paid to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements—in this case, *The Black Panther* newspaper. This last is informed by media theoretical infrastructuralism which focuses on processes of mediation that engender structures, relations, and modes of being in the world.

Across the following sections, the concept of infrastructural politics emerges from out of the BPP's discourse as manifested in *The Black Panther* newspaper. First, I argue that by

identifying the police as an unwanted infrastructure of colonial power and the state's anti-poverty infrastructure as insufficient, the BPP activated infrastructure as a site of political struggle. Second, I focus on the BPP's Service to the People Programs as its attempt to provide and become infrastructure for the people. These first two sections read *The Black Panther* as a record of the BPP's thought and practice. In the third section, I perform an "infrastructural inversion" by foregrounding *The Black Panther* newspaper itself as an object of study in its own right (G. Bowker, 1994). I investigate how *The Black Panther* mediates the affective infrastructure of the party by tracking expressions of the characteristic concepts of the party and the comrade through its pages. My analysis is structured thematically around Dean's eight characteristics—concentration, endurance fidelity, and transference; discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage—and two additional themes that emerged from reading. The final section distills the preceding discourse analysis into the concept of infrastructural politics and argues why the BPP's manifestation of it is so compelling and instructive today.

A. Activating Infrastructure

The BPP was founded as The Black Panther Party for Self Defense on October 15, 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Newton and Seale met at Merritt College, a community college in Oakland, where they were students and members of the Soul Students Advisory Council, a group associated with the Revolutionary Action Movement. In this group, Newton and Seale were exposed to the revolutionary texts of Fanon, Mao, and Che Guevara, and the idea that the Black community was an internal colony of the United States—all of which left a lasting imprint on the BPP's thought (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 32). Soon, however, they would split from the Soul Students Advisory Council after the group disapproved of their using its funds to bail people out of jail and buy guns. The breakup was mutual: Newton felt the group

was all intellectual talk and no material action. The street-tough Newton determined to organize "the brothers off the block." Newton and Seale spent the first two weeks of October drafting the platform and program of their new party. Newton dictated to Seale, Newton's brother Melvin proofed, and the new party was born (Seale, 1970/1996, pp. 59–60). In ten points, the platform demanded self-determination, full employment, reparations and an end to exploitation, housing, education, exemption from military service, an end to police brutality, the release of all prisoners, and trails by a jury of peers for the Black community. The final, tenth point summarized their demands: "We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace" (The Black Panther Party, 1968, p. 7). Seale took the title of Chairman; Newton would be Minister of Defense.

The first thing Newton and Seale did as the BPP was get guns from a Japanese-American radical named Richard Aoki—an M-1 rifle and a 9mm pistol. Newton's probation disallowed him from carrying a pistol, so the pistol went to Seale; the rifle was Newton's. They began spontaneously following police officers in the streets. In December "Lil" Bobby Hutton, whom Seale had taken under his wing at an anti-poverty program where he worked in the summer, joined the party as its first member (Seale, 1970/1996, p. 77). To raise money to buy more guns, Newton and Seale purchased copies of *Quotations from Chairman Mao* in San Francisco's Chinatown for 30 cents each and sold them on the UC Berkeley campus for a dollar (Seale, 1970/1996, pp. 80–81) On January 1, 1967 they opened their first office.

By the end of 1968, the BPP would become national figures. The first major action of the newly formed party was providing an armed escort to Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, during her visit to San Francisco in February 1967. At the office of *Ramparts Magazine*, Newton impressed Eldridge Cleaver, recently released from prison and now writing for the magazine, by

confronting and backing down the police with a shotgun (Seale, 1970/1996, p. 134). He soon joined the party as the Minister of Information. On April 1, Denzil Dowell was murdered by police in Richmond. Mark Comfort, a local activist, contacted Newton and Seale on behalf of Dowell's family, who asked the BPP to investigate. In the process, the BPP held two large rallies, received 300 applications for new members, and began a newspaper, *The Black Panther Black Community News Service* (Seale, 1970/1996, p. 141). Cleaver, "because of [his] writing skills and interest in communications" was the editor (E. Cleaver, 1968c, p. 14). Emory Douglas, a local artist, joined the party as Minister of Culture and helped with the layout and art. In May, the BPP sent an armed delegation to Sacramento to protest the Mulford Act, which would make it illegal to open carry firearms in California. Here the BPP was launched into the media spotlight after they ended up on the State Assembly floor, fully armed. By a vote of the party, Newton stayed back in Oakland; Cleaver accompanied the convoy not as a member of the BPP but as a reporter for *Ramparts*. Regardless, he was arrested along with the rest of the group (and an innocent bystander) at a gas station shortly after the incident. As a result of the incident, Seale was imprisoned until December 8. The passage of the Mulford Act in late July effectively ended the BPP's practice of patrolling the police, and they were subject to frequent arrests.

Early on the morning of October 28, 1967, Newton and his friend were pulled over by two Oakland police, and a shootout ensued. In the aftermath, one officer, John Frey, was dead, and Newton was wounded. Newton was arrested, and the "Free Huey!" campaign began. The BPP formed a working coalition with the Peace and Freedom Party, who agreed to organize on behalf of the Free Huey! campaign and lend the BPP their sound equipment for rallies if the BPP registered voters to get the Peace and Freedom Party on the ballot in the upcoming elections. As part of the deal, the Peace and Freedom Party would run four BPP leaders for office on its ticket:

Newton for Congress in Alameda County, Cleaver for president, Seale for State Assembly, and Kathleen Cleaver (Eldridge's wife and the Communication Secretary of the BPP) for State Assembly (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, pp. 107–110, 124).

On April 4, 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Black communities across the United States erupted., but Oakland was relatively calm. Two days later, a group of armed BPP members were approached by police on the side of the road. Cleaver and Lil Bobby Hutton took shelter in the basement of a nearby house and engaged the police in a shootout. Finally, after being shot, teargassed, and firebombed, Cleaver and Hutton surrendered. They exited the burning building with their hands up to show they were unarmed. Cleaver was arrested, and Hutton, only 17-years-old, was shot to death. Cleaver was imprisoned until June 6, when the BPP was able to post his $50,000 bail sum (Seale, 1970/1996, pp. 254–255). Newton's trial for murder began in July. In August, Bobby Seale spoke at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which was the site of huge protests and riots. In September, Newton was found guilty of manslaughter in a "compromise verdict" (Newton, 1968b, p. 2). The Free Huey! campaign continued. In November, due for a hearing to likely have his parole revoked and return to prison, Cleaver went underground. He fled to Cuba and then Algiers. The year 1968 ended with Newton in jail, Cleaver in exile, and the BPP on the national stage.

The BPP was founded primarily to combat police brutality against the Black community (Abron, 1998, p. 181; F. B. Jones, 1968, p. 16). From the beginning, however, its program addressed a wide range of socio-economic problems facing Black people in the United States, beyond just the police (Nelson, 2011, p. 50). Though they had gained legal rights, many Black Americans, particularly in the North and West, found their situations virtually unchanged as they continued to suffer from inequalities that the Civil Rights movement was unable to ameliorate

(Alkebulan, 2007, p. 6; Spencer, 2016, p. 8) These included unemployment, unsuitable and overpriced housing, poor health, and rampant hunger. The BPP responded to these conditions by activating infrastructures of the state as sites of political struggle.

The postwar period in the United States was marked by the emergence of what Self (2006) calls the "welfare-warfare state:" "the largest, most active and interventionist federal state in American history" (p. 19). Domestically, the New Deal and, later, Johnson's Great Society programs constructed a vast welfare infrastructure while the Cold War produced rapid militarization that filtered down to local police. The BPP responded to the American welfare-warfare state by directly challenging the legitimacy of both its wings: the police on one hand and anti-poverty programs on the other. In doing so, they identified police as an unwanted infrastructure of colonial violence and anti-poverty programs as insufficient for producing real change in the lives of Black Americans. In this case, infrastructure appears straightforwardly in the everyday sense of the word: large systems, centralized in control, that are used in-common by a group or public.

1. The police

An instance of police brutality catalyzed the publication of the first issue of *The Black Panther*. Distributed to publicize the murder of Denzil Dowell by police in nearby Richmond, California on April 1, 1967, the paper challenges the official narratives of Dowell's death and extolls the Black community to organize in response. This first issue introduces one of the most consistent refrains in all of the BPP's discourse: "the white cop is the instrument sent into our community by the Power Structure to keep Black People quiet and under control" ("Armed Black Brothers," 1967, p. 4). In the subsequent May 1967 issue, Newton writes that "because black people desire to determine their own destiny, they are constantly inflicted with brutality

from the occupying army, embodied in the police department" (1967a, p. 4). The metaphor is repeated again in the July 20, 1967 issue. Earl Anthony writes that the "racist occupation army (i.e. police department) protects the banditry, theivery, and oppression of the ruling class in the name of law and order" (1967, p. 11). Seale writes that "the racist power structures power over black people lies in its police force occupying our community" (1967, p. 15). One can see how the BPP, since its inception, consistently surpassed simple condemnation of the police to provide a political analysis of police brutality and racism.

Understanding the BPP's colonial analysis is key to recognizing that they viewed the police as an infrastructure. That the police are an "occupying army" was not just a figure of speech; the BPP believed that the police were actually a colonial military force. This was one of the central tenants of their political analysis. The BPP belonged to "a subset of activists that [believed] black Americans were not citizens denied their rights […] but rather a colonized people" denied the power of self-determination (Malloy, 2017, p. 5). Urban Black Americans lived in communities filled with white-owned businesses with white employees, patrolled by white police, and governed by white politicians. Although this colonial relation is less obvious today, Malloy (2017) argues that "perhaps the most important legacy of the BPP is the continuing salience of the colonial model to make sense of the situation of African Americans" (p. 244). This colonial relation has become less immediately legible today because in the late 60s and early 70s the United States began to manage its internal Black colony—which, after the war, had become a surplus rather than exploitable labor force—with the campaign of racialized mass incarceration resisted by BPP that continues today (Malloy, 2017, p. 245; Wang, 2018, p. 57).

Drawing from Malcolm X and Fanon, a colonial analogy is the starting point of the BPP's analysis, from which their understanding of police brutality follows. In a November 1967

article, Cleaver writes “it is no secret that the Black Panther Party for Self Defense believes that the police function in Black Communities in the same manner and for the same purpose as an occupying army functions in a colony. In fact, we take the position that Afro-America is a domestic colony subjected to a peculiar form of colonialism” (1967b, p. 6). Cleaver begins a statement presented at the Peace and Freedom Party Forum:

> “I think the first thing we have to realize, really get into our minds, is that it is a reality when you hear people say that there’s a ‘black colony’ and a ‘white mother country.’ […] If you don’t make that distinction, then a lot of the activities going on in this country will be non-sensical. […] But if you accept the analysis that the black colony is separate and distinct from the mother country, then other forms of political struggle are indicated.” (1968a, p. 8)

In another paper presented at the Peace and Freedom Party Founding Convention he is careful to proceed from the same premise: “we start with the basic definition: that black people in America are a colonized people in every sense of the term and that white America is an organized Imperialist force holding black people in colonial bondage” (1968b, p. 12). He reiterates this argument again in an article in the subsequent, May 18, 1968 issue: “Our’s is a struggle against Community Imperialism. Our black communities are colonized and controlled from the outside […] we ourselves are controlled by the racist police who come into our communities from outside and occupy them patrolling, terrorizing, and brutalizing people like a foreign army in a conquered land” (E. Cleaver, 1968d, p. 10). This series of articles from the early editions of *The Black Panther* hammer in to place the BPP’s colonial analysis of police brutality, out of which springs their identification of the police as an infrastructure of the state.

The BPP articulated an analysis of police brutality that identified the police not as a racist but legitimate institution, but as an infrastructure of illegitimate colonial power. Police were not simply racist on an individual level, nor just at an institutional level; they were, at a political level, "the Enforcer arm of the Power Structure" ("Speeding Up Time," 1968, p. 8). The BPP's understanding of police brutality was political—based in their colonial analysis—not purely racial. Newton states in an interview printed in the March 13, 1968 issue that "we realize that when we are assaulted in the community by the gestapo tactics of the police that this is also a political thing." (1968a, p. 4) Black people are brutalized by police not just because they are Black but "because the power structure finds it to their advantage to keep us imprisoned in our black community as colonized people are kept by a foreign power" (p. 4). An October 5, 1968 article quotes Fanon to describe the infrastructural function of police in the Black community:

> "As the black revolutionary theorist Frantz Fanon stated about Algeria, a situation which is basically different only in kind and not in degree from the situation in this country: 'the policeman and the soldier are the official, instituted go-betweens … the agents of government speak the language of pure force.' In the black communities of America, the policeman is also the agent of the government, the visible example of law and order, of justice and fairness." ("Justice of Injustice," 1968, p. 13)

This discourse was consistent throughout the period 1967–1971, often repeated verbatim. In early 1970, prominent Los Angeles Panther Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt invokes the concept of infrastructure explicitly to describe the United States' exercise of power: "the CIA in Viet Nam has established an Infra Structure similar to their own here in ameriKKKa" (1970, p. 4). He identifies various police unions and organizations as part of the "Infra Structure" of American fascism.

The discourse about police in *The Black Panther* reveals that the BPP viewed police as a concrete infrastructure of state power. In the BPP's analysis, police make possible the continued colonial domination of Black Americans throughout the dispersed internal colony. They understood that the police are one of "those systems without which contemporary societies cannot function" in a doubled sense (Edwards, 1998b, p. 10). First, the state requires the police—the domestic police and the international military—to maintain its rule. Second, for Black Americans, the police are an unavoidable part of life. "Police repression is a fact of everyday existence" in the Black community (Avakian, 1967, p. 11). In their responses, the BPP activate this unwanted infrastructure as a site of political struggle.

The BPP responded to police brutality in two ways. First, and most famously, they picked up the gun. The BPP founders and early members instigated armed confrontations with the police. Corresponding to point seven of the platform, which demands an end to police brutality, the seventh point of the BPP's program reads:

> "We believe we can end police brutality in our black community organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense." (The Black Panther Party, 1968, p. 7)

Newton reasoned that "the power structure depends upon the use of force without retaliation" (1967b, p. 4). His solution was to disrupt the daily exercise of colonial violence through armed resistance that was, until the passage of the Mulford Act in July 1967, completely legal.

This served two purposes: first, it was self-defense. The Panthers refused to stand idly by while their community was brutalized; instead they confronted police with their own guns. They

practiced “self-defense against the occupation forces of an illegitimate and criminal government” (Walsh, 1968, p. 14). This provoked the well-documented violent repression of local and federal forces, but it also served another function: recruitment. Armed self-defense was also educational. Members of the community who witnessed Newton stand down police officers were impressed and inspired to support—if not join—the fledgling organization. By openly confronting the police, the BPP performed an infrastructural inversion of their own, drawing attention to the invisible, taken-for-granted operation of colonial violence that the police embody, challenging the legitimacy of this infrastructure, and empowering the Black community to resist its unwanted imposition.

Picking up the gun aimed to minimize the immediate threat of police brutality. The BPP also promoted a long-term program of community control of the police. This program built on the BPP’s colonial analysis and demanded decentralized police forces as a form of self-determination. In May 1968 Seale announced that “we want our own Black police department which lives in our own community—because the police are the arm of the power structure” (quoted in “Bobby/Garry,” 1968, p. 25). In the same issue, Cleaver demands that police be removed from the Black community: “withdraw the troops. The occupying army of the police must be replaced with a force of black men who live in the community to maintain order and harmony” (1968b, p. 25). The BPP began demanding that municipal governments in Berkeley, Oakland, and Richmond introduce amendments to replace existing police departments with community controlled ones and encouraging others to do the same (“Black Community Police Demanded,” 1968).

The October 5, 1968 issue provides readers with a summary of the “Pig Control Amendment” (“Summary of Pig Control Amendment,” 1968). In short, racially segregated cities

would have separate police departments for each ethnic community. Each department would be overseen by a group of commissioners elected by a council of members from the respective communities. Last, all officers would be required to live in the community that they police. Instead of a predominantly white police force coming into the Black community from without—as in a colonial structure—communities would be policed by people who would ostensibly be accountable to their communities because they actually lived in them. "Racism in the police department," they argued, "will never be stopped until de-centralization is achieved and de-centralization means community control" (Joudon Ford, quoted in "Press Conference of N.Y. Panthers," 1968, p. 3).

The BPP began circulated petitions for the amendment and raised support for it in the newspaper. A January 15, 1969 headline reads "SIGN PETITION; CONTROL YOUR LOCAL PIGS." After introducing the petition, explaining its importance, and summarizing the proposed amendment, the article closes by saying "Police brutality will cease when police are made to answer to the community for their brutal and oppressive tactics. In the name of justice, be sure to sign the petition" ("Sign Petition; Control Your Local Pigs," 1969, p. 6). Two articles in the August 30, 1969 issue argue on behalf of the petition. The first, with the headline "TURNING THE PIGS INTO POLICE," recognizes people's hesitance to sign the petition, but insists that "Community Control is the first step toward insuring that the people, not the fascist pigs, have the power to determine the destiny of their community" ("Turning the Pigs Into Police," 1969, p. 10). The second, under the headline "WHAT DOES THE DECENTRALIZATION OF POLICE MEAN?," explains that community control of the police threatens the very existence of the US government: "So when the Black Panther Party initiates a Community Control of Police Petition, we are threatening an arm of Babylon which is very fundamental to its existence. Without that

arm of organized violence and repression, Babylon would cease to exist" ("Decentralization of Police," 1969, p. 15). Here, the BPP's understanding of the police as an infrastructure of the state—without which it could not function—is reflected even in the more reformist portions of their program.

The BPP, with the help of its organizing bureau The National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF), would continue to organize and gather signatures for their referendum, and they eventually succeeded in getting it on the ballot in Berkeley. The July 25, 1970 issue announces that the NCCF filed over 15,000 signatures of registered voters and that the community control of police amendment would appear on the ballot in November. It did not pass.

Today, in the wake of renewed attention to the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality energized by a fresh wave of protests, many look to the BPP for inspiration, if not a model (Rhodes, 2007/2017, p. 15). While contemporary calls to "defund" or "abolish" the police may appear more radical than the BPP's apparently modest "community control," it is crucial to emphasize that the BPP's position was rooted in a colonial analysis. For the BPP, the police were not a legitimate but corrupt institution in need of reform; they were an infrastructure of the state's colonial power to violently deny Black Americans their right to self-determination. As such, they were never the final target of the BPP's analysis. In *Soul On Ice*, Cleaver writes "In their rage against the police, against police brutality, people lose sight of the fundamental reality: that the police are only an instrument for the implementation of the policies of those who make the decisions. Police brutality is only one facet of the crystal of terror and oppression. Behind police brutality there is social brutality, and political brutality" (excerpted as E. Cleaver, 1969a, p. 6). The police were only one arm of the U.S. government that the BPP sought to

overthrow, only the most immediate and violent representative of the state. Today, when the state attempts to placate massive uprisings with minor concessions, it is crucial to renew the BPP's colonial analysis of the police as an unwanted infrastructure of illegitimate state violence so that revolutionary movements do not fall into reform. As the BPP recognized, it will be insufficient to abolish the police without abolishing capital, which necessitates abolishing and decolonizing the United States as such (Newton, 1971b, p. F).

2. Anti-poverty programs

The BPP was formed also to combat a wide range of socio-economic problems facing the Black community. Issues like decrepit housing, unemployment, unequal healthcare, and poor food were just as integral to the BPP's founding as police brutality (Nelson, 2011, p. 50). Cleaver begins the front page story of the third edition of *The Black Panther* by listing the many indignities suffered by Black Americans:

> "Bad roads, dilapidated housing, rampant unemployment, inferior education, brutal cops […] bad sewers, bad lighting, no drainage system, no say-so over the decisions that control our lives—this is a portrait of the horrible inhuman conditions that the white structure forces black people in the North Richmond area to live under. By holding the community in this abject, colonial status the power structure taxes them while allowing them no representation. They have no one to speak for them on the city council, nobody takes their needs, desires, and dreams into consideration." (1967a, p. 1)

Lists such as this are common throughout *The Black Panther*, which dedicates countless articles to documenting the inhumane conditions in which Black Americans lived.

Under the auspices of the Great Society and the War on Poverty, the U.S. government had constructed an infrastructure of programs and centers ostensibly to combat the poverty

chronicled by Cleaver. In the summer of 1966 Seale would take a job at one of these anti-poverty centers in North Oakland. Here he witnessed first-hand the socio-economic destitution of his Black community and experienced the inadequacy of existing anti-poverty programs to rectify it (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 36; Seale, 1970/1996). It was in the office of that anti-poverty center, in fact, where Newton and Seale wrote down the ten point platform and founded the BPP.

An Emory Douglas cartoon in the October 12, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther* succinctly illustrates the BPP's position on Great Society programs. It depicts a pig in a long-sleeve shirt labelled "L.B.J." The pig's arms flail in the air, its mouth is agape in a tongue-waggling shriek, and the turbulence of its last oinking breath emanates from its snout while it is flushed down a large toilet labelled "THE GREAT SOCIETY" (1968b, p. 7).

Determining that the state's existing anti-poverty programs were insufficient, the BPP again activated this infrastructure as a site of political struggle. The above-cited list of grievances from Cleaver is taken from an article about an effort to incorporate the Black-majority neighborhood of North Richmond into an independent city. One of the perceived benefits of this plan was that the Black community would "gain control of the War on Poverty Funds that come into the area, instead of standing by passively watching the manipulators downtown diverting these funds to their own selfish ends" (E. Cleaver, 1967a, p. 2). In the July 20, 1967 issue Seale describes how he turned a speaking engagement at a Poverty Program in Hunters Point into a political demonstration to demand more jobs from the mayor of San Francisco (1967). Another article narrates the escalating sequence of events that led up to the demonstration. About 150 Black men had been expecting to get jobs as supervisors with a Summer Youth Work program, but when they found out only 40 would be hired "their slogan was 'Jobs or Gasoline,' because

every factory in the area would be burned. They were talking about black power on the actual level, on the pavement level, if you can dig it" (Murray, 1967, p. 14).

An article with the headline "WHO DECIDES FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY?" in the March 3, 1969 issue spells out the BPP's criticism of anti-poverty programs, using the Model Cities program as an example. Following the BPP's colonial analysis, the article begins with the premise that "Whites who live outside the community make decisions that affect the lives of Black people. Black people are still relegated to a position of subservience and treated like immature children by the white ruling class" (Dynamite, 1979, p. 13). Anti-poverty programs are framed primarily as a question of self-determination. The article describes federal programs as "a large con game" wherein "a few token representatives" of the Black community are "'allowed' only minor participation" while the programs, at best, "change a few unsightly physical characteristics in a community" (p. 13). According to the article, the Model Cities program would in reality build "fancy middle-class apartments […] which will only make more money for white-owned realty and construction companies and hastily established white-controlled non-profit corporations and foundations" (p. 13). Ultimately, the article claims, all Great Society programs "do more to perpetuate than change the system" (p. 13). Instead of this insufficient, state-controlled infrastructure, "what the Black community really needs is POWER […] Once we have power, we will be able to decide for ourselves" (p. 13).

Just like with police brutality, the BPP pursued multiple strategies for addressing the inadequacy of the state's anti-poverty infrastructure. Control over poverty programs became a consistent demand of the BPP's. In an interview reprinted in the September 28, 1968 issues of *The Black Panther*, Cleaver says that "one of the main programs that we should have today is their coming into the communities and putting different groups of black people on these poverty

programs and buying them out if they agree to perform in a certain manner" (1968e, p. 6). In other words, these infrastructures ought to be established but then handed over to communities to run themselves.

Simultaneously, the BPP went forth to meet the needs of the people directly. They instituted a variety of community programs that would come to be known as Service to the People Programs. In its direct response to the inadequacy of state anti-poverty infrastructure, the BPP enacted an infrastructural politics of a second type: providing and becoming infrastructure to the people.

B. Providing/Becoming Infrastructure

Thanks to the widespread mobilization of the Free Huey! campaign, the BPP's membership had rapidly grown by the end of 1968. Their radical militancy, however, had landed leadership in tough spots. Newton was in jail, Cleaver was in exile, and Seale was facing possible federal charges stemming from the Democratic National Convention protests over the summer. The trend would continue. In 1969 the BPP became the main target of the FBI's COINTELPRO operations: 233 out of the 295 COINTELPRO operations conducted against Black activists at this time were directed against the BPP (Churchill, 2001, p. 82). On January 17, L.A. Panthers Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins were assassinated by members of Ron Karenga's Us organization, with whom the BPP had a rivalry that was aggravated and exploited by the FBI.

The BPP needed to regroup. It stopped accepting new members and attempted to institute discipline throughout the party. Nonetheless, the BPP continued to face many challenges. In March, Seale was indicted for conspiracy to cross state lines to incite a riot, and in August he was extradited to Chicago to stand trial. In April, 21 New York Panthers were arrested and

indicted for an alleged conspiracy to bomb multiple buildings across the city. The following month, the "New Haven Nine" were arrested for the murder of BPP member Alex Rackley, for which Seale would also be indicted. Meanwhile, Cleaver traveled abroad, attempting to raise the profile of the BPP and gain powerful allies. 1969 ended how it began for the BPP: with more assassinations and arrests. On December 3, Chief of Staff David Hilliard was arrested for threatening to kill Richard Nixon in a speech he delivered in November. At 4:00 AM on December 4, Cook County police raided the apartment of rising Chicago BPP leader Fred Hampton. They shot him once in the shoulder and twice in the head while he slept. Mark Clark was also killed in the raid.

Beginning in 1969, the BPP also instituted a variety of Service to the People Programs ranging from Free Breakfast for School Children (the most famous and most widely successful program) to pest control and free bussing to prisons for families of inmates (Hilliard, 2008). Given that the state's anti-poverty programs were insufficient, the BPP started their own. A sociotechnical conception of infrastructure allows us to recognize and evaluate this social practice as the provision of infrastructure. What emerges, is a second valence of infrastructural politics: providing and becoming infrastructure to the people as a mode of political praxis.

Infrastructure is an entanglement of social practices and technical objects. Star (1999) writes that "infrastructure is a fundamentally relational concept, becoming real infrastructure in relation to organized practices" (p. 380). Infrastructure is not just a thing, as it is in the ordinary sense, but a status that sociotechnical assemblages can attain. A list of characteristics identifies when—not what—an infrastructure occurs: embeddedness, transparency, reach or scope, learned as part of membership, links with conventions of practice, embodiment of standards, built on an installed base, becomes visible upon breakdown (Star & Ruhleder, 1996). In a simplified

formulation: “organizations, socially communicated background knowledge, general acceptance and reliance, and near-ubiquitous accessibility are required for a system to be an infrastructure” (Edwards, 2003, p. 188). Although some of these characteristics derived from technical systems don’t perfectly translate to largely non-technical community programs, they nonetheless provide a heuristic for recognizing the BPP’s practice as the provision of infrastructure.

The BPP announced the beginning of “BREAKFAST FOR BLACK CHILDREN,” a “revolutionary program of making sure that our young, going to school, have a full stomach before going to school in the morning” in the September 7, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther* (Newton et al., 1968, p. 7). They advertised this first program, and requested volunteers, in five issues from September 1968 until it opened in late January 1969.

With Newton imprisoned and Cleaver in exile, Seale and Chief of Staff David Hilliard took initiative and expanded the scope and scale of the BPP’s community programs. Seale instituted the breakfast program nationally in a directive printed in the March 3, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther*. Free health clinics, bussing to prisons, liberation schools, and more would soon follow. His sweeping explication of the party’s history to that point and political analysis champions service to the people as a practical lesson in socialism that would meet the immediate needs of the Black community. Moreover, it would insulate the BPP from repression by bringing the party closer to the people, and the people closer to the party.

As indicated by Seale, the Service to the People Programs performed many functions. Building on the activation of the state’s anti-poverty infrastructure as a site of political struggle, the BPP’s community programs criticized the state’s insufficient efforts through social practice (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, pp. 13, 286; Spencer, 2016, pp. 85, 117). In the August 16, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther*, Cleaver writes that “these actions expose the contradiction between

the pretenses of the system and the needs of the people. They stand as an assertion that the pigs of the power structure are not fulfilling their duties" (1969b, p. 4). The programs were also extremely important for sustaining the party itself (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 29). The party's membership, massively swollen through the Free Huey! movement, needed direction and things to do. The community programs provided "positive, disciplined activities for the membership" (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 29). Moreover, they improved the BPP's reputation—at this point more closely associated with police shootouts than feeding children—among community members.

Evidently, not all of the famously macho BPP membership was initially enthusiastic about community programs. In the March 31, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther*, an anonymous member of the Los Angeles chapter writes, "Dig, we are not and definitely won't run a nursery and change children who have diaper rashes, if this is what you expected, forget it and get hat!" (1969, p. 8). This dig at those who lag behind the revolutionary consciousness of party members reflects a deeper reticence of more militant members toward the party's new, service-oriented direction. Community programs were a site of conflict between the many women members whose diligent work actually sustained the party and the men who felt domestic labor like cooking and serving breakfast was a woman's job exclusively (Spencer, 2016).

Consequently, the newspaper published many articles celebrating the revolutionary nature of community programs. The April 27, 1969 issue highlights the breakfast programs in particular. Out of 14 total articles, eight feature the breakfast program. In addition to a three page photo montage, there is a centerfold editorial statement (with more photos) from managing editor Elbert "Big Man" Howard and a statement from the Central Committee that praises the breakfast programs. The cover depicts a young Black boy at breakfast under the headline "Breakfast for Children." Within a pink and black polka-dotted border, he stoops over a table, lifting food to his

open mouth. Inside, a photograph of a woman preparing a plate of food is captioned "All party work is political." The issue leverages authoritative voices in the party to emphasize the importance of serving the people. The statement from the Central Committee praises Newton's practical and theoretical innovations and declares "PRACTICAL SOCIALIST PROGRAMS FROM THE BLACK NATION IS WHERE IT'S AT" (1969, p. 14).

By addressing itself to infrastructures of social reproduction (Heynen, 2009) the BPP's politics "tore these spaces out of the nation-state and claimed them as their own" to undercut and expropriate the U.S. government's power (Singh, 1998a, p. 79). Like their critique of the police and Great Society programs, the BPP's community service was grounded in achieving self-determination (Abron, 1998, p. 178). An April 1969 article argues, "We cannot depend upon the present government to fulfill our wants and needs. Thus more and more programs shall be set up to suffice the desires of the people and destroy the dictatorship of the b[o]urgeosie (ruling class) and its lackeys" (Marsha, 1969, p. 14). In the August 16, 1969 issue Cleaver explains the radical aspirations of the BPP's humble programs:

> "Breakfast for Children pulls people out of the system and organizes them into an alternative. […] If we can understand Breakfast for Children, can we not also understand Lunch for Children, and Dinner for Children, and Clothing for Children, and Education for Children, and Medical Care for Children? And if we can understand that, why can't we understand not only a People's Park, but People's Housing, and People's Transportation, and People's Industry, and People's Banks? And why can't we understand a People's Government?" (1969b, p. 4)

Cleaver's infrastructural free association demonstrates how the BPP's community programs were not reformist but contained revolutionary aspirations: by providing an increasing number of

infrastructures to the Black community, the party would supplant the state and become infrastructural to the whole people.

Cleaver's article reflects a conception of politics centered on building and maintaining institutions, outside of the state and under the control of the Black community (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 196). As Richard "Dharuba" Moore writes, "When we talk of survival as human beings within an oppressive social, economical, and political system and super structure, we must by necessity talk of creating programs that will insure our survival, and to go even further lay down the foundation for a new alternative to the present racist state machinery now in existence" (1970, p. 9). Resonating with contemporary infrastructuralisms, "the question of politics becomes identical with the reinvention of infrastructures" for the BPP (Berlant, 2016, p. 394). They enacted a form politics that attempts the (seemingly) impossible: fashioning infrastructures of social reproduction that are actually "non-reproductive, generating a form from within brokenness beyond the exigencies of the current crisis, and alternatively to it too" (Berlant, 2016, p. 393). They knew that political power—in addition to growing out of the barrel of a gun—lay in becoming infrastructure to the people. The BPP would wrest power from the state by supplanting its infrastructures, which they understood as sites of political control (Easterling, 2014), with their own.

Whether they succeeded, however, is up for discussion. Of course, the BPP's community programs were infrastructural in a rudimentary sense: they provided services that were essential to the everyday functioning of communities. And they were widely successful in doing so. The BPP's breakfast programs, for example, were the catalyst and model for the federally funded school breakfast programs in operation today (Heynen, 2009, p. 406). Their free medical clinics pioneered new methods of health activism and research into sickle cell anemia as well (Nelson,

2011). It is difficult to ascertain from *The Black Panther* newspaper, though, whether the BPP's service to the people programs were infrastructure in a rigorous sense—that is, according to the sociotechnical definitions of Star and Ruhleder (1996) or Edwards (2003).

Although service programs are one of the most prominent topics in *The Black Panther* newspaper by quantity, *The Black Panther* is, ironically, not the most insightful resource on the BPP's community programs. By my count, from September 7, 1968 (when the first breakfast program was announced) to March 6, 1971 the newspaper published 252 articles in which service programs feature prominently—more than two per issue, on average. As a record of the actual, day-to-day operation of the BPP's service programs, however, *The Black Panther* is rather sparse. Most commonly, planned or fledgling programs are announced with a brief article. These tend to offer a short analysis of the particular problem the program addresses, whether it be hunger, health, or education. They say that the BPP is going forth to meet the needs of the Black community and provide the details of the particular program. The details, order of appearance, and depth of analysis vary, but the genre is fairly consistent. In a rare instance of candor about a service program, a Panther reports that in Hunters Point "the people as a whole haven't taken the idea of the [Community Information] Center nor the purpose of the Center and relished it as their own, but on the other hand the people haven't rejected it either" (Carrol, 1970, p. 6).

Additionally, there are numerous reports of the difficulties particular branches faced securing donations, finding locations, and getting raided by local police. Grocers who refused to make donations and ministers who refused to host breakfasts in their churches were criticized in the paper. Accounts of violence faced by the party almost universally refer to the Breakfast for School Children program as a sort of alibi. It is either the reason why the police harass the party,

or the programs are weaponized to vilify the repression they face. A report on the initial arrest of the New Haven Nine states that "The Black Panther Party is organizing around programs which will benefit the community and educate the people […] Because of these programs, the government is clearly trying to crush the Black Panther Party" ("Repression," 1969, p. 13). Another article claims that "by indicting the N.Y. 21, the fascist pig power structure was trying to stop the implementation of the Free Breakfast for Children Program in the N.Y.C. area" (Zayd, 1969, p. 9). An account of a police raid of the Detroit branch office reports that "a typewriter and adding machine which was used to aid and co-ordinate the feeding of CHILDREN in the FREE BREAKFASTS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN PROGRAM, was taken by the pigs, and never returned" ("Detroit Branch Raided by Fascist Pigs," 1969, p. 17).

On the whole, there is little discourse in *The Black Panther* that reflects the day-to-day of the party's service programs from the perspective from community members. Nonetheless, the BPP's service to the people did seem to exhibit many of the traits of infrastructure. They were certainly built on installed bases: Free Breakfast for School Children and Liberation Schools were typically hosted in local churches. As a result, the BPP often struggled with local politics and community resistance in establishing programs. And they had reach and scope: the programs were instituted nationally, and they operated, sometimes continuously, for many years. The first Liberation School in Oakland, which was later renamed the Intercommunal Youth Institute, for example, graduated students until 1982. The programs were embedded: breakfasts were scheduled around and linked to the school calendar. Potorti writes that "breakfasts structured rather than disrupted the morning routines of both the child participants and the young adult volunteers" (2017, p. 91). In the summers, when there was no school, liberation schools took their place, used the same transportation organization, and served food as well.

The community programs embodied new standards of the BPP's ideals. At Liberation School, children were taught "about the big family and what it is all about. In the big family we do not hit or swear at the brothers and sisters. We are all brothers and sisters because we all are not free. We are all equal because we are not free" ("San Francisco Liberation School," 1969, p. 17). For better and worse, they were linked with conventions of practice. Liberation schools were "a familiar concept in the black community because they had been an organizing tactic used by Southern civil rights groups" (Alkebulan, 2007, p. 33). Reflecting deep-seated distrust of medical doctors within the Black community, the opening of the Bobby Hutton Memorial Free Health Clinic in Kansas City "met with some difficulties. The open house was not well attended by the people of the community. Many people do not really believe that the FREE HEALTH CLINIC is really free" ("Bobby Hutton Memorial Free Health Clinic," 1969, p. 18). As mentioned above, breakfast programs were a site of internal conflict around gendered labor as well.

Transparency was a goal of the BPP's community programs. The party hoped that, eventually, the programs would run themselves. For the breakfast program in particular, they sought donations on a recurring basis and attempted to involve community members to the extent that the program could be passed on to them exclusively, freeing the BPP to do other work. An article in the April 27, 1969 issue reads, "the Breakfast has already been initiated in several chapters, and our love for the masses makes us realize that it must continue permanently and be a national program. But we need your help, and that means money, food, and time. We want to turn the program over to the community but without your effort and support we cannot" ("To Feed Our Children," 1969, p. 3). And when the programs broke down, it was visible. In the December 20, 1969 issue the Richmond branch of the BPP "sincerely apologizes" for arriving late to the breakfast program (Dauod, 1969, p. 4). In the October 31, 1970 issue, the Harlem

branch apologizes to its community for not serving breakfast one morning: “We did not serve breakfast to the children this morning. It was a failure on all our parts as a whole, not just the individuals involved. It is time for us to stop shucking and jiving and get down to some serious business because our survival is at stake” (“Message to the Youth of the Harlem Community,” 1970, p. 11). One missed breakfast wasn’t just a minor disruption to people’s schedule; it meant that potentially hundreds of community children would go hungry that day in school.

There are many letters to the party that demonstrate that the Black community viewed the BPP as an infrastructure for meeting their needs in general. These expressions indicate that the BPP’s community programs achieved some degree of general acceptance, reliance, and accessibility. According to Bloom and Martin, Jr. (2013) “local Party chapters frequently served as community sounding boards and social service agencies—as black people’s stewards […] In doing so, [the BPP] provided community members with a vital source of remediation that was often unavailable from the state” (pp. 180–181). In the July 19, 1969 issue, Fred Hampton writes that “when people got a problem they come to the Black Panther Party for help and thats good. Because, like Mao says we are supposed to be ridden by the people and Huey says we’re going to be ridden down the path of social revolution and that’s for the people” (1969, p. 7). The BPP received and reprinted many letters from individuals seeking help, especially from Black men in the military and the family or friends of people unjustly incarcerated. One letter from a “Military Pig,” for example, says “the reason I’m writing to the Black Panther Party is because I have a problem, and I think the Panthers are the best and the only ones who can help me” (Chatman, 1969, p. 3). A letter from Ali Bey Hassan, imprisoned in the Bronx as one of the New York 21, requests legal assistance for another inmate (1969). Perhaps due to the BPP’s many high-profile legal battles, this type of letter was common, in addition to many requesting assistance with

deplorable housing and racist landlords. Evidently, members of the Black community learned, as part of membership in the community, that the BPP were a dependable resource for meeting their needs.

While it is difficult to offer a complete assessment of the BPP's community programs based on *The Black Panther* alone, the discourse present does seem to indicate that the BPP exhibited many of the characteristics of infrastructure through its social practice. Moreover, I am confident that interviews and local party histories would reveal the extent to which impoverished Black communities across the United States relied on the infrastructures of social reproduction implemented by the BPP. Ultimately, though, in the case of providing and becoming infrastructure, the aspiration is more significant than the achievement.

The BPP's vision for its service programs embodied a second valence of infrastructural politics: providing and becoming infrastructure to the people. Although the BPP was perhaps not ultimately successful in becoming infrastructure in the long-term, the radical power of providing infrastructure to the people as a mode of political praxis resonates strongly today when our infrastructures are often the sites of capitalist accumulation, political domination, and stark inequality.

C. Communicational Infrastructure

In 1970, the BPP's membership dwindled, and the party began to unravel. The high-profile trials of Seale, the New York 21, and the New Haven Nine commenced and continued. Newton appealed his manslaughter conviction but remained imprisoned until August when he was released on bail, pending a new trial. He returned to the people on the eve of the BPP's Philadelphia plenary session of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention planned for the fall. Abroad, Cleaver forged ties with the revolutionary governments in East Asia, and he

officially opened the International Section of the BPP, housed in Algiers, in October. From an outside perspective, the BPP was chugging along—albeit with great difficulty.

Under the surface, however, the BPP was fracturing. Internal disagreement over the party's strategy produced two major factions: a large portion of the party supported the Central Committee in Oakland and its new service-oriented line, while a vocal and influential minority of more militant members aligned with Cleaver's internationalism urged open guerilla war. In February 1971, Michael Cetewayo Tabor and Richard Dharuba Moore, two of the New York 21, fled the country with Connie Matthews, and they were all expelled from the party by Newton. On February 26, 1971 Newton and Cleaver had an argument on live TV that resulted in the expulsion of Cleaver and the entire International section by Newton. At this point, the BPP's period as an internationally prominent revolutionary vanguard party had come to a close.

Given the severity of the disagreement between Newton and Cleaver, there are surprisingly few indications of conflict in *The Black Panther*. First, the August 30, 1969 issue of the paper moves international news to its own section. Until that point, domestic and international stories had always appeared on the same pages, with little distinction. This change, apparently Newton's request, was a subtle dig at Cleaver's internationalism (Malloy, 2017, p. 174). In the November 22, 1969 issue Cleaver seems to jab back at Newton and the party's turn away from its militant roots and toward disciplined restraint, writing that "a determined revolutionary doesn't require an authorization from a Central Committee before offing a pig. As a matter of fact, when the need arises a true revolutionary will off the Central Committee" (1969c, p. 5). In a fairly obvious power play, Newton begins to refer to himself as the "supreme commander" of the BPP in the August 15, 1970 issue of *The Black Panther*. Finally, an article in the February 13, 1971 issue, wherein Michael Cetewayo Tabor's, Richard Dharuba Moore's, and

Connie Matthews' expulsions were announced, responds to an open letter in which many of the New York 21 openly criticized Newton and implicitly aligned themselves with Cleaver. That few signs of conflict appear in *The Black Panther* is somewhat unsurprising because during this challenging period the newspaper served, almost exclusively, to raise funds and preserve organizational identity (Davenport, 1998, p. 202).

The BPP relied on a vast communicational apparatus to support its work. Members typed up meeting minutes, filled out daily and weekly work reports, and regularly mailed records to headquarters. In its later years, the BPP created standardized forms that were filled in to facilitate this process (Spencer, 2016, p. 133). Of the numerous printed and written documents through which the BPP functioned, its newspaper was the most important. An article in the August 8, 1970 issue of *The Black Panther* concedes that "J. Edgar Hoover was correct in his analysis that the effectiveness of the Party is through the newspapers" ("Repression of the Black Panther Newspaper," 1970, p. 11). Virtual Murrell writes, "Our paper is so important that it is an absolute necessity that the information we circulate within our paper, reach the Brothers in the street […] We use it primarily for two reasons: to give political consciousness to the masses and as an organizing tool" (1969, p. 16). Everyone—from the leadership down to the rank-and-file of the BPP, the director of the FBI, and contemporary scholars—counts *The Black Panther* as immensely important to the party. It is telling that after the party split in early 1971, the Cleaver-aligned faction targeted Samuel Napier, the national circulation manager for the newspaper since 1968, for assassination.

Embodying the perspective of contemporary media theoretical infrastructuralism, the BPP leaders—in particular, Newton and Cleaver—thought like media theorists, "in the ablative case: 'by means of which'" (McLuhan, 1987, quoted in Peters, 2015b, p. 21). From Newton's

discerning predictions about technical automation and labor (Newton, 1971b; Wang, 2018, p. 57) to Cleaver's "interest in communications" (E. Cleaver, 1968c, p. 14), the BPP was guided by a sophisticated media-technical sensibility. Reflecting on the news media's failure to report on the BPP's second Executive Mandate read by Seale on the steps of the San Francisco Hall of Justice, an anonymous article in the July 3, 1967 issue of *The Black Panther* states that "the only lesson which the Black Panthers learned from all this is that the mass media of this racist country is controlled by dog capitalist exploiters and they very carefully regulate everything that is communicated to the public. The Black Panther Party For Self Defense has no respect for the mass media of this country and has every intention of breaking the control over what black people hear over the news media" (1967, p. 7). In the following issue, a BPP reporter regrets his inability to communicate solidarity and lend assistance to an anonymous Black man who was fleeing from police: "It then became very clear that one of the most serious faults of black people is their lack of communication with one another. Black people need machinery to cope with precisely the type of situation described above. There should be some way to let brothers know that there are black people who will aid him in so matter what confrontation he makes with the racist exploiting power structure" ("Black Brother Beats the Heat," 1967, p. 2). In the same issue Newton declared it "of prime importance" for the party to develop its newspaper (1967e, p. 5). After the party split Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver, taking advantage of new, handheld Sony video cameras, established the Revolutionary People's Communications Network to connect political radicals and exiles around the world (Malloy, 2017, pp. 188–197). Cleaver sought to exploit the "landscape of technology, the channels and circuits of our environment" to coordinate anti-imperialist resistance (Cleaver, quoted in Malloy, 2017, p. 201).

Given the BPP's leaders' unique media-technical awareness, the sophistication exhibited by their communicational infrastructure is not surprising. "Communication," writes Rhodes (2007/2017), "took up a significant portion of the Black Panthers' labors" (p. 112). The importance and attention that the BPP dedicated to *The Black Panther* newspaper, chief among many other media, illustrates the final valence of infrastructural politics: attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements.

As indicated above, *The Black Panther* performed many functions for the BPP. Counted among the BPP's service programs, it was another attempt at providing infrastructure to the Black community that was widely successful. A letter from reader, contributor, and future Student Editor Iris Wyse reprinted in an early issue says "I am thrilled that you have started that beautiful truthful paper again. I missed not having a paper that would hip me to all the happenings in our black communities" (1968, p. 5). In the July 11, 1970 issue Brother Bowdiddlee Brown writes that "The Black Panther Community News Service is the greatest and baddest newspaper ever produced by Blacks and for Blacks in specific and the world at large. For it totally relates to Black people's lives and is a vital Black institution that tells us the truth about what this fascist, racist society is doing to us" (1970, p. 15). Emory Douglas remarked that *The Black Panther* "became a paper that people relied on" (quoted in Rhodes, 2007/2017, p. 119). According to Rhodes (2007/2017) *The Black Panther* was "the paradigmatic periodical of black revolutionary politics" in its time and was "ubiquitous in black communities across the United States" (pp. 120, 122). Evidently *The Black Panther* achieved a high degree of ubiquity and reliance, indicating that it was an infrastructure for the Black community.

As the primary way that the party represented itself to itself, *The Black Panther* newspaper was also infrastructural to the party itself, producing the BPP as such (Rhodes,

2007/2017, p. 116). *The Black Panther* was instrumental in constructing the BPP's identity and culture. In the early period of the party, the newspaper communicated the BPP's ideology and platform to its membership, producing social and ideological cohesion (Calloway, 1977, p. 61; Davenport, 1998, pp. 199, 202). In the September 13, 1969 issue, Seale writes that "the Party paper sets the correct, or is definitely suppose to give, the correct political line. Now everyone in the Party naturally receives nationally the Party newspaper. From there, the correct political perspective is transferred, by Party members and the Black Panther Party newspapers" (1969a, p. 17). Infusing every article with the party's political analysis, each issue of *The Black Panther* contains a concentrated expression of the party's complete ideology. As a result, members didn't just read *The Black Panther*; they studied it. Thus, *The Black Panther* newspaper is a compelling document of the generative power of newspapers as infrastructures for producing publics, imagined communities, and, in this case, a vanguard party (Ananny, 2012, 2018; B. Anderson, 1983/2006).

Dean theorizes the vanguard party as an affective infrastructure that "knots together unconscious processes across a differential field to enable a communist political subjectivity" to emerge (2016, p. 28). "The party," she writes, "is a body that can carry the egalitarian discharge after the crowds disperse, channeling its divisive promise of justice into organized political struggle" (p. 6). It is "an apparatus for mobilizing emotional longing and generating affective attachment in the service of struggle" (p. 247). The four affective functions of the party are concentration, endurance, fidelity, and transference. The party concentrates the energies of the crowd into directed political struggle, providing a structure that allows this energy—and struggle—to endure. The party maintains fidelity to the event of the crowd, and its collectivity acts back upon its members in a process of transference that produces comrades. Comrades

exhibit discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage. As a regular conduit through which the party mediated itself to itself, *The Black Panther* is a rich record of the BPP as an affective infrastructure.

The Black Panther newspaper self-consciously performed the psychodynamic functions of the party; through its pages, the affective infrastructure of the BPP was mediated. BPP leadership clearly understood the party's role as an affective infrastructure. One of the oldest of the BPP's recurring slogans is "The spirit of the people is stronger than the man's technology." It is not often remarked upon in scholarship, but this slogan accompanied the ten point platform and program from the second to the fifth issue of the newspaper. Subsequently it was a common refrain within and following many articles. It reflects the understanding that the BPP had of its affective function. Explaining the role of political cartoons in *The Black Panther*, Emory Douglas writes, "We try to create an *atmosphere* for the vast majority of black people—who aren't readers but activists—through their observation of our work, they *feel* they have the right to destroy the enemy" (1968, p. 20, emphasis added). Douglas's analysis of revolutionary art exhibits an understanding that the newspaper performed an essential affective role for the party, its members, and its readers. Under the headline "THE BLACK PANTHER: MIRROR OF THE PEOPLE," Landon Williams writes:

> "The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is not just a newspaper in the traditional sense of the word, it's more than that. The Black Panther Community News Service is a living contemporary history of our people's struggle for liberation at the grass roots level. It's something to be studied and grasped, and saved for future generations to read, learn and understand. […] No! The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is not an ordinary newspaper. It is the flesh and blood, the sweat and tears

> of our people. […] The Black Panther Black Community News Service, is truly *a mirror of the spirit of the people*" (1970, pp. 10–11, emphasis added).

Evidently, *The Black Panther* went far beyond simply relaying information. It created an atmosphere, a "structure of feeling" (Raymond Williams, 1961/2011); it was the communicational infrastructure of transference, mediating the party to itself, modulating and reflecting back the spirit of its members and the people.

This final section performs an infrastructural inversion by reading *The Black Panther* newspaper not as a simple record or index of a historical reality external to it but as an active agent in producing the reality of the BPP. My analysis is structured around tracing Dean's eight concepts of the party and the comrade—concentration, endurance, fidelity, and transference; discipline, joy, enthusiasm, and courage—through the discourse of *The Black Panther* to examine how the newspaper was infrastructural to the party's psychodynamic processes. The BPP's self-conscious use of its newspaper to mediate the party's affective infrastructure reflects the final valence of infrastructural politics: attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements. By examining the affective mediation of *The Black Panther*, I hope to demonstrate the productivity of scholarly attention to the communicational infrastructures of political movements, as well as Dean's psychodynamic theorization of the party form.

1. Concentration

At its core, a vanguard party "is an organization and concentration of sociality on behalf of a certain politics" (Dean, 2016, p. 189). One of the primary functions of the vanguard party is "concentrating and directing the energies of the people. The party shapes and intensifies the people's practical struggles" (p. 152). The party is an infrastructure for molding amorphous affect into directed emotion. *The Black Panther* newspaper reflects that the BPP performed the

function of concentrating the chaotic rebellion of Black communities into organized political struggle.

Some of the most consistent points of reference in the BPP's discourse are the Watts Rebellion of 1965 and the numerous riots that erupted across American cities in the summer of 1967. Newton and Seale recognized that the Black community's unrest had reached a peak, and they founded the BPP to give direction to the anger and discontent bubbling over in urban centers across the country. In the July 20, 1967 issue of *The Black Panther*, Judy Hart provides a definition of revolution that echoes Dean precisely: "no more than the fusing of separate frustrations, desires, convictions, and strengths toward a common liberation" (1967, p. 11). The BPP understood that it was involved in shaping and directing the energies and feelings of the people. In 'The Correct Handling of a Revolution,' Newton observes that "people have proved they will not tolerate any more oppression by the racist dog police through their rebellions in the black communities all across this country. The people are looking now for guidance to extend and strengthen their resistance struggle" (1967e, p. 5). Newton saw that concentration was the first task of the new party. "Bunchy" Carter identifies Newton's ability to concentrate the Black community's unrest as the distinguishing feature of his genius: "This is the genius of Huey Newton, of being able to TAP this VAST RESEVOIR of revolutionary potential. […] But I mean to really TAP it, to really TAP IT, to ORGANIZE it, and to direct it into an onslaught, a sortie against the power structure, this is the genius of Huey Newton, this is what Huey Newton did" (1969, p. 2). From very early on, the BPP demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the psychodynamics of political struggle.

In addition to anger, the BPP also sought to concentrate and organize the cooperation that existed within impoverished Black communities. "There is the spirit of communalism that's been

developing," Cleaver writes, "that needs to be harnessed, there's a spirit of anti-establishment that need to be harnessed, and there's a spirit of unit and direction and there's also ideological attraction, an idea to be made and put together, that will be the glue that will hold all of us together" (E. Cleaver, 1968g, p. 11). The BPP's service programs reflect the party's efforts to concentrate and organize what they saw as a spirit of communalism latent in the Black community.

Concentration was a lasting principle of the BPP's ideology, appearing in a headline as late as August 1970: "FROM RIOTS TO ARMED STRUGGLE" (Stamp, 1970). The persistence of concentration in the BPP's discourse reflects their clear understanding of its relationship to endurance: "the frustration and anger of black people has to be asserted in organized and sustained revolts" ("World of Black Folks International," 1967, p. 17).

2. Endurance

"The beautiful in-between of infinite potentiality" that manifests in protests, uprisings, and riots, Dean writes, "can't last forever. People get tired. Some want a little predictability, reliable food sources, shelter, and medical care" (2016, p. 142). The purpose of the vanguard party is to organize these energies for the long haul, into a form that can endure. The party is "flexible, adaptive, and expansive enough to endure beyond the joyous and disruptive moments of crowds in the streets" (Dean, 2019, p. 6). Like their acute understanding of the concentrating function of the party, the BPP emphasize the importance of endurance in *The Black Panther*.

Illustrating the connection between concentration and endurance, Newton writes that "the brothers in East Oakland learned from Watts a means of resistance fighting by amassing the people in the streets, throwing bricks and molotov cocktails to destroy property and create disruption. […] this manner of resistance is sporadic, short-lived, and costly in violence against

the people. […] The Vanguard Party must provide leadership for the people. It must teach the correct strategic methods of prolonged resistance […] This is the primary job of the party" (1967e, p. 3). The BPP displayed enormous powers of endurance in 1969 when it faced the strongest repression but also the most growth (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 21).

That the party could and would endure repression was a constant refrain in *The Black Panther* in 1969 especially, when many party members were imprisoned. In the November 29, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther* Eddie Denton writes that "the pig power structure would like you to believe that by jailing or killing of the leadership of the Black Panther Party, that the rest of the Party membership will soon die (fall out of the revolution). This is an out an out lie. The whole membership of the Black Panther Party knows the policies of the Party, and how to carry them out" (1969, p. 8). After the murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago police, *The Black Panther* re-emphasized the party's capacity to endure in the face of repression and continue their political struggle: "By raising their hands against Deputy Chairman, Fred Hampton, they lifted their hands against the best that humanity possesses. AND ALREADY OTHER HANDS ARE REACHING OUT, PICKING UP THE GUNS!!!" (Randy, 1969, p. 2). A letter from Panther women imprisoned in Niantic reads, "THEY CAN ARREST US, THEY CAN KILL US. THEY CAN CHOKE US, THEY CAN TAKE OUR BABIES THEY CAN STARVE US – BUT THEY CANNOT STOP THE STRUGGLE" (Niantic Political Prisoners, 1969, p. 6). Many of these statements echo Hampton's message, which would become a slogan, that "you can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail the revolution" (1969, p. 8). The revolution endures because as Newton saw it, "in the case of the human, we are not dealing only with the single individual, we are also dealing with the ideas and beliefs which have motivated him and which sustain him, even when his body is confined. In the case of humanity the whole is much

greater than its parts […] The dignity and beauty of man rests in the human spirit which makes him more than simply a physical being" (1969, p. 2). The BPP clearly understood the party's role as an infrastructure for empowering the people's spirit to endure against all odds.

3. Fidelity

For Dean, the crowd embodies a moment of egalitarian energy, "a collective desire for collectivity," that breaks through the everyday machinations of political domination (2016, p. 5). The vanguard party "organizes fidelity to this equality, this justice, this blessed moment of joyous belonging" that materializes in the protest crowd (Dean, 2016, p. 122). The BPP was founded in the wake of a several day rebellion in Hunters Point that erupted after a 16-year-old boy was shot and killed by police (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 38). The riots of Watts, Detroit, Newark, and more, are a constant reference in *The Black Panther*, reflecting that the BPP maintained fidelity to these events by conducting political struggle in their wake.

Riots are a consistent touchstone in the BPP's discourse. In the fifth issue of *The Black Panther*, published in midst of the "long, hot summer" of 1967, Earl Anthony writes that:

> "Newark is a major battlefront in black America's war for national liberation. […] The conditions that have led to the revolt in Newark are the same conditions that have initiated revolts in Harlem, Watts, Brooklyn, Omaha, San Francisco, Oakland, Chicago, Cleveland, etc. […]What has Newark proved? What did Watts prove? It has proven that black people, of all ages, of all status, have adapted an uncompromising position that freedom shall be gained in this country by any means necessary." (1967, pp. 11–12)

The centerfold of that issue is a spread of photographs of the action in Newark. One caption says, "Racists call it 'rioting,' but actually it's a political consequence on the part of Black people who have been denied freedom, justice and equality." In May 1968 Seale declares that "the black

community faces a grave situation, which is manifested in this people's rebellion against the racist, decadent system of mad dog America. Of the over 105 rebellions since Harlem in July, 1964 plus the over 100 rebellions since the assassination by the racist power structure of Dr. Martin Luther King, it is crystal clear, as Brother Stokely Carmichael says, that maximum retaliation on the part of the black community as a whole is in fact the order of the day" (Seale, 1968, p. 10).

This discourse continues into 1970. In the January 10, 1970 issue of *The Black Panther*, "D.C." Don Cox updates the riot count: "Since 1964 there have been over 400 rebellions in Black communities all across Babylon. In 1966 Huey P. Newton began to organize the implacables into the Black Panther Party. Our Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, recognized that the means of resistance used by the masses indicated the desire to put an end to the brutality, murder and deprivation perpetrated against Black people, by any means necessary" (1970, p. 9). Here, Cox explicitly attributes the formation of the BPP to Newton's fidelity to the liberation manifested in these urban rebellions. BPP members even describe their work as "fidelity" on two occasions. One member says, "Our staunch fidelity to our program has led to widespread jailing of our members, and especially our leaders" (Ralph Cobb, quoted in Anonymous, 1970, p. 8). Two such jailed members write that their "fidelity to the struggle for complete liberation" compels them to constantly struggle with their comrades (Bird & Shakur, 1970, p. 18).

Fidelity is not just faith but faith put into action. The egalitarian discharge of riots, protests, and uprisings manifests a political truth, and fidelity is "the work done toward building that truth in the world" (Dean, 2019, p. 85). Fidelity "demands that we build the infrastructure capable of maintaining" political struggle (Dean, 2016, p. 249); to conduct political struggle faithful to Watts, to Newark, to Detroit, Newton and Seale built the infrastructure of the BPP.

4. Transference

"The more powerful the affective infrastructure we create," writes Dean, "the more we will feel its force, interiorizing the perspective of the many into the ego-ideal that affirms our practices and activities and pushes us to do more than we think we can" (2016, p. 249). This process of the collective working back upon its members is called transference: "the affective intensity of the Party works on its members, making them stronger together than they were apart as it pushes them to act in collective rather than individual interests" (Dean, 2016, p. 237). As the mirror of the spirit of the people, *The Black Panther* newspaper mediated the BPP's transferential function, modulating and reflecting the affective intensity of the party upon its members.

There are a few moments in *The Black Panther* that powerfully index the transferential function of the party. In a statement responding to his guilty manslaughter verdict in 1968, Newton "compliment[s] the people on the revolutionary fervor that they have shown thus far." He continues:

> "They have been very beautiful and they have exceeded my expectations. Let us go on outdoing ourselves, a revolutionary man always transcends himself or otherwise he is not a revolutionary man, so we always do what we ask of ourselves or more than what we know we can do. We have the people behind us that we are always successful, the people collectively." (Newton, 1968b, p. 2)

In this statement Newton deftly amplifies the party's spirit, which had been deflated by a guilty verdict, and redirects it back upon the people by invoking their collectivity and the capacity to transcend oneself that it produces. A subsequent article by "Matilaba" (Joan Lewis) responds to Newton's statement, testifying to the powerful transferential effect of the BPP's collectivity upon

its members. She reflects on the imminent possibility of death at the hands of police or betrayal by "those you put your trust in" (Matilaba, 1968, p. 18). "And when they fail you in one way or another," she writes, "you lose that spark, that thing that helps keep you going and suddenly you are convinced that whatever you do you have to make it by yourself, alone with no help" (p. 18). But, in the depths of despair, her spirits are lifted by the thought of the collective that depends on her:

> "Of course people may dig you and to some extent depend on you to do your thing. […] Right now the leary feeling which keeps throbbing in my soul becomes stronger […] Sometimes I feel like saying fuck it and I don't care if I die, but brothers and sisters remember this; loosing your revolutionary life will only let our people down." (p. 18)

Newton's statement, printed in *The Black Panther*, inspires the young Lewis to subordinate her individualism to the collective of the party. A piece in the October 3, 1970 issue expresses a similar sentiment, "If the revolutionary political education is high enough [a Panther] will know that if he gives into the pig he will not only let himself down, he also will be letting people down, perhaps to the extent of losing the struggle" (Howard, 1970, p. 10). In these articles, we can observe the power of the party's affective infrastructure working back upon its members. They testify to the BPP's transferential function and *The Black Panther* newspaper's role in mediating the process. The BPP, by representing and mediating itself to itself, invokes a sense of collectivity that inspired its members to transcend their individualism.

Moreover, by printing these types of expressions, *The Black Panther* re-mediates the process of transference itself, endowing individual expressions with the force of collectivity. Two poems printed in *The Black Panther* in late 1968 reflect how BPP members found strength

in collectivity and the capacity to exceed oneself that it produces. A meditation on weapons and violence determines that "success / will depend mostly on your state of mind:"

"what will win
is mantras, the sustenance we give each other.
the energy we plug into
(the fact that we touch
share food)" (Di Prima, 1968, p. 17)

The speaker recognizes that in terms of guns and knives, the BPP is on equal footing with their enemies: "the guns will not win this one, they are an incidental part of the action" (p. 17). What differentiates the BPP is collectivity; this produces an awesome strength in excess of what individuals, on their own, are capable of. A similar poem about revolutionary hope titled "TIME IS RUNNING OUT!" begins:

"As we move closer to true revolution
Our Lives become more entangled into
each others
Our beliefs are tried over and over
But neither do we falter
Neither do we fail
A fire is life up under us and we
Burn with a new sense of meaning
……..a new sense of hope." (Bruce, 1968, p. 19)

In these poems, collectivity is more than a source of duty; it is also sustenance, meaning, and hope. Evidently, individual members of the BPP found affective sustenance in the party's

collectivity, identifying strength with subordinating oneself to the people. Moreover, these poems perform valuable affective work for the party itself. By printing these particular works in *The Black Panther*, the BPP re-mediates the authors' experiences of transference itself back to the party, producing an affective feedback loop infused with the force of collectivity to work upon its members again.

5. Incite, inspire

Transference, the process whereby the affective power of collectivity induces individuals to exceed themselves, produces comrades. Dean identifies four emotional characteristics of the comrade produced by the transferential relationship of the party to its members: discipline, joy, courage, and enthusiasm. In addition to tracing Dean's four characteristics, I also describe two other affective modalities that emerged in my reading of *The Black Panther*: from 1967 to 1968, the BPP primarily sought to incite and inspire its fledgling membership; from 1969 to early 1971, the predominate message of *The Black Panther* was "INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE!"

The Black Panther contains fewer expressions of individuals' emotions than one might expect from the primary vehicle for mediating the party's affective infrastructure. In fact, this was an intentional decision on the part of the paper's editors. An editorial statement printed in the February 2, 1969 issue—immediately after the murders of "Bunchy" Carter and John Huggins—discourages contributors from being overly emotional:

> "The Black Panther Party appreciates the contributions of all revolutionary people and will attempt to publish all relevant material that is submitted to the Black Panther newspaper. THE BLACK PANTHER is an instrument of political education and is published with the intent of countering the misinformation that often appears in the mass communication media. THE BLACK PANTHER is not to be considered an outlet for

> emotional outburst of irrevelant profanity. This is not to imply that all profanity will be eliminated from THE BLACK PANTHER, but to inform contributors that all material must correspond with the primary purpose of the paper—to educate the oppressed." (The Black Panther Party, 1969, p. 5)

Evidently, the editors of *The Black Panther* found personal emotional expressions counterproductive to their goal of education. Nonetheless, it is possible to read into the BPP's discourse for the affective work *The Black Panther* performs and the emotions it attempts to elicit from its readers.

In its early period, *The Black Panther* newspaper primarily incites and inspires its readership. An article in the second issue reflects on being inspired by the BPP's political actions: "These Black Men who express fervor, spirit and boldness of heart kindle in me, a Black Woman, the feeling of wanting to help plan, work, experience, and most of all share not only in these feelings with him but the togetherness of wanting and now going about getting our freedom together" ("Sister Williams Says," 1967, p. 6). This issue also introduces the BPP's most enduring cultural contribution: the pig. There is a drawing a large pig in the lower right hand corner of the first page. Underneath, it reads "SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL POLICE." Douglas makes the meaning of the tongue-in-cheek slogan more explicit in the following issue. A Black revolutionary fighter bounds over the pig. They are accompanied by a poem, "On Revolutionary Art:" "Painting a Liberation / scene, too, Black People / killing whities. It's / about time. It's Four / Hundred Years overdue" (Douglas, 1967, p. 1). In the subsequent issue, Newton's poem "GUNS BABY GUNS" advocates for another of the BPP's most iconic actions: picking up the gun. He writes: "Army 45 will stop all jive / Buckshots will down the cops / P38 will open Prison gates / Carbine will stop a war machine / 357 will win us our heaven / And if you don't

believe in lead, / you are already dead" (Newton, 1967c, p. 7). The early issues of *The Black Panther* constitute a call to arms, inciting the Black community to revolutionary violence.

By May 1968, however, revolutionary violence had landed Newton in jail, Cleaver in exile, and Lil Bobby Hutton in an early grave. *The Black Panther* shifted its discourse to inspiring extended political struggle, particularly to "Free Huey!" One of the hallmarks of *The Black Panther* is its use of slogans, frequently repeated, illustrated with cartoons, and attached, in bold face, to the end of nearly every article. These slogans serve as a kind of affective touchstone, increasing their intensity with every repetition. They were important to gaining and maintaining attention, as well as communicating the party's ideology (Calloway, 1977, pp. 61–62). They imbue the newspaper with the voice of a chanting crowd, tapping in to the ritual function of communication (Carey, 2009). The May 4 and 18, 1968 issues, for example, fill the negative space around the iconic photograph of Newton in the wicker throne with "HUEY MUST BE SET FREE!" repeated 52 times. Typically, this is where the text of Newton's column "In Defense of Self Defense" appears. In this case, however, the space usually reserved for sophisticated political analysis and theorizing is filled with a simple slogan that concentrates all of the party's energy into a single demand: "HUEY MUST BE SET FREE!" The slogan literally takes the place of information, reflecting the importance of affective inspiration at this crucial time. Evidently, many were inspired by the BPP at this time: as a result of the Free Huey! campaign, the BPP's membership grew to its highest point in the party's history.

6. Intensify

Under enormous legal pressure and facing violent repression, the BPP shifted *The Black Panther*'s primary message in 1969. In a speech printed in the July 19, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther*, David Hilliard reassures his audience that the BPP is on the right track. Despite the

major challenges faced by the party, different work is not required—only more intensity: "it's just a matter of beginning to intensify the areas of work that we're doing. It's just a matter of doing that and doing it endlessly, doing it with more vigor, doing it with more understanding, doing it with more patience, it's these kinds of attitudes that require in order to bring forth the kind of world that we would like to live in" (Hilliard, 1969, p. 5). In the September 6, 1969 issue, the slogan "IT'S TIME TO INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE" appears in large bold print below the centerfold issue by Cleaver.

Reading *The Black Panther* during this period, however, is anything but reassuring. The newspaper bombards its readers with report after report of violence, police brutality, government repression, rigged courts, and letters from those in horrific jails. It feels like every week there is a new city with a different number attached to it.

During this period, *The Black Panther* performs a delicate affective operation of converting repression into resistance, exhorting its heavily pressed membership to intensify the struggle. Frequent reference is made to Mao's dictum that "it is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves." The call to intensify the struggle is incessant. In the September 13, 1969 issue Joe Davis writes "we must now begin to stand up and intensify our fight against this injustice that is brought down on us from 'those' that are in power and ruling over us" (1969, p. 9). A month later, an interview with Don Cox is printed under the headline "IT'S TIME TO INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE." Similar headlines continue to appear: "WE MUST NOT GIVE UP," "IT'S TIME TO INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE! COUNTER-ATTACK!," "IT'S TIME TO INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE," "WITH EVERY PIG ATTACK ON THE VANGUARD PARTY, THE PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE PIGS

GROW.” The paper becomes more militant and begins printing a column on organizing self-defense groups that details guerilla fighting tactics. Eventually, it begins calling for violence again.

The slogans attached at the ends of articles seem to perform a key function at this time. By constantly repeating phrases like “SEIZE THE TIME,” “ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE,” and “INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE” after articles, *The Black Panther* nullifies their discouraging power, détourning reports of repression into inspiration to continue the fight. A month before the FBI-exacerbated split between Newton and Cleaver would destroy the party, Newton insists that “the repression breeds resistance. […] We welcome all attacks. We will overcome all obstacles and advance wave upon wave. We will rid the world of the bourgeoisie and destroy all of the monsters, and the whole world will belong to the people” (1971a, p. 10). Again, reflecting a keen awareness of the ritual function of communication, the BPP utilize slogans to intensify the paper’s tone and transfer this intensity to its readers.

7. Discipline

One of the primary characteristics of Dean’s comrade is discipline. Discipline “induces the subordination of personal interest for the sake of producing a new force” of revolutionary politics (Dean, 2019, p. 86). In late 1968, after inciting and inspiring the people to revolution, but before massive forces of repression would pressure the BPP to intensify the struggle, the predominate message of *The Black Panther* is discipline.

Instituting discipline was a major objective for the BPP beginning in late 1968. Frustrated with party members’ frequent arrests, which ate up party funds, the BPP instituted a set of rules in the September 7, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther*. After his guilty manslaughter verdict, Newton surprised many by “admonish[ing his] revolutionary brothers and sisters to use restraint”

(1968b, p. 2). Despite having been threatening that "The Sky's the Limit!" if he were not set free, Newton asked that there not be "violent eruption at this time for the reason that the establishment would like to see a violence occur in the community so that they will have an excuse to send in 2000 or 8000 troops" (p. 2). A headline in the subsequent issue reads "PIGS WANT WAR PANTHERS COOL." This show of discipline by Newton and the BPP later supplied support to in his appeal for bail: "Huey and the Black Panther Party are well known in the Black community for keeping things cool during periods of emotional stress—for protecting the community and never inciting or encouraging violence" ("Why Huey?," 1969, p. 2).

It was one thing for Newton to make a personal display of discipline; actually instituting discipline in the party proved to be an enduring challenge. In late 1968, Newton writes that "at this point we stress discipline, we stress organization" (1968c, p. 12). In January 1969 The BPP stopped accepting new members and expanded its rules in by adding eight points of attention and three main rules of discipline. Kathleen Cleaver writes "I think, that it must become very clear that what the black community and the vanguard must do is tighten up internally" (1969, p. 4). The result was a steady stream of purges.

The BPP's purges were a war against individualism or what they sometimes called "ultra-democracy." Frank Jones writes that "one of the principles that the party must adhere to and demand from all members is that of discipline. Discipline is necessary to give the proper cohesiveness to all Party work, and without discipline the efficiency of the Party is impaired" (F. Jones, 1969, p. 17). "Any member of the Party who acts in an individualistic manner," he continues," must be prepared to suffer the consequences as an individual" (p. 17). For many, the consequence was being publicly expelled from the party. The BPP announced new purges in virtually every subsequent issue of *The Black Panther*. In extreme cases, entire chapters or

branches were disbanded. The purges were framed with reference to concentration and endurance; they weren't bad for the party but good. Jones writes that "the purge is not a weakening process, but a preparatory one. We are preparing much as a boxer who is over weight must do. The boxer sheds weight to gain greater stamina, more speed and agility" (p. 17). From the perspective of the leadership, purges produced a more disciplined, and thus more capable, party.

8. Joy

The flip side of discipline is joy. "Comrades," Dean writes, "engage in collective self-enjoyment" (2019, p. 57). The affective power of collectivity makes disciplined work joyful to party members. Joy is the least represented characteristic of the comrade in *The Black Panther*. In some cases, in fact, it's actively discouraged. The announcement of a birthday benefit for Newton says that "the occasion will not be a joyous one, because the brother is not physically free to join us" ("Birthday Benefits for Huey," 1970, p. 5). Nonetheless, a few bright spots shine through.

Like Dean's theorization predicts, BPP members describe political struggle in joyous terms. A poem titled "HAPPINES IS A WARM MUSLIM" says that "Happiness Is … Being dragged away from a lunch counter after being served / Seeing a pair of BLACK hands under a KKK sheet / Finding out the address of your slum landlord" ("HAPPINESS IS A WARM MUSLIM," 1968, p. 17). In "THAT MADE ME FEEL GOOD," Edo T. Mack writes "I offed a pig today, / that ended my problem / with imperialism, / but I still feel oppress. / Guess I'll off me another one tomorrow. I offed a pig today, that ended my problem / with white capitalism, / but I still feel oppress, / Guess I'll off me another one tomorrow. I off a pig today, that made me feel good, / Guess I'll off me another one tomorrow" (1968, p. 18). A photograph from a

breakfast program is captioned “Happiness is serving the people” in the April 27, 1969 issue. In the February 13, 1971 issue, Ericka Huggins describes opening another BPP office in L.A. She writes:

> “WE PAINTED THE OFFICE BLACK AND BLUE AND ORGANIZED THE INSIDE OF THE OFFICE WITH POSTERS, ARRANGED A LITERATURE TABLE---IT WAS A GOOD FEELING BEING THERE, DIRECTING ENERGIES TOWARDS STRUGGLING WITH THE PEOPLE FOR SOMEthing--- FREEDOM, JUSTICE, A LITTLE PEACE---RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COLONY BETWEEN WATTS AND DOWNTOWN, I THINK WE WERE ALL HAPPY „„” (Huggins, 1971, p. 6)

Like Dean’s joyous comrades, virtually all of the rare moments of joy expressed in the discourse of *The Black Panther* are associated with participating in political work. Although, unlike today when expressions of “Black joy” suffuse Black blogs, social networks, and other technologies, instances of this particular mood in *The Black Panther* newspaper are rare (Brock, Jr., 2020; Steele, 2016). The relative scarcity of joy in its emotional mix may have been detrimental to the BPP as burn out—whether physical, financial, or emotional—was a source of attrition in the party’s membership (Heath, 1976a, pp. 105–106; Casey, 1997, quoted in Spencer, 2016, p. 195). That said, it seems unlikely that the overwhelming tide of state infiltration, repression, and assassination would have been stemmed by a more joyous newspaper.

9. Enthusiasm

The party produces enthusiasm in its members. Engaging in collective struggle produces “enthusiasm, energy […] that surplus benefit of collectivity, which enables them to do more” (Dean, 2019, pp. 88–89). As demonstrated above, the power of collectivity produced a capacity in BPP members to exceed oneself. Often, this was expressed as enthusiasm.

An anonymous article in the July 3, 1967 issue of *The Black Panther* describes a new member, Captain Hawk, who had never been involved with a political organization before. Upon joining the BPP because he saw that the party was working for the people, he "amazed everyone with the enthusiasm with which he went about his work" ("Captain Hawk," 1967, p. 10). David L. Rice attributes student interest in the Omaha Liberation School to the teachers' enthusiasm. Unlike public school instructors, who teach for a salary, "the Liberation School instructors are enthusiastic, BECAUSE [THEY] ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CHILDREN AND DRIVEN BY THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE" (Rice, 1970, p. 10). Writing from prison, Afeni Shakur enthusiastically declares "we will not rest until we have fulfilled the task that history has laid down for us. Let us fight on with the unbeatable spirit of a winning people!" (1970, p. 11). These expressions reflect the enthusiasm that the collectivity of the BPP produced in its members.

Later in 1970, during the period of intensifying the struggle, enthusiasm was expressed militaristically as well. Against great repression, the BPP came to rely on its members ability to enthusiastically exceed the power of individuals alone, particularly in acts of violence. The paper often celebrates members who engaged in shootouts with police. An article in the July 11 issue explains that "the phrase 'To Be A Match For A Hundred' means that one must prepare himself to defeat 100 of the attacking enemy" ("Michale and Lawrence Proved Themselves," 1970, p. 4). Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur reflect upon their role as women in the struggle. They learned from the party that women, just like men, can "do certain extraordinary things; […] we can stand up against any attack the fascists wage. We need not fight simply tit for tat, but we can also act as machine guns to wear the enemy thin" (Bird & Shakur, 1970, p. 18). In this case, the collectivity of the party demonstrates a unique ability to elicit more from its members than they ever thought

they were capable of as individuals. As it shrank in size, the BPP would increasingly rely on this type of outsized enthusiasm from its members to carry on the revolutionary struggle.

10. Courage

Enthusiasm produces the final characteristic of the comrade: "courage, the courage to adapt to circumstances, to respond at crucial junctures, to retreat to a position of strength, to plan for contingencies, and to recognize that we learn which tactics are correct from the people" (Dean, 2019, p. 94). As the primary communicational infrastructure of the BPP, *The Black Panther* newspaper consistently enjoins its readers to be courageous.

The cartoons printed throughout *The Black Panther*, in particular, seem especially designed to produce a courageous public. Knowing that the Black community was not a reading public, *The Black Panther* sought to communicate the party's ideology just as much through its illustrations as through its writing. Douglas described his art as creating an "atmosphere" for the people to "feel they have the right to destroy the enemy" (Douglas, 1968a, p. 20). The BPP's cartoons were designed to produce courage in their audience.

The cartoons most commonly depict police, symbolized as pigs, being killed. The second page of the September 7, 1968 issue pictures three black men attacking a pig with a knife and spiked club—possibly a baseball bat with nails through it. The uniformed pig, with flies circling his head, wails and cries. A poster in background demands "FREE HUEY!" in large black lettering. On the fifth page, two pigs, with their accompanying flies, cry and gasp for breath while they run from a giant flying stick of dynamite. One particularly striking example on page 16 of the November 2, 1968 issue depicts a massive, uniformed pig on his knees. The pig, whose gut spills over both the front and back of his tight, bullet-laden belt, is terrifying. The hairs on his arms and neck rise in long, sharp spikes; slobber flows over his enormous sabre teeth. Three

large tears roll down his face, and he clasps his hands in prayer at the end of the barrel of a revolver (presumably taken from his own empty holster) held by a small Black boy, no older than a teenager. The April 20, 1969 issue contains a cartoon by Mark Teemer with similarly drawn pigs cowering in fear as they're killed by two chiseled Black men.

By depicting countless police in their death throes at the hands of Black revolutionaries, the cartoons printed in *The Black Panther* were designed to evince courage in their audience, and evidently they succeeded. The newspaper contains numerous expressions of courage. A poem in the September 28, 1968 issue recites a rhythmic battle call: "Kill them bloods with sharpened steel / Kill them bloods with guns for real / Moving through the night in bands of three's / Dying on your feet and not on your knees" ("DRUM CALLS IN THE NITE," 1968, p. 16). A month later, one poet declares "If we must die let us die nobly. / Though far outnumbered let us show brave, […] Like men we'll face the murderous cowardly pack / Pressed to the wall YES but – FIGHTING BACK!!!" ("I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD," 1968, p. 17). Many other poems express similar sentiments. In one instance, a group of L.A. Panthers defending their office for five hours against a police attack, found courage in the lines of "Bunchy" Carter's poem "BLACK MOTHER" which they had hanging on the wall ("What Really Happened in Los Angeles," 1969, p. 12). This type of courage unto death, the willingness to die for the sake of the people, would find its highest expression in Newton's concept of revolutionary suicide.

Through the pages of its newspaper, the BPP represented itself to itself, mediating the affective infrastructure of the party to produce disciplined, joyous, enthusiastic, and—above all—courageous comrades. The sophisticated affective mediation and modulation performed by *The Black Panther* reflects how the BPP and its leaders often thought like media theorists, carefully considering how information was communicated by and within the party. Embodying

the final valence of infrastructural politics, *The Black Panther* newspaper is a testament to careful attention the BPP paid to its communicational infrastructures. I hope that my analysis demonstrates the productivity of scholarly attention to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political movements as well.

D. INFRASTRUCTURAL POLITICS

In the preceding sections I adopted an infrastructuralist lens to mine the discourse of *The Black Panther* newspaper for the BPP's political legacy. What has emerged from my particular reading is the concept of infrastructural politics. I've argued that the BPP demonstrates a unique infrastructural politics throughout their thought and practice. First, grounded in a colonial analysis that understands the police as an infrastructure of state violence, the BPP activated infrastructure as a site of political struggle. They also identified the U.S. government's anti-poverty programs as an insufficient infrastructure. After activating these as sites of political struggle as well, the BPP developed its own community programs to meet the needs of the people, demonstrating the second valence of infrastructural politics: providing and becoming infrastructure as a mode of political praxis. Finally, as the primary site through which the BPP mediated itself to itself, *The Black Panther* newspaper stands as a testament to the careful attention that must be paid to the communicational infrastructures that sustain political struggle.

Over and above these particular valences based in specialized definitions of infrastructure, perhaps what is most compelling about the BPP's political vision is their commitment to material self-determination through community control over institutions of social reproduction—the way their politics are infrastructural in a comprehensive, foundational sense (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018).

In late 1970, Newton developed a theory of capitalist globalization he called "intercommunalism." In short: because the United States is an empire that exerts a material influence upon every nation of the world, in many cases determining national policy, Newton argued, nations no longer exist in any meaningful sense. Instead, the world is comprised of a vast collection of interconnected "communities." Newton defined a community as "a comprehensive collection of institutions which serve the people who live there" (1971b, p. F). Years earlier, in the fourth issue of *The Black Panther*, he defines politics: "Politics are merely the desire of individuals and groups to satisfy first their basic needs: food, shelter and clothing, and security for themselves and their loved ones" (1967d, p. 9). As Seale explains, "Politics starts with hungry stomachs, dilapidated housing, murder and brutal treatment by racist cops, unfair treatment received in the courts, the way black men are drafted into the military forces and are forced to fight other colored people of the world" (1967, p. 4). Newton believed that "the things that we commonly use and commonly need should be commonly owned" (Newton, 1970, p. 2). Therefore, Cleaver describes the revolution as "the struggle of black people to liberate their communities from community imperialism, and to enact the principle of community control over community institutions" (1968f, p. 1). And thus follows the basic, foundational political vision of the BPP: "A people's government provides the basic necessities of land, bread, housing, education and clothing" ("Jersey City Black Community Information Center," 1970, p. 9). In their practice, the BPP attempted to make this infrastructural vision a reality.

Unsurprisingly, then, concrete infrastructures figure prominently in BPP discourse. "A Poem For Huey" appears in the November 23, 1967 issue of *The Black Panther*. In a rapid staccato, the speaker narrates scenes of violence beginning with Newton's arrest and escalating to shootouts with police and guerilla warfare: "I TAKE FIVE / BROTHER / YOU TAKE FIVE /

SISTER / YOU RELOAD / POWER LINES BRIDGES FACTORIES / STORES WHITE HOUSE PENTAGON / BOOM BOOM/BOOM BOOM/BOOM BOOM/BOOM BOOM/BOOM (Morris, 1967, p. 8). The poem closes with an apostrophe directly to Newton, reassuring him that the people understand the necessity of revolutionary violence: "NO MERCY BANG BANG / ONLY WAY OUT / BANG BANG BANG BANG / HUEY / WE UNDERSTAND" (p. 8). In addition to the necessity of revolutionary violence, this poem also reflects that the BPP understood, from Newton and other leadership, the importance of infrastructure in political struggle. Another poem, presumably written by Diance Di Prima, in the first issue of 1969 echoes a similar message: "When you seize Columbia, when you / seize Paris, take / the media, tell the people what you're doing / what you're up to and why and how you mean […] when you seize a town, a campus, get hold of the power / stations, the water, the transportation" ("Revolutionary Letter #15," 1969, p. 4). Much later, Randy Williams's "Urban Guerillas" analyzes the United States' vulnerability to attacks on its infrastructure (Randy Williams, 1970). Here again one witnesses the BPP thinking in the ablative case; the BPP understood, from Huey, that politics is the struggle for control over infrastructure.

Infrastructural politics is not only the negation of existing infrastructures of capitalist domination; it also necessitates building infrastructures as well. As demonstrated above, the BPP enacted this valence of infrastructural politics through its community programs. Berlant (2016) illustrates this infrastructural mode of politics with the figure of the earthworm. "The worm," she writes, "creates a space of movement that becomes form. […] In the wormhole the worm creates an infrastructure to hold itself in the world: the hole fits the worm, but only as it moves" (2016, p. 401). In precisely this way, the BPP's infrastructural politics wrested more and more sites of political control from the state by and at the same time as producing infrastructures of its own in

practice. Their politics destabilized the infrastructures of the capitalist present by materially producing infrastructures of the future. Printed in the October 26, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther*, Diance Di Prima's "Revolutionary Letter #7" illustrates the mechanism of the BPP's infrastructural politics with a strikingly resonant simile: "like a million earthworms tunneling under this structure / till it falls" (p. 17). The BPP's infrastructural politics hollow out the spaces of state control from the inside by building revolutionary infrastructures, until the whole thing collapses.

An instrumentalist view of infrastructure teaches us that while the technical objects change, the needs they meet remain the same (Edwards, 2003). People will always need land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace. Political movements will always need to communicate information, incite and inspire people to action, modulate and sustain the affective investment of their participants, and articulate a vision of the future. The preceding analysis has attempted to provide some tools and models for thinking critically about the assemblages of human practice and technical objects that make all of these diverse processes possible. The concept of infrastructural politics, I hope, will be useful to activists and scholars alike.

In the following section, I place my analysis back into the wider context of postmodernism. This final part concludes by explaining the special significance of the BPP's infrastructural politics to the postmodern problematic of cognitive mapping and describing what an infrastructural politics might look like today.

V. Infrastructure, Cognitive Mapping, and the Black Panther Party

A. The Black Panther Party's Aesthetics of Cognitive Mapping

The BPP emerged when the forms of what would soon be called "late capitalism" and its cultural logic "postmodernism" were solidifying and becoming clear (Singh, 1998a, p. 82). In his thought, Newton demonstrates a prescient understanding of this third stage of capital, anticipating the work of later scholars of capitalist globalization like Hardt and Negri (Malloy, 2017, pp. 117–118; Narayan, 2017). Newton's theory of intercommunalism, in particular, resonates strongly with Jameson's (1991) account of late capitalism. Consequently, the BPP's infrastructural politics embody a solution to the unique political challenge of postmodernism identified by Jameson—namely, cognitive mapping.

For Jameson, late capitalism is differentiated from the stage of monopoly capitalism by "the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and stock exchanges […] new forms of media interrelationship […] computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale" (1991, p. xix). In this stage, "the corporation and the trust have consigned individualism (and its forms and categories) to the ash can of history" (p. 217). One of these forms of individualism consigned to the ash can of history is the nation: "not merely the older city but even the nation-state itself has ceased to play a central functional and formal role in a process that has in a new quantum leap of capital prodigiously expanded beyond them" (p. 412).

Many years earlier, Newton had independently formulated a strikingly similar analysis in the form of intercommunalism. Identifying many of the same characteristics as Jameson, Newton

says that “technology is developing at such a rapid rate that we’ll start with automation, go to cybernation, and then go from there probably to technocracy […] the proletarian working class, will definitely be on the decline” (1971b, p. D). He continues: “because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass media, because of the fire power of the imperialist, because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, that nationhood did not exist […] all of the nations were transformed at the hands of the imperialist and the ruling circle in the interests of the imperialists” (p. E–F). The result is what Newton calls “reactionary intercommunalism:” “a distorted form of collectivity” wherein “everything’s been collected but it’s used for the interest of the ruling circle” (p. F, G). Both Newton and Mandel (1972) describe this latest stage as having fulfilled the historical role that Marx set for capitalism: developing the productive forces of society and interconnecting the world. In so many words, Newton articulates a cogent analysis of late capitalism roughly equivalent to Jameson’s.

Reviewed above, the world system of late capitalism produces a new representational impossibility: that is, “the incapacity of our minds […] to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects;” “a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to the vast and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society’s structures as a whole” cannot be formed (Jameson, 1991, pp. 44, 51). Jameson’s brief case study, The League of Black Revolutionary Workers, which he suggests was “the single most significant political experience of the American 1960s,” ran up against “the enormous strategic and tactical difficulties of coordinating local and grassroots or neighborhood political actions with national or international ones” (Jameson, 1991, p. 413). This local-global coordination is precisely, however, what the

BPP—exact contemporaries of, and arguably more significant than, the League of Black Revolutionary Workers—succeeded most in performing.

Coordinating the local and the global is what the BPP most excelled at. For many scholars, it was the principal concern of their thought and practice, what distinguished them from their contemporaries, and endures as their major contribution to radical politics (Clemons & Jones, 2001, p. 27; Malloy, 2017, pp. 3–4, 59, 65, 179; Rhodes, 2007/2017, p. 301; Self, 2006, p. 37; Singh, 1998a, p. 82). By consistently relating the personal to the global, I argue, the BPP articulated a compelling version of cognitive mapping endemic to postmodernism through their infrastructural politics.

In the August 16, 1969 issue of *The Black Panther* Cleaver perfectly encapsulates the representational problem of late capitalism. He asks, "After picking up the gun, whom do we shoot?" (1969b, p. 4). Designed to answer this question, an aesthetics of cognitive mapping runs through each of the three valences of the BPP's infrastructural politics. "It is a fact and it is necessary that the people here understand that seeing imperialism 10,000 miles away," Seale argued, "And demanding an end to imperialism 10,000 miles away is not the crux of the problem, but in fact the people are *going to have to see the whole*" (1969, p. 3, emphasis added). Thus, across each site of their infrastructural politics—namely, the police, serving the people, and *The Black Panther* newspaper—the BPP links the immediate, local experience of Black Americans to the global totality of late capital, articulating a form of cognitive mapping endemic to postmodernism.

First, in activating the police as an infrastructure of state power—and a site of political struggle—the BPP always relates local police to the imperialist violence of the U.S. military abroad, especially in Vietnam. Newton establishes this analysis in his series of essays published

in *The Black Panther* as “In Defense of Self Defense.” In the second issue of the paper he writes “there is a great similarity between the occupying army in Southeast Asia and the occupation of our communities by the racist police. The armies are there not to protect the people of South Vietnam, but to brutalize and oppress them for the interests of the selfish imperial power” (Newton, 1967a, p. 4). “The police action in Vietnam is no different from the police action in the Black ghettos of America. The police occupy our Black communities like a foreign troop occupies territory,” Newton repeats in the subsequent issue (1967b, p. 4). And again in the March 16, 1968 issue: “So, the police is only an arm of the white power structure used very similarly to their military force—which it is—the local police is a military force, then there’s the National Guard as the national police, and then there’s the regular military as the international police. These police are used to occupy our community just as foreign troops occupy territory” (Newton, 1968a, p. 4). By beginning with the local police and telescoping outward to the national guard, the marines, and finally imperialism, fascism or intercommunalism, the BPP relate “existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic [or social] totality” (Jameson, 1991, p. 52). As Don Cox says, “Black people in general, may not relate to the word, or the definitions of fascism as articulated [by] [Georgi] Dimitroff, but black people sure relate to the social practice of 400 years of brutality and murder perpetrated on us by the fathers of fascism” (1969, p. 11). The Black community already understood the violence they suffered at the hands of police—they experienced it first-hand. The task of the BPP was to represent the relationship between individual experiences of colonial violence at home and the imperialist violence of the capitalist world system globally.

The BPP’s Service to the People programs also embodied an aesthetics of cognitive mapping. As shown above, these programs performed many functions. They fed hungry children,

but they also mapped their relationship to the total world system of multinational capital. The programs "connected individuals, households, communities, cities, states, and nations" through a scalar politics of social reproduction (Heynen, 2009, p. 408). As Newton explains, "Black people already know they're poor and powerless. They just don't understand the nature of their oppression. They haven't drawn the line from their condition to the system of capitalism. The Survival Programs do that" (quoted in Potorti, 2017, p. 95). Again, the BPP demonstrates an intuitive fluency in cognitive mapping, linking individual lived experiences to the totality of multinational capital. Outward from doctors' offices and children's breakfast plates, the BPP drew a map of the world's infrastructures of social reproduction—and envisioned a new world infrastructure as well.

Finally, *The Black Panther* newspaper, above all, provided its readers with a global vision of the world and their place in it. The BPP's newspaper was the "primary vehicle" for their "anticolonial vernacular" that "melded a global analysis with local issues and idioms" (Malloy, 2017, pp. 71, 81). In addition to local reports from Black communities across the United States, *The Black Panther* always carried an impressive array of international news. Until late 1969, international news was presented alongside domestic news, with little distinction between the two, communicating through the paper's layout the connection between the local and the global (Malloy, 2017, pp. 89–91). The BPP "sought to show followers that there was a worldwide revolt against oppression in which the Panthers played an active role" (Rhodes, 2007/2017, p. 123). *The Black Panther* newspaper imbued in its individual readers a global consciousness.

Emory Douglas, in particular, crafted a visual language for representing the relationship between the local and the global, individuals and the totality of multinational capital. "We draw

pictures that show Standard Oil in milk bottles launched at Rockefeller with the wicks made of cloth from I Magnin and J Magnin," Douglas explains, "pictures of Chinese fireworks in gun powder form aimed at the heart of the enemy—Bank of America—pictures of pigs hanging by their tongues wrapped with barbed wire connected to your local power plant" (1968a, p. 20). Thus, Douglas understood the task of revolutionary art as mapping multinational capital. Douglas's centerfold art in the September 28, 1968 issue of *The Black Panther* depicts a BPP guerilla alongside a Native American warrior, a Zapatista, a Viet Cong soldier, and a Cuban revolutionary. They raise their weapons in unison, signaling the connection between all struggles against imperialism and capitalism. A Douglas triptych in the March 16, 1968 issue is paradigmatic of the BPP's aesthetics of cognitive mapping. Each of the three panes contains an identical, uniformed pig. His fat belly hangs over his belt while he struts on long hooves. On his belt there is a canister of teargas, a can of Mace, a revolver, and a string of bullets. He carries a rifle in his left hand, and a baton labelled "NAPALM" in his right. The pig squints through the flies buzzing around his head and over his large snout, presumably at some innocent person he's going to brutalize. The pig on the left is labelled "LOCAL POLICE;" in the center, "NATIONAL GUARD;" on the right, "MARINES." At the top left of the cartoon, in large boldface type: "*IT'S ALL THE SAME*."

B. Infrastructure and Cognitive Mapping

I have suggested that the BPP's infrastructural politics embodied and enacted a form of cognitive mapping endemic to postmodernism. In a seminal essay on the 1960s, Jameson (1984a) suggests that the "Fanonian model" of politics was paradigmatic of the 60s and, consequently, waned with the clarity of the colonial analogy upon which it was based. As I've shown, the BPP's politics were undoubtedly of this "older"—from the perspective of

postmodernism—type of "politics [that] sought to coordinate local and global struggles, so to speak, and to endow the immediate local occasion for struggle with an allegorical value, namely that of representing the overall struggle itself and incarnating it in a here-and-now thereby transfigured" (Jameson, 1991, p. 330). Jameson argues that "politics works only when these two level can be coordinated," but this type of stereo politics "is no longer possible" in the period of postmodernism (p. 330).

Today, the "representation of social relations as such now demands the mediation of this or that interposed communicational structure, from which it must be read off indirectly" (p. 416). In late capitalism, this requisite communicational structure is information and communications technology: "information technology [is] virtually the representational solution as well as the representational problem of this world system's cognitive mapping, whose allegories can now always be expected to include a communicational third term" (Jameson, 1992, p. 10). As I've described them, though, the BPP's infrastructural politics didn't enlist information technology—Newton and Cleaver's media-technical sensibility notwithstanding. What makes the BPP's politics such a compelling articulation of cognitive mapping is that they are more than internationalist in this "older" sense; they are infrastructural. The BPP's infrastructural politics already contain the essence of a communicational third term in the form of infrastructure.

Successful cognitive mapping is "a matter of form," and its form is infrastructure (Jameson, 1988, p. 356). Note that representing postmodern social relations "demands the mediation of this or that interposed communicational *structure*," not object. It follows that information technology presents itself as the potential solution to cognitive mapping not because of its particular objective content but because it is infrastructural, in form, to late capitalism. In

other words, infrastructure is the essence of cognitive mapping, while information and communications technology is merely its appearance.

This is confirmed when one recognizes that, analytically, the infrastructure concept is equivalent to Jameson's definition of cognitive mapping. In short, the goal of cognitive mapping is to locate one's subject position within and with respect to the totality of multinational capital; a cognitive map represents one's imaginary relationship to the real conditions of their existence. Immediately, it is important to note that what cognitive mapping aims to represent is not a thing but a relationship. Moreover, Jameson does not mean 'representation' in the sense that has accumulated negative baggage vis-à-vis poststructuralism. Rather, he uses representation as "the synonym of 'figuration'" or perhaps, I would suggest, mediation (Jameson, 1988, p. 348). Thus, a successful cognitive map isn't a simplistic representation of multinational capital; instead, cognitive mapping *mediates the relationship between an individual and the totality.*

After a quick recoding, cognitive mapping is rendered formally equivalent to infrastructure. The resonances of scholarly definitions of infrastructure with my rewritten definition of cognitive mapping are exact. Edwards (2003) argues that "infrastructure, as both concept and practice, not only bridges [micro, meso, and macro] scales [of force, time, and social organization] but also offers a way of comprehending their relations" (p. 382). Because infrastructures provide "human-sized interfaces" to "bigger and submerged systems," to live within infrastructure "is to know one's place in gigantic systems that both enable and constrain us" (Peters, 2015a, p. 41, 2015b, p. 31; Edwards, 2003, p. 387). Moreover, infrastructure is fundamentally relational; it is "that which is between—between people, mediated by tools, and emergent" (Star & Bowker, 2006, p. 231). "An infrastructure occurs," Star and Ruhleder write,

"when the tension between local and global is resolved" (1996, p. 114). The definition of infrastructure describes the aesthetics of cognitive mapping exactly.

Infrastructure thus appears to be the solution to the postmodern impasse of cognitive mapping. In light of the special relationship between infrastructure and cognitive mapping, this last ought to be adopted as an imperative for infrastructuralism. Because it is relational and mediational, infrastructure possesses a unique ability to represent individuals' relationships to the totality of multinational capital, and it should be enlisted by critical infrastructure scholars in service of cognitive mapping toward an infrastructural politics. Innovative forms of "deep mapping" and "transmission narratives" offer generative glimpses of what infrastructuralism as cognitive mapping might look like in practice (Mattern, 2015a; Starosielski, 2015).

C. Toward an Infrastructural Politics

In the early 1990s, Jameson observed that "what is more surprising, and perhaps more immediately serious politically," about postmodern politics "is that the new representational models also foreclose and exclude any adequate representation of what used to be represented—however imperfectly—as a 'ruling class'" (1991, p. 349). Today, we don't seem to have that problem at all. For the most part, we can readily identify our enemies: the ruling class is Wall Street; it's Jeff Bezos; it's "the one percent." The difficulty today—equally as much a result of inadequate cognitive maps—is knowing where to intervene. Given a lever long enough to move the world, we wouldn't know where to place the fulcrum. Political struggle is fragmented into an infinite array of local issues, and we are spoiled for choice. As the BPP understood, however, infrastructures are sites of social, political, and economic control and, thus, make excellent fulcrums in leveraging social, political, and economic change. Infrastructure, moreover, offers a powerful solution to our present impasse by uniting diverse struggles under a common umbrella.

Our contemporary political landscape forcefully demonstrates both the power of infrastructure and the continuing salience of the BPP's political legacy. The very same infrastructures activated by and enlisted in the BPP's politics are today the sites that mediate individuals' interpellation as class-conscious subjects. The 2016 and 2020 campaigns of Bernie Sanders have galvanized widespread support for nominally democratic socialist policies in healthcare and higher education. Outside of electoral politics, countless people have been radicalized as part of the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality and mass incarceration. Evidently, the evocative power of infrastructures of social reproduction and colonial violence continue to elicit cognitive maps that relate individuals' experiences to the totality of multinational capital. It's no wonder that many of today's movements that organize through digitally networked communications and social media draw on the BPP's uniquely mass-mediated politics for inspiration (Morgan, 2006, p. 326; Rhodes, 2007/2017, pp. 15–17). In the wake of a reenergized movement against police brutality, one can only expect the BPP's recuperation to continue. In addition to their anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and Marxism-Leninism, the BPP's infrastructuralism must be revitalized as well.

Infrastructural battles are being fought right now in Flint, Michigan; the unceded land of the Wet'suwet'en nation; the Brazilian Amazon; cyberspace; and countless locales across the world. It is the duty of critical infrastructure scholars, first, to draw attention and support to these manifestations of infrastructural contestation and, second, to innovate ways of articulating them together toward a unified infrastructural politics. Cognitive mapping is, after all, little more than a code word for class consciousness. By uniting diverse struggles under the concept of infrastructure, we can begin to re-articulate the political demand for land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace on behalf of a generic political subject, the people, and

offer a viable alternative vision of the world by beginning to build the infrastructures of a collective, egalitarian future.

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